

LORD BYRON

b. January 1, 1788, London, England

d. April 19, 1824, Ottoman Empire

POET

“The great art of life is sensation, to feel that we exist, even in pain.”

Best known for his satirical epic poem, “Don Juan,” and his own life of excess, Lord Byron was among the first prominent bisexuals.

Born George Gordon, Lord Byron was a leading poet of the Romantic period. His ambiguous sexuality, flamboyant persona, and lifestyle of excess have made him a cultural and literary legend and among the first prominent bisexuals.

Byron studied at Trinity College in Cambridge, where he published his first volumes of poetry. In his early 20s, he traveled throughout the Mediterranean region and took up residency in Greece. When Byron returned to England in 1811, he published “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,” which garnered him a following among aristocrats and intellectuals.

Byron’s personal life was steeped in mystery. It is speculated that he had a child with his half-sister Augusta. In 1816 he spent the summer with authors Mary and Percy Shelley, with whom Byron is thought to have had more than a platonic

relationship. His extravagant personality and penchant for scandal made Byron a celebrity of the Romantic era.

Lord Byron’s literary legacy is defined by his satirical epic poem, “Don Juan.” Byron’s hero, Don Juan is a fictional libertine characterized by cynicism, magnetism and rebellion.

Byron wrote openly about love and lust for both men and women. He was among the first important writers labeled as bisexual. Some scholars assert that such a label does not encompass the full complexity of the poet’s fluid sexuality. Noted literature professor Emily Bernhard Jackson stated:

“It is not so simple to define Byron as homosexual or heterosexual: he seems rather to have been both, and neither ... For Byron, sexuality was not this -ality or that -ality, not this aim or that object, not this particular yearning or that particular desire. It was just desire, and it just was.”



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