



Count Julian

Walter Savage Landor

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Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) was an English writer and poet, eldest son of Walter Landor and his wife Elizabeth Savage. He was sent to Rugby School, but was removed at the headmaster's request and studied privately with Mr. Langley, vicar of Ashbourne. In 1793 appeared in a small volume, divided into three books, *The Poems of Walter Savage Landor*, and, in pamphlet form of nineteen pages, an anonymous *Moral Epistle*, respectfully dedicated to Earl Stanhope. No poet at the age of twenty ever had more vigour of style and fluency of verse; nor perhaps has any ever shown such masterly command of epigram and satire, made vivid and vital by the purest enthusiasm and most generous indignation. Three years later appeared the first edition of the first great work which was to inscribe his name for ever among the great names in English poetry, *Gebir*. In 1808, under an impulse not less heroic than that which was afterwards to lead Byron to a glorious death in redemption of Greece and his own good fame, Landor, then aged thirty-three, left England for Spain as a volunteer to serve in the national army against Napoleon at the head of a regiment raised and supported at his sole expense. After some three months campaigning came the affair of Cintra and its disasters; his troop, in the words of his biographer, dispersed or melted away, and he came back to England in as great a hurry as he had left it, but bringing with him the honourable recollection of a brave design unselfishly attempted. The campaign also furnished the material in his memory for the sublimest poem published in our language, between the last masterpiece of Milton and the first masterpiece of Shelley, one equally worthy to stand unchallenged beside either for poetic perfection as well as moral majesty, the lofty tragedy of *Count Julian*, which appeared in 1812, without the name of its author. No comparable work is to be found in English poetry between the date of *Samson Agonistes* and the date of *Prometheus Unbound*; and with both these great works it has some points of greatness in common.

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