BYRON'S MANFRED and *PELLICO'S FRANCESCA DA RIMINI*

Here are two dramatic passages which contrast interestingly:

A: Ah, me! what words! Would you then pity me?
Or hate me less, if I should win more fame
In savage war? Speak but the word! Just say
The place, the years, and I'll be gone at once.
So much the stiffer is the enterprise,
So much the sweeter will its struggles be,
As you have laid them on me. Hope of fame
Has often nerv'd the vigour of these arms;
But thy command will give me far more strength.
I'll win my honours in no tyrant's ranks,
My country's laurel crown shall be my prize,
But woven by your hands. Your voice, your praise,
One glance of your sweet eyes.

B: Eternal God!
What words![1]

A: Parlami! Io t'ho chiamata nella tacita notte, ho spaventati gli uccelli sopiti sui quei rami, e svegliato i lupi della montagna, e fatto conoscere alle caverne il tuo nome invano echeggiato, che mi rispondeva. – Molte cose mi risposero – spiriti ed uomini – ma tu fosti muta. Deh, parlami! Ho vegliato più a lungo che le stelle, e guardato invano il cielo cercando di te. Parlami! Ho trascorsa la terra, e non ho mai trovato la sua sembianza. – Parlami! osserva queste furie che mi circondano – esse si commuovono per me; io non le temo, e ho pietà di te sola. – Parlami! sebbene irata – purchè tu parli – non m'affando di che, – ma fa ch'io t'oda una volta – questa volta – una volta sola!

B: Manfredo![2]

1: Silvio Pellico, *Francesca da Rimini*, tr J.G.V.P. (Dublin, James McGlashan, 1851) p. 27. The original runs:

Quai detti! Avresti
Di me pietà? Cessar d'odiarmi alquanto
Potresti, se col brando io m'acquistassi
Fama maggior? Un tuo comando basta.
Prescrivi il luogo e gli anni. A'più remoti
Lidi mi recherò; quanto più gravi
E perigliose troverò le imprese,
Vie più dolci mi fien, poichè Francesca
Imposte me la avrà. L'onore assai
E l'ardimento mi fan prode il braccio;
Più il farà prode il tuo adorato nome.
Contaminate non saran mie glorie
Da tirannico intento. Altra corona,
Fuorchè d'alloro, ma da te intrecciata,
Non bramerò: solo uno tuo applauso, un detto,
Un sorriso, uno sguardo ... *Opere* (Paris, Thieriot, 1848) p. 489: III i)

2: Pellico, *Tragedie ... Manfredo, poema drammatico di Lord Byron (versione in prosa*, Florence, no publisher named, 1859) p.460. The original runs:

Speak to me!

The first seems conventional in contrast to the second, whose protagonist is much deeper into a despair which will not easily be assuaged by his going, like Radames in *Aida*, to win military glory in the name of his beloved. But the desperate plea for the beloved to speak to him just once, and the terminal feeling that if he gets no reaction this time he may as well give up, are features common to both. The second is from Silvio Pellico's translation of Byron's *Manfred*, which Pellico published in 1818 with his own tragedy *Francesca da Rimini*, and the first from a translation of that same *Francesca da Rimini*, published in Dublin in 1851 under the initials "J.G.V.P.", which *may* be the work of Byron's best friend John Cam Hobhouse, or Lord Broughton de Gyfford, as he had by then become.

Byron and Hobhouse first heard of Pellico and his tragedy on October 13th 1816, in the box at La Scala, Milan, belonging to Ludovico di Breme. Breme had a poor opinion of most of the Italian writers of his time, as Hobhouse recorded in his diary:

> Of Alfieri his countryman he spoke as almost the only writer of modern times – though he said he had seen a tragedy on the subject of Francesca da Rimini by a young man, his friend, which though not a perfect work was very affecting. This poet had shown his tragedy to Foscolo, who advised him to burn it – afterwards he showed it to Breme, who was delighted and put it into the hands of a celebrated actress, who played in it with great effect....[3]

Breme capitivated both Byron and Hobhouse with his droll wit, and his inexhaustible wealth of satirical anecdotes. They liked those especially which he told about A. W. von Schlegel, whose company they had endured in Madame de Staël's house at Geneva earlier in the year. Four days after their trip to La Scala, they went to Breme's for a magnificent dinner. Hobhouse records their reception thus:

> Rain for the first day. Some time, went at past five, having sat in writing all day, to the Casa Roma to dine with Monsignor Breme, who lives in that large palace with his brother the Marquis. We found a large party of young men, some of whom we knew there, and Lord Byron as well as myself most gallantly received: indeed, the enthusiasm which my poetical friend meets is something extraordinary.
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> Mirabeau, the banker here, came with his letters, merely to see *le célèbre poète*, and Breme says he thinks he is more like Petrarch than any other writer. His encomiums to myself would make me blink in England, but here only serve to make me fancy that I shall be sure of a favourable and fair reception, and of having a just interpretation put upon what I say or do. This gives a facility of manner which I never remember to have before recognized, and makes me as yet like this place better

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> For I have called on thee in the still night,
> Startled the slumbering birds from the hushed boughs,
> And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
> Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
> Which answered me – many things answered me –
> Spirits and men – but thou wert silent all;
> Yet speak to me – I have outwatched the Stars,
> And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee;
> Speak to me – I have wandered o'er the earth
> And never found thy likeness. Speak to me!
> Look on the fiends around – they feel for me –
> I fear them not – and feel for thee alone –
> Speak to me, though it be in wrath – but say –
> I reck not what – but let me hear thee once,
> Once more!
>
> Manfred! (II iv 134-50)

3: See www.Hobby-O.com, "Milan".

> than any other I have ever seen. A persuasion that I am of the liberal English, and more than all here, a hater of the Congress Castlereagh system, gives me a willing audience in this place, which is not elsewhere found, at least I have not found it.[4]

di Breme gave an account of the evening in a P.S. to a letter to Giuseppe Grassi of 16th October, in which he refers to

> ... il dottissimo Hobhouse viaggiator in Grecia, ora compagno di Byron ("the extremely learned Hobhouse, traveller in Greece and now Byron's companion").[5]

A strong reason for Hobhouse's future writing about Italian politics and literature was thus that he thought the Italians took him seriously in a way the English didn't. *The Substance of some Letters from Paris*, his liberal account of the Hundred Days, probably had much to do with their enthusiasm. Buoyed up by the reception he had had in Milan, he dedicated its third edition to Byron the following year. Also at the dinner

> ... there was ... the little Silvio Pellico, author of *Francesca da Rimini* – I did not hear him say a word …[6]

... and Vincenzo Monti, opposed to Breme in literary matters, but urbane and patriarchal enough for Byron to pay particular attention to what he said. When the evening finished, wrote Hobhouse,

> We went home with a MS of *Francesca da Rimini* …[7]

The former Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, which had had Milan as its capital and Eugene Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepson, as its Viceroy, had since the Congress of Vienna been under Austrian rule. Ludovico di Breme had been one of its almoners (he had been head of a school for the court pages) and his father its Interior Minister. The literary factions into which Byron and Hobhouse found Milanese society split did not divide themselves very exactly along political lines, but which side one was on appeared to depend loosely on the degree of fatalism with which one accepted the new fact of Austrian domination. There was a rough consensus that although economically the Austrians were even more parasitical than the French, the French (or rather, Beauharnais' puppet government) had been no less authoritarian than the Austrians had up to now appeared:

> Monti and Pellico and Breme said to day [Hobhouse records on October 21st] that Napoleon's government was dreadfully illiberal as to publications and that they planned an edition of the classics leaving out every thing in favour of liberty …[8]

How much of the classics would survive if they were shorn of their libertarian rhetoric is an interesting question. Despite such an appearance of agreement, strong undercurrents of dislike and accusation were identifiable during the days which the two Englishmen spent in Milan, and streams of visitors appeared at their rooms, all anxious to put their side of the political story. It seemed that an important issue for them to understand was what exactly had happened on April 20th 1814, when Beauharnais' Finance Minister Count Giuseppe Prina had

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4: Ibid.
5: See Breme, letter to Madame de Staël, 30th October 1816 , *Lettere*, a cura di Piero Camporesi (Milan, Giulio Einaudi, 1966) p. 388.
6: See www.Hobby-O.com, "Milan".
7: Ibid.
8: Ibid.

been lynched by a mob, apparently drafted into Milan from the surrounding country estates by local landowners opposed to Beauharnais, who were taking advantage of Napoleon's abdication, signalling the downfall of the Napoleonic kingdom and the subsequent Austrian invasion – which not everyone had opposed. All the Italians whom Byron and Hobhouse met were anxious that the two should hear their version of it. Another issue was the editorship and content of the *Biblioteca Italiana*, a literary journal which the Austrians had set up, and one's attitude to which was seen as a touchstone of whatever "patriotism", at such an uncertain time, meant. Ugo Foscolo – the one major Italian writer who had left the country, unable to deal with the compromise involved in staying on – had turned down its editorhip, as had Monti. On October 20th Byron and Hobhouse are introduced to Giuseppe Acerbi, who had accepted the post, and who is described by Hobhouse as

> ... a middle aged tallish man with black eyes not polished manners and something sly in his looks .. talking temperately and casting round his eye to see if he was safe …[9]

They dislike his way of condescending to the absent Breme, whose charm has worked its spell so well that Acerbi stands no chance of an objective hearing. In this context, any play written by someone patronised by and praised by Breme is bound to find favour, and, on October 22nd, after a visit to the Villa Buonaparte at Monza, the former country seat of Beauharnais, Hobhouse writes

> We drove back to Milan – dined – at night Byron and I translated part of *Francesca da Rimini* – I till late –[10]

Byron seems to have given up almost at once, perhaps because their Italian was not perfect – "Byron and I took a course with our grammars in the evening"[11] Hobhouse writes on October 24th. But Hobhouse persisted. On October 25th his diary entry starts

> Did nothing particular in the morning but <erased: "translated some of Pellico's tragedy"> {overlineated: "wrote letters"}[12]

That evening occurs the great comic event of their visit, a trip to La Scala for a performance by Tommaso Sgricci, the *improvvisatore*. Monti, and his son-in-law Count Giulio Perticari, whom Sgricci is *said* by Breme's faction to have cuckolded, is *said* to be behind the scenes helping to censor the suggestions (for, to prove his genius, Sgricci improvises on themes given him by the audience). Sgricci does not go down well, either with the liberals in Breme's box, or with Byron and Hobhouse, or indeed with the house, parts of which empty, to Breme's vocal delight, as the display winds on and on. Monti – who had, according to Breme, been walking the streets touting Sgricci as a great talent in the morning – leaves town in embarrassment the next day.[13] As if in reaction to this proof of conservative charlatanism, Hobhouse presses on, and, having been introduced (by one of the Carvellas brothers from Zante) to yet another polemicist, Angelo Anelli, and having read the following day a pamphlet about the events of April 20th 1814, he writes

> At the arrival of the Austrians the lodge of Masons was dissolved and all those in the employment of government took an oath not to act or meet any more. Anelli is a professor – he has taken the

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9: Ibid.
10: Ibid.
11: Ibid.
12: Ibid.
13: See Breme, letter to Madame de Staël, 30th October 1816 *Lettere*, a cura di Piero Camporesi (Milan, Giulio Einaudi 1966, p. 386-9).

> oath – he seemed to say that the Austrian was a very mild government – the English were hated as well they may be – by the Italians and suspected by the Austrians – I walked out dined and translated two acts of the *Francesca da Rimini* …[14]

The English were hated because of the assistance they had given the Austrians in invading, and the seal of approval they had allowed them to receive at Vienna in the following year. One expected nothing more from Austrians, but from the freedom-loving English one was entitled to some assistance, surely. Here was another challenge to Byron and Hobhouse – from two such famous English liberals, a gesture such as translating *Francesca* would go down well. Two days later, on October 27th, occured the famous tussle at La Scala between Polidori and the Austrian grenadier officer. At the start of his entry for October 28th Hobhouse records "At the play of Francesca – of which translated little more than an act to day",[15] and at the end, "wrote a little of Francesca and then to bed".[16] On the 29th, despite an attempt by Hobhouse and Byron at intervening on his behalf with Count Franz de Saurau, the Austrian governor, who receives them very politely, but will not help them, Polidori is expelled; and the diary entry for October 30th starts,

> rainy – finished Francesca da Rimini – Polidori went at half past one to day.[17]

It thus took Hobhouse thirteen days to draft his translation, at least, from the receipt of the manuscript on October 17th. Seemingly encouraged by Byron, Pellico had high expectations of it. On 22nd November he wrote to his brother,

> Lord Byron non è autore delle *Bella Penitente*; non ha ancor fatto tragedie, ma l'Inghilterra ne aspetta da lui. Senti le obbligazioni che gli ho; non gli bastò di lodar molto la mia *Francesca*; si pose a tradurne un Atto e poi un altro, e poi si fermò nella risoluzione di farla conoscere al suo paese. Egli è Direttore del Teatro di Drurylane [sic] a Londra; l'ha dunque tradotta tutta (fra lui e Lord Hobhouse [sic] suo amico indivisibile) e la manderà quanto prima sulle scene di Shakespeare. Egli assicura che sebbene avvezzi a produzioni più complicate, i suoi compatriotti saranno colpiti della *bella semplicità* (come la chiama egli) di quella tragedia. Sarà preceduta da un Prologo, in cui Lord Byron informerà gli Spettatori di quanto è uopo che sappiano, cioè dell'essere produzione italiana, etc. e com'è uso su quei teatri, la chiuderà con un Epilogo – Questa lusinga al mio amor proprie dovrebbe farmi scrivere altri cose, eppure il tempo vola, e non fo niente ...[18]
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> *("Lord Byron is not the author of* The Fair Penitent*; he has not yet written a tragedy, but England expects one of him, and he feels this obligation. He did not hesitate to praise my* Francesca *highly; and set himself to translate one act and then another, and then resolved to make it known in his country. He is Director of the Drury Lane Theatre in London; he has therefore, with his inseparable friend Lord Hobhouse, translated it all, and will send it as soon as possible to the stage of Shakespeare. He is certain that although they are accustomed to more complicated works, his countrymen will be struck by the "beautiful simplicity" (as he called it) of this tragedy. It will be preceded by a Prologue, in which Lord Byron will tell the audience what they need to know of Italian dramas, and, as plays are in their theatres, concluded with an Epilogue – This increase in my self-esteem should make me write more, but time flies, and I have done nothing ...").*

Nothing came of any of these plans, which owed, indeed, more to Pellico's innocent imagination than to English good faith; they ran into the sand somewhere between then and 1820, when the *Quarterly* published Henry Hart Milman's article on Italian tragedy, and when Pellico was launched into real immortality, with the start of his ten freezing years in Austrian

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14: www.Hobby-O.com, "Milan".
15: Ibid.
16: Ibid.
17: Ibid.

prisons. And, as Nick Havely has shown,[19] no-one knows what happened to the translation. It may have been published in 1851, under the pseudonymous initials "J. G. V. P." – I offer the idea as a tantalising possibility, but have no evidence other than that a translation was published in Dublin (by James McGlashan of 50, Upper Sackville Street)[18] in 1851, and that Hobhouse had been in Dublin in 1850, a fact which cannot be gleaned from the published version of his diary.[1920] There is no reference to any publication plans in the actual diaries of 1850 or 1851, but as he was a reserved diarist, his failure to mention any proves nothing.

The still more tantalising idea lies in Pellico's ingenuous words to his brother "[Byron] non ha ancor fatto tragedie, ma l'Inghilterra ne aspetta da lui. Senti le obbligazioni che gli ho ...". For, as we know now, but as no-one, not even Hobhouse, appears to have known then, Byron was writing a tragedy of sorts, namely, *Manfred*.

Manfred's writing is surrounded in mystery. In his diary, Hobhouse never refers to it, even though he is with Byron for what we assume to be much of its writing, from late August to early December 1816. The rough draft is not dated anywhere – a strange thing, for Byron normally dates the beginnings and ends of his manuscripts. It is commonsense to date the first act, in which the Alps provide much of the imagery, to before October 9th, when Byron leaves Switzerland via the Simplon Pass – but commonsense might ignore the fact that he had a phenomenal memory, and need not have been in Switzerland in order to write about, for example, the Jungfrau, or the Staubbach waterfall. We really have no idea at what point the composition of the play was when he arrived in Milan, and read *Francesca da Rimini* – we don't even know that he read all of *Francesca*, for Hobhouse and he only co-operate on "part of" it: see the diary passage from October 22nd, printed above. We know that he saw a performance of Monti's tragedy *Aristodemo* (often adduced as another Italian dramatic source for *Manfred*) on November 29th, at the Teatro San Benedetto in Venice;[21] but we can deduce nothing about his acquaintance with Pellico's tragedy, beyond assuming that he read its opening.

The scene containing the passionate speech of Paolo, printed at the start of this essay, is III i. It leads on to that part of the play on which Foscolo based his advice to Pellico, to burn the piece: for Pellico's bold decision is to re-write Dante. Another speech of Paolo's reveals the following (again I quote the 1851 translation):

> Some time I tried to hide
> My passion, but one day it seem'd to me
> That you had read my heart. You from your rooms
> Were coming towards the garden. I was lying
> Stretch'd on a bed of flowers, near the lake,
> Thence gazing at your rooms. At your approach
> I rose in haste. Your eyes, fixed on a book,
> Did not see me. A tear fell on the page.
> I spoke to you. My words were much disturb'd,
> And so in truth were you. That book you gave me.

18: McGlashan was, though Scots, a well-known Dublin publisher of the day. He had taken over the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1838 and changed its politics from conservative to nationalist, a leaning which would square with the politics of *Francesca*. He moved from 21 D'Olier Street to 50 Upper Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) in 1850, so the translation would have been one of his first from a new address. I am grateful to Vincent Kinane, of Trinity College Library Dublin, for his help here, and also to Mary Caulfield and the Irish Byron Society. Anthony Cronin suggests that "[J. G.] V. P." might signify "[J. G.] Vere Power".

19: He visited Ireland with his daughters in September 1850, passing through Dublin on 9th- 12th and 24th-25th (B.L. Add. Mss. 43755 2r - 4v and 15r - 16r).

20: At *Recollections of a Long Life* VI 264-5, the 1850 entry-sequence jumps from August 27th to November 11th.

21: See www.Hobby-O.com, "Milan to Venice".

We read together how Knight Lancelot
Was seized by mighty love. We were alone,
Suspecting nothing of each other's love.
Our eyes met. I grew pale. You trembled, and
Suddenly left me.[22]

... and so avoided the sin to which the passage from *Inferno* V, which Byron afterwards did translate, is so memorable a tribute. The lines here rendered as *We read together how Knight Lancelot / Was seized by mighty love. We were alone, / Suspecting nothing of each other's love* is lifted straight from the *Inferno* – although *sanza alcun sospetto* (*Inferno* V 129) means, in the original, that the lovers had no fear of discovery, not that neither sensed the other's love. Adultery is avoided for the rest of the play – but this does not prevent Francesca's husband from mistakenly killing both her and Paolo anyway, just before the curtain falls.

Byron, if he read the play at all, may have been struck by the sentimentality of the way it revised Dante, and, as an expert, having written several poems on the theme of triangular love-tragedy himself, *The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, Parisina*, and so on, decided perhaps that it wasn't worth the bore of translation. Perhaps it reminded him too much of Leigh Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*, published earlier in 1816, about which he had also felt obliged to be polite. Hobhouse, however, who had no personal experience of adultery, or indeed very much experience of heterosexual infatuation at all, must have seen Francesca's self-denial as a fine womanly thing, and girded up his loins, and got out his grammar, accordingly.

Manfred and Astarte are far closer to the Paolo and Francesca of Dante than are the Paolo and Francesca of Pellico: their love seems to have been consummated, and Manfred, at least, is as a result experiencing torment – in the company of devils, too, though not subject to their dictates. Byron may have read *Francesca da Rimini* as a negative example, and trimmed his own play thematically in consequence. The idea of going off for a soldier to the Crusades, or to fight for his country's liberty in the manner of William Tell, or of Pellico's Paolo, never occurs to Manfred, part of whose maniacal hauteur lies in his indifference to such ideas as military heroics, or patriotism.

Where Francesca reacts to Paolo's emotive speeches with several of her own – all to do with the need for renunciation – Astarte reacts to Manfred's still more emotive speeches

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22: Silvio Pellico, *Francesca da Rimini*, tr J.G.V.P. (Dublin, James McGlashan, 1851) pp. 28-9. The original runs:

Io questa fiamma
Alcun tempo celai; ma un dë mi parve
Che tu nel cor letto m'avessi. Il piede
Dalle virginee tue stanze volgevi
Al secreto giardino; e presso al lago,
In mezzo ai fior prosteso, io sospirando
Le tue stanze guardava, e al venir tuo
Tremando scorsi. Sopra un libro attenti
Non mi vedeano gli occhi tuoi; sul libro
Ti cadeva una lagrima ... Commosso
Mi t'accostai. Perplessi eran miei detti,
Perplessi pur erano i tuoi. Quel libro
Mi porgesti, e leggemmo. Insiem leggemmo
Di Lanciotto come amor lo strinse.
Soli eravamo, e senz'alcun sospetto ...
Gli sguardi nostri s'incontraro ... il viso
Mio scolorossi ... tu tremavi ... e ratta
Ti dileguasti. *Opere* (Paris, Thieriot, 1848) p. 491: III i.

hardly at all, except to tell him that he will die the following day. We can imagine Byron, impatient with Pellico's over-rhetorical heroine, determining to have a heroine entirely devoid of any rhetoric other than that implicit in short speeches and cryptic silence. Here, in the 1851 Dublin translation, is the speech of Francesca which triggers the one printed at the start of this essay:

> What passionate words! Do you speak of your love?
> And is it in her loss you grieve so much?
> Is love so fierce a tyrant in your heart?
> Oh! love should never be the only flame
> In a brave soldier's heart. His thoughts should be
> To win bright honour on the battle-field,
> At the sword's point. Go! follow honour's flag,
> Or love, weak love, will bring you to disgrace.[23]

And here, in Pellico's translation, is the dialogue which follows from the single word of Astarte:

> Manfredo: Prosiegui, prosiegui. – Non vivo che nel suono –
> questa è la tua voce!
> Fantasma: Manfredo! Domani finiscono i tuoi mali terreni. Addio!
> Manfredo: Ancora una parola – son io perdonato?
> Fantasma: Addio!
> Manfredo: Dimmi, c'incontreremo noi ancora?
> Fantasma: Addio!
> Manfredo: Una parola, per pietà! Di che tu mi ami.
> Fantasma: Manfredo! (*Lo spirito d'Astarte sparisce*.)[24]

Pellico's own intention in printing *Francesca* with his translation of *Manfred* may have been to draw attention to the parallel he had seen – aware, perhaps, that he may, in 1816, have offered a model which Byron developed. Where his lovers are young, but, in a way uncharacteristic of youth, use their love as a motive for much utterance and posture, the lives of Byron's lovers are over, and all they have left is silence and defeat.

One of the most famous speeches in *Francesca* is not about human love at all, but one in which Paolo declares his desire to fight for his motherland. Here it is, in the 1851 Dublin translation:

> In what good cause
> Have I, a hir'd soldier, shed my blood!
> O Italy! how gladly would I draw
> My sword for thee, if threats of envious foes
> Call'd forth thy strength! Far, above all other lands
> That the sun shines upon, O Italy!
> Art thou not the most lovely? Thou hast been
> The nursing-mother of all noble arts.
> Birth-place of heroes! e'en thy dust has once
> Breath'd in great men. Thy happy genius woke
> The courage of my ancestors. All dear
> To me live still to me within thy sacred bounds.[25]

23: Silvio Pellico, *Lettere Milanese*, ed. Mario Scotti (Turin, Casa Editirice Loescher- Chiantore, 1963) pp. 73-4.

24: Nick Haveley, Francesca Frustrated: New Evidence about Hobhouse's and Byron's Translation of Pellico's Francesca da Rimini, Romanticism 1.1 (1995) pp. 106-20.

25: Silvio Pellico, *Francesca da Rimini*, tr J.G.V.P. (Dublin, James McGlashan, 1851) p. 14.

If these words are Hobhouse's, we may have evidence enough as to why he chose not to acknowledge them. Comparison with the Italian reveals a poor ear for rhythm, an incapacity to reproduce even the simplest of Pellico's echo- and balance-effects, or to attempt the dramatic qualities of his phrasing. Here, in the original, is the opening of Paolo's patriotic speech, just quoted:

> Per chi di stragi si macchiò il mio brando?
> Per lo straniero. E non ho patria forse,
> Cui sacro sia de'cittadini il sangue?
> Per te, per te, che cittadini hai prodi,
> Italia mia, combatterò, se oltraggio
> Ti moverà la invidia. E il più gentile
> Terren non sei di quanti scalda il sole?
> D'ogni bell'arte non sei madre, o Italia?
> Polve d'eroi non è la polve tua?
> Agli avi miei tu valor desti e seggio,
> E tutto quanto hi di più caro, alberghi.[26]

In the first line, the rhetorical force of Paolo's answer to his own question is neutralised by hiding it in the question itself. The concision of lines five to six is drawn out to two-and-a-half lines by translating the single word *combatterò* by *how gladly would I draw / My sword for thee*. The next rhetorical question is confounded by again dragging its one-and-a-half lines out to two-and-a-half, and destroying its shape by adding another *O Italy!* as if the pentameter needed padding. By now the translator is using enjambement regularly, not for effect, but because he is metrically lost, so that the economical *D'ogni bell'arte non sei madre, o Italia?* is turned from a question to a statement, again running over the line, so that *Polve d'eroi non è la polve tua?* loses not only its balance, but even its simple repetition ... and so on.

Hobhouse was a competent versifier (without being a poet at all) but most of the verse he wrote rhymed. If the Dublin translation of *Francesca* is his, it looks as if his usual search for a rhyme facilitated his rhythm, and gave him more conviction than he could muster in blank verse.

Inserted to make sure the audience had maximum sympathy with the hero from the outset, this speech – when delivered in Italian – brought the house down so often that the Austrians finally insisted on its deletion as the price of performance. Byron, aware, from his observation of the literary and political factions in Milan, of how much hot air flew about there in place of action – more, even, perhaps, than flew about in England – may have felt encouraged, by reading *Francesca*, in his determination to keep the action of his own tragedy away from politics, to put love – consummated – in the past, and to put his protagonists and their strictly private dramas on mountain tops, in lonely castles, or in Hell.

26: Pellico, *Opere* (Paris, Thieriot, 1848) pp. 469-70: I v.