POEMS WRITTEN FOR, TO, OR CONCERNING TERESA GUICCIOLI

STANZAS TO THE PO

STORNELLI

TO TERESA GUICCIOLI

FRANCESCA OF RIMINI

“COULD LOVE FOR EVER …”

THE PROPHECY OF DANTE

The date of birth of Teresa Gamba Ghiselli was unknown until quite recently: she was born in 1798.[1] Educated at Santa Chiara, a school run on principles advanced for the time, she was married to Alessandro Guiccioli – thirty-seven years her senior – on March 7th 1818. She had her first affair, with Cristoforo Ferri, in mid-1818, having met Byron briefly on March 10th of that year, at a Venetian conversazione held by the Countess Albrizzi. They met properly on the night of April 2nd / 3rd 1819 at the Countess Benzoni's (just after Byron had dispatched *Don Juan* II to England), and fell in love. It was the last of Byron's affairs, and lasted in theory until his death in 1824. It was a complete infatuation on both their parts – on being told in 1819 that Teresa was near to death, Byron contemplated suicide. Alessandro Guiccioli – with whom Byron shared an interest in the theatre – tolerated their liaison, and Byron even lived in his palazzo at Ravenna. Byron was friends with Teresa's father, Ruggiero Gamba, and her brother Pietro, both of whom shared his liberal politics, dangerous in an Italy run by Rome and by the Austrians and Bourbons. The governments persecuted him by forcing the Gambas to move from state to state.

That Byron should be capable of profound affection after his two years of systematic debauchery in Venice is at once surprising and unsurprising – he certainly needed a change; and Teresa, with her looks, energy, low contralto voice, skill at music, languages, mimicry, and ability to discuss politics, and at least Italian poetry with him, provided one.

She was without shame about the affair – Thomas Moore commented on her seemingly innocent unawareness that anything untoward had occurred. Every respectable Italian married woman had a Cavalier Servente, and Byron was hers. However, after a time Alessandro did begin to object, whereupon she gained a decree of separation from him – the only one granted in the papacy of Pius VII (he was a friend of the family; however, his successor, Leo XII, granted her another). The condition was that she returned to the care of her father; and everyone (except Alessandro, who had to pay her maintenance) honoured the fiction that Ruggiero Gamba was guardian of his daughter's morals.

She and Byron spent much time in Ravenna, but had to leave late in 1821. They moved to Pisa – then to Genoa – and by then Byron, bored by her but feeling an obligation to her and the Gambas because of the suffering they had undergone on his behalf, decided that the only way to break off the relationship was in the name of a higher cause, namely that of Greek Independence. Pietro went with him to Greece, where both men died. Ruggiero was imprisoned by the Papal authorities for seven years. Teresa, after post-Byronic affairs with

I am grateful to Michael Fincham and Valeria Vallucci for their help in making these editions.

1: Natale Graziani (*Byron e Teresa, L'Amore Italiano*, Milan 1995, p.22) discovered that, in Volume 21 of the baptisms register in the Battistero di San Giovanni in Fonte, Ravenna, T.G.'s birth is recorded as having happened on February 18, 1798.

Henry Fox and with James Fitzharris, Third Earl of Malmesbury, wandered Europe, still maintained by Alessandro, and after his death married the Marquis de Boissy, one of the richest men in France. Though anti-English, he was proud of her status as "ancienne maitresse de Byron."

She died in 1873.

Though she became fluent enough in English (see letter below), Teresa never graduated to a critical understanding of her lover's revolutionary poetry. She even persuaded him to give up writing *Don Juan* for a while (he began it again in secret). It's impossible to claim that she was an inspiration to him as Laura was to Petrarch (Petrarch and Laura, after all, were never lovers); but several interesting, and contrasting, poems sprang from their circumstances. Omitted from the selection below is *Saradanapalus*, in which, both agreed, the love-interest between Mirrha and the protagonist would have been less marked without Teresa's encouragement.

The poems associated with Teresa show Byron's complex and committed relationship with Italian culture – the culture both of his day and of the preceding centuries. His friend Hobhouse wrote of their reception in Milan in 1816,

> 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 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.

It seems that both Byron and Hobhouse realised for the first time in Italy – what they never had realised in England – that literature was a serious business.

STANZAS TO THE PO

This is one of Byron's most passionate poems concerning Teresa. In her *Vie de Lord Byron en Italie*, she writes:

> When [in May 1819] he came within sight of the river Po, he was devoured by the feeling which drove him on and was the goal of his journeying, and he unburdened his heart by writing his moving ode *To the Po,* which begins:
>
> River! that rollest by the ancient walls …[2]

Byron seems to have written the poem on June 1st 1819.[3] He was, we must assume, aware that the estuary of the Po was the setting for the great scene of adultery between Paolo and Francesca in Canto Five of Dante's *Inferno*, translated by him as *Francesca of Rimini* (see below). Dante, exiled from Florence as Byron was from England, is buried in Ravenna. Rimini is south of Ravenna on the coast. Francesca was from Ravenna, and Paolo from Rimini.

Discussing the poem, Peter Vassallo[4] draws our attention to Petrarch, Sonnet CCVII:

Rapido fiume, che d'alpestra vena
rodendo intorno, onde l'tuo nome prendi,
notte e di meco disioso scendi
ov'Amor me, te sol natura mena,

Vattene innanzi; il tuo corso non frena
Nè stanchezz nè sonno: e pria che rendi
suo dritto al mar, fiso i' si mostri attendi
l'erba più verde e l'aria più serena.

Ivi a quel nostro vivo e dolce sole
ch'addorna e infiora la tua riva manca
forse (o che spero) e l'mio tardar le dole.

Bascia'l piede, o la man bella e bianca;
dille, e 'l basciar sie'n vece di parole;
'Lo spirito è pronto ma la carne è stanca.'

[Swift river, which from its Alpine source / winds around the place and whence you derive your name / night and day you descend to me / while Love solely possesses me while Nature nourishes you. // Go before me, for weariness and sleep do not stop your course / and before you flow direct to the sea / you pass by a greener grass and a more serene sky. // For there the bright and sweet sun which adorns and fills your banks with flowers is lacking / perhaps (what do I hope for) my lingering upsets her. // Kiss her feet, or her lovely white hand / tell her, and let your kisses be a substitute for words / "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."]

The greater complexity of Byron's poem, his use of the river as a metaphor for his passion, and his capacity to think around the situation he and Teresa are in, come into sharper relief from the comparison.

2: *Vie*, 1,101.
3: See BLJ IX 118.
4: *Byron, the Italian Literary Influence* (1984) pp. 40-41.

Stanzas to the Po was first published in 1824 in Thomas Medwin's *Conversations of Lord Byron*. Copy-text below is the rough draft, published at *MYSR Byron* III pp. 3-7; and Mary Shelley's fair copy, transcribed at *SC* VII 522-4. I have not seen Byron's own fair copy, which is in the Berg.

STANZAS TO THE PO

River, that rollest by the ancient walls,
    Where dwells the Lady of my Love,[5] when she
Walks by thy brink, and there perchance recalls
    A faint and fleeting memory of me –

What if thy deep and ample stream should be
    A mirror of my heart, where she may read
The thousand thoughts I now betray to thee,
    Wild as thy wave, and headlong as thy speed –

What do I say – "A mirror of my heart"?
    Are not thy waters sweeping – dark – and strong?
Such as my feelings were and are, thou art;
    And such as thou art, were my passions long.

Time may have somewhat tamed them; not for ever
    Thou overflow'st thy banks, and not for aye
Thy bosom overboils, congenial River!
    Thy floods subside, and mine have sunk away –

But left long wrecks behind us; yet again,
    Borne in our old unchanged career, we move:
Thou tendest wildly onwards to the main,
    And I to loving one I should not love.

The current I behold will sweep beneath
    Her native walls, and murmur at her feet;
Her eyes will look on thee, when she shall breathe
    The twilight air, unchained from Summer's heat.

She will look on thee, – I have looked on thee,
    Full of that thought: and, from that moment, ne'er
Thy waters could I dream of, name, or see,
    Without the inseparable sigh for her.

Her bright eyes will be imaged in thy stream, –
    Yes, they will meet the wave I gaze on now:
But mine cannot e'en witness in a dream
    That happy wave repass me in its flow.

The wave that bears my tears returns no more –
    Will She return by whom that wave shall sweep? –
Both tread thy bank, both wander by thy shore,
    I near thy source, and she by the blue deep.

But that which keepeth us apart is not
    Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of earth,
But the distractions of a various lot,
    Ah! various as the Climates of our birth.

5: One of Alessandro Guiccioli's many estates was at Ca' Zen, near one of the mouths of the Po.

A Stranger loves a Lady of the land;
    Born far beyond the Mountains, but his blood
Is all Meridian – as if never fanned
    By the bleak Wind that chills the Polar flood.[6]

My blood is all meridian – were it not
    I had not left my clime – nor should I be,
In spite of tortures ne'er to be forgot
    A slave again of love – at least of thee.

'Tis vain to struggle – let me perish young –
    Live as I lived – and love as I have loved,
To dust if I return, from dust I sprung,
    And then at least my heart cannot be moved.

6: A Byronic commonplace: see *The Giaour*, 1099–1102: *"The cold in clime are cold in blood, / Their love can scarce deserve the name; / But mine was like a lava flood / That boils in Ætna's breast of flame …"*

STORNELLI

Perhaps with a view to scaring his publisher, Byron wrote to Murray:

> Besides I mean to write my best work in *Italian* – & it will take me nine years more thoroughly to master the language – & then if my fancy exists & I exist too – I will try what I *can* do *really*.[7]

His Italian was very good (see letter printed below), though he had some of his most important letters – the ones not to Teresa – written for him by Pietro, Teresa's brother. Whether he would ever have become such a second-nature virtuoso as to be able to write heavy-weight Italian poetry is hard to say. These few, very minor poems, composed in the simple three-line form of *stornelli*, are all we have. They seem to date from mid-1822, when he was renting the Villa Dupuy at Montenero. Here is Teresa's description of the place, and some relevant events there:

> Count Pietro, having spent twenty-four hours at Montenero, was to depart in the evening to join his father in Pisa, and then go on to Lucca, when another unpleasant incident took place. Some fatality seemed to be brooding over them and conspiring against their peace of mind. The heat wave was so overwhelming that artificial means had to be sought in order to aid breathing. For this purpose the window recesses were lined with branches of greenery that were kept sprayed. But there was a shortage of water. The tanks had run dry, and there was not even enough water for ordinary domestic requirements.[8] The only available resource was a spring a mile away from there, up on the mountain; for the last few days they had been going there to draw water, filling barrels that were brought tack to Montenero on mule-back, since the path was too steep and bumpy to employ any other method. In other words, those trips could not be very enjoyable.
>
> A man from Romagna had been put in charge of this daily expedition; he was a shoemaker by trade, and had been expelled from Faenza, the place he hailed from, for unruly conduct.[9] The young Count, who was unaware of the latter circumstance, had recklessly welcomed him to his house in Pisa out of kindness, because that man claimed to have belonged to one of the liberal factions, and to have been persecuted for it. He was retained in Montenero, at the time, as an odd-job man. Now, this man, by his temperament and place of origin, was used to wielding a knife; and when the time came to set out for the fountain, he refused to do so on that particular day, <threatening the other servants with a knife> railing at the rich and the nobility, and talking of equality and fraternity, with the kind of logic that in ignorant minds, when linked to a bad character, goes clean contrary to justice and brotherhood.
>
> When it became clear that his answer to rebukes from the others was to menace them with a knife he had snatched up, they called for Count Pietro, convinced that his presence would be enough to get the fellow, who owed everything to him, to see reason. But whether he was under the influence of drink, or out of native savagery, he flung himself upon the Count as soon as he appeared, and slashed him on the cheek with his knife, brandishing the weapon and continuing to threaten everybody.
>
> It only took a moment for Count Pietro to go up to his room and seize his pistols, and he was about to treat the wretch according to his deserts, and to defend the others from his menaces, when Lord Byron—who at that moment was at a sitting the Countess was giving to the American painter[10] on the ground floor—hearing the shouts from the servants hall, left the chamber and collided with Count Pietro. The latter, beside himself with rage, holding his pistols and his face covered in blood, was rushing down the stairs <towards the servants' quarters> to knock some sense into the scoundrel as he deserved, and to protect the people he was still threatening. It took all the authority that Lord Byron had over the Count to check him in the heat of such righteous anger, and to entrust the matter—and make the Count resigned to leaving his revenge—to the law.

7: BLJ VI 105.

8: B. went to law over this with the Villa's owner, Francesco Dupuy. He lost and had to pay Dupuy the equivalent of three months' rent with interest.

9: As with Sergeant-Major Masi, the possibility that this servant was part of a set-up by the police should not be discounted. The affair he created from nothing gave the authorities an excuse to harass the Gambas yet again. Marchand (III, 1006) identifies the servant as Vincenzo Papi, who had pitchforked Masi, and another quarrelsome servant as Gaetano Forestieri. T.G. names Pietro only.

10: William Edward West, who executed two very poor paintings of B. and Teresa at this time.

While Lord Byron was sending word to the Leghorn police, so that justice could take its course, the wretched man, who had dashed out of the house, was prowling up and down in front of the main entrance like a wild beast in its cage, sobbing and swearing at the same time.[11]

STORNELLI

Quando vi vede voi sol si incanta
a le stelle con la luna si confronta?
e chi la godera Teresa Santa?

Il Sole con la Luna e due stelle accanto
Teresa lei non sente il mio lamento
Quando parto da Lei mi scappa il pianto –

Fior di giunchiglia
il sangue nelle vene mi si accaglia
Saluta la Contessa e la famiglia

Tomaso con Giusepe han litigato[12]
il fior Pierino e stato ferito
ci manco poco che non fu amazzato –

Fior di granato
di partir di Pisa son risoluto
se non mi viene a trovar son disparato –

Fior di viole
il fior Pierino mi vuole abbandonare
e lascia lo suo amore e lo suo core

TRANSLATIONS by Valeria Vallucci

I. When the Sun sees you, it is enchanted / Does it compare with the Moon and the Stars? / And who will be delighted by Holy Teresa?

II. Close to the Moon and the Stars stands the Sun, / Teresa, she cannot hear my lament / When I take my leave of Her, I let tears slip from my eyes

III. Flower of Jonquil, / The blood curdles into my veins / Greet the Countess and her Family.

IV. Tommaso and Giuseppe have argued / Flower Pierino[13] has been wounded / he was nearly killed.

V. Flower of Pomegranate, / I am resolved to leave from Pisa / I will be in despair, / If she does not come to see me.

VI. Flower of violets, / Flower Pierino would like to abandon me / And he leaves his love and his heart.

11: *Vie*, 1196-1203.
12: Although this refers to a quarrel between two servants, it could still be the incident T.G. describes above, for Pietro is not known to have been wounded twice. "Giusepe" could be Giuseppe Strauss, injured in the Pisan Affray; Tomaso could be the aggressor, as described here by T.G.
13: That is, "the handsome Pietro Gamba".

TO TERESA GUICCIOLI

Teresa knew the value of teasing her lover so as to render his possessiveness more intense. Byron wrote to her, some time in June or July 1819:

> "I miei pensieri in me dormir' non ponno" ebbe dunque ragione – cosa fa quel' uomo ogni sera e tante ore al' vostro fianco in palco? – "*dunque siamo intesi*" – belle parole! – "*siete intesi*" – a cio che mi pare, – ho veduto che ogni momento in quale io voltai la testa verso il palco scenico voi voltaste gli occhi a guardare quella persona – e cio dopo tutto che è passato oggi! – – Ma non temete, dimane sera lo lasciarò il campo libero. – – Io non ho forza a sostenere ogni giorno un' tormento nuovo – m'avete fatto divinire spreggevole nei miei proprii occhi e fra poco forse anche in quelli dei altri. – Non avete veduto i martiri miei? non l'avete compatita? vi perdono cio che mi fate soffrire – ma non posso mai perdonare a me stesso la debolezza di cuore la quale m'impedisce finora a prendere il solo partito onorevole in tali circonstanze – cio – di<dirti> dirvi Addio – in eterno. – –
>
> "My thoughts cannot find rest in me" – I was right then – what is that man doing every evening for so long beside you in your box? "*So we are agreed*" – fine words! "*You* are agreed", it appears. I noticed that every time I turned my head towards the stage you turned your eyes to look at that man – and this, after all that had happened today! But do not fear, tomorrow I shall leave the field clear for him. – I have no strength to bear a fresh torment every day – you have made me despicable in my own eyes – and perhaps soon in those of others. – Have you not seen my torments? Have you not pitied them? I forgive you what you have made me suffer – but I can never forgive myself the weakness of heart which has prevented me until from taking the only honourable step in such circumstances – that of bidding you good-bye – for ever –[14]

The incident – of which we hear no more – though Byron had his revenge by flirting with at least one of Teresa's associates[15] – occurred at Ravenna. The poem seems to emanate from the same, or a similar, event. Copytext below is CPW IV 240-1.

14: BLJ VI 169, 170. The opening quotation the last line of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, X: *ma i suoi pensieri in lui dormir non ponno*. B. had used it as epigraph to *The Corsair*.
15: BLJ VI 186.

TO TERESA GUICCIOLI

I saw thee smile upon another;
If not a lover or a brother –
Or both (thus to unite in both
A Lover's best and worst in guiltiest growth) –
He had no business there to be –
Thy smiles to him were snakes to me.

I saw thee smile – deny it not –
For I was rooted to the spot;
Nailed to my cross – I bled – and saw –
And suffered – but could not withdraw.

I know enough, though not to take
The vengeance I could find or make.
Therefore thou livest – he may live –
Go, love him, I can even forgive.
Never again shall Sorrow be
A Vampire at my heart for thee.
Yes! Drop by drop and beat by beat
Ye wrung my bosom's blood, most Sweet!

If I could tell thee what I felt
Thine eyes would fill, thy heart would melt,
If I could tell thee what I feel
Thou'dst curse thyself that cannot heal.

Oh! that the cold grey stone were graven
Above the vault where lies my haven –
And the all-cooling earth were scattered
Upon the brain that thou hast shattered,
And that the flight of years had made
A desert where my bones were laid,
Till even my Dust had ceased to be
And Death forgotten me – like thee.

FRANCESCA OF RIMINI

The most famous passage in the *Divina Commedia* (*Inferno*, V, 98-142) is often removed from its hellish context and enjoyed as a romantic piece in its own right. In fact Paolo and Francesca are bound to one another in an eternity of physical bliss – thereby devaluing and rendering a torture that which in life they most enjoyed. Teresa, who was never conscious that her relationship with Byron was morally dubious, let alone damnable, probably thought of the passage as a sort of Italian Balcony Scene, without the tragic outcome. She writes:

> Before those days were over, Lord Byron found a copy of Dante's *Inferno* on the Countess's table, and they read the episode of Francesca da Rimini together, whereupon she asked him if it had already been translated into English. "Yes," he answered, "*tradotto—ma tradito.*" "Very well," she said, "avenge it, then."
>
> The next day he brought her his version of the episode. ''Take my word for its accuracy", he told her; "I won't vouch for any other qualities." That rendering, in which he even kept the metre, the terza rima, is in every way a marvellous achievement.[16]

The rough draft is dated March 20th, 1820. Here is the passage Byron translates:

Siede la terra dove nata fui
su la marina dove 'l Po discende
per aver pace co' seguaci sui.
Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende
prese costui de la bella persona
che mi fu tolta; e 'l modo ancor m'offende.
Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.
Amor condusse noi ad una morte:
Caina attende chi a vita ci spense».
Queste parole da lor ci fuor porte.
Quand'io intesi quell'anime offense,
china' il viso e tanto il tenni basso,
fin che 'l poeta mi disse: «Che pense?».
Quando rispuosi, cominciai: «Oh lasso,
quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio
menò costoro al doloroso passo!».
Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io,
e cominciai: «Francesca, i tuoi martìri
a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.
Ma dimmi: al tempo de' dolci sospiri,
a che e come concedette amore
che conosceste i dubbiosi disiri?».
E quella a me: «Nessun maggior dolore
che ricordarsi del tempo felice
ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore.
Ma s'a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
dirò come colui che piange e dice.
Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto.
Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse

16: *Vie*, 2,145-6.

quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.
Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
esser basciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.
Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante».
Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
l'altro piangea; sì che di pietade
io venni men così com'io morisse.
E caddi come corpo morto cade.

The idea of Byron and Teresa reading the passage, and then, aroused by it as Paolo and Francesca were by the Arthurian book, making adulterous love, would not have met with Dante's approval.

The poem should really be entitled *Francesca from Rimini*.

Teresa made several copies (see *SC* VIII, 857-68).

FRANCESCA OF RIMINI

"The Land where I was born sits by the Seas,
Upon that shore to which the Po descends
With all his followers in search of peace.
Love, which the gentle heart soon apprehends,
Seized him for the fair person which was ta'en
From me, and me even yet the mode offends.
Love, who to none beloved to love again
Remits, seized me with wish to please so strong
That, as thou seest, yet, yet it doth remain.[17]
Love to one death conducted us along:
But Caina waits for him our life who ended."[18]
These were the accents uttered by her tongue.
Since I first listened to these Souls offended
I bowed my visage, and so kept it till
"What think'st thou?" said the bard – then I unbended
And recommenced, "Alas! unto such ill
How many sweet thoughts, what strong ecstacies,
Led these their evil fortune to fulfill!"
And then I turned unto their side my eyes,
And said, "Francesca, thy sad destinies
Have made me sorrow till the tears arise.
But tell me, in the season of sweet sighs
By what, and how thy love to passion rose
So as his dim desires to recognize?"
The she to me – "The greatest of all woes
Is to recall to mind our happy days
In misery, and that thy teacher knows.
But if to learn our passion's first root preys
Upon thy Spirit with such sympathy,

17: Paolo and Francesca are still united physically by their love; see line 39.

18: Caina is the first division of the ninth circle of Hell, reserved for those who kill members of their own family. Gianciotto Malatesta, Paolo's brother, who killed them both, is Francesca's husband. He was still living when Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy*: hence Caina waits for him.

I will relate as he who weeps, and says.
We read one day for pastime, seated nigh,
Of Lancelot, how love enchained him too;
We were alone, quite unsuspiciously.
But oft our eyes met, and our cheeks in hue
All o'er discoloured by that reading were;
But one point only wholly us o'erthrew.
When we read the long-sighed-for smile of her
To be thus kissed by such a fervent lover,
He, who from me can be divided ne'er,
Kissed my mouth, trembling in the act all over—
Accursed was the book, and he who wrote;
That day no further leaf we did uncover."
While thus one Spirit told us of their lot
The other wept so, that, with pity's thralls,
I swooned, as if by death I had been smote,
And fell down even as a dead body falls.[19]

19: Dante faints from excess of empathy with their excess of love.

COULD LOVE FOR EVER

Teresa did not like this lyric, which implies that love is not eternal. She wrote in the early 1830s to John Murray:

> The *Song Could love for ever* was written in a moment of great moral and bodily suffering – When he (Lrd Byron) wanted to take *the Resolution to leave Italy*. This step which he thought his duty to take costed him the greatest sacrifice of feelings – and he wrote such verses (as occasionally he did in different circumstances) *not for publication* but only for relieving his mind – and give himself the strength he wanted – but which he could not find – though on the *very day and hour* in which they were written he was under the influence of a *periodical fever* – a circumstance which may *sufficiently explain* the *indifference* of such a *composition* which he esteemed so *unworthy* of being published that he threw it among the other useless papers in a corner of his room – where having being founded by chance and finally it given to the public – is also now inserted among his poetry though it is.
>
> That is every thing I know about the *Song*; you may make use of this note or, no as you like and think better.[20]

The poem was both roughed-out on and fair-copied on December 1st 1819.

Doris Langley Moore told Jerome McGann that "this poem is a frank parody of John Philpott Curran's 'The Deserter's Lament'":[21]

> If sadly thinking, and spirits sinking,
> Could, more than drinking, my cares compose,
> A cure from sorrow from sighs I'd borrow,
> And hope tomorrow would end my woes.
>
> But since, in wailing, there's nought availing,
> And fate unfailing will strike the blow,
> Then for that reason, and for a season,
> Let us be merry before we go! …

Byron's song does not parody Curran's ballad; the ballad would, if it post-dated Byron, parody Byron. In fact both employ a traditional Irish melody, and there are various lyrics, all pessimistic. See Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Part II, in which Stephen wakes one morning in the Victoria Hotel, Cork, to hear his father singing another variant of it.

I have used Byron's own fair copy,[22] and the rough draft, printed at *MSYR Byron* III pp. 47-50.

20: Undated letter from Teresa Guiccioli (183??), John Murray Archive. Murray may have known that Teresa was lying, for B. had sent the poem to Kinnaird (see next note but one); but he printed her commentary anyway.

21: CPW IV 506.

22: The fair copy forms three sides of a letter to Douglas Kinnaird. On the fourth, B. writes, "Honourable Doug. – / Consent to the Mort.{gage} is in 'tother paper / yours truly [*squiggle*]". See BLJ Supplement 52.

COULD LOVE FOREVER

Decr 1st 1819.

1.

Could Love for ever
Run like a river
And Time's Endeavour
Be tried in vain,
No other Pleasure
With this could measure
And as a Treasure
We'd hug the chain.
But since our sighing
Ends not in dying
And formed for flying
Love plumes his wing,
Then for this reason
Let's love a Season,
But let that Season be only *Spring*. –

2.

When Lovers parted
Feel broken-hearted,
And all hopes thwarted
Expect to die,
A few years older
Ah! how much colder
They might behold her
For whom they sigh;
When linked together
Through every weather
We pluck Love's feather
From out his wing;
He'll sadly shiver
And droop forever
Without the plumage[23] that sped his Spring. –

3.

Like Chiefs of Faction
His Life is Action,
A formal paction,
Which curbs his reign,
Obscures his Glory,
Despot no more, he
Such Territory
Quits with disdain.
Still – Still – advancing
With banners glancing

23: "Shorn of the plumage" (fair copy alternative reading).

His power enhancing
He must march on;
Repose but cloys him,
Retreat destroys him,
Love brooks not a degraded throne! –

4.

Wait not, fond Lover!
Till years are over,
And then recover
As from a dream.
While Each bewailing
The other's failing
With wrath and railing,
All hideous seem;
While first decreasing
Yet not quite ceasing,
Pause not – till teazing
All passion blight;
If once diminished
His reign is finished,
One last embrace then, and bid Good Night!

5.

So shall Affection
To recollection
The dear connection
Bring back with joy,
You have not waited
Till tired and hated
All Passions sated
Begin to cloy.
Your last embraces
Leave no cold traces,
The same fond faces
As through the past,
And Eyes the Mirrors
Of your sweet Errors
Reflect but Rapture not least though last.

6.

True! Separations
Ask more than patience –
What Desperations
From such have risen!
And yet Remaining,
What is't but chaining
Hearts, which once waning
Beat 'gainst their prison;

Time can but cloy Love,
And Use destroy Love,
The winged Boy Love
Is but for boys.
You'll find it Torture
Though sharper, shorter,
To wean and not wear out your Joys.

THE PROPHECY OF DANTE

In his comical poem *Mardoche*, Alfred de Musset writes:

> Blonds cheveux, sourcils bruns, front vermeil ou pâli;
> Dante aimait Beatrix. – Byron la Guiccioli.[24]

[Blonde hair, brown eyebrows, face blushing or pale; / Dante loved Beatrice. – Byron la Guiccioli.]

Musset was a humourist, and probably intended a bathetic antithesis: "Dante had Beatrice; Byron had to make do with Guiccioli."

Teresa, naturally blind to such cruel jokes, encouraged the idea that she had been to Byron what Beatrice was to Dante – his Muse, his inspiration; the problem being that Dante and Beatrice never went to bed together, as Byron and Teresa did (though Teresa would have denied having been to bed with Byron). She thinks highly of *The Prophecy:*

> It was also on that fine evening that *The Prophecy of Dante* originated, because the Countess remarked to him that, as he had written about Tasso, it would give her much happiness were he also to compose something about Italy's supreme poet. "Your wish is my command", he responded, and the next day he began work on that poem, which he dedicated to his lady friend. The work is one of the most significant evidences of his genius, not only because of its grandeur, but because it was penned while his heart was in the state that it was just then, and while he was encamped in a wretched inn with neither books nor papers to refer to; everything had to be sought from his memory.[25]

The temptation which the concept provided for Byron is not hard to understand. Like Dante, he was an exile from his country, albeit a voluntary one, free to go back whenever he wanted, unlike Dante, who was sentenced by his Florentine enemies *in absentia* to be burnt at the stake. Like Dante, he had a powerful sense of the poet's moral role in society, and he liked to speak about the future, albeit facetiously:

> Think if then George the fourth should be dug up!
> How the new Worldings of the then new East
> Will wonder where such Animals could sup
> (For they themselves will be but of the least –
> Even Worlds miscarry when too oft they pup,
> And every new Creation hath decreased
> In size, from overworking the Material –
> Men are but Maggots of some huge Earth's burial);
>
> *How* will to these young People, just thrust out
> From some fresh Paradise, and set to plough,
> And dig, and sweat, and turn themselves about –
> And plant, and reap, and spin, and grind, and sow,
> Till all the Arts at length are brought about –
> Especially of War and Taxing – how –
> I say – will these great relics – when they see 'em –
> Look like the Monsters of a new Museum? – –[26]

He was, like Dante, skilled at describing extreme physical and mental suffering. Although not a Catholic, he sympathised with that faith in terms both political and spiritual. But he made no attempt to be a systematic thinker, and never gave himself to anything like the massive philosophical / theological groundwork that lies behind Dante's achievement. His

---

24: Alfred de Musset, *Mardoche*, XIII, 1-2.
25: *Vie*, 2,140-2.
26: *Don Juan* IX, stanzas 39-40.

universe is fragmented, multi-perspectived, tragic and bathetic both at once. Where Dante's assertion is that the universe is ultimately governed by Love and understood by Faith, Byron regards Love as a mixed blessing, and can never find a faith in anything except *Circumstance, that unspiritual god / And miscreator*[27] as he names it in *Childe Harold.*

Byron is able neither to emulate or to imitate Dante's confidence: the sense is that his protagonist has been selected both for unusual privilege – in descending into Hell, ascending Mount Purgatory, and seeing God in Heaven, all before death – and for unusual punishment, in being banished from the city he loves as he loves life; although what he has done to merit either experience is not clear to him, as it is unclear to St Matthew in Caravaggio's great triptych in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome – God's will seems an accidental thing, impossible to analyse reasonably, perhaps, indeed, a chance combination of circumstances: "the Chaos of Events" (II, 6). Why Italy is perpetually ravaged – the theme of Canto II – is an inscrutable question, as is the question, why do so many Italians assist at her despoilment? It is certainly no part of any divine plan Byron's Dante can see. "So be it, we can bear" (IV 20) is the murmur of a Stoic, not the hymn of a Christian. Artists are Byron's Dante's heroes. Michaelangelo, driving his chisel into the "Marble Chaos" (IV 60) creates a beauty which he does not find. The "Truth" that "shall strike their eyes" in the poem's penultimate line is not a religious one.

Peter Vassallo[28] suggests that Byron was influenced in his depiction of Dante by a recent book by Vincenzo Monti's son-in-law, Count Giulio Perticari, whom he had met in Milan.[29] In his *Dell'Amor Patrio di Dante* (privately printed in 1819, three years after he and Byron had met), Perticari defends Dante on the grounds that his anger was justified by his patriotism. It is hard not to suspect that Perticari had to print the work privately to avoid prosecution by the Austrians. Nothing in early nineteenth-century Italy, not even, or especially not, Dante scholarship, was safe politically.

The Prophecy of Dante was started in Ravenna on June 18th 1819, and first published (with *Marino Faliero*) in April 1821. On October 29th 1819 Byron wrote to Murray:

> I had also written about 600 lines of a poem – the Vision (or Prophecy) of Dante – the subject a view of Italy in the ages down to the present – supposing Dante to speak in his own person – previous to his death – and embracing all topics in the way of prophecy – like Lycophron's Cassandra. But this and the other are both at a standstill.[30]

Later he spoke highly of his timing in writing the work, hoping that an Italian insurrection against the Bourbons in Naples and the Austrians in Lombardy was imminent. Here are some selections:

> … the 4 first Cantos of Dante's prophecy (the best thing I ever wrote if it be not *unintelligible*) …[31]

> … "Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem!["] the Huns are on the Po – but if once they pass it on their march to Naples – all Italy will rise behind them – the Dogs – the Wolves – may they perish like the Host of Sennacherib! – if you want to publish the Prophecy of Dante – you will never have a better time.[32]

> … Now is a good time for the Prophecy of Dante; – Events have acted as an Advertisement thereto. – Egad – I think I am as good a vates (prophet videlicet) as Fitzgerald of the Morning Post.[33]

In the event the Bourbons and Austrians triumphed with ease, which is perhaps why the poem stops at its fourth canto, and does not bring its narrative up to the present.

27: CHP IV 125, 6-7.
28: Vassallo, op. cit., pp. 31-3.
29: On October 17th 1816.
30: BLJ VI 235.
31: BLJ VII 59.
32: BLJ VII 172.
33: BLJ VII 205.

The Prophecy is more of an exercise than a poem; Byron puts little of his own imagination into it, and seems too rushed to include any imitative, Dantesque visions. Dante does not prophesy very much that is surprising; an inevitable problem, since what for him is the future is for Byron a well-documented past. Here he emulates Dante, for although the *Divine Comedy* was written between 1304 and 1321, its action happens over Easter weekend of 1300, so that it reads as a prophecy: the only dead people Dante meets in it are those who died before 1300 (see above, *Francesca of Rimini*, 11n).

The precedents Byron quotes – those of Lycophron and Horace – do not work, as the imagined audiences for those poems, existing at the same time as the prophet, would receive the prophecies with surprise and shock, which Byron's Dante's audience, at no point well-defined, but – though Byron hasn't worked it out – seeming to exist after the events foretold, and knowing them as history, can not. However, he does follow Lycophron in making his Dante speak in riddles, without naming names.

The indifferent poetic quality of *The Prophecy* did not stop Cerbone Cerboni, the Police Commissioner of Volterra, writing of it:

> It [*The Prophecy of Dante*] is most decidedly not written in the spirit of our government, nor of any of the Italian governments. To me, indeed, it seems designed to augment popular agitation, which is already sufficiently aroused. Lord Byron makes Dante foresee democracy and independence, as the true *goods* of this country.[34]

It is hard to support the reading of the poem as democratic, though its Dante is certainly in favour of Italian independence. An Italian translation – probably not the New York one by Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's librettist, but an anonymous one from Paris (they may be the same) – circulated among political activists during the events of 1821, which to the arrest of scores of patriots, including Silvio Pellico. See the last paragraph of Byron's Preface for the hint of a doubt in his mind whether the poem was intended for an English, or an Italian, audience.

In preparing the text below I have consulted Byron's own fair copy, the first edition, and the rough draft, printed at *MSYR Byron* III pp. 11-43. I have adopted the fair copy alternative readings of III, 76, 77 and 162, as being more ferocious and Dantean. The move from rough to fair copy shows Byron using more emphatic terminal dashes, reconsidering the spelling of "crowd", and preferring commas to dashes in dramatic lists. He also uppercases more often; I have assisted whenever he uses "Stars" or "Sun."

34: Quoted Iris Origo, *The Last Attachment* 303 (John Murray), 329-30 (Helen Marx Books).

THE PROPHECY OF DANTE

Motto. – –

"'Tis the Sunset of Life gives me mystical lore,
And coming Events cast their Shadows before."
Campbell. – –

DEDICATION

LADY![35] If for the cold and cloudy clime
Where I was born, but where I would not die,
Of the great Poet-Sire of Italy
I dare to build the imitative rhyme,
Harsh Runic[36] copy of the South's sublime,
THOU art the cause; and howsoever I
Fall short of his immortal harmony,
Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.
Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,
Spak'st; and for thee to speak and be obeyed
Are one; but only in the sunny South
Such sounds are uttered, and such charms displayed,
So sweet a language from so fair a mouth –
Ah! to what effort would it not persuade?

– Ravenna, June 21st 1819.

35: The poem's dedicatee is Teresa Guiccioli.
36: "Runic" implies "north European, harsh, primitive."

PREFACE

In the course of a visit to the city of Ravenna in the summer of 1819, it was suggested to the author[37] that having composed something on the subject of Tasso's confinement, he should do the same on Dante's exile – the tomb of the poet forming one of the principal subjects of interest in that city, both to the native and to the stranger.[38]

"On this hint I spake,"[39] and the result has been the following four cantos, in terza rima, now offered to the reader. If they are understood and approved, it is my purpose to continue the poem in various other cantos to its natural conclusion in the present age. The reader is requested to suppose that Dante addresses him in the interval between the conclusion of the Divina Commedia and his death, and shortly before the latter event, foretelling the fortunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries. In adopting this plan I have had in mind the Cassandra of Lycophron,[40] and the Prophecy of Nereus by Horace,[41] as well as the Prophecies of Holy Writ. The measure adopted is the terza rima of Dante, which I am not aware to have been hitherto tried in our language, except it may be by Mr. Hayley,[42] of whose translation I never saw but one extract, quoted in the notes to Caliph Vathek;[43] so that – if I do not err – this poem may be considered as a metrical experiment. The cantos are short, and about the same length of those of the poet whose name I have borrowed, and most probably taken in vain.

Amongst the inconveniences of authors in the present day, it is difficult for any who have a name, good or bad, to escape translation. I have had the fortune to see the fourth canto of Childe Harold translated into Italian versi sciolti[44] – that is, a poem written in the *Spenserian stanza* into *blank verse*, without regard to the natural divisions of the stanza, or of the sense. If the present poem, being on a national topic, should chance to undergo the same fate, I would request the Italian reader to remember that when I have failed in the imitation of his great "Padre Alighier,"[45] I have failed in imitating that which all study and few understand, since to this very day it is not settled what was the meaning of the allegory in the first canto of the Inferno, unless Count Marchetti's ingenious and probable conjecture[46] may be considered as having decided the question.

He may also pardon my failure the more, as I am not quite sure that he would be pleased with my success, since the Italians, with a pardonable nationality, are particularly jealous of

---

37: Read, "In the midst of a passionate love-affair which took me to Ravenna, Teresa, my mistress, suggested …"

38: Dante's undistinguished tomb is up a dull alley, within easy walking distance of the Palazzo Guiccioli, where B. stayed in Ravenna. See *Don Juan* IV, 104 1-4:

I pass each day where Dante's bones are laid:
A little Cupola, more neat than solemn,
Protects his dust, but reverence here is paid
To the bard's tomb, and not the Warrior's column …

39: *Othello*, I iii 166. Othello tells the Venetian Senate of a hint dropped by Desdemona.

40: In the *Cassandra* of Lycophron (a Greek poet of the third century BC), Cassandra prophesies the Trojan War and most of Greek history up to Alexander the Great.

41: At Horace, *Odes*, I, xv, Nereus stops Paris as he sails back with Helen, and foretells the horrors of the Trojan War.

42: William Hayley (1745-1820) ridiculed at *EBSR*. B. quotes his *Life of Milton* at *Don Juan* Dedication, stanza 11n.

43: William Beckford's *Vathek* (French, 1787, English, 1786) was B.'s favourite book: the inscription over the gate of hell (*Inferno*, III) is quoted as the final note (*Vathek*, ed. Lonsdale, 1970, p. 160).

44: *CHP* IV was translated into Italian blank verse and published as *Italia* by Michele Leoni in 1819. Even though politically neutered, it was banned. B. quotes from a letter of Leoni at BLJ VII 97.

45: B. quotes the sonnet *O Gran Padre Alighier* by Alfieri.

46: Count Giovanni Marchetti (1790-1852) *Della prima e principale allegoria del poema di Dante. Discorso* (1819-21).

all that is left them as a nation – their literature; and in the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war,[47] are but ill disposed to permit a foreigner even to approve or imitate them without finding some fault with his ultramontane presumption. I can easily enter into all this, knowing what would be thought in England of an Italian imitator of Milton, or if a translation of Monti,[48] or Pindemonte,[49] or Arici,[50] should be held up to the rising generation as a model for their future poetical essays. But I perceive that I am deviating into an address to the Italian reader, when my business is with the English one, and be they few or many, I must take leave of both.

47: B. had been plunged into the war between the Italian classicists, led by Monti, and the Italian romantics, led by Ludovico di Breme, as soon as he entered Milan in the autumn of 1816.

48: Vincenzo Monti (1754-1828), turncoat establishment poet. Referred to by B as *quel Giuda di Parnasso* ("that Judas of Parnassus") at BLJ VII 150-2. B. met him at Milan in 1816.

49: Ippolito Pindemonte (1753-1828) lover of Madame Albrizzi, best known for his translations of Homer. B. meets him on June 4th 1817: see BLJ V 233.

50: Cesare Arici (1782-1836) didactic poet and translator of Virgil. This is B.'s only reference to him. B. does not mention the one unambiguously great Italian poet of the period, Ugo Foscolo.

Canto First

Ravenna June 18th 1819

Once more in Man's frail World! which I had left
So long that 'twas forgotten; and I feel
The weight of Clay again, – too soon bereft
Of the Immortal Vision, which could heal
My earthly sorrows, and to God's own Skies
Lift me from that deep Gulph without repeal,
Where late my ears rung with the damned cries
Of Souls in helpless bale; and from that place
Of lesser torment, whence men may arise
Pure from the fire to join the Angelic race;
Midst whom my own bright Beatrice bless'd *
My Spirit with her light; and to the Base
Of the Eternal Triad, first, last, best,
Mysterious, three, sole, infinite, Great God![51]
Soul Universal! led the mortal Guest,
Unblasted by the Glory, though he trod
From Star to Star[52] to reach the immortal[53] throne. –
Oh Beatrice! whose sweet limbs the Sod
So long hath prest, and the cold marble Stone,
Thou sole pure Seraph of my earliest love,
Love so ineffable, and so alone,
That Nought on earth could more my bosom move,
And meeting thee in Heaven was but to meet
That without which my Soul, like the Arkless Dove,
Had wandered still in search of, nor her feet
Relieved her wing till found; without thy light,
My Paradise had still been incomplete. – – †
Since my tenth Sun gave Summer to my Sight
Thou wert my Life,[54] the Essence of my Thought,
Loved ere I knew the name of Love, and bright
Still in these dim old eyes, now overwrought
With the World's war, and years, and banishment,
And tears for thee, by other woes untaught;
For mine is not a Nature to be bent
By tyrannous Faction, and the brawling Crowd;
And though the long, long Conflict hath been spent
In vain, and never more, save when the Cloud
Which overhangs the Apennine, my Mind's Eye
Pierces to fancy Florence, once so proud
Of me, can I return, though but to die,
Unto my native Soil, they have not yet
Quenched the old Exile's Spirit stern and high.
But the Sun, though not overcast, must set,
And the Night cometh; I am old in days,
And deeds, and contemplation, and have met
Destruction face to face in all his ways. – –

51: Shows B.'s capacity to empathise with Catholicism.
52: "Star over Star" (fair copy alternative reading).
53: "Almighty throne" (fair copy).
54: In fact Dante claims, in the *Vita Nuova*, that he was nine when first he saw and fell in love with Beatrice.

The World hath left me, what it found me, pure,
And if I have not gathered yet its praise,
I sought it not by any baser lure;
Man wrongs, and Time avenges, and my Name
May form a Monument not all obscure,
Though such was not my Ambition's end or aim,
To add to the vain-glorious list of those
Who dabble in the pettiness of fame
And make Men's fickle breath the Wind that blows
Their Sail, and deem it Glory to be classed
With Conquerors,[55] and Virtue's other foes,
In bloody Chronicles of ages past. –[56]
I would have had my Florence great and free – ‡
Oh, Florence! Florence! unto me thou wast
Like that Jerusalem which the Almighty He
Wept over, "but thou wouldst not;"[57] as the Bird
Gathers its young, I would have gathered thee
Beneath a Parent pinion, hadst thou heard
My voice, but as the Adder deaf and fierce,
Against the breast that cherished thee was stirred
Thy Venom, and my state thou didst amerce,[58]
And doom this body forfeit to the fire.
Alas! how bitter is his Country's Curse
To him who *for* that Country would expire,
But did not merit to expire *by* her,
And loves her, loves her even in her Ire. – –
The Day may come when she will cease to err,
The Day may come she would be proud to have
The Dust she dooms to scatter,[59] and transfer §
Of him, whom she denied a home,[60] the Grave. –
But this shall not be granted, let my dust
Lie where it falls, nor shall the Soil which gave
Me breath, but in her sudden fury thrust
Me forth to breath elsewhere, so reassume
My indignant bones, because her angry Gust
Forsooth is over, and repealed her doom;
No, – She denied me what was mine – my Roof,
And shall not have what is not hers – my Tomb. –
Too long her armed Wrath hath kept aloof

55: As B. had been with Napoleon.

56: Compare *Epistle to Augusta*, stanza 13:

With false ambition what had I to do?
Little with love, and least of all with fame!
And yet they came unsought and with me grew,
And made me all which they can make – a name.
Yet this was not the end I did pursue –
Surely I once beheld a nobler aim.
But all is over – I am one the more
To baffled millions which have gone before.

57: Matthew 23 37: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

58: For B.'s use of this rare but useful-for-rhyming word (meaning "punish"), see *Cain* II i 15.

59: "The Ashes she would scatter" (fair copy alternative reading).

60: Dante was expelled from Florence in January 1204, for complex reasons of political in-fighting.

The breast which would have bled for her, the heart
That beat, the mind that was temptation-proof,
The Man who fought, toiled, travelled, and each part
Of a true Citizen fulfilled, and saw
For his reward the Guelf's ascendant Art
Pass his destruction even into a law.
These things are not made for forgetfulness,
Florence shall be forgotten first; too raw
The wound, too deep the wrong, and the distress
Of such endurance too prolonged to make
My pardon greater, her injustice less,
Though late repented; yet – yet – for her sake
I feel some fonder yearnings, and for thine,
My own Beatrice, I would hardly take
Vengeance upon the land which once was mine,
And still is hallowed by thy Dust's return,
Which would protect the Murderess like a Shrine,
And save ten thousand foes by thy sole Urn. –
Though, like old Marius from Minturnæ's Marsh
And Carthage Ruins,[61] my lone breast may burn
At times with evil feelings hot and harsh,
And sometimes the last pangs of a vile foe
Writhe in a dream before me, and o'erarch
My brow with hopes of Triumph – let them go! –
Such are the last infirmities[62] of those
Who long have suffered more than mortal woe,
And yet being mortal still, have no repose
But on the pillows of Revenge – Revenge,
Who sleeps to dream of blood, and waking glows
With the oft-baffled, slakeless thirst of Change,
When we shall mount again – and they that trod
Be trampled on, while Death and Até[63] range
O'er humbled heads and severed necks – Great God!
Take these thoughts from me – to thy hands I yield
My many wrongs – and thine Almighty rod
Will fall on those who smote me – be my Shield!
As thou hast been in peril, and in pain,
In turbulent cities, and the tented field[64] –
In toil, and many troubles born in vain
For Florence. – I appeal from her to Thee! –
Thee, whom I late saw in thy loftiest reign,
Even in that glorious Vision, which to see
And live was never granted until now,
And yet Thou hast permitted this to me.
Alas! with what a weight upon my brow
The Sense of Earth and earthly things comes back,
Corrosive Passions, feelings dull and low,
The heart's quick throb upon the mental rack,

61: Plutarch reports that, during his conflict with Sulla in 88 BC, Caius Marius was deserted, stripped naked in the marshes near Minturnæ, and afterwards expelled from Carthage. But he returned to Rome victorious and spent five days and nights killing Sulla's followers.

62: Milton, *Lycidas,* 71: *That last infirmity of Noble mind …*

63: Greek goddess of strife and lawlessness: see *Julius Caesar*, III i 272.

64: Compare *Othello*, I iii 85: *… they have used / Their dearest action in the tented field …*

Long day, and dreary Night; the retrospect
Of half a Century bloody and black,
And the frail few years I may yet expect
Hoary and hopeless, but less hard to bear,
For I have been too long and deeply wrecked
On the lone rock of desolate Despair
To lift my eyes more to the passing Sail
Which shuns that reef so horrible and bare –
Nor raise my voice – for who would heed my Wail? –
I am not of this people, nor this Age,
And yet my Harpings will unfold a tale[65]
Which shall preserve these times when not a page
Of their perturbed annals could attract
An eye to gaze upon their civic[66] rage
Did not my verse embalm full many an act
Worthless as they who wrought it; 'tis the doom
Of Spirits of my Order[67] to be racked
In life, to wear their hearts out, and consume
Their days in endless strife, and die alone;
Then future thousands crowd around their tomb,
And Pilgrims come from climes where they have known
The Name of him – who now is but a Name
And wasting homage o'er the sullen Stone,
Spread his – by him unheard, unheeded – fame;
And mine at least hath cost me dear: to die
Is nothing – but to wither thus[68] – to tame
My mind down[69] from its own infinity –
To live in narrow ways with little men,
A common sight to every common eye,
A wanderer, where even Wolves can find a den,
Ripped from all kindred, from all home, all things
That make communion sweet, and soften pain[70] –
To feel me in the solitude of Kings
Without the power that makes them bear a Crown –
To envy every dove his nest and wings
Which waft him where the Apennine looks down
On Arno, till he perches, it may be,

65: Compare *Hamlet*, I v 15: *I could a tale unfold who lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul …*
66: "civil" (fair copy alternative reading).
67: Compare Manfred to the Chamoix Hunter, *Manfred* II i 38: *I am not of thine order.*
68: Compare *Macbeth*, III i 47-8: *To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus …*
69: Compare Manfred to the Abbot, *Manfred*, III i 116: *I could not tame my Nature down …*
70: See B.'s letter to Moore (BLJ VI 69) describing his own misery during the separation: "I could have forgiven the dagger or the bowl, any thing, but the deliberate desolation piled upon me, when I stood alone upon my hearth, with my household gods shivered around me." See also *Don Juan*, III stanzas 51-2, for the similar feelings of Lambro; CMP 97: and *Marino Faliero*, III ii 361-4: *My pure household gods / Were shiver'd on my hearth, and o'er their shrine / Sate grinning Ribaldry and sneering Scorn*. The figure of King Priam in Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*, is sometimes quoted as an antecedent, when Pyrrhus slaughters first his son, and then him, before his household altar: but see this speech from Scott's *The Antiquary* (1816) a novel much read by B. (see BLJ V 109, 112, VIII 88) in which Monkbarns, the protagonist, describes his ancestor, a German printer: "He was, indeed, a man who would have stood firm, had his whole printing-house, presses, fonts, forms, great and small pica, been shivered to pieces round him ..." (I p.142). The sacredness of home is a central theme in epic. Odysseus must return there, Aeneas has to establish a new one; but Dante, like Don Juan, has to leave his, as B. had to.

Within my all-inexorable town,
Where yet my boys are, and that fatal She, ||
Their mother, the cold Partner who hath brought
Destruction for a dowry; this to see
And feel, and know without repair, hath taught
A bitter lesson; but it leaves me free:
I have not vilely found, nor basely sought,
They made an Exile – not a Slave of Me. –[71]

* The reader is requested to adopt the Italian pronunciation of Beatricé, sounding all the Syllables.

† Che sol per te le belle opere
Che fanno in cielo il Sole e l'altre Stelle
Dentro in lui si crede il Paradiso,
Così se guardi fiso
Pensar ben dèi ch'ogni terren' piacere.

– Canzone, in which Dante describes the person of Beatrice, strophe third.[72]

‡ L'Esilio che m'è dato onor mi tegno:
Che se giudicio o forza di destino
Vuol pur che il mondo versi
I bianchi fiori in persi
Cader tra' buoni è pur di lode degno.[73]

– Sonnet of Dante, in which he represents Right, Generosity, and Temperance as banished from among men, and seeking refuge from Love, who inhabits his bosom.

§ "Ut si quis predictorum ullo tempore in fortiam dicti communis pervenerit, *talis perveniens igne comburatur, sic quod moriatur.*"[74] – Second sentence of Florence against Dante, and the fourteen accused with him. –The Latin is worthy of the Sentence.

|| This Lady, whose name was *Gemma*, sprung from one of the most powerful Guelf families, named Donati. – Corso Donati was the principal Adversary of the Ghibellines. She is described as being "*Admodum morosa, ut de Xantippe Socratis philosophi conjuge scriptum esse legimus*,"[75] according to Giannozzo Manetti. But Lionardo Aretino is scandalised with Boccacce, in his life of Dante, for saying that literary men should not marry. "Qui il Boccaccio non ha pazienza, e dice, le mogli esser contrarie agli studj; e non si ricorda che Socrate il più nobile filosofo che mai fusse ebbe moglie, e figliuoli e uffici della Repubblica della sua Città; e Aristotele che, &c. &c. ebbe due mogli in varj tempi, ed ebbe figliuoli, e

71: B., like Dante, always concludes his canto with the opening line of a tercet.
72: "You should think that beautiful works are those made by the Sun and the Stars in the sky, where Paradise is enclosed, so if you stare at it, you (will) realize that every pleasure is earthly." Editors assure us that these lines are not by Dante, but by either Fazio degli Uberti or Bindo Borrichi da Siena.
73: All editions follow the fair copy in putting a row of dots for the middle three lines here. I have read the dots as a request for the space to be filled up. The lines are 76-80 from *Rime* 47 (CIV, Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute …; *not* a "sonnet"): "The exile to which I was condemned is an honour for me / for if men's judgement or fate obliged me to lose the world / the white flowers in verses / will fall among the good and make me worthy of praise." They are quoted by Giulio Perticari in his *Difesa di Dante* (*Opere*, 1838, I p.349).
74: "(It is decreed) that if any of those stated beforehand (*i.e., Dante and his associates*) should at any time come within the jurisdiction of the stated city (*i.e., Florence*), such a person on entering should be consumed by fire in such a way that he should die."
75: "Rather bad-tempered, as we read Xantippe, the wife of Socrates the philosopher, to have been."

ricchezze assai. – E Marco Tullio – e Catone – e Varrone, e Seneca – ebbero moglie,"[76] – &c. &c. It is odd that honest Lionardo's examples, with the exception of Seneca, and, for any thing I know, of Aristotle, are not the most felicitous. Tully's Terentia, and Socrates' Xantippe, by no means contributed to their husbands' happiness, whatever they might do to their philosophy – Cato gave away his wife – of Varro's we know nothing – and of Seneca's, only that she was disposed to die with him, but recovered, and lived several years afterwards. But, says Lionardo, "L'uomo è *animale civile*, secondo piace a tutti i filosofi." And thence concludes that the greatest proof of the *animal's Civism* is "la prima congiunzione, dalla quale multiplicata nasce la Città."[77]

76: "Here Boccaccio has no patience, and says, that wives do not help with study; and does not remember that Socrates, the most noble philosopher who ever lived, had a wife, and children, and was an official of his city-state; and Aristotle, who, etc. etc., and had two wives at different times, and children, and riches enough. And Marcus Tullius – and Cato – and Varro – and Seneca – had wives, etc., etc."

77: "Man is a civic animal, despite what all the philosophers say … primal conjunction [i.e., marriage] by which the City is allowed to grow." B. seizes on the merest suggestion that Dante's wife may have been cold and unsympathetic to him. Little is known about her, except that she was called Gemma Donati, and that she bore Dante two sons – the "boys" of I 172.

Canto Second

The Spirit of the fervent days of Old,
When words were things[78] that came to pass, and Thought
Flashed o'er the Future, bidding men behold
Their Children's Children's doom already bought
Forth from the Abyss of Time which is to be,
The Chaos of Events, where lie half-wrought
Shapes that must undergo Mortality;
What the great Seers of Israel wore within,
That Spirit was on them, and is on me,
And if, Cassandra-like, amidst the din
Of Conflict none will hear, or hearing heed
The voice from out the Wilderness, the Sin
Be theirs, and my own feelings be my Meed,
The only guerdon[79] I have ever known. –
Hast thou not bled? And hast thou still to bleed,
Italia? Ah! to me such things foreshown
With dim sepulchral light bid me forget
In thy irreparable wrongs my own;
We can but have one Country, and e'en yet
Thou'rt mine – my bones shall be within thy breast,
My Soul within thy language, which once set
With our old Roman Sway in the wide West;
But I will make another tongue arise
As lofty and more sweet, in which exprest,
The Hero's ardour, or the Lover's sighs,
Shall find alike such sounds for every theme
That every word, as brilliant as thy Skies,
Shall realize a Poet's proudest dream,
And make thee Europe's Nightingale of Song;
So that all present Speech to thine shall seem
The Note of meaner birds, and every tongue
Confess its Barbarism when compared[80] with thine. –[81]
This shalt thou owe to him thou didst so wrong,
Thy Tuscan Bard, the banished Ghibelline. – – –[82]

78: Compare *Don Juan* III 88, 1: *But Words are things* …

79: B. uses this word (which means "reward") three times in this poem, more than in any other.

80: "when matched" (fair copy alternative reading).

81: Compare *Beppo*, stanza 44:

I love the language, that soft bastard Latin,
Which melts like kisses from a female mouth,
And sounds as though it should be writ on Satin
With syllables which breathe of the sweet South,
And gentle liquids gliding all so pat in
That not a single accent seems uncouth –
Like our harsh Northern whistling grunting Guttural,
Which we're obliged to hiss, and spit, and sputter All.

Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is a treatise (written in Latin) extolling Italian as the best medium for poetry and philosophy.

82: For all his triple emphatic dashes, B. simplifies. Dante was not at first a Ghibelline, from the aristocracy, but a White Guelf, from the Florentine middle classes. It was the triumph of the Black Guelfs – helped by a French invasion – which led to his being exiled (Guelfs supported the Papacy). He attached himself to the Ghibellines (supporters of the German Emperor) after the exploits of the Emperor Henry VII.

Woe! Woe! the Veil of coming Centuries
Is rent[83] – a thousand years which yet supine
Lie like the Ocean waves ere winds arise,
Heaving in dark and sullen undulation,
Float from Eternity into these eyes;
The Storms yet creep, the Clouds still keep their Station,
The unborn Earthquake yet is in the Womb,
The bloody Chaos yet expects Creation,
But all things are disposing for thy doom;
The Elements await but for the Word,
"Let there be Darkness!" and thou grow'st a Tomb! –
Yes! thou, so beautiful, shalt feel the Sword,[84]
Thou, Italy! so fair that Paradise,
Revived in thee, blooms forth to man restored:
Ah! must the Sons of Adam lose it twice?
Thou, Italy! whose ever Golden fields,
Ploughed by the Sunbeams solely, would suffice
For the World's granary;[85] thou, whose Sky Heaven gilds
With brighter Stars, and robes with deeper blue;
Thou, in whose pleasant places Summer builds
Her palace, in whose cradle Empire grew,
And formed the Eternal City's ornaments
From Spoils of Kings whom freemen overthrew;
Birthplace of Heroes, Sanctuary of Saints,
Where earthly Glory first, then heavenly made
Her home; thou, all which fondest Fancy paints,
And finds her prior Vision but pourtrayed
In feeble colours, when the Eye – from the Alp
Of horrid Snow, and rock, and shaggy shade
Of desart-loving Pine, whose emerald Scalp
Nods to the Storm – dilates and dotes o'er thee,
And wistfully implores, as 'twere, for help
To see thy Sunny fields, my Italy!
Nearer and nearer yet, and dearer still
The more approached, and dearest were they free,
Thou – Thou – must wither to each tyrant's will:
The Goth hath been – the German, Frank, and Hun[86]
Are yet to come – and on the imperial hill
Ruin, already proud of the deeds done
By the old Barbarians, there awaits the new,
Throned on the Palatine, while lost and won
Rome at her feet lies bleeding; and the hue
Of human Sacrifice, and Roman Slaughter
Troubles the clotted air, of late so blue,
And deepens into red the saffron water
Of Tiber, thick with dead; the helpless Priest,
And still more helpless nor less holy daughter,

83: "The rending or lifting of a veil" is the meaning of the word "apocalypse".
84: Editors refer us to *Purgatorio* VI 76-127 as a precedent for the prophetic lament which now follows: but in the *Purgatorio*, Dante is regretting Italy's internal dissentions, not her vulnerability to foreign invasions, as B. makes him do here. Dante only rarely shows himself an Italian, as opposed to a Florentine, patriot.
85: "harvest" (fair copy alternative reading).
86: Any of these words will do to describe the Austrians.

Vowed to their God, have shrieking fled, and ceased
Their ministry; the Nations take their prey,
Iberian, Almain, Lombard, and the beast
And Bird, Wolf, Vulture, more humane than they
Are; these but gorge the flesh, and lap the gore
Of the departed, and then go their way;
But those, the human Savages, explore
All paths of Torture, and insatiate yet,
With Ugolino hunger[87] prowl for more.
Nine Moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and set; *
The chiefless Army of the dead, which late
Beneath the traitor Prince's[88] banner met,
Hath left its leader's ashes at the Gate;
Had but the royal Rebel lived, perchance
Thou hadst been spared, but his involved thy fate.
Oh! Rome, the Spoiler or the Spoil of France,
From Brennus to the Bourbon, never, never,
Shall foreign Standard to thy walls advance
But Tiber shall become a mournful river.
Oh! when the Strangers pass the Alps and Po,
Crush them ye Rocks! floods whelm them, and forever!
Why sleep the idle Avalanches so?
To topple on the lonely Pilgrim's head?
Why doth Eridanus but overflow
The peasant's harvest from his turbid bed?
Were not each barbarous horde a nobler prey?
Over Cambyses'[89] host the Desart spread
Her Sandy Ocean, and the Sea Waves' Sway
Rolled over Pharaoh and his thousands[90] – why,
Mountains and Waters, do ye not as they?
And You, ye Men! Romans, who dare not die,
Sons of the Conquerors who overthrew
Those who overthrew proud Xerxes, where yet lie
The dead whose tomb Oblivion never knew,
Are the Alps weaker than Thermopylæ? –[91]
Their passes more alluring to the view
Of an Invader? is it they? or ye?
That to each host the mountain gate unbar,
And leave the march in peace, the passage free?
Why, Nature's Self detains the Victor's car,
And makes your land impregnable, if Earth
Could be so; but alone She will not war,
Yet aids the Warrior worthy of his birth
In a Soil where the Mothers bring forth Men –

87: Ugolino is imprisoned in a tower by his enemy, Archbishop Ruggieri. He is finally forced by hunger to eat the dead bodies of his sons, imprisoned with him. His punishment in Hell is to gnaw perpetually at Ruggieri's neck. See *Inferno* XXXII-III, and *Don Juan* II stanza 83.

88: Charles, Constable de Bourbon, killed during the sack of Rome in May 1527. His death is dramatised by B. in *The Deformed Transformed*, II i (Benvenuto Cellini claimed responsibility for it). He is a traitor because, though a Constable of France, he sided with Charles V and Henry VIII.

89: Cambyses, sixth century BC King of Persia, whose invasion force against the Ammonians was swallowed by the desert sands.

90: "phalanx" (fair copy alternative reading). See Exodus 14-15.

91: For the holding-action by the Spartans before the army of Xerxes, see *CHP* II 73, 7; or *Don Juan* III, *The Isles of Greece*, 7, 6.

Not so with those whose Souls are little worth;
For them no fortress can avail – the Den
Of the poor reptile which preserves its sting
Is more secure than walls of Adamant, when
The hearts of those within are quivering.
Are ye not brave? yes, yet the Ausonian soil
Hath hearts, and hands, and arms, and hosts to bring
Against Oppression; but how vain the toil,
While still Division sows the seeds of Woe
And Weakness, till the Stranger reaps the Spoil. –
Oh! my own beauteous land! so long laid low,
So long the Grave of thy own Children's hopes,
When there is but required a single blow
To break the Chain – yet, yet the Avenger stops
And Doubt and Discord step 'twixt thine and thee,
And join their Strength to that which with thee copes;
What is there wanting then to set thee free,
And show thy Beauty in its fullest light?
To make the Alps impassable; and We,
Her Sons, may do this with *one* deed, – Unite! –

***** See "Sacco di Roma," generally attributed to Guicciardini. There is another written by a Jacopo *Buonaparte*, Gentiluomo Samminiatese che vi si trovò present.[92]

92: Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), historian and politician, was present at the sack of Rome in 1527, but wrote no poem about it. He was, like Dante, a Florentine patriot who lamented the state of Italy. The poem by Jacopo Buonaparte was published in 1756. He was of the family, the most famous member of which (Napoleon) was himself an enemy of Italian freedom.

Canto Third

From out the Mass of never dying ill,
    The Plague, the Prince, the Stranger, and the Sword,
    Vials of Wrath but emptied to refill
And flow again, I cannot all record
    That crowds on my prophetic eye – the Earth
    And Ocean written o'er would not afford
Space for the annals, yet it shall go forth;
    Yes, All, though not by human pen, is graven,
    There where the farthest Stars and Suns have birth.[93]
Spread like a banner at the gates of Heaven,
    The bloody Scroll of our millenial wrongs
    Waves, and the echo of our groans is driven
Athwart the sound of Archangelic songs,
    And Italy, the Martyred Nation's[94] gore,
    Will not in vain arise to where belongs
Omnipotence and Mercy evermore;
    Like to a harpstring stricken by the Wind,
    The Sound of her lament shall, rising o'er
The Seraph voices, touch the Almighty Mind. –
    Meantime I, humblest of thy Sons, and of
    Earth's dust by Immortality refined
To Sense and Suffering, though the vain may scoff,
    And tyrants threat, and meeker victims bow
    Before the Storm because its breath is rough,
To thee – my Country! whom before, as now,
    I loved and love, devote the mournful lyre
    And melancholy gift high Powers allow
To read the future – and if now my fire
    Is not as once it shone o'er thee, forgive! –
    I but foretell thy fortunes – then expire;
Think not that I would look on them and live;
    A Spirit forces me to see – and speak –
    And for my Guerdon grants *not* to survive;
My Heart shall be poured over thee and break. –
    Yet for a moment, ere I must resume
    Thy sable web of Sorrow, let me take
Over the gleams that flash athwart thy gloom
    A softer glimpse; some Stars shine through thy Night,
    And many Meteors, and above thy tomb
Leans sculptured Beauty, which Death cannot blight;
    And from thine ashes boundless Spirits rise
    To give thee honour, and the earth delight;
Thy Soil shall still be pregnant with the Wise,
    The Gay, the learned, the generous, and the brave,
    Native to thee as Summer to thy Skies,
Conquerors on foreign shores, and the far wave, *
    Discoverers of new Worlds, which take their name; †
    For *thee* alone they have no arm to save,
And all thy recompense is in their fame,
    A noble one to them, but not to thee –

93: Echoes the last line of *Paradiso*: *l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*.
94: "Country's" (fair copy alternative reading).

Shall they be glorious, and thou still the same?
Oh! more than these illustrious far shall be
The Being – and even yet he may be born –
The mortal Saviour[95] who shall set thee free,
And see thy diadem, so changed and worn
By fresh Barbarians, on thy brow replaced;
And the sweet Sun replenishing thy Morn,
Thy moral Morn, too long with clouds defaced
And noxious vapours from Avernus risen,
Such as they all must breathe who are debased
By Servitude, and have the Mind in prison.
Yet through this centuried Eclipse of Woe
Some Voices shall be heard, and Earth shall listen;
Poets shall follow in the path I show,
And make it broader; the same brilliant Sky
Which cheers[96] the birds to Song shall bid them glow,
And raise their notes as natural and high;
Tuneful shall be their numbers; they shall sing
Many of Love, and some of Liberty,
But few shall soar upon that Eagle's wing,
And look in the Sun's face with Eagle's gaze[97]
All free and fearless as the feathered King,
But fly more near the earth; how many a phrase
Sublime shall lavished be on some small Prince
In all the prodigality of Praise![98]
And Pearls flung down to regal Swine[99] evince
The Whoredom of high Genius,[100] which, like Beauty,
Too oft forgets its own self-reverence,
And looks on prostitution as a duty.[101]
He who once enters in a Tyrant's hall ‡
As Guest is Slave, his thoughts become a booty,[102]
And the first Day which sees the Chain enthrall
A Captive, sees his half of Manhood gone – §

95: It is not clear to whom B. refers; he echoes Virgil's prophecy of the Hound ("'l Veltro") at *Inferno*, I 101-11; no-one knows who is intended there, either.

96: "choirs" (fair copy alternative reading).

97: Eagles were supposed in medieval tradition to be only birds who could gaze directly at the sun, and were thus metaphors for poets such as Dante who could perceive the full power of God's love.

98: Echoes Dante's canzone *Doglia mi reca*: *O Deo, qual maraviglia / voler cadere in servo di signore, / o ver di vita in morte* (O God, how strange to wish to fall so low as to serve a lord, truly from life to death).

99: "And language eloquently false" (all editions: fair copy alternative reading).

100: "The harlotry of Genius" (all editions: fair copy alternative reading).

101: "And prides itself on prostituted duty" (fair copy alternative reading). Moore (*Life*, 1830, II 308n) recollects three lines which probably went at this point, and which may have referred to Monti. They occur in no Ms.:

The prostitution of his Muse and wife,
Both beautiful, and both by him debased,
Shall salt his bread and give him means of life.

I do not know whether Monti had "prostituted" his wife; she was unfaithful to him with Foscolo. Monti's son-in-law, Giulio Perticari, had given B. the idea for this poem (see Introduction, above). The theme of the hireling poet has been a common one of B.'s since *EBSR*:

Such be their mead, such still the just reward
Of prostituted muse and hireling bard! (*EBSR* 181-2)

102: Yes, B. really does rhyme "beauty" with "booty". Lines 80-1 translate a sentence from Alfieri's biography: *chi entra in casa del tiranno si fa schiavo*.

The Soul's emasculation saddens all
His Spirit; thus the Bard too near the throne
Quails from his inspiration, bound to *please* –
How servile is the task to please alone![103]
To smooth the verse to suit his Sovereign's ease
And royal leisure, nor too much prolong
Aught save his Eulogy, and find, and seize,
Or force, or forge fit argument of Song.[104]
Thus trammelled, thus condemned to Flattery's trebles,
He toils through all, still trembling to be wrong:
For fear some noble thoughts, like heavenly rebels,[105]
Should rise up like high treason to his brain,
He sings, as the Athenian spoke, with pebbles
In's mouth, lest Truth should stammer through his Strain.[106]
But out of the long file of Sonneteers
There shall be some who will not sing in vain,
And he, their Prince, shall rank among my peers, ||
And Love shall be his torment; but his Grief
Shall make an Immortality of tears,
And Italy shall hail him as the Chief
Of Poet-lovers, and his higher Song
Of Freedom wreathe him with as green a leaf.
But in a farther age shall rise along
The banks of Po, two greater still than he;
The World which smiled on him shall do them wrong
Till they are Ashes, and repose with me.
The first[107] will make an Epoch with his lyre,
And fill the Earth with feats of Chivalry:[108]
His Fancy like a Rainbow, and his Fire,
Like that of Heaven, immortal, and his Thought
Borne onward with a wing that cannot tire;
Pleasure shall, like a Butterfly new caught,
Flutter her lovely pinions o'er his theme,
And Art itself seem into Nature wrought
By the transparency of his bright dream. –
The Second,[109] of a tenderer, sadder mood,
Shall pour his Soul out o'er Jerusalem;
He, too, shall sing of Arms, and Christian blood,

103: Yet Dante flatters powerful men even in the *Paradiso*: see Cacciaguida's "prophetic" words about the poet's patron Can Grande della Scala, *Paradiso* XVII 75-93.

104: B. probably has Southey and Monti in mind here; Alfieri records in his autobiography how he had refused to meet the court-poet Metastasio. But see the numerous dedicatory verses in *Orlando Furioso.*

105: B. seems to have forgotten that he is the strict Catholic Dante, and speaks of the rebellion of Lucifer in a heroic, Miltonic perspective.

106: But Demosthenes rehearsed with pebbles in his mouth to improve his diction, not to practise lying.

107: Ariosto.

108: Ariosto's flights of sheer comic fantasy cannot be accommodated by Byron/Dante's solemn idiom.

109: Tasso. But see Goethe: "Das große Epos des Italieners hat seinen Ruhm durch Jahrhunderte behauptet; aber mit einer einzigen Zeile des ‚Don Juan' könnte man das ganze ‚Bereifte Jerusalem' vergiften" (The Italian's great epic has held sway for centuries; but the whole of *Jerusalem Delivered* could be poisoned by a single line from *Don Juan*.) *Goethes Gespräche mit Eckermann*, int. Franz Deibel, Leipzig, p.132.

Shed where Christ bled for man; and his high harp
Shall, by the Willow over Jordan's flood,
Revive a Song of Sion; and the sharp
Conflict, and final triumph of the brave
And pious, and the Strife of Hell to warp
Their hearts from their great purpose, until wave
The Red-Cross banners where the first Red Cross
Was crimsoned from his veins who died to save,
Shall be his sacred[110] Argument; the loss
Of years, of favour, freedom, even of fame,
Contested for a time, while the smooth Gloss
Of Courts would slide o'er his forgotten name,
And call Captivity a kindness, meant
To shield him from Insanity or Shame,
Such shall be his meet Guerdon! who was sent
To be Christ's Laureate – they reward him well!
Florence dooms me but death or banishment,
Ferrara him a pittance and a cell,[111]
Harder to bear and less deserved, for I
Had stung the Factions, which I strove to quell;
But this meek Man, who with a Lover's eye
Will look on Earth and Heaven, and who will deign
To embalm with his celestial flattery
As poor a thing as e'er was spawned to reign,
What will *he* do to merit such a doom?
Perhaps he'll *love*,[112] and is not Love in vain
Torture enough without a living tomb? –
Yet it will be so – he and his Compeer,
The Bard of Chivalry, will both consume
In penury and pain too many a year,
And, dying in despondency, bequeath
To the kind World, which scarce will yield a tear,
A Heritage enriching all who breathe
With the Wealth of a genuine Poet's Soul,
And to their Country a redoubled Wreath,
Unmatched by time; not Hellas can unroll
Through her Olympiad two such Names, though One
Of Hers[113] be mighty; and is this the whole
Of such men's destiny beneath the Sun?
Must all the finer thoughts, the thrilling Sense,
The lightning[114] blood with which their arteries run,
Their body's self turned Soul with the intense
Feeling of that which is, and Fancy of
That which should be, to such a recompense
Conduct? – shall their bright plumage on the rough
Storm still be scattered? – Yes – and it must be,

110: "glorious" (fair copy alternative reading).
111: B. writes of Tasso's imprisonment in *The Lament of Tasso*.
112: The theory that Tasso was imprisoned because of his love for Leonora (used by B. in *The Lament*) is false.
113: Homer.
114: "winged / electric" (fair copy alternative readings).

For, formed of far too penetrable stuff,[115]
These birds of Paradise but long to flee
Back to their native Mansion,[116] soon they find
Earth's Mist with their pure pinions not agree,
And die or are degraded, for the Mind
Succumbs to long infection, and despair,
And Vulture Passions flying close behind,[117]
Await the moment to assail and tear;
And when at length the winged wanderers stoop,
Then is the Prey-bird's triumph, then they share
The Spoil, o'er-powered at length by one fell Swoop.[118]
Yet some have been untouched, who learned to bear,
Some whom no Power could ever force to droop,
Who could resist themselves even, hardest Care!
And task most hopeless; but some such have been,
And if my name amongst the number were,
That Destiny austere, and yet serene,
Were prouder than more dazzling fame unblest;
The Alp's snow Summit nearer heaven is seen
Than the Volcano's fierce eruptive Crest,
Whose Splendour from the black Abyss is flung,
While the scorched Mountain, from whose burning breast
A temporary torturing flame is wrung,
Shines for a night of terror, then repels
Its fire back to the Hell from whence it sprung,
The Hell which in its entrails ever dwells. –[119]

* Alexander of Parma, – Spinola, – Pescara, – Eugene of Savoy, – Montecucco. –[120]

† Columbus, – Americus Vespusius, – Sebastian Cabot. – – – –[121]

‡ A verse from the Greek tragedians, with which Pompey took leave of Cornelia on entering the boat in which he was slain. – – –[122]

§ The verse and sentiment are taken from Homer.[123]

|| Petrarch.

115: *Hamlet*, III iv 36: *For so I shall if it be made of penetrable stuff.*
116: *Romeo and Juliet*, III ii 102: *Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring.*
117: B.'s implicit comparison is between poets and Prometheus, devoured by a vulture.
118: *Macbeth*, IV iii 218-9: *All my pretty chickens and their dam / At one fell swoop?*
119: B.'s Dante compares his own stoicism in the face of everything the world throws at him (the Alp) with more volatile and vulnerable temperaments such as those of Ariosto or Tasso (the volcano).
120: B. refers to Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma; Ambrogio, Marchese di Spinola; Ferdinando Francesco dagli Avalos, Marquis of Pescara; Prince François Eugene of Savoy-Carignan; and Raimondo Montecuccoli. All five fought with success in foreign wars.
121: Columbus gave his name to Colombia, and "Vespusius" (Amerigo Vespucci) his to America. I don't know anywhere named after Sebastian Cabot.
122: The lines are from Plutarch's Life of Pompey, and are from an unnamed play by Sophocles: *Whoever takes his way into a tyrant's court / Becomes his slave, although he went there a free man.* Pompey quotes them to his wife Cornelia just prior to his assassination at Alexandria.
123: The lines are the words of the swineherd Eumaios at *Odyssey*, XVII 322-3: *For Zeus of the wide brows takes away one half of the virtue from a man, once the day of slavery closes upon him.*

Canto Fourth. –

Many are Poets who have never penned
  Their Inspiration, and perchance the best:[124]
  They felt, and loved, and died, but would not lend
Their thoughts to meaner beings; they compressed
  The God within them, and rejoined the Stars
  Unlaurelled upon earth, but far more blest
Than those who are degraded by the Jars
  Of Passion, and their frailties linked to fame,
  Conquerors of high Renown, but full of Scars;
Many are Poets but without the name,
  For what is Poesy but to create
  From overfeeling Good or Ill; and aim
At an external life beyond our fate,
  And be the new Prometheus of new men,
  Bestowing fire from heaven, and then, too late,
Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,
  And Vultures to the heart of the Bestower,
  Who, having lavished his high gift in vain,
Lies chained to his lone rock by the Sea-shore.
  So be it, we can bear. – – But thus all they,
  Whose Intellect is an o'ermastering Power
Which still recoils from its encumbering clay
  Or lightens it to Spirit, whatsoe'er
  The form which their Creations may essay,
Are bards; the kindled Marble's bust may wear
  More Poesy upon its speaking brow
  Than Aught less than the Homeric page may bear;
One noble stroke with a whole life may glow,
  Or deify the canvas till it shine
  With Beauty so surpassing all below,
That they who kneel to Idols so divine
  Break no commandment, for high heaven is there
  Transfused – transfigurated: – and the line
Of Poesy, which peoples but the air
  With Thought and beings of our Thought reflected,
  Can do no more: then let the Artist share
The palm, he shares the peril, and dejected
  Faints o'er the labour unapproved, Alas!
  Despair and Genius are too oft connected. –[125]
Within the Ages which before me pass
  Art shall resume and equal even the Sway
  Which with Apelles and old Phidias[126]
She held in Hellas' unforgotten day.
  Ye shall be taught by Ruin to revive
  The Grecian forms at least from their decay,
And Roman Souls at last again shall live

124: Compare Thomas Gray, *Elegy in a Country Churchyard,* 59: *Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest …*

125: Compare Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel,* 163-4: *Great Wits are sure to Madness near allied, / And thin Partitions do their Bounds divide …*

126: Greek artist and sculptor / architect. Apelles was a friend of Alexander the Great; Phidias designed the Parthenon.

In Roman works wrought by Italian hands,
And Temples, loftier than the old temples, give
New wonders to the World; and while still stands
The Austere Pantheon, into heaven shall sore
A Dome,[127] its image, while the base expands *
Into a fane surpassing all before,
Such as all flesh shall flock to kneel in; ne'er
Such Sight hath been unfolded by a door
As this, to which all Nations shall repair
And lay their Sins at this huge Gate of Heaven.
And the bold Architect[128] unto whose care
The daring Charge to raise it shall be given,
Whom all Arts shall acknowledge as their Lord,[129]
Whether into the Marble Chaos driven
His Chisel bid the Hebrew, at whose word †
Israel left Egypt,[130] stop the waves in Stone,[131]
Or hues of Hell be by his pencil poured
Over the damned before the Judgement throne, ‡
Such as I saw them, such as all shall see,
Or fanes be built of Grandeur yet unknown,
The Stream of his great thoughts shall spring from Me, §
The Ghibelline, who traversed the three realms
Which form the Empire of Eternity.[132]
Amidst the clash or swords, and clang of Helms,
The Age which I anticipate, no less,
Shall be the Age of Beauty, and while whelms
Calamity the Nations with distress,
The Genius of my Country shall arise,
A Cedar towering o'er the Wilderness,
Lovely in all its branches to all eyes,
Fragrant as fair,[133] and recognized afar,
Wafting its native incense through the Skies. –
Sovereigns shall pause amidst their sport of War,
Weaned for an hour from blood, to turn and gaze
On canvas or on Stone; and they who mar
All Beauty upon earth, compelled to praise,
Shall feel the Power of that which they destroy;
And Art's mistaken Gratitude shall raise
To Tyrants who but take her for a toy
Emblems and Monuments, and prostitute
Her charms to Pontiffs proud, who but employ ||
The Man of Genius as the meanest brute
To bear a burthen, and to serve a need,
To sell his labours, and his soul to boot:
Who toils for Nations may be poor indeed

127: B. had described St Peters before, at *CHP* IV stanzas 152-9.
128: Michaelangelo.
129: Michaelangelo was sculptor, painter, architect, and poet.
130: "… from whose word / Israel took God, pronounce" (fair copy alternative reading).
131: "His Chisel bid the Hebrew, at whose word / Israel left Egypt, stop the waves in stone {or cleave the sea in stone}" (fair copy alternative readings; B. writes, 'To John Murray Esq[re]. these presents – Take your choice of these lines, whichever is thought best – "'tis all hoptional" as Liston says – yrs B[scrawl]'). Liston unidentified.
132: Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, traversed in the three parts of the *Divine Comedy*.
133: Wherein the "fragrance" of the Italian Renaissance resides is not a question to ask.

But free; who sweats for Monarchs is no more
Than the gilt Chamberlain, who, cloathed and fee'd,
Stands sleek and slavish, bowing at his door. – – –
Oh! Power! that rulest and inspirest, how
Is it that they on earth – whose earthly Power
Is likest thine in heaven in outward show,
Least like to thee in attributes divine,
Tread on the universal necks that bow,
And then assure us that their rights are thine? –
And how is it that they, the Sons of Fame,
Whose Inspiration seems to them to shine
From high, they whom the Nations oftest name,
Must past their days in penury or pain?
Or step to Grandeur through the paths of Shame?
And wear a deeper brand, and gaudier chain?
Or if their Destiny be born aloof
From lowliness, or tempted thence in vain,
In their own Souls sustain a harder proof,
The inner war of Passions deep and fierce?
Florence! when thy harsh Sentence razed my roof,
I loved thee, but the vengeance of my verse,
The hate of injuries which every year
Makes greater, and accumulates my curse,
Shall live, outliving all thou holdest dear,
Thy pride, thy wealth, thy freedom, and even *that*,
The most infernal of all evils here,
The Sway of petty Tyrants in a State;
For such sway is not limited to Kings,
And Demagogues yield to them but in date
As swept off sooner; in all deadly things
Which make men hate themselves, and one Another,
In discord, cowardice, cruelty, all that springs
From Death the Sin-born's incest with his Mother,[134]
In rank Oppression in its rudest shape,
The Faction Chief is but the Sultan's brother,
And the worst Despot's far less human Ape: –
Florence! when this lone Spirit, which so long
Yearned, as the Captive toiling at escape,
To fly back to thee in despite of wrong,
An Exile, saddest of all Prisoners,
Who has the whole world for a dungeon strong,
Seas, Mountains, and the Horizon's verge[135] for bars,
Which shut him from the sole small spot of Earth
Where – whatsoe'er his fate – he still were hers,
His Country's, and might die where he had birth –
Florence! when this lone Spirit shall return
To kindred Spirits, thou wilt feel my worth,
And seek to honour with an empty Urn
The Ashes thou shalt ne'er obtain; Alas!
"What have I done to thee, my People?" Stern ††
Are all thy dealings, but in this they pass

134: Again, an image from Milton, not from Dante. See *Paradise Lost*, II, 648-73.

135: "Horizōn for bars" (fair copy alternative reading); B. writes, "What is Horizon's quantity? Horīzon – or Horĭzon? adopt accordingly".

The limits of Man's common Malice, for
All that a Citizen could be – I was;
Raised by thy will, all thine in peace and war,
And for this thou hast warred with me. – 'Tis done,
I may not overleap the eternal bar
Built up between us, and will die alone –
Beholding, with the dark eye of a Seer,
The evil days to gifted Souls foreshown,
Foretelling them to those who will not hear,
As in the old time, till the hour be come
When Truth shall strike their eyes through many a tear,
And make them own the Prophet in his tomb. –

Ravenna 18th. 1819.

* The Cupola of St. Peter's.

† The Statue of Moses on the Monument of Julius 2d.

SONETTO.

Di Giovanni Battista Zappi.

Chi è costui, che in dura pietra scolto,
Siede gigante, e le più illustre, e conte
Opre dell'arte avvanza, e ha vive, e pronte
Le labbia sì, che le parole ascolto?
Quest'è Mosè; ben me'l diceva il folto
Onor del mento, e'l doppio raggio in fronte,
Quest'è Mosè, quando scendea del monte,
E gran parte del Nume avea nel volto.
Tal era allor, che le sonanti, e vaste
Acque ei sospese a sè d'intorno, e tale
Quando il mar chiuse, e ne fè tomba altrui.
E voi sue turbe un rio vitello alzate?
Alzata aveste imago a questa eguale!
Ch'era men fallo l'adorar costui.[136]

136: Coleridge provides a translation of this poem which he says is by Samuel Rogers but which is in fact by William Roscoe (it appears at Richard Duppa's *Life and Literary Works of Michael Angelo Buonarotti*, 1806, pp.185-6):

And who is he that, shap'd in sculptured stone,
Sits giant-like? stern monument of art
Unparallel'd, while language seems to start
From his prompt lips, and we his precepts own?
—'Tis Moses; by his beard's thick honours known,
And the twin beams that from his temples dart;
'Tis Moses; seated on the mount apart,
While yet the Godhead o'er his features shone.
Such once he looked, when ocean's sounding wave
Suspended hung, and such amidst the storm
When o'er his foes the refluent waters roar'd.
An idol calf his followers did engrave;
But had they rais'd this all-commanding form,
Then had they with less guilt their work adored.

‡ The Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel. –

§ I have read somewhere (if I do not err, for I cannot recollect where) that Dante was so great a favourite of Michel Angolo's, that he had designed the whole of the Divina Commedia – but that the volume containing these studies was lost by Sea.[137]

|| See the treatment of Michel Angolo by Julius 2^{d}, and his neglect by Leo 10th. –

†† "E scrisse più volte non solamente a particulari Cittadin del Reggimento, ma ancora al Popolo, e intra l'altre un Epistola assai lunga che comincia: – *'Populе mi, quid feci tibi?'* – *Vita di Dante scritta da Lionardo Aretino.* – – – –[138]

137: Coleridge says that B.'s source for the story of Michaelangelo's illustrations to the *Divine Comedy* being lost at sea is *Illustrations to the Life of Michael Angelo, by R. Duppa ... Consisting of outlines from the principal works of Michael Angelo, in sculpture, painting, and design* (1816) where we read that in the margin of the painter's copy of Dante "he designed with a pen and ink, all the interesting subjects. This book was possessed by Antonio Montanti, a sculptor and architect in Florence, who, being appointed architect to St. Peter's, removed to Rome, and shipped his … effects at Leghorn for Cività Vecchia, among which was this edition of Dante. In the voyage, the vessel foundered at sea, and it was unfortunately lost in the wreck" (p.120n). I have not seen the 1816 edition.
138: "He wrote several times, not just to individual citizens, but to the people, including one quite long letter beginning, 'What have I done to thee, my people?'" – *Lionardo Aretino's Life of Dante.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

STANZAS TO THE PO: First published in Medwin's *Conversations,* 1824. [MSS: rough draft, Morgan; fair copy, Berg; Mary Shelley's fair copies, Pforzheimer and Bodleian; copy by Teresa Guiccioli, John Murray Archive.]

STORNELLI: First published CPW VI, pp. 512. [MS: unknown.]

TO TERESA GUICCIOLI: First published CPW IV, pp. 240-1. [MS: John Murray Archive.]

FRANCESCA OF RIMINI: First published in Moore's Life, 1832. [MSS: rough draft, Morgan; second draft, Houghton Library, Harvard; final draft, Walpole Library, King's School, Canterbury; Mary Shelley's fair copy, John Murray Archive; three copies by Teresa Guiccioli, Pforzheimer.]

"COULD LOVE FOR EVER …": First published in Lady Blessington's *Conversations*, *New Monthly Magazine,* 1832. [MSS: rough draft, Morgan; fair copy, B.M.; two partial copies by Teresa Guiccioli, Pforzheimer; complete copy by Teresa Guiccioli, John Murray Archive.]

THE PROPHECY OF DANTE, A POEM. ***Written Ravenna 18th June 1819 - ????; first published by John Murray (with Marino Faliero) April 1821.*** First published alone Paris 1821, Philadelphia 1821, London 1825; ed. L. W. Potts 1879 (Cantos I - II) [MSS: draft, New York Morgan; fair copy, BL Ashley 5159; Fair copy of Dedicatory Sonnet and Preface, National Museum Prague; unidentified transcript of relevant Italian sonnet, BL Ashley B2698.] La Profezia di Dante, ed Francesco Bruni and Loretta Innocenti, Rome 1999

Reviewed. Beacon (Edinburgh: May 5th 1821); Literary Gazette (May 5th 1821); New Literary Gazette (Philadelphia: June 9th 1821); Monthly Magazine (supplement for 1821); New Monthly Magazine (May 1821)

Translations.

French by Benajmin Laroche (in Oeuvres de Dante) Paris 1842
by S.Rhéal, 1846
German (with Monody on Sheridan and The Dream) by Ph. Meyer, Frankfurt 1831
(with The Curse of Minerva and The Lament of Tasso) by Gustav Pfizer, Stuttgart 1887
Italian (anon) Paris 1821
by Lorenzo da Ponte, New York 1821 (parallel text), 1822
by Giovanni Giovio, Milan 1856
by Melchiorre Missirini, Milan 1858
by Ed. Roncaldier, Rome, Milan 1904
Spanish (from French) by Antonio Maria Vizcayno, Mexico City 1850

Criticism.

Bone, J. Drummond. On 'Influence', and on Byron's and Shelley's use of Terza Rima in 1819, Keats-Shelley Review 1979, pp 38-48
Taylor, Beverly. Byron's Use of Dante in The Prophecy of Dante, KSJ 1979 pp 102-19
Mills, Chester H. The Prophecy of Dante, BJ 8 (1980) pp 50-9
Bone, J. Drummond. Political Choices: The Prophecy of Dante and Werner, in Stürzl, Erwin A. and James Hogg, eds. Byron: Poetry and Politics, Salzburg. Seventh International Byron Symposium, Salzburg 1980: Universität Salzburg 1981