Byron and Hobby-O

Byron and Hobby-O:
Lord Byron's Relationship with John Cam Hobhouse

By

Peter Cochran

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ABBREVIATIONS

BB: *Byron's Bulldog, The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron*, ed. Peter W. Graham, Ohio 1984

Berg: Four volumes of Hobhouse's diary, New York Public Library, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

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

BoA: Byron, *The Bride of Abydos*

Burnett: *The Rise and Fall of a Regency Dandy The Life and Times of Scrope Berdmore Davies*, by T.A.J.Burnett, John Murray 1981

Camporesi: *Ludovico di Breme, Lettere*, ed. Pietro Camporesi, Einaudi 1966

CHP: Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

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

CPW: *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 Vols Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980-93

Collective Wisdom: *The Collective Wisdom; or, Sights and Sketches in the Chapel of St. Stephen; containing a Bird's Eye View, with Characters and Cuts of John Cam Hobhouse, Peter Moore, and Richard Martin ESQRS, M.P's* (Knight and Lacey, London 1824)

DJ: Byron, *Don Juan*

Grierson: *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H.J.C. Grierson, Constable 1932

Journey: *A Journey through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey to Constantinople during the Years 1809-1810*, by John Cam Hobhouse, James Cawthorne 1813: second edition

Joyce: *My Friend H*, by Michael Joyce, John Murray 1948

KSR Keats-Shelley Review

LBLI: *Lord Byron's Life in Italy*, by Teresa Guiccioli, trans. Rees, ed. Cochran, AUP Delaware, 2005

LBW: Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Wife* (Macdonald 1962).

LLB: *The Late Lord Byron*, by Doris Langley Moore, John Murray 1961

Letters: *The Substance of some Letters from Paris*, by John Cam Hobhouse, James Ridgeway 1816
LJ: *The Works of Lord Byron, Letters and Journals*, ed. R. E. Prothero, 6 vols. London: John Murray, 1898-1901
LJM: *The Letters of John Murray to Lord Byron,* ed. Andrew Nicholson, Liverpool University Press, 2007
Marchand: *Byron: A Biography*, by Leslie A. Marchand, 3 vols Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1957
Medwin: *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron,* ed. Lovell, Princeton 1966
Mistake: *A Trifling Mistake in Thomas Lord Erskine's recent Preface. Shortly noticed and respectfully corrected in a Letter to his Lordship, by the author of the "Defence of the People"*, ed. Malcolm Kelsall, Regency Reprints, Cardiff 1984
Moore, *Journal: The Journal of Thomas Moore,* ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 6 vols. Delaware 1983-91
Moore, *Letters*: *The Letters of Thomas Moore,* ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 2 vols. Oxford 1964
NLS: National Library of Scotland
RLL: *Recollections of a Long Life*, by Lord Broughton, ed. Lady Dorchester, 6 vols. London: John Murray, 1909–11
RR: *The Romantics Reviewed*, ed. Donald H. Reiman, Garland, 1972
Some Account: *Some Account of a Long Life* (sic on title page: on cover, *Recollections of a Long Life*) 5 vols. 1865
Stocking: *The Claire Clairmont Correspondence*. Ed. Stocking, Marion Kingston. 2 vols. Baltimore and London. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995
Travels: *Travels in Albania and other Provinces of Turkey in 1809 and 1810*, by the Right Honourable Lord Broughton G.C.B., John Murray 1855
Zegger: *John Cam Hobhouse: A Political Life, 1819-1852*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia 1973

Long poems by Byron are quoted by Canto, Stanza and Line, thus: VIII, 23, 2.

Abbreviations in the notes

B.:	Byron.
Berg 1, 2, 3 and 4:	Broughton Holograph Diaries, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
H.:	Hobhouse.

EDITORIAL:
HOBHOUSE'S DIARY

I believe it would take five people about two years, working full-time, to read and transcribe all of Hobhouse's diary, from 1809 to 1865. I have transcribed from 1809 to 1824, paraphrasing where I thought the original insufficiently interesting, and it has taken nineteen years of intermittent work. I have skim-read from 1824 to 1842. I apologise for the fact that there may be undiscovered bits of useful information about Byron and Hobhouse hidden in the twenty-eight-odd volumes which I haven't even touched. Who knows what the future holds?

Material from the diary is transcribed from the manuscripts with much tidying-up. I have not treated Hobhouse's manuscript style as Holy Writ, but have modernised and repunctuated throughout. Hobhouse rarely begins a sentence with a capital, and is irregular in his past participle endings: sometimes he apostrophises them, sometimes he includes the "e", sometimes he puts nothing. He often employs superscripts, especially in "L^{d}" and "M^{r}". I have not used these, but have given "y^{e}" when he uses it for comical effect. He frequently uses as pointer a small promiscuous splodge which I have felt at liberty to interpret either as a full stop or a comma, as grammar or rhetorical effect seems to dictate. If there is no pointer where one seems called for, and his mood is spontaneous, I have used an editorial dash. I have also added punctuation where I feel it is needed. All his abbreviations have been expanded.

If a prose quotation is left-justified only, it is taken from the original manuscript. This does not apply to Hobhouse's diary, where I have changed too many of the accidentals for it to count as accurate transcription.

Codes in manuscript transcriptions:

<Authorial deletion>
<xxxxx> Irrecoverable authorial deletion
{Interlineated word or phrase}
E[ditoria]l A[dditio]n
[ ] Illegible

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CHAPTER ONE

JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE: A LIFE

"He was a dandy in Regency England, the fiery radical hero of Westminster, the John Bull incarnate in early Victorian times."
—Robert E. Zegger.

John Cam Hobhouse, later Baron Broughton (1786-1869), politician and (as he thought), best friend of Lord Byron, the eldest child of Sir Benjamin Hobhouse, bart., by his first wife, Charlotte (heiress of Samuel Cam of Chantry House, Bradford, Wiltshire), was born at Redland, Bristol, on June 27th 1786. He had two younger brothers, Benjamin and Henry, and two sisters, one of whom died in infancy, leaving the other, Sophia. His mother died in 1791, when he was five: the absence of a maternal figure for most of his childhood may account for his dual perspective on women, who were for Hobhouse either whores to be paid or darlings to be sentimentalized over. Absence of maternal comfort may also account for his lack of personal hygiene, and his crude attitude to sex.

From his father's second marriage, to Amelia Parry, he acquired fourteen half-siblings. Hobhouse's step-mother hardly figures in his diary, and when she does, she is "my mother": his real mother is not mentioned at all. It seems to have been differences with his step-mother which caused him to go abroad with Byron in 1809, without telling his family.

His background was one of unenfranchised nonconformity and great commercial wealth – his father was worth a quarter of a million at the time of his death. These are important factors for the understanding of the way Hobhouse's reformist politics developed. A thorough bourgeois, he wanted fairer representation, but only for the propertied. His father was a noted Unitarian who campaigned for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: his mother was also a dissenter. He went to Lewin's Mead, John Prior Estlin's Unitarian school at Bristol (where Southey, Coleridge and Lamb were frequent visitors), then to Westminster School, and then to Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he obtained the Hulsean prize in 1808 for a pious essay *On the Origin and Intention of Sacrifices*:

Byron called it his "Essay upon Entrails".[1] He graduated B.A. in 1808 and M.A. in 1811.

In a letter, Byron gives a glimpse of how he and Hobhouse became undergraduate friends:

> It was not till 1807, after I had been upwards of a year away from Cambridge, to which I had returned again to *reside* for my degree, that I became one of Matthew's familiars, by means of Hobhouse, who, after hating me for two years, because I wore a *white hat*, and a *grey* coat, and rode a *grey* horse (as he says himself), took me into his good graces because I had written some poetry. I had always lived a good deal, and got drunk occasionally, in their company – but now we became really friends in a morning. Matthews, however, was not at this period resident in College. I met *him* chiefly in London, and at uncertain periods at Cambridge. Hobhouse, in the mean time, did great things: he founded the Cambridge "Whig Club" (which he seems to have forgotten), and the "Amicable Society," which was dissolved in consequence of the members constantly quarrelling, and made himself very popular with "us youth," and no less formidable to all tutors, professors, and Heads of Colleges. William Bankes was gone; while he stayed, he ruled the roast – or rather the roasting – and was father of all mischiefs.[2]

Hobhouse gives another glimpse of their student friendship, in verse:

> If e'er a simple youth appear,
> Tho' with a friend too thick and near;
> (As I sometimes may seem to be,
> Perchance, my B—n, e'en to thee;
> Disturbing with too early knock
> Your daily rest, ere two o'clock:)
> Him kindly we pronounce at once
> A forward fellow and a dunce.[3]

Only a really close chum or pal would knock up his friend at two in the afternoon.

The gist of my story is the way in which Byron's huge poetic talent quickly dwarfs Hobhouse's minor one: but, conversely, how Hobhouse's genuine political vocation puts Byron's amateur political dabblings in the shade … *at first*: as Hobhouse gets older, more established, and more smug, we may long again for some of Byron's amateur enthusiasm.

1: BLJ I 188.
2: B. to Murray, November 19th 1820: Ms. not found: text from LJ V 121-8.
3: *Imitations*, p.51 (Imitation of Hor. Sat. III Lib I.).

At Cambridge Hobhouse founded (as Byron says) a Whig Club, and in 1809 he travelled with Byron across Portugal and Spain to Gibraltar. At Cadiz, he caught the clap, which Byron puts into *Don Juan* II. From Malta he and Byron were encouraged by English naval and diplomatic intelligence, in the person of Spiridion Forresti, to travel into Albania, where they stayed with Ali Pasha from October 19th-23rd 1809: an English naval force meanwhile took over most of the Ionian Islands, a fact on which Ali congratulated them. In fact they had been used unwittingly as sweetners to Ali, while the English took over the islands, which Ali had thought were to be his. They then went into Greece, where their naivety was shown when they were surprised to discover considerable anti-Turkish feeling amongst the inhabitants. They based themselves in Athens, visiting Marathon on January 24th, and then, when Byron felt that he was about to be compromised by the mother of Teresa Macri, the "Maid of Athens", fled via Smyrna to Constantinople. Here they attended an audience with Sultan Mahmoud II on July 10th.

It's to a letter from Mrs Byron to her son that we owe the knowledge that Benjamin Hobhouse had no idea, during the continental excursion of 1809 and 1810, where or with whom his son had gone. But father and son are quickly reconciled (on February 4th 1811) and remain firm supporters each of the other for the rest of their lives, despite Sir Benjamin's increasing conservatism.

His brother Benjamin Hobhouse was John Cam's favourite relative, and his death at Quatre Bras, just before Waterloo, is the biggest tragedy of his early life. His other brother Henry was an India merchant with a difficult wife (though for Hobhouse all women not his sisters are difficult). Brother Henry must not be confused with Cousin Henry "Home Office" Hobhouse, who organises censuses, and may have something to do with setting up the "Cato Street Conspiracy". Isaac, his step-brother, gets expelled from Harrow twice, from Oxford once, and ends up at the "ultra-radical" Trinity, Cambridge (June 19th-21st, 1822): though he doesn't graduate. Another step-brother is called Thomas Benjamin.

Keeping track of Hobhouse's sister and half-sisters is impossible, there are so many of them. Sophia is his full sister, and accompanies him, his brother Henry and Henry's wife, on the Italian tour, 1816-17. Harriett Theodora is the one with health problems; in January 1823 she marries the future Bishop of Madras, and bears their first child on March 24th 1824. Charlotte rides; Matilda and Amelia ("Matty" and "Melly"), travel through Italy with John Cam and Isaac in 1822: Amelia seems to have a Brucknerian obsession about numbers. Matilda is Hobhouse's darling; she's the one who enjoys metaphysics (September 29th 1821), is bored by

men's conversation (August 12th 1821), who can't bear to think of Hobhouse alone (March 7th 1827), and to whom Ugo Foscolo proposes, to Hobhouse's intense disgust (March 22nd 1824). Later she makes an advantageous Italian match, to Hobhouse's misery, for he thought they'd grow old together (March 27th 1827). She plays the piano (July 18th 1822). Joanna rarely gets a mention (see May 26th 1822, July 4th 1824, and November 3rd 1824). Catherine appears on November 3rd 1824. And there are seven more …

Hobhouse was a bold traveller, but never a cosmopolitan one. For him, it was not "What do they know of England, who only England know?" so much as "What do they know of the rest of the world, who know not England?" For him, English scenery and English architecture were the measure of all. "Ecklow", a village in Belgium through which he passes on August 1, 1816, and whose name he can't be bothered to grasp, he describes as "looking like Sodbury."[4] On Christmas Day 1809 he records

> Turned round the corner of a little hill and saw the citadel of Athens. Road more wide, and plain through grounds cultivated with wheat and vineyards, then through olive grounds for an hour, and afterwards, for the last hour, on a broad Newmarket Road without trees.[5]

On May 13th 1810, we get the following:

> First view of Constantinople two o'clock, the white minarets of Sultan Achmed and Santa Sophia looking like Kings College Chapel at a distance.[6]

On October 31st 1809 Hobhouse records, "Byron is writing a long poem in the Spenserian stanza" – the first-ever reference to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Prior to its publication, he had seen Byron as his poetic equal. Lines 247-62 in the first edition of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) are by him. In their absence from England, Hobhouse's anthology *Imitations and Translations* was published, containing several poems by Byron, and on returning he published a comic poem, *The Wonders of a Week at Bath.* Neither volume was a success, and Hobhouse's references to Byron's great success are from now on few and far between (see Chapter Three). On the other hand, his account of their

4: B.L.Add.Mss.56536; entry for August 1st 1816.
5: B.L.Add.Mss.56527; entry for December 25th 1809.
6: B.L.Add.Mss.56529; entry for May 13th 1810.

eastern tour, *A Journey through Albania, and other Provinces of Turkey*, went through two printings. It is notable for its final section, about the aspirations and failures of Sultan Selim III, who may be Byron's inspiration for *Sardanapalus* (see Chapter Four). The book brought Hobhouse a Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1814.

One strange detail: Hobhouse takes leave of his family in the usual way before his long continental journey in 1813, and on departing for France in 1815 to witness the Hundred Days: but when he leaves with Byron in 1809, and when he leaves to join Byron in 1816, he does not even tell his father or his family that he's going – let alone where or with whom.

Enthusiastic versifier though he may be, Hobhouse is for the most part a thorough philistine, who doesn't think of himself as one: he *believes* he loves painting and poetry. But he treats art as what we would call a general knowledge quiz, a memory test in which a gentleman must keep ahead of the opposition at *soirées*. On August 26th 1821 he writes:

> Looked over Guercino's pictures engraved chiefly by Bartolezzi, and ashamed to find I did not know the story of Sophonisba, which I confounded with that of Sigismonda – which I also confounded with another tale in Boccaccio – must correct this inaccuracy, and if I find my memory fail, must not talk at all.[7]

For some time he is, in Vienna in 1813, never far from the company of Beethoven, but doesn't ever mention him, being more impressed by the proximities of Waldstein and Razumovsky, Beethoven's patrons. He sinks lowest on December 18th 1813:

> Went to the *Schöpfung* of Haydn in the theatre after <breakfast> dinner. Χαπε, and home.[8]

The oratorio, the ambiguous meal, and the prostitute, are given equal value by the diarist.

His reading of novels is refreshingly naïve. Here is a characteristic passage from his diary:

> **September 2nd 1815:** Ditto, ditto – we tried to read *The Wanderer*,[9] by far the worst novel I ever read. We [*he and his sisters*] did read *Belinda*,[10]

7: B.L.Add.Mss.56543; entry for August 26th 1821.
8: B.L.Add.Mss.56535; entry for December 18th 1813.
9: *The Wanderer* by Fanny Burney, published 1814.
10: *Belinda* by Maria Edgeworth (1802).

> which is decent, but I do not like it so much as I did. At last we got *Joseph Andrews*, and I read it aloud for fear of the ladies passing over bad passages – it is delightful – also *Tom Jones* – more delightful – and *Amelia*, in many parts as delightful. Fielding leaves all other novel writers at an immeasurable distance. It is wonderful he should be thought immoral, especially in *Tom Jones*, where not a bad action is committed without being followed by almost immediate chastisement. He seems a decided religionist, though he makes Thwackum persevere in villainy, and Square repent – however, when a man is bad and has religion, he cannot repent – there is no way for him to go – no inducement.[11]

Like the rest of the world, he is an assiduous reader of the Waverley Novels.

Wednesday July 29th 1812, in which Hobhouse "interposes his body between" Byron and Caroline Lamb, is one of the diary's most famous passages, and illustrates, as does no other, the delight Hobhouse takes in separating Byron from the women in his life (those that thrust themselves upon his attention, that is: on this very morning, Byron writes a friendly letter to Mercer Elphinstone).[12] That William Lamb would have been able to sue Byron for enticement if Hobhouse had not worked so hard, that the scandal would have been terrific, and the personal consequences for both Byron and Caroline disastrous, cannot be denied; but the moral high ground Hobhouse thus inhabits doubles the pleasurable conviction he derives both from performing the task, and from recording it the following day.

Caroline had sent a note to Fletcher, trying to facilitate her plan:

> FLETCHER, – Will you come and see me here some evening at 9, and no one will know of it. You may say you bring a letter, and wait the answer. I will send for you in. But I will let you know first, for I wish to speak with you. I also want you to take the little Foreign Page I shall send in to see Lord Byron. Do not tell him before-hand, but, when he comes with flowers, shew him in. I shall not come myself, unless just before he goes away; so do not think it is me. Besides, you will see this is quite a child, only I wish him to see my Lord if you can contrive it, which, if you tell me what hour is most convenient, will be very easy. I go out of Town to-morrow for a day or two, and I am now quite well – at least much better.[13]

11: Berg 4; entry for September 2nd 1815.
12: BLJ II 183-4.
13: LJ II 116n.

Hobhouse takes up the tale:

Went to Byron's – N^{o} 8 St James's Street – in expectation of going to Harrow, a scheme he had resolved on to avoid the threatened visit of a lady. At twelve o'clock, just as we were going, several thundering raps were heard at the door, and we saw a crowd collected about the door, and opposite to it. Immediately, a person in a most strange disguise walked upstairs. It turned out to be the lady in question, from Brocket. She, seeing me, ran up the garret stairs, on which I went down into Mr Dollman's shop and ordered a hat. Coming up again to take my hat and stick and go away, I did think that to leave my friend in such a situation, when, as Mr Dollman told me, every soul in the house, servants and all, knew of the person in disguise, and not to prevent the catastrophe of an elopement which seemed inevitable, would be unjustifiable. Accordingly I stayed in the sitting-room, whilst the lady was in the bedroom pulling off her disguise, under which she had a page's dress. Lord Byron was with her, but repeatedly came out to me, so that nothing could possibly have happened; besides which, both parties were too much agitated to admit a doubt of their conduct at that time.

Mr Dollman saw me twice at Byron's desire, and pressed upon me the necessity of "the lady's going out" of the house. I sent in by Byron several proposals for her quitting the place, but she said positively she would not go. At last she was prevailed upon to put on a habit, bonnet, and shoes belonging to a servant of the house, and, after much entreaty, did come out into the sitting room, in Byron's presence. I pressed upon her the necessity of instantly leaving the place – she said she would not. – "Then," said Byron, "we must go off together, there is no alternative". – "Indeed", said I, "but there is, you shall not go off this time". – The lady said she would not go off. I continued to urge upon her the absolute necessity of leaving the house. She said, "There will be blood spilt <first>". – "That", returned I, "there will be indeed, unless you go away". To this Byron assented. – "It shall be mine then", said the lady.

She then began to look quite wild, and to struggle, and, seeing a court sword lying on the sofa, back made a snatch to get at it, but was held back by Byron. To appease her I went out of the room for five minutes to speak to Mr Dollman, and obtain of him that no violent measures might be taken, but whilst absent I desired Fletcher, Byron's valet, to go into the bedroom to prevent the possibility of anything criminal happening, or anything which might be construed into a possibility of the thing to be dreaded taking place.

Returning into the room I found her more tranquil. She said she would go away on the condition of seeing Byron once more before Friday. She was told she should – she should do anything she pleased if she would be content to go away now.

Here was a difficulty – she must change her clothes before she went to her carriage, and this she could not do at Byron's, for fear of being known.

When she came out of his lodgings, after some reflection I told her she might go in a hackney coach (one had been standing at the door by my order some time) to my lodgings, where she might put on her own clothes, which she had in a bundle with her, and thence go in another hackney coach to her carriage, or to the house of some friend. She said she would do this if Byron went with her. I said, "I cannot consent to let you and Byron be in my rooms together – such a conduct would not be consistent with what I owe to both of you, to your mother (Lady Bessborough) and to myself". She entreated me very hard for some time that I would permit her and Byron to be together in my rooms, but I flatly denied, and Byron said – "Indeed it would be wrong to expect it of you – I do not expect it".

At last she consented to leave Byron's, dressed up in the servant's habit &c., and go in a hackney coach to Manchester Buildings, on condition that Byron might go in the coach with her as far as my lodgings. On this I left the house and went to the bottom of St James's Street. In a minute or two I saw them (Byron and the lady) step into the coach, and drive down the street.

At that instant I ran across the park to my lodgings, and, having got my door opened, stood at the corner of the buildings. The hackney coach soon came. I stopped it at the corner before it turned to the buildings, and desired Byron to get out, at which he did. The hackney coach then drove with the lady to my lodgings. I handed her out, took her upstairs, and, showing her my rooms, went away immediately, that she might dress herself, desiring her to lock the doors.

I went into the street to Byron, whom I found at the corner of the buildings, and walked with him to Bailly's coffee-house, where I left him, and came back to my lodgings. The lady had dressed herself in her own clothes when I came into my sitting-room, and I immediately began to impress the necessity of her getting to her carriage or to some friends.

In a short time a note came to her from Byron enclosed to me. It stated he wished to see her before she left London. She wrote an answer which she gave to me <not> <appointing some time & place, but saying she would contrive it> At last she settled to go to a Mrs Conyers, N^{o} 5 Grosvenor Gate – a friend of hers – and begged I would go with her. To this I consented, and she left my lodgings in a hackney coach with me, taking a little basket with her containing some of her clothes, shoes, &c. We ordered the coach to stop a hundred yards from the house, and then got out – I took her <hand/>arm and walked towards N^{o} 5. A servant in livery offered to carry the basket, and followed with it behind. When at Mrs Conyers we knocked, and the servant said his mistress was at home. After a short parley in the passage, and her requesting me a thousand times to call on her at Melbourne House the next day, and asking me to send her carriage from Moore's livery stables to her at N^{o} 5 Grosvenor Gate, I took leave of her – she was very much affected.

Before I went she made me promise I would not prevent Byron from meeting her once before she left London – she mentioned Barnet or

Highgate – on her way back, and, knowing that all apparent opposition would make her as extravagant as before, and cause a scene, I consented to speak to him on the subject.

God knows that from the very beginning I have done my best to keep my friend out of the scrape. My first wish was that he should give this lady, who by the common consent of all London has made a dead set at him, no power over him by consenting to any serious folly, and when I knew that everything had passed between them, my next desire was to prevent a public disclosure and an elopement – this latter event would, as Byron assured me and assures me, have certainly taken place but for the part I played in the transactions of yesterday, which I have here noted down, twenty-four hours only after they took place, in case it should ever be necessary to defend myself from any misrepresentations, and for the purpose of keeping by me a correct statement of these facts, which together with a thousand others would prove that the seduction has not been on the side of my friend.

I have letters from the lady's mother, and the lady, thanking me for what I [had] done before this event; and at the time Lady Bessborough first begged me to interfere, I knew interference was too late, except to prevent an elopement, but this I could not tell her, for my friend Byron had trusted me with the secret, and to him I owed a paramount and prior duty. All my endeavours have certainly tended to what I thought his good. I have not cared for the others, nor have consulted anything in my transactions with them but his advantage and my own honour. The prayers and entreaties of the mother did indeed prompt me to the same conduct, which I should have pursued solely for the benefit of my friend, but it was much against my will, and only after repeated applications, that I had any communication with her. I did tell her that the fault was more on the side of the woman than the man, and that if she could answer for the forbearance of her daughter I could engage for the prudence of my friend. In all communications with the lady I have insisted on the propriety of being prudent, and of taking no step which might produce an *éclaircissement*. I knew it was useless to talk about that virtue which she had *not*, but I could not tell her I knew her case. There again my duty to my friend interfered.

As to Byron, I have nothing to accuse [him] of except the having told me his secret, and having talked about me to the family. It was not strange he should not take my advice, when the lady was so *exigéante*, seeing that, after many efforts, I could neither get him away from London nor prevent him from writing to the lady. I gave up speaking to him on the subject for ten days, and never should have mentioned the topic again, had not the departure of the lady from London, and his talk, made me think there was no dread of an elopement. Lady Bessborough, on the 16th, requested I would write to her and tell her how affairs went on between the parties: my knowledge of the real fact, and my resolution of not identifying myself with any of the family, have rendered it very difficult for me to do this without running the chance of misleading Lady Bessborough – so I have

not written at all as yet – but now shall give her a few lines, expressing my complete persuasion that nothing but the detention of her daughter from London will prevent some catastrophe – it is my duty to tell her this.

I cannot tell her what happened yesterday – there would be no use in giving her such a detail, nor would such a disclosure help at all to prevent what is alone now to be prevented, *an elopement* – yet, should that transaction ever come to her ears, she may think that I was aiding and abetting, and mistake all that was ever done by me to get her daughter out of the scrape for an endeavour to forward her views to get into it. I cannot help it, and if I should suffer from the misfortune of having been obliged to interfere in this <transaction> delicate affair, I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that my motives have been honourable and my conduct such as anyone in similar circumstances would have most probably been forced to pursue.

Written Thursday July <29> 30th.[14]

Dined at Reilly's – went to the play in the evening – *Such Things Are*, and *The Sleepwalker*.[15]

From May 1813 to February 1814 he makes a long tour through wartime Europe, without Byron, and leaving just before the publication of *Journey*. He visits Stralsund, Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig, Prague, Fiume, Weimar and Amsterdam. On June 15th 1813 he meets Crown Prince Bernadotte, who is affable, despite Hobhouse's shy "shuffling," and who, on being told that it was he "qui a apporté le papier de Danemark," invites him to dinner the following night. Hobhouse duly attends, and is unimpressed with the furniture and cutlery, though he admires Bernadotte, who speaks politely to him again.

On July 4th 1813 he goes (in regimentals) to a village called Peterwalden, for an audience with Tsar Alexander. He and his colleagues are kept waiting in a large long gallery, while a Scots Doctor Weily entertains them with descriptions of the aftermath of Borodino, and of what he found inside General Kutusov's body at the autopsy (namely, "a

14: B.L.Add.Mss. 56530, ff.49v.-52v.; entry for July 29th 1812. Used as the basis for Marchand I 355-9. Not in RLL.

15: *Such Things Are* is by Mrs Elizabeth Inchbald, and *La Somnambule* is by Antoine de Feriol, comte de Pont-de-Veyse – the latter the source for Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

mass of corruption, beginning with the piles, going on with fat in his intestines …" and so on).

Eventually, after others have arrived, and after they have been advised that the Tsar will discuss uniforms, "a large middle-sized [*sic*] youngish looking man in a green coat with a small star buttoned up" walks in alone, apparently from his bedroom. Sure enough, he questions each of them about their uniforms. "When speaking he put his head near the person addressed, and looked rather eagerly and uncomfortably in his face." He asks Hobhouse if he is "*proprement militaire*, or something which I did not hear – to which I replied 'J'ai un regiment,' and then hobbled something about 'il y a un regiment'" – at which Lord Cathcart interrupts, and introduces Alexander to the next man. Having thus done his imperial duty, the Tsar retires to his bedchamber. The audience lasts five minutes. Hobhouse wishes that he had just bowed and kept quiet.[16]

Hobhouse witnesses much wartime suffering – he passes through Leipzig shortly after the great battle there. In Saxony he passes a barrier manned by Austrian *landswehr*:

> On the left was a man on his back, half-stripped, and dead, the post-boy said, since last night. Further on were many bodies of horses. The cavalry had fought there. We came to a desolate, half-burned, unroofed, village, where three or four houses alone smoked, and these, we had been told, were infected, and saw a poor fellow by the roadside with his pack resting on a stone. We flung him something from the box – he had not strength to take it.[17]

On September 22nd 1813 Hobhouse hears a false rumour that Byron is dead:

> This day after dinner Captain Moresby mentioned the death of the only friend I have in the world, and I was weak enough to give way to a transport of grief before men who did not know me to be sincere. My neighbour, [*David "Long"*] Baillie, kindly tried to convince me the Captain must be mistaken, but although facts were much on the side of consolation, and have been since that time, I cannot help even at this day (November 18th) dreading the worst. I tried Swift's panacea, but all in vain

16: H.'s only meeting with the Prince Regent, on May 28th 1811, is as bathetic: "Went with Colonel Lemon to Carlton House and after waiting from three to a quarter before six amongst an immense crowd of *Lords and 'Gentlemen'* kissed the Prince Regent's hand, who muttered something I could not well hear …"
17: B.L.Add.Mss.56535; entry for December 13th 1813.

> – very few nights have since passed that I have not, whether dreaming or awake, dwelt upon this fatal event.[18]

He arrives back in England (to find Byron alive) on February 6th 1814. On February 18th occurs one of his rare references to a Byronic success:

> Walked about London today, instead of dining at home – Byron with me. I have read his *Corsair*, which although it has perhaps not such brilliant passages as the *Childe*, is on the whole better – its success has been astonishing – 13,000 copies sold in a month – the abuse showered on Byron for the *Weep, Daughter of a Royal Line* has helped it along.

When, in April 1814, the news breaks of the abdication of the greatest of his heroes, Napoleon, he hurries to Paris, accompanied by Henry Grattan – Byron at first agrees to go, then changes his mind. On May 3rd Hobhouse is disgusted to witness Louis XVIII entering the capital.

Throughout this period he is a member of the Holland House Whig circle. He considers, but rejects, the idea of standing as M.P. for Cambridge University.

He hears about Byron's engagement to Annabella Milbanke via a third party – Byron hasn't the heart to tell Hobhouse himself. However, on January 2nd 1815 he acts as best man at the wedding, having made an attempt – probably with Byron's encouragement – to dissuade the minister from performing the ceremony. Annabella learned about this, and it increased her hatred of him, which she shared with Augusta Leigh. Hobhouse later got back on good terms with Augusta, but never with Annabella.

Upon Napoleon's escape from Elba, Hobhouse again went to Paris, where he met Benjamin Constant, and witnessed Napoleon's attempt to become a constitutional ruler (see Chapter Five). He saw Bonaparte on several occasions. Waterloo – the news of which reached him as he was trying to cross the Swiss border with Michael Bruce – depressed him, and he was disgusted by the second reinstatement of Louis XVIII, "this king of shreds and patches". In the following year he published an account of the Hundred Days, *The Substance of some Letters written by an Englishman resident in Paris during the last Reign of the Emperor Napoleon*, in which he displayed his hatred of the Bourbon dynasty and his sympathy with Bonaparte – despite the death of his brother Benjamin at Quatre Bras. The book – only the third edition of which was dedicated

18: B.L.Add.Mss.56533; entry for September 22nd 1813.

to Byron – was reviewed in the *Quarterly*, which affected to read it as a parody. Its French translation was seized by the government, and both printer and translator were fined and imprisoned.

Hobhouse wrote the prologue to Charles Maturin's *Bertram*, which opened at Drury Lane on May 9th 1816. He attempted a comedy, called *The Green Kiosk*, but was dissuaded from completing it by Kinnaird.

He was loyal to Byron throughout the separation from Annabella (see Chapter Six), and drew up what he termed, mendaciously, "a full and scrupulously accurate account" of the events – just as he drew up one about the Burning of Byron's Memoirs (see Chapter Thirteen). This was printed privately in 1870 in the wake of the Beecher Stowe controversy, and reprinted in *Recollections of a Long Life* (II pp.191-366). He saw Byron off at Dover on April 25th, and, in the autumn of 1816, with Scrope Davies, visited the poet at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva, arriving on the day Shelley left. A subtextual jealousy of Shelley may be sensed from the paucity of references to that poet in the diary. Hobhouse and Byron dined often with Madame de Staël at Coppet, and made two Alpine tours. During this time Byron was writing *Manfred* – a work to which Hobhouse never refers. Passing the Simplon in October, they visited Milan, where they were entertained by Ludovico di Brême, and met Vincenzo Monti, Stendhal, and Silvio Pellico, whose tragedy *Francesca da Rimini* Hobhouse translated, assisted at first by Byron (see Chapter Seven). In Austrian-occupied Milan, Byron and Hobhouse found that their politics created an appreciative audience for them such as they had never experienced in England:

> Mirabeau, the banker here, came with his letters, merely to see *le célèbre poète*, and Breme says he thinks he is more like Petrarch than any other writer.[19] His encomiums to myself would make me blink in England, but here only serve to make me fancy that I shall be sure of a favourable and fair reception, and of having a just interpretation put upon what I say or do. This gives a facility of manner which I never remember to have before recognized, and makes me as yet like this place better than any other I have ever seen. A persuasion that I am of the liberal English, and more than all here, a hater[20] of the Congress Castlereagh system, gives me a willing audience in this place, which is not elsewhere found, at least I have not found it.[21]

19: Like Petrarch in the way he is publicly acknowledged and feted.
20: "hatred" (Ms.)
21: B.L.Add.Mss. 56537, entry for October 17th 1816.

A strong reason for Hobhouse's future writing about Italian politics and literature would thus be that he thought the Italians took him seriously in a way the English didn't.

They then visited Venice and Rome together. During late 1817 and early 1818 Hobhouse wrote voluminous notes for Canto IV of *Childe Harold*; the poem was afterwards dedicated to him by Byron. The section on Italian literature in this book, *Historical Illustrations to the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, was written for him, in uneasy collaboration, by Ugo Foscolo (see Chapter Eight).

Hobhouse became a member of The Rota, a dining club for the promotion of reforms. In 1819 he contested the parliamentary seat of Westminster, which had become vacant on the suicide of Sir Samuel Romilly. He stood as a radical Whig, supported by his father and by Sir Francis Burdett, but was defeated on March 3rd by George Lamb, Lord Melbourne's brother. Riots followed, and a breach opened between him and the more right-wing Holland House Whigs.

At this time he wrote several political pamphlets, and an anonymous reply written by him to a sarcastic speech of Canning's attracted much attention: in the Commons in 1821, he said that Canning had "insulted, derided, betrayed, and crouched to every party" and politician in the country.[22] In 1819 he published an anonymous pamphlet entitled *A Trifling Mistake, &c.* To the question "What prevents the people from walking down to the House, and pulling out the members by the ears, locking up their doors, and flinging the key into the Thames?" he answered that "their true practical protectors ... are to be found at the Horse Guards, and the Knightsbridge barracks". The House of Commons' analysis of this passage ignored the answer, read the question as rhetorical, and found Hobhouse guilty of breach of privilege (see Chapter Eleven). Arrested on December 14th 1819, he remained in Newgate (in rooms next to the Governor's) until the dissolution of parliament on February 29th 1820. On February 5th 1820 the Court of King's Bench had refused to interfere with the Speaker's warrant, and the oppressed Hobhouse could only respond with a protest in the *Times*. Prior to his release he issued his address *To the Independent Electors of Westminster*.

While he was in Newgate, the "Cato Street Conspiracy" occurred (see Chapter Ten). Mrs Arbuthnot records in her diary Wellington's conviction that if it had succeeded, and the conspirators had offered Hobhouse the headship of their provisional government, he would have accepted.

22: Quoted Zegger p.88.

Despite this, in later years Hobhouse and Wellington were on excellent terms:

> **Thursday June 20th 1839:** … Dined at the Duke of Wellington's – found him alone when I entered the room – he received me with great kindness and led me up and down the room talking to me of Lady Hastings' claim on Deccan booty – which he characterised as infamous – he said he had written another paper on the subject which he thought would settle the question – he said that his definition of booty was "what you could lay *your bloody hand on* and keep" – and he suited the action to the word by putting his outstretched hand on the table – and repeating his saying more than once in his peculiar fashion.[23]

It's clear that Wellington's objections to Hobhouse had cooled by 1839.

With Francis Place as what we would call his campaign manager, he now (March 25th 1820), succeeded in beating Lamb at Westminster, and was returned to parliament as Burdett's colleague, with a triumphal procession through London, which his father, step-mother, and innumerable step-sisters, had gazed down upon proudly from the balcony of Mackay's the oilman's, in Piccadilly. Hobhouse's radicalism was qualified, and his statements of principle were guarded. The exact nature of the franchise extension he envisaged was left delibertately unclear. He believed in a fairer distribution of franchises and voting rights, but never said what suffrage extension he envisaged – was, indeed, obscure and equivocal on that point. He was much clearer when attacking corrupt privilege. When in Newgate he rebuffed overtures made to him by William Cobbett – on the eve of Cato Street. Cobbett described him as playing Sancho Panza to Sir Francis Burdett's Quixote (see illustration on next page).

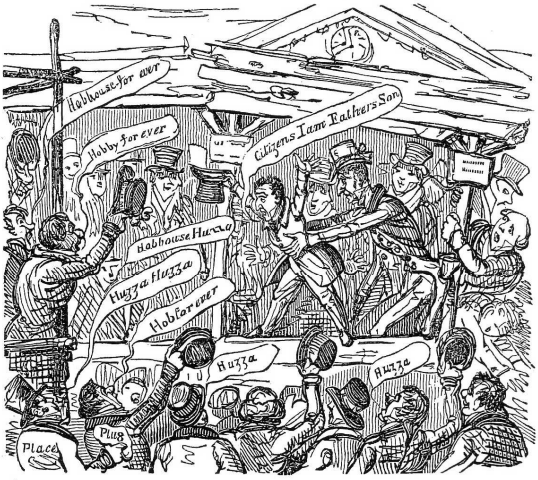
By this time Burdett was much more important to him as a friend than Byron.

Hobhouse seems to have been an extremely confident orator. We have a semi-admiring, semi-facetious account of his style on the hustings:

> You see him setting not one foot on the sea and another on the land, like the commander of nations, (which by the way is the certain prelude of a fall); but you find him planting a heel of each boot, of goodly altitude and armed with steel, upon the top of an axle-bolt of the waggon,—so that these heel-plates and these axle-bolts may, as perfect conductors, convey away the excess of electric fire with which he is charged; and thus save,

23: B.L.Add.Mss.56561, f.33v.

not the neighbouring theatres merely, but London herself from the horror of a new conflagration. He stands there and thus. You admire the perfect level of the upper line of his forehead; his nose is exactly like Cockspur Street and the Haymarket; his mouth is rich, and roomy as the space around you; his voice is sonorous as the million dins of London harmonised (or, if you will, discorded) into one; and, in short, there is not one of his lineaments, one of his gestures, or one of his accents but which finds among the localities of his constituents, "a local habitation and a name."[24]



"I will move storms, I will condole in some measure: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant; I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in."
SHAKSPEARE.

From *Collective Wisdom*. Hobhouse is Burdett's puppet.

Hobhouse can't do without society, but only on his terms, and not for society's sake: dinner parties are evaluated by how much he's learned from the conversation at them. He's a snob, wedded, despite his "Whig radicalism", to the English class system. He can't adjust, for example, to the friendly relationships which he sees between masters and servants in Italy. There could be no Leporello to his Don Giovanni (not that he was a Don Giovanni).

24: *Collective Wisdom* pp.27-8.