Chapter 2

"Repairing Shattered Thrones": Post-Waterloo Europe and the Shelley–Byron Circle, June 1815–December 1816

Introduction

This chapter investigates how the end of the Napoleonic wars affected the Shelley–Byron circle's understandings of Europe, especially while they traveled through the continent in 1816. It focuses on the third Canto of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Hobhouse's published account of Napoleon's downfall, and the Shelleys' writings immediately following Waterloo and on their own excursion to Switzerland in 1816, particularly the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*. I argue that the Shelley–Byron circle contribute to a contemporary debate—also involving political commentators and politicians—about what kind of Europe has emerged following Waterloo. In this respect, they acknowledge a new multiplicity surrounding ideas of Europe, which thrives on competing political programs for reorganizing the continent. At the same time, however, they articulate a singular history which narrates Europe's development according to a specific ideological agenda determined mainly by their suspicion of reactionary politics. As a result, they treat Europe as a concept open to debate, while also constructing a specific vision of what "Europe" should mean or represent. Second, the chapter discusses how the circle interprets European politics through use of the words "freedom" and "liberty." Sometimes this

language of freedom constructs a transnational European community, in which states are connected by their shared commitment to "free" government. Complicating this however, the circle also associate "freedom" with ideas of state independence; that is, a Europe divided into rival states independent from one another and not necessarily unified by any common tradition. In this respect, the idea of "freedom" both evokes and challenges notions of a common European identity. These different usages might appear to be contradictory, but they can be connected, I want to suggest, by reconsidering the circle's radical ideas about patriotism, which argue for a local patriotic politics that legitimizes transnational collective identity.

Waterloo and the Multiple Histories of Europe

The end of the Napoleonic wars once again opened up continental Europe to British travelers, and the Shelley–Byron circle were among the first to take advantage of this new freedom of movement. The practical difficulties of traveling in a recent war-zone influenced their experiences of the new Europe. Writing to Hobhouse, Byron reports that "at Manheim we crossed the Rhine & keep on this side to avoid the French segment of Territory at Strasbourg—as we have not French passports—& no desire to view a degraded country."[1] Byron regards his journey in terms of border-tensions; he is restricted by passport bureaucracy and territorial protectionism, but also suggests that the ideological landscape has altered and that "degraded" France is part of an imperfect new European order. Charles Clairmont's tour through France is similarly shaped by the physical consequences of combat: "we visited the battleground where Soult was defeated by Wellington. We mounted the redoubts & viewed [...] the mouldering and bleached bones of our countrymen."[2] The national divisions accentuated by war define Clairmont's and Byron's understandings of European travel.

If the end of war permitted these journeys and defined particular routes or objects of interest, then it also shaped ways to think about Europe, rekindling older debates about the potential for renewed progress. In his "View of the Progress of Society in Europe" (1769), William Robertson had said that "the universal progress of science during the last two centuries, the art of printing, and other obvious causes have filled Europe with such a multiplicity of histories."[3] The mention of "universal progress" evokes a common European identity: a single "great political system" in which "the acquisition of knowledge, the progress in the art of war [and...] political sagacity and address are nearly equal" across European states. However, Robertson also suggests that growing "collections of historical materials"

enable a variety of "histories" (or historical interpretations) to be posited. Robertson thus combines a single shared comprehension of Europe, with plural, or "multiple," understandings of that history.[4] This is an important tension, which occurs throughout the writings of the Shelley–Byron circle in this period. Many are concerned to argue for one particular post-Waterloo idea of Europe (i.e., that Europe either has developed or should develop along a specific ideological line). But they simultaneously acknowledge the multiple political and cultural directions Europe could subsequently take and the various interpretations which can be given to a single historical event.

In a diary entry for July 8, 1815, John Cam Hobhouse records his disappointment that Louis XVIII has been proclaimed king "in the twenty-first year of his reign"—a dubious declaration given that Louis had evidently not ruled France for the previous two decades. The proclamation attempts to rewrite history to suit a new political agenda, but disguises its reinterpretation as a continuous monarchical narrative. Refuting this complacent resolution, Hobhouse instead presents the post-Waterloo political negotiations as a clash between "the rights of the French nation to choose their own monarch" and the treatment of France "as a conquered nation." In this way, postwar Europe is a battleground for ideological conflict between the forces of "liberty" (including Wellington, whose "moderation" gave "the friends of freedom [. . .] every hope") and the tyranny represented by Lord Castlereagh and Louis XVIII.[5] This is not a national dispute (that is, between competing states)—rather, it is driven by interpretations of "freedom," in which certain actors, like Wellington and Napoleon, can figure on both sides. In his *Letters Written [. . .] During the Last Reign of the Emperor Napoleon* (1816), Hobhouse quotes and then comments on a declaration by Castlereagh:

> '[my] object has long been to restore Europe to that ancient social system which her late convulsions had disjointed and overthrown' [. . .] The ancient social system of Europe!—Truly one has as great a respect for these words, either together or apart, as for the holy Roman Empire, though it should turn out to be neither ancient, nor social, nor a system. [. . .] That state of things which his lordship would wish to restore [. . .] can be no other than that absolute monarchy, repugnant to the institutions and national manners of the ancestors of the modern peoples of Christendom.[6]

Hobhouse agrees that Europe can be considered as a common unit in political and social analysis, but he rejects Castlereagh's specific idea of Europe as a rigid, anti-progressive, misinterpretation of the proper tradition of monarchy. In England, which more accurately represents how Europe

should be organized, "the sovereign augmented the rights of the citizen." Hobhouse, therefore, recognizes the multiplicity of ideas of Europe, but also gives preference to a singular history which narrates Europe's development according to a specific ideological agenda: "the friends of the 'ancient social system' [...] must see [...] that they have scotched the snake of Jacobinism not killed it." Commenting on Helen Maria Williams's *Narrative of Events in France*, Hobhouse remarks that, had he not known her to be an eyewitness, he would suppose that "she had employed the optics of the editors of some ministerial journal, rather than those eyes which beamed with delight at the dawn of continental freedom."[7] Here, he notes the multiple interpretations of European events—not only because Williams's hostility to Napoleon conflicts with his own views, but also because her change of mind about the Revolution indicates how "multiple histories" result from an author's ideological repositioning.[8] Importantly though, Hobhouse still insists upon the rejection of absolutist monarchy as the single "true" direction for historical progress.

How, then, did Waterloo and its political consequences affect ideas of Europe? Some members of the circle configure Napoleon's defeat as a turning point which altered the political and military circumstances of Europe. Their reflections on the precise nature of these changes are, however, closely related to uncertain views about Napoleon himself, since they are unsure whether to welcome or condemn a remodeled Europe premised politically and ideologically on his defeat. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage III*, the narrator says:

> Gaul may champ the bit
> And foam in fetters,—but is Earth more free?
> Did nations combat to make *One* submit,
> Or league to teach all kings true sovereignty?
> What! shall reviving Thraldom again be
> The patched-up idol of enlightened days.
> (3.163–8)[9]

The passage summarizes several competing visions of Europe resulting from the war. Was it fought to free Europe from the universalizing dominance of "One" ruler? Or did it intend to resurrect "true" forms of monarchical government? Did it unify European states by constructing a "league" which worked collectively to reshape Europe? Or did it shatter "the links of the world's broken chain" (3.162), destroying potential commonality through international conflict and coercion? Byron implies that Waterloo is a defining moment in the (re)configuration of European society, but he is less sure about the ideological implications of Napoleon's defeat.

Hobhouse also speculates on Napoleon's triumphs and the consequences of his downfall. While in office, Napoleon's achievements were "the conquest of Egypt, of Italy, of Austria, of Prussia, of Poland, the foundation of empires and kingdoms, [...] a thousand monuments of laws, and arts and arms." His leadership remodeled legal and cultural life in many European countries, showing how violent conquest can reformulate society for the better and how separate states can be drawn into a common system. Still more crucially, Napoleon embodies the possibility of complete change in Europe's self-organization. The alliance that defeated France "will dissolve," says Hobhouse, and "the empire of reason and independence [...] will extend its reign beyond the boundaries prescribed for individual ambition and, embracing state after state, establish at last its prevailing happy sway over the fairest portion of the civilised world."[10] In other words, Napoleon is merely the prelude to the "decisive triumph" of a borderless community, beginning in Europe and then expanding across the "civilised world." This Eurocentrism assumes Allied failure even in the moment of apparent victory: Waterloo may have curbed Napoleon's ambition, but it also initiates a new beginning since the restored governments cannot resist social and political change.

Elsewhere, however, Hobhouse worries that Waterloo is the fulcrum of multiple possibilities. If Castlereagh can realize the "utility of reform, he might yet be the benefactor of Europe." Yet the grim prospect of monarchical oppression remains: whereas formerly "the friends of freedom cherished every hope," now France appears a "conquered culprit" and is "dissolved by force." Hobhouse acknowledges several interpretations of the new Europe, each hinging on the consequence of Waterloo. Yet, this uncertainty also contains radical possibility, for if Europe can be interpreted differently, it can also be made to change: Europe's future is not prescribed and its political and ideological associations can be altered. Hobhouse notes that, as a form of government, monarchy has become so closely aligned with European stability that states have declared war to defend it from revolutionary intentions. However, if "monarchy" can be redefined, then a new notion of Europe can also be constructed; if Louis XVIII could return not as "divine proprietor" of France, but "upon the enfranchisement of the commons," then a new Europe can emerge from Waterloo outside Castlereagh's "ancient social system."[11]

For the Shelleys, Waterloo represents the supremacy, rather than the potential alteration, of pre-Revolutionary monarchical European government. In the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, Mary Shelley suggests that borders have intensified as a result of post-Waterloo politics: "we were detained for two days for the purpose of obtaining [...] our passports, the French government having become much more circumspect."

Furthermore, the war has reinvigorated oppressive government—the Allies "fill [France…] with hostile garrisons, and *sustain* a detested dynasty on the throne" (my emphasis), showing how Waterloo has failed to alter Europe's governmental system. Like Hobhouse though, Mary Shelley speculates that this defeat may instigate future change, inspiring "every nation in Europe" toward "liberty."[12] Her husband is more pessimistic. He tends to see Napoleon and the Allies as two aspects of the same despotic idea of Europe, arguing that Waterloo replaced one form of monarchical absolutism with another. In "Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte," the speaker laments how "old Custom, legal Crime" were nearly banished in the Revolution, but had reemerged under the Emperor and therefore how Napoleon had disastrously failed to change Europe's "despotic" political system.[13] Shelley makes clear the precise extent of this stagnation when he writes, three years later, "the usurpation of Bonaparte, and then the Restoration of the Bourbons were the shapes in which this reaction clothed itself, and the heart of every lover of liberty was struck as with a palsy by the succession of these events."[14] This language of paralysis is apt, for despite the "succession of events," history itself has not progressed forward in the ideal way Shelley had hoped: in August 1815, he remarked to Hogg, "you will see in the papers the continuance of the same system."[15]

Other members of the 1816 circle share this view. Writing very soon after Waterloo, Byron says to Thomas Moore, "every hope of a republic is over, and we must go on under the old system."[16] Unlike *Childe Harold III*, these remarks suggest that the debate about the European system of government has concluded. *Manfred*, which was begun in Switzerland in 1816, also gloomily alludes to European politics. In act 2, scene 3, Nemesis tells how he "was detain'd repairing shattered thrones, / Marrying fools, restoring dynasties, / Avenging men upon their enemies, / And making them repent their own revenge."[17] Although "mortals dared to ponder for themselves, / To weigh kings in the balance, and to speak / Of freedom, the forbidden fruit" (2.3.69–71), the attempt has failed, change has proved illusory, and the "old system" is reinvigorated. One character in the drama even speculates on the nightmarish return of Napoleon, so deeply is Europe locked into a stasis where no progress is possible: "The Captive Usurper, / Hurl'd down from the throne, / Lay buried in torpor, / Forgotten and lone; / I broke through his slumbers, / I shivered his chain, / I leagued him with numbers—/ He's Tyrant again" (2.3.16–23). Hobhouse also complains that Castlereagh's attempts to revitalize the "ancient social system" enshrine reactionary stasis at the heart of Europe. According to him, Castlereagh wishes to create a political system whereby mutual antagonism ensures that one country's prosperity and progress is

opposed by the others, "so that each of the states of Europe might be successively proscribed and successively ruined" by "the perpetual recurrence of wars." Castlereagh's ideal Europe never deviates from the status quo and preserves the bordered rivalries of separate states. Hobhouse justifies this analysis by quoting the foreign secretary's own writings, which speak of the "*security and permanent tranquillity of [...] Europe*" (Hobhouse's emphasis). Castlereagh thus wishes to secure the permanence of his particular notion of Europe, disguising reaction behind the language of peace and stability.[18]

It is precisely this kind of language, however, which appeals to contemporary conservative commentators. In his *Annals of Europe* (1816), T. H. Horne celebrates Waterloo because it has "restored to the world those ancient land-marks, which the lawless hand of tyranny had removed." Horne uses the word "Europe" in a historical sense, to refer to the pre-Napoleonic and pre-Revolutionary political state. Napoleon had thus formulated "ruinous aggression on the peace and prosperity of the nations of Europe"; by seeking to change that peace and stability, he is betraying the ideal of what Europe should be like.[19] The *Annual Register* for 1815 makes a similar assertion, arguing that Napoleon has upset the peaceful balance of Europe by wielding sovereignty "to the hazard and disturbance of all the neighbouring states" and obliging the Allies to maintain military presence "inconsistent with that pacific character [of...] Europe."[20] In this sense, Waterloo has preserved the authentic ideal of Europe from irresponsible revision. For George Ensor, an anti-establishment writer, post-Waterloo politics contradicts the inevitable progress of history: "for almost every kingdom in Europe within these twenty-five years has exhibited the substitution, abdication, or the dethronement of the reigning prince."[21] However, for conservative observers, this same denial of progress defends the proper order of things from dangerously new imaginings of Europe. Both these perspectives implicitly recognize the "multiplicity" of ideas of Europe even as they identify an "authentic" or "true" course for the subcontinent's future. They engage with many potential Europes but also construct a singular vision of what Europe should mean or represent. Waterloo is a key part of this process, determining where Europe is headed both politically and ideologically.

A crucial consequence of this debate about the implications of Waterloo is that it becomes possible to see Europe as both united and divided by recent political events. In her 1817 account of the elopement excursion with Percy Shelley and Claire Clairmont three years earlier, Mary Shelley reflects on the strangeness of postwar Europe and the difficulties of communication across national borders. Continental travel having been difficult for so long, France now seems an alien place, and she notes how

unfamiliar cultural practices differ from country to country: "on passing the French[-Swiss] barrier, a surprising difference may be observed between the opposite nations that inhabit each side." She conceives of the border in terms of a barrier which prevents interaction between states. Indeed, this separation occurs even within states: rural France is "detached from the rest of the world, and ignorant of all that was passing in it." Mary Shelley seems skeptical that these national and regional boundaries can be transcended. She relates the example of a man "in a very unfortunate position: he had been born in Holland, and had spent so much of his life between England, France and Germany, that he had acquired a slight knowledge of the language of each country, and spoke all very imperfectly. He [. . .] was nearly unable to express himself."[22] This man is a kind of failed cosmopolitan—uncertainly aligned with all nations and none, he is barely able to function in European society. These observations contrast strongly with Polidori's accounts of his journey over similar territory. He comments on how travel is permitted without passports and how borders are not marked, so that countries appear to blend into one another. If it were not for the military presence and the signs of economic deprivation—both consequences of the recent wars—"we should not have perceived that we had crossed" any border.[23] The disparity between Mary Shelley's and Polidori's impressions is partly a matter of traveling status and finances (Polidori journeyed with Byron, already an international celebrity by this point). But, it also reveals various interpretations of postwar Europe: Mary Shelley emphasizes the divisions exacerbated by the conflicts, while Polidori's Europe opens new possibilities for international travel and cross-border cultural communities. Significantly, Polidori, unlike the Shelleys, frequented Germaine de Staël's international literary gatherings at Coppet in 1816, along with Byron, Hobhouse, August von Schlegel, Charles de Bonstetten, and many others. I discuss Staël in more detail in the following chapter, but it is important to note here that the Coppet-Byron circle is explicitly concerned with issues of nationality and transnationalism. The group discuss international travel (Byron and Hobhouse's trip to Greece being especially fascinating) and debate Napoleon's impact on various European countries, particularly Spain and the Italian states. These *salons* appear to have been contentious: Hobhouse, for example, disapproves of Schlegel's "dreadfully national" opinions.[24]

Other authors and politicians also remark on how the war unites and divides Europe. Lord Liverpool, the British prime minister, considered Napoleon's return "not merely a British, but a European question"—a problem which affects the "system" of Europe and must be determined by all Europeans together.[25] *Childe Harold III* puts this more elegantly: France has been "pierced by the shaft of banded nations through" (3.160)—Europe

comes together, but in opposition to one of its own number, united and divided by the conflict. Waterloo itself is the culmination of this paradox, "where the sword united nations drew / Our countrymen were winning on that day" (3.313–4); where Europe is both "united" in a patriotic and international sense and at war with itself. Although he identifies a potential commonality in Napoleon's defeat, Byron critiques the Emperor for "his continued obtrusion on mankind" and his "want of all community of feeling," which prevented him from engaging with people and countries on anything other than his own terms.[26] Like Mary Shelley's "unfortunate" man, Napoleon is a failed cosmopolitan, who united and reformed Europe only by giving it a common enemy. Byron explores a similar idea in his poem "Napoleon's Farewell (From the French)," which presents him alternately as a failed universalist (who sought to conquer and unify the world, but was ultimately vanquished by Allied unity) and as a patriotic hero, dedicated to specifically French glory and interest (France, "I made thee [...] the wonder of earth").[27] Percy Shelley is similarly preoccupied throughout 1815–16 with the "self-centered seclusion" of those who keep themselves aloof from human sympathies. In the preface to *Alastor,* he says that such people "languish, because none feel with them their common nature. [...] They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their countries."[28] These individuals also fail in a political sense because they are unable to engage with any kind of community or group identity. And yet he presents three different kinds of "community": a shared intrinsic "common nature," a cosmopolitan union of world citizens, and a community organized around national interest. In critiquing disengagement from society, he presents "community" in an ambiguous manner which reflects uncertainties over Europe's post-1815 organization.

However, analysis of the Napoleonic wars does not necessarily lead to uncertainty in one's conceptualization of Europe. In *The Field of Waterloo*, written after viewing the battle-site in 1815, Sir Walter Scott presents a nationalist version of war-torn Europe. He emphasizes the rivalry between states to create an idea of Britain forged by Napoleonic conflict: "well hast thou stood, my Country"; "Britons" have "trampled down [...] tyrannic might."[29] For Scott, Europe is a space in which competing countries strive for mastery—it has no meaning or context other than as a scene for British–French rivalry. There is no mention of non-French, non-British participants in the battle itself, nor any analysis of how the war may or may not have affected international relations. Waterloo is merely a canvas for British heroism. It is precisely this national factionalism which disturbs Hobhouse when he writes that "the animosities of governments seem to have been communicated to whole nations, and, especially, as far

as concerns France and England, each individual has become a belligerent." He worries that the war has provoked divisions and that those principles of civil and religious commonality have been violated "without any attention to the want of civilised intercourse or the decency of christian communion."[30]

From the opposite political perspective to Scott, Ensor's anti-allied postwar writings propose a very secure idea of Europe which reconciles considerable differences between states and their common interests. If all Europe would adopt "free government" (defined as "an express contract between the people and their rulers"), then each country would be free to rule itself as it chooses, and yet Europe would be unified in mutual respect for this "free," contractual system. Significantly, Ensor suggests that the European system and the condition of France are inseparably connected: "such is the state of Europe and of France [. . .] when war, enmity and vengeance have been strewed through all the nations."[31] In this sense, the state of France defines the state of Europe, allowing a vision of European totality to derive from, and depend on, the circumstances of one constituent state. Indeed, this is the underlying assumption of many writers—the fortunes of a collected Europe rely upon the conditions of the French state, and by redesigning France, Europe can be similarly reimagined. In this sense, the divided Europe of separate states and the vision of a common or collected European system are intimately linked.

Complicating this further, though, is the use of "Europe" as a collective term signifying opposition to France. When Castlereagh speaks of "the powers of Europe," he means those states which have leagued together against Napoleonic France.[32] In this way, he implies that France lies "outside" Europe—an aberration broken off from the main community. Moreover, by using Europe as a term for "anti-French alliance," he evokes both the extent and seriousness of divisive conflict and the possibility of some European unity developing from those partitions. Even Hobhouse hopes that France will establish "peaceful relations with all the powers of Europe," implying, like Castlereagh, that France has become divorced from the Europe embodied by the Allies.[33] This use of the word "Europe" is especially problematic because it acknowledges the separations of states while simultaneously making assertions about what Europe should be like—collected together in a (largely undefined) "peaceful" system. For the writers I have mentioned, the experience of war has both shattered Europe into competitive fragments and enabled new imaginings of collective identity, redefining the problem of European community within the new parameters of the Napoleonic wars. In this respect, the long-standing issues of Europe's relative unity and division are revised and recontextualized in a specific historical moment.

Liberty and Independence: European Freedom

Members of the Shelley–Byron circle often interpret post-Waterloo European politics through use of the words "freedom" and "liberty." In particular, they attempt to delineate a "tradition of freedom"; that is, a shared trajectory for European countries which identifies their interconnected histories and future progress. In doing this, they follow established ideas about the relationship between "Europe" and "freedom." Many eighteenth-century reference books devote considerable space to defining and outlining a European tradition of "free" government. For example, William Guthrie's *Geographical, Historical and Commercial Grammar* describes Europe as "unrestrained" in commerce, government, and religion, especially when compared to the "tyrannical" regimes of Asia.[34] This difference between European and Asian governmental traditions is explained in terms of environmental factors: Guthrie's *New System of Modern Geography* (1792) suggests that the spread of despotism is prevented in Europe by the varied land-surface, forming "natural barriers which check the progress of conquest." In Asian countries, the large extent of land makes despotism inevitable, since only one individual ruling by force can keep the country in order. In Europe, however, "the barren rocks and mountains are more favourable for exciting human industry and invention, than the natural unsolicited luxuriancy of more fertile soils." For this reason, ancient Greece is where the human mind "began to avail itself of its strength" and where European "industry and invention" began, because it is the most variable and broken of territories. Greece's development epitomizes Europe's: it is an exemplar of "equity of laws and the freedom of political constitution."[35] Some eighteenth-century reference books even define the word "Europe" itself in terms of freedom. According to the anonymous *Complete System of Geography* (1747), as well as a large number of other sources, Europe "is called [. . .] 'Alfrank' by the Turks; 'Frankoba' by Georgians; and 'Frankistan' by Asian peoples."[36] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the word "frank" has etymological connections with "freedom,"[37] although it is not entirely clear whether non-Europeans genuinely saw Europe as the "land of the free," or whether this was how Europeans imagined that others saw them.[38] Nevertheless, the idea of Europe is being constructed through association with "freedom" and by contrast with the decadent tyrannies of Asia.

In the early nineteenth century therefore, the ideological association between Europe and freedom had become well established. A *Supplement* to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* summarizes these current ideas by defining European liberty more precisely. It speaks of the freedom to worship as one

pleases, freedom to trade, freedom to formulate one's own laws, and freedom from a tyrannous government: advantages which are only found, it claims, in European states. Most importantly, it traces this European freedom throughout history—from "the freedom of Grecian states" to exist independently, to "freedom of commerce in modern day Britain."[39] The *Supplement* uses this notion to construct a shared European historical development and identity. In other words, the idea of political and commercial "freedom" is what connects ancient Greece, fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian city-states and modern Britain together. "Freedom" is what makes Renaissance Italy the successor to ancient Greece and modern Britain the heir to the Renaissance; and this "freedom" therefore makes it meaningful to speak of a "European" cultural tradition transmitted through different periods and societies. Indeed, for the *Supplement*, "freedom" drives the gradual development of ever improving governmental systems and intellectual achievement in Europe.

In 1815–16, the Shelley–Byron circle reinterprets this "libertarian tradition" to take account of the Allies' victory over Napoleon. In the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), for example, Mary Shelley hopes that "fellow feeling" for liberty can reform all European countries after the recent victories of the monarchical powers:

> All those of every nation in Europe who have a fellow feeling with the oppressed [. . .] cherish an unconquerable hope that the cause of liberty must at length prevail.[40]

Mary Shelley's use of "liberty" has a distinctly radical aspect: she employs the word to signify opposition to the "hostile garrisons" and "detested dynasties" of monarchy. Instead, the prospect of "free" (that is, nonmonarchical) government can potentially reform the war-torn remnants of Europe, uniting the separate nations behind common governmental principles. In using "liberty" to indicate desire for reform, Mary Shelley taps into a developing political vocabulary: "'liberal' in the sense of 'favorable to constitutional change' [was] a recently-established English usage" which first occurred in the early nineteenth century.[41] Furthermore, the phrase "fellow feeling" evokes Margaret Cohen and April Alliston's notion of the "sentimental community." For them, popular eighteenth and nineteenth-century texts by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Germaine de Staël, and others induce an "emotional connection that transcends nations" by appealing to a wide community of readers not limited by national borders.[42] Mary Shelley gives this concept a political dimension: she suggests that "fellow feeling" for liberty allows one to comprehend Europe in terms of transnational political principles, rather than as separate national identities. In

this way, Europe's past and future are defined by "sympathy" for libertarian causes.

Byron, however, seems less optimistic about the prospects for "free" government. In *Childe Harold III*, he identifies a tradition of freedom under threat:

> While Waterloo with Cannae's carnage vies
> Morat and Marathon twin names shall stand,
> They were true Glory's stainless victories,
> Won by the unambitious heart and hand
> Of a proud, brotherly and civic band,
> All unbright champions in no princely cause
> Of vice-entail'd Corruption; they no land
> Doom'd to bewail the blasphemy of laws
> Making kings rights divine, by some Draconian clause.
> (3.608–16)

In this meditation on European history, the tradition of freedom is evident in the battles of Morat and Marathon, victories, according to Jerome McGann, "of men fighting for their liberty."[43] In more recent times, the French general Marceau's service in the Revolutionary Wars contributed to the cause of liberty:

> He was Freedom's champion, one of those,
> The few in number, who had not o'erstept
> The charter to chastise which she bestows.
> (3.549–51)

For Byron, as for Mary Shelley, Europe's achievements are defined by the liberty and common purpose associated with opposition to monarchical power. But *Childe Harold* also articulates another tradition which seeks to limit that freedom: the "Draconian clause" which resists the efforts of the "civic band." Europe's history and future is thus based on conflict between advocates and opponents of freedom. Caroline Franklin argues that *Childe Harold* is "a profound elegy for the permanent loss of political freedom in the cycles or 'revolutions' of European history."[44] In fact, however, Byron understands European freedom as a concept in flux, not just inexorable decline. Although Waterloo appears to be a victory for the "Draconian clause," hope still exists:

> We do not curse thee Waterloo!
> Though Freedom's blood thy plain bedew;
> There 'twas shed, but is not sunk—

Rising from each gory trunk,
Like the water-spout from ocean,
With a strong and growing motion—
It soars and mingles in the air.
("Ode (from the French)," lines 1–7)

This poem, first published in the *Morning Chronicle* on March 15, 1816,[45] seems to suggest that cause of "Freedom" has been set back by Napoleon's defeat. Yet, Napoleon himself is described both as "Freedom's son" (line 27), and as a proud monarch, a hero who "sank into a King" (33)—meaning that his downfall simultaneously marks the defeat of both "free" government and kingly arrogance. This ambiguous presentation of Napoleon expresses uncertainty over Europe's direction: does Napoleon's deposition indicate a continuation of or a disruption in the tradition of freedom?[46] As the poem continues, the speaker strives to answer this question, eventually claiming that "Freedom rejoices" (73) because "France hath twice been too well taught / The 'moral lesson' dearly bought—/ Her safety sits not on a throne [. . .] / But in equal rights and laws" (77–81). This freedom can be found, not in the competition of nations ("Pouring nations blood like water, / In imperial seas of slaughter!" [89–90]), but in European "fellow feeling": where "the heart and mind, / And the voice of mankind, / Shall arise in communion" (91–3). Despite the apparent victory of the Allied monarchies, Waterloo ultimately confirms the potential development of European liberty.

In *The Siege of Corinth* (also published in early 1816),[47] Byron is similarly concerned for the loss, and possible recovery, of freedom. The speaker laments how "Venice ceased to be / Her ancient civic boast—'the Free' " (lines 84–5), before tracing the history (and future prospects) of that "freedom" back to Christianity and ancient Greece, now overrun with oriental despotism: "Till Christian hands to Greece restore / The freedom Venice gave of yore" (104–5). Like the *Supplement* to *Britannica*, the poem uses "freedom" to connect different periods and locations as part of a discernable tradition, but unlike the reference book, it also discusses manifest threats to that freedom, mainly from "the Moslem's sway" (107). The use of Venice is particularly important here. Malcolm Kelsall suggests that, for Byron, Venice was not only "the meeting place of Occident and Orient in a direct imperial and religious conflict," but also signifies the "transition of a former imperial power to colonial status," particularly after Napoleon conquered and abolished the Venetian Republic in 1797.[48] In this respect, Venice represents the intricate constructions and tensions of European history: empire and colony, Christianity and Islam, freedom and tyranny. Byron's awareness of these complex interactions makes him cynical about

unthinkingly optimistic ideas of progress, but this skepticism does not, I would suggest, define his conception of post-Napoleonic Europe and its potential for "free" government.

Hobhouse also muses on the complexities of the libertarian tradition: "it cannot be concealed, there is in the flight of Napoleon a precipitancy which nothing can escape; and we must sigh as Montesquieu did over the suicide of Brutus, to see the cause of liberty so easily abandoned." Hobhouse identifies Napoleon with a tradition of freedom that extends deep into history, beyond the *philosophes* and back to the classical world. Like Byron, though, he is preoccupied by the prospective failure of that tradition. Indeed, Napoleon seems to embody both the possibility of greater liberty and the disappointments of its dissipation. If here he is the banished emblem of freedom, later his presence, rather than his absence, hinders liberty's progress: "France would have now been free had not Napoleon come back."[49] In *Letters Written During the Last Reign*, Hobhouse elaborates further on exactly what he means by "freedom." He identifies a "proper" tradition of monarchy which should operate uniformly throughout Europe, but at present exists only in England—where "the rights of the citizen" are respected and "the desire of freedom has made the capital [...] affluent in money and men, so their wealth gave them the ability to defend and confirm their independence." Despite this stress on British "independence," Hobhouse envisages this as a European-wide ideal, proposing that all states should strive for this condition. As an Empire, France had drawn closer to this model system, for despite "the tyranny of Napoleon," "the circumstances of his elevation [...] confirm the notions of the power of individual exertion, and the original equality of man." By contrast, Castlereagh's political objective—to restore the "ancient social system" of monarchies—completely betrays the notion of European liberty by supporting despotic regimes and refusing to acknowledge that other states should be free to govern themselves. There is an inconsistency here: Hobhouse opposes Britain being "the arbitress of Europe," but still upholds the British governmental system as the ideal model for the realization of European freedom. This leads him into slightly self-contradictory territory, arguing that both Britain and Napoleon's France alternately represent and prevent the development of liberty.[50]

However, the term "freedom" is not merely used by radical thinkers like Mary Shelley, Byron, and Hobhouse. Horne rejoices that Napoleon's downfall has "gladdened the heart of every lover of freedom," since his usurpation was an offence to Europe's ancient traditions. He calls the Napoleonic Wars "The Campaign of the Liberties of Europe," suggesting that a "free" Europe is one which replicates the pre-1789 status quo.[51]

Castlereagh himself even employs this terminology to justify British government policy: "the powers of Europe," he says, treating the subcontinent as a totality, "have been compelled, in vindication of their own liberties, and for the settlement of the world, to invade France."[52] This language recalls William Robertson's use of "liberty" in the 1760s. In his "View of the Progress of Society in Europe," Robertson refers to the balance of power in terms of liberty: "the method of preventing any monarch from rising to such a degree of power, as was inconsistent with the general liberty."[53] This associates the word with "stability," a usage which contrasts with liberal and radical writers who employ "freedom" and "liberty" to refer to changes in governmental organization. Ensor, for example, contrasts "free nations" with "the abyss of monarchy." Alluding to the precedent of ancient Athens, he asserts that monarchy, not Revolutionary France, is an aberration from the proper order of things.[54] These writers base their understandings of European history and futurity upon different notions of freedom, using various interpretations of the libertarian tradition to analyze contemporary politics and to construct teleologies of what Europe should be like based on a conception of its "free" past.

Percy Shelley, however, directly challenges the concept of a free tradition particular to European states. In a fragment known to editors as "The Elysian Fields" and written either in 1815 or 1816, the speaker says that:

> the English nation does not, as has been imagined, inherit freedom from its ancestors. Public opinion rather than private institution maintains it in whatever portion it may now possess [. . .] As yet the gradation [by] which this freedom has advanced has been contested step by step.[55]

These sentences make "freedom" iconoclastic, opposed to institutions and continually reimagined by each generation, not passed on in an identifiable tradition or progression. Moreover, because Shelley emphasizes both the Englishness and the locality of the "public opinion" which defines this freedom, his suggestions stand against that the more general "European liberty" identified by Byron and Hobhouse, which extends from ancient Greece to the Revolution as part of abstract tradition. They treat freedom as a progress theory, sometimes hindered, but gradually developing in a single direction. Instead, Shelley emphasizes the multiplicity of possible futures: how a momentary popular reassessment of freedom, disconnected from previous interpretations, can abruptly change society, or literally free it from its past.

"Liberty," then, often evokes a common European ideal—a notion of how Europe can be shaped through the alleged liberation of the Revolution or (for conservative writers) the freedoms of the "ancient social system."

However, liberty is also associated with ideas of state independence: that is, a Europe divided into rival national blocs with no shared tradition. Byron's friend James Wedderburne Webster employs "freedom" in a strictly patriotic context in his poem "Waterloo" (1816), asserting the supremacy of England over its enemies: Wellington's victory "Hath swell'd his Country's Harp of fame" and subdued French tyranny by protecting "the free."[56] The struggle for freedom and the struggle for state self-assertion are thus connected. Mary Shelley makes a similar point when she observes that the Swiss could "make a brave defence against any invader of their freedom." In other words, they can best defend their liberty by preserving independence and self-government.[57]

Hobhouse also connects liberty with independence by calling the Napoleonic conflicts "the late war against national independence"—a struggle for France's self-assertion against an Alliance determined to crush its new freedoms. The success of this aggression may "serve for a precedent fatal to our own liberties." Hobhouse here associates general European freedom with the capacity for states to operate independently, unmolested by other powers. This argument is clearly problematic, since it can be argued that French foreign policy before and during Napoleon's reign violated the freedoms of other "independent" states. Nevertheless, Hobhouse advocates an idea of Europe based on "the principles of national liberty," suggesting that greater international cooperation can be achieved by separately operating states, because powers would be discouraged from interfering in each other's affairs. He looks forward to the moment when "the alliance will dissolve" and "the first decisive triumph of the principles of national liberty will be witnessed." If this occurs, "a new system" of Europe can develop, based on the freedom of separate states. Once again, there is a radical agenda here: Hobhouse hopes that this revolutionary change will "embrace state after state," eventually encompassing "the fairest portion of the civilised world."[58]

As I will argue in Chapter 7, this association of liberty with revolution and national self-determination becomes an important part of Byron's thinking as his interest in Greek independence develops in the 1820s. Before landing on the Greek mainland, he would justify his purpose using the language of nation-building ("I did not come here to join a faction, but a nation") and the language of freedom ("the fruitful [. . . boughs?] of the tree of Liberty" will flourish).[59] Calling on the support of the U.S. consul in Geneva, Byron says: "an American has a better right than any other to suggest to other nations—the mode of obtaining that Liberty which is the glory of his own."[60] In this sense, the cause of liberty helps create both independent nationhood and a transnational movement joined in opposition to tyrannous government. A similar idea is evident in some

assessments of Napoleon's defeat. The preface to the 1816 *Annual Register* says that in Germany:

> Popular writers had been encouraged to arouse and create patriotic feelings by the contrast between slavish submission to a detestable foreign tyranny, and the acquiescence of freemen in a constitution.

This excites anti-Napoleonic feeling by uniting the language of liberty and nationalism. But, it also moves beyond its German specificity to present an idea of Europe in which many countries are connected by their shared freedom, formed in opposition to Napoleonic hegemony. Britain's victory was partly assured by "the liberalities of our political institutions" and other states, including Russia, have emulated this with "openness and success." In this last case, "liberty" refers both to a national trait and to an idea which can potentially shape all Europe.[61]

Debate about what Europe is (or what it should be) thus hinges on a few key concepts—"liberty," "freedom," "independence"—which can be appropriated for a variety of ideological purposes. "Liberty" can be used to evoke a shared European tradition and a Europe of separate states asserting themselves against one another. These various usages of the term "liberty" might seem contradictory. However, they can be connected using the argument of William Hazlitt's essay "On Patriotism" (1814). In the essay, Hazlitt theorizes a nationalism which legitimizes a wider, transnational, collective identity. Love of country, he says, "is little more than another name for the love of liberty, of independence, of peace, and social happiness."[62] In other words, patriotism inspires, not merely a devotion to a particular state, but also a universalist social vision, an ideal for all societies. As J. G. A. Pocock observes, "patriot" has a number of disparate meanings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It could signify devotion to the local nation, but also a person "who loved his or her country more than its ruling family or institutions" and who professed loyalty to a common identity not represented by the national government.[63] In this sense, Hazlitt can use the word both to allude to and look beyond the nation, evoking shared principles ("liberty," "peace") which are not solely applicable to a specific state.

Hazlitt's arguments about liberty and patriotism rework some of Richard Price's ideas in *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789). Hazlitt was well acquainted with Price's thinking: Price corresponded with Hazlitt's father, and Hazlitt's own letters record engagement with his works.[64] It is therefore likely that Hazlitt had read the *Discourse*, especially given its heightened public prominence (even notoriety) following Burke's attack on the text in *Reflections on the Revolution* (1790).[65] Indeed, Hazlitt alludes

to Burke's disagreement with Price in *The Eloquence of the British Senate* (1807), when he mentions the "theories of Mr Burke and Dr Price on the subject [of revolution]."[66] In the *Discourse*, Price interprets the French Revolution in terms of "liberty":

> I have lived to see nations panting for liberty which seemed to have no idea of it. I have lived to see thirty millions of people demanding liberty with an irresistible voice, their King led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects.[67]

Price celebrates the specific triumph of the French state in freeing itself from despotic rule. This is the "liberty" of a state discovering its independence, freeing itself from the weight of past tradition and the disapproval of neighboring countries. In this respect, the French Revolution has helped legitimize specific new national identities: "Liberty is the [...] object of patriotic zeal [as] an enlightened country must be a free country." However, Price also suggests that this "freedom" has implications for the whole of Europe:

> I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading a general amendment in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.

The blaze of Revolution "lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates Europe!"[68] "Freedom" establishes a patriotic identity, marking the uniqueness of France, but it also creates collective hopes for "Europe" based on the shared principles of law, reason, and opposition to despotism. For Price, as for Hazlitt, patriotism inspires not merely a devotion to a particular state, but also a universalist social vision, an ideal for all societies. Hazlitt's patriotism, associated with (revolutionary) social change, therefore has both national and transnational implications. This is patriotism beyond the "local," which hopes for universal "common liberties" extending across all Europe and beyond.

These arguments provide a useful framework to understand Percy Shelley's comments about "freedom" in 1816. Writing to Thomas Peacock, he connects freedom with national specificity while purporting to question precisely that connection:

> You live in a free country where you may act without restraint & possess that which you possess in security; for as long as the name of *country* & the selfish conceptions which it included shall subsist England I am persuaded, is the most free and refined.

Shelley identifies and seeks to move beyond a particularly English freedom: while declaring his patriotic attachment to "England, my country dear to me for ever," he also critiques the limited experiences available to one "who has never passed the limits of his native land."[69] Percy Shelley advocates what might be called a "cosmopolitan patriotism," which predicates itself on experience and appreciation of other countries. In celebrating and seeking to overcome the separations between European states, Price similarly exhorted listeners to: "explain the duty we owe to our country, and the nature, foundation, and proper expressions of that love to it," but also warns against "contempt of other countries, and forming men into combinations and factions against their common rights and liberties."[70] When they rail against despotism in France, Turkey or Russia, Price and Shelley patriotically assert Britain's superiority, but also regret that "common . . . liberties," a cosmopolitan notion of shared "rights," have not extended there.

For Price, Hazlitt, and Shelley, therefore, "liberty" has a parochial meaning related to state independence and a transnational meaning signifying the collective development of all Europe. More importantly, these meanings are not necessarily incompatible. For all three writers, it is perfectly possible to be patriotic, defend local independence, and hope for a "liberty" which unifies states across Europe under a common system. This is because the key tenets of radical "liberty"—opposition to despotism, to monarchical or religious privilege—are both national and transnational causes. That is to say, the independence of a specific country and the establishment of common "freedom" in Europe are part of the same radical project. The true patriot desires reform at home and abroad; he wishes to celebrate success in his own country and instigate changes based on common principles across all Europe. It is therefore possible to be both a patriot and a cosmopolitan simultaneously, because "love of one's country" and the desire for international cooperation are based on commitment to the same radical principles.[71] For the Shelley–Byron circle, ideas of state independence and common European liberty are not as disconnected as might first appear, since both are founded in a radical vision of the ideal society.

History after Waterloo: Experience and Interpretation

Napoleon's defeat is also an opportunity to reflect on the practice of history. In the preface to *Letters Written During the Last Reign*, Hobhouse points out that historical events are often misinterpreted: "the total perversion of facts" and "the partial selection of others" lead to "delusions"

often spread by a government to justify its policies. Although Hobhouse purports to banish these falsehoods and reveal the truth instead, he admits that ideas of Europe can be political constructions: "our relations with the European cabinets" are beset by "many errors" and thus the British view of Europe is flawed by "dangerous or mistaken politicians."[72] Even as he attempts to expose the true state of European relations, Hobhouse notes the inadequacy of claims to truth shaped by subjective opinions and ideological priorities.

In *Childe Harold,* Byron's narrator muses on how our understanding of history is shaped by the circumstances of its recording:

> What want these outlaws conquerors should have
> But History's purchased page to call them great?
> [...]
> In their baronial feuds and single fields,
> What deeds of prowess unrecorded died!
> (3.429–30, 433–4)

The narrator recognizes an arbitrary element in writing and remembering history. This attitude perhaps explains why he interprets his European surroundings in complex subjective layers, which are made all the more intricate by the interwoven speaking voices of the narrator, Childe Harold, and Byron. A particular example of this fusion is the section on Lake Geneva (stanza 99), which combines Byron's tour in June 1816, Childe Harold's poetic experiences at the scene, remembrances of Rousseau's relations there with Madame d'Houdetot, and allusions to Rousseau's novelization of the region in *Julie*.[73] By tapping into Rousseau's popular work, these intertextual layers create another of Cohen and Alliston's "sentimental communities"—a "cultural interaction" that transgresses national borders, the historical moment and particular characters to evoke sympathy in a wide community while remaining rooted in a specifically suggestive locale.[74] Geneva is thus a transnational European space—constructed and understood through subjective experiences and literary allusions comprehensible to an international community of readers. Moreover, Europe is not merely a political and cultural concept to be analyzed—it is also shaped by personal experience, recollection and reimaginings.

For Percy Shelley too, European history opens up a kind of mental and literary archaeology. Stephen Cheeke suggests that in Romantic writing "the materiality of a place" is "over-written and written-through with lived experience, with memory": "just as the mind is layered and striated with memory," so "the physical structure" of a place similarly reveals "cross-sections of buried experience, of historical subjectivity."[75] In his letters to

T[homas] P[eacock] in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, Shelley investigates both real European history and his personal reflections, especially his recall of literary texts, in the spaces he confronts. Upon seeing the prison at Chillon, he says that "at the commencement of the Reformation, and indeed long after that period, this dungeon was the receptacle of those who shook, or who denied the system of idolatry. From the effects of which mankind is even now slowly emerging."[76] The Swiss setting embodies for Shelley a European-wide history of theological oppression as well as the possibility of progress: "the records of classical, feudal and eighteenth-century struggles between liberty and tyranny, and, relatedly, between imperial invading armies and those resisting them."[77] It also taps into the controversy surrounding *Julie*, condemned by Edmund Burke and others as a "veritable source-book of revolutionary morality" since the novel's account of an affair between a tutor and the daughter of a Swiss aristocrat apparently undermined "the tranquility and security of domestic life."[78] In this respect, "Rousseau permeates *Six Weeks' Tour* as a participant in a tradition of political thought [. . .] that is severely critical of the institution of monarchy."[79] Other radicals associated Switzerland with more ideal forms of European government. Writing in 1798, Helen Maria Williams calls Chillon a "Swiss Bastille" and argues that Geneva pioneered its own revolution "founded on the great principle of liberty" before France. For her, Switzerland is a kind of utopia, a "picture of social happiness" where "I shall no longer see liberty profaned and violated." She also links the grandeur of the Alps with revolution, "the highest attainments of political discovery."[80] For Hobhouse, the region recalls not only antiestablishment authors like Staël and Rousseau, but also the republican heroes of the English Civil War, especially the regicide Edmund Ludlow, who had sought sanctuary in Switzerland following the restoration of Charles II in 1660.[81]

Shelley's experience of his journey—in Europe and around Lake Geneva—thus involves complex renegotiations of space and time. He connects the Swiss landscape to European politics as well as to recent literature, mentioning to Peacock how Napoleon's second wife Marie Louise visited the area in homage to Rousseau. "A Bourbon dared not even to have remembered Rousseau," Shelley declares, "She owed this power to that democracy which her husband's dynasty outraged [. . .]. This little incident shews at once how unfit and how impossible it is for the ancient system of opinions, or for any power built upon a conspiracy to revive them, permanently to subsist among mankind."[82] In the Empress's private love for *Julie*, he identifies a conflict between ancient and modern systems of European government, an ideological debate which encompasses both multiple possibilities for historical development and an ideal linear path

for radical European progress. The Lake recalls Europe's past and future; it becomes a real-and-imagined landscape relating to contemporary politics, the imaginings and researches of other writers, and the author's personal understandings of those political and imagined circumstances. In creating ideas of Europe, therefore, political and personal perspectives are interdependent. Indeed, Byron sometimes seems to view European history and his own life in terms of one another: "Kingdoms and empires in my little day / I have outlived and yet I am not old."[83]

At other times, however, members of the Shelley–Byron circle write about (their experience in) Europe as if they were outside politics or history. As Cheeke argues, Byron's work exhibits a "contradictory desire" for both "consecrated spots" offering the "material facts" of historical events and for "spaces unburdened with the material of history."[84] In a poetic fragment composed in July 1816, Byron's speaker is unsure whether to engage with history and investigate its signs, or whether the past is distant and untouchable: are the dead "The ashes of a thousand Ages spread / Wherever Man has trodden or shall tread—/ Or do they in silent cities dwell / Each in his own uncommunicative cell"?[85] Can he connect with history, or is he confronted with the emptiness of history's silence? In some of his letters from late 1816, including the "alpine journal" written for Augusta Leigh, Byron attempts a "de-politicization" of European space, writing that the region is a "paradise of wilderness," seemingly detached from politics and history. In the journal, the Alps become a self-consciously imagined landscape: they are "all I have ever heard or imagined of a pastoral existence" and "take on a fantastical aspect." The region is somehow "outside" politics and the complexities of historical thought—instead it is a scene of intensely personal aesthetic experience, where dead trees "reminded me of my family" and where one can imagine "Death mounted in the Apocalypse."[86]

Polidori also seems to treat his European journey in apolitical terms, commenting extensively on sightseeing scenes and aesthetically assessing buildings, paintings, and people while barely mentioning contemporary politics. Even the visit to Waterloo itself prompts comment principally on the tourist and commercial opportunities recently developed at the site: if it were not for the boys who eagerly sell buttons, books, and military equipment "there would be no sign of war" and "no one [. . .] would imagine two such myriaded armies had met there."[87] Polidori presents Waterloo as a genteel tour-site rather than a recent battlefield—it is a "gentleman's excursion [. . .] geared towards the avoidance of permanent shock."[88] However, Polidori still engages with history, albeit in a somewhat evasive manner. Reacting to Scott's *Field of Waterloo*, for instance, Polidori declares "he says Waterloo will last longer than Cressy and Agincourt. How different! They only agree in one thing—that they were both the cause of injustice."[89] The

phrasing is very tentative and ambiguous. What, exactly, is “the cause of injustice”? Is Polidori critiquing or supporting Scott’s idea that battles help define national identity—in which case why does Waterloo differ from Agincourt? Seen in this light, Polidori’s reluctance to engage in political commentary can be related to his uncertainty about the precise implications of Waterloo: as for Byron in *Childe Harold*, the causes and effects of conflict remain opaque. Polidori is unable to conceptualize the political repercussions and wider historical significance of the recent wars; and it is this which makes the magnitude of violence seem unimaginable.

Although writers sometimes suggest that European travel facilitates escape from “all species of information,” political conceptions remain beneath such protestations of detachment.[90] The last letter in *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour*, written by Percy Shelley, shuns explicit political comment and talks instead about “ecstatic wonder” and “Nature” as a “poet.” He makes, here, the experience of Europe almost mystical—an otherly land for spiritual reflection and philosophical escape not possible at home, where the surroundings are less “untameable and inaccessible.”[91] However, drafts of Shelley’s contemporaneous poem “Mont Blanc,” reveal how European history intrudes upon these apparently apolitical meditations:

~~The cities of mankind~~
~~All things are changed with tumult & with sound~~
~~Man even~~
~~Wave rolling upon wave with restless swell~~
[…]

~~Power dwells apart~~
The works and ways of man
~~The cities of mankind~~
~~The cities of mankind~~—their death & birth
And that of him & all that may be,
All things that move and breathe, with toil and sound
Are born & die, revolve subside and swell—
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
Remote serene & inaccessible![92]

With its language of “remote” serenity and inaccessibility, the poem might seem to suggest the ultimate irrelevance of history in the face of “tranquillity” that stands beyond human politics. But the draft continually recalls “the cities of mankind,” “the works and ways of man,” and how “things are changed with tumult and with sound”; in other words, the scene brings to mind the Revolution and consequent European upheavals. As Cian Duffy puts it, within “the landscape’s emptiness […] the mountain’s true,

revolutionary 'voice' can be heard."[93] For all their apparent remoteness, Shelley's Alps are inscribed with political significance: not only the possibility of past and future Revolution, but also rival reactionary "codes of fraud and woe."[94] Moreover, the Alps were the scene of Napoleon's much mythologized crossing shortly after taking power and they, therefore, represent the start of his controversial impact on the Revolutionary legacy and European politics. For this reason, when "Mont Blanc" speaks of dwelling "power," it alludes to barely concluded events in recent history and their enduring effects.

Shelley acknowledges the impossibility of removing oneself from history in a letter to T. J. Hogg in August 1816:

> In considering the political events of the day I endeavour to divest my mind of temporary sensations, to consider them as already historical. This is difficult. Spite of ourselves the human beings which surround us infect us with their opinions: so much as to forbid us to be dispassionate observers of the questions arising out of the events of the age.[95]

Shelley implies that the process of thinking about contemporary events relies upon and produces particular understandings of history. In order to comprehend the present, one must consider it outside immediate "sensations" and place it within a deeper historical context. Yet, as Shelley says, no understanding of history is "dispassionate," as it is always influenced by the "opinions" of oneself and others. This opens up the possibility of "multiple histories," as each observer constructs his or her own unique perspective from personal experiences, reading, and reflection. But that very flexibility also facilitates a specific radical political agenda. For Shelley, as for Hobhouse, not all perspectives are equally valid. Some are "infectious," that is to say, corrupting and unwelcome, which is why he and other members of the circle explore radical (or Whiggish) alternatives which can reapply existing notions of freedom and revolution in the post-Waterloo context. In this respect, their understandings of politics are inseparably connected to ideas about Europe's past and future. For the Shelley–Byron circle, thinking about history, about political change, and about Europe are interrelated ideological processes.

Chapter 3

"The Elysium of Europe": Byron, Italy, and Europe, June 1817–July 1818

Introduction

This chapter focuses on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto IV as well as other works written during its period of composition, notably Hobhouse's *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold* (1818). I argue that it is not sufficient to see Canto IV strictly in terms of sympathy for (Italian) nationalism, since this belies the important transnational themes of travel, literary fame, and classical inheritance that preoccupy the poem. But neither is it enough to interpret the poem solely in terms of cosmopolitanism, since this underemphasizes its concrete local contexts, namely Italian locations and the English language. Instead, a new approach is needed which shows how the poem presents both the locally specific as well as shared histories and traditions that cross local boundaries. The answer, I suggest, lies in analyzing how the poem constructs ideas about Europe, since analysis of that concept must account for both the local and the transnational. First, I explore how Byron uses specific places in the Italian states (especially Rome and Venice) to frame discussions of European history—that is, events and institutions which connect European countries together. Rome, for example, inspires reflections on imperial conquest, the prospect of (republican) change, classical inheritance, and Christianity. In other words, it presents culture and politics which cross national borders and can be traced across periods. Byron's writing about Italy therefore articulates the interaction of local and transnational identity politics: he focuses on local rivalries and the uniqueness of individual locations,

but nevertheless assembles this into an idea of a federal Italy, united by culture and history despite its divisions. Italy, in turn, becomes a symbol for understanding modern Europe, particularly the ongoing struggles of monarchy and "freedom," and the spread of a shared religion and classical heritage. In this respect, *Childe Harold* constructs "Europe" and "Italy" simultaneously. Second, I note how Byron discusses travel, language, and literary texts in terms of both connection and separation: they can signify divisions between peoples and their different histories and traditions, but they can also facilitate new meetings of cultures, especially when texts are translated between languages, and individuals travel to unfamiliar places. Crucial too is the idea that writers can effect political change. For Byron, the construction of "Italy" and "Europe" is not merely an aesthetic process; it is also a contribution to actual political debate. This insistence on the political application of writing therefore foreshadows Byron's increasingly tangible participation in contemporary politics, especially his criticism of post-Vienna diplomacy and involvement in the Greek Revolution.

The "Dedication" to *Childe Harold IV* introduces many of these themes. Denying any distinction between the author and the protagonist ("the pilgrim"), Byron says "I had become weary of drawing a line which everyone seemed determined not to perceive, like the Chinese in Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, whom nobody would believe to be Chinese."[1] This is a significant analogy: Goldsmith's book comments on the idiosyncrasies of life in Britain by using the device of a Chinese traveler writing home. Byron, as I will show, is similarly interested in the perspectives afforded by familiar and foreign perception. However, he also combines the image of the "citizen of the world"—the traveler at home everywhere—with that of the pilgrim: the traveler searching for something specific, and who has a particular goal. In this respect, the journey described in the poem is both specific in intention and unconstrained by borders and local loyalties. In an important but under-cited essay, Bernard Beatty notes that a pilgrimage is both a celebration of specific particularity—a tour of a local "special claim"—and a wider exploration of shared spaces and traditions. The site of pilgrimage is unique and incomparable, but also represents the shared history and culture of a much wider constituency. For Beatty, this undermines any interpretation of *Childe Harold IV* as a straightforward celebration of local specificity and hence of Italian nationalism. Instead, it reveals the "paradoxes of nationalism": how nationalism is premised on the uniqueness of the local, but also "attaches unlimited value to time and place" to construct the wider idea of a national community.[2] But perhaps there is another way of seeing this. Rather than resulting in a "paradox," perhaps different particulars are integrated into a "European" register—as unique but connected contributions to a shared history. In other words, the language of "Europe" can help express the specificity of a place, or a

text, or a tradition, but can also see it in terms of its connections to other such places, traditions, and texts.

For example, in the "Dedication" a series of remarks focus on the particularity of Italian identity, opening with a quotation from Alfieri: "*La pianta uomo nasce più robusta in Italia che in qualunque altra terra*" (The plant man is born more robust in Italy than in any other land).[3] Byron names a number of Italians who "will serve to the present generation an honourable place in most of the departments of Arts and Science, and Belles Lettres [. . .] and in some the very highest—Europe—the World—has but one Canova." He praises "the facility of their acquisitions, the rapidity of their conceptions, the fire of their genius [and] their sense of beauty." Byron appears here to be celebrating a national identity—but, of course, he is partly constructing an overarching Italian cultural identity in order to unify peoples of different locations, governments, and dialects. What I want to suggest is that this foreshadows the development of a European register later in the poem: Byron identifies places, historical events, traditions, and texts which traverse state and cultural boundaries, even while they reside in a particular locale. Addressing Hobhouse, Byron contrasts the "melancholy dirge" of Roman laborers mourning Rome's decline with "the bacchanal roar of the songs of exultation still yelled from London taverns over the carnage of Mont St. Jean, and the betrayal of Genoa, of Italy, of France, and of the world, by men you have exposed" in *Letters During the Last Days*. Ostensibly framing a contrast between particular circumstances, this is also a passage about the interaction of European states: about Britain's interference in the affairs of others and also the transfer of imperial authority from ancient Rome to modern Britain. It is a passage about the power and oppression of certain states, but it also builds a web of European politics and influence which stretches across borders and periods. Later, Byron questions whether the Italian states have really gained anything from the post-Napoleonic "transfer of nations."[4] The phrase, of course, alludes to the diplomatic bartering initiated in Vienna. But it is also important, in this poem, to think of the cultural components of "nations"—specific texts, places, peoples—as being subject to "transfer": that is, not restricted to certain local applications, but used to construct wider, transnational, ideas, and identities.

Venice, Rome, Italy, Europe

Throughout *Childe Harold IV*, Byron talks in detail about specific places in the Italian states. But as well as remarking on the unique splendors of these places, he also uses them to reflect on European history, that is, events and

institutions which connect European countries together and expose their interrelations. An example begins the poem: "Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear, / The pleasant place of all festivity, / The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy!" (4.25–7). This passage celebrates the uniqueness of Venice, but also uses it to construct and exemplify wider Italian cultural practices. Note too the phrase "revel of the earth," which places Venice's singularity in a global context and suggests that its symbolic functions are not restricted to Italy alone: Venice represents the pinnacle of worldly festivity as well as celebratory Italian culture. Elsewhere in the poem, the implications of Venice's symbolisms are more specific:

> her daughters had their dowers
> From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
> Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
> In purple was she robed, and of her feast
> Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increas'd.
> (4.14–18)[5]

There are two significant points here. First, Venice is a place of confrontation with "the East": like Greece, Albania, and Gibraltar, it is a border-zone marking the separation, but also the close proximity, of European and non-European spaces. This is something which Byron emphasizes continuously in his writing of this period. In a "Fragment" on Venice, the speaker observes:

> The church of St Mark—which stands hard by
> With fretted pinnacles on high—
> And cupola and minaret—
> More like the mosque of orient lands.
> (lines 31–4)[6]

These lines portray Venice as a border-zone where Christian and Islamic cultures intermingle without becoming indistinct. "Venice: An Ode," however, associates the city with staunch opposition to Islamic incursion: its overseas conquests "restored the Cross, that from above / Hallow'd her sheltering banners, which incessant / Flew between earth and the unholy Cresent" (lines 113–16).[7] In *Childe Harold*, Venice is even called "Europe's bulwark 'gainst the Ottomite" (4.123), a phrase which makes the city both a frontier and the fulcrum of Europe's defense from the Turks. In all these examples, Byron builds a particularized idea of Venice as a place like no other, but also uses that locality to generalize about "the Orient" and "Europe." In this way, Byron constructs localized and European spaces from his reflections upon the significance of Venice.

Byron is not alone in taking this perspective. In his note to line 19 of *Childe Harold*, Hobhouse calls attention to Venetian dialect variations of Tasso sung by gondoliers, thereby identifying unique local traditions. Significantly though the stanza he chooses to amplify his point also mentions a collective Christian community pitting itself against non-Europeans:

> *Canto l'arme pietose, e 'l capitano*
> *Che 'l gran Sepolcro liberò di Cristo*
> *[. . .]*
> *E in van l'Inferno a lui s'oppose, e in vano*
> *S'armò d' Asia, e di Libia il popol misto*
>
> (I sing of the merciful arms and of the Chief
> Who freed the great Sepulcher of Christ
> . . .
> And in vain the Inferno opposed him, and in vain
> The mixed people of Asia and of Libya armed themselves).[8]

Hobhouse thus uses Venice and Tasso to articulate a local culture—albeit one under threat since the loss of Venice's independence under Napoleon—and a collective Christian-European culture defined by opposition to Africans and Asians. His Venice is a unique place, but also represents the edges of Europe, simultaneously constructing particularized and transnational identities. Similarly for William Stewart Rose, whom Byron met in Venice in September 1817,[9] the city is "a little world by itself, with arts of its own and manners of its own," but also a place of unfamiliar non-European experiences, for example, a climate "charged with all the venom of Africa."[10] In this respect, Venice represents both the expansive possibilities of encountering different cultures and rivalries generated by those same encounters. The poet Samuel Rogers, for instance, notes the "mosque like roof" of St Mark's Basilica and the interaction of "the turk, the greek & the polish Jew" in the pursuit of trade, but also sees Venice as a symbol of confrontation with (and victory over) "the East": St Mark's square has "two grand columns from Constantinople, one a Lion looking to the East, the seat of empire emblematical."[11] Similarly, William Berrian, in Venice at the same time as Byron, notes "the varying physiognomy and dress of so many different people": "Frenchman, Englishmen, Germans, Americans, Greeks and Turks."[12] Venice is a transnational place, but particular identities are also hardened as a result of those encounters, so that Berrian speaks of physical differences ("physiognomy"), as well as distinct fashions. For these writers therefore, Venice serves several interrelated functions: it

shows a cosmopolitan mixing of peoples, and it constructs specific identities, both on a local and national level, but also in shaping ideas about Christian-Europeans and their Muslim and Asian others.

Returning to *Childe Harold*, I now wish to discuss the second implication of the quotation with which I began this section. Byron says of Venice that "her daughters had their dowers / From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East / Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers / In purple was she robed, and of her feast / Monarchs partook" (4.14–18). These lines, with their contemplation of empire and the allure of monarchical power, recall recent historical events, particularly the actions of Napoleon: his abolition of the Venetian Republic in 1797; his famed excursion to Egypt; his construction of a vast empire from "the spoils" of separate states; and the irresistible lure of an imperial crown. Byron uses Venice to reflect on these events; the city becomes a kind of case study in the interpretation of European history. Later, Byron notes:

> The Suabian sued, and now the Austrian reigns—
> An Emperor tramples where an Emperor knelt,
> Kingdoms are shrunk to provinces, and chains
> Clank over sceptred cities; nations melt
> From power's high pinnacle.
>
> (4.100–4)

Byron alludes to the 1177 Peace of Venice, when the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I ended hostilities with the Pope, contrasting this curb on imperial ambition with Francis I of Austria's current reign over the city. Moreover, Venice's decline from glory symbolizes the practices of post-Vienna politics, where smaller states like Venice and Poland are sacrificed to the victorious powers. Venice therefore exemplifies the course of European history, especially the growth, decline, and rivalries of empires.

However, Venice is not only the perpetrator and victim of imperial power, it also symbolizes political freedom. Byron speaks of its "thirteen hundred years of freedom" and the Venetian "names no time nor tyranny can blight," "herself still free" (4.113, 126, 122). Indeed, he grants Venice a prominent role in the fight against tyrants. After mentioning how the Attic Muse helped the Athenians to find freedom from captivity, Byron addresses Venice, suggesting that "proud historic deeds" and "Thy love of Tasso, should have cut the knot / Which ties thee to thy tyrants" (4.146–9). Such inspiration continues to present-day Britain:

> and thy lot
> Is shameful to the nations,—most of all,
> Albion! to thee, the Ocean queen should not

Abandon Ocean's children; in the fall
Of Venice, think of thine.
(4.149–53)

These comments connect three states, separated by space and time, together into a continuous narrative about the struggle between liberty and tyranny. This is not a narrative of unambiguous progress or the inevitable triumph of liberty—after all, Byron alludes to the Athenians' defeat by Syracuse and the current subjection of Venice. Instead, he outlines a tradition of shared problems, equally comprehensible now as in ancient times by a common language of "freedom." Venice both echoes and prophecies other aspects of this connection, links which stretch across national and temporal boundaries, but which are not universal, as they are particular to the development of European history as Byron understands it.

Byron is not alone in associating Venice with freedom, or in using the city's history to draw political lessons for the present. In his notes to the poem, Hobhouse discourses at length on the wrongdoings of sovereigns, holding up Venice as a beacon of republican independence and describing the curtailment of Frederick I as a "triumph of liberty."[13] Similarly, John Moore's *A View of Society and Manners in Italy*, parts of which Byron read in Venice,[14] asserts that "the independence of Venice was not built on usurpation, nor cemented with blood, it was founded on the first law of human nature, and the undoubted rights of man." For Moore, "a hatred of tyranny" and a "love of liberty" inspired the city's foundation as "an asylum from the fury of Atilla"; its government subsequently reached "the highest degree of perfection" (although it has since become corrupt).[15] Of course, these opinions were far from original: Venice had long been admired as a model of civic virtue, since it apparently preserved the "balanced" constitution of republican Rome and foreshadowed the separation of powers in modern Britain.[16] As Beatty observes, many eighteenth-century authors define the idea of freedom "by all that is best in classical and European culture."[17] James Thomson's *Liberty* (1735–6), for example, traces the trajectory of liberty from ancient Greece, through the Roman republic and Renaissance Italy to modern Britain.[18] However, although Byron clearly works within this tradition, what makes his treatment of Venice more complex is the multiplicity of its different symbolic functions. Thomson constructs a smooth narrative in which the gradual triumph of liberty becomes ever more inevitable, but for Byron, Venice represents the interaction of many histories, political systems and potential futures. In "Venice: An Ode" he says:

Glory and Empire! once upon these towers
With Freedom—godlike Triad! how ye sate!

> The league of mightiest nation in those hours
> When Venice was an envy.
>
> (lines 101–4)

These lines acknowledge the multiple legacies of Venice: it represents both political freedom and the power of empires. It is a place of past glory, but also an exemplar of wider decline in Europe: "thirteen hundred years / Of wealth and glory turn'd to dust and tears"; "There is no hope for nations! [. . .] / The everlasting *to be* which *hath been* / Has taught us nought or little" ("Ode," 15–16, 59–60). It is used to celebrate the "harmless conquests" (113) of imperial activity, but also to condemn the "blindfold bondage" (70) of monarchical government. And, of course, it represents the potential salvation of republicanism, and the dissolution of those hopes: "The name of Commonwealth is past and gone [. . .] / Venice is crush'd" (125–7). Byron thus uses this rich interpretation of Venice's legacy to diagnose the complex politics of contemporary Europe, with its similar fluctuations between hopeful possibilities and eventual disappointments.

In these formulations, Venice is both a unique location and a transnational space. When the speaker of "Venice: An Ode" laments that "when thy marble walls / Are level with the waters, there shall be / A cry of nations" (1–3), he mourns the potential demise of a distinctive place, but also understands the city in terms of "the nations" collective grief. Venice's very uniqueness is what makes it valued by those other places, and in this sense, its individuality and its transnationality are interdependent. At the end of the poem, the speaker suggests that the United States inherits the failed political freedom of Venice and Britain: "Still one great clime, in full and free defiance, / Yet rears her crest, unconquer'd and sublime, / Above the far Atlantic!" (142–4). This is partly a nationalist point, but it also extends the familiar tradition of freedom across new boundaries to incorporate more states. In this respect, as well as representing various ideas about European politics, Venice is also a means to explore connections and contrasts with the extra-European world, interactions which are closely related to European notions of "freedom" and "tyranny." It is insightful to note how some contemporary reviews react to this complexity. Many choose to focus on a chosen theme, belying the complexity of Byron's writing. The *British Critic* sees in Venice's decline a lesson for British power, whereas the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Northern Star* understand *Childe Harold* as a straightforward defense of "the cause of Freedom."[19] Walter Scott's review for the *Quarterly*, however, offers more perceptive analysis. First, he recognizes Venice's ambiguity as a symbol of political liberty, noting that the city also produced "the most jealous aristocracy that ever existed." And second,,he critiques Byron's

apparent call for "free and independent nations," arguing that, if liberated from Austria, Venice would be unable to defend or support itself without recourse to worse tyrannical government. "What is to be wished for Italy," he says, "is the amalgamation of its petty states into one independent and well-governed kingdom, capable of asserting and maintaining her place among the nations of Europe."[20] In advocating a united Italy, Scott uses Venice as a base from which to construct wider states and forms of collective identity. Despite his different politics, Scott, like Byron, recognizes the complex symbolic resonance of Venice: it represents independence from monarchs, as well as oligarchical tyranny; the implementation of Revolutionary principles and the collapse of those same ideals. Most importantly, it is a unique location which also signifies wider Italian and European communities.

Many of these same issues are also important in the Byron circle's treatment of Rome, which makes use of an even wider array of interpretative registers, notably republicanism, imperialism, and Catholicism. In this respect, the circle's classicism is not based solely upon Hellenistic foundations, since it is indebted to, and complicated by, the rich ideological connotations of Roman history.[21] In *Childe Harold*, the narrator says: "Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul! / The orphans of the heart must turn to thee, / Lone mother of dead empires" (4.694–6). Rome's specificity is thus defined by its familial relations to other countries and "dead empires." Moreover, the narrator's declaration of particular attachment is complicated by his self-defined transnationalism: "I've taught me other tongues—and in strange eyes / Have made me not a stranger" (4.64–5). In this way, Rome is a home for cosmopolitans, its very uniqueness premised on its transnational legacies and appeal. Glossing these lines in his *Historical Illustrations*, Hobhouse calls Rome "the country of every man." Although he mentions the "local sanctity" of the place, he also says that classical education qualifies "the traveller of every nation for that citizenship which is again become [. . .] what it once was, the portion of the whole civilised world."[22] Hobhouse's book details at tremendous length the incomparable sights of the city, but Rome also symbolizes "the civilised world," constructing an imagined community which extends beyond Italy, while remaining grounded in European Christianity and classical culture.

Byron's treatment of Rome is distinguished from his writing on Venice by the prominence granted to religion:

> Parent of our Religion! whom the wide
> Nations have knelt to for the keys of heaven!
> Europe, repentant of her parricide,

> Shall yet redeem thee, and, all backward driven,
> Role the barbarian tide, and sue to be forgiven.
> (4.419–23)

Italy and Rome are cultural progenitors, the centerpieces of European religious tradition. But the implications are more complex: the lines also allude to religious divisions in Europe—the peoples who rebelled against Catholicism—as well as to former Christian unity and the prospect of redemption. In Italy, Europeans can find the means to reflect on their unanimity by acknowledging their common origin, but it also foregrounds the divisions and changes which are equally central to understanding European (religious) culture. Rome is the "Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods, / From Jove to Jesus" (4.1307–8). It is the holiest of sites "Since Zion's desolation" (4.1380–1), representing the development of Judeo-Christianity and its accommodation with classical history. The city thus symbolizes how faiths cross borders and unite disparate peoples and periods. But it also shows how those cultures are themselves changed by such transnational movements. Sometimes they overlay and replace one another, creating more complex traditions as indicated by the multifarious religious resonances of Rome; and sometimes they fragment into competition, as evidenced by the "parricide" of the Reformation.

A few of Byron's contemporaries also emphasize the importance of Rome and Christianity in understanding Europe. Hobhouse notes that as "the metropolis of Christianity," Rome had "tempted the ambition of every conqueror" and "sovereign of Europe," as if the pretensions of absolute power could only be conferred "on the banks of the Tyber." In this respect, Hobhouse argues that mastery of Europe has traditionally been understood in terms of Rome, a connection which continued to modern times when Napoleon crowned his son the King of Rome.[23] Hobhouse's antagonist John Chetwode Eustace uses Rome in a similar fashion.[24] In the preface to his *Classical Tour*, Eustace openly asserts his devout Roman Catholicism, making it central in his investigation of the classical past and its implicit lessons for modern government and political liberty.[25] In this way, the preface retrospectively invigorates a shared European culture in terms of religion and classical inheritance. Like Hobhouse's conquerors, Eustace authorizes his mastery of European classical history by confirming and celebrating his own devotion to Roman traditions.

However, such foregrounding of religious identity in Europe is not entirely uncontroversial. Jeremy Black emphasizes the importance of anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century British travel writing: tourists would often decry the autocracy, superstition, and clerical oppression of Catholic countries, inviting positive comparisons with the idyll of home. For some

moralists, travel itself was dangerous as it could expose impressionable people to the woes of "Popery."[26] For this reason, the *British Critic* objects strongly when Byron names Rome the "Parent of our Religion" on the grounds that it undermines the poet's religious and national loyalties: "had he condescended to have informed himself what the religion of his country was."[27] The reviewer tries to re-erect the national and religious boundaries which *Childe Harold*'s reflections on Rome and Venice seeks to complicate. Nor are these anti-Catholic remarks a sign of reactionary xenophobia. Even the radical Hobhouse abuses Catholicism as a corruption of early Christianity, which engages in "ridiculous" practices.[28] This succeeds in making Rome strange and otherly—no longer the symbol of a shared culture, it is now an alien and foreign place, wedded to religious superstition and despotism. Thomas Moore, visiting Italy in 1819, also notes the ambiguous role of Catholicism in radical politics. The "Liberals in Italy," he says, "dread the grant of emancipation to Catholics [in Britain] as it would give such a triumph to the papacy, their great object of their detestation." Moore goes on to remark on what "different colours a general question may receive from local interests."[29] In other words, apparently transnational issues—like the radical hopes for governmental reform—are often presented and interpreted in local terms. It is therefore necessary to remember the interaction of locality and transnationality in the Byron circle's writings: ideas about Rome have an import beyond their local setting, but the consequent reflections on European history and governance are still refracted through specific geographical and historical circumstances and connotations. Rome and Europe, in other words, help construct one another. In addition, Moore's comments show how Catholicism is a controversial political issue for writers of all persuasions, likely to evoke sectarian sentiments and accentuate ideas about (national) difference for a British readership. Byron's placement of Rome and Catholicism at the center of his understanding of Europe is therefore a somewhat daring strategy—one made all the more remarkable by the treatment of Catholicism in *Beppo*. Here, Catholicism is used to highlight the alien experience of life in Venice and Italy: "if your religion's Roman, / And you at Rome would do as Romans do, / According to the proverb,—although no man, / If foreign is oblig'd to fast" (lines 65–8). In *Beppo*, Catholic practices indicate the local specificity and unfamiliarity of the foreign, whereas in *Childe Harold*, they also stand for the potential unity of shared religious belief across Europe.

As with Venice, writing about Rome is also an opportunity to reflect on ideas about imperialism, liberty, and governance, both in the past and in contemporary Europe. Looking upon the Coliseum and thinking of its gladiatorial contests, the narrator of *Childe Harold* mourns the "young

barbarians" captured from the Danube and "Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday" (4.1263–9). Rome here is driven by its thirst for blood, both in terms of the contests themselves and the imperial expansion required to facilitate them. Yet, the poem also notes the transnationality of the Empire—the "buzz of eager nations" witnessing the fight at the Coliseum where "burning nations choked the ways" (4.1243, 1271). Byron explores the ways in which the empire both antagonizes and tries to erase borders between peoples; it spreads certain cultural practices which connect "nations" as well as the violence and coercion necessary to sustain it. And, of course, these reflections also pertain to recent history—the empire of Napoleonic France being replaced by the ambitions of other imperial powers. When Byron mentions the ancient conflict between Rome and Carthage, he does so using the modern terminology of "national" conflict, alluding to current problems in Europe: "such is the hate when warring nations meet!" (4.567). Likewise, the interpretation of ancient empires is overlaid with recent conflicts between nation-states: the past and the present are understood in terms of one another.

However, like Venice, Rome represents the (lost) opportunities of liberty. Byron mourns the death of Brutus and the days "when Rome was free" (4.730–8), a lament which alludes to the dawn of the Roman Empire, but also concerns the disintegration of liberal hopes during the restorations, especially renewed Austrian influence over the Italian states.[30] Later, he emphasizes the republican implications of this "freedom" by discussing powerful figures who rejected monarchy, namely Sulla, who resigned as dictator of the Roman Republic and Oliver Cromwell: "Sulla was first of victors; but our own / The sagest of usurpers, Cromwell" (4.757–8). Of course, these are not unambiguous examples: Sulla marched against the Senate and Cromwell assumed considerable personal power, so neither is a simplistic republican hero. Instead, Byron uses the complex legacies and connotations of Rome to debate the interaction of liberty and tyranny throughout European history. He thus asserts the endurance of "Freedom," which lives on like a fallen tree: "The tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind, / Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth, / But the sap lasts,—and still the seeds we find / Sown deep" (4.878–81). Yet, Rome also represents the extinction of those hopes:

> The field of freedom, faction, fame and blood:
> Here a proud people's passions were exhaled,
> From the first hour of empire in the bud
> To that when further worlds to conquer fail'd
> But long before has Freedom's face been veil'd.
> (4.1009–13)

These reflections on freedom and its discontents are grounded in the space of Rome, which facilitates the simultaneous consideration of different political themes and possibilities affecting both ancients and moderns. In the *Historical Illustrations*, Hobhouse tries to simplify the politics of the poem: "we have heard too much of the turbulence of the Roman democracy and of Augustan virtues. No civil tranquillity can compensate for that perpetual submission, not to laws but persons, which must be required from the subjects of the most limited monarchy."[31] As in the poem itself, Rome prompts reflections on modern politics, but Hobhouse's explications fail to acknowledge the full complexity of Byron's Rome: it is simultaneously a decaying and declining place of vanished glories and a living progenitor of cultural traditions and political possibilities which continue to inspire.

Of course, these ruminations are not unique to Byron or his circle. Stephen Cheeke notes the various "commonplaces" typical to visitors to Rome, including solemn reflections on fortune, on the transience and decay of power, and on "the continuity of past and present through the notion of an enduring legacy." These sentiments are clichés, but also offer "an experience that is somehow repeated or renewed [. . .] in a place 'common' to each visitor," thereby creating a transhistorical sense of community built though that familiarity.[32] Byron clearly works within a tradition, which sees in Rome the interplay of "poverty and squalor," the impermanence of greatness," and the "transfer of intellectual pre-eminence" to the present.[33] There is a political element to this too. As Malcolm Kelsall demonstrates, Byron applies to post-Napoleonic Europe traditional Whiggish arguments which combine faith in "the historical progress of liberty" with "pessimism about the contemporary scene" and which used the classics to explore the conflict between freedom and tyranny. In this way, *Childe Harold IV*'s "central intellectual problem" is to place modern politics—the Revolution, Napoleon, the restorations—within a familiar pattern: the "Roman theme of the rise and fall of liberty."[34]

With this in mind, it is instructive to look at a few other contemporary writings and guidebooks about Rome. For many of these texts, classicism "mandated a fair portion of the traveler's itinerary and guided his responses to many sights and cultural artefacts." The purpose of travel was to familiarize oneself with "the Classical Mind," a task which could be aided by visiting places associated with admired classical authors.[35] For John Moore, the attraction of Rome is determined mainly by "reading the classics, and the history of the ancient republic" while in Henry Coxe's guidebook, the landscape is "the seat of valour and the cradle of the sciences and the arts": it "awakens all those classical recollections which formed the delight of our youth."[36] Modern Italy is thus constructed in terms of the ancient past, and this has led some commentators to suggest that travelers of the period were

broadly uninterested in contemporary Italian politics. Jeremy Black identifies a retreat "into the past" in travelers' accounts of their journeys: tourists, he says, "knew little and cared less about [Italy's] current culture and society."[37] J. R. Hale even detects a political and aesthetic conservatism in contemporary guidebooks. Partly because older eighteenth-century texts were reprinted to meet the sudden demand after 1814, published guides tended to preserve much earlier aesthetic values, as well as focusing heavily on the classical past. According to Hale, "the greatest pleasure lay not in coming across the unexpected, but in a measured reaction to the familiar." In Italy, "every stone, every road had its historical association [...] a scene could not be fully appreciated unless the memory peopled it with illustrious shades" of ancient times.[38] These conventions would seem to suggest that a search for the past overwhelmed interest in the present for many contemporary tourists and their guidebooks.

It is possible, however, to exaggerate the extent to which travel books were disinterested in modern politics. Eustace's *Classical Tour* opens by stating that the object of his work is to "trace the resemblance between Modern and Ancient Italy, and to take for guides and companions in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the writers that preceded or adorned the first."[39] In other words, modernity and antiquity are mutually illuminating: Eustace is interested in the "resemblance" or correspondence between them. Rather than allowing the past to become fossilized, he promotes the relevance of classicism to nineteenth-century concerns, even seeing the past and modern politics in terms of one another. Indeed, his view of Roman governance is colored by his political views: his self-confessed sympathy for republicanism is motivated by "Liberty, the source of so many virtues" and "the general tendency of [republican] principles to the cause of freedom." These same qualities also inspire "the Commonwealth of England," which combines "the excellencies of all the ancient commonwealths, together with the advantages of the best form of monarchy." For Eustace therefore, ancient and modern systems of government operate according to analogous values, meaning that they can illuminate one another. Classical study confirms Eustace's Whig sensibilities: the English monarchy, like the Roman Republic, avoids the twin evils of "royal encroachment and popular frenzy."[40] A broadly similar process occurs in Henry Sass's *A Journey to Rome and Naples Performed in 1817*. Sass treats Rome in terms of the vanished past: "I am upon the spot—on the spot *only*—where it formerly stood—the illusion is dissipated [...] Rome, with all its greatness, has vanished from the earth." But the account is also a cause for reflection on modern politics: for example, he praises France for "improving Italy," not only in terms of roads, communication and security, but also "the general state of society." He also

discourses on political theory, speaks of a contract between the government and the governed, and hopes for the demise of despotic kings and emperors in favor of "the proper object of government": "the safety and happiness of the people."[41]

In this respect, Byron and his circle operate within existing modes of thought which connect Italian travel with modern politics and which assert the relevance of classical tradition to the contemporary world and its problems. However, what I wish to emphasize is how Byron uses Rome to represent ideas about Europe: the Roman exemplar stands for the whole, while at the same time, European events are understood according to Roman examples. In *Childe Harold*, therefore, Napoleon is described as an imitator of the Roman past, a "kind / Of bastard Caesar, following him of old / With steps unequal" (4.802–4). At stanza 145, the narrator paraphrases Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*: "'When stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand; / When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall; / And when Rome falls—the World'" (4.1297–9). Rome is here explicitly equated with the state of the (Eurocentric) world, and it is this evocative connection which allows the poem to proceed so frequently from discussions about specific places and events to generalizations about the course of history and modern Europe. At one point, for example, the narrator reflects on Napoleon's downfall:

> Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be,
> And Freedom find no champion and no child
> [. . .]
> Or must such minds be nourished in the wild,
> Deep in the unpruned forest, 'midst the roar
> Of cataracts, where nursing nature smiled
> On infant Washington? Has Earth no more
> Such seeds within her breast, or Europe no such shore?
> (4.856–64)

The discussion here expands to diagnose problems in contemporary Europe: the narrator says that French history since the Revolution has been "fatal" "To Freedom's cause, in every age and clime" (4.866–7), a statement which universalizes the post-Revolutionary legacy. This strategy allows Byron to talk about both specific locations and periods—ancient Rome, modern France—and generalize them into European themes about tyranny, republicanism, and the struggle for freedom. The idea of Europe is thus built upon these specifics, but the resultant implications are not restricted to them, and hence, it is possible to transfer ancient debates about despots, rebellion, and governance to the modern circumstances of Europe.

However, it is important to note that this construction of Europe remains grounded in the material and the specificity of certain spaces. Writing about the Coliseum, the narrator of *Childe Harold* says:

> Arches on arches! as it were that Rome,
> Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
> Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
> Her Coliseum stands.
>
> (4.1144–7)

In other words, the complex and contradictory components of Roman history are assembled together into a single edifice. This is a useful way to explain how Byron constructs his intricate idea of Rome, but it also indicates how Rome itself is a component in the construction of still larger concepts, namely Italy and Europe. Continuing the archaeological metaphors, the poem continues: "A ruin—yet what ruin! from its mass / Walls, palaces, half-cities, have been reared" (4.1279–80). To put it differently, the fragments of Rome supply the materials and inspiration for other social and cultural legacies. Rome helps build the structure of Byron's Europe: the struggles of monarchy, empire and freedom, the spread of a shared religion, and classical heritage and so on. It is both the product of these combinations, and a kind of model for wider European historical and political themes. James Buzard talks about the "symbolic" significance of particular places for nineteenth-century tourists in the definition of "culture." Quoting Coleridge's maxim on the picturesque—"where parts are seen and distinguished, but the whole is felt"—Buzard suggests that ideas about "foreign" cultures are fashioned from observation of its parts, so that a specific place gives evidence of the totality.[42] Rome is an especially complex case because its symbolisms also represent the familiarity of a shared culture. Not only is the city an assembly of constituent histories and legacies, but Rome is itself a "component" which gives evidence to a European culture. Byron engages in a kind of archaeological "layering," in which different pasts and potential futures are superimposed over one another to make shared spaces and communities. As Stephen Cheeke argues, these understandings are "produced by the fact of being present on the spot, where the hidden and buried connections of history become manifest, where the very knowledge of *inter*connection becomes possible through contemplation of one's own presence in a particular place."[43] In other words, layered constructions of communal European history are grounded in local particularity, and a reading of Byron's work must give equal consideration to both these factors.

In summary then, Byron partly memorializes a project for the Italian nation: he gathers "a set of literary and historical figures under the transcendent sign of a national 'spirit' ".[44] But this is not all. Italy is also:

> The master-mould of Nature's heavenly hand,
> Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,
> The beautiful, the brave—the lords of earth and sea,
>
> The commonwealth of kings, the men of Rome!
> And even since, and, now, fair Italy!
> Thou art the garden of the world, the home
> Of all art yields.
>
> (4.220–7)

The passage identifies the distinctiveness of Italy, but this cannot be equated with simplistic nationalism because Italy also serves as a "model" which has more extensive applicability. It is an exemplar and an ideal of universal artistic standards, as well as a special and unique location. In the language of one review of *Childe Harold*, Italy is the "Elysium of Europe": the abode of the illustrious dead so important to Europe's classical inheritance, but also a place which perfects and encapsulates the "ideal" of European culture.[45] The phrase "commonwealth of kings" is important too, because it alludes to enduring debates about government which have continued from antiquity to the post-Napoleonic period. But while the phrase partly implies rivalry, it also expresses a federal unity: it gathers the Italian states into a common unit. This shows how Byron also uses Italy, Rome, and Venice to frame ideas about Europe: the independence and exceptionality of these places is analyzed alongside those historical episodes and cultural traditions which connect them to others. Hobhouse expresses something similar when he says that "there is no country which can contend with Italy," but also notes the attractiveness of the region to "the pilgrims of united Europe." He acknowledges the "territorial divisions and subdivisions" in the states, but sees that local particularity in the context, not only of a collective Italy, but also of a "united" European culture, all countries being "the children of the same mother."[46] When Byron mentions the "genius of the place" (4.1039), the phrase therefore has a double implication. It refers not only to the qualities which make that location distinctive, but also to the etymologically related "genus" of the place; that is, the "common characteristics" which define the place's membership of an interconnected familial group.

It is important to recognize that these constructions of Italy and Europe contribute to existing lines of argument. Italian states had long been a

key component in "Whig philosophies of history," providing rich source material for the struggles of liberators against tyrants.[47] Furthermore, in the early nineteenth century, Italy had become a kind of proxy in British debates about the reorganization of Europe: "the Tories wanted reform to prevent revolution, the Whigs wanted Austrian influence checked, the more extreme liberals wanted revolution to expel the foreigner from Italian soil." Italy's association with British radical politics intensified in 1814 when Lord William Bentinck, contrary to British policy, encouraged the Genoese government to restore the radical 1797 constitution. After the Congress of Vienna, the so-called betrayal of Genoa made Italy a "popular liberal cause" for opponents of the government.[48] But this should not imply that interlocked understandings of Italy and Europe were standard or unremarkable. John Moore makes no attempt to theorize a unified Italy, preferring to concentrate on the dissonance between different states: Venice's rivalries with Lombardy and Padua, and Venice's subsequent role in disputes between Austria and France.[49] William Rose even denies the possibility of a united Italy, writing that such hopes were not widely held except by "a few young men," and that a federation could only occur under the coercion of a larger state with sufficient means "to bribe or force the others into union."[50]

In *The Beauty of Inflections*, Jerome McGann suggests that Byron "transforms Italy into a geo-political myth through which he can criticize the deficiencies of contemporary Europe on the one hand, and initiate more generous and vital forms of human civilization on the other."[51] Yet, his conception of Italy is also grounded in the material, making the resultant construction both "real" and "imagined." Furthermore, Byron also configures the ideas of Italy and Europe being critiqued, a process which continually evolves throughout his writing. At the end of *Childe Harold IV*, he mentions "Calpe's rock" (Gibraltar) and the "Symplegades," two islands in the Bosphorus (4.1574–6), returning to the spatial demarcations at the edges of Europe that had preoccupied him in Canto I. But at the moment of this familiar return, he also offers a new spatial reconceptualization of Europe:

> The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
> Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
> And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
> [. . .]
> Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
> Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
> Thy waters washed their power while they were free,
> And many a tyrant since; their shores obey

> The stranger, slave, or savage, their decay
> Has dried up realms to deserts—not so thou,
> Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play.
> (4.1621–36)

Rather than seeing Europe in terms of the conflicts, borders, and journeys of land, here the Mediterranean takes center stage as the space which connects temporarily distant empires and facilitates their interaction.[52] The sea symbolizes the mutability of Europe's history, but also the enduring concepts, conflicts, and encounters which remain crucial to understanding the ancient past and the culture and politics of the European present.

Language, Writing, Internationality

Childe Harold IV is not only grounded in specific locations, it is also shaped by a particular language. This is significant because Byron suggests that speakers of different languages possess distinct mentalities. Informing Richard Belgrave Hoppner about Italian customs, Byron says: "our modes of thinking and writing are so unutterably different that I can conceive no greater absurdity than attempting to make any approach between the English and Italian poetry of the present day."[53] Indeed, in *Childe Harold,* the narrator says "I twine / My hopes of being remembered in my line / With my land's language" (4.76–8), defining himself in terms of a native language and literary tradition. However, these demarcations of a literary-cultural border are not the full picture. The narrator also boasts that "I've taught me other tongues—and in strange eyes / Have made me not a stranger" (4.64–5), and he wonders whether his fame will echo "from out the temple where the dead / Are honoured by the nations" (4.83–4). This process of "honouring" is an international one, and an author's reputation is therefore not founded strictly upon one vernacular language. Instead, Byron is interested in how languages and literary texts can signify divisions, but can also connect peoples together by crafting new, transnational identities. Writing to the Italian translator of *Childe Harold*, Byron acknowledges the difficulties—even the impossibility—of transferring expressions perfectly from one idiom to another: "[I] return my thanks in my native language—that I may not do injustice to yours." But he also asserts the communicative possibilities of translation for transcending such divisions: "in common with every English reader of your language I feel highly indebted for the honour you have done to ours in your versions of the most Classical of our poets [Milton, Shakespeare, Otway] and I should

be [. . .] gratified by your continuance to give *them* to Italy."[54] For Byron, languages can divide speakers, but texts, literary traditions, and ideas can also cross those barriers as they are reformulated for different language-communities.

Byron discusses travel in a very similar way, as both strengthening and overcoming separations between peoples and spaces. In Venice, he rails against English tourists who "infect" Italy: "I abhor the nation—& the nation me [. . .] it may suffice to say—that if I met with any of the race in the beautiful parts of Switzerland—the most distant glimpse or aspect of them poisoned the whole scene." He stays at Venice, he claims, chiefly because "it is not one of their 'dens of thieves' and here they but pause and pass."[55] These harsh words set up boundaries between (national) cultures: the British are a foreign "tribe," invading the spaces of other peoples. But Byron also looks to escape such national particularity even as he purports to promote it. By denouncing the British so aggressively, he disassociates himself from them, thereby placing himself outside the nationalist boundaries that he simultaneously emphasizes so strongly. Incompetent and insensitive tourists such as the poet William Sotheby blunder "through Italy without a word of the language," but Byron implies that he himself has achieved a finer comprehension and a more subtle engagement with Italy and its cultures.[56] In this respect, Byron makes a case both for and against transnationalism, identifying how travel can harden perceptions of difference, but also seeing his own lifestyle as an exemplar of intercultural adaptability and as a rejection of parochialism. "I have lived much with Italians" and "I understand Italian and speak it (with more readiness than accuracy)" he informs Thomas Moore. This affords him a perspective unconstrained by monolingualism, while also allowing a more "authentic" local encounter with the particularities of Venetian and Italian life.[57] For this reason, Byron describes his travel in Italy in terms of both cosmopolitanism and a localized attachment to specific places. In Venice, "I have books—a decent establishment—a fine country—a language which I prefer—most of the amusements & conveniences of life—as much of society as I choose to take."[58] This is not simply a case of reveling in a newfound rootlessness, because Byron also takes pride in a new place and its unique attractions. For Byron, travel creates and shapes new local associations even as it disrupts other localisms, and it is necessary to understand his travel writing in terms of attachment to specific places, transnational opportunities, and their consequent tensions. When Byron reports his participation in a *conversazione* to Moore, he emphasizes the cosmopolitan mix of people in attendance, "a motley crew of Austrians, Germans, noble Venetians, foreigners," but he also speaks of Britain as "our" country, thus identifying a homeland for himself. By including Moore in this community, he

complicates matters still further; he goes on to call Moore's native Ireland "your" country and emphasizes its distinctiveness from the other British Isles.[59] He thus grants Moore a localized identity, while also drawing him into an (inter)national community of which they are both a part.

In making these statements, Byron is, of course, tapping into long-standing views of travel as a patriotic exercise in bolstering national pride and as an opportunity for transnational encounter. As Buzard writes, the Grand Tour "could broaden one's horizons, making a 'citizen of the world'; or it could make one a better citizen at home, confirming the superiority of British social arrangements over those found elsewhere."[60] John Moore celebrates the first possibility, suggesting that "the reciprocal exchange of good offices with those whom he considered as enemies" will help a young man look "beyond the limits of his own country." "Seas, mountains, rivers," Moore continues "are *geographical* boundaries, [which] never limited the good-will or esteem of one liberal mind," constructing a transnational imagined community of polite manners.[61] Coxe also advises that a traveler should "avoid one's own countrymen" and "take no English carriage or servants" in order to divest himself of national prejudices and partisan comparisons. Instead, "a traveller should never interfere with the received opinion of the country where he is a stranger"; he should become less attentive to cultural differences in order to gain the most from the trip.[62] But for Samuel Rogers, even though travel can help "our prejudices [to] leave us," this new-found worldliness should be channeled to a patriotic purpose: "must we not return better citizens than we went? [. . .] for the more we become acquainted with the institutions of other countries, the more highly we must value our own." According to Rogers, cosmopolitanism itself is a patriotic instrument.[63] William Rose cannot find even this consolation as he details the frustrating experiences of life away from home. He focuses especially on problems crossing borders: "informalities" in his passport and prejudice "against the English" prevent him from moving around freely; border-sentries—"the guardians of the frontier"—charge extortionate fees "on the grounds that we were foreigners." Rose's travels outline the existence of bordered national spaces, and even the act of crossing those borders reminds the traveler of his outsider status. Perhaps influenced by these inconveniences, Rose's own assumptions contribute to the policing of cultural boundaries: he supports protectionism "for the purpose of encouraging national industry," and also remarks on the "superior order of the English people."[64] Moore's experiences were not necessarily unusual. Since the 1790s—and certainly since the Napoleonic wars—a modern passport system had developed in Britain, France, and Germany "which imposed a new type of state control on travel and introduced a new administrative distinction between citizens and aliens." Motivated mainly

by "fears of external military threat and of subversion," as well as indicating greater centralized authority, these new procedures cemented a legal distinction between locals "who did not need permits, and 'foreigners' from outside the district, who did."[65] In the Italian states, border controls could be onerous: a relatively short journey from the Simplon Pass to Florence via Bologna, would involve at least six passport and customs stops, not counting the impounding of papers in exchange for residence permits at cities.[66] Often, however, "rank and status" remained "much more important than nationality" in obtaining papers and permitting passage—perhaps explaining why Byron never complains about such routine problems despite his and Rose's similar itineraries.[67]

Most interesting, however, are travel books' observations on the divisive and communicative possibilities of travel. Henry Sass, another traveler in Italy in 1817, suggests that the visitor abroad "should endeavour to divest himself if all prejudice, that he may relate what he sees with impunity." But even he cannot resist "force of habit," indulging in rather absurd stereotyping: "there is a neatness and cleanliness in the French [. . .] they are greatly superior to the Italians, who are in general very filthy [. . .] The French are lively and industrious: the Italians [. . .] extremely indolent."[68] James Sloan, who toured the Italian states in 1816–17, distinguishes between "national characters" with a comparable aggressiveness: "we are too apt to confound in one general idea the Italian and the French character," he says. "The principle of vanity" is at the root of French conduct, while Italians are undone by "indolence" and "effeminacy." However, Sloan also draws these divisive denunciations together to form collective identities. He suggests that the Italian peoples have a "uniform aspect," and that this precipitates a unified state; he even argues that a federal Italy might be "a respectable and efficient member" of the "European commonwealth." Sloan therefore articulates the potential for a community beyond the regional characteristics that preoccupy his observations. In some respects, however, his notion of a "European commonwealth" merely develops the implications of his focus on an Italian common character. Like his construction of "Italy," this idea of Europe gathers regional localisms into a larger identity which remains defined by specific spaces and histories. Sloan's ideas about Europe and distinct nations are interrelated because they are founded on similar principles and assumptions: "like all the old governments of Europe," he generalizes, "[Austria] is pregnant with abuses and stands in need of reform."[69]

What interests me here is how these perspectives on regional and collective identities shape ideas about Europe as a place divided by contrasts, but which still retains shared traditions, texts, and places. For Byron, foreign places are different and unique, but are also transnationally constructed.

On visiting Verona, for example, he says that Shakespeare "has done more for [the city] that it ever did for itself. They still pretend to show, I believe, the 'tomb of the Capulets.'"[70] Verona here presents itself in terms of the foreign imagination, and it is thus understood in terms of its transnational representations. An idea of pilgrimage is at work too: Verona's very uniqueness is founded upon its cross-border appeal and its veneration by traveling foreigners. A similar process occurs in *Childe Harold IV* when Venice reminds the narrator of "Shylock and the Moor, / And Pierre" (4.33–4), that is, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. Later on, he notes that "Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art, / Had stamp'd her image in me" (4.158–9); his expectations of Venice are shaped by literary representations of the city in other languages. In this way, Byron constructs not just local and European spaces, but also European writing and writers. These writers themselves formulate ideas about Europe, but are also part of those formulations in the sense of belonging to a shared culture not restricted by national or linguistic boundaries. Byron values certain individuals and their work as symbols of their locale and for having wider influence beyond those boundaries.

In *Childe Harold*, for instance, the narrator laments that Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio are not commemorated locally: "have their country's marbles nought to say? / Could not her quarries furnish forth one bust?" (4.502–3). Byron tries to revitalize these figures as local heroes, but he also reflects on how they transcend parochial connections: "the crown / Which Petrarch's laureate brow supremely wore, / Upon a far and foreign soil had grown" (4.510–12). Byron comments on how Petrarch established Italian as a literary language, thus contributing to an idea of Italian community—"He arose / To raise a language, and his land reclaim / From the dull yoke of her barbaric foes" (4.266–8). But Hobhouse's note reminds us that this is not a straightforward assertion. Petrarch is identified with "the country where he was born [Florence], but where he would not live"; he had an "aversion" for his "native country." Hobhouse presents the poet as a figure on the borders, as an exile and a wanderer between city-states, flitting between Rome, Padua, Parma, and Venice. Petrarch thus highlights the fractious rivalries and local pride of the Italian states, as well as the possibility of traversing those divides. Indeed, Hobhouse's cataloguing of memorials to Petrarch in various cities indicates both aspects of the poet's symbolic significance. Hobhouse's note on Boccaccio similarly complicates a "nationalist poetics" by esteeming him as a European figure. Like Petrarch, he "founded, or certainly fixed, a new language," but he also transmitted the "science and poetry of Greece" to Italy and was esteemed "by every polite court in Europe."[71] Byron and Hobhouse are interested in the transnational importance of these authors without losing

sight of their local contexts. Byron calls Dante "the southern Scott" (4.357) and Walter Scott himself "the Ariosto of the North" on the grounds that his themes—"chivalry, war & love"—resemble those if the Italian poet. Clarifying his remark to Murray, Byron denies that this is a "sad *provincial* eulogy"; instead, the comment offers an appreciation of Scott which goes beyond provinciality, while simultaneously remaining rooted in it: Scott's poems speak particularly to "*all countries* that are *not* in the South."[72] In one of his own notes to *Childe Harold*, Byron takes this a stage further still, suggesting that authors somehow inhabit a world beyond age, nation, and gender: "writers of all ages and nations, are, as it were associated in a world of their own," where "the individual will gradually disappear" and the distinctions of gender are unimportant ("the dead have no sex").[73] Unlike his other comments, Byron proposes that writers escape their circumstances of particularity—he moves toward an idea of universality which, as I argue in Chapter 5, is a central part of Percy Shelley's notions of both authorship and Europe.

All of this owes much to the eighteenth-century notion of the *voyage littéraire*, in which a cultured tourist would visit antiquities, memorial sites, and living scholars in order to assert his or her membership of an international intellectual community.[74] Indeed, in his work of this period, Byron presents himself as a transnational author, thereby associating himself with admired writers of the past and present. *Childe Harold IV* originally appeared with two other poems written in early 1817. One is a translation from the poet Jacopo Vittorelli, the other is "A Very Mournful Ballad on the Siege and Conquest of Alhama" which describes a confrontation between Christians and Muslims. The latter purports to be a translation from Arabic source material, although McGann conjectures that Byron's source material was more likely Spanish; either way, it "was unknown to English readers before Byron's translation."[75] In this respect, the poem narrates a cultural conflict but is simultaneously an example of cultural transmission. In his note to the poem, Byron says that "it was forbidden to be sung by the Moors, on pain of death, within Granada." He moves the poem beyond this super-specific context which details its circumstances of utterance and allows it to be comprehended more widely, without losing sight of its particular connotations. In this way, he produces works which combine materials from different languages and traditions for a new readership.[76] Stephen Cheeke suggests that Byron's work is in part "an exploration of the strange process of acculturation and translation." *The Prophecy of Dante*, for example, employs Dante himself as the speaker and this "double-voice" represents "intertextual relationships in European literature." The work is both "an English poem disguised as an Italian poem" and "an Italian poem disguised as an English poem"; it crafts an

"Anglo-Italian" perspective which crosses national borders, however much the poem also champions hopes for Italian unity: "What is there wanting then to set thee free, / […] Her sons, may do this with one deed—Unite" (Canto 2, lines 142–5).[77]

Beppo is an important part of Byron's transnational poetics too, especially when seen as a response to John Hookam Frere's *Whistlecraft* (1818). That work comically trumpets a national agenda. "I think that Poets (whether Whig or Tory)," says the narrator, "Should study to promote their nation's glory." He therefore wishes that "I could write a book / Such as all English people might peruse" and which could "raise the nation's spirits."[78] Frere's poem is important, not simply for influencing Byron's subsequent comic work, but also for "adapting an Italian medley style in *ottava rima* to English verse."[79] In other words, this satirical *Specimen of an Intended National Work* must be understood in terms of its transnationality. Similarly, *Beppo* bases much of its comedy on comparisons between English and foreign cultural practices: "Venice" says the epigraph, "was then what *Paris* is *now*—the seat of all dissoluteness." The narrator talks about how "countries of the Catholic persuasion" have different recreations and morals, as if addressing a hopelessly parochial English readership: "within the Alps," for example, a woman is permitted "to have *two* men" (lines 280–2). However, this easy demarcation of cultural borders is not straightforward. Sometimes, the narrator talks about particularly Venetian practices—gondoliers, masked balls, and the like being especially suited for assignations impossible elsewhere. But sometimes he identifies wider regions for comparisons with the London and English social scene: the area "from Venice to Verona," the Italian states generally, Catholic countries *en mass*, or even all places south of the Alps (lines 129–33, 280–2, 322–8, 343–4). The scope of the poem's local attachments and identifications is thus more complex than it first appears to be; it overlays a number of different civil, regional, national, and religious identities, showing how these can all coexist in a specific place (in this case Venice), and how that place cannot be defined or compartmentalized by one such identity in isolation. Indeed, the poem shows Venice to be place of cultural contact, where the unique masked celebrations reflect the cosmopolitanism of the city: "Turks and Jews […] / Greeks, Romans, Yankee-doodles and Hindoos" (18–20). Furthermore, the poem's plot concerns a man who moves across borders and who is defined by his cosmopolitan array of local attachments and guises. Beppo holds multiple identities simultaneously, able to alternate between Turkish and Christian appearances and forms of conduct. For his wife Laura, he is at once one of "us" and "them": "Are you really, truly now a Turk? […] / Is't true they use their fingers for a fork?" (729–31). In other words, particular identities and places are fluid; cultural boundaries, while

never negligible, are established only to be overturned or complicated. The local and the transnational are implicated within one another.

Many contemporary reviews do not pick up on this complexity and instead denounce the lack of explicit patriotism. The *British Review* worries about a growing "denationalising spirit" and suggests that *Beppo*, with its flippancy and foreign setting, undermines the support structures of "our nationality and our morality." "We dread an amalgamation with the Continent" and "the contagion of French or Italian manners," the review thunders, treating the poem's transnationalism as a kind of cultural invasion.[80] The same reviewer critiques *Childe Harold IV* for "injuriously comparing the society, government, laws, and usages of our own country, with the rights, privileges and immunities of other nations, licensed by ignorance and superstition."[81] To put it differently, the poem undermines British national identity by promoting other states, although there is a slight difference between this position and that of the *Beppo* review. Whereas that piece is concerned about national "corruption," the reviewer here is exercised by unflattering comparisons between essentially stable national identities. The *Literary Gazette* even objects to the use of classical allusions: "it ill becomes Lord Byron, or any Englishman, to exalt the melancholy dirges of modern Romans for the loss of independence" given that "Waterloo, a victory glorious to Britain did more for the independence of mankind" than "millions of years" of Italian efforts could ever achieve.[82] There is, of course, an irony in this condemnation: the reviewer's determination to assert the uniqueness of Britain tips over into universalist assumptions, whereby the country's particular advantages and achievements are applicable to the whole world—in other words, beyond the borders that he wants to make impassable.

However, not all contemporary views were so harsh. John Wilson's review of *Childe Harold* compares Byron with Rousseau, another popular author to whom "the spirits of men, from one end of Europe to the other," had turned. Rousseau, like Byron, "filled his works with expressions of his own character," and these insights "commanded and enforced a profound and universal sympathy, by proving that all mankind [. . .] the lofty and the low, the strongest and the frailest, are linked together by the bonds of a common but inscrutable nature."[83] In other words, what makes Rousseau and Byron attractive to readers across Europe—what makes them "European" authors—is the way in which they capture both the universal and the particular: they write about experiences which are unique and personal, but which also tap into a shared common nature. This is the key to their European appeal, since the idea of European culture is similarly dependent on unique, shared traditions, and identities that extend beyond national or state borders. "A great poet," says Wilson, is "free and

unconfined," ranging "over the earth and the societies of men." He thus praises Byron for refusing to be constrained by (national) place or history, though this does not distract from *Childe Harold*'s precise circumstances among "the august fabrics of the genius of England." Still more interestingly, he sees this as part of a trend: "the Italian, Grecian, Peninsular, Ionian and Ottoman feeling which pervades *Childe Harold* [...] was not first brought upon the English mind by the power of that genius, but was there already in great force and activity," part of "the general motion of the mind of that society."[84] This tries to locate Byron within existing traditions of thought about Europe, politics, and international "feeling," although aside from the comparison with Rousseau, Wilson does not detail the trajectory of this modern pattern.

Why, then, is the Byron circle so interested in questions of national identity at this time? And why does Wilson identify this interest as part of a broader cultural trend? A clue can be found, I think, in one of Byron's notes to *Childe Harold* which mentions Germaine de Staël. When Byron argues that authors inhabit a world beyond age, gender, and nation, his comments have a specific context because they feature in a passage praising Staël, especially her novel *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807). Similarly, Hobhouse's conception of a transnational literature in *Historical Illustrations* bears evidence of Staël's influence. In the "Essay on the Present Literature of Italy" which concludes the volume, Hobhouse argues that modern writers have been inspired by "the most extraordinary change [...] that had ever affected the moral or political world": "the great convulsions which shook not only 'mightiest monarchs', but also the mind of man, in all the countries of Europe."[85] In other words, Italian literature is comprehensible only in a European context—its specific development is determined by nonlocal events. Later, Hobhouse makes explicit reference to Staël's theory of literature and its European contexts:

> A great question at the moment divides the learned world in Italy into the partisans of classical poetry, and of the poetry of romance. The first, of course, range Homer in the front of the battle; and the others, who have adopted the division of Madame de Staël, and talk of a literature of the North, and a literature of the South, have still the courage to depend upon Ossian for their principal champion.[86]

Hobhouse alludes to Staël's *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (*Literature Considered in Relation to Social Institutions*) (1800). This work examines the relationship between literature and its geographical, political, and social contexts; most notably, it distinguishes between the literature of Mediterranean countries,

especially Greece and Rome (the South) and northern Europe. Her thesis has a nationalist element in that it seeks to identify not only characteristic traits of particular nations and their writings, but it also constructs supranational categories—North, South—which are not curtailed by state boundaries. Staël had applied these ideas more specifically to the Italian context in her essay "*De l'esprit des traductions*" (1816). This essay in part asserts the special qualities of certain languages and countries: "*Il faut que toutes les nations aient un principe actif d'intérêt [...] Les Italiens doivent se faire remarquer par la littérature et les beaux-arts*" (It is necessary that all nations have an active principle of interest...The Italians must make themselves remarkable for literature and fine arts).[87] In particular, says Staël, Italian is the most suitable language for conveying the subtleties and continuing the traditions of Homeric Greek. However, she also champions the possibilities of translation: "*Il n'y a pas de plus éminent service à rendre a la littérature, que de transporter d'une langue à l'autre les chefs-d'oeuvres de l'esprit humain.*" (There is no more eminent service to give back to literature than to transport the masterpieces of the human spirit from one language to another). Translation can contribute to a "*circulation des idées*," and she recommends that Italian intellectuals busy themselves with translation from English and German, "*non pour emprunter, mais pour connaître*" (not to borrow, but to know [with the implication of "meet"]).[88] A. W. Schlegel, for example, has translated Shakespeare with "exactitude" and "inspiration" to create a new literature equally grounded in its German language and English source material. Staël advocates a transnational literature facilitated through translation, and by alluding to her ideas, Hobhouse intervenes in a very current controversy. Giacomo Leopardi, Ugo Foscolo, and others, in direct response to Staël, denied that Italian literature needed foreign influence and asserted the strength of its native traditions.[89] Hobhouse's mention of Staël, as well as his professed expertise in Italian literature, drew him further into this debate; Ludovico di Breme, "a man of some prominence in Italian letters," even wrote to express dissatisfaction with the essay's treatment of the dispute.[90]

Although Staël's essay had reignited an immediate interest in national and transnational literature, such ideas had long been a part of her thought, especially in the influential and successful *Corinne*. This novel, says John Isbell, contains the first appearance of the word "*nationalité*," which makes it stand at the forefront of "modern nationalism."[91] Staël pioneered what *Blackwood's Magazine* called in 1818 "the art of analysing the spirit of nations."[92] Yet, the novel also complicates these national identities. Corinne herself is a "symbol of Italian culture and history," but her Anglo-Italian heritage and mastery of many languages makes her exemplify a "cosmopolitan ideal." For Staël, "the vitality of each European nation depends

upon the preservation of its cultural identity as well as its acceptance of creative stimuli from other cultures." Art—for example, Corinne's Italian translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, itself sourced from Italian materials—is a "hybrid" of languages and literary traditions.[93] In this way, *Corinne* makes a case for both nationalism and transnationalism. On the one hand, "*l'esprit et l'imagination se plaisent dans les différences qui caractérisent les nations*" (the mind and imagination delight in the differences which characterize nations). And on the other, "*qu'un homme qui sait quatre langues vaut quatre hommes*" (a man who knows four languages is worth four men), since multilingualism can open up "*une nouvelle sphère d'idées*" (a new sphere of ideas).[94] For Pierre Macherey, *Corinne* is "a celebration of a cosmopolitan culture which can transmit across frontiers the characteristic values of quite alien sensibilities: those values complement one another, mingle without merging and project their values outwardly without renouncing the particular that constitutes them [...] A new culture is born after having undergone the ordeal of a linguistic [...] migration."[95]

All this is especially important due to the close links that scholars have identified between *Corinne* and *Childe Harold IV*. McGann suggests that Byron's Roman stanzas are "written in conscious recollection" of the equivalent Roman chapters in *Corinne*.[96] The poem therefore embodies its own theories about transnational authors and culture, by transfiguring the concerns and approaches of another text into a new language. Joanne Wilkes identifies even more precise parallels. Staël originally translated a sonnet by Vincenzo da Filicaia into French for inclusion in *Corinne*, although she eventually left it out for fear of censorship given that the poem laments Italy's vulnerability to attack—a charged point when the states were under French rule. It is this same sonnet that Byron adapted into English for stanzas 42–3 of *Childe Harold IV* ("Italia, oh Italia"). Both texts comment on the Rome's ruins, its "political eclipse," Europe's "cultural debt to Italy," and both hope for the eventual independence of the Italian states. There are even parallels in the way that they represent St Peter's: "in both texts, St Peter's is portrayed as incomparable as a man-made structure, to the extent that it seems to have been created by nature rather than by human beings."[97] *Corinne* and *Childe Harold* are similarly interested in the interaction of *nationalité* and *mobilité* across (national) cultures: they write of the experiences of exile from one's homeland and the strangeness of the unfamiliar; but also about the interaction and mingling of shared cultures. The difference between them, says Wilkes, is that Staël highlights the suffering and "conflicting aspects" resulting from Corinne's dual heritage, whereas for Byron, "*mobilité*" is the "capacity to adapt easily to the demands of different social environments, a 'playing of parts'" rather than "a sign of inner depth."[98] In Byron's case, however, this might imply a certain superficiality

to what is actually a sustained and complex interest in (trans)nationality and acculturation. What I wish to stress, therefore, is that Byron and Staël are equally interested in national and transnational perspectives and identities, and that ideas about Europe stem from this interaction. "Europe" depends on the specificity of places and identities, but also evokes the complexities of cultural connections and rivalries. Byron's and Staël's construction of European culture, literature, travel, and so on encompasses both these aspects; their Europe is comprised of unique and commonly shared cultures which are interconnected yet regionally divisible.

These issues also have a political application. In *Childe Harold*, Byron emphasizes the tangible role paid by poets in the struggles for liberty. "Thy love of Tasso," he tells the Venetian people, "should have cut the knot / Which ties thee to thy tyrants" (4.148–9). In *The Lament of Tasso*, written in April 1817, Tasso the narrator predicts the demise of tyranny and upholds himself as the symbol of resistance:

> I make
> A future temple of my present cell,
> Which nations yet shall visit for my sake
> While thou, Ferrera! when no longer dwell
> The dual chiefs within thee, shalt fall down,
> And crumbling piecemeal view thy hearthless halls,
> A poet's wreath shall be thine only crown,
> A poet's dungeon thy most far renown.
> (lines 219–26)

Byron's Tasso denounces local corruption, but he also sees himself as representing a wider resistance to despotism which extends beyond his specific location and will be recognized by the "nations." For Byron, poets are instruments of political reform—a tradition which he participates in himself by writing such calls to arms. Hobhouse also argues for a reciprocal relationship between literature and politics. Literary production, he says, is shaped by political history, especially experiences of revolution, tyranny, and invasion: "the frequent domestic revolutions, the repeated corruptions, the arms and arts of strangers, succeeding each other rapidly and imperceptibly, and bringing with them new laws, and manners, have occasioned in Italy more vicissitudes than are to be found in the literature of any other country."[99] However, as well as being affected by politics, writers can also orchestrate political change. Hobhouse identifies past and present authors who have contributed to the cause of European freedom: Boccaccio is a "republican, philosopher and free man"; Machiavelli is a "libertine"; Alfieri a "bard of freedom"; and Tasso possesses a "love of

liberty."[100] In a note to *Childe Harold*, Hobhouse says that Machiavelli's "memory was persecuted as his life had been for an attachment to liberty, incompatible with the new system of despotism."[101] He turns Machiavelli into a symbol of contemporary causes; his politics are reinterpreted to match Hobhouse's own preferences for non-monarchical, non-hereditary forms of republican government. Writers, Hobhouse wants to emphasize, are radical political agents who can reshape the "revolutions" of European history as much as they are affected by them. These ideas are important as reminders that, for the Shelley–Byron circle, constructions of Europe have explicitly political connotations and that literary works can have tangible political consequences. As I shall argue in the following chapters, these assumptions become more crucial as the poets' careers develop. For Percy Shelley, writing about Europe is inseparably connected to ideas about revolution and radical change. And for Byron, the prospect of a new and different Europe is central to his skepticism of post-Vienna politics and to his involvement in the Greek War of Independence.