

= Nicolo Giraud =

Nicolo or Nicolas Giraud (born c . 1795 ? after 1815) was a friend and possibly a lover of the English Romantic poet Lord Byron . The two met in 1809 while Byron was staying in Athens . Giraud was reported to have taught him Italian , and was his travel companion in Greece . Byron paid for Giraud 's education and left him £ 7 @, @ 000 (about £ 450 @, @ 000 in 2016) in his will . Years after they parted company , Byron changed his will to exclude Giraud . Other than his involvement with Byron , little is known of Giraud 's life .

The friendship between Byron and Giraud has become a topic of interest among scholars and biographers of Byron . Many believe that the pair 's relationship was platonic , but correspondence between Byron and his friends has been used since the late 20th century to argue that the two were engaged in a love affair . The earliest claim of a sexual relationship between them comes from George Colman 's poem *Don Leon* , in which Byron is the principal character and Giraud is portrayed as his liberator from the sexual prejudices in Britain . The poem is not biographical ; it promotes Colman 's own social and political views .

= = Life = =

Nicolas Giraud was born in Greece to French parents ; the name by which he is most commonly known , Nicolo , was given to him by Byron . Giraud may have been the brother @-@ in @-@ law of Giovanni Battista Lusieri , a Roman painter and broker for Lord Elgin . Demetrius Zografos , Byron 's guide in Greece , informed Byron that the 60 @-@ year @-@ old Lusieri was unmarried , and was courting two women , each of whom believed that Lusieri was to marry her . Lusieri certainly had a close relationship with Giraud , so it is possible that the two were related in another way , perhaps as father and son . Byron met Giraud in Athens in January 1809 , and the two were companions until Byron resumed his travels in March .

During the following year , Giraud was working at a Capuchin monastery when he was assigned to teach Byron Italian after the latter 's return to Greece . The two spent their days studying , swimming , and taking in the landscape as Byron composed poetry . In a letter to John Hobhouse , dated 23 August 1810 and written at the Capuchin monastery of Mende near Athens where he was residing , Byron states :

But my friend , as you may easily imagine , is Nicolo who by @-@ the @-@ by , is my Italian master , and we are already very philosophical . I am his " Padrone " and his " amico " , and the Lord knows what besides . It is about two hours since , that , after informing me he was most desirous to follow him (that is me) over the world , he concluded by telling me it was proper for us not only to live , but " morire insieme " [die together] . The latter I hope to avoid ? as much of the former as he pleases .

Byron took Giraud to visit Charles Meryon , an English doctor who recounted the visit in his memoirs and noted Byron 's vivid interest in the boy . Afterward , rumours were spread by Byron 's servant that the consultation concerned an anal rupture . Meryon was a travelling companion with Michael Bruce and Lady Hester Stanhope , one of Byron 's friends . Accounts from Bruce and Howe Browne , both witnesses to Byron 's interactions with Giraud , provided confirmation of the relationship to Byron 's early biographer Thomas Moore , although in disparaging terms . In mid @-@ 1810 , Giraud acted as Byron 's majordomo on their travels to the Peloponnese , and took care of Byron during his illness while at Patras , eventually becoming ill himself . After recovering , although still weak , the pair continued on their travels , arriving at Athens on 13 October . By November they were joined by Lusieri , Louis François Sébastien Fauvel , who was a French consul , and a group of German academics .

Byron and Giraud parted ways in Valletta , Malta . Byron saw to Giraud 's education by paying for his schooling in a monastery on the island . The two stayed in contact by letter , and after a year Giraud left the monastery , telling Byron that he was tired of the company of monks . Shortly after Giraud left Malta , Byron drew up for him in his will a bequest of £ 7 @, @ 000 (£ 450 @, @ 000 in 2016) , almost twice as much as he later lent for refitting the Greek Navy . The will read : " To

Nicolo Giraud of Athens , subject of France , but born in Greece , the sum of seven thousand pounds sterling , to be paid from the sale of such parts of Rochdale , Newstead or elsewhere , as may enable the said Nicolo Giraud ... to receive the above sum on his attaining the age of twenty @-@ one years . " Byron later removed Giraud from his will (as he did with John Edleston ? who predeceased him ? and other boyhood companions) .

Giraud wrote to Byron in January 1815 :

My most precious Master , I cannot describe the grief of my heart at not seeing you for such a long time . Ah , if only I were a bird and could fly so as to come and see you for one hour , and I would be happy to die at the same time . Hope tells me that I shall see you again and that is my consolation for not dying immediately . It is two years now since I spoke English . I have completely forgotten it .

Byron had not been responding to Nicolo 's letters , which Nicolo mentions in the letter : " It is now almost three years that I am at Athens ; and have sent you many letters , but I have not received any answer " . It is possible that Byron did not respond because he was married and , according to the 20th @-@ century Byron biographer Phyllis Grosskurth , " Nicolo was the last person he would have wanted to hear from . "

= = Relationship with Byron = =

Giraud 's relationship with Byron has been a topic discussed by many of Byron 's biographers . Moore , Byron 's early biographer , described the relationship between Byron and Giraud as :

one of those extraordinary friendships ? if attachment to persons so inferior to himself can be called by that name ? of which I have already mentioned two or three instances in his younger days , and in which the pride of being a protector , and the pleasure of exerting gratitude , seem to have constituted to his mind the chief , pervading charm . The person , whom he now adopted in this manner , and from similar feelings to those which had inspired his early attachments to the cottage @-@ boy near Newstead , and the young chorister at Cambridge , was a Greek youth , named Nicolo Giraud , the son , I believe , of a widow lady , in whose house the artist Lusieri lodged . In this young man he appear [s] to have taken the most lively , and even brotherly , interest .

Moore 's work was commented on by Byron 's close friend , John Hobhouse , who noted that " Moore had not the remotest guess at the real reason which induced Lord B. at that time to prefer having no Englishman immediately or constantly near him . " Regardless of Moore 's bias against the lower class and Byron 's spending time with other boys during his times in Greece , Byron was close to Giraud while the two were together .

Early 20th @-@ century biographer André Maurois argues that " what Byron was capable of loving in another was a certain kind of innocence and youthfulness " and that the relationship was one of Byron 's " protective passions " . Likewise , G. Wilson Knight , in his 1953 biography of Byron , believes that Byron became protective over Giraud just as he did with all of the children he met during his travels . Giraud was special to Byron , and , according to Knight , " it was probably of Nicolo that he was thinking when he wrote that Greece was ' the only place I was ever contented in ' " . In Byron : A Biography , published in 1957 , Marchand points out that Byron " wished Hobhouse there to share the nonsensical gaiety " of when Byron and Giraud were together , but changed his mind after remembering that Hobhouse 's personality would not be conducive to entertainment . Their time together " was a relaxed pleasure that [Byron] was to remember more fondly than most of the adventures of his travels " .

A few critics disagree with the speculation over Giraud 's and Byron 's relationship . The early 20th @-@ century biographer Ethel Mayne points out both the frequency of such relationships in Byron 's life and their inherent ambiguity when she says , " His stay was also marked by one of those ambiguous friendships with a youth infinitely below him in rank which have already been seen to recur in his life ... The patron was supposed to be learning Italian from [Girard] ; this made a pretext for giving him , on their parting at Malta in 1811 ... a considerable sum of money " . Elizabeth Longford , in her 1976 biography , disagrees with the claims that there was a physical relationship between the two and argues , " Byron 's especial favourite among the ' ragazzi ' was Nicolo Giraud . He had first taken up with Nicolo while Hobhouse was away in Euboea the year before , but there is

no evidence that his feelings for Nicolo were anything but romantic and protective . " Jerome Christensen followed this view in 1993 and adds , " we know little more than what Byron tells us " .

Christensen points out that " although there is no evidence that Lord Byron , padrone and amico , was ever so vulgar as to set an exact market value on his sexual arrangements in Greece , Nicolo Giraud , Eustathius 's replacement in Byron 's affections , was employed as ' dragoman and Major Domo ' , a position that almost certainly entailed payment in love and money " . D. L. MacDonald 's 1986 biography simply describes Giraud as " The great love of Byron 's Eastern tour " , and D. S. Neff 's 2002 work describes the two as part of " an amorous relationship " . Others , such Jay Losey and William Brewer in their analysis of 19th @-@ century sexuality , speculate that Byron 's relationship with Giraud was modeled on a Grecian form of pederasty , and homosexual studies scholar Louis Crompton believes that pederasty was a facet of Byron 's life and that his letters hinted towards a sexual relationship between Byron and Giraud . As Paul Douglass , in an analysis of Byron biographical studies , points out , Crompton also claims that biographers like Marchand ignored the nature of Byron 's relationship with Giraud . Douglass also mentions that Crompton 's work , Byron and Greek Love " focuses Byron 's life around a single issue , rather than attempting to create a larger view . Such studies prompt negative responses from those who feel the writer warps Byron to fit the theme , presenting a one @-@ sided account " .

Benita Eisler , in 2000 , argues that Giraud was one of many of Byron 's intended sexual conquests . Although , as Eisler claims , Byron was at first unable to attain " that state of total and complete satisfaction " of a sexual relationship with Giraud , he wrote to Charles Matthews declaring that he would soon conquer any of the boy 's remaining inhibitions . During Byron 's illness , Byron boasted to Hobhouse and Lady Melbourne that he continued to have sex with one such incident almost causing his death . Although it is uncertain , according to Eisler , " Whether this surfeit of erotic fulfillment involved only Nicolo as partner , he does not say . He was still fond enough of the boy , but his sexual obsession , with its attendant scorekeeping , seems to have run its course . " Nigel Leask , in 2004 , argues that Hobhouse would have disapproved of Byron 's relationship with Giraud , and Fiona MacCarthy notes in her 2002 biography that Lady Melbourne " would have understood his partner to be female " . In a survey of the various biographical opinions and disagreements about Byron 's relationships , including Giraud , written before 2004 , Douglass points out that " despite the greater certainty about his sexual ambivalence , the exact nature of those relationships remains elusive " .

= = = Don Leon = = =

George Colman , Byron 's friend , anonymously wrote a poem called Don Leon that , according to Bernard Grebanier , " depicts Byron as having wooed Giraud with gifts when they first met , and to have busied himself with developing the boy 's mind " .

The narrator of Don Leon praises Giraud and claims that Giraud was so beautiful that he :

Gave pleasing doubts of what his sex might be ;

And who that saw him would perplexed have been ,

For beauty marked his gender epicoene .

Throughout the poem , the narrator describes how Byron (Don Leon) spent his time with Giraud :

Spent half in love and half in poetry !

The muse each morn I wooed , each eve the boy ,

And tasted sweets that never seemed to cloy .

The poem ends with Giraud 's beauty conquering any fears that Byron may have about their relationship :

But thou , Giraud , whose beauty would unlock

The gates of prejudice , and bid me mock

The sober fears that timid minds endure ,

Whose ardent passions women only cure ,

Receive this faithful tribute to thy charms ,

Not vowed alone , but paid too in thy arms .

For here the wish , long cherished , long denied ,
Within that monkish cell was gratified .

G. Wilson Knight , unlike most early critics , thought the poem was worthy of response , although he says that it was from " the most indecent poet of high quality in our literature " . Grebanier believes that Colman , as " a recipient of Byron 's confidence during a crucial period of the poet 's life , and as a man who shared Byron 's hatred of pretense ... must have seen an ideal subject in presenting ruthlessly , even brutally , the basic truths about Byron 's moral dilemma , as a powerful means of blasting once more that sanctimoniousness which has always been fashionable in Britain . " Colman 's purpose was not necessarily to discuss Giraud , but to respond to those who spread rumours about Byron and criticized Byron for his failed marriage , the reason for his exile . The poem does focus on Giraud , and , as Grebanier argues , " If , the poem says , our hero 's affections were fastened upon Nicolo Giraud " then Byron 's actions are acceptable because " he was but following the custom of the country . Once he had seen a beautiful Ganymede of fifteen attending the Turkish Governor , a Grecian youth , publicly known as the Governor 's ' catamite . ' Was it criminal to do what the Governor was doing ? "

Byrne Fone , a historian of homosexuality @-@ related issues , emphasizes how the poem and the fictional discussion of Giraud and Byron 's relationship reveal insights into 19th @-@ century British views on homosexuality . To Fone , the poem was written by one who knew Byron and reveals Byron 's homosexuality . Fone also argues that the 1833 publication of the poem was prompted by the arrest of William Bankes , a homosexual friend of Byron , and the execution of Henry Nicholls for homosexual activity . The opening lines of the poem mention " crippled Talleyrand " , William Beckford and William Courtenay . Fone argues that the references to Beckford and Courtenay are used both to talk about the unfair treatment of homosexual men who had committed no real crime , and to emphasise England 's hypocrisy when it comes to sex . The poem then claims that England 's treatment of homosexuals forces Don Leon to travel to Greece in order to fulfill his desires and be free of intellectual control , which is fulfilled when Don Leon is able to be with Giraud . The fictional Giraud , according to Fone , allows Don Leon to break free of the homophobia of England . The poem , as he points out , tries to convince Moore to mention Byron 's homosexual desires . Fone concludes , " It is not only the poem that is an effective attack on homophobic prejudice , but the example of the poet himself . "