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A Bibliographic Essay on the Copy of Byron's *Waltz*

Housed in the Georgia State University Rare Books Collection

BY

Shane McGowan

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When George Gordon, Lord Byron composed his satire *Waltz: An Apostrophic Hymn* in late October, 1812, waltzing was rather in vogue in London high society (*Byron's Letters* 2.228-9, 2.234). The Prince Regent had done much to popularize the Austrian folkdance that year, and, as a result, it had become quite a sensation amongst the aristocracy and fashionable gentry of London. But not everyone was so enamored with the new dance fad. Guardians of social propriety condemned the waltz as ““an enemy of true morals”” because it required members of the opposite sex to pair off and dance with their bodies pressed closely together (qtd. in Knowles 33). And then there was Lord Byron, whose reasons for objecting to the dance were not based on moral grounds. Byron biographer Benita Eisler has claimed that the scandalized utterances of Horace Hornem, Esq., the putative author of Byron's “apostrophic hymn,” show a more mature Byron in the process of throwing off his “posture of cosmopolitan worldliness and his relativistic view of morals” (368). Yet it is far more likely that Byron, a lifelong flaunter of conventional morality, took exception to the waltz for personal and political reasons. As Phyllis Grosskurth has pointed out, Byron's low opinion of waltzing almost certainly issued in part from the fact that “its swirling movement made him only too aware of his physical limitations [i.e., his clubfoot]” (171). And, as Gary Dyer has noted, Byron likely would have associated the waltz closely with the person and politics of its most prominent enthusiast, the Prince Regent, whom the Radical Byron despised thoroughly (19). Thus the parochial moralist Horace Hornem, Esq., appears merely to act as a screen for both Byron's personal embarrassment and the sociopolitically subversive agenda that he pursues in the poem.¹

In any case, the copy of *Waltz* housed in the Georgia State University Library's rare books collection occupies an intriguing place in the publication history of this relatively obscure satire by Byron.² Byron's letters place the date of the poem's first publication at sometime in the winter or early spring of 1813, and the authoritative Byron bibliographies of Francis Lewis Randolph and Thomas James Wise both include this authorized 1813 edition, as well as a second, substantially different pirated edition from 1821 (*Byron's Letters* 3.41; Randolph 56; Wise 71-3). Yet, based on an examination of its title page, collation, and textual features, the GSU copy belongs to neither of these editions. Instead, it appears to represent an earlier pirated edition published in 1816. If this is indeed the case, then the GSU copy is the only known witness to this edition aside from a copy housed in the rare books collection at the Syracuse University Library.

The bibliographic obscurity of the 1816 pirated edition already complicates any effort to establish the GSU copy as a witness of it. To add to this difficulty, the 1816 pirated edition bears at least a superficial resemblance to the one from 1821. The GSU copy possesses roughly the same dimensions (21.7 cm x 13.3 cm) that Randolph and Wise give in their entries for the 1821 edition, and, based upon the location of the single watermark in the GSU copy (near the gutter on B3^r), the GSU copy is a quarto like the 1821 edition. Perhaps due to these similarities between editions, at least one previous examiner of the GSU copy has identified it as the 1821 pirated edition. On $\pi 1^r$, a series of handwritten notes presumably inscribed by a twentieth-century bookseller or bibliographer reads "PIRATE ed, (LON 1821)."³

However, substantial differences in the title pages of the GSU copy and the 1821 pirated edition reveal this identification to be incorrect.⁴ For one, the title page of the

GSU copy attributes to Ovid *Waltz*'s epigraph, "Qualis in Eurote ripis, aut per juga Cynthi / Exercet Diana choros." (This same attribution, according to Randolph and Wise, is also found in the 1813 edition.) The 1821 edition, on the other hand, revises this attribution entirely.⁵ Indeed, not only does it correctly identify the *Aeneid* (1.498-9) as the source of the epigraph, but it also provides an English gloss from John Dryden's 1698 translation of Virgil's epic:

Such on *Eurota*'s Banks, or *Cynthus*' hights [sic],
Diana seems; and so she charms the sight,
 When in the Dance the graceful Goddess leads
 The Quire of Nymphs, and overtops their Heads.

(1.699-702; original emphasis)

In and of itself, the lack of both the correct attribution and the gloss from Dryden in the GSU copy suffices to rule out the possibility that it belongs to the 1821 pirated edition.

Yet other title page features also attest to the GSU copy's distinctness from the 1821 edition. The title page of the 1821 edition contains a printer statement identifying the printer and publisher as a W. Clark of 201, the Strand, whereas the title page of the GSU copy contains no printer statement whatsoever.⁶ In all likelihood, this omission in the GSU copy is deliberate and proceeds from the same logic that informed Byron's decision to publish *Waltz* pseudonymously. As Eisler and Grosskurth both have observed, *Waltz*'s brazenly unflattering allusions to the Prince Regent and his notoriously large girth meant that any legally demonstrable association with the poem's authorship or publication likely would have led to a prison sentence (368; 171).⁷ It is therefore hardly

surprising that a printer or publisher might prove unwilling to place his imprint upon an edition of the poem.

However, this answer seems somewhat incomplete when one considers that both the 1813 and 1821 editions of *Waltz* contain a printer statement despite the legal risks involved. Clearly, those risks were not as great as Byron's usual publisher, John Murray, felt that they were when he refused to bring out *Waltz* himself (*Byron's Letters* 3.41 n 4). So why would the party or parties responsible for the GSU copy feel the need to release the text anonymously?

A potential answer to this question depends in large part upon the publication date for the GSU copy. The presence of a watermark in the form of the numeral "16" on B3 suggests that the GSU copy belongs to an edition recorded in no other bibliography beside the *National Union Catalogue, Pre-1956 Imprints*. The *NUC* entry describes this edition as "unauthorized" and mentions the presence of the watermark "1816" (245). Reading the word "unauthorized" as "without a printer statement," it is safe to conjecture that the GSU copy belongs to this edition. If that is indeed the case, then it would place the date of the GSU copy's publication at 1816. The opportunity to compare the GSU copy with the one at Syracuse University (whose catalogue description serves as the basis for the *NUC* entry) would resolve this matter definitively.⁸

The tentative establishment of 1816 as the date of the GSU copy makes it possible to speculate upon the reason for its anomalous omission of a printer statement. The year 1816 found Byron "'at war with all the world and his wife'" (*Byron's Letters* 5.16). In addition to scorned lover Lady Caroline Lamb's continued efforts to ruin Byron publicly as punishment for his spurning of her in the summer of 1812, Byron's rather unamicable

break with his wife in January of 1816 managed to bring all of his past indiscretions, real or imagined, into the light of day. Rumors of incest, sodomy, and adultery mounted against Byron to such an extent that the ordinarily extroverted socialite became unwilling to set foot outside his rooms (Eisler 494). These legally actionable allegations of criminal perversion left Byron genuinely fearful of being apprehended, tried, and sentenced to prison or even death (Eisler 500). As a consequence, Byron went into a self-imposed (and, as it would turn out, lifelong) exile on the Continent in spring of 1816. If the GSU copy of *Waltz* was indeed published in this same tumultuous year, then the printer and publisher of the edition may have omitted a printer statement so as to avoid openly associating themselves with the work of such a controversial and increasingly vilified figure. Indeed, as Paul Douglass has suggested after Byron's own account, the pseudonym of Horace Hornem, Esq., did not prevent *Waltz* from being attributed to Byron (Douglass 16; *Byron's Letters* 3.41). And yet this knowledge was likely what made the publication of a new *Waltz* edition an attractive prospect for its printer and publisher in the first place. As we often find in the cases of contemporary celebrities embroiled in scandal, Byron's back catalogue likely would have enjoyed at least a small upsurge in popularity as his public infamy grew. The omission of a printer statement would have permitted the printer and publisher to profit from such an upsurge without risking the denigration of their own names in the process.⁹

Of course, such speculation about printer and publisher motives would prove fruitless if the GSU copy turned out not to belong to the 1816 edition. And there is in fact some evidence to suggest this as the case. Aside from the highly speculative nature of the connection delineated above, there is the uncertain matter of the GSU copy's

collation. The book appears initially to have fourteen leaves in two gatherings of seven. Yet this number seems wrong when one considers that a standard quarto with two gatherings should contain a total of sixteen leaves with eight per gathering. This fact would seem to indicate that two leaves have been excised at some point in the book's history. And since excisions in any place except the beginning and end of the book would lead almost certainly to noticeable lacunae, it stands to reason that the first leaf in A and the last leaf in B are the ones missing. This conclusion leaves open the possibility that the first leaf of A was a preliminary title page with features not present in the 1816 edition witnessed by the Syracuse copy.

Appendix I: Collation

4° : π^3 A-C⁴ (-C4) [1 (-A1, -1C)]; 22 leaves, pp. *iii-v*, *vi-viii*, *ix*, 9, 10-21, 22-25, 26-30

The text contains three preliminaries as well as three leaves affixed at the end. Both of these additional gatherings are of a stiffer and (based on their severe yellowing) more acidic paper than the laid paper on which the text proper is printed. The direct attachment of these leaves to the book's binding boards suggests that they were inserted by a bindery.

Pages 22-24 contain handwritten pagination. However, this person has misnumbered p. 22 as p. 23, resulting in the repetition of that page number.

Appendix II: Title Page Description

Waltz: | AN | APOSTROPHIC HYMN | [horizontal ornament] | BY | HORACE
HORNEM, ESQ. | [double rule] | “Qualis in Eurote ripis, aut per juga Cynthi | Exercet
DIANA choros.” OVID.

Underlining denotes the presence of gothic font. Also, note that the second of the two rules separating the author from the epigraph is of a greater thickness than the first.

Appendix III: A Note on the Pseudonym “Horace Hornem, Esq.”

Byron chose the pseudonym “Horace Hornem, Esq.” with specific aspects of *Waltz* in mind. The first name clearly refers to the famous Roman orator and poet Horace, who remains best known for his odes on various aspects of Roman social life. Like his celebrated namesake, Horace Hornem uses the Classical poetic form of the “apostrophic hymn” (i.e., the ode) in order to make timely observations about his society. The humor in comparing the historical Horace to the putative author of *Waltz* lies in the fact that the latter’s subject matter is of a completely ephemeral nature. Whereas the historical Horace’s odes depicted aspects of what Byron would have considered one of the greatest civilizations ever to have existed, the Horace of *Waltz* immortalizes what Byron would have regarded as a pointless passing fad.

Explaining the surname “Hornem” requires a closer look at Byron’s biography as well as some speculation about his personal feelings at the time of *Waltz*’s composition. During the same period that Byron first encountered the waltz and wrote his satire about it, he was also making his first (unsuccessful) attempts to woo his future wife, Annabella Milbanke. Byron absolutely dreaded the possibility that a passion for waltzing on Annabella’s part might act as an insurmountable obstacle in his courtship of her (*Byron’s Letters* 2.218). And yet he also seems to have had an acute awareness of how singular his distaste for the waltz must have appeared to friends and acquaintances such as Annabella. By disdaining the dance as he did, the notorious “immoralist” Byron suddenly found himself in the unlikely company of those same staunch moral conservatives, stern-faced curmudgeons, and unrefined rural gentry whom he would later mock in *Don Juan*.

The humor of this situation was almost assuredly not lost on Byron. Indeed, it appears that through the persona of Horace Hornem, Esq., *Waltz*'s putative author, Byron was lampooning in part the curious position in which his own dislike of waltzing had placed him. Horace Hornem is in many ways Byron's extreme counterpart. Dull, unsophisticated, sociopolitically conservative, and pathologically clueless about the manners and mores of London high society, Hornem is a caricature of the man whom Byron saw himself suddenly becoming whenever he expressed an opinion on waltzing or watched others perform the dance.

One possible gesture in this direction is Byron's erroneous attribution of *Waltz*'s epigraph to Ovid. As noted above, this attribution occurs in the 1813 authorized edition and therefore seems to be Byron's own. But the considerable knowledge of classical literature attested in Byron's other works suggests that this error is anything but accidental. Hornem, as Eisler has observed, typifies the stereotypical "naïve country squire" who fashions himself a gentleman but lacks both the learning and the refinement of one (367). Indeed, Hornem himself proclaims in note 1 to the text of *Waltz*, "My Latin is all forgotten, if a man can be said to have forgot what he never learned" (B7^f). Thus it is more likely that the error in attribution lies with the classically illiterate Hornem rather than the Cantabrigian Byron. By having Hornem in his capacity as author and cultural critic make the laughably parochial mistake of confusing Virgil with Ovid, Byron satirizes the backwardness seemingly evinced by his own attitude toward waltzing. The misattribution of the epigraph allows Byron slyly to insinuate that a worldly and educated gentleman like himself should not be expressing the sort of opinions more usually

identified with coarse rustics like Hornem, who cannot tell the difference between the two greatest Roman poets of all time.

Yet, for all the apparent dissimilarity between Byron and his pseudonymous persona, Horace Hornem also represents a great deal that Byron was (or, at least, felt he was) at the time of *Waltz*'s composition. The name "Hornem" resembles "horn," which in turn evokes the story of Actaeon, whom Diana caused to sprout horns after he espied the goddess and her coterie of nymphs bathing in the forest. (Recall that the epigraph to *Waltz* specifically references the awesome spectacle of Diana and her "chorus" of nymphs.) As is well-known, the figure of horned Actaeon carries with it strong associations with cuckoldry and male inadequacy.¹⁰ Horace Hornem can thus be seen as an expression of Byron's own sense of inadequacy in the face of his physical inability to dance the waltz. Like Hornem, whose similar inability to dance the waltz results in his wife and daughter being stolen away from him by fleet-footed Austrian princes, Byron must stand by and face the prospect that some more physically capable man will step in and (literally) sweep Annabella Milbanke off her feet.

Endnotes

¹ See my note on Byron's pseudonym in Appendix III for further discussion of the nature and significance of the Horace Hornem, Esq., persona.

² I will refer to the text in question hereafter as the GSU copy.

³ The presence of some type of identifying serial number, "PC93" (clearly not the Library of Congress catalogue number), suggests the association of this handwritten note with a twentieth-century bookseller. The same hand appears also to have penciled in additional annotations to the text. The date "1813" appears to the left of Horace Hornem's signature at the end of the prefatory address "To the Publisher," and pagination (22-24) has been added on both sides of B4, which separates the text of the poem from the text of the notes. See Appendix II for further information on these latter annotations.

⁴ This and all subsequent discussions of specific textual features of the 1821 pirated edition reference the digitally scanned facsimile that the Bodleian has made freely available to the public via *Google Books*.

⁵ For more on the reason why Byron, a competent classicist, would have attributed the epigraph incorrectly, see my discussion of the Horace Hornem pseudonym in Appendix III. The answer to this question of the (seemingly deliberate) erroneous attribution also explains the broader significance of the epigraph's use.

⁶ As Randolph and Wise attest, the 1813 edition contains a printer statement identifying it as the work of an S. Gosnell under the commission of prominent London publisher Sherwood, Neely, and Jones of Paternoster Row. This rules out the possibility that the GSU copy belongs to the first edition. For more information on the reason why Sherwood, Neely, and Jones published *Waltz* rather than Byron's usual publisher, John Murray, see note 7 below and *Byron's Letters* 3.41 n 2.

⁷ After all, *Waltz* was first published around the same time that Byron's friend, the editor and poet Leigh Hunt, found himself on trial for authoring and printing a rather unflattering article about the Prince Regent in his newspaper, the *Examiner*. That Hunt was found guilty of libel and sentenced to two years in prison would have only intensified anxieties about punitive measures being taken against those who authored or disseminated subversive texts such as *Waltz*.

⁸ The catalogue description of the Syracuse University copy offers some additional proof for identifying the Syracuse copy and the GSU copy as one in the same. In addition to stating that the Syracuse copy is "not in Wise," the description mentions the presence of "8 pages of 'notes,' p[ages] 23-30." The GSU copy also contains eight pages of notes with the same pagination.

However, the Syracuse University catalogue also mentions that these notes are "not in the original editions" and "not by Byron." This claim would seem to mark the Syracuse copy as distinct from the GSU copy, for the notes in the GSU copy appear to be the same ones that Byron composed for the 1813 edition. Yet this claim seems mistaken. Although the notes in the 1813 and 1821 editions begin and end on different page numbers, they both contain roughly the same amount of notes as the GSU and Syracuse copies in terms of page length. Such similarity would seem to indicate (albeit, inconclusively) that the notes in the Syracuse copy are the same as those in the GSU copy and the two other known editions.

⁹ By the time of the 1821 edition, however, measures of this sort seem to have become largely unnecessary. Two other major differences between the 1816 and 1821 editions are the appositive "The Noble Author of *Don Juan*," which is affixed below the pseudonym on the title page of the latter, and the inclusion of five "fugitive pieces" including the moderately well-known Byron poems "To T. Moore" and "Adieu to Malta." (Wise points out that .) When coupled with the presence of a printer statement, these features suggest that the parties involved in the publication of the 1821 edition did not regard open association with Byron as quite the same professional and personal risk as those responsible for the 1816 edition did. After all, five years on the Continent

had caused the furor over Byron's private transgressions to cool considerably, and the publication of *Don Juan* beginning in 1819 had shifted the London reading public's opinion back toward a more favorable view of him as both an important poet and an important cultural figure. While the risk of prosecution for disseminating a subversive text still loomed remotely, being openly associated with "the noble author of *Don Juan*" evidently did not carry with it the same risk as did open association with the "mad, bad, and dangerous" Byron of 1816.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Falstaff's humiliation in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the Knight's unfortunate fate in *Dr. Faustus*.

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