

The Prolix Sublime

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

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Byron était généreux avec ses mots. Il traduisait sa vie (plutôt qu'en faire la transcription) par des lettres, des journaux intimes et des vers; il enrobait ses vers de préfaces et de notes écrites en prose; il écrivait des critiques et des lettres aux éditeurs; il ne pouvait ni ne voulait-il terminer ses longs poèmes, disant qu'il y ajouterait peut-être quelque chose plus tard; il lui arrivait d'écrire sur un seul événement dans plus d'une demi-douzaine de lettres adressées à diverses personnes; il notait une idée dans son journal et l'étirait pour en faire une pièce de théâtre; son épouse, peu admiratrice, le traitait de monarque des mots; ceux qui le connaissaient se souviennent de l'infinie variété de ses conversations « sans réserves ». Il trouvait plaisir dans les mots et aimait les étirer dans toutes les directions : interrompant le flux de la narration dans *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* pour y insérer des méditations, faisant de longues digressions dans *Don Juan*, jouant sur les mots des autres, gonflant ses écrits de citations. Et pourtant, ses longs poèmes et sa prose abondante coulent à flots dans une profusion du langage. Il faut aussi se rappeler que Byron était un écrivain populaire. Les lecteurs de l'époque devaient donc apprécier son caractère proluxe, fécond. En 1909, A. C. Bradley faisait valoir que les poètes de l'époque de Wordsworth n'avaient pas le talent d'écrire de longs poèmes, et qu'ils ne faisaient qu'enfiler des paroles sur une ficelle de vers tout au plus ordinaires. À la manière de son époque, Bradley supposait que le goût des gens s'était amélioré avec le temps et que les Victoriens qui avaient succédé à Byron pouvaient apprécier la bonne poésie, contrairement à Byron et ses contemporains. Selon moi, l'écriture copieuse de Byron était délibérée, une sorte de principe de créativité. Un peu avant Bradley, J. A. Symonds affirmait qu'il nous fallait, pour juger de la grandeur d'un poète, une vaste quantité de mots et de poèmes de sa plume. Est-ce pourquoi Byron écrivait tant? Ou croyait-il, comme Burke, qu'une « idée claire, c'est . . . une autre façon de nommer une petite idée¹ »? Associait-il au sublime une plénitude de mots? L'abondance de mots n'est pas toujours synonyme de longs poèmes, pas plus qu'il y a un seul point de vue critique sur le bien ou mal-fondé du non-minimalisme. Mais dans sa pratique de la profusion, Byron semble avoir absorbé quelques-unes des attitudes des poètes qui le précédaient immédiatement et anticipé sur celles des poètes de la fin du vingtième siècle.

THE PROLIX SUBLIME

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Résumé

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In 2003, when Paul Curtis announced the focus of the Moncton conference, I wrote "The Prolix Sublime" on my scratch pad. I was sure it would be the easiest thing to write about. It wasn't. Like everyone else, I knew that Byron was generous with words. He translated (rather than transcribed) his life into words. He wrote prefaces, reviews, letters, notes, verse, and speeches. He would not or could not finish his long poems.² He was famous for the variety of his "unreserved" conversation (Lovell 344). He delighted in stretching words in many directions, stopping the narrative to meditate in *Childe Harold*, inserting digressions in *Don Juan*, swelling his writing with quotations.³ Readers must have liked his prolixity or why was he a popular writer? He could literally afford to be generous with words. Unlike Jane Austen's cramped manuscripts, or Wordsworth's and Darcy's crossed letters, Byron, with a few exceptions, left wide margins and spaces. "He use[d] expensive paper, unlike Shelley who couldn't afford it," and he wasted it.⁴

What did this have to do with the sublime? Byron used the word in his poetry as if it did not interest him as an idea. *The Island* seems to sum up the alpha and omega of his use of the word sublime in his poetry: mountain scenery is sublime and there is “sublime tobacco” (lines 297, 448).⁵ In fact, over the years he learned that the sublime is not simply the subject and thought but also the verse of a poem. It is something that must be pursued (*English Bards*) and achieved (“An Ode on Venice”). It is the grand end of a process, from being prone to being above everything else, a massive rearing up of power, or perhaps a release of power. In the final stanzas of *Childe Harold* canto 4, Byron is superior to those who have tried to control the Ocean. Judging by the tone of these stanzas, his submission to the Ocean makes him serene.

Byron’s generosity with words is like his capacious, ample attitude to the world.⁶ He likes many facets to things, and variety needs many words to describe it. When words don’t express precisely what the poet wants to say, he must use them in several relationships with each other, changing his perspective slightly each time. The kaleidoscope of life needs multiple expressions. The early nineteenth century admired energy, “wildness,” and the unconfined, in politics, literature, and individuals. Hazlitt prized gusto, Byron reviled its opposite, viz., disgust. Shelley’s image for new life — force bursting out of a universal sepulchre — is especially interesting for it is not that which is already free that is esteemed as much as that which breaks out of confinement. Poetry, too, is “a power that cannot be contained within itself; is impatient of all limit” (Hazlitt 5).⁷ There is unexpected agreement that genre was unrestricted, flowing from one type into another. “The best pastoral in the language is that prose poem, Walton’s *Complete* [sic] *Angler*,” Hazlitt said (153); everything Wordsworth wrote added to his gothic cathedral; and Byron’s prefaces and notes were part of his long poems, even though Inkel is outraged that prose can be considered “as sublime as poetry” (*The Blues*, line 102). Genre must exist for it to be altered. The act of breaking free, of creating anew out of the old is cherished.

The 1890s and early 1900s had a meaner attitude to poetry.⁸ Palgrave’s editorial principle for Book Four of *The Golden Treasury*, devoted to Romantic poetry, was that “narrative, descriptive, and didactic poems, — unless accompanied by rapidity of movement [and] brevity, . . . have been

excluded. Humorous poetry . . . has been considered foreign to the idea of the book” (Fowler vii). An editorial vandal, Palgrave omitted passages to bring a poem “to a closer lyrical unity,” and extracts “essentially opposed to this unity” were excluded (ix). Since Byron’s fecundity couldn’t be accommodated as it was, he was virtually dropped. This is not criticism as discovery but as imposition. The reader is told what good poetry is and he had better learn not to “value those authors who make the most demands of us as readers,” narrowing his imagination to lyrics that turn on a single “thought, feeling, or situation.”⁹ The early nineteenth century was more adventurous and tentative. Byron’s long poems are journeys of discovery for him. He seems to ask, what will come next? What will the shape of my poem be? Will I ever finish it? This is not a pose. In canto 3 of *The Prophecy of Dante*, which is almost entirely about the sublime, he writes of grandeur and boundlessness that exceed creativity: “I cannot all record / That crowds on my prophetic eye” (lines 5-6).

Great writers are great readers.¹⁰ Byron’s colossal appetite for reading is an aspect of his expansiveness. He read the good, bad, and indifferent, enjoyed it tremendously, and reported it with glee, even when he hated it — consider his description of the unity of place observed by tying the protagonist to the leg of a table. He admired Voltaire and Scott, both prolific writers themselves. Ideas don’t come out of nothing for Byron. He said that he stood on the shoulders of giants. The expression is an old one, and that is the point. Byron’s cornucopia is sometimes writing that has gone before, others’ and his own. Quotations are his articulation. They also trigger his imagination in less obvious ways. For instance, although he mocked the protagonist tied to a table, he experimented with unity of place in *Sardanapalus*, but a dining room as the heart of a battle was equally absurd. Yet it opened his mind to the great leaps of time and border crossings of *The Deformed Transformed* in which ghosts and men, magic and history mingle cheerfully. Once he responded to a work, his multiple generousities came spilling out in words, mercifully free of theoretical stiffening. He does not teach his readers how to read him in the way of Wordsworth but watches his poems unfold as we do.

A single event could be equally fruitful. Take the example of the death of the commandant. Lady Byron was the only one to whom he wrote two accounts of it. His very first letter about it, however, was to Moore, the

second to his wife, in which he converted the excitement of his letter to Moore into “I am so heroic” stuff; but he also managed to communicate a sense of how stirring his existence was compared to her tight little life in her mother’s home. She hadn’t responded to it when he wrote her the second letter, clearly dying to know what she thought of his adventure, but playing it cool, adopting the “you may remember I told you” mode, as if to say, “these things happen to us men.” He changes the wording and length of his story but really experiments with tonal variation, as he does in the stanza bundles of *Childe Harold*.

The “Alpine Journal,” *Manfred* and *Childe Harold* canto 3 are more marked examples of casting the same content in different moulds. Unlike the letters about the commandant, these are chiefly personal ruminations. Their suppressed, sometimes barely verbalised energy derives from this. Once again, that is not all. When Byron began to write drama, he did not mention a play in his letters until he had completed it, but he did think about it in his journals, as if talking with himself. We know that although he hoped his plays would be performed, he wrote them as if he had no audience in mind, which makes *Manfred* a sort of private articulation. *Childe Harold* canto 3 is the oddest in this respect. He most certainly had an audience in mind when he wrote it, but it doesn’t have the comic declamatory overtones of the first Canto, and is so much like a murmur to himself that it, too, is a personal rather than public utterance.

Their formal difference is another matter. The “Alpine Journal” has a free form. Byron may write as much or as little as he likes; he may stop and start at will. But the forms of the other two made him anxious. He worried about whether he should call *Manfred* “a kind of poem in dialogue,” a “piece of phantasy,” or the “the witch drama,” for “It has no pretense to being called a drama — except that it is in dialogue and acts” (BLJ 5: 170, 193, 195). His refusal to say whether *Childe Harold* was finished, his adding stanzas even when it was about to go to press, and the change in focus and tone from canto to canto, manifest a similar tentativeness about form.

If Byron wanted to commune with himself about his Alpine experience, why did he write a drama and poem when he could have simply added to the Journal? Why was he concerned with giving *Manfred* a formal name when the freedom of the Journal was available to him? I

would guess that formal control helped Byron to extend his mind. The notoriously difficult and confined Spenserian stanza was his earliest vehicle for the unending long poem. Within that, he created another hurdle for himself by parcelling his narrative into bundles of stanzas. These are not randomly placed but each builds upon the previous one. He followed a similar pattern of composition in his dramas. The last line or scene of a play departs, sometimes radically, from all that has preceded it and becomes the focus of exploration in the next play.¹¹ The cornucopia must be “emptied to refill / And flow again” (*The Prophecy of Dante* 3. 3-4) Byron’s words seem to work something like that. He must write so that he may write more. The more he writes the more there is to write. Abundance as an aesthetic principle was not unique to Byron. In his lecture on Dryden and Pope, Hazlitt suggests that a narrow range of experience, ideas, and emotions needs shorter poetic forms and smooth verse, whereas lofty imagination and variety require long poems, more words.¹²

I am trying to find connections between Byron’s prodigious output and possible reasons why he was so prolific. How much did he inherit from earlier writers, how much did he adapt? Was prolixity a structure of feeling of his own time? Was it useful to him as a writer? Let’s return to tonal variation for a bit.

The content of the “Alpine Journal,” *Manfred* and *Childe Harold* canto 3 is to a large extent feeling and emotion. Byron’s energy seems to be aimed at finding expression for this. In all three works, the grief is constant but the more foregrounded tones change. For instance, blasted pines remind him of his family, but the “Alpine Journal” was a private communication to Augusta who would have seen beyond the black humour of its surface to its core of sadness. Its real focus is set back from one’s immediate attention. *Childe Harold* canto 3 is the most various of the three works, combining the personal and objective, although it, too, is framed as a personal address to his daughter. It is possible to see the Journal and *Childe Harold* 3 as one-sided conversations about illegitimate and legitimate love, but why did he not address a canto of *Childe Harold* to Augusta? Could it be that he thought of poetry, which he associated with the sublime, as the more legitimate form? If this were so, perhaps it was because it imposed control on him. Once the content is controlled by

form, a subtler poetry emerges, the one (I think) that defeated some late nineteenth-century readers.¹³ Paradoxically, formal control resulted in a greater volume of words. The more elusive an idea or feeling, the more the words needed to describe it. Since there is no verbal symbol for it, it can only be hinted at or approximated through analogy, metaphor, sound, the whole armoury of the human mind. Too few words, and the thing will appear as something it is not. As with Iago's thoughts, an idea needs dilation for it to be born. Words clarify. Such writing requires not pithiness but a discursive wit to prevent its descent into the "trivially fluent" (Saintsbury 99).¹⁴

With each new version of the same content, Byron increased the tonal variety, not as a brief local effect but, in *Childe Harold*, as cadences that hold a Canto together, or link one Canto with another, and cadence needs length.¹⁵ Hazlitt assumed that verse meant to be read to oneself, or "rhymes of the eye," do not have this slow musical effect. Slowing down characterises *Childe Harold* canto 3 but not its sibling *Manfred*, whose grand gestures are undercut by Spirits aspiring to Palgrave's Hit Parade of rapid lyrics: "Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd / From my mansion in the cloud" (1. 1. 50-1). If the sublime is duration and length of sound, what are we to do with Byron's laughter here? Where are his letters of everyday life to be accommodated? Byron's term for failed loftiness was the "false 'sublime,' " the sort of thing manifested by Wordsworth as "the 'idiot in his glory,' " but perhaps his toppling of loftiness is deliberate.¹⁶ I think that formal control released his creativity and became a means of discovery. In *Manfred*, for instance, he comes up against the limitations of Gothic melodrama. He adds some comedy to it through silly rhymes and the Hunter's common sense perspective on Manfred's " 'luxury of sorry feeling,' " and then uses this renovated version in *The Deformed Transformed* (Brown 237). Like others of his time, Byron is not interested in the sublime as an exclusive aesthetic principle. Something more encompassing would suit him better, such as Hazlitt's oxymoronic "egotistical sublime" which modifies the sublime through mockery but also explains a crucial aspect of the poet it describes. He could have returned to the eighteenth-century "urbane sublime" which included satire, sublime, and ordinary experience, but perhaps that was limited as well (Brown 237). Byron's appetite for life needed a concept of grandeur that allowed for variety without straying very far from the sublime as awe

of the divine. Eventually, he worked out a sublime that had the “extreme tonal instability” of *Don Juan* and included the “prodigality of life.”¹⁷ Even Hazlitt admired his achievement: “there is nothing mimminee-pimminee, modern, polished, light, fluttering, in his standard of the sublime and beautiful. . . . He is not a carpet poet” (310).

We may now return to the issue of the volume of Byron’s work. In the late nineteenth century, J. A. Symonds said that the greatness of a poet could only be assessed if he left an ample amount of work (2).¹⁸ Shelley has “a much larger body of work than Keats has to his name,” which is why he is the greater poet (Saintsbury 87). He also had greater variety, from which critics predicted that, had he lived, he would have written better and better, whereas Keats may have merely repeated himself.¹⁹ Without age, time, maturity, knowledge, sustained imagination, and diversity, a long poem was impossible.

The other issue that pops up every so often in the last half of the century is whether the long poem was dead, and what it was anyway. As far as I have found, there is no link made between the long poem and the volume of a writer’s work, but there may be one. Responding to Edgar Allan Poe, for whom the long poem was an absurdity,²⁰ A. C. Bradley felt that with all its faults, it must be preserved. Its faults included lack of uniformity. Like Palgrave, he had no use for pastiche-like variation. He admitted that a long poem needed imaginative powers “superfluous” in a short one, but the best Romantic long poem was only a several short lyrics joined by passages of prose (Bradley 203). Byron had already said that poets could not expect to write good poetry all the time; long poems were bound to have bad patches in them, but perhaps Bradley did not know this. Others have said that a long poem has narrative and sustained observation and representation of human action and emotion. The long poem, reborn in the late twentieth century, has a website where it has been said that it is essentially dramatic, and to be read aloud.²¹ Long poems test the poet’s imaginative energy and stamina, in contrast to “pushy. . . . short (convenient, undemanding)” poems (Greening). Variety, it is repeatedly said, is its greatest virtue, and not merely variety of tone.²² The long poem is a combination of genres.²³ The problem is how to make it cohere. Solutions include a narrative glue and “spiritual architecture.”²⁴ They could have been talking about Byron.²⁵ *Childe Harold* is to be read aloud;

Don Juan's generic variety outsoars the eight-line stanza; and we all agree that spiritual architecture holds these two poems in place. Byron's energy and variety were never in doubt.

A critic has said that Spenser put his magnanimous view of nationhood into *The Faerie Queene*, written at a time of expanding nationalism (Reeves 69). This suggests that the slow movement of the poem mimics the leisurely emergence of nationalism, as if the poet could not do any more than the age had done politically. Poets from Spenser onwards look for subject and language in the course of writing their long poems. In a somewhat similar way to Spenser, Byron does not celebrate a thing that is already in existence but uses the poem as a laboratory where he invents the nation or society or whatever needs inventing at that moment in his life. In *Childe Harold* canto 3, he invented a new post-Waterloo self, and he considered the viability of non-monarchical governments in his drama. At a time when nothing was clear but everything seemed possible, it could not have been easy to arrive at prescriptive things to say, whereas ambling through ideas and feelings was a route to discovering what to be and say.²⁶ Writing about the magnitude of style of the so-called Great Romantics, Victor Kiernan says that they were "governed by accidents of the historical tides swirling round [them] . . . [Their writing was] a means of catching at ideas, [and] indulging in [their] insatiable curiosity . . . in a flow of satire, wit, eloquence. . . . For us, it is an immense chaotic contribution to a way of looking at the universe which had begun taking shape [in their time]" (54). The long poem was used to create an ideal rather than report one.

Why have I spent so much time over the long poem? It is partly because of late nineteenth century's critical elision between the long poem and the volume of a poet's work, and partly because of changing attitudes to prolixity. Gray apologised for saying in fifty lines what Tacitus had said in five words (Bredvold 611); the Romantics loved prolixity; late Victorian and early twentieth-century minimalists, in pursuit of tiny grandeur, disdained them for it. A considerable reason was that I couldn't find the critical key for researching Byron's prolixity. Finally, I thought of approaching it via the long poem. Now, very tentatively, it seems possible to see all of Byron's work as a long poem.²⁷ To put it another way, the long poem's imaginative and creative stamina, energy of observation and

language, and above all, its variety of content, genre, and tone, are Byron's characteristic strengths. He is not prolix (wordy, lengthy) but prolific (fertile, fruitful, abounding).

Only a man so phenomenally endowed with generosity of attitude could have afforded such "magnificent prodigality."²⁸ Byron's writing is varied, generous, paradoxical, and overwhelming. Like his *Ocean and God's creation*, it is "boundless, endless, and sublime" (CHP 4. 183).²⁹

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¹ La traduction de Sonya Malaborza.

² Prolivity pleased Byron. He didn't want to end his long poems. When he seemed to have ended *Childe Harold*, he told Murray, "you may be sure I will do for the text all that I can to finish with decency" (BLJ 5: 265). See also 264 and 272.

³ In spite of his prodigious activity, "there has always been talk . . . of Byron's indolence'. If he won time for indolence, that was surely his crowning achievement" (Knight 266).

⁴ Peter Cochran, e-mail to the author, 6 May 2004. On the economics of writing, it is useful to compare Jane Austen and Byron. Jane Austen published her novels at her own expense. She asked for thinner paper and larger sheets to cut costs. Byron, in contrast, argued about payment but began his writing career by loftily refusing payment. He did not discuss the cost of paper with his publisher as far as I know. Another difference between the two is that Byron could afford to travel, in England and abroad. When he was abroad, his words flowed — as *Childe Harold*, the plays, Journals, *Don Juan*. They came out of his travels or when he was away from home, when he had exchanged his pond for the ocean. His goalless travel became the shape of his long poems. Austen, however, was confined to narrow rooms, which Edward Said sees in the confined range of her work. Smaller, thinner books were cheaper. Cheap pirated versions Byron's work ensured that Byron had a working class readership. Saintsbury makes a connection between the cost and the decline in wordiness: Swinburne's "*Atalanta*, [was] at first published in a rather luxurious form (which has become rare and very costly) . . ." (Saintsbury 296).

⁵ The sublime is historically confined. Influential in the late seventeenth century, admired by the Augustans, "absorbed into the blood stream of English thinking . . . about literature" in the course of the eighteenth century, it went out more or less at the time E. H. Coleridge and Saintsbury announced that the "vogue" for Byron had passed (Preminger 819b; Coleridge 5: vii; Saintsbury 78). For late nineteenth-century critics, Byron was "distinctly of the second class and not even of the best kind of second" (Saintsbury 80).

⁶ The thesaurus links expansiveness with verbal fluency.

⁷ For a discussion of "wild," see my "'Wild' and its synonyms in the *Ode to the West Wind*," *The Romantics*, ed. Shobhana Bhattacharji (2001; New Delhi: Doaba, 2003) 173-174.

⁸ Nineteenth-century meanness wasn't an occasional or passing thing. Max Beerbohm's "pettiness and hostility" resulted in his "lifelong obsession with the tedium of bigness . . . a kind of childishness or envy. No one else, surely, has ever given so much crafty energy in scaling bigness down" (Schwarz 10). The early twentieth-century's minimalist rules could be frustrating for an expansive author. Ford Madox Ford told D. H. Lawrence that *The White Peacock*, written in the year Bradley ran down the Romantic long poem, "with its enormous prolixity of detail, sins against almost every canon of art as I conceive it" (qtd. in Parks 73).

⁹ C. S. Lewis, quoted in J. H. Alexander, "Romantic Poetry," *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, ed. Martin Goyle et al (1990; London: Routledge, 1991) 265-277, 265; Fowler vii.

¹⁰ Paul Bailley, in a recorded talk broadcast on All India Radio, early 2004.

¹¹ See Bhattacharji, "Byron's Drama," *passim*.

¹² To appreciate Pope, we must "shut up our books and seal up our senses" (Hazlitt 123).

¹³ Many of them judged Byron by pre-existing standards. Samuel C. Chew ranged over a wide field, relating the plays to Byron's other writings. He believed that Byron's plays were written according to "a special theory of dramatic art," yet he judged them against a model of classical drama (30). By his reckoning, the earlier plays were a run-up to the perfect *Sardanapalus* and the later ones sad fallings-off, an argument so schematic that he represented it diagrammatically (41). See as well Bhattacharji, "Byron's Drama," (Chapter 1). Bradley used Book Four of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* to prove that the Romantics were good at shorter lyrics but not long poems.

¹⁴ Bradley criticised *Don Juan* for being too discursive (Bradley 181).

¹⁵ See e.g., Hazlitt, "On Shakespeare and Milton" (97).

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- ¹⁶ *Hints from Horace* 782; *English Bards* 253.
- ¹⁷ J. H. Alexander 268; Hazlitt 26. Hazlitt admires the “multitude of things” in Homer’s poems (26).
- ¹⁸ “As an aspiring writer, you are brought up on the notion that you have to write several books – offer a substantial body of work – or you are no writer at all. To write just one book and stop with that seems failure of a kind.” (Pradeep Sebastian, “One-Book Writers,” *The Hindu Literary Review* [May 2, 2004]: 6.) There is little information on the matter in the intervening 126 years, although Saintsbury said, “the scanty verse of Emily Brontë has been worthy of such high praise that only a mass of work would appear to be wanting to put her in the first rank At thirty, however, a genuine poetess should have produced more than a mere handful of verse . . .” (325).
- ¹⁹ Symonds’s comment might explain Keats’s terror at dying without leaving a substantial body of work behind. Initially his ambition was to write a long poem, but when he knew he was dying, he began to write frantically, and in several genres so that at least there would be lots of his work if not a single long poem. He must have arrived at this position — that to be thought of as a great poet, there must be either a long poem or a substantial body of work to one’s name — via ideas picked up from friends, and perhaps Hazlitt’s lectures. Who are Keats’s great poets? Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare, i.e., he wanted to be in the canon. It is possible, thus, that his idea of what made a poet great was canonical as well.
- ²⁰ See Edgar Allan Poe, “The Poetic Principle,” *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. David Galloway (1967; London: Penguin, 1986) 9-46.
- ²¹ John Greening, “Dedication to the Monarch,” *Long Poem Group Newsletter*, ed. Sebastian Barker and William Oxley, No. 5 (October 1997), *n.pag.*, online, <http://www.dgdclynx.plus.com/lpgn/lpgn52.html> (accessed: 26. 6. 2005).
- ²² See Saintsbury on “certain poetic faults” of Swinburne (297). As recently as June 2004, the issue of variety was raised with regard to Joyce Carol Oates, who is accused of having too little variety: “While prodigious, her output must be matched or outmatched, page for page, by some of the long-winded nineteenth- and early twentieth-century masters, among them Balzac . . . George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Henry James” (Fraser 36).
- ²³ Think of Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate* (Jon Silkin, “Essential Values,” *Long Poem Group Newsletter*, ed. Sebastian Barker and William Oxley, No. 5 (October 1997), *n.pag.*, online, <http://www.dgdclynx.plus.com/lpgn/lpgn52.html> (accessed: 26. 6. 2005).
- ²⁴ It needs “internal structure and spiritual architecture” (Jon Silkin, “Essential Values”).
- ²⁵ Which they are not. Palgrave’s selection for Book Four of *The Golden Treasury* is an early silencing of Byron already mentioned. The silencing of Byron continues through critics like Bradley (1909) and James Reeves (1965). Reeves says, for example, that the Spenserian stanza was used “notably” by Keats but does not mention the 500 Spenserian stanzas of *Childe Harold* (69). Fifty odd years later, the poet Douglas Oliver, said that he used Tasso’s ottava rima, as if he was the first to burst upon its possibilities after Tasso (Douglas Oliver, “Form and Poetic Process,” *Long Poem Group Newsletter*, ed. Sebastian Barker and William Oxley, No.5 (October 1997), *n.pag.*, online, <http://www.dgdclynx.plus.com/lpgn/lpgn52.html> (accessed: 26. 6. 2005). Alas, poor Juan.
- ²⁶ Bradley says the time required reflection: “prophecies, laments, outcries of joy, and murmurings of peace” were its language (184).
- ²⁷ “In form it resembles an epistolary novel” (Wilson Knight on Byron’s letters to Lady Melbourne about his flirtation with Frances Wedderburn Webster, 271).
- ²⁸ Victor Kiernan was commenting on Marx, “one of the Great Romantics,” and his articles for the *New York Tribune* (54).
- ²⁹ It is also a lot like the eighteenth-century urbane sublime, in which there is “a continuity between the satiric and sublime modes, as well as between the sublime mode and ordinary experience [The period was] able to encompass within a single stylistic framework remarkable and

remarkably shifting range of tone and subject matter. Its thought processes are characterised by their continuity, their fluidity, and their reluctance to be polarized. . .” (Brown, 237).