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The Cambridge Quarterly, Volume 35, Number 1, 2006, pp. 97-101 (Review)

Published by Oxford University Press



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place it alongside better-known works on a university or school syllabus. This is not a banal example of a sub-Shakespearian history play by a minor writer, as might have been presumed: by representing a strikingly diverse range of dramatic genres, geographical locations, social classes and linguistic idioms, *Edward IV* exemplifies the dynamism and complexity of early modern popular culture. After the sustained work Rowland has done on Heywood's play its relative neglect by critics and editors will seem all the more inexplicable and, one would hope, will no longer be the case.

doi:10.1093/camqtly/bfj009

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Matthew Bevis

The Cambridge Companion to Byron edited by Drummond Bone. Cambridge University Press, 2004. £15.99 ISBN 0521786762 (pbk); £45 ISBN 0521781469 (hbk)

'I AM NOT FAMOUS for decision', Byron once noted in a demure parenthesis to the earl of Blessington.¹ The confession winningly highlights Byron's changeability, and yet – given the poet's awareness of how public infamy may not always tally with private inclinations – the comment might also imply hidden depths: 'not *famous* for decision, granted ... but there are other sides to me, you know'. In conversation with Lady Blessington, the poet quipped, 'Now, if I know myself, I should say, that I have no character at all', before quickly thinking through the importance of that 'if' and following it with a 'but': 'But, joking apart, what I think of myself is, that I am so changeable, being every thing by turns and nothing long – I am such a strange *mélange* of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me. There are but two sentiments to which I am constant – a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant.'² It is characteristic of Byron's self-witnessing

¹ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 11 vols. (London 1973–81) x. 157.

² *Lady Blessington's Conversations of Lord Byron*, ed. Ernest J. Lovell (Princeton 1969) p. 220.

intelligence to move between the quixotic and the constant, and to sense the dangers and values of both qualities. Making sense of Byron, then, requires a responsiveness to his mobility and an attentiveness to his principles: decidedly undecided, yes, but not necessarily indecisive.

This collection of essays brings out the protean nature of Byron's achievement. The editor, Drummond Bone, has organised it into three sections – 'Historical Contexts', 'Textual Contexts' and 'Literary Contexts' – and this gives the volume a certain rhythm: a general overview of recurring preoccupations (biography, publishing, politics, sexuality), then a closer look at individual texts in the corpus, and finally a wider perspective again for subjects such as Byron's relationship to his poetic forebears and followers. On the whole, this structure works well, and allows for conversations on Byron's work which might not have emerged in a straightforwardly chronological approach to his writings. Sometimes the exchanges are helpfully corrective: in his generally persuasive essay on 'Byron's life and his biographers' Paul Douglass notes of the poet's early travels that he 'looked forward now to crossing Europe with his friend Hobhouse, cavalierly ignoring the Napoleonic wars' (p. 11). Given that Byron was travelling through the Peninsula, this comment stands in need of correction, and receives it in Philip Martin's essay later in the volume: 'It is hard to imagine a more politically volatile location for Byron's travels, and the poem that granted him fame [*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*], than Portugal and Spain in 1809, and Byron's journey was a long way from the conventional Grand Tour' (p. 81). Other essays usefully complement and complicate one another when read in tandem; Jerome McGann's piece on 'Byron's Lyric Poetry' discusses how the poet's celebration of being 'born for opposition' involves an opposition to his own lyrical flights of fancy, while Malcolm Kellsall's essay on 'Byron's Politics' touches on the same Byronic phrase in order to reconsider its political implications. Similarly, Alan Richardson's contribution on 'Byron and the Theatre' nicely dovetails into Anne Barton's essay on 'Byron and Shakespeare', as both critics cast a fresh eye over the poet's qualified regard for Shakespearian dialogue and dramaturgy.

These implicit conversations between essays contribute much to the volume, but the *Companion* becomes more companionable when it focuses less on 'context' and more on 'text' – or, rather, when it brings the first to bear on the second in order to elucidate Byron's craft as a writer. Peter Graham's essay on 'Byron and the Business of Publishing' gives a very good sense of the poet's relationship with his publishers, with Murray in particular, showing how 'the long-suffering publisher kept liberal Byron amenable to conservative advice' (p. 33). And yet, when Graham glosses the poet's methods of composition – 'personally negligent in attending to petty details' (p. 35) – one feels that this isn't quite the whole picture, and that more of the 'petty details'

might have been attended to. Byron's fussiness over little things can be seen even when he is writing at great speed (over half the closing couplets in *Don Juan*, for example, were changed at least once from Byron's original versions).³ The devil is in the detail, and much of Byron's devilish charm as a writer comes through when the *Companion* gets stuck into particulars. Andrew Elfenbein's sharp discussion of the Byronic hero as an 'eerie magnet for attention' (p. 61) is enriched by his gloss of the following lines from *Lara*: 'from the breast | He forced an all unwilling interest' (p. 61). Elfenbein's apt comment that 'unwilling' may mean 'an interest that is not voluntary' and/or 'an interest that is not desired' (p. 62) goes to the heart of the Byronic hero's mysterious hold on us. Other close readings also enhance the collection: Drummond Bone's look at Byron's interest in forms of freedom takes useful bearings from reflections on the contours of the *ottava rima* form; Susan Wolfson's suggestive piece on *The Vision of Judgment* is sharpened by her look at Byron's revisions from draft manuscripts; and Jane Stabler's engaging readings of *Mazeppa* are aided by some sensitive comments on Byron's rhymes.

One of the best contributions to the volume is Andrew Nicholson's piece on Byron's prose. Building on his superb edition, *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, Nicholson examines the poet's letters, journals and notes to his own poems, before settling on two articles ('To the Editor' and *Some Observations*) for more extended analysis. Nicholson's discussions of Byron's use of the dash, and of the physical size of a manuscript page, are particularly revealing. Of the former, he writes: 'dashes often enshrine or capture Byron's accretive mode of thinking and writing. We think we have come to a full-stop or a rest, and then – with a dash (the dash connective, perhaps) – new material is added that rounds out the sentence, qualifies it, alters it entirely, raises or lowers it to a different pitch, or modulates it into a new key' (pp. 192–3). When discussing manuscripts, he offers us suggestive ways into thinking about how 'there is a bond, a tactile intimacy, between Byron and his writing materials, even a respect for them, even a fury with them' (p. 193). Through close attention to the styles of the prose, Nicholson shows how Byron's writing is frequently inflected with the varied tones and rhythms of *Don Juan*, and how the shifts between indignant satire and indulgent humility in such writing embody a tactful generosity which might serve as a model of critical conduct.

Nicholson's article points to new directions in Byron studies (we need more work on the letters, and on their relationship with the poetry), and other articles in the *Companion* also offer fresh perspectives and possibilities. Bernard Beatty considers Byron's debts to the eighteenth century, while Peter Cochran examines the poet's bequests to European literature; both

³ See Truman Guy Steffan, *Byron's Don Juan: The Making of a Masterpiece*, 4 vols. (Austin 1971) i. 313.

are useful surveys, and should serve as prompts to further research. Philip Martin is particularly good on *Childe Harold I* and *II* and *The Tales*, teasing out the declamatory, civic tones in the former poem, yet also showing how it displays a suspicion of rhetorical propaganda. Nigel Leask's contribution on 'Byron and the Eastern Mediterranean' is similarly instructive, showing how, 'in establishing a positive image of the provincial Ottoman ruling class in terms of the gentlemanly ideal of Whig political discourse, Byron dispels the stereotype of oriental despotism and theocratic central government from Istanbul' (p. 113). Given the long-standing emphasis on Byron's Greek affiliations, Leask's discussion of how the poet refused to allow nationalist idealism to smother his sceptical cosmopolitanism is a welcome addition to this area of Byron scholarship.

The *Companion* is designed to be more than just a primer; as the editor points out, it aims 'to avoid mere introductory paraphrase of previous views' (p. 2). For the most part, the collection does manage this, although it is a pity that there is not more space devoted to *Don Juan* (Bone discusses it in his essay, but a separate, more sustained article on the poem would not have been amiss). Byron would have had sympathy for those who undertake 'the trouble of an index', so it may seem churlish to quibble with the volume's generally very good stab at it, but some omissions might be corrected in future editions: there is no entry for Samuel Beckett, despite his popping up on more than one occasion, no reference to Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight' though it is quoted on page 298, and the Hazlitt entry misses a couple of citations (on pages 202 and 206). That said, other aspects of the index facilitate one's sense of the conversations between different contributors in interesting ways. The entry for *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, for instance, contains not only page references, but separate subheadings on topics such as 'and Europe's history', 'Shakespearean expressions', 'and Catholic church', and 'publication of'.

In *Don Juan*, Byron ends one stanza with a typically candid yet crafty sign-off: 'I do not know; – I wish men to be free | As much from mobs as kings, from you as me' (IX. 25). This amicable shrug of the shoulders displays those two sentiments to which the poet considered himself constant – 'a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant'. And yet the lines are not quite delivered 'joking apart', for the apposition of the phrasing ('from mobs as kings, from you as me') tentatively aligns 'mobs' with the readers, and the 'kings' with Byron – a hint of the lordly privilege behind some of his egalitarian pronouncements. As such, the lines provide a wry acknowledgement that even calls for untrammelled liberty might veer into 'cant' if not watched with a shrewd eye. Indeed, Byronic freedoms are rarely cherished without provisos, even when it comes to the poet defending his own liberties. As he observed of *Don Juan*, 'Why Man the Soul of such writing is its licence – ... at least the *liberty* of that *licence* if one likes – *not* that one

should abuse it'.⁴ Those dashes and the phrases which follow them point to a mind which is tirelessly attempting to see things from more than one point of view. This *Companion* should be welcomed for a similar ambition.

doi:10.1093/camqtly/bfj007

⁴ *Letters*, vi. 207.