

LORD BYRON
ΛΟΡΔΟΣ ΒΥΡΩΝΑΣ
(1788-1824)

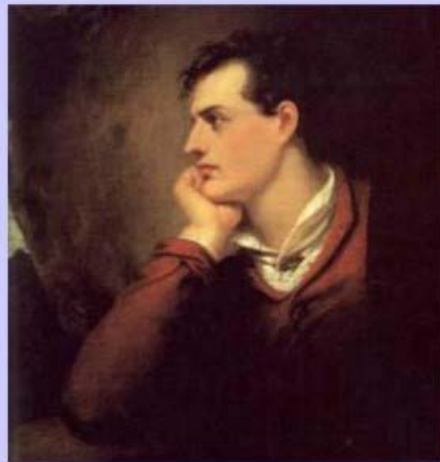
A TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT ROMANTIC
POET WHO LOVED GREECE



INFORMATION ABOUT LORD BYRON

Lord (George Gordon) Byron

1788-1824



An English poet, a leading figure in Romanticism and one of the most ardent philhellenes, who gave his life for the freedom of Greece. Lord Byron, as he is known in our country, George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron, was born on **January 22, 1788** in London and came from an aristocratic family.

WHO WAS LORD BYRON? WHEN DID HE MEET GREECE?

"If I am a poet, ... the air of Greece has made me one."

Early years

- ◉ From an early age he loved to study, read many books, studied in English colleges, learned to speak Greek and Latin and travelled a lot. At the age of 21 he became a Member of Parliament and was often opposed to other lords because he showed interest in working class issues. In 1809 he travelled to Greece for the first time. He visited Patras, Preveza, Nikopolis, Arta, Ioannina and reached Tepeleni, where he was hosted by Ali Pasha. He returned to Patras, went to Aigio, Delphi, Livadia, Athens, where he stayed for two months and then to ancient Troy and Constantinople.
- ◉ Byron, with his poetic sensitivity, was enchanted by the Greek natural beauties and the ancient ruins. While travelling, he wrote wonderful poems that reflected his artistic emotion. In his great poetic work, entitled "[The Pilgrimage of Childe Harold](#)", he gives beautiful descriptions of the Epirus. A special place has a poem, where he describes a storm that found him in [Zitsa](#) of [Epirus](#). The poem "[Islands of Greece](#)" was inspired in [Sounio](#), where he describes his impressions of ancient Troy. The Greek-loving poet was indignant from the depths of his soul with the sacrilege of Elgin, who stole the marble works from the Acropolis and wrote the poem "[The Curse of Athens](#)". His other poems were "[The Nymph of Abydos](#)", "[Turkish Tales](#)" and "[Don Juan](#)", perhaps the leading poetic creation. Byron with these poetic works became famous in England, while his world fame was growing.

ONE OF THE STATUES ATTRIBUTED TO HIM



“THE ISLES OF GREECE”, ONE OF HIS POEMS

- THE isles of Greece! the isles of Greece
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.
- The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse:
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' 'Islands of the Blest'.
- The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.
- A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set, where were they?
- And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?
- 'Tis something in the dearth of fame,
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.
- Must we but weep o'er days more blest?
Must we but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylae!
- What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, 'Let one living head,
But one, arise,—we come, we come!
'Tis but the living who are dumb.
- In vain—in vain: strike other chords:
Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
And shed the blood of Scio's vine:
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!
- You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet;
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?
- Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.
- The tyrant of the Chersonese
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!
O that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.
- Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood might own.
- Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells;
In native swords and native ranks
The only hope of courage dwells:
But Turkish force and Latin fraud
Would break your shield, however broad.
- Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.
- Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

SELF EXILE AND SELFLESSNESS, IN GREECE'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

- ◉ On **January 5, 1824** he arrived in Messolonghi, where the struggling Greeks welcomed him with enthusiasm. There he collaborated with other foreign volunteers and at his own expense organized the army and took care of the fortification of Messolonghi.
- ◉ On **January 25**, the government recognized him as General. His efforts, however, to organize the army and to reconcile the chiefs, as well as the bad climate, undermined his health. On April 9, he fell into bed with a high fever. He was muttering, but even then he was still urging the Greeks to reconcile, in order to achieve their liberation. At dawn on April 19, 1824, Easter Monday, he passed away in Messolonghi, at the age of 36. His last words were about Greece: *"I gave her the time, my health, my property, and now I give her my life. What could I do more?"*



HIS END-HIS LEGACY

- ◉ His death spread heavy mourning to all the struggling Greeks. Men and women mourned Byron, who became a symbol of patriotism and a national hero, as a true brother and protector. After his funeral in Messolonghi, his body was transported to London.
- ◉ In those days Dionysios Solomos wrote a great poem («Εἰς τὸ θάνατο τοῦ Λόρδου Μπάιρον») dedicated to this great lover of Greece, which begins with these verses:

*Λευθεριά, για λίγο πάψε
Νά χτυπᾶς με το σπαθί·
Τώρα σίμωσε καί κλάψε
Εἰς τοῦ Μπάιρον το κορμί*
- ◉ After the liberation, the Greeks honored Byron and made a statue of him, which rises in Zappeion, overlooking the Acropolis and represents the philhellene near a woman - Greece - who crowns him. The name of Byron was given to the refugee settlement, which was founded in Athens, above Pagrati and today constitutes the Municipality of Byron.

ΤΟ ΠΟΙΗΜΑ «ON THIS DAY I COMPLETE MY THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR», ΣΕ ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΝΙΚΟΥ ΣΠΑΝΙΑ:

- ◉ ΣΗΜΕΡΑ ΣΥΜΠΛΗΡΩΝΩ ΤΑ ΤΡΙΑΝΤΑ-ΕΞΗ ΜΟΥ ΧΡΟΝΙΑ... (Μεσολόγγι, 22 Ιανουαρίου 1824)
- ◉ Αδιάφορη τούτη η καρδιά θα μένει γιατί καρδιά καμμιά δεν συγκινεί: κι' όμως απαρνημένη και θλιμμένη ματώνει στη στιγμή.
- ◉ Οι μέρες μου χλωμά κίτρινα φύλλα τ' άνθη και της αγάπης οι καρποί είναι σκουλήκια βούρκος και σαπίλα και κούφιοι οι παλμοί.
- ◉ Οι σπίθες που μου φεύγουν απ' τα σπλάχνα καθώς ηφαιστεια νησιού νεκρά φλόγες δεν βγάνουνε παρά μian άχνα σα νεκρικά πυρά.
- ◉ Τον κλήρο του έρωτα που συνταράζει ελπίδες και πόθους δεν έχω εγώ μηδέ σκοπό πάρεξ ένα μαράζι ένα βαρύ ζυγό.
- ◉ Και να μην πω: «ούτε έτσι - μήτε τώρα...» στα εξιλαστήρια πάθη της ζωής ηρώων στεφάνια πλέκονται οληνώρα θανάτου και τιμής.
- ◉ Βόλια και λάβαρα! Αχός, Ελλάδα φως μου, πώς με καλείς. Πολεμιστές και πάλι στης ασπίδας την απλάδα πεθαίνουν νικητές.
- ◉ Ω ξύπνα! Ελλάδα μου όχι συ, ξύπνα και βύζαξε τις ρίζες πνεύμα μου δυνάμωσε μες των Γραικών τα δείπνα με ένα νεύμα μου.
- ◉ Πείνες της σάρκας, ηδονές και πάθος τα βδελυρά και τερατόμορφα 'Οχι! Κύττα την ομορφιά σαν λάθος σε πρόσωπα όμορφα.
- ◉ Αν κλαις τη γιότη σου, τότε μη ζήσεις! Χρέος και θάνατος σωστός εδώ με σφαίρες τη ζωή σου να σφαλίσεις στο χώμα αυτό.
- ◉ Γύρνα με περιέργεια το κεφάλι μέτρα καλά, να 'ναι φαρδύς-πλατύς ο τάφος σου, κι' ύστερα από την ζάλη πέσε ν' αναπαυτείς.

SOME OF BYRON'S QUOTES...

- ◉ *“ Friendship is love without wings”.*
- ◉ *“Always laugh when you can, it is cheap medicine”.*
- ◉ *“A great poet belongs to no country; his works are public property and his memoirs the inheritance of the public”.*

THE GREAT PHILHELLENE!

