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Byron and his Twentieth Century Poetic Legacy: Yeats, Auden, Berryman

Abstract

In the twentieth century, Byron offers poetic opportunities for new generations of poets. However, critics have rarely chosen to explore the contours and content of this influence. This article understands Byron's influence not as subconscious but as deliberately fashioned by his inheritors, where W. B. Yeats, W. H. Auden, and John Berryman choose the way in which Byron functions as a model in their poetry. Byron is neither forbidding ancestor nor kindly father. What Byron offers to his twentieth century descendants would not be a shared manner or a collective talent for a well-placed echo or allusion to their precursor. Byron offers a multi-faceted example that his followers would explore and exploit. Focusing upon W. B. Yeats, W. H. Auden, and John Berryman, this article will explore how Byronic Romanticism becomes central to these twentieth century poets. Byron's cosmopolitanism offered each of his inheritors a version of an Anglophone poet far removed from the parochial model. Byron becomes an alternative version of Harold Bloom's 'exemplary Modern Poet' especially adapted for twentieth century purposes.

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Byron and his Twentieth Century Poetic Legacy: Yeats, Auden, Berryman

Harold Bloom pronounces Wordsworth 'the exemplary Modern Poet, the Poet proper',[1] where Romanticism equates to the Wordsworthian. But what of Byron, his great contemporary, who refused to conform to Wordsworthian values? Byron rejected, perhaps with more humour than sincerity, 'Turdsworth the great Metaquizzical poet',[2] and made his brand of poetics offer up very different opportunities from his Lake poet peer. If the modernists claimed to dispense with, in

T. E. Hulme's strident terms, Romanticism as 'spilt religion',[3] Byron's version of (anti-)Romanticism became a competing and compelling possibility for twentieth century poets.[4] It is remarkable that critics have tended not to afford much time to Byron's twentieth century legacy,[5] with even Damian Walford Davies and Richard Maggraf Turley's collection, *The Monstrous Debt*, affording a mere four cursory references to Byron.[6] Yet Byron's 'conversational facility',[7] his mobility, his cosmopolitanism, and his celebration of artifice are vital to his inheritors. W. B. Yeats, W. H. Auden, and John Berryman choose to work with Byron's example, taking from him the conversational wittiness, the role of incisive critic of his own age, and above all, the presence and multi-vocal range that Byron embeds into poetry. Byronic Romanticism remained central to Anglo-Irish and American poetry.[8] Byron becomes the exemplar that sanctions the diversity and power of their own poetic voices.

Byron himself did not seem to wish for inheritors. Writing to Thomas Moore, Byron disavowed the coming generation for fear they would imitate what his had attempted:

> Our fame will be hurt by admiration and imitation. When I say our, I mean all (Lakers included), except the postscript of the Augustans. The next generation (from the quantity and facility of imitation) will tumble and break their necks off our Pegasus, who runs away with us; but we keep the saddle, because we broke the rascal and can ride. (*BLJ* VI, 10)

Romantic innovation, for Byron, was a siren song that would seduce and then embarrass inheritors who can't 'ride' their Pegasus. Inheritance would not spell success. Sarah Wootton shows Byron as a poet who operates as 'an active agent in the myths that grow up around him',[9] and Lucy Newlyn shrewdly refers to 'Byron's

(masculine) imperviousness to his own popularity' as 'myth'.[10] Myth it was, but Byron did characterize himself as 'a ruin amidst ruins' (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* IV. 225: 19), and his example to his twentieth century descendants has resembled this fractured self-portrait. Christopher Ricks's and Harold Bloom's theories of influence, the former based on inheritance and the latter founded upon *agon*, offer vital ways of reading the idea of influence in general.[11] Yet the nature of Byron's specific example licensed a specific type of attitude towards his influence: the sense of having a choice. What Yeats, Auden, and Berryman would take from Byron would not be a shared manner or a collective talent for a well-placed echo or allusion to their precursor. Byron functions neither as a forbidding ancestor nor as a kindly father figure. Following Christopher Ricks's *Allusion to the Poets*, I view their relationships in these cases as a fortunate inheritance rather than a terrible burden.[12] Yeats, Auden, and Berryman's interactions with Byron bear the hallmarks of relations enjoyed rather than endured. Byron's influence offers a peculiar freedom. The poet who 'was born to say the things that people say one must not say' extends a fraternal hand rather than wears a paternal frown.[13] Each twentieth century poet rode their own version of Byron's Pegasus and took only what they needed from the Romantic poet's multi-faceted example.

Eliot and Pound made Romantic poetry their bugbear, aiming to slough off their Romantic predecessors in favour of a new, more modern, aesthetic. But T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound were not so anti-Romantic as they advertised, and closer scrutiny of their work yields repeated incursions of Romanticism in general and Byronism in particular. Pound's *Cantos*, his international and trans-historical epic, is a monument to his wilful effort to master the slippery and difficult material—history itself—within

the form and genre of his choosing. Byron, 'whom he much admired',[14] had written *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*,[15] which both became models for Pound's enterprise. Byron provided a recent example of cosmopolitan experimental poetics for Pound,[16] and Byron's mixed register, where personality dominates throughout all lament and criticism, gave Pound a modern prototype for how his own epic could range from emotion to emotion, mode to mode, within a single framework. If Pound found freedom in Byron's example, Eliot would find another way to make Byron useful. Grover Smith perceptively notes the worth of Byron to Eliot,[17] and Eliot exposes his own stake in the Byron myth in an essay that appears to condemn Byron to being only significant for his own generation. Eliot's essay, 'Byron', sees Eliot's critical intelligence adopt a swingeing attacking force, as if killing off a problematic precursor in Bloom's parlance. For Eliot, Byron 'was an actor who devoted immense trouble to becoming a role that he adopted; his superficiality was something that he created for himself'. Repeatedly, Eliot refers to Byron as adopting the mantle of an 'intelligent foreigner', whose voice is that of 'an accomplished foreigner writing in English'.[18] Correspondence between the two poets abounds, with Eliot emerging as the ultimate example of such an 'intelligent foreigner' writing of and in England. What Eliot also concedes in this apparent attack is a way of reading the Romantic poet that is all about smooth surfaces and theatrical posturing while recognising Byron as a poet of difference, one divorced from his subject and even his language. Alice Levine points out a shared apprehension of their roles in the respective consciousness of their generations: 'Byron and Eliot often seem to stand analogously apart from the traditions with which they have become all but synonymous'.[19] This play of surfaces, theatrical ruin, and cosmopolitan 'foreignness' forms a faint but fundamental connection between Byron and Eliot. Neither Pound nor Eliot could

exorcise Byron from their poetry, but it was Yeats who would choose Byron as a vital model with whom he could work in his post-nineties poetry.

Byron, rather than being the monolith that governed Yeats's career, is one of many Romantic influences for Yeats, drawn upon to build those 'mere complexities' ('Byzantium', 7) of his poetry.[20] Yeats found in Byron a different example from what Eliot or Pound had observed.[21] If Eliot noted the actor, and Pound used the epic cosmopolitan innovator, Yeats heard the speaker. Yeats had been influenced by Pound's determinedly modern self-conception but, as George Bornstein writes, 'Pound's impact became a coda rather than an overture to a new phrase in Yeats' anti-romanticism, and he shortly turned back to his original tradition with instruments tuned by the techniques of modernism'.[22] Pound and Eliot's poetics began to pall. After reading H. J. C Grierson's collection of essays,[23] Yeats wrote to him on 21 February 1926: 'I am particularly indebted to you for your essay on Byron. My own verse has more and more adopted – seemingly without any will of mine – the syntax and vocabulary of common personal speech'.[24] Carlos Baker views 'Byron as a model',[25] as Yeats came to see in Byron a poetic ancestor, and Byron was a precursor that stood for conflict, formal mastery, political engagement, and a personality that stood at the centre of the poetry.

In 'No Second Troy', personal mythology achieves, or wishes to claim, the grandeur and significance of Homer's war. Fascination with experimentation turns 'No Second Troy' into cross-rhymed question after question. Sidestepping the Petrarchan or Shakespearean sonnet tradition via his formal choices, we are drawn into the elevation of woman into myth:

What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

('No Second Troy', 8-14)

Yeats sounds Byron's conversational note by eschewing smooth iambic pentameter, with emotion seeming to run the sestet metrically ragged. Lines 8 to 12 burst towards a question that demands not an answer from the reader but recognition of the seminal significance of Yeats's subject and, by extension, Yeats himself. But Yeats seems a bystander, an onlooker writing about power rather than enjoying its possession. Byron makes the same move in *Don Juan*, where the narrator's continuing speech suggests his significance but his subject betrays him as peripheral. Advising Juan to 'Be hypocritical, be cautious, be / Not what you *seem*, but always what you *see*' (*Don Juan*, XI. 86: 687-8), there is a dangerous sense, for both Byron and Yeats, that poetry may be nothing compared to action. The self-loathing of the man of contemplation when compared to the man of action, conscious of 'the envy in my thought' ('The Road at My Door', 13), recurs from Byron to Yeats, with both using their chosen task to build and sustain myth as the 'action' that might promote poetry from word to deed.

Byron's poetry swells personal rumours into public legend. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the poem that prompted Byron's claim, 'I awoke one morning and found

myself famous',[26] faces up to, even fanning the flames of the very public drama about his infamous separation from Annabella Milbanke. The poetry experiments with the porousness of the boundary between art and autobiography rather than bemoaning it:

> Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
> Ada! sole daughter of my house and heart?
> When last I saw thy young blue eyes, they smiled,
> And then we parted,—not as now we part,
> But with a hope.—
> Awaking with a start,
> The waters heave around me; and on high
> The winds lift up their voices: I depart,
> Whither I know not; but the hour's gone by,
> When Albion's lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye.

(*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* III. 1: 1-9)

The intricacy of the formal choices sees Byron enshrine suffering in song, using poetry to transmute local gossip into titanic myth. He does not abandon himself entirely to an emotion but instead reveals the symbiotic union between form and feeling. The final line's balancing of sounds uses 'grieve or glad' to make both emotions seem the same to the now disaffected poet. Pulling the stanza apart before knitting it back together, Byron almost severs the poem's prosodic and rhyming links before using them as a means to keep going. Newlyn writes 'If Keats triumphed over the cult of personality by its negation, Byron's was the opposite course',[27] and Yeats adopts Byron's choice.

Yeats would profit from Byron's example in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 'The Tower'. This poem, for all its apparent confessional quality where Yeats breaks down as he faces up to the despair of the imagination's focus upon 'a woman won or woman lost?' (II. 113), dissolves the spontaneity affected by the lines as we note the recurrence of 'labyrinth' from one stanza to another. Yeats anticipates, structures, and controls even the most apparently devastating personal pain. Yeats learns from Byron that no emotional experience is without poetic potential. Emotion is important inasmuch as it can be transmuted into art. Listing Byron's heroes alongside those of Keats and Shelley, Yeats aims to pinpoint how each succeeded in creating types and symbols instead of characters. In his *Uncollected Prose*, Yeats wrote:

> the poets began to write but little of individual men and women, but rather of great types, great symbols of passion and mood, like Alastor, Don Juan, Manfred, Ahasuerus, Prometheus, and Isabella of the Basil Pot. When they tried, as in Byron's plays, to display character for its own sake they failed.[28]

Though critics might rightly protest that Byron actually managed to create characters, particularly Don Juan,[29] it is Yeats's perception that the Romantic poets must needs create great types that offers a suggestive insight into Byron's significance for the younger poet. George Bornstein writes that 'Yeats himself never really succeeded in creating rounded characters in his plays',[30] and we might extend this observation to view Yeats as aiming to write the self as one of those 'great types, great symbols of passion and mood' in some of his most characteristic poetry. Though Byron is listed with Keats and Shelley in Yeats's observations, Don Juan as a character stands out amongst the given names. Yeats, as Bornstein observes, 'needed some of Byron's relaxed raciness to break out of his early rhetoric of the nineties',[31] but he also needed Byron's skill of matching prosody with emotion to sharpen the tang of personal

emotion transmuted into poetry and Byron's example of a poet rendering his poetics in poetry rather than prose. 'The Tower' is a showcase for what Yeats takes of Byron's example.

Hanrahan, as featured in 'The Tower', becomes symbolic of the productive tension between the personal and the artistic, rendered in poetry but with an existence that seems to extend beyond the purely textual. Though one of Yeats's heroic nationalist characters,[32] one of those 'great types', there remains something brokenly human about him, where character starts to edge out type, recalling how Don Juan also seems to move between character and type in Byron's eponymous epic. Likewise, Yeats's creative imagination jostles against Hanrahan's presence, where the former's power seems to possess shades of sadism rather than Coleridge's grand conception of primary imagination as 'a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'.[33] Yeats's imagination has teeth:

> And I myself created Hanrahan
> And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn
> From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages.
> Caught by an old man's juggleries
> He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro
> And had but broken knees for hire
> And horrible splendour of desire;
> I thought it all out twenty years ago:

(57-64)

Even as Yeats asserts his control over Hanrahan as subject matter, the rhyme scheme slurs, with 'Hanrahan' and 'dawn' shedding a menacing dissonance within the first

two lines, only to be followed up by the following straining rhymes. This jarring serves to indicate pointedly that the stanza is a created structure, marshalled into poetry by the poet whose repetitive 'ands' point up struggle. The poet's control has its limits, and language almost escapes rhyme's harness. Language mirrors content as 'stumbled, tumbled, fumbled' jolts the line, and anticipates Hanrahan's broken knees. The bitter rhyming unity of 'hire' and 'desire' laments their match where 'horrible splendour of desire' melds longing with its corresponding pain and degradation. Yeats depicts Hanrahan's struggle through these lines with close attention to his stumbling existence, but the final lines indicate a disengagement from his creation. There is a certain cruelty here as Yeats's pleasure in the creation of Hanrahan's pain mingles with pity, and a shimmering sense of the Joycean artist paring his fingernails as he writes.

That curious mixture of sympathy and cruelty, engagement with disassociation, appears in Byron's *Don Juan*'s narrator as he steers Don Juan through his many adventures and his suffering. As in 'The Tower', we are forced to note the poet's power. For *Don Juan* furnished Yeats with an important example of how the poet might act as a magician, showing his sleight to hand to his captive audience. In *Don Juan*, Byron's artistic control over his subject immerses the reader in the description of Haidée's and Juan's doomed love affair followed by her decline and eventual death. Byron presents the narrator as moved by the tale, which corresponds to the anticipated reader response that Byron projects. But the narrator asserts his authority over the tale: 'Here I must leave him, for I grow pathetic, / Moved by the Chinese nymph of tears, green tea!' (*Don Juan* IV. 52: 409-10). Juan's suffering seems like a quirk of the narrator's imagination, a chance slip of the pen. It is the narrator's choice

of beverage that dictates the story, and a second, brusquer demonstration of the narrator's power over the direction of the tale jars with the pathetic description that immediately preceded it:

> But let me change this theme, which grows too sad,
>
> And lay this sheet of sorrows on the shelf; …
>
> Besides I've no more on this head to add;
>
> And as my Muse is a capricious elf,
>
> We'll put about, and try another tack

(*Don Juan* IV. 74: 585 & 586 and 589-91)

This deliberately abrasive change of 'tack', where the poet's art sees him 'put about' rather than 'sing, by my own eyes inspired' (Keats, 'Ode to Psyche', 43)[34] underscores the narrator's pose of having unpretentious control over the chaos of the multiple tales to be told: the narrator moulds the poem and Juan's life in his chosen and affectedly down to earth imaginative cast. Our attention stays on the teller of the tale, not its official hero. The poet is the one to watch, and neither Byron nor Yeats allows the reader to forget it.

Byron also sanctioned an example of the worldly poet turning prophet with a twist, not specially anointed by some higher power, but as one of the 'Men of the world, who know the World like Men' (*Beppo* 76. 602). Shelley, who 'shaped my life',[35] and William Blake, one of the poets to whom Yeats 'owe[d] my soul',[36] had donned the prophetic mantle, but Byron's 'Darkness', with its knowing and carefully detached version of the apocalypse, offers a suggestive though oblique influence upon 'The Second Coming'. Prophetic from its opening, Yeats writes his terse lines in the

manner of a witness to destructive potential, unable to prevent certain ruin. We plunge into dark half-knowledge:

> The darkness drops again; but now I know
> That twenty centuries of stony sleep
> Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

(18-22)

Instead of reading this through the Shelleyan lens of poets as 'legislators, or prophets' (*A Defence of Poetry*, 677), Yeats accesses a different type of prophecy, whispering that the poet-prophet might not be on our side. That unnameable 'rough beast', won through incomplete and imperfect knowledge, has a thrilling menace: Yeats barely conceals his excitement. Byron's 'Darkness' enjoys its shadowy knowledge differently, where the poetry slumps rather than flares into nightmare:

> The world was void,
> The populous and the powerful—was a lump,
> Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
> A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.

(69-72)

Speeding through non-description, with these 'lesses' signalling all that is not, the poetry's lumpen gravity wallows in its ugliness. Rearing up at the end as if to celebrate annihilation rather than lament the lost world, Byron's final lines salute rather than censure this apocalypse: 'Darkness had no need / Of aid from them—She was the universe' (81-2), deliberately shadowing his lines with Alexander Pope's

snarling smile at the close of *The Dunciad*. Beckoning in the chaos, Yeats and Byron find a poetic silver lining in destruction: for them, apocalypse has a charm.

First for Byron, then for Yeats, exile became yet another theme for the 'embittered heart' ('The Circus Animals' Desertion', II. 13). Byron makes poetic capital out of exile, just as Yeats would affirm his alienation from the Catholic majority in Ireland despite his nationalist credentials. The patrician hauteur of 'September 1913' learns from and moves past Byron's admonishing archness: 'You are *not* a moral people, and you know it / Without the aid of too sincere a poet' (*Don Juan* XI. 87: 695-6). Yeats, like Byron, makes poetic form become a kind of armour, protecting him from the sallies of his enemies and strengthening his own claim for superiority. Yeats's passion for poetic battle mirrors and builds upon Byron's own self-image of being 'born for opposition' (*BLJ* IV, 82). Yeats's great theme, the tragedy of outliving one's proper age, featured at its finest in 'The Circus Animals' Desertion', recalls Byron's elegiac glissando across *Don Juan*'s canto XI where the exiled poet traces the 'silent change' as it 'dissolves the glittering mass' (*Don Juan* XI. 76: 606). Byron's shape-shifting poetry licensed Yeats's experiments in writing the self and its world, and with Byron as one of his models, Yeats would find a Romantic poet who would put the self, in all its complex glory, at the forefront of his art.

Byron claims in a translation of Martial that 'Post-obits rarely reach a poet' (*CPW* VI. 579, l. 6). But Auden aimed to try his luck, enjoying the freedom and the absurdity of writing to one who cannot reply. For Auden discovered in Byron a precursor with a wit equal to, even exceeding, his own. Paying Byron the ultimate compliment, Auden proclaimed that the Romantic poet wrote in 'A style whose meaning does not need a

spanner, / You are the master of the airy manner' (*Letter to Lord Byron*, III. 183),[37] as the *Letter to Lord Byron* sings with zesty enjoyment of an amusing peer rather than master. Auden frowned upon Byron's more melancholy productions, proclaiming that one such example, *Manfred*, 'must have been written, as it were, by committee'.[38] But Auden was more discerning than to see Byron only as a poet with whom he shares a taste for laughter. The similarities between the poets run deeper than a talent and taste for the comic mode, with Auden's pleasure in the industrial seeming influenced by Byron's own rejection of the Wordsworthian ideal of nature as the highest inspiration for poetry. Byron's letter to John Murray of 1821 on the Bowles/ Pope controversy,[39] the 'canonical canon controversy' of the century,[40] affirmed the poetic quality of the artificial, speaking against any shibboleths that there could or should be proper topics for poems, especially nature. Auden found liberty in Byron's aesthetic creed, cementing his preference for Byron over Wordsworth with: 'Clearer than Scafell Pike, my heart has stamped on / The view from Birmingham to Wolverhampton' (*Letter to Lord Byron*, II, 175). Byron is no po-faced moralist and even becomes chief sinner as he parades his sophisticated poetic self through *Beppo* as 'a broken Dandy lately on my travels' (*Beppo* 52. 410). But Auden permits himself subtle parity, despite immediately referring to Byron as 'my lord' as he chattily launches into the celebrity scene, confessional culture, and alludes to Pope, a nod to Byron's admiration for one of his poetic fathers that underlines how Auden shares preferences as well as poetic power with his addressee.

Like Byron's disdain, often feigned but sometimes felt, for poetry, Auden denigrates his medium with accomplished ease. Praising Jane Austen but choosing to write to Byron in hopes of finding a more forgiving reader, Auden launches into an amusing

denunciation of poetry in favour of the novel, finding the novel to imply for its author 'finer character and faculties' (*Letter to Lord Byron*, I, 171) than poetry could for its maker:

> The average poet by comparison
>
> Is unobservant, immature, and lazy.
>
> You must admit, when all is said and done,
>
> His sense of other people's very hazy,
>
> His moral judgements are too often crazy,
>
> A slick and easy generalisation
>
> Appeals too well to his imagination.

(*Letter to Lord Byron*, I, 171)

Jerome McGann shrewdly observes that for Byron, 'poets and poetry were themselves often judged primarily on the basis of the author's personal qualities (or at least those qualities which Byron chose to attribute to them)'.[41] Auden comes teasingly close to offering a similarly personal appraisal of poets. Condemning the poet's tendency to enter into 'slick and easy generalisation', he knowingly engages in the same practice, courting censure while laughing away objections. Echoing Byron's breezy and sometimes excoriating sense of the poet as inferior to the man of action, Auden carefully paints himself as able both to be aware of and transcend the problem he delineates. Byron affects the same distance from his art, and wrote to Annabella Milbanke on 29 November 1813 that:

> I by no means rank poetry or poets high in the scale of intellect—this may look like Affectation—but it is my real opinion—it is the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earth-quake. (*BLJ* III, 179)

Deprecating poetry and poets, Byron, like Auden, pronounces an apparently objective if jaundiced view of their art. McGann reads Byron straight, arguing that 'poetry was nothing next to a life of action, and even if it were something, he was unfit for its tasks. He felt lost on both sides'.[42] But Byron's letter manages to express ennui with poetry even as he enjoys the adulation of his audience. Auden claims the same privilege. Smearing his poetic brethren as 'unobservant', 'lazy' and 'hazy' on human nature, though he affects to include himself, the poem itself rejects being placed in the same category. Far from lazy, hazy, or crazy, Auden's interest in fact, an element of Byron's poetry that he praises in his essay on *Don Juan*,[43] is paraded throughout the *Letter to Lord Byron*, revealing Auden as more of a student than a peer of his long-dead companion. Borrowing everything from rhyme words to specific jokes, Auden, despite Thomas Carlyle's injunction, has clearly opened his Byron and closed his Goethe.

Deploring the voguish quality of the literary world in a manner all too reminiscent of Byron's loathing of his own contemporary scene, what he described as 'declining age of English poetry',[44] Auden offers a witty précis of the current state of things. Almost insouciant, Auden's knowledge sidesteps becoming a personal investment in the stock market of literature. Gently mocking the Aleister Crowley and sub-Yeatsian occultism as fallen fashion, the Good, the Beautiful, and the True come in for similar levity of handling. Joyce, Eliot, Hopkins, and Proust come forth as the names to know in Auden's marketised vision of the realms of poesy. Almost shrinking from the implied cruelties of such a summary, Auden affects a blameless air reminiscent of *Don Juan*'s promise 'even my Muse's worst reproof's a smile' (XI. 63: 502):

I'm saying this to tell you who's the rage,

And not to loose a sneer from my interior.

Because there's snobbery in every age,

Because some names are loved by the superior,

It does not follow they're the least inferior:

(II. 178)

Advertising less critical judgment than he displays while managing to signal his disdain into the bargain, Auden paints himself as somehow separate from the arena, watching rather than taking part in the fluctuating fortunes of his fellow artists. We note the contrast to *Don Juan*, where Byron snarls as he describes the 'literary *lower* empire' (XI. 62: 489) before imagining a bout in the 'fisty ring' (XI. 55: 434), and elegising his own career (XI. 56: 441-8). Like *Don Juan*'s narrator holding court for his readers, Auden delineates a new coterie as he courts our comradely smirks. 'This flirtation at the borders between art and life, this calculated provocation of his audience', observes Peter Manning, 'signals the continuous dialogue of *Don Juan* with its readers — (the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* "a plain man"?) — and how thoroughly the Byronic self exists in exchange with the social world around it'.[45] What is striking is how far Auden eschews a similar sense of exchange, situating himself above the fray. His separation from such modish jockeying for position takes Byron's *sprezzatura* further than ever, where he witnesses the debased quality of the contemporary age in comparison to the warrior-like if ironised power of Byron's portrait of the literary arena. Auden keeps the conversational tone but removes the affecting accents of a 'man speaking to men' in favour of a carefully impersonal and impermeable front.[46] Though in his 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats', Auden affirms that poetry 'survives / In the valley of its saying where executives / Would never want to tamper' (2. 242), here poets and their poetry are become commodities, suffering the

fate without complaint that Byron insisted he'd avoided in *Don Juan* when he felt his 'irregularity of chime' would guarantee that his poem evinced 'no servility' (*Don Juan*, XV. 20: 158 and 157). Byron's 'uncommon common sense' is out-common-sensed by Auden.[47]

Humour is not Auden's only inheritance from Byron. Writing in the wake of Yeats's political poetry, Auden seemed to write as witness as much as agent of change. Auden was long noted for his political poetry, with his editor Edward Mendelson summing up his reputation as 'court poet to the left' before his political (and religious) shift towards the right or, more accurately,[48] away from clear political statement. The career-long ambiguity of Auden's poetry revolves around a preoccupation with the role of the poet caught from Byron and Yeats, in particular. Auden alludes to Byron's 'Stanzas to [Augusta]' in his elegy for Yeats, 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' with 'In the deserts of the heart / Let the healing fountain start' (3. 243),[49] expressing the subterranean connection between the two poets in a similarly *sotto voce* manner. Part of Byron and Yeats's kinship was their liberty and licence to speak to the public, and Auden shared their ability. Yeats's 'Easter 1916' seemed the twentieth century epitome of public poetry. But Auden, appraising 'Easter 1916', protested what he saw as Yeats's dangerously measured poem: 'After the rebellion of Easter Sunday 1916, [Yeats] wrote a poem on the subject which has been called a masterpiece. It is. To succeed at such a time in writing a poem which could offend neither the Irish Republican nor the British Army was indeed a masterly achievement'.[50] Even if the critic rejects Auden's view of the poem, his point that to commemorate without partisanship can be to flatten poetry's power seems apt. For Auden knew himself to be a public poet too, as Michael O'Neill writes: 'Like Byron in *Don Juan*, Auden is

able to write public poetry, a poetry that has its often journalistic finger on the pulse'.[51] When choosing to reject Yeats's mode, Auden returns to Byron's example.

Auden, removed to America by 1939, now had a personal experience of exile to draw upon, and Byron offered a model for writing back to a troubled homeland. And Byron defined how to word a snarling and smiling attack on England in *Beppo*. His borrowing from William Cowper, '"England! with all thy faults I love thee still!' (*Beppo* 47: 369) emphasises faults even as the love uneasily co-exists with the criticism as the stanzas progress. Byron anatomises English culture, and after the adoring remarks on Italy's women, weather, and language, Byron saturates his lines in irony, deliberately flattening *ottava rima* into self-consciously deadened tone:

> I like the taxes, when they're not too many;
>
> I like a sea-coal fire, when not too dear;
>
> I like a beef-steak, too, as well as any;
>
> Have no objection to a pot of beer;
>
> I like the weather, when it is not rainy,
>
> That is, I like two months of every year.
>
> And so God save the Regent, Church, and King!
>
> Which means that I like all and every thing.

(*Beppo* 48: 377-84)

Despite William Keach's characterisation of Byron's speaker as 'a Tory, loyal to "Regent, Church and King"', Byron's speaker's attitude is more complex than this allows, particularly when Keach sees it as a quasi-fraternal gesture, 'a strategy meant to appeal to' and tease Byron's Tory friends.[52] Instead, Byron damns his home country with faint praise, forcing us to note the relative lack of brio and enchantment

of these lines in comparison to the earlier delight in 'that soft bastard Latin' (44: 345). The lines' monotony makes a careful though subtle mockery of the exclamation mark at the end of 'God save the Regent, Church, and King!' as we wonder how much Byron could possibly like, and certainly not love, the England about which he chooses to speak instead of sing. 'Lost / Unhappy and at home', yet never quite at home with England and the English audience to whom he writes,[53] Byron's divided inheritance permeates his poetry and defines how he interacts with the contemporary poetic and political milieu. 'Your English heart' was only ever half of the story.[54] Byron, as he promises in *Don Juan*, says: 'when I speak, I *don't hint*, but *speak out*' (XI. 88: 704).

Auden, living through the thirties, would find the Byronic tonal bequest difficult to uphold, but took seriously the command to speak of what was rather than what could be. But the actual was grim fare: Auden writes with more puzzled sympathy than moral censure in 'September 1, 1939'. Writing what seems like an epitaph for that 'low dishonest decade' (5), Auden sheds '[i]ronic points of light' (247) upon a poem that instructs us, against his later disavowal of the sentiment, to 'love one another or die' (246). Pulling his version of the Yeatsian aphoristic punch, 'Now days are dragon-ridden' ('Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', I. 25), Auden leads the response to contemporary events even as he seems apart from the people, separated by his status as poet. Like Byron's Dante in *The Prophecy of Dante*, the poet forges his personal path, detached from but in touch with suffering. Tough minded and dry-eyed, Auden's poem chooses not to access Byronic ridicule but it does insist on puncturing what he views as 'debased Romanticism':[55]

> All I have is a voice
> To undo the folded lie,

The romantic lie in the brain

Of the sensual man-in-the-street

And the lie of Authority

(246)

Anthony Hecht claims that Auden sends up 'the extravagant claims made in poetry's behalf by some of the Romantics, by Shelley in particular', but this seems directly indebted to Byron's ironic manner, a manner that leads M. H. Abrams to omit Byron from *Natural Supernaturalism* because of that 'ironic counter-voice' which 'deliberately opens a satirical perspective on the vatic stance of his Romantic contemporaries'.[56] Byron, like Auden, exposes rather than reifies cant,[57] and Auden catches from him the hope that poetry might expose truths and unseat the 'lie' that recurs three times in five lines. Rather than Blakean caustics or his grand 'voice of the Bard',[58] the Byronic 'voice', was the voice that denounced royalty and government in *Beppo*, *The Vision of Judgment*, amongst others, and one that offers a possibility for effecting change or at least revealing its importance.

But deception shadows the poet, with aesthetic effect always in danger of distorting a poem's ethics. Explaining his recoil from some early poems, including 'Sir, no man's enemy' and 'Spain 1937', Auden writes: 'A dishonest poem is one which expresses, no matter how well, feelings or beliefs which its author never felt or entertained'.[59] But Auden, after the thirties, would admit or even boast that 'The Truest Poetry is the Most Feigning'. In the final stanza of 'Spain 1937', Auden seems stranded with the sense that 'We are left alone with our day', haunted by his intimation that 'History to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help or pardon' (212). Auden later rejected the stanza on moral grounds, writing that 'to say this is to equate goodness with

success',[60] but such self-criticism chooses to overlook the palpable pain evinced by his own admission that defeat is as like to happen to the good as it is to the evil. Auden finds, as Byron found, that moral conundrums cannot be avoided by the public poet. Byron, the political public poet, gives Auden both precedent and an example that would offer possibilities to but not dictate the terms of his own work.

John Berryman was deeply and self-consciously influenced by Yeats and Auden, a fact that Robert Lowell, his friend and rival, would censure. Lowell claimed that Berryman 'clung so keenly to Hopkins, Yeats and Auden that their shadows paled him'.[61] But over the course of Berryman's career, such influence enlivens rather than smothers, and after his apprenticeship as 'a burning trivial disciple' of Yeats in particular,[62] Berryman was ready to write what 'Two Organs' called the 'big fat fresh original & characteristic poems' that made their mark on his cultural milieu. Even then, in the same poem, Yeats and Auden appear, to Berryman's recollection of his early poetic career, as ghosts haunting the early work:

> I didn't want my next poem to be *exactly* like Yeats
> or exactly like Auden
> since in that case where the hell was *I*?[63]

('Two Organs', 178)

Those pernickety italics express a not entirely secret longing to write *their* poetry, even as it admits to a dream of coming close to but not quite touching their achievements. But '*I*' could be found by going back to their great and shared influence: Byron. Berryman comes to Byron through Yeats and Auden. For Byron stands behind Yeats and Auden, the Romantic original that could help Berryman to become himself. Claiming to be 'hostile to every visible tendency in both American

and English poetry', Berryman sought 'the reproduction or invention of the motions of a human personality, free and determined'.[64] Byron beckoned. As well as feeling like an 'exile at home',[65] Berryman shared with Byron a fascination with the possibilities of the long poem. *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, an early masterpiece, is captivated by God as stern lawgiver, much like Byron's own experimentation with the Jehovah figure in *Cain: A Mystery*, where far from divine mercy and understanding, 'God grudged his aid' (*Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, 17. 137). The cycle of rebellion and submission in the poem charts the flow of human life and its trials with Byronic quiet pity for the poem's subjects. Byron and Berryman find a key common preoccupation in religion, with the work of both poets having serious claims to be theological poetry, if written with keen subversive edge. But it was with *The Dream Songs* that Berryman would reveal his remaking of the epic with Byron's flair for defiance of and obedience to its parameters. John Haffenden writes that 'Like *Don Juan*, *The Dream Songs* needs to be seen as neither finished nor integral in a pure way. Like Byron's designs, the weakness of Berryman's designs became a condition of artistic success'.[66] This insight suggests the vital presence of *Don Juan* for Berryman's sequence. Ezra Pound had given a twentieth century model for how the epic might be updated by the modern poet, but Byron gave the ultimate example to a poet whose work seemed to have 'nothing of the *accidental* and inadvertent in it, no trace of genuine impurity'.[67] The breath-taking range of *The Dream Songs* finds its centre in the creation of a speaker, Henry, whose personality holds the poetry together as a single unit despite each poem seeming like a discrete entity. *Don Juan* stands behind the *Dream Songs* as a presiding deity.[68] Byron's model for experimentation with the self, as if in a scientific sense, licensed Berryman's trick for bringing art and life into touching distance within the epic poem. The self could and did become the

touchstone for art without descending into narcissistic self-expression. For its astonishing scope and depth, *Don Juan* becomes the most crucial model for Berryman, a poet obsessed by the range of experience possible in human life.

If Byron had defined an artistry that drew from without fully committing to portraits from life, Berryman was his attentive student, fashioning his protagonist, Henry, as a character that both is and is not the poet himself. Byron would wearily proclaim to be sick of drawing a line between Harold and himself that his readers ignored, and Berryman is similarly disillusioned by the apparent ease with which his audience collected the parallels between poet and his hero. Berryman objected to the idea that Henry was merely an egotistical device, reacting to the question: 'You… have been called a confessional poet. How do you react to that label?' with the reply: 'With rage and contempt! Next question'.[69] Dream Song 1 immediately displays the mode that would define the rest of the collection, where personality is both the intimate and fragile heart of the poetry while it is also distanced, subject to the poet's ironies and amusement. For the opening poem parades the kind of variety that Berryman can master or occasionally be mastered by in his poetry. Starting with a sentence that skates on the edge of mocking sulky Henry, Berryman's speaker takes the tone of an empathetic placater—seeing Henry's point manages both to mark his difference from and investment in Henry Pussycat, his subject who seems so subjected to the world—while implying Henry's childishness. The deliberately convoluted 'It was the thought that they thought / they could *do* it' smacks of an explanation extended to the reader,[70] but it manages to skirt explanation with aplomb. Henry's refusal to speak takes centre stage.

But Henry, now 'pried' open, seems opened up to a cruel scrutiny. This kind of pained empathy suggests why Henry is so often identified as 'the thinnest of disguises for Berryman himself, stripped of his irony, boastfulness and self-mockery'.[71] Even Robert Lowell erred towards that explanation.[72] But *Love and Fame* saw Berryman warn, 'I am not writing an autobiography-in-verse, my friends' ('Message', 201). Taking its cue from Byron's handling of personality in poetry, Berryman seeks to perform a similarly risky experiment where the self metamorphoses into an aesthetic creation. Not only does Henry manage to survive, but also the poem survives its dark night of the soul, recovering enough to move into stanza three. And here the layering of voices shows off Berryman's ability to display Byronic mobility. The pitch perfect nuance recalls seems Berryman's ultimate Byronic inheritance in his multi-tonal epic.[73] The first two lines of the final stanza seem like a continuation of the speaker's voice that had spoken the rest of the poem, where the following two lines show Henry break into the poem and speak for himself, remembering his past gladness rather than agonising over his present pain. But the final two lines of the poem: 'Hard on the land wears the strong sea / and empty grows every bed' (3) offer a third, more profound voice. Aphoristic in the force and brevity of the lines, the 'eternal note of sadness', sounds, to borrow a phrase from Matthew Arnold. We recollect the power of Byron as ethical poet, his insistence on 'expressing the truth'.[74] Like Byron before him, in poems such as 'When We Two Parted' as Jerome McGann has showed,[75] Berryman has reconfigured the lyric poem. Byron manipulates the idea of the lyric as confessional outpouring, and Berryman continues to plough this furrow, radically reconfiguring the idea of a self uttering itself without restriction. It is Berryman's command over these voices, the movement between the personal and the universal through the development of a myth, which seems deliberately personal as well as

carefully impersonal. Byron becomes the crucial model for a poet fascinated by the self, a self that is transfigured through the power of art, and the Romantic survival seems all the more powerful in Berryman's unobtrusive use of Byron's model. These poems are desperately artificial as Berryman experiments with possibilities of the self, possibilities initially suggested by Byron. The boundaries between art and life become dangerously, though thrillingly porous, in Berryman's reworking of the Byronic problem of the barrier between self and world. Perhaps this is why 'Dream Song 366' claims that 'these Songs are not meant to be understood, you understand. / They are only meant to terrify and comfort' (388).

Rather than the first Dream Song seeming like a gesture of individuation, Berryman reveals the battle for his soul as a 'hybrid psychomachia' between religion and psychology, as Helen Vendler argues.[76] More importantly, like Byron, there is a sense that Berryman will sing the human heart, human life, and the muddle of all things. Erotic love, so often banished from the canon of Romantic poetry, is part of Berryman's inheritance from Byron. For Byron, as Edward Bostetter notes, 'could not subscribe to the attitude assumed by his Romantic contemporaries—at least in their poetry—that the gross and sensual must be transcended by the ideal love, or absorbed into it, or ignored'.[77] Bostetter foregrounds Byron's exaltation of the sensual, his love of 'Love in full life and length, not love ideal' (*Beppo* 13. 97), and Berryman's *Dream Songs* shares such fascination with romantic and erotic forms of love inflected by a zestful wit. *Don Juan* is not the only touchstone for Berryman. *Beppo*'s description of the descent from 'glances' to 'ogles sighs' before making it into 'adulterous beds' (*Beppo* 16. 121 and 127) enjoys even as it officially condemns illicit sex. *Don Juan*, with its fascination with Juan's sexual antics, sees the narrator heartily

and euphemistically wish 'That Womankind had but one rosy mouth, / To kiss them all at once from North to South' (VI. 27: 215-6), functioning as the predecessor of Berryman's later, more openly lascivious but also more self-mocking, wish of 'Two Organs' where the speaker recalls his wish at twenty 'to satisfy at once all Barnard & Smith', to say nothing of 'Miss Gibbs's girls' (179). But 'Dream Song 4', less distanced and more desiring, is a record of desire, popping with Petrarchan hyperbole, arch and funny, as frank admission co-exists with self-mockery. Staring at a beautiful woman, Henry describes his situation where 'only the fact of her husband & four other people / kept me from springing on her' (6). But for all the joy of desire, an Old Testament sense of punishment encroaches by the poem's end: 'There ought to be a law against Henry. / —Mr. Bones: there is' (6). That seventh commandment sternly looms. Like Byron, Berryman adores the sensual world even as he remains all too aware that there is a price to pay. Byron, the 'true voluptuary', might exalt 'the earthly' (*BLJ* III, 239), he never quite forgets the eternal cost of such pleasures, and Berryman is alert to the same reckoning. Byron's sensual and sacred imagination forms the model for Berryman's own.

Byron had Dante say 'Poets shall follow in the path I show, / And make it broader' (*The Prophecy of Dante* III. 64-5), and knowingly wrote the terms of his own brand of influence. Byron is the poet of personality, of truth offered by one of the poets who 'know[s] the world like men' (*Beppo* 76. 602), and a poet open and responsive to the vast range of experience of humanity. Yeats, Auden, and Berryman, in their commitment to these premises, become Byronic poets. Not by slavish borrowings, but by their willingness to forge unique paths as poets, paths opened up by Byron. To become Byron's heir,[78] paradoxically, each poet became more distinctive, more

defiantly independent, and finally, as Byron puts it better 'workmen' (*Don Juan* I. 1606). Byron wrote of Robert Burns: 'What an antithetical mind!—tenderness, roughness—delicacy, coarseness—sentiment, sensuality—soaring and grovelling, dirt and deity—all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay!' (*BLJ* III, 239). What the poet admired was his own reflection. The extremes Byron sought and found in Burns are those that his own inheritors would discover in Byron. Each poet featured here, and many others, lights upon an element of Byron, from his biting wit to his manipulative lyricism, from personal alienation to the epic sweep, to bring to bear upon their own work. Byron refuses to be a monolith, 'the exemplary Modern Poet, the Poet proper',[79] and that becomes his greatest attraction for his modern inheritors.

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[1] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York, 1973), 20.

[2] *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols. (London, 1973-1994), VIII, 66. Hereafter *BLJ*.

[3] T. E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism', Herbert Read (ed.), *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London, 1924), 111-40 (118).

[4] For Byron as anti-Romantic, see M. H. Abrams's decision to omit Byron from his discussion in *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (London, 1971), 13.

[5] For example *Byron: Heritage and Legacy*, a recent edited collection, contains scant mention of Byron's twentieth century poetic legacy. See Cheryl A. Wilson (ed.), *Byron: Heritage and Legacy*, (Houndmills, 2008).

[6] Damian Walford Davies and Richard Maggraf Turley (eds), *The Monstrous Debt: Modalities of Romantic Influence in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Detroit, MI, 2006).

[7] *Don Juan* XV. 20: 155. All quotations from Byron's poetry and drama (unless specified otherwise) will be taken from the relevant volume of Lord George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1980-93).

[8] See, for example, Michael O'Neill's *The All-Sustaining Air: Romantic Legacies and Renewals in British, American and Irish Poetry Since 1900* (Oxford, 2007).

[9] Sarah Wootton, '"Here then is a maze to begin, be in": Michael Ondaatje's Byronic inheritance', Mark Sandy (ed.), *Romantic Presences in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 2012), 163-74 (165).

[10] Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford, 2000), 32.

[11] Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford, 2002); Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

[12] For influence as a burden, see W. J. Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (London, 1971).

[13] Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford, 2002), 123.

[14] Massimo Bacigalupo, 'Rapallo and Rome', Ira B. Nadel (ed.), *Ezra Pound in Context* (Cambridge, 2020), 251-60 (251).

[15] Bacigalupo notes the importance of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in particular (251).

[16] John Espey, *Ezra Pound's* Mauberley*: A Study in Composition* (Berkeley, CA, 1944), 42.

[17] Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* (Chicago, IL, 1956), 3.

[18] T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* ([1957] London, 1971), 200-1.

[19] Alice Levine, 'T. S. Eliot and Byron', *ELH*, 45 (1978), 522-541 (523).

[20] *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, 1957).

[21] For further analysis of this relationship, see Madeleine Callaghan, 'Forms of Conflict: Byron's Influence On Yeats', *English*, 64 (2015), 81-98.

[22] George Bornstein, *Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens* (Chicago, IL, 1976), 80.

[23] H. J. C. Grierson, *The Background of English Literature and Other Collected Essays and Addresses* (London, 1925).

[24] *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London, 1954), 710.

[25] Carlos Baker, *The Echoing Green: Romanticism, Modernism, and the Phenomena of Transference in Poetry* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), 152.

[26] Thomas Moore, *The Works of Lord Byron: with his Letters and Journals, and his Life*, *by Thomas Moore, esq*., 17 vols. (London, 1832-1840), 1, 347.

[27] Newlyn, 32.

[28] *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats,* ed. John P. Frayne (New York, NY, 1970), 270-1.

[29] Peter Cochran, 'Yeats', *Byron's European Impact* (Newcastle, 2015), 477 (464-86).

[30] Bornstein, 32.

[31] Bornstein, 45.

[32] For a fuller discussion of Yeats's interest in the folkloric tradition, see Edward Hirsch, '"And I Myself Created Hanrahan": Yeats, Folklore, and Fiction', *ELH* 48 (1981), 880-93.

[33] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria, Volume 7, Part 1*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, Bollingen Series LXXV (Princeton, NJ, 1983) VII. 1, 304.

[34] *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard, 3rd ed. (London, 1988).

[35] 'Prometheus Unbound', *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats: Volume V: Later Essays*, ed. William H. O'Donnell with assistance from Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux (New York, NY, 1994), V, 118-22 (122).

[36] 'A General Introduction to My Work', *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats: Volume V: Later Essays*, V, 204-16 (211)

[37] Auden's poetry is quoted from *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939*, ed. Edward Mendelson ([1977] London, 1986) with page numbers supplied.

[38] W. H. Auden, 'Don Juan', *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (London, 1975), 402.

[39] See 'The Bowles/Pope Controversy 1821: Letter to John Murray Esq.', *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991).

[40] James Chandler, 'The Pope Controversy: Romantic Poetics and the English Canon', *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1984), 481-509 (481).

[41] Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago, IL, 1968), 6.

[42] Jerome McGann, *Don Juan in Context* (Chicago, IL, 1976), 22.

[43] Auden, 'Don Juan', *The Dyer's Hand*, 405.

[44] Byron, 'Letter to John Murray Esq.', *Byron's Prose*, 149.

[45] Manning, 217.

[46] William Wordsworth, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1802', *Lyrical Ballads, 1798 and 1802*, ed. with introd. and notes by Fiona Stafford, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2013), 103.

[47] Ricks, 126.

[48] Edward Mendelson, 'Preface', *The English Auden*, p. xix. Auden's poetry and prose will be quoted from this edition; Paul Hendon records Stephen Spender's view that *The Orators* shows him 'to indulge in Fascist day-dreams of fantastic and murderous practical jokes'. See Paul Hendon, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Cambridge, 2000), 65.

[49] McGann, *Fiery Dust*, 93.

[50] W. H. Auden, 'The Public v. the Late Mr. William Butler Yeats', *The English Auden*, 390.

[51] O'Neill, 94.

[52] William Keach, *Arbitrary Power: Romanticism, Language, Politics* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), 65-6.

[53] Seamus Heaney, 'The Tollund Man', *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).

[54] This epithet is taken from John Gibson Lockhart's anonymous *Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Byron. By John Bull* (April/May 1821), in *Lord Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (London, 1970), 190.

[55] O'Neill, 91.

[56] Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 13.

[57] For Byron's loathing of cant, see Byron, 'Letter to John Murray Esq.', *Byron's Prose*, 128.

[58] William Blake, 'Introduction', *Songs of Experience*, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, rev. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1982).

[59] 'Foreword' to W. H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems, 1927-1957* (London, 1966), 15.

[60] Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems*, 15.

[61] Robert Lowell, 'The Poetry of John Berryman', *Collected Prose*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1987), 111.

[62] John Berryman, *The Freedom of the Poet* (New York, NY, 1976), 323. Berryman also wrote of Yeats, 'I didn't so much wish to resemble as to be'. See John Berryman, 'One Answer to a Question', *Shenandoah* 17 (1965), 67-76.

[63] John Berryman, 'Two Organs', *Collected Poems: 1937-1971*, ed. and introd. by Charles Thornbury (New York, NY, 1989), 178-9. Berryman's poetry, except *The Dream Songs*, will be quoted from this edition with page numbers supplied.

[64] Quoted in John Haffenden, *The Life of John Berryman* (London, 1982), 352.

[65] Philip Coleman, '"The Politics of Praise": John Berryman's Engagement with W. B. Yeats', *Etudes Irlandaises* 28.2 (2003), 11-27 (17).

[66] John Haffenden, *John Berryman: A Critical Commentary* (London, 1980), 64.

[67] John Bayley, 'On John Berryman' *Contemporary Poetry: Essays and Interviews*, ed. Robert Boyers (New York, NY, 1974), 69.

[68] See Douglas Dunn on the importance of Byron's Don Juan to *The Dream Songs.* Douglas Dunn, 'Gaiety and Lamentation: The Defeat of John Berryman', *Berryman's Understanding: Reflections on the Poetry of John Berryman*, ed. Harry Thomas (Boston, MA, 1988), 139-151 (141).

[69] Peter Stitt, quoting John Berryman, 'The Art of Poetry: An Interview with John Berryman', (27 and 29 October, 1970), in *Berryman's Understanding: Reflections on the Poetry of John Berryman*, ed. Harry Thomas (Boston, MA, 1988), 21.

[70] John Berryman, *The Dream Songs*, introd. Michael Hofmann (New York, NY, 2014), 3. All *Dream Songs* are quoted from this edition with page numbers supplied.

[71] Jeffrey Allen Triggs, 'Dream Songs and Nightmare Songs: The Balance of Style in the Later Poems of John Berryman', *South Dakota Review*, 15 (1988), 70-4.

[72] 'Henry is Berryman, seen as himself, as *poète maudit*, child and puppet'. Robert Lowell, 'The Poetry of John Berryman', *Collected Prose* (London, 1987), 108.

[73] M. K. Joseph, *Byron the Poet* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964), 78.

[74] Byron, 'Letter to John Murray Esq.', *Byron's Prose*, 149 and 143.

[75] Jerome McGann, 'Byron and "The Truth in Masquerade"', *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge, 1992), 191.

[76] Helen Vendler, *The Given and the Made: Strategies of Poetic Redefinition* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), 36.

[77] Edward E. Bostetter, *The Romantic Ventriloquists: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron* (Seattle, WA, 1963), 252.

[78] See Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets*, for a discussion that refers to poetic heirs throughout.

[79] Bloom, 20.