(by which last I mean neither rhythm nor metre) this genus comprises as its species, gaming; swinging or swaying on a chair or gate; spitting over a bridge; smoking; snuff-taking; tete-a-tete quarrels after dinner between husband and wife; conning word by word all the advertisements of the *Daily Advertiser* in a public house on a rainy day, etc. etc. etc.

1815 1817

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON
1788-1824

In his *History of English Literature,* written in the late 1850s, the French critic Hippolyte Taine gave only a few condescending pages to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Percy Shelley, and Keats and then devoted a long chapter to Lord Byron, "the greatest and most English of these artists; he is so great and so English that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and of his age than from all the rest together." This comment reflects the fact that Byron had achieved an immense European reputation during his own lifetime, while admirers of his English contemporaries were much more limited in number. Through much of the nineteenth century he continued to be rated as one of the greatest of English poets and the very prototype of literary Bomanticism. His influence was manifested everywhere, among the major poets and novelists (Balzac and Stendhal in France, Pushkin and Dostoyevsky in Russia, and Melville in America), painters (especially Delacroix), and composers (including Beethoven and Berlioz).

Yet even as poets, painters, and composers across Europe and the Americas struck Byronic attitudes, Byron's place within the canon of English Bomantic poetry was becoming insecure. The same Victorian critics who first described the Bomantic period *as* a literary period warned readers against the immorality of Byron's poetry, finding in his voluptuous imagination and aristocratic disdain for the commonplace an affront to their own middle-class values: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe," Thomas Carlyle urged in *Sartor Resartus* (1834), meaning to redirect the nation toward healthier reading matter. After getting a glimpse of the scandalous stuff recorded in Byron's journals, Felicia Hemans ceased to wear the brooch in which she had preserved a lock of the poet's hair: she could venerate him no longer. Indeed, Byron would have had qualms about being considered a representative figure of a period that also included Wordsworth (memorialized in Byron's *Don Juan* as "Wordy") or Keats (a shabby Cockney brat, Byron claimed) or scribbling women such as Hemans. These reservations were reciprocated. Of Byron's best-known male contemporaries, only Shelley thought highly of either the man or his work (although there are signs that, among the naysayers, the negative reactions were tinged with some resentment at Byron's success in developing a style that spoke to a popular audience). Byron in fact insisted that, measured against the poetic practice of Alexander Pope, he and his contemporaries were "all in the wrong, one as much as another. . . . We are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself." Pope's Horatian satires, along with Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy,* exerted a significant influence on the style that Byron developed for his epic survey of modern folly, *Don Juan.*

Still, even as he had recourse to old-fashioned eighteenth-century models, Byron cultivated a skepticism about established systems of belief that, in its restlessness and defiance, expressed the intellectual and social ferment of his era. And through much

of his best poetry, he shared his contemporaries' fascination with the internal dramas of the individual mind (although Byron explored personality in an improvisatory and mercurial manner that could not have been more different from Wordsworth's autobiographical accounts of his psychological development). Readers marveled over the intensity of the feelings his verse communicated—"its force, fire, and thought," said the novelist Lady Sydney Morgan—and the vividness of the sense of self they found in it. Byron's chief claim to be considered an arch-Bomantic is that he provided the age with what Taine called its "ruling personage; that is, the model that contemporaries invest with their admiration and sympathy." This personage is the "Byronic hero." He is first sketched in the opening canto of *Childe Harold,* then recurs in various guises in the verse romances and dramas that followed. In his developed form, as we find it in *Manfred,* he is an alien, mysterious, and gloomy spirit, superior in his passions and powers to the common run of humanity, whom he regards with disdain. He harbors the torturing memory of an enormous, nameless guilt that drives him toward an inevitable doom. And he exerts an attraction on other characters that is the more compelling because it involves their terror at his obliviousness to ordinary human concerns and values. This figure, infusing the archrebel in a nonpolitical form with a strong erotic interest, was imitated in life as well as in art and helped shape the intellectual and the cultural history of the later nineteenth century. The literary descendants of the Byronic hero include Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights,* Captain Ahab in *Mohy-Dick,* and the hero of Pushkin's great poem *Eugene Onegin.* Byron also lived on in the guise of the Undead, thanks to the success of a novella by his former friend and traveling companion John Polidori, whose "The Vampyre" (1819) mischievously made Byron its model for the title character. Earlier Byron had in his writings helped introduce the English to the Eastern Mediterranean's legends of bloodsucking evil spirits; it was left to Polidori, however, to portray the vampire as a habitue of England's most fashionable social circles. The fact that, for all their menace, vampires—from Bela Lugosi's Count Dracula to Anne Rice's L'Estat—remain models of well-dressed, aristocratic elegance represents yet another tribute to the staying power of Byron's image.

Byron's contemporaries insisted on identifying the author with his fictional characters, reading his writing as veiled autobiography even when it dealt with supernatural themes. (They also read other people's writing this way: to Polidori's chagrin, authorship of "The Vampyre" was attributed to Byron.) Byron's letters and the testimony of his friends show, however, that, except for recurrent moods of deep depression, his own temperament was in many respects opposite to that of his heroes. While he was passionate and willful, he was also a witty conversationalist capable of taking an ironic attitude toward his own activities as well as those of others. But although Byronism was largely a fiction, produced by a collaboration between Byron's imagination and that of his public, the fiction was historically more important than the actual person.

Byron was descended from two aristocratic families, both of them colorful, violent, and dissolute. His grandfather was an admiral nicknamed "Foulweather Jack"; his great-uncle was the fifth Baron Byron, known to his rural neighbors as the "Wicked Lord," who was tried by his peers for killing his kinsman William Chaworth in a drunken duel; his father, Captain John Byron, was a rake and fortune hunter who rapidly spent his way through the fortunes of two wealthy wives. Byron's mother was a Scotswoman, Catherine Gordon of Gight, the last descendant of a line of lawless Scottish lairds. After her husband died (Byron was then three), she brought up her son in near poverty in Aberdeen, where he was indoctrinated with the Calvinistic morality of Scottish Presbyterianism. Catherine Byron was an ill-educated and extremely irascible woman who nevertheless had an abiding love for her son; they fought violently when together, but corresponded affectionately enough when apart, until her death in 1811.

When Byron was ten the death of his great-uncle, preceded by that of more imme-

diate heirs to the title, made him the sixth Lord Byron. In a fashion suitable to his new status, he was sent to Harrow School, then to Trinity College, Cambridge. He had a deformed foot, made worse by inept surgical treatment, about which he felt acute embarrassment. His lameness made him avid for athletic prowess; he played cricket and made himself an expert boxer, fencer, and horseman and a powerful swimmer. Both at Cambridge and at his ancestral estate of Newstead, he engaged with more than ordinary zeal in the expensive pursuits and fashionable dissipations of a young Begency lord. As a result, despite a sizable and increasing income, he got into financial difficulties from which he did not entirely extricate himself until late in his life. In the course of his schooling, he formed many close and devoted friendships, the most important with John Cam Hobhouse, a sturdy political liberal and commonsense moralist who exerted a steadying influence throughout Byron's turbulent life.

Despite his distractions at the university, Byron found time to try his hand at lyric verse, some of which was published in 1807 in a slim and conventional volume titled *Hours of Idleness.* This was treated so harshly by the *Edinburgh Review* that Byron was provoked to write in reply his first important poem, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* a vigorous satire in which he incorporated brilliant ridicule (whose tactlessness he later came to regret) of important contemporaries, including Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

After attaining his M.A. degree and his legal independence from his guardians, Byron set out with Hobhouse in 1809 on a tour through Portugal and Spain to Malta, and then to little-known Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor. There, in the classic locale for Greek love, he encountered a culture that accepted sexual relations between older aristocratic men and beautiful boys, and he accumulated materials that, sometimes rather slyly, he incorporated into many of his important poems, including his last work, *Don Juan.* The first literary product was *Childe Harold;* he wrote the opening two cantos while on the tour that the poem describes; published them in 1812 soon after his return to England; and, in his own oft-quoted phrase, "awoke one morning and found myself famous." He became the celebrity of fashionable London, and increased his literary success with a series of highly readable Eastern tales; in these the Byronic hero, represented against various exotic backdrops as a "Giaour" (an "infidel" within Muslim society), or a "Corsair" (a pirate), or in other forms, flaunts his misanthropy and undergoes violent and romantic adventures that current gossip attributed to the author. In his chronic shortage of money, Byron could well have used the huge income from these publications, but instead maintained his status as an aristocratic amateur by giving the royalties away. Occupying his inherited seat in the House of Lords, he also became briefly active on the liberal side of the Whig party and spoke courageously in defense of the Nottingham weavers who had resorted to smashing the newly invented textile machines that had thrown them out of work. He also supported other liberal measures, including that of Catholic Emancipation.

Byron was extraordinarily handsome—"so beautiful a countenance," Coleridge wrote, "I scarcely ever saw . . . his eyes the open portals of the sun—things of light, and for light." Because of a constitutional tendency to obesity, however, he was able to maintain his looks only by resorting again and again to a starvation diet of biscuits, soda water, and strong purgatives. Often as a result of female initiative rather than his own, Byron entered into a sequence of liaisons with ladies of fashion. One of these, the flamboyant and eccentric young Lady Caroline Lamb, caused him so much distress by her pursuit that Byron turned for relief to marriage with Annabella Milbanke, who was in every way Lady Caroline's opposite, for she was unworldly and intellectual (with a special passion for mathematics) and naively believed that she could reform her husband. This ill-starred marriage produced a daughter (Augusta Ada) and many scenes in which Byron, goaded by financial difficulties, behaved so frantically that his wife suspected his sanity; after only one year the union ended in a legal separation. The final blow came when Lady Byron discovered her husband's

incestuous relations with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. The two had been raised apart, so that they were almost strangers when they met as adults. Byron's affection for his sister, however guilty, was genuine and endured all through his life. This affair, enhanced by rumors about Byron's earlier liaisons with men, proved a delicious morsel even to the jaded palate of a public that was used to eating up stories of aristocratic vice. Byron was ostracized by all but a few friends and was finally forced to leave England forever on April 25, 1816.

Byron now resumed the travels incorporated in the third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold.* At Geneva he lived for several months in close and intellectually fruitful relation to Percy and Mary Shelley, who were accompanied by Mary's stepsister, Claire Clairmont—a misguided seventeen-year-old who had forced herself on Byron while he was still in England and who in January 1817 bore him a daughter, Allegra. In the fall of 1817, Byron established himself in Venice, where he began a year and a half of debauchery that, he estimated, involved liaisons with more than two hundred women. This period, however, was also one of great literary creativity. Often working through the night, he finished his tragedy *Manfred;* wrote the fourth canto of *Childe Harold;* and then, feeling more and more trapped by the poetic modes that had won him his popularity, tested out an entirely new mode in *Beppo: A Venetian Story,* a comic verse tale about a deceived husband in which he previewed the playful narrative manner and the ottava rima stanzas of *Don Juan.* In December 1818 he began the composition of *Don Juan.*

Exhausted and bored by promiscuity, Byron in 1819 settled into a placid and relatively faithful relationship with Teresa Guiccioli, the young wife of the elderly Count Alessandro Guiccioli; according to the Italian upper-class mores of the times, having contracted a marriage of convenience, she could now with some propriety take Byron as her lover. Through the countess's nationalistic family, the Gambas, Byron became involved with a group of political conspirators seeking to end the Austrian Empire's control over northern Italy. When the Gambas were forced by the authorities to move to Pisa, Byron followed them there and, for the second time, joined the Shelleys. There grew up about them the "Pisan Circle," which in addition to the Gambas included their friends Thomas Medwin and Edward and Jane Williams, as well as the Greek nationalist leader Prince Mavrocordatos, the picturesque Irish Count Taaffe, and the adventurer Edward Trelawny, a great teller of tall tales who seems to have stepped out of one of Byron's romances. Leigh Hunt, the journalist and essayist, joined them, drawing Byron and Percy Shelley into his plan to make Italy the base for a radical political journal, *The Liberal.* This circle was gradually broken up, however, first by the Shelleys' anger over Byron's treatment of his daughter Allegra (Byron had sent the child to be brought up as a Catholic in an Italian convent, where she died of a fever in 1822); then by the expulsion of the Gambas, whom Byron followed to Genoa; and finally by the drowning of Percy Shelley and Edward Williams in July 1822.

Byron meanwhile had been steadily at work on a series of closet tragedies (including *Cain, Sardanapalus,* and *Marino Faliero)* and on his devastating satire on the life and death of George III, *The Vision of Judgment.* But increasingly he devoted himself to the continuation of *Don Juan.* He had always been diffident in his self-judgments and easily swayed by literary advice. But now, confident that he had at last found his metier, he kept on, in spite of persistent objections against the supposed immorality of the poem by the English public, by his publisher John Murray, by his friends and well-wishers, and by his extremely decorous lover, the Countess Guiccioli—by almost everyone, in fact, except the idealist Shelley, who thought *Juan* incomparably better than anything he himself could write and insisted "that every word of it is pregnant with immortality."

Byron finally broke off literature for action when he organized an expedition to assist in the Greek war for independence from the Ottoman Empire. He knew too well the conditions in Greece, and had too skeptical an estimate of human nature, to

entertain hope of success; but, in part because his own writings had helped kindle European enthusiasm for the Greek cause, he now felt honor-bound to try what could be done. In the dismal, marshy town of Missolonghi, he lived a Spartan existence, training troops whom he had subsidized and exhibiting practical grasp and a power of leadership amid a chaos of factionalism, intrigue, and military ineptitude. Worn out, he succumbed to a series of feverish attacks and died just after he had reached his thirty-sixth birthday. To this day Byron is revered by the Greek people as a national hero.

Students of Byron still feel, as his friends had felt, the magnetism of his volatile temperament. As Mary Shelley wrote six years after his death, when she read Thomas Moore's edition of his *Letters and Journals:* "The Lord Byron I find there is our Lord Byron—the fascinating—faulty—childish—philosophical being—daring the world—docile to a private circle—impetuous and indolent—gloomy and yet more gay than any other." Of his contradictions Byron was well aware; he told his friend Lady Blessington: "I am so changeable, being everything by turns and nothing long—I am such a strange *melange* of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me." Yet-he remained faithful to his code: a determination to tell the truth as he saw it about the world and about himself (his refusal to suppress or conceal any of his moods is in part what made him seem so contradictory) and a dedication to the freedom of nations and individuals. As he went on to say to Lady Blessington: "There are but two sentiments to which I am constant—a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant."

The poetry texts printed here are taken from Jerome J. McGann's edition, *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works* (Oxford, 1980-93).

Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos[1]

May 9, 1810

i

If in the month of dark December
Leander, who was nightly wont
(What maid will not the tale remember?)
To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

2

If when the wintry tempest roared
He sped to Hero, nothing loth,
And thus of old thy current pour'd,
Fair Venus! how I pity both!

3

For *me,* degenerate modern wretch,
Though in the genial month of May,

1. The Hellespont (now called the Dardanelles) is the narrow strait between Europe and Asia. In the ancient story, retold in Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander,* young Leander of Abydos, on the Asian side, swam nightly to visit Hero, a priestess of the goddess Venus at Sestos, until he was drowned when he made the attempt in a storm. Byron and a young Lieutenant Ekenhead swam the Hellespont in the reverse direction on May 3, 1810. Ryron alternated between complacency and humor in his many references to the event. In a note to the poem, he mentions that the distance was "upwards of four English miles, though the actual breadth is barely one. The rapidity of the current is such that no boat can row directly across. . . . The water was extremely cold, from the melting of the mountain snows."

My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
And think I've done a feat to-day.

4

But since he cross'd the rapid tide,
According to the doubtful story,
To woo,—and—Lord knows what beside,
And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

5

'Twere hard to say who fared the best:
Sad mortals! thus the Gods still plague you!
He lost his labour, I my jest:
For he was drown'd, and I've the ague.

1810 1812

She walks in beauty[1]

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling place.

3

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

June 1814 1815

1. From *Hebrew Melodies* (1815), a collection of lyrics on Old Testament themes that Byron composed to accompany the musician Isaac Nathan's settings of traditional synagogue chants. Byron wrote these lines about his beautiful cousin by marriage, Anne Wilmot, who at the ball where they first met wore a black mourning gown brightened with spangles. In their context as the opening poem of *Hebrew Melodies,* the lines praise any one of a number of Old Testament heroines. To hear the poem sung to Nathan's music, consult Norton Literature Online.

They say that Hope is happiness

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.[1]
VIRGIL

They say that Hope is happiness—
But genuine Love must prize the past;
And Mem'ry wakes the thoughts that bless:
They rose the first—they set the last.

2

And all that mem'ry loves the most
Was once our only hope to be:
And all that hope adored and lost
Hath melted into memory.

3

Alas! it is delusion all—
The future cheats us from afar:
Nor can we be what we recall,
Nor dare we think on what we are.

1814 1829

When we two parted

i

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

2.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

3

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;

1. Happy is he who has been able to learn the causes of things (Latin; *Georgics* 2.490).

A shudder comes o'er me —
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well: —
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

4

In secret we met —
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee! —
With silence and tears.

1815 1815

Stanzas for Music

There be none of Beauty's daughters
With a magic like thee;
And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me:
When, as if its sound were causing
The charmed ocean's pausing,
The waves lie still and gleaming,
And the lulled winds seem dreaming.

And the midnight moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep;
Whose breast is gently heaving,
As an infant's asleep.
So the spirit bows before thee,
To listen and adore thee;
With a full but soft emotion,
Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

1816 1816

Darkness[1]

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling[0] in the eternal space, *in the dark*
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth

1. A powerful blank-verse description of the end of life on Earth. New geological sciences and an accompanying interest in what the fossil record indicated about the extinction of species made such speculations hardly less common in Byron's time than in ours. Mary Shelley would later take up the theme in her novel *The Last Man* (1826).

Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Mom came, and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded-—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and looked up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food:
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again;—a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death,
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung[0] them, or the dropping dead *withered*
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies; they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place,

Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful—was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless,° treeless, manless, lifeless— *without vegetation*
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon their mistress had expired before;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the universe.

1816 1816

So, we'll go no more a roving[1]

i

So, we'll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

2

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

3

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

1817 1830

1. Composed in the Lenten aftermath of a period of late-night carousing during the Carnival season in Venice, and included in a letter to Thomas Moore, February 28, 1817. Byron wrote, "I find 'the sword wearing out the scabbard,' though I have but just turned the corner of twenty-nine." The poem is based on the refrain of a bawdy Scottish song, "The Jolly Beggar": "And we'll gang nae mair a roving / Sae late into the nicht."

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage *Childe Harold* is a travelogue narrated by a melancholy, passionate, well-read, and very eloquent tourist. Byron wrote most of the first two cantos while on the tour through Spain, Portugal, Albania, and Greece that these cantos describe. When he published them, in 1812, they made him at one stroke the best-known and most talked about poet in England. Byron took up *Childe Harold* again in 1816, during the European tour he made after the breakup of his marriage. Canto 3, published in 1816, moves through Belgium, up the Rhine, then to Switzerland and the Alps. Canto 4, published in 1818, describes Italy's great cities, in particular their ruins and museums and the stories these tell of the bygone glories of the Roman Empire.

Byron chose for his poem the Spenserian stanza, and like James Thomson (in *The Castle of Indolence)* and other eighteenth-century predecessors, he attempted in the first canto to imitate, in a seriocomic fashion, the archaic language of his Elizabethan model. (*Childe* is the ancient term for a young noble awaiting knighthood.) But he soon dropped the archaisms, and in the last two cantos he confidently adapts Spenser's mellifluous stanza to his own autobiographical and polemical purposes. The virtuoso range of moods and subjects in *Childe Harold* was a quality on which contemporaries commented admiringly. Equally fascinating is the tension between the body of the poem and the long notes (for the most part omitted here) that Byron appended to its sometimes dashing and sometimes sorrowing chronicle of his pilgrimage in the countries of chivalry and romance—notes that feature cosmopolitan reflections on the contrasts among cultures as well as sardonic, hard-hitting critiques of the evolving political order of Europe.

In the preface to his first two cantos, Byron had insisted that the narrator, Childe Harold, was "a fictitious character," merely "the child of imagination." In the manuscript version of these cantos, however, he had called his hero "Childe Burun," the early form of his own family name. The world insisted on identifying the character as well as the travels of the protagonist with those of the author, and in the fourth canto Byron, abandoning the third-person *dramatis persona,* spoke out frankly in the first person. In the preface to that canto, he declares that there will be "less of the pilgrim" here than in any of the preceding cantos, "and that little slightly, if at all, separated from the author speaking in his own person. The fact is, that I had become weary of drawing a line which every one seemed determined not to perceive."

FROM CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

A ROMAUNT[1]

From Canto 1

["SIN'S LONG LABYRINTH"]

I

Oh, thou! in Hellas[0] deem'd of heav'nly birth, *Greece*
Muse! form'd or fabled at the minstrel's will!
Since sham'd full oft by later lyres on earth,
Mine dares not call thee from thy sacred hill:
Yet there I've wander'd by thy vaunted rill;

I. A romance or narrative of adventure.

Yes! sigh'd o'er Delphi's long-deserted shrine,
Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still;
Nor mote° my shell awake the weary Nine[2] *may*
To grace so plain a tale—this lowly lay° of mine. *song*

2

Whilome[3] in Albion's" isle there dwelt a youth, *England's*
Who ne in virtue's ways did take delight;
But spent his days in riot most uncouth,
And vex'd with mirth the drowsy ear of Night.
Ah, me! in sooth he was a shameless wight,[0] *creature*
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee;
Few earthly things found favour in his sight
Save concubines and carnal companie,
And flaunting wassailers[4] of high and low degree.

3

Childe Harold was he hight:°—but whence his name *called*
And lineage long, it suits me not to say;
Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,
And had been glorious in another day:
But one sad losel[5] soils a name for aye,
However mighty in the olden time;
Nor all that heralds rake from coffin'd clay,
Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.

4

Childe Harold bask'd him in the noon-tide sun,
Disporting there like any other fly;
Nor deem'd before his little day was done
One blast might chill him into misery.
But long ere scarce a third of his pass'd by,
Worse than adversity the Childe befell;
He felt the fulness of satiety:
Then loath'd he in his native land to dwell,
Which seem'd to him more lone than Eremite's[6] sad cell.

5

For he through Sin's long labyrinth had run,
Nor made atonement when he did amiss,
Had sigh'd to many though he lov'd but one,
And that lov'd one, alas! could ne'er be his.
Ah, happy she! to 'scape from him whose kiss
Had been pollution unto aught so chaste;
Who soon had left her charms for vulgar bliss,
And spoil'd her goodly lands to gild his waste,
Nor calm domestic peace had ever deign'd to taste.

2. The Muses, whose "vaunted rill" (line 5) was the Castalian spring. "Shell": lyre. Hermes isfahled to have invented the lyre by stretching strings over the hollow of a tortoise shell.
3. Once upon a time; one of the many archaisms that Byron borrowed from Spenser.
4. Noisy, insolent drinkers (Byron is thought to refer to his own youthful carousing with friends at Newstead Abbey).
5. Rascal. Byron's great-uncle, the fifth Lord Byron, had killed a kinsman in a drunken duel.
6. A religious hermit.

6

And now Childe Harold was sore sick at heart,
And from his fellow bacchanals would flee;
'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,
But Pride congeal'd the drop within his ee:° *eye*
Apart he stalk'd in joyless reverie,
And from his native land resolv'd to go,
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea;
With pleasure drugg'd he almost long'd for woe,
And e'en for change of scene would seek the shades below.

From Canto 3

["ONCE MORE UPON THE WATERS"]

1

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
Ada![1] sole daughter of my house and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
And then we parted,—not as now we part,
But with a hope.—
Awaking with a start,
The waters heave around me; and on high
The winds lift up their voices: I depart,
Whither I know not; but the hour's gone by,
When Albion's lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye.

2

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome, to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam, to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

3

In my youth's summer[2] I did sing of One,
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
Bears the cloud onwards: in that Tale I find
The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears,
Which, ebbing, leave a sterile track behind,
O'er which all heavily the journeying years
Plod the last sands of life,—where not a flower appears.

1. Byron's daughter Augusta Ada, born in December 1815, a month before her parents separated. Byron's "hope" (line 5) had been for a reconciliation, but he was never to see Ada again.
2. Byron wrote canto 1 at age twenty-one; he is now twenty-eight.

4

Since my young days of passion—-joy, or pain,
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string,
And both may jar:[3] it may be, that in vain
I would essay as I have sung to sing.
Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness—so it fling
Forgetfulness around me—it shall seem
To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.

5

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits him; nor below
Can love, or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance: he can tell
Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife
With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpair'd, though old, in the soul's haunted cell.

6

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing; but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought![4] with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings' dearth.

7

Yet must I think less wildly:—I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I chang'd; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what time can not abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate.

8

Something too much of this:—but now 'tis past,
And the spell closes with its silent seal.[5]
Long absent HAROLD re-appears at last;
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal;
Yet Time, who changes all, had alter'd him

3. Sound discordant.
4. I.e., Childe Harold, his literary creation.
5. I.e., he sets the seal of silence on his personal tale ("spell").

In soul and aspect as in age: years steal
Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb;
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

9

His had been quaff'd too quickly, and he found
The dregs were wormwood; but he fill'd again,
And from a purer fount, on holier ground,
And deem'd its spring perpetual; but in vain!
Still round him clung invisibly a chain
Which gall'd for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy though it clank'd not; worn with pain,
Which pined although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering with every step, he took, through many a scene.

10

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mix'd
Again in fancied safety with his kind,
And deem'd his spirit now so firmly fix'd
And sheath'd with an invulnerable mind,
That, if no joy, no sorrow lurk'd behind;
And he, as one, might midst the many stand
Unheeded, searching through the crowd to find
Fit speculation! such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand.

11

But who can view the ripened rose, nor seek
To wear it? who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow old?
Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
Harold, once more within the vortex, roll'd
On with the giddy circle, chasing Time,
Yet with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond° prime. *foolish*

12

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;
Proud though in desolation; which could find
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

13

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,

Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome° *book*
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For Nature's pages glass'd° by sunbeams on the lake. *made glassy*

14

Like the Chaldean,[6] he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams; and earth, and earth-born jars,
And human frailties, were forgotten quite:
Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

15

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with dipt wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat
Of his impeded soul would through his bosom eat.

16

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With nought of hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild,—as on the plundered wreck
When mariners would madly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck,—
Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check.

[WATERLOO]

17

Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!
An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchered below!
Is the spot mark'd with no colossal bust?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show?[7]
None; but the moral's truth tells simpler so,
As the ground was before, thus let it be;—
How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
And is this all the world has gained by thee,
Thou first and last of fields! king-making Victory?

6. A people of ancient Babylonia, expert in astronomy.
7. Referring to the triumphal arches erected in ancient Rome to honor conquering generals, a custom Napoleon had revived.

18

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo![8]
How in an hour the power which gave annuls
Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting too!
In "pride of place" here last the eagle flew,[9]
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations[1] through;
Ambition's life and labours all were vain;
He wears the shattered links of the world's broken chain.[2]

Fit retribution! Gaul[3] may champ the bit
And foam in fetters;—but is Earth more free?
Did nations combat to make *One* submit;
Or league to teach all kings true sovereignty?
What! shall reviving Thraldom again be
The patched-up idol of enlightened days?
Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the Wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to thrones? No; *prove*[4] before ye praise!

20

If not, o'er one fallen despot boast no more!
In vain fair cheeks were furrowed with hot tears
For Europe's flowers long rooted up before
The trampler of her vineyards; in vain years
Of death, depopulation, bondage, fears,
Have all been borne, and broken by the accord
Of roused-up millions: all that most endears
Glory, is when the myrtle wreathes a sword
Such as Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant lord.[5]

21

There was a sound of revelry by night,[6]
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage-bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

8. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, near Brussels, had occurred only the year before, on June 18, 1815. The battlefield, where almost fifty thousand English, Prussian, and French soldiers were killed in a single day, quickly became a gruesome tourist attraction.
9. "Pride of place," is a term of falconry, and means the highest pitch of flight [Byron's note, which continues by referring to the use of the term in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 2.4]. The eagle was the symbol of Napoleon.
1. The Grand Alliance formed in opposition to Napoleon.
2. Napoleon was then a prisoner at St. Helena.
3. France. Byron, like other liberals, saw the defeat of the Napoleonic tyranny as a victory for tyrannical kings and the forces of reaction throughout Europe.
4. Await the test (proof) of experience.
5. In 514 B.C.E. Harmodius and Aristogeiton, hiding their daggers in myrtle (symbol of love), killed Hipparchus, tyrant of Athens.
6. A famous ball, given by the duchess of Richmond on the eve of the battle of Quatre Bras, which opened the conflict at Waterloo.

22

Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
But, hark!—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
Arm! Arm! and out—it is—the cannon's opening roar!

23

Within a windowed niche of that high hall
Sate Brunswick's fated chieftain;[7] he did hear
That sound the first amidst the festival,
And caught its tone with Death's prophetic ear;
And when they smiled because he deem'd it near,
His heart more truly knew that peal too well
Which stretch'd his father on a bloody bier,
And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell:
He rush'd into the field, and, foremost fighting, fell.

24

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blush'd at the praise of their own loveliness;
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon nights so sweet such awful morn could rise?

25

And there was mounting in hot haste: the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward in impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;
While throng'd the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips—"The foe! They come! they come!"

26

And wild and high the "Cameron's gathering" rose!
The war-note of Lochiel,[8] which Albyn's° hills *Scotland's*
Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes:—
How in the noon of night that pibroch[9] thrills,

7. The duke of Brunswick, nephew of George III of England, was killed in the battle of Quatre Bras. His father, commanding the Prussian army against Napoleon, had been killed at Auerstedt in 1806 (line 205).

8. "Cameron's gathering" is the clan song of the Camerons, whose chief was called "Lochiel," after his estate.

9. Bagpipe music, usually warlike in character.

Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years,
And Evan's, Donald's[1] fame rings in each clansman's ears!

27

And Ardennes[2] waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with nature's tear-drops, as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valour, rolling on the foe
And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and low.

28

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
Battle's magnificently-stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent!

* * *

[NAPOLEON]

36

There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,[3]
Whose spirit antithetically mixt
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixt,
Extreme in all things! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to re-assume the imperial mien,° *character*
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene!

37

Conqueror and captive of the earth art thou!
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,

1. Sir Evan and Donald Cameron, famous warriors in the Stuart cause in the Jacobite risings of 1689 and 1745.

2. The wood of Soignes is supposed to be a remnant of the "forest of Ardennes" famous in Boiardo's *Orlando,* and immortal in Shakespeare's As *You Like It.* It is also celebrated in Tacitus as being the spot of successful defence by the Germans against the Roman encroachments—I have ventured to adopt the name connected with nobler associations than those of mere slaughter [Byron's note], *Orlando Innamorato* is a 15th-century Italian epic of love and adventure.

3. Napoleon, here portrayed with many characteristics of the Byronic hero.

Who wooed thee once, thy vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deem'd thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

38

Oh, more or less than man—in high or low,
Battling with nations, flying from the field;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest" soldier taught to yield; *lowest*
An empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,
But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skill'd,
Look through thine own, nor curb the lust of war,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star.

39

Yet well thy soul hath brook'd the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it wisdom, coldness, or deep pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;—
When Fortune fled her spoil'd and favourite child,
He stood unbowed beneath the ills upon him piled.

40

Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steel'd thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn which could contemn
Men and their thoughts; 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turn'd unto thine overthrow:
'Tis but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.[4]

41

If, like a tower upon a headlong rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,
Such scorn of man had help'd to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
Their admiration thy best weapon shone;
The part of Philip's son[5] was thine, not then
(Unless aside thy purple had been thrown)
Like stern Diogenes[6] to mock at men;
For sceptred cynics earth were far too wide a den.

4. An inversion: "all who choose such lot" (i.e., who choose to play such a game of chance).
5. Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon.
6. The Greek philosopher of Cynicism, contemporary of Alexander. It is related that Alexander was so struck by his independence of mind that he said, "If I were not Alexander, I should wish to be Diogenes."

42

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

43

This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists,[7] Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule:

44

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nurs'd and bigotted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

45

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.[8]

* * *

52

Thus Harold inly said, and pass'd along,
Yet not insensibly to all which here

7. Learned men. But the term often carries a derogatory sense—thinkers with a penchant for tricky reasoning.

8. In the stanzas here omitted, Harold is sent sailing up the Rhine, meditating on the "thousand battles" that "have assailed thy banks."

Awoke the jocund birds to early song
In glens which might have made even exile dear:
Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
And tranquil sternness which had ta'en the place
Of feelings fierier far but less severe,
Joy was not always absent from his face,
But o'er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace.

53

Nor was all love shut from him, though his days
Of passion had consumed themselves to dust.
It is in vain that we would coldly gaze
On such as smile upon us; the heart must
Leap kindly back to kindness, though disgust
Hath wean'd it from all worldlings: thus he felt,
For there was soft remembrance, and sweet trust
In one fond breast,[9] to which his own would melt,
And in its tenderer hour on that his bosom dwelt.

54

And he had learn'd to love,—I know not why,
For this in such as him seems strange of mood,—
The helpless looks of blooming infancy,
Even in its earliest nurture; what subdued,
To change like this, a mind so far imbued
With scorn of man, it little boots to know;
But thus it was; and though in solitude
Small power the nipp'd affections have to grow,
In him this glowed when all beside had ceased to glow.

55

And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
That love was pure, and, far above disguise,
Had stood the test of mortal enmities
Still undivided, and cemented more
By peril, dreaded most in female eyes;
But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour!

* * *

[SWITZERLAND][1]

68

Lake Leman° woos me with its crystal face, *Geneva*
The mirror where the stars and mountains view

9. Commentators agree that the reference is to Byron's half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

1. Byron with his traveling companion and physician, John Polidori, spent the gloomy summer of 1816 near Geneva, in a villa rented for its proximity to the household that Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (who would marry Shelley at the end of the year), and her half-sister Claire Clairmont had set up there. The famous ghost-story-telling contest in which these five participated, and which saw the genesis of both *Frankenstein* and Polidori's "The Vampyre," took place that June. The Shelley household's involvement in *Childe Harold* is extensive. The fair copy of this canto was in fact written out by Claire, and Percy would eventually deliver it to Byron's publisher in London.

The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:
There is too much of man here, to look through
With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherish'd than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penn'd me in their fold.

69

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind;
All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
Of our infection, till too late and long
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,[0] *tumult*
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
'Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

70

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own soul, turn all our blood to tears,
And colour things to come with hues of Night;
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea,
The boldest steer but where their ports invite,
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity
Whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne'er shall be.

71

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,[2]
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake;—
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doom'd to inflict or bear?

72

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me,
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.[3]

2. River rising in Switzerland and flowing through France into the Mediterranean.

3. During the tour around Lake Geneva that they took in late June 1816, Percy Shelley introduced Byron to the poetry of Wordsworth and Wordsworth's concepts of nature. Those ideas are reflected in canto 3, but the voice is Byron's own. For his comment on being "half mad" while writing

73

And thus I am absorb'd, and this is life:
I look upon the peopled desart past,
As on a place of agony and strife,
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

74

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

75

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forego
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turn'd below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?

76

But this is not my theme; and I return
To that which is immediate, and require
Those who find contemplation in the urn,[4]
To look on One,[5] whose dust was once all fire,
A native of the land where I respire
The clear air for a while—a passing guest,
Where he became a being,—whose desire
Was to be glorious; 'twas a foolish quest,
The which to gain and keep, he sacrificed all rest.

77

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over passion, and from woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew
How to make madness beautiful, and cast

canto 3, see his letter to Thomas Moore, January 28, 1817 (p. 736).

4. I.e., those who find matter for meditation in an urn containing the ashes of the dead.

5. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had been born in Geneva in 1712. Byron's characterization is based on Rousseau's novel *La Nouvelle Heloise* and autobiographical *Confessions.*

O'er erring deeds and thoughts, a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they past
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.

78

His love was passion's essence—as a tree
On fire by lightning; with ethereal flame
Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
Thus, and enamoured, were in him the same.
But his was not the love of living dame,
Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
But of ideal beauty, which became
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
Along his burning page, distempered though it seems.

3 $

85

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

86

It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darken'd Jura,[6] whose capt heights appear
Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more;

87

He is an evening reveller, who makes
His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
At intervals, some bird from out the brakes," *thickets*
Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy, for the starlight dews
All silently their tears of love instil,
Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

88

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate

6. The mountain range between Switzerland and France, visible from Lake Geneva.

Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

89

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
All is concentered in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

90

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,[7]
Binding all things with beauty;—'twould disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.

91

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take[8]
A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek
The Spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,
Uprear'd of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

92

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the fight
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

7. The sash of Venus, which conferred the power to attract love.

8. It is to be recollected, that the most beautiful and impressive doctrines of the Founder of Christianity were delivered, not in the *Temple,* but on the *Mount* [Byron's note].

93

And this is in the night:—Most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 'tis black,—and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

94

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted;
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed:—
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters,—war within themselves to wage.

95

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunder-bolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath fork'd
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation work'd,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurk'd.

96

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll[9]
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

97

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

9. Knell (old form).

But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

98

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb,—
And glowing into day: we may resume
The march of our existence: and thus I,
Still on thy shores, fair Leman! may find room
And food for meditation, nor pass by
Much, that may give us pause, if pondered fittingly.

^ $$*

»3

I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee,—
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles,—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed[1] my mind, which thus itself subdued.

114

I have not loved the world, nor the world me,—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things,—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,—
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.

"5

My daughter! with thy name this song begun—
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end—
I see thee not,—I hear thee not,—but none
Can be so wrapt in thee; thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never should'st behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart,—when mine is cold,—
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

116

To aid thy mind's development,—to watch
Thy dawn of little joys,—to sit and see

1. Defiled. In a note Byron refers to *Macbeth* 3.1.66 ("For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind").

Almost thy very growth,—to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,—
This, it should seem, was not reserv'd for me;
Yet this was in my nature:—as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

117

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me; though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation,—and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us,—'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me; though to drain
My blood from out thy being, were an aim,
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou would'st love me, still that more than life retain.

118

The child of love,—though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in convulsion,—of thy sire
These were the elements,—and thine no less.
As yet such are around thee,—but thy fire
Shall be more tempered, and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea,
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me!

1812, 1816

Manfred

Manfred is Byron's first dramatic work. As its subtitle, "A Dramatic Poem," indicates, it was not intended to be produced on the stage; Byron also referred to it as a "metaphysical" drama—that is, a drama of ideas. He began writing it in the autumn of 1816 while living in the Swiss Alps, whose grandeur stimulated his imagination; he finished the drama the following year in Italy.

Manfred's literary forebears include the villains of Gothic fiction (another Manfred can be found in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto;* see p. 579) and of the Gothic dramas Byron had encountered during his time on the board of managers of London's Drury Lane Theatre. Manfred also shares traits with the Greek Titan Prometheus, rebel against Zeus, ruler of the gods; Milton's Satan; Ahasuerus, the legendary Wandering Jew who, having ridiculed Christ as he bore the Cross to Calvary, is doomed to live until Christ's Second Coming; and Faust, who yielded his soul to the devil in exchange for superhuman powers. Byron denied that he had ever heard of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* and because he knew no German he had not read Goethe's *Faust,* of which part 1 had been published in 1808. But during an August 1816 visit to Byron and the Shelley household, Matthew Lewis (author of the Gothic novel *The Monk;* see pp. 595 and 602) had read parts of *Faust* to him aloud, translating as he went, and Byron worked memories of this oral translation into his own drama in a way that evoked Goethe's admiration.

Like Byron's earlier heroes, Childe Harold and the protagonists of some of his

Eastern tales, Manfred is hounded by remorse—in this instance, for a transgression that (it is hinted but never quite specified) is incest with his sister Astarte; it is also hinted that Astarte has taken her own life. While this element in the drama is often regarded as Byron's veiled confession of his incestuous relations with his half-sister, Augusta, and while Byron, ever the attention-seeker, in some ways courted this interpretation, the theme of incest was a common one in Gothic and Bomantic writings. It features in *The Monk* and Walpole's closet drama *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), and, at about the time Byron was composing his drama, it was also being explored by Mary and Percy Shelley.

The character of Manfred is its author's most impressive representation of the Byronic Hero. Byron's invention is to have Manfred, unlike Faust, disdainfully reject the offer of a pact with the powers of darkness. He thereby sets himself up as the totally autonomous man, independent of any external authority or power, whose own mind, as he says in the concluding scene (3.4.127—40), generates the values by which he lives "in sufferance or in joy," and by reference to which he judges, requites, and finally destroys himself. In his work *Ecce Homo,* the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, recognizing Byron's anticipation of his own *Ulhermensch* (the "superman" who posits for himself a moral code beyond all traditional standards of good and evil), asserted that the character of Manfred was greater than that of Goethe's Faust.

For more information on the context of *Manfred,* see "The Satanic and Byronic Hero" at Norton Literature Online.

Manfred

A DRAMATIC POEM

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."[1]

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MANFRED	WITCH OF THE ALPS
CHAMOIS HUNTER	ARIMANES
ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE	NEMESIS
MANUEL	THE DESTINIES
HERMAN	SPIRITS, ETC.

The scene of the Drama is amongst the Higher Alps—partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the Mountains.

Act 1

SCENE 1. MANFRED *alone.—Scene, a Gothic gallery.*[2]*—Time, Midnight.*

MANFRED The lamp must be replenish'd, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch:
My slumbers—if I slumber—are not sleep,
But a continuance of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not: in my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within; and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.

1. Hamlet's comment after having seen his father's ghost (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.5.168—69).

2. A large chamber built in the medieval Gothic style with high, pointed arches.

But grief should be the instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and science, and the springs
Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world,
I have essayed, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not: I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men—
But this avail'd not: I have had my foes,
And none have baffled, many fallen before me—
But this avail'd not:—Good, or evil, life,
Powers, passions, all I see in other beings,
Have been to me as rain unto the sands,
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb, that beats with hopes or wishes,
Or lurking love of something on the earth.—
Now to my task.—
Mysterious Agency!
Ye spirits of the unbounded Universe!
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light—
Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence—ye, to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And earth's and ocean's caves familiar things—
I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you—Rise! appear! [A *pause.*]
They come not yet.—Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you[3]—by this sign,
Which makes you tremble—by the claims of him
Who is undying,[4]—Bise! appear!—Appear! [A *pause.*]
If it be so.—Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me: by a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birth-place in a star condemn'd,
The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,
A wandering hell in the eternal space;
By the strong curse which is upon my soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will.—Appear!

[A *star is seen at the darker end of the gallery; it is stationary; and a voice is heard singing.*]

FIRST SPIRIT[5]

Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd,
From my mansion in the cloud,

3. Arimanes, who appears in 2.4.
4. Probably God, to whom traditional magic conjurations often allude.
5. The Spirits, successively, are those of the Air, Mountain, Ocean, Earth, Winds, Night, and Manfred's guiding Star.

Which the breath of twilight builds,
And the summer's sun-set gilds
With the azure and vermilion,
Which is mix'd for my pavilion;
Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridd'n;
To thine adjuration[0] bow'd, *summons*
Mortal—be thy wish avow'd!

Voice of the SECOND SPIRIT

Mont Blanc[6] is the monarch of mountains,
They crowned him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow.
Around his waist are forests braced,
The Avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.
The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day;
But I am he who bids it pass,
Or with its ice delay.
I am the spirit of the place,
Could make the mountain bow
And quiver to his cavern'd base—
And what with me wouldst *Thou?*

Voice of the THIRD SPIRIT

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the wind is a stranger,
And the sea-snake hath life,
Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells;
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;
O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep echo roll'd—
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

FOURTH SPIRIT

Where the slumbering earthquake
Lies pillow'd on fire,
And the lakes of bitumen[0] *mineral pitch*
Rise boilingly higher;
Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,

6. The highest mountain in the Alps. Percy Shelley paid tribute to it in a poem published in the same year as *Manfred*.

As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;
I have quitted my birth-place,
Thy bidding to bide—-
Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy wall be my guide!

FIFTH SPIRIT

I am the Rider of the wind,
The Stirrer of the storm;
The hurricane I left behind
Is yet with lightning warm;
To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
I swept upon the blast:
The fleet I met sailed well, and yet
'Twill sink ere night be past.

SIXTH SPIRIT

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

SEVENTH SPIRIT

The star which rules thy destiny,
Was ruled, ere earth began, by me:
It was a world as fresh and fair
As e'er revolved round sun in air;
Its course was free and regular,
Space bosom'd not a lovelier star.
The hour arrived—and it became
A wandering mass of shapeless flame,
A pathless comet, and a curse,
The menace of the universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky!
And thou! beneath its influence born—
Thou worm! whom I obey and scorn—
Forced by a power (which is not thine,
And lent thee but to make thee mine)
For this brief moment to descend,
Where these weak spirits round thee bend
And parley with a thing like thee—
What wouldst thou, Child of Clay! with me?

The SEVEN SPIRITS

Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds, thy star,
Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their spirits are—
What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals-—say?

MANFRED Forgetfulness—
FIRST SPIRIT Of what—of whom—and why?

MANFRED Of that which is within me; read it there—
Ye know it, and I cannot utter it.
SPIRIT We can but give thee that which we possess:
Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
O'er earth, the whole, or portion, or a sign
Which shall control the elements, whereof
We are the dominators, each and all,
These shall be thine.
MANFRED Oblivion, self-oblivion—
Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
Ye offer so profusely what I ask?
SPIRIT It is not in our essence, in our skill;
But—thou mayst die.
MANFRED Will death bestow it on me?
SPIRIT We are immortal, and do not forget;
We are eternal; and to us the past
Is, as the future, present. Art thou answered?
MANFRED Ye mock me—but the power which brought ye here
Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!
The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,[7]
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far-darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in clay!
Answer, or I will teach you what I am.
SPIRIT We answer as we answered; our reply
Is even in thine own words.
MANFRED Why say ye so?
SPIRIT If, as thou say'st, thine essence be as ours,
We have replied in telling thee, the thing
Mortals call death hath nought to do with us.
MANFRED I then have call'd ye from your realms in vain;
Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.
SPIRIT Say;
What we possess we offer; it is thine:
Bethink ere thou dismiss us, ask again—
Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length of days—
MANFRED Accursed! what have I to do with days?
They are too long already.—Hence—begone!
SPIRIT Yet pause: being here, our will would do thee service;
Bethink thee, is there then no other gift
Which we can make not worthless in thine eyes?
MANFRED No, none: yet stay—one moment, ere we part—
I would behold ye face to face. I hear
Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
As music on the waters; and I see
The steady aspect of a clear large star;
But nothing more. Approach me as ye are,
Or one, or all, in your accustom'd forms.
SPIRIT We have no forms beyond the elements

7. In Greek myth Prometheus molded man from clay, and stole fire from heaven to give it to humans.

Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form—in that we will appear.

MANFRED I have no choice; there is no form on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting.—Come!

SEVENTH SPIRIT *[appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure].*[8]
Behold!

MANFRED Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy.—I will clasp thee,
And we again will be— *[The figure vanishes.]*
My heart is crushed! **[MANFRED** *falls senseless.]*

[A *voice is heard in the Incantation*[9] which follows.]

When the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;
When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answer'd owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep,
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gathered in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

8. This shape may be an image of Astarte, whose phantom appears in 2.3.97.

9. Byron had published this "incantation"—a magical spell—as a separate poem six months before *Matifred,* with a note explaining that the poem was "a Chorus in an unfinished Witch drama began some years ago."

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse;
And a spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall Night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatch'd the snake,
For there it coil'd as in a brake;[0] ***thicket***
From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which pass'd for human thine own heart;
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,[1]
I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell![2]

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd—now wither!

SCENE 2. *The Mountain of the Jungfrau*,[3]—Time, Morning.—**MANFRED** *alone upon the Cliffs.*

MANFRED The spirits I have raised abandon me—
The spells which I have studied baffle me—

1. I.e., by your kinship with Cain, who murdered his brother, Abel.
2. Cf. Satan's words in Milton's *Paradise Lost* 4.75: "Which way I fly is Hell; my self am Hell."
3. A high Alpine mountain in south-central Switzerland.

The remedy I reck'd of° tortured me; ***considered***
I lean no more on super-human aid,
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulf'd in darkness,
It is not of my search.—My mother Earth!
And thou fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril—yet do not recede;
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds
And makes it my fatality to live;
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of spirit, and to be
My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself—
The last infirmity of evil.[4] Ay,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister, *[An eagle passes.]*
Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,
Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision.—Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself;
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will
Till our mortality predominates,
And men are—what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. Hark! the note,
[The Shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.]
The natural music of the mountain reed—

4. An echo of Milton's "Lycidas," where fame is identified as "That last infirmity of a noble mind" (line 71).

For here the patriarchal days[5] are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal[0] air, *free-moving*
Mix'd with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;
My soul would drink those echoes.—Oh, that I were
The viewless[0] spirit of a lovely sound, *invisible*
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Enter from, below a CHAMOIS[6] HUNTER.

CHAMOIS HUNTER Even so
This way the chamois leapt: her nimble feet
Have baffled me; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail.—What is here?
Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reach'd
A height which none even of our mountaineers,
Save our best hunters, may attain: his garb
Is goodly, his mien° manly, and his air *appearance*
Proud as a free-born peasant's, at this distance.—
I will approach him nearer.

MANFRED *[not perceiving the other]* To be thus—
Gray-hair'd with anguish, like these blasted pines,
Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
A blighted trunk upon a cursed root,
Which but supplies a feeling to decay—
And to be thus, eternally but thus,
Having been otherwise! Now furrow'd o'er
With wrinkles, plough'd by moments, not by years;
And hours—all tortured into ages—hours
Which I outlive!—Ye toppling crags of ice!
Ye avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me—
I hear ye momently above, beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict; but ye pass,
And only fall on things which still would live;
On the young flourishing forest, or the hut
And hamlet of the harmless villager.

CHAMOIS HUNTER The mists begin to rise from up the valley;
I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
To lose at once his way and life together.

MANFRED The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep Hell,
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heaped with the damn'd like pebbles.—I am giddy.

CHAMOIS HUNTER I must approach him cautiously; if near,
A sudden step will startle him, and he
Seems tottering already.

MANFRED Mountains have fallen,

5. The days of the Old Testament partriarchs, who were shepherds.

6. A goatlike antelope found in the European mountains.

Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
Rocking their Alpine brethren; filling up
The ripe green valleys with destruction's splinters;
Damming the rivers with a sudden dash,
Which crush'd the waters into mist, and made
Their fountains find another channel—thus,
Thus, in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg[7]—
Why stood I not beneath it?

CHAMOIS HUNTER Friend! have a care,
Your next step may be fatal!—for the love
Of him who made you, stand not on that brink!

MANFRED *[not hearing him]* Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime—as thus—thus they shall be—
In this one plunge.—Farewell, ye opening heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully—
Ye were not meant for me—Earth! take these atoms!

[As MANFRED *is in act to spring from the cliff, the* CHAMOIS HUNTER *seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp.*][8]

CHAMOIS HUNTER Hold, madman!—though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood.—
Away with me—I will not quit my hold.

MANFRED I am most sick at heart—nay, grasp me not—
I am all feebleness—the mountains whirl
Spinning around me—I grow blind—What art thou?

CHAMOIS HUNTER I'll answer that anon.—Away with me—
The clouds grow thicker—there—now lean on me—
Place your foot here—here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub—now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle—softly—well—
The Chalet will be gained within an hour—
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing,
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath wash'd since winter.—Come,'tis bravely done—
You should have been a hunter.—Follow me.

[As *they descend the rocks with difficulty, the scene closes.*]

Act 2

SCENE 1. A *Cottage amongst the Bernese Alps.*[9] MANFRED *and the* CHAMOIS HUNTER.

CHAMOIS HUNTER NO, no—yet pause—thou must not yet go forth:
Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other, for some hours, at least;
When thou art better, I will be thy guide—

7. In 1806, ten years before the composition of *Manfred*, a huge landslide on Mount Rossberg ("Rosenberg") had destroyed four villages and killed 457 people.

8. See the color insert for John Martin's visual representation of this moment in his watercolor *Manfred on the Jungfrau*.

9. A mountain range in south-central Switzerland.

But whither?

MANFRED It imports not; I do know
My route full well, and need no further guidance.

CHAMOIS HUNTER Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of high lineage—
One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys—which of these
May call thee Lord? I only know their portals;
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths,
Which step from out our mountains to their doors,
I know from childhood—which of these is thine?

MANFRED No matter.

CHAMOIS HUNTER Well, sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come, taste my wine;
'Tis of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thawed my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine—Come, pledge me fairly.

MANFRED Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never—never sink in the earth?

CHAMOIS HUNTER What dost thou mean? thy senses wander from thee.

MANFRED I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed: but still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven,
Where thou art not-—and I shall never be.

CHAMOIS HUNTER Man of strange words, and some half-maddening sin,
Which makes thee people[0] vacancy, whate'er *populate*
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience—

MANFRED Patience and patience! Hence—that word was made
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
I am not of thine order.
Thanks to heaven!

CHAMOIS HUNTER I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell;' but whatsoe'er thine ill,
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.

MANFRED Do I not bear it?—Look on me—J live.

CHAMOIS HUNTER This is convulsion, and no healthful life.

MANFRED I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number: ages—ages—
Space and eternity—and consciousness,
With the fierce thirst of death—and still unslaked!

CHAMOIS HUNTER Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far.

I. The hero who, according to legend, liberated Switzerland from Austrian oppression in the 14th century.

MANFRED Think'st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth; but actions are our epochs: mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless, and all alike, as sands on the shore,
Innumerable atoms, and one desart,
Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,
But nothing rests, save carcases and wrecks,
Rocks, and the salt-surf weeds of bitterness.
CHAMOIS HUNTER Alas! he's mad—but yet I must not leave him.
MANFRED I would I were—for then the things I see
Would be but a distempered[0] dream. ***disturbed***
CHAMOIS HUNTER What is it
That thou dost see, or think thou look'st upon?
MANFRED Myself, and thee—a peasant of the Alps—
Thy humble virtues, hospitable home,
And spirit patient, pious, proud and free;
Thy self-respect, grafted on innocent thoughts;
Thy days of health, and nights of sleep; thy toils,
By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes
Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave,
With cross and garland over its green turf,
And thy grandchildren's love for epitaph;
This do I see—and then I look within—
It matters not—my soul was scorch'd already!
CHAMOIS HUNTER And would'st thou then exchange thy lot for mine?
MANFRED No, friend! I would not wrong thee, nor exchange
My lot with living being: I can bear—
However wretchedly,'tis still to bear—
In life what others could not brook to dream,
But perish in their slumber.
CHAMOIS HUNTER And with this—
This cautious feeling for another's pain,
Canst thou be black with evil?—say not so.
Can one of gentle thoughts have wreak'd revenge
Upon his enemies?
MANFRED Oh! no, no, no!
My injuries came down on those who loved me—
On those whom I best loved: I never quell'd[0] ***killed***
An enemy, save in my just defence—
My wrongs were all on those I should have cherished—
But my embrace was fatal.
CHAMOIS HUNTER Heaven give thee rest!
And penitence restore thee to thyself;
My prayers shall be for thee.
MANFRED I need them not,
But can endure thy pity. I depart—
'Tis time—farewell!—Here's gold, and thanks for thee—
No words—it is thy due.—Follow me not—
I know my path—the mountain peril's past:—
And once again, I charge thee, follow not! *[Exit* MANFRED.]

SCENE 2. *A lower Valley in the Alps.*—A *Cataract.*

Enter MANFRED.

It is not noon—the sunbow's rays still arch[2]
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
And fling its lines of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse.[3] No eyes
But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,
And with the Spirit of the place divide
The homage of these waters.—I will call her.

[MANFRED *takes some of the water into the palm of his hand, and flings it in the air, mnttering the adjuration. After a pause, the* WITCH OF THE ALPS *rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.]*

Beautiful Spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
The charms of Earth's least-mortal daughters grow
To an unearthly stature, in an essence
Of purer elements; while the hues of youth,—-
Carnation'd like a sleeping infant's cheek,
Rock'd by the beating of her mother's heart,
Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves
Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,
The blush of earth embracing with her heaven,—
Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame
The beauties of the sunbow which bends o'er thee.
Beautiful Spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glass'd[0] serenity of soul, *reflected*
Which of itself shows immortality,
I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
At times to commune with them—if that he
Avail him of his spells—to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.

WITCH Son of Earth!
I know thee, and the powers which give thee power;
I know thee for a man of many thoughts,
And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both,
Fatal and fated in thy sufferings.
I have expected this—what wouldst thou with me?

MANFRED To look upon thy beauty—nothing further.
The face of the earth hath madden'd me, and I
Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce

2. This iris is formed by the rays of the sun over the lower part of the Alpine torrents: it is exactly like a rainbow come to pay a visit, and so close that you may walk into it: this effect lasts until noon [Byron's note].

3. Revelation 6.8: "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."

To the abodes of those who govern her—
But they can nothing aid me. I have sought
From them what they could not bestow, and now
I search no further.

WITCH What could be the quest
Which is not in the power of the most powerful,
The rulers of the invisible?

MANFRED A boon;
But why should I repeat it? 'twere in vain.

WITCH I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

MANFRED Well, though it torture me,'tis but the same;
My pang shall find a voice. From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
Was there but one who—but of her anon.
I said, with men, and with the thoughts of men,
I held but slight communion; but instead,
My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scattered leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. And then I dived,
In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death,
Searching its cause in its effect; and drew
From wither'd bones, and skulls, and heap'd up dust,
Conclusions most forbidden.[4] Then I pass'd
The nights of years in sciences untaught,
Save in the old-time; and with time and toil,

4. Cf. passages from Victor Frankenstein's account of his scientific investigations. "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death"; "Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave . . . ?" (chap. 4).

And terrible ordeal, and such penance
As in itself hath power upon the air,
And spirits that do compass air and earth,
Space, and the peopled infinite, I made
Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
Such as, before me, did the Magi,[5] and
He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
Eros and Anteros, at Gadara,[6]
As I do thee;—and with my knowledge grew
The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
Of this most bright intelligence, until—
WITCH Proceed.
MANFRED Oh! I but thus prolonged my words,
Boasting these idle attributes, because
As I approach the core of my heart's grief—
But to my task. I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend, or being,
With whom I wore the chain of human ties;
If I had such, they seem'd not such to me—
Yet there was one—
WITCH Spare not thyself—proceed.
MANFRED She was like me in lineaments—her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;
And tenderness—but that I had for her;
Humility—and that I never had.
Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
I loved her, and destroy'd her!
WITCH With thy hand?
MANFRED Not with my hand, but heart—which broke her heart—
It gazed on mine, and withered. I have shed
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed—
I saw—and could not staunch it.
WITCH And for this—
A being of the race thou dost despise,
The order which thine own would rise above,
Mingling with us and ours, thou dost forego
The gifts of our great knowledge, and shrink'st back
To recreant" mortality—Away! *cowardly*
MANFRED Daughter of Air! I tell thee, since that hour—
But words are breath—look on me in my sleep,

5. Masters of occult knowledge (plural of *magus*).
6. Byron's note to lines 92—93 identifies this figure as Iamblicus, the 4th-century Neoplatonic philosopher, who called up Eros, god of love, and Anteros, god of unrequited love, from the hot springs named after them at Gadara, in Syria.

Or watch my watchings—Come and sit by me!
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies;—I have gnash'd
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—I have pray'd
For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
I have affronted death—but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things pass'd harmless—the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break.
In phantasy, imagination, all
The affluence of my soul—which one day was
A Croesus in creation[7]—I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dash'd me back
Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought.
I plunged amidst mankind—Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found,
And that I have to learn—my sciences,[8]
My long pursued and super-human art,
Is mortal here—I dwell in my despair—
And live—and live for ever.

WITCH It may be
That I can aid thee.

MANFRED To do this thy power
Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
Do so—in any shape—in any hour—
With any torture—so it be the last.

WITCH That is not in my province; but if thou
Wilt swear obedience to my will, and do
My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.

MANFRED I will not swear—-Obey! and whom? the spirits
Whose presence I command, and be the slave
Of those who served me—Never!

WITCH Is this all?
Hast thou no gentler answer—Yet bethink thee,
And pause ere thou rejectest.

MANFRED I have said it.

WITCH Enough!-—I may retire then—say!

MANFRED Retire!

[The **WITCH** *disappears.]*

MANFRED *[alone]* We are the fools of time and terror: Days
Steal on us and steal from us; yet we live,
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke—
This heaving burthen, this accursed breath—
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,

7. I.e., my imagination had at one time been, in its creative powers, as rich as King Croesus (the legendary monarch famed for his wealth). Manfred's self-description in this passage, as longing for a death that is denied him, is modeled on the legend, often treated in Romantic literature, of the Wandering Jew.

8. Occult bodies of knowledge.

Which sinks with sorrow, or beats quick with pain,
Or joy that ends in agony or faintness--
In all the days of past and future, for
In life there is no present, we can number
How few—how less than few—wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill
Be but a moment's. I have one resource
Still in my science—I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be:
The sternest answer can but be the Grave,
And that is nothing—if they answer not—
The buried Prophet answered to the Hag
Of Endor;[9] and the Spartan Monarch drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny—he slew
That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardon'd—though he call'd in aid
The Phyxian Jove, and in Phigalia roused
The Arcadian Evocators to compel
The indignant shadow to depose her wrath,[1]
Or fix her term of vengeance—she replied
In words of dubious import, but fulfill'd.
If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful—
Happy and giving happiness. What is she?
What is she now?—a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon—or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain—
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare:
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze
On spirit, good or evil—now I tremble,
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart,
But I can act even what I most abhor,
And champion human fears.—The night approaches. *[Exit.]*

SCENE 3. *The Summit of the Jungfrau Mountain.*

Enter FIRST DESTINY.[2]

The moon is rising broad, and round, and bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot

9. The Woman of Endor, at the behest of King Saul, summoned up the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel, who foretold that in an impending battle the Philistines would conquer the Israelites and kill Saul and his sons (I Samuel 28.7—19).

1. Plutarch relates that King Pausanias ("the Spartan Monarch") had accidentally killed Cleonice ("the Byzantine maid"), whom he desired as his mistress. Her ghost haunted him until he called up her spirit to beg her forgiveness. She told him, enigmatically, that he would quickly be freed from his troubles; soon after that, he was killed. Another Pausanias, author of the *Description of Greece,* adds the details that King Pausanias, in the vain attempt to purge his guilt, had called for aid from Jupiter Phyxius and consulted the Evocators at Phigalia, in Arcadia, who had the power to call up the souls of the dead.

2. The three Destinies are modeled on both the witches of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the three Fates of classical mythology, who, in turn, spin, measure, and then cut the thread of an individual's life.

Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces; o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment—a dead whirlpool's image;
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake—where the clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by—
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils;
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes,[3] for to-night
Is our great festival—'tis strange they come not.

A Voice without, singing

The Captive Usurper,[4]
Hurl'd down from the throne,
Lay buried in torpor,
Forgotten and lone;
I broke through his slumbers,
I shivered his chain,
I leagued him with numbers—
He's Tyrant again!
With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a nation's destruction—his flight and despair.

Second Voice, without

The ship sail'd on, the ship sail'd fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his wreck;
Save one, whom I held, as he swam, by the hair,
And he was a subject well worthy my care;
A traitor on land, and a pirate at sea—
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me!

FIRST DESTINY, *answering*

The city lies sleeping;
The morn, to deplore it,
May dawn on it weeping:
Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it—
Thousands lie lowly;
Tens of thousands shall perish—
The living shall fly from
The sick they should cherish;
But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from.
Sorrow and anguish,

3. The name is derived from Ahriman, who in the dualistic Zoroastrian religion was the principle of darkness and evil.
4. Napoleon. The song of the first Voice alludes to Napoleon's escape from his captivity on the island of Elba in March 1815. After his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo he was imprisoned on another island, St. Helena, in October 1815.

And evil and dread,
Envelope a nation—
The blest are the dead,
Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation.—
This work of a night—
This wreck of a realm—this deed of my doing—
For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing!

Enter the SECOND *and* THIRD DESTINIES.

THE THREE
Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves;
We only give to take again
The spirits of our slaves!

FIRST DESTINY Welcome!—Where's Nemesis?[5]
SECOND DESTINY At some great work;
But what I know not, for my hands were full.
THIRD DESTINY Behold she cometh.

Enter NEMESIS.

FIRST DESTINY Say, where hast thou been?—
My sisters and thyself are slow to-night.
NEMESIS I was detain'd repairing shattered thrones,
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties,[6]
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge;
Goading the wise to madness; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh, for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance, and to speak
Of freedom, the forbidden fruit.—Away!
We have outstaid the hour—mount we our clouds! *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE 4. *The Hall of* ARIMANES.—ARIMANES *on his Throne, a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the* SPIRITS.

Hymn of the SPIRITS

Hail to our Master!—Prince of Earth and Air!—
Who walks the clouds and waters—in his hand
The sceptre of the elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command!
He breatheth—and a tempest shakes the sea;
He speaketh—and the clouds reply in thunder;
He gazeth—from his glance the sunbeams flee;
He moveth—earthquakes rend the world asunder.
Beneath his footsteps the volcanos rise;

5. The Greek and Roman goddess of vengeance, particularly of the sin of hubris, overweening presumption against the gods.

6. Alluding to Byron's marriage and to the restoration of monarchies across Europe that followed the battle of Waterloo.

His shadow is the Pestilence; his path
The comets herald through the crackling skies;
And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
To him War offers daily sacrifice;
To him Death pays his tribute; Life is his,
With all its infinite of agonies—
And his the spirit of whatever is!

Enter the DESTINIES *and* NEMESIS

FIRST DESTINY Glory to Arimanes! on the earth
His power increaseth—both my sisters did
His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty!
SECOND DESTINY Glory to Arimanes! we who bow
The necks of men, bow down before his throne!
THIRD DESTINY Glory to Arimanes!—we await
His nod!
NEMESIS Sovereign of Sovereigns! we are thine,
And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
And most things wholly so; still to increase
Our power increasing thine, demands our care,
And we are vigilant—Thy late commands
Have been fulfilled to the utmost.

Enter MANFRED.

A SPIRIT What is here?
A mortal!—Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship!
SECOND SPIRIT I do know the man—
A Magian[0] of great power, and fearful skill! *magus*
THIRD SPIRIT BOW down and worship, slave!—What, know'st thou not
Thine and our Sovereign?—Tremble, and obey!
ALL THE SPIRITS Prostrate thyself, and thy condemned clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.
MANFRED I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.
FOURTH SPIRIT 'Twill be taught thee.
MANFRED 'Tis taught already;—many a night on the earth,
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes; I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.
FIFTH SPIRIT Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his Glory—Crouch! I say.
MANFRED Bid *him* bow down to that which is above him,
The overruling Infinite—the Maker
Who made him not for worship—let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.
THE SPIRITS Crush the worm!
Tear him in pieces!—
FIRST DESTINY Hence! Avaunt!—he's mine.

Prince of the Powers invisible! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote; his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature, like
Our own; his knowledge and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the ethereal essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne; his aspirations
Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know—
That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.
This is not all—the passions, attributes
Of earth and heaven, from which no power, nor being,
Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart; and in their consequence
Made him a thing, which I, who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine,
And thine, it may be—be it so, or not,
No other Spirit in this region hath
A soul like his—or power upon his soul.

NEMESIS What doth he here then?

FIRST DESTINY Let *him* answer that.

MANFRED Ye know what I have known; and without power
I could not be amongst ye: but there are
Powers deeper still beyond—I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek.

NEMESIS What wouldst *thou?*

MANFRED Thou canst not reply to me.
Call up the dead—my question is for them,

NEMESIS Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch[0] *confirm*
The wishes of this mortal?

ARIMANES Yea.

NEMESIS Whom would'st thou
Uncharnel?

MANFRED One without a tomb—call up
Astarte.[7]

NEMESIS

Shadow! or Spirit!
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which returned to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!

7. Byron applies to Manfred's beloved the name of Astarte (also known as Ashtoreth), goddess of !ove and fertility, the Eastern equivalent of the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm.
Appear!—Appear!—Appear!
Who sent thee there requires thee here!

[The Phantom of ASTARTE *rises and stands in the midst.]*

MANFRED Can this be death? there's bloom upon her cheek;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic[0]—like the unnatural red *feverish flush*
Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.
It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same—Astarte!—No,
I cannot speak to her—but bid her speak—
Forgive me or condemn me.

NEMESIS
By the power which hath broken
The grave which enthrall'd thee,
Speak to him who hath spoken,
Or those who have call'd thee!

MANFRED She is silent,
And in that silence I am more than answered.
NEMESIS My power extends no further. Prince of air!
It rests with thee alone—command her voice.
ARIMANES Spirit—obey this sceptre!
NEMESIS Silent still!
She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.
MANFRED Hear me, hear me—
Astarte! my beloved! speak to me:
I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die,
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.
I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art—and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—Speak to me!

For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answered me—many things answered me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all.
Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wandered o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE Manfred!

MANFRED Say on, say on—
I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!

PHANTOM Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills.
Farewell!

MANFRED
Yet one word more—am I forgiven?

PHANTOM Farewell!

MANFRED Say, shall we meet again?

PHANTOM Farewell!

MANFRED One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

PHANTOM Manfred! *[The Spirit of* ASTARTE *disappears.]*

NEMESIS She's gone, and will not be recall'd;
Her words will be fulfill'd. Return to the earth.

A SPIRIT He is convulsed—This is to be a mortal
And seek the things beyond mortality.

ANOTHER SPIRIT Yet, see, he mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will.
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.

NEMESIS Hast thou further question
Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?

MANFRED None.

NEMESIS Then for a time farewell.

MANFRED We meet then—
Where? On the earth?

NEMESIS That will be seen hereafter.

MANFRED Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well! *[Exit* **MANFRED.]**

[Scene closes.]

Act 3

SCENE 1. A *Hall in the Castle of* **MANFRED.** **MANFRED** *and* **HERMAN,**

MANFRED What is the hour?

HERMAN It wants but one till sunset,

And promises a lovely twilight.

MANFRED Say,
Are all things so disposed of in the tower
As I directed?

HERMAN All, my lord, are ready;
Here is the key and casket.

MANFRED It is well:
Thou mayst retire. *[Exit* **HERMAN.]**

MANFRED *[alone]* There is a calm upon me —
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,[8]
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon,"[9] found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once:
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down
That there is such a feeling. Who is there?

Re-enter **HERMAN.**

HERMAN My lord, the abbot of St. Maurice' craves
To greet your presence.

Enter the **ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.**

ABBOT Peace be with Count Manfred!

MANFRED Thanks, holy father! welcome to these walls;
Thy presence honours them, and blesseth those
Who dwell within them.

ABBOT Would it were so, Count! —
But I would fain confer with thee alone.

MANFRED Herman, retire. What would my reverend guest? *[Exit* **HERMAN.]**

ABBOT Thus, without prelude: — Age and zeal, my office,[2]
And good intent, must plead my privilege;
Our near, though not acquainted neighbourhood,
May also be my herald. Rumours strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,
And busy with thy name; a noble name
For centuries; may he who bears it now
Transmit it unimpair'd!

MANFRED Proceed, — I listen.

ABBOT 'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things
Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the shade of death,
Thou communest. I know that with mankind,

8. "The most diverse" or, possibly, "the most foolish" (*viotley* was the multicolored suit worn by a court jester).
9. Greek for both "the Beautiful" and "the Good."
1. In the Rhone Valley in Switzerland.
2. Position in the church.

Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely
Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
Is as an anchorite's,[3] were it but holy.

MANFRED And what are they who do avouch these things?

ABBOT My pious brethren—the scared peasantry—
Even thy own vassals—who do look on thee
With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril.

MANFRED Take it.

ABBOT I come to save, and not destroy—
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there still is time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to heaven.

MANFRED I hear thee. This is my reply; whate'er
I may have been, or am, doth rest between
Heaven and myself.—I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator. Have I sinn'd
Against your ordinances? prove and punish!

ABBOT My son! I did not speak of punishment,
But penitence and pardon;—with thyself
The choice of such remains—and for the last,
Our institutions and our strong belief
Have given me power to smooth the path from sin
To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
I leave to heaven—"Vengeance is mine alone!"
So saith the Lord,[4] and with all humbleness
His servant echoes back the awful word.

MANFRED Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer—nor purifying form
Of penitence—nor outward look—nor fast—
Nor agony—nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep despair,
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself .
Would make a hell of heaven—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit, the quick sense
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.

ABBOT All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place,
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity.—Say on—

3. A person who, for religious reasons, lives in seclusion.

4. Romans 12.19: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
And all we can absolve thee, shall be pardon'd.

MANFRED When Rome's sixth Emperor[5] was near his last,
The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
To shun the torments of a public death
From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
With show of loyal pity, would have staunch'd
The gushing throat with his officious robe;
The dying Roman thrust him back and said—
Some empire still in his expiring glance,
"It is too late—is this fidelity?"

ABBOT And what of this?

MANFRED I answer with the Roman—
"It is too late!"

ABBOT It never can be so,
To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
And thy own soul with heaven. Hast thou no hope?
'Tis strange—even those who do despair above,
Yet shape themselves some phantasy on earth,
To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men.

MANFRED Ay—father! I have had those earthly visions
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither—it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss,
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies)
Lies low but mighty still.—But this is past,
My thoughts mistook themselves.

ABBOT And wherefore so?

MANFRED I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway—and soothe—and sue—
And watch all time—and pry into all place—
And be a living lie—who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdained to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

ABBOT And why not live and act with other men?

MANFRED Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation:—like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone Simoom,[6]
Which dwells but in the desart, and sweeps o'er

5. Byron transfers to Otho, the sixth emperor, a story that the historian Suetonius tells about the death of an earlier emperor, Nero.

6. A hot, sand-laden wind in the Sahara and Arabian deserts,

The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly; such hath been
The course of my existence; but there came
Things in my path which are no more.

ABBOT Alas!
I 'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would—

MANFRED Look on me! there is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,
Without the violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure—some of study—
Some worn with toil—some of mere weariness—
Some of disease—and some insanity—
And some of withered, or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are numbered in the lists of Fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! for even of all these things
Have I partaken; and of all these things,
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or, having been, that I am still on earth.

ABBOT Yet, hear me still—

MANFRED Old man! I do respect
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain:
Think me not churlish; I would spare thyself,
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy—and so—farewell. *[Exit* MANFRED.*]*

ABBOT This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,
Mix'd, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive: he will perish,
And yet he must not; I will try once more,
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.
I'll follow him—but cautiously, though surely. *[Exit* ABBOT.*]*

SCENE 2. *Another Chamber,* MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

HERMAN My Lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
He sinks beyond the mountain.

MANFRED Doth he so?

I will look on him.

[MANFRED *advances to the Window of the Hall.*]

Glorious Orb! the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons
Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits[7] who can ne'er return.—
Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean[0] shepherds, till they pour d *Bab)ionian*
Themselves in orisons![0] Thou material God! *prayers*
And representative of the Unknown—
Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
Even as our outward aspects;—thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone:
I follow. *[Exit* MANFRED.]

SCENE 3. *The Mountains.—The Castle of* MANFRED *at some distance.—A Terrace before a Tower.—Time, Twilight.* HERMAN, MANUEL, *and other Dependants of* MANFRED.

HERMAN 'Tis strange enough; night after night, for years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness. I have been within it,—
So have we all been oft-times; but from it,
Or its contents, it were impossible
To draw conclusions absolute, of aught
His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
One chamber where none enter; I would give
The fee° of what I have to come these three years, *ownership*
To pore upon its mysteries.

MANUEL 'Twere dangerous;
Content thyself with what thou knowest already.

7. Genesis 6.4: "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Byron interprets "the sons of God" as denoting disobedient angels.

HERMAN Ah! Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And could'st say much; thou hast dwelt within the castle—
How many years is't?
MANUEL Ere Count Manfred's birth,
I served his father, whom he nought resembles.
HERMAN There be more sons in like predicament.
But wherein do they differ?
MANUEL I speak not
Of features or of form, but mind and habits:
Count Sigismund was proud,—but gay and free,—
A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
With books and solitude, nor made the night
A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
From men and their delights.
HERMAN Beshrew[8] the hour,
But those were jocund times! I would that such
Would visit the old walls again; they look
As if they had forgotten them.
MANUEL These walls
Must change their chieftain first. Oh! I have seen
Some strange things in them, Herman.
HERMAN Come, be friendly;
Relate me some to while away our watch:
Fve heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happened hereabouts, by this same tower.
MANUEL That was a night indeed; I do remember
'Twas twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening—yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's[9] pinnacle, so rested then,—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings—her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The Lady Astarte, his—
Hush! who comes here?
Enter the ABBOT.
ABBOT Where is your master?
HERMAN Yonder in the tower.
ABBOT I must speak with him.
MANUEL 'Tis impossible;
He is most private, and must not be thus
Intruded on.

8. Curse (used jocularly).

9. A peak a few miles north of the Jungfrau.

ABBOT Upon myself I take
The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be—
But I must see him.
HERMAN Thou hast seen him once
This eve already.
ABBOT Sirrah! I command thee,
Knock, and apprize the Count of my approach.
HERMAN We dare not.
ABBOT Then it seems I must be herald
Of my own purpose.
MANUEL Reverend father, stop—
I pray you pause.
ABBOT Why so?
MANUEL But step this way,
And I will tell you further. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE 4. *Interior of the Tower.*

MANFRED *alone*

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful!
I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn'd the language of another world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering,—upon such a night
I stood within the Coloseum's wall,
'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bayed beyond the Tiber;[1] and
More near from out the Caesars' palace[2] came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot—where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night; amidst
A grove which springs through levell'd battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;—
But the gladiators' bloody Circus[3] stands,

1. The river that flows through Rome.
2. The palace of the Roman emperors. It stands on the Palatine hill, immediately southwest of the Coliseum.
3. The circular arena within the Coliseum where professional gladiators fought to the death as public entertainment.

A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!
While Caesar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.—
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,
As 'twere anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old!—
The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.—
'Twas such a night!
'Tis strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order.

Enter the ABBOT.

ABBOT My good Lord!
I crave a second grace for this approach;
But yet let not my humble zeal offend
By its abruptness—all it hath of ill
Recoils on me; its good in the effect
May light upon your head—could I say *heart*—
Could I touch *that*, with words or prayers, I should
Recall a noble spirit which hath wandered,
But is not yet all lost.

MANFRED Thou know'st me not;
My days are numbered, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or 'twill be dangerous—Away!

ABBOT Thou dost not mean to menace me?

MANFRED Not I;
I simply tell thee peril is at hand,
And would preserve thee.

ABBOT What dost mean?

MANFRED Look there!
What dost thou see?

ABBOT Nothing.

MANFRED Look there, I say,
And steadfastly;—now tell me what thou seest?

ABBOT That which should shake me,—but I fear it not—
I see a dusk and awful figure rise
Like an infernal god from out the earth;
His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds; he stands between
Thyself and me—but I do fear him not.

MANFRED Thou hast no cause—he shall not harm thee—but
His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.
I say to thee—Retire!

ABBOT And, I reply—
Never—till I have battled with this fiend—
What doth he here?
MANFRED Why—ay—what doth he here?
I did not send for him,—he is unbidden.
ABBOT Alas! lost mortal! what with guests like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake;
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah! he unveils his aspect; on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of hell—
Avaunt!—
MANFRED Pronounce—what is thy mission?
SPIRIT Come!
ABBOT What art thou, unknown being? answer!—speak!
SPIRIT The genius[4] of this mortal.—Come! 'tis time.
MANFRED I am prepared for all things, but deny
The power which summons me. Who sent thee here?
SPIRIT Thou'lt know anon—Come! come!
MANFRED I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!
SPIRIT Mortal! thine hour is come—Away! I say.
MANFRED I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:
Away! I'll die as I have lived—alone.
SPIRIT Then I must summon up my brethren.—Rise! [*Other Spirits rise up.*]
ABBOT Avaunt! ye evil ones!—Avaunt! I say,—
Ye have no power where piety hath power,
And I do charge ye in the name—
SPIRIT Old man!
We know ourselves, our mission, and thine order;
Waste not thy holy words on idle uses,
It were in vain; this man is forfeited.
Once more I summon him—Away! away!
MANFRED I do defy ye,—though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;
Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye—earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb.
SPIRIT Reluctant mortal!
Is this the Magian who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal?—Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life? the very life
Which made thee wretched!
MANFRED Thou false fiend, thou liest!
My life is in its last hour,—*that* I know,

4. The spirit or deity presiding over a human being from birth.

Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels; my past power
Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science—penance—daring—
And length of watching—strength of mind—and skill
In knowledge of our fathers—when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
And gave ye no supremacy: I stand
Upon my strength—I do defy—deny—
Spurn back, and scorn ye!—

SPIRIT But thy many crimes
Have made thee—

MANFRED What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,
And greater criminals?—Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
Is its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time[5]—its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me—but not yours!

[The Demons disappear.]

ABBOT Alas! how pale thou art—thy lips are white—
And thy breast heaves—and in thy gasping throat
The accents rattle—Give thy prayers to Heaven—
Pray—albeit but in thought,—but die not thus.

MANFRED 'Tis over—my dull eyes can fix thee not;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well—
Give me thy hand.

ABBOT Cold—cold—even to the heart—
But yet one prayer—alas! how fares it with thee?—

MANFRED Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die.[6]

5. The last of several echoes by Manfred of Satan's claim that "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, and a Hell of Heaven" (*Paradise Lost* 1.254—55). See also 1.1.251 and 3.1.73, above.

6. When this line was dropped in the printing of the first edition, Byron wrote angrily to his publisher: "You have destroyed the whole effect and mora! of the poem by omitting the last line of Manfred's speaking."

[MANFRED *expires.*]

ABBOT He's gone—his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight-
Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone.

1816-17 1817

Don juan

Byron began his masterpiece (pronounced in the English fashion, *Don Joo-nn)* in July 1818, published it in installments beginning with cantos 1 and 2 in 1819, and continued working on it almost until his death. Initially he improvised the poem from episode to episode. "I *have* no plan," he said, "I *had* no plan; but I had or have materials." The work was composed with remarkable speed (the 888 lines of canto 13, for example, were dashed off within a week), and it aims at the effect of improvisation rather than of artful compression; it asks to be read rapidly, at a conversational pace.

The poem breaks off with the sixteenth canto, but even in its unfinished state *Don Juan* is the longest satirical poem, and indeed one of the longest poems of any kind, in English. Its hero, the Spanish libertine, had in the original legend been superhuman in his sexual energy and wickedness. Throughout Byron's version the unspoken but persistent joke is that this archetypal lady-killer of European legend is in fact more acted upon than active. Unfailingly amiable and well intentioned, he is guilty largely of youth, charm, and a courteous and compliant spirit. The women do all the rest.

The chief models for the poem were the Italian seriocomic versions of medieval chivalric romances; the genre had been introduced by Pulci in the fifteenth century and was adopted by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso* (1532). From these writers Byron caught the mixed moods and violent oscillations between the sublime and the ridiculous as well as the colloquial management of the complex ottava rima—an eight-line stanza in which the initial interlaced rhymes *(ahahab)* build up to the comic turn in the final couplet (cc). Byron was influenced in the English use of this Italian form by a mildly amusing poem published in 1817, under the pseudonym of "Whistlecraft," by his friend John Hookham Frere. Other recognizable antecedents of *Don Juan* are Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas,* both of which had employed the naive traveler as a satiric device, and Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy,* with its comic exploitation of a narrative medium blatantly subject to the whimsy of the author. But even the most original literary works play variations on inherited conventions. Shelley at once recognized his friend's poem as "something wholly new and relative to the age."

Byron's literary advisers thought the poem unacceptably immoral, and John Murray took the precaution of printing the first two installments (cantos 1—2, then 3—5) without identifying Byron as the author or himself as the publisher. The eleven completed cantos that followed were, because of Murray's continuing jitters, brought out in 1823—24 by the radical publisher John Hunt. In those cantos Byron's purpose deepened. He set out to create a comic yet devastatingly critical history of the Europe of his own age, sending the impressionable Juan from West to East and back again, from his native Spain to a Russian court (by way of a primitive Greek island and the 1790 siege of the Turkish town of Ismail) and then into the English gentry's country manors. These journeys, which facilitated Byron's satire on almost all existing forms of political organization, would, according to the scheme that he projected for the poem as a whole, ultimately have taken Juan to a death by guillotining in Revolutionary France.

Yet the controlling element of *Don Juan* is not the narrative but the narrator. His running commentary on Juan's misadventures, his reminiscences, and his opinionated remarks on the epoch of political reaction in which he is actually telling Juan's

story together add another level to the poem's engagement with history. The narrator's reflections also at the same time lend unity to *Don Juan's* effervescent variety. Tellingly, the poem opens with the first-person pronoun and immediately lets us into the storyteller's predicament: "I want a hero. . . ." The voice then goes on, for almost two thousand stanzas, with effortless volubility and shifts of mood. The poet who in his brilliant successful youth created the gloomy Byronic hero, in his later and sadder life created a character (not the hero, but the narrator of *Don Juan)* who is one of the great comic inventions in English literature.

FROM DON JUAN

Fragment[1]

I would to Heaven that I were so much Clay—
As I am blood—bone—marrow, passion—feeling—
Because at least the past were past away—
And for the future—(but I write this reeling
Having got drunk exceedingly to day
So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling)
I say—the future is a serious matter—
And so—for Godsake—Hock[2] and Soda water.

From Canto 1

[JUAN AND DONNA JULIA]

I

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not cafe to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan,
We all have seen him in the pantomime[1]
Sent to the devil, somewhat ere his time.

5

Brave men were living before Agamemnon[2]
And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
But then they shone not on the poet's page,

1. This stanza was written on the back of a page of the manuscript of canto 1. For the author's revisions while composing two stanzas of *Don Juan,* see "Poems in Process," in the appendices to this volume.
2. A white Rhine wine, from the German *Hochheimer.*
1. The Juan legend was a popular subject in English pantomime.
2. In Homer's *Iliad* the king commanding the Greeks in the siege of Troy. This line is translated from a Latin ode by Horace.

And so have been forgotten—I condemn none,
But can't find any in the present age
Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

6

Most epic poets plunge in "*medias* res,"[3]
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road)[4]
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before—by way of episode,
While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

7

That is the usual method, but not mine—
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

8

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women—he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
So says the proverb—and I quite agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps—but that you soon may see:—
Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,
A noble stream, and call'd the Guadalquivir.

9

His father's name was Jose[5]—*Don*, of course,
A true Hidalgo,[0] free from every stain *noble man*
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,
Than Jose, who begot our ~~hero~~, who
Begot—but that's to come Well, to renew:

10

His mother was a learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known—
In every christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,

3. Into the middle of things (Latin; Horace's Art *of Poetry* 148).
4. I.e., the smoothest road for heroic poetry.
5. Normally "Jose"; Byron transferred the accent to keep his meter.

And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did.

11

Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
All Calderon and greater part of Lope,[6]
So that if any actor miss'd his part
She could have served him for the prompter's copy;
For her Feinagle's[7] were an useless art,
And he himself obliged to shut up shop—he
Could never make a memory so fine as
That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.

12

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic[8] all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy—her morning dress was dimity,[0] *cotton*
Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

13

She knew the Latin—that is, "the Lord's prayer,"
And Greek—the alphabet—I'm nearly sure;
She read some French romances here and there,
Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
For native Spanish she had no great care,
At least her conversation was obscure;
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
As if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em.

* * *

22

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed
With persons of no sort of education,
Or gentlemen, who, though well-born and bred,
Grow tired of scientific conversation:
I don't choose to say much upon this head,
I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?

23

Don Jose and his lady quarrell'd—*why*,
Not any of the many could divine,
Though several thousand people chose to try,

6. Calderon de la Barea and Lope de Vega, the great Spanish dramatists of the early 17th century.
7. Gregor von Feinagle, a German expert on the art of memory, who had lectured in England in 1811.
8. Athenian. *Attic salt* is a term for the famed wit of the Athenians.

'Twas surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice curiosity,
But if there's any thing in which I shine
'Tis in arranging all my friends' affairs.
Not having, of my own, domestic cares.

24

is? And so I interfered, and with the best
Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
I think the foolish people were possess'd,
For neither of them could I ever find,
Although their porter afterwards confess'd—
But that's no matter, and the worst's behind,
For little Juan o'er me threw, down stairs,
A pail of housemaid's water unawares.

25

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
His parents ne'er agreed except in doting
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;
Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in
Their senses, they'd have sent young master forth
To school, or had him soundly whipp'd at home,
To teach him manners for the time to come.

26

Don Jose and the Donna Inez led
For some time an unhappy sort of life,
Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;
They lived respectably as man and wife,
Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

27

For Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,
And tried to prove her loving lord was *mad,*[9]
But as he had some lucid intermissions,
She next decided he was only *bad;*
Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,
No sort of explanation could be had,
Save that her duty both to man and God
Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.

28

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;

9. Lady Byron had thought her husband might be insane and sought medical advice on the matter. This and other passages obviously allude to his wife, although Byron insisted that Donna Inez was not intended to be a caricature of Lady Byron. In her determination to preserve her son's innocence, Donna Inez also shares traits with Byron's mother.

And then she had all Seville for abettors,
Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
The hearers of her case became repeaters,
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

29

And then this best and meekest woman bore
With such serenity her husband's woes,
Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,
Who saw their spouses kill'd, and nobly chose
Never to say a word about them more—
Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,
And saw *his* agonies with such sublimity,
That all the world exclaim'd "What magnanimity!"

32

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
Then their relations, who made matters worse;
('Twere hard to say upon a like occasion
To whom it may be best to have recourse—
I can't say much for friend or yet relation):
The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,
But scarce a fee was paid on either side
Before, unluckily, Don Jose died.

33

He died: and most unluckily, because,
According to all hints I could collect
From counsel learned in those kinds of laws,
(Although their talk's obscure and circumspect)
His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;[0] *law case*
A thousand pities also with respect
To public feeling, which on this occasion
Was manifested in a great sensation.

37.

Dying intestate,[0] Juan was sole heir *without a will*
To a chancery suit, and messuages,[1] and lands,
Which, with a long minority and care,
Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
An only son left with an only mother
Is brought up much more wisely than another.

1. Houses and the adjoining lands. "Chancery suit": a case in what was then the highest English court, notorious for its delays.

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
And worthy of the noblest pedigree:
(His sire was of Castile, his dam from Arragon).
Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
In case our lord the king should go to war again,
He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

39

But that which Donna Inez most desired,
And saw into herself each day before all
The learned tutors whom for him she hired,
Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral;
Much into all his studies she inquired,
And so they were submitted first to her, all,
Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.[2]

40

The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use,
In all these he was much and deeply read;
But not a page of anything that's loose,
Or hints continuation of the species,
Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.

41

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
Who in the earlier ages made a bustle,
But never put on pantaloons or boddices;
His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,
And for their Aeneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,
Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,
For Donna Inez dreaded the mythology.

42

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,
Although Longinus[3] tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample;
But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with "*Formosum Pastor Corydon.*"[4]

2. Includes biology, physiology, and particularly botany, popular in the era in part because study of plants' stamens and pistils offered a form of surreptitious sex education.
3. In *On the Sublime* 10, the Greek rhetorician Longinus praises a passage of erotic longing from one of Sappho's odes.
4. Virgil's *Eclogue* 2 begins: "The shepherd, Corydon, burned with love for the handsome Alexis."

43

Lucretius' irreligion[5] is too strong
For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;
I can't help thinking Juvenal[6] was wrong,
Although no doubt his real intent was good,
For speaking out so plainly in his song,
So much indeed as to be downright rude;
And then what proper person can be partial
To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?

44

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
Expurgated by learned men, who place,
Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
The grosser parts; but fearful to deface
Too much their modest bard by this omission,
And pitying sore his mutilated case,
They only add them all in an appendix,[7]
Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index.

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
This I will say—my reasons are my own—
That if I had an only son to put
To school (as God be praised that I have none)
'Tis not with Donna Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone,
No—No—I'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

53

For there one learns—'tis not for me to boast,
Though I acquired—but I pass over *that,*
As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
I say that there's the place—but *"Verbum sat,"*[8]
I think I pick'd up too, as well as most,
Knowledge of matters—but no matter *what*—
I never married—but, I think, I know
That sons should not be educated so.

54

Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit; he seem'd
Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
And every body but his mother deem'd
Him almost man; but she flew in a rage,

5. In *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things),* Lucretius argues that the universe can be explained in entirely materialist terms without reference to any god.
6. The Latin satires of Juvenal attacked the corruption of Roman society in the 1st century c.E. and displayed its vices.
7. Fact! There is, or was, such an edition, with all the obnoxious epigrams of Martial placed by themselves at the end [Byron's note]. Martial, another Latin poet, was a contemporary of Juvenal.
8. A word [to the wise] is sufficient (Latin).

And bit her lips (for else she might have scream'd),
If any said so, for to be precocious
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

55

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
Selected for discretion and devotion,
There was the Donna Julia, whom to call
Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
Of many charms in her as natural
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus,[9] or his bow to Cupid,
(But this last simile is trite and stupid).

56

The darkness of her Oriental eye
Accorded with her Moorish origin;
(Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;
In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin).
When proud Grenada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept,[1] of Donna Julia's kin
Some went to Africa, some staid in Spain,
Her great great grandmamma chose to remain.

57

She married (I forget the pedigree)
With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down
His blood less noble than such blood should be;
At such alliances his sires would frown,
In that point so precise in each degree
That they bred *in and in,* as might be shown,
Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts and nieces,
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

58

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
Ruin'd its blood, but much improved its flesh;
For, from a root the ugliest in Old Spain
Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;
The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:
But there's a rumour which I fain would hush,
'Tis said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

59

However this might be, the race[0] went on *family line*
Improving still through every generation,
Until it center'd in an only son,
Who left an only daughter; my narration
May have suggested that this single one
Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion

9. The belt ("zone") of Venus made its wearer sexually irresistible.
1. The Moorish king of Granada (the last Islamic enclave in Spain) wept when his capital fell and he and his people were forced to emigrate to Africa (1492).

I shall have much to speak about), and she
Was married, charming, chaste,[2] and twenty-three.

60

Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,
And love than either; and there would arise
A something in them which was not desire,
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole.

61

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
Bright with intelligence, and fair and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like the aerial bow,
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
Mounting, at times, to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

62

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
And yet, I think, instead of such a **ONE**
'Twere better to have **TWO** of five and twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
And now I think on't, "mi vien in mente,"[3]
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

63

'Tis a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
And all the fault of that indecent sun,
Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,
That howsoever people fast and pray
The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:
What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

64

Happy the nations of the moral north!
Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth;
('Twas snow that brought St. Francis back to reason);
Where juries cast up what a wife is worth
By laying whate'er sum, in mulct,[4] they please on
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
Because it is a marketable vice.

2. I.e., faithful to her husband.
3. It comes to my mind (Italian).
4. By way of a fine or legal penalty.

65

Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,
A man well looking for his years, and who
Was neither much beloved, nor yet abhorr'd;
They lived together as most people do,
Suffering each other's foibles by accord,
And not exactly either *one* or *two;*
Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,
For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

« $

69

Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
Caress'd him often, such a thing might be
Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,
When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;
But I am not so sure I should have smiled
When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three,
These few short years make wondrous alterations,
Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

70

Whate'er the cause might be, they had become
Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,
Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,
And much embarrassment in either eye;
There surely will be little doubt with some
That Donna Julia knew the reason why,
But as for Juan, he had no more notion
Than he who never saw the sea of ocean.

71

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind,
And tremulously gentle her small hand
Withdrew itself from his, but left behind
A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland
And slight, so very slight, that to the mind
'Twas but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand
Wrought change with all Armida's[5] fairy art
Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

And if she met him, though she smiled no more,
She look'd a sadness sweeter than her smile,
As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store
She must not own, but cherish'd more the while,
For that compression in its burning core;
Even innocence itself has many a wile,
And will not dare to trust itself with truth,
And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

5. The sorceress in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) who seduces Rinaldo into forgetting his vows as a crusader.

75

Poor Julia's heart was in an awkward state;
She felt it going, and resolved to make
The noblest efforts for herself and mate,
For honour's, pride's, religion's, virtue's sake;
Her resolutions were most truly great,
And almost might have made a Tarquin[6] quake;
She pray'd the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.

76

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,
And next day paid a visit to his mother,
And look'd extremely at the opening door,
Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;
Grateful she was, and yet a little sore—
Again it opens, it can be no other,
'Tis surely Juan now—No! I'm afraid
That night the Virgin was no further pray'd.

77

She now determined that a virtuous woman
Should rather face and overcome temptation,
That flight was base and dastardly, and no man
Should ever give her heart the least sensation;
That is to say, a thought beyond the common
Preference, that we must feel upon occasion,
For people who are pleasanter than others,
But then they only seem so many brothers.

78

And even if by chance—and who can tell?
The devil's so very sly—she should discover
That all within was not so very well,
And, if still free, that such or such a lover
Might please perhaps, a virtuous wife can quell
Such thoughts, and be the better when they're over;
And if the man should ask,'tis but denial:
I recommend young ladies to make trial.

79

And then there are such things as love divine,
Bright and immaculate, unmix'd and pure,
Such as the angels think so very fine,
And matrons, who would be no less secure,
Platonic, perfect, "just such love as mine":
Thus Julia said—and thought so, to be sure,
And so I'd have her think, were I the man
On whom her reveries celestial ran.

6. A member of a legendary family of Roman kings noted for tyranny and cruelty; perhaps a reference specifically to Lucius Tarquinus, the villain of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*.

86

So much for Julia. Now we'll turn to Juan,
Poor little fellow! he had no idea
Of his own case, and never hit the true one;
In feelings quick as Ovid's Miss Medea,[7]
He puzzled over what he found a new one,
But not as yet imagined it could be a
Thing quite in course, and not at all alarming,
Which, with a little patience, might grow charming.

* *

90

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

91

He, Juan (and not Wordsworth), so pursued
His self-communion with his own high soul,
Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,
Had mitigated part, though not the whole
Of its disease; he did the best he could
With things not very subject to control,
And turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

92

He thought about himself, and the whole earth,
Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
And how the deuce they ever could have birth;
And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,
How many miles the moon might have in girth,
Of air-balloons, and of the many bars
To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

93

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'Twas strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If *you* think 'twas philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

7. In *Metamorphoses* 7 Ovid tells the story of Medea's mad infatuation for Jason.

94

He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then
He thought of wood nymphs and immortal bowers,
And how the goddesses came down to men:
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
And when he look'd upon his watch again,
He found how much old Time had been a winner—
He also found that he had lost his dinner.

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'Twas on a summer's day—the sixth of June:—
I like to be particular in dates,
Not only of the age, and year, but moon;
They are a sort of post-house, where the Fates
Change horses, making history change its tune,
Then spur away o'er empires and o'er states,
Leaving at last not much besides chronology,
Excepting the post-obits[8] of theology.

104

'Twas on the sixth of June, about the hour
Of half-past six—perhaps still nearer seven,
When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
Described by Mahomet, and Anacreon Moore,[9]
To whom the lyre and laurels have been given,
With all the trophies of triumphant song—
He won them well, and may he wear them long!

105

She sate, but not alone; I know not well
How this same interview had taken place,
And even if I knew, I should not tell—
People should hold their tongues in any case;
No matter how or why the thing befell,
But there were she and Juan, face to face—
When two such faces are so,'twould be wise,
But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

106

How beautiful she look'd! her conscious[1] heart
Glow'd in her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
Oh Love! how perfect is thy mystic art,
Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,

8. I.e., postobit bonds (post *obitum,* "after death" [Latin]): loans to an heir that fall due after the death of the person whose estate he or she is to inherit. Byron's meaning is probably that only theology purports to tell us what rewards are due in heaven.

9. Byron's friend the poet Thomas Moore, who in 1800 had translated the *Odes* of the ancient Greek Anacreon and whose popular Orientalist poem *Lalla Rookh* (1817) had portrayed the "heathenish heaven" of Islam as populated by "houris," beautiful maidens who in the afterlife will give heroes their reward.

1. Secretly aware (of her feelings).

How self-deceitful is the sagest part
Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along—
The precipice she stood on was immense,
So was her creed° in her own innocence. *belief*

107

She thought of her own strength, and Juan's youth,
And of the folly of all prudish fears,
Victorious virtue, and domestic truth,
And then of Don Alfonso's fifty years:
I wish these last had not occurr'd, in sooth,
Because that number rarely much endears,
And through all climes, the snowy and the sunny,
Sounds ill in love, whate'er it may in money.

$ $

113

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
The devil's in the moon for mischief; they
Who call'd her **CHASTE**, methinks, began too soon
Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
Sees half the business in a wicked way
On which three single hours of moonshine smile—
And then she looks so modest all the while.

114

There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control;
The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose.

115

And Julia sate with Juan, half embraced
And half retiring from the glowing arm,
Which trembled like the bosom where 'twas placed;
Yet still she must have thought there was no harm,
Or else 'twere easy to withdraw her waist;
But then the situation had its charm,
And then—God knows what next—I can't go on;
I'm almost sorry that I e'er begun.

116

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,
With your confounded fantasies, to more
Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
Your system feigns o'er the controlless core
Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers:—You're a bore,

A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been,
At best, no better than a go-between.

117

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
Until too late for useful conversation;
The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,
I wish, indeed, they had not had occasion,
But who, alas! can love, and then be wise?
Not that remorse did not oppose temptation,
A little still she strove, and much repented,
And whispering "I will ne'er consent"—consented.

* \$ \$

126

'Tis sweet to win, no matter how, one's laurels
By blood or ink; 'tis sweet to put an end
To strife; 'tis sometimes sweet to have our quarrels,
Particularly with a tiresome friend;
Sweet is old wine in bottles, ale in barrels;
Dear is the helpless creature we defend
Against the world; and dear the schoolboy spot
We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot.

127

But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
Is first and passionate love—it stands alone,
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;
The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd—all's known—
And life yields nothing further to recall
Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
Fire which Prometheus[2] filch'd for us from heaven.

* * *

'33

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'Tis pity though, in this sublime world, that
Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;
Few mortals know what end they would be at,
But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
The path is through perplexing ways, and when
The goal is gain'd, we die, you know—and then—

'34

What then?—I do not know, no more do you—
And so good night.—Return we to our story:
'Twas in November, when fine days are few,
And the far mountains wax a little hoary,
And clap a white cape on their mantles blue;

2. The Titan Prometheus incurred the wrath of Zeus by stealing fire from heaven for humans.

And the sea dashes round the promontory,
And the loud breaker boils against the rock,
And sober suns must set at five o'clock.

'35

'Twas, as the watchmen say, a cloudy night;
No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud
By gusts, and many a sparkling hearth was bright
With the piled wood, round which the family crowd;
There's something cheerful in that sort of light,
Even as a summer sky's without a cloud:
I'm fond of fire, and crickets, and all that,
A lobster-salad, and champagne, and chat.

136

'Twas midnight—Donna Julia was in bed,
Sleeping, most probably—when at her door
Arose a clatter might awake the dead,
If they had never been awoke before,
And that they have been so we all have read,
And are to be so, at the least, once more—
The door was fasten'd, but with voice and fist
First knocks were heard, then "Madam—Madam—hist!

137

"For God's sake, Madam—Madam—here's my master,
With more than half the city at his back—
Was ever heard of such a curst disaster!
'Tis not my fault—I kept good watch—Alack!
Do, pray undo the bolt a little faster—
They're on the stairjust now, and in a crack[0] *moment*
Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly—
Surely the window's not so *very* high!"

138

By this time Don Alfonso was arrived,
With torches, friends, and servants in great number;
The major part of them had long been wived,
And therefore paused not to disturb the slumber
Of any wicked woman, who contrived
By stealth her husband's temples to encumber:[3]
Examples of this kind are so contagious,
Were one not punish'd, all would be outrageous.

!39

I can't tell how, or why, or what suspicion
Could enter into Don Alfonso's head;
But for a cavalier of his condition[0] *rank*
It surely was exceedingly ill-bred
Without a word of previous admonition,
To hold a levee[4] round his lady's bed,
And summon lackeys, arm'd with fire and sword,
To prove himself the thing he most abhorr'd.

3. I.e., with horns that, growing on the forehead, were the traditional emblem of the cuckolded husband.
4. Morning reception.

140

Poor Donna Julia! starting as from sleep,
(Mind—that I do not say—she had not slept)
ins Began at once to scream, and yawn, and weep;
Her maid Antonia, who was an adept,
Contrived to fling the bed-clothes in a heap,
As if she had just now from out them crept:
I can't tell why she should take all this trouble
To prove her mistress had been sleeping double.

141

But Julia mistress, and Antonia maid,
Appear'd like two poor harmless women, who
Of goblins, but still more of men afraid,
Had thought one man might be deterr'd by two,
And therefore side by side were gently laid,
Until the hours of absence should run through,
And truant husband should return, and say,
"My dear, I was the first who came away."

142

Now Julia found at length a voice, and cried,
"In heaven's name, Don Alfonso, what d'ye mean?
Has madness seized you? would that I had died
Ere such a monster's victim I had been!
What may this midnight violence betide,
A sudden fit of drunkenness or spleen?
Dare you suspect me, whom the thought would kill?
Search, then, the room!"—Alfonso said, "I will."

143

He search'd, *they* search'd, and rummaged every where,
Closet and clothes'-press, chest and window-seat,
And found much linen, lace, and seven pair
Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,
With other articles of ladies fair,
To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat:
Arras[5] they prick'd and curtains with their swords,
And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

144

Under the bed they search'd, and there they found—[6]
No matter what—it was not that they sought;
They open'd windows, gazing if the ground
Had signs or footmarks, but the earth said nought;
And then they stared each others' faces round:
'Tis odd, not one of all these seekers thought,
And seems to me almost a sort of blunder,
Of looking *in* the bed as well as under.

145

During this inquisition Julia's tongue
Was not asleep—"Yes, search and search," she cried,

5. A tapestry hanging on a wall.

6. Perhaps a chamber pot.

us? "Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
It was for this that I became a bride!
For this in silence I have suffer'd long
A husband like Alfonso at my side;
But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
If there be law, or lawyers, in all Spain.

146

"Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
If ever you indeed deserved the name,
Is't worthy of your years?—you have threescore,
Fifty, or sixty—it is all the same—
Is't wise or fitting causeless to explore
For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
How dare you think your lady would go on so?"

159

The Senhor Don Alfonso stood confused;
Antonia bustled round the ransack'd room,
And, turning up her nose, with looks abused
Her master, and his myrmidons,[7] of whom
Not one, except the attorney, was amused;
He, like Achates,[8] faithful to the tomb,
So there were quarrels, cared not for the cause,
Knowing they must be settled by the laws.

160

With prying snub-nose, and small eyes, he stood,
Following Antonia's motions here and there,
With much suspicion in his attitude;
For reputations he had little care;
So that a suit or action were made good,
Small pity had he for the young and fair,
And ne'er believed in negatives, till these
Were proved by competent false witnesses.

161

But Don Alfonso stood with downcast looks,
And, truth to say, he made a foolish figure;
When, after searching in five hundred nooks,
And treating a young wife with so much rigour,
He gain'd no point, except some self-rebukes,
Added to those his lady with such vigour
Had pour'd upon him for the last half-hour,
Quick, thick, and heavy—as a thunder-shower.

162

At first he tried to hammer an excuse,
To which the sole reply was tears, and sobs,

7. Servants, so named for the followers Achilles led to the Trojan War.
8. The *fidus Achates* ("faithful Achates") ofVirgil's *Aeneid*, whose loyalty to Aeneas has become proverbial.

And indications of hysterics, whose
Prologue is always certain throes, and throbs,
Gasps, and whatever else the owners choose:—
Alfonso saw his wife, and thought of Job's;[9]
He saw too, in perspective, her relations,
And then he tried to muster all his patience.

163

He stood in act to speak, or rather stammer,
But sage Antonia cut him short before
The anvil of his speech received the hammer,
With "Pray sir, leave the room, and say no more,
Or madam dies."—Alfonso mutter'd "D—n her,"
But nothing else, the time of words was o'er;
He cast a rueful look or two, and did,
He knew not wherefore, that which he was bid.

164

With him retired his "posse *comitatus*,"[1]
The attorney last, who linger'd near the door,
Reluctantly, still tarrying there as late as
Antonia let him—not a little sore
At this most strange and unexplain'd "*hiatus*"
In Don Alfonso's facts, which just now wore
An awkward look; as he resolved the case
The door was fasten'd in his legal face.

165

No sooner was it bolted, than—Oh shame!
Oh sin! Oh sorrow! and Oh womankind!
How can you do such things and keep your fame,
Unless this world, and t'other too, be blind?
Nothing so dear as an unfilch'd good name!
But to proceed—for there is more behind:
With much heart-felt reluctance be it said,
Young Juan slipp'd, half-smother'd, from the bed.

166

He had been hid—I don't pretend to say
How, nor can I indeed describe the where—
Young, slender, and pack'd easily, he lay,
No doubt, in little compass, round or square;
But pity him I neither must nor may
His suffocation by that pretty pair;
'Twere better, sure, to die so, than be shut
With maudlin Clarence in his Malmsey butt.[2]

* * *

9. Job's wife advised her afflicted husband to "curse God, and die," He replied, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh" (Job 2.9–10).

1. The complete form of the modern word *posse* (*posse comitatus* means literally "power of the county" [Latin], i.e., the body of citizens summoned by a sheriff to preserve order in the county).

2. Clarence, brother of Edward IV and of the future Richard III, was reputed to have been assassinated by being drowned in a cask ("butt") of malmsey, a sweet and aromatic wine.

169

What's to be done? Alfonso will be back
The moment he has sent his fools away.
Antonia's skill was put upon the rack,
But no device could be brought into play—
And how to parry the renew'd attack?
Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But press'd her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

170

He turn'd his lip to hers, and with his hand
Call'd back the tangles of her wandering hair;
Even then their love they could not all command,
And half forgot their danger and despair:
Antonia's patience now was at a stand—
"Come, come,'tis no time now for fooling there,"
She whisper'd, in great wrath—"I must deposit
This pretty gentleman within the closet."

173

Now, Don Alfonso entering, but alone,
Closed the oration of the trusty maid:
She loiter'd, and he told her to be gone,
An order somewhat sullenly obey'd;
However, present remedy was none,
And no great good seem'd answer'd if she staid:
Regarding both with slow and sidelong view,
She snuff'd the candle, curtsied, and withdrew.

174

Alfonso paused a minute—then begun
Some strange excuses for his late proceeding;
He would not justify what he had done,
To say the best, it was extreme ill-breeding;
But there were ample reasons for it, none
Of which he specified in this his pleading:
His speech was a fine sample, on the whole,
Of rhetoric, which the learn'd call "*rigmarole.*"

180

Alfonso closed his speech, and begg'd her pardon,
Which Julia half withheld, and then half granted,
And laid conditions, he thought, very hard on,
Denying several little things he wanted:
He stood like Adam lingering near his garden,
With useless penitence perplex'd and haunted,
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
When lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

181

A pair of shoes!—what then? not much, if they
Are such as fit with lady's feet, but these
(No one can tell how much I grieve to say)
Were masculine; to see them, and to seize,
Was but a moment's act.—Ah! Well-a-day!
My teeth begin to chatter, my veins freeze—
Alfonso first examined well their fashion,
And then flew out into another passion.

182

He left the room for his relinquish'd sword,
And Julia instant to the closet flew,
"Fly, Juan, fly! for heaven's sake—not a word—
The door is open—you may yet slip through
The passage you so often have explored—
Here is the garden-key—Fly—fly—Adieu!
Haste—haste!—I hear Alfonso's hurrying feet—
Day has not broke—there's no one in the street."

183

None can say that this was not good advice,
The only mischief was, it came too late;
Of all experience 'tis the usual price,
A sort of income-tax laid on by fate:
Juan had reach'd the room-door in a trice,
And might have done so by the garden-gate,
But met Alfonso in his dressing-gown,
Who threaten'd death—so Juan knock'd him down.

184

Dire was the scuffle, and out went the light,
Antonia cried out "Rape!" and Julia "Fire!"
But not a servant stirr'd to aid the fight.
Alfonso, pommell'd to his heart's desire,
Swore lustily he'd be revenged this night;
And Juan, too, blasphemed an octave higher,
His blood was up; though young, he was a Tartar,[3]
And not at all disposed to prove a martyr.

185

Alfonso's sword had dropp'd ere he could draw it,
And they continued battling hand to hand,
For Juan very luckily ne'er saw it;
His temper not being under great command,
If at that moment he had chanced to claw it,
Alfonso's days had not been in the land
Much longer.—Think of husbands', lovers' lives!
And how ye may be doubly widows—wives!

186

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,
And Juan throttled him to get away,

3. A formidable opponent.

And blood ('twas from the nose) began to flow;
At last, as they more faintly wrestling lay,
Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
And then his only garment quite gave way;
He fled, like Joseph,[4] leaving it; but there,
I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.

187

Lights came at length, and men, and maids, who found
An awkward spectacle their eyes before;
Antonia in hysterics, Julia swoon'd,
Alfonso leaning, breathless, by the door;
Some half-torn drapery scatter'd on the ground,
Some blood, and several footsteps, but no more:
Juan the gate gain'd, turn'd the key about,
And liking not the inside, lock'd the out.

188

Here ends this canto.—Need I sing, or say,
How Juan, naked, favour'd by the night,
Who favours what she should not, found his way,
And reach'd his home in an unseemly plight?
The pleasant scandal which arose next day,
The nine days' wonder which was brought to light,
And how Alfonso sued for a divorce,
Were in the English newspapers, of course.

189

If you would like to see the whole proceedings,
The depositions, and the cause at full,
The names of all the witnesses, the pleadings
Of counsel to nonsuit,[5] or to annul,
There's more than one edition, and the readings
Are various, but they none of them are dull,
The best is that in shorthand ta'en by Gurney,[6]
Who to Madrid on purpose made a journey.

190

But Donna Inez, to divert the train
Of one of the most circulating scandals
That had for centuries been known in Spain,
Since Roderic's Goths, or older Genseric's Vandals,[7]
First vow'd (and never had she vow'd in vain)
To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
She sent her son to be embark'd at Cadiz.

191

She had resolved that he should travel through
All European climes, by land or sea,

4. In Genesis 39.7ff. the chaste Joseph flees from the advances of Potiphar's wife, leaving "his garment in her hand."
5. Judgment against the plaintiff for failure to establish his case.
6. William B. Gurney (1777-1855), official shorthand writer for the houses of Parliament and a famous court reporter.
7. The Germanic tribes that overran Spain and other parts of southern Europe in the 5th through 8th centuries, notorious for rape and violence.

To mend his former morals, or get new,
Especially in France and Italy,
(At least this is the thing most people do).
Julia was sent into a nunnery,
And there, perhaps, her feelings may be better
Shown in the following copy of her letter:

192

"They tell me 'tis decided; you depart:
'Tis wise—'tis well, but not the less a pain;
I have no further claim on your young heart,
Mine was the victim, and would be again;
To love too much has been the only art
I used;—I write in haste, and if a stain
Be on this sheet,'tis not what it appears,
My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

193

"I loved, I love you, for that love have lost
State, station, heaven, mankind's, my own esteem,
And yet can not regret what it hath cost,
So dear is still the memory of that dream;
Yet, if I name my guilt,'tis not to boast,
None can deem harshlier of me than I deem:
I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest—
I've nothing to reproach, nor to request.

194

"Man's love is of his life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these can not estrange;
Man has all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

195

"My breast has been all weakness, is so yet;
I struggle, but cannot collect my mind;
My blood still rushes where my spirit's set,
As roll the waves before the settled wind;
My brain is feminine, nor can forget—
To all, except your image, madly blind;
As turns the needle[8] trembling to the pole
It ne'er can reach, so turns to you, my soul.

196

"You will proceed in beauty, and in pride,
Beloved and loving many; all is o'er
For me on earth, except some years to hide
My shame and sorrow deep in my heart's core;

8. Of a compass.

These I could bear, but cannot cast aside
The passion which still rends it as before,
And so farewell—forgive me, love me—No,
That word is idle now—but let it go.

197

"I have no more to say, but linger still,
And dare not set my seal upon this sheet,
And yet I may as well the task fulfil,
My misery can scarce be more complete:
I had not lived till now, could sorrow kill;
Death flies the wretch who fain the blow would meet,
And I must even survive this last adieu,
And bear with life, to love and pray for you!"

198

This note was written upon gilt-edged paper
With a neat crow-quill, rather hard, but new;
Her small white fingers scarce could reach the taper,[9]
But trembled as magnetic needles do,
And yet she did not let one tear escape her;
The seal a sunflower; "*Elle vous suit partout*,"[1]
The motto, cut upon a white cornelian;
The wax was superfine, its hue vermilion.

199

This was Don Juan's earliest scrape; but whether
I shall proceed with his adventures is
Dependent on the public altogether;
We'll see, however, what they say to this,
Their favour in an author's cap's a feather,
And no great mischief's done by their caprice;
And if their approbation we experience,
Perhaps they'll have some more about a year hence.

200

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
New characters; the episodes are three:
A panorama view of hell's in training,
After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

201

All these things will be specified in time,
With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
The *vade mecum*[2] of the true sublime,

9. The candle (to melt wax to seal the letter).
1. She follows you everywhere (French). This motto was inscribed on one of Byron's seals and on a jewel he gave to John Edleston, the boy with whom he had a romantic friendship while at Cambridge. Their friendship was memorialized in Byron's 1807 poem "The Cornelian."
2. Go with me (Latin, literal trans.); handbook. Byron is deriding the neoclassical view that Aristotle's *Poetics* proposes "rules" for writing epic and tragedy.

Which makes so many poets, and some fools;
Prose poets like blank-verse, I'm fond of rhyme,
Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
I've got new mythological machinery,[3]
And very handsome supernatural scenery.

There's only one slight difference between
Me and my epic brethren gone before,
And here the advantage is my own, I ween;
(Not that I have not several merits more,
But this will more peculiarly be seen)
They so embellish, that 'tis quite a bore
Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,
Whereas this story's actually true.

203

If any person doubt it, I appeal
To history, tradition, and to facts,
To newspapers, whose truth all know and feel,
To plays in five, and operas in three acts;
All these confirm my statement a good deal,
But that which more completely faith exacts
Is, that myself, and several now in Seville,
Saw Juan's last elopement with the devil.[4]

204

If ever I should condescend to prose,
I'll write poetical commandments, which
Shall supersede beyond all doubt all those
That went before; in these I shall enrich
My text with many things that no one knows,
And carry precept to the highest pitch:
I'll call the work "Longinus o'er a Bottle,
Or, Every Poet his *own* Aristotle."

205

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;[5]
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthey:
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene[6] is somewhat drouthy:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor—
Commit—flirtation with the muse of Moore.

3. The assemblage of supernatural personages and incidents introduced into a literary work.
4. The usual plays on the Juan legend ended with Juan in hell; an early-20th-century version is Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman.*
5. This is one of many passages, in prose and verse, in which Byron vigorously defends Dryden and Pope against his Romantic contemporaries.
6. Fountain on Mount Helicon whose waters supposedly gave inspiration. George Crabbe, whom Byron admired, was the author of *The Village* and other realistic poems of rural life. Thomas Campbell, Samuel Rogers, and Thomas Moore were lesser poets of the Romantic period; the last two were close friends of Byron and members of London's liberal Whig circles.

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby's Muse,
His Pegasus,[7] nor any thing that's his;
Thou shalt not bear false witness like "the Blues,"[8]
(There's one, at least, is very fond of this);
Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose:
This is true criticism, and you may kiss—
Exactly as you please, or not, the rod,
But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G—d![9]

207

If any person should presume to assert
This story is not moral, first I pray
That they will not cry out before they're hurt,
Then that they'll read it o'er again, and say,
(But, doubtless, nobody will be so pert)
That this is not a moral tale, though gay;
Besides, in canto twelfth, I mean to show
The very place where wicked people go.

213

But now at thirty years my hair is gray—
(I wonder what it will be like at forty?
I thought of a peruke[0] the other day) *wig*
My heart is not much greener; and, in short, I
Have squander'd my whole summer while 'twas May,
And feel no more the spirit to retort; I
Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
And deem not, what I deem'd, my soul invincible.

214

No more—no more—Oh! never more on me
The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,
Which out of all the lovely things we see
Extracts emotions beautiful and new,
Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee:
Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?
Alas! 'twas not in them, but in thy power
To double even the sweetness of a flower.

215

No more—no more—Oh! never more, my heart,
Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!
Once all in all, but now a thing apart,

7. The winged horse symbolizing poetic inspiration. The wealthy William Sotheby, minorpoet and translator, is satirized, as Botherby, in Byron's *Beppo*.
8. I.e., bluestockings, a contemporary term for female intellectuals, among whom Byron numbered his wife (line 1644).
9. Byron's parody of the Ten Commandments seemed blasphemous to some commentators. Radical publishers like William Hone, who in 1817 had been put on trial for the ostensible blasphemy of political satires that used the form of the Anglican Church's creed and catechism bitterly noted a double standard: books brought out by the ultra-respectable John Murray were not subject to the same reprisals as Hone's books.

Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse:
The illusion's gone for ever, and thou art
Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,
And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,
Though heaven knows how it ever found a lodgement.

216

My days of love are over, me no more
The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
Can make the fool of which they made before,
In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
The copious use of claret is forbid too,
So for a good old gentlemanly vice,
I think I must take up with avarice.

217

Ambition was my idol, which was broken
Before the shrines of Sorrow and of Pleasure;
And the two last have left me many a token
O'er which reflection may be made at leisure:
Now, like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken,
"Time is, Time was, Time's past,"[1] a chymic treasure[2]
Is glittering youth, which I have spent betimes—
My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

218

What is the end of fame? 'tis but to fill
A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
Whose summit, like all hills', is lost in vapour;
For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,
And bards burn what they call their "midnight taper,"
To have, when the original is dust,
A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust.[3]

219

What are the hopes of man? old Egypt's King
Cheops erected the first pyramid
And largest, thinking it was just the thing
To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
But somebody or other rummaging,
Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

220

But I, being fond of true philosophy,
Say very often to myself, "Alas!

1. Spoken by a bronze bust in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594). This comedy was based on legends about the magical power of Roger Bacon, the 13th-century Franciscan monk who was said to have built with diabolical assistance a brazen head capable of speech.

2. "Chymic": alchemic; i.e., the "treasure" is counterfeit gold.

3. Byron was unhappy with the portrait bust of him recently made by the Danish sculptor Thorwaldsen.

All things that have been born were born to die,
And flesh (which Death mows down to hay) is grass;[4]
You've pass'd your youth not so unpleasantly,
And if you had it o'er again—'twould pass—
So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse."

221

But for the present, gentle reader! and
Still gentler purchaser! the bard—that's I—
Must, with permission, shake you by the hand,
And so your humble servant, and good bye!
We meet again, if we should understand
Each other; and if not, I shall not try
Your patience further than by this short sample—
'Twere well if others follow'd my example.

222

"Go, little book, from this my solitude!
I cast thee on the waters, go thy ways!
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
The world will find thee after many days."
When Southey's read, and Wordsworth understood,
I can't help putting in my claim to praise—
The four first rhymes are Southey's every line:[5]
For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.

From Canto 2

[THE SHIPWRECK]

8

But to our tale: the Donna Inez sent
Her son to Cadiz only to embark;
To stay there had not answer'd her intent,
But why?—we leave the reader in the dark—
'Twas for a voyage that the young man was meant,
As if a Spanish ship were Noah's ark,
To wean him from the wickedness of earth,
And send him like a dove of promise forth.

9

Don Juan bade his valet pack his things
According to direction, then received
A lecture and some money: for four springs
He was to travel; and though Inez grieved,
(As every kind of parting has its stings)
She hoped he would improve—perhaps believed:
A letter, too, she gave (he never read it)
Of good advice—and two or three of credit.[1]

4. An echo of Isaiah 40.6 and 1 Peter 1.24: "All flesh is grass."
5. The lines are part of the last stanza of Southey's "Epilogue to the Lay of the Laureate."
1. Letters of credit allowed travelers to obtain cash from an international network of bankers.

10

In the mean time, to pass her hours away,
Brave Inez now set up a Sunday school
For naughty children, who would rather play
(Like truant rogues) the devil, or the fool;
Infants of three years old were taught that day,
Dunces were whipt, or set upon a stool:
The great success of Juan's education,
Spurr'd her to teach another generation.

11

Juan embark'd—the ship got under way,
The wind was fair, the water passing rough;
A devil of a sea rolls in that bay,
As I, who've cross'd it oft, know well enough;
And, standing upon deck, the dashing spray
Flies in one's face, and makes it weather-tough:
And there he stood to take, and take again,
His first—perhaps his last—farewell of Spain.

12

I can't but say it is an awkward sight
To see one's native land receding through
The growing waters; it unmans one quite,
Especially when life is rather new:
I recollect Great Britain's coast looks white,
But almost every other country's blue,
When gazing on them, mystified by distance,
We enter on our nautical existence.

* * *

17

And Juan wept, and much he sigh'd and thought,
While his salt tears dropp'd into the salt sea,
"Sweets to the sweet"; (I like so much to quote;
You must excuse this extract, 'tis where she,
The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
Flowers to the grave);[2] and sobbing often, he
Reflected on his present situation,
And seriously resolved on reformation.

18

"Farewell, my Spain! a long farewell!" he cried,
"Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
Of its own thirst to see again thy shore:
Farewell, where Guadalquivir's waters glide!
Farewell, my mother! and, since all is o'er,
Farewell, too dearest Julia!,"—(here he drew
Her letter out again, and read it through).

2. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 5.1.227.

"And oh! if e'er I should forget, I swear—
But that's impossible, and cannot be—
Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,
Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea,
Than I resign thine image, Oh! my fair!
Or think of any thing excepting thee;
A mind diseased no remedy can physic—"
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick.)

20

"Sooner shall heaven kiss earth"—(here he fell sicker)
"Oh, Julia! what is every other woe?—
(For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor,
Pedro, Battista, help me down below.)
Julia, my love!—(you rascal, Pedro, quicker)—
Oh Julia!—(this curst vessel pitches so)—
Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!"
(Here he grew inarticulate with retching.)

21

He felt that chilling heaviness of heart,
Or rather stomach, which, alas! attends,
Beyond the best apothecary's art,
The loss of love, the treachery of friends,
Or death of those we doat on, when a part
Of us dies with them as each fond hope ends:
No doubt he would have been much more pathetic,
But the sea acted as a strong emetic.[3]

\$ \$ &

49

'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down
Over the waste of waters; like a veil,
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail;
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown
And grimly darkled o'er their faces pale,
And the dim desolate deep; twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

5°

Some trial had been making at a raft,
With little hope in such a rolling sea,
A sort of thing at which one would have laugh'd,
If any laughter at such times could be,
Unless with people who too much have quaff'd,
And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,
Half epileptical, and half hysterical:—
Their preservation would have been a miracle.

3. In stanzas 22—48 (here omitted) the ship, bound for Leghorn in Italy, runs into a violent storm and is battered into a helpless, sinking wreck.

51

At half-past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars,
And all things, for a chance, had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use:
There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews;
She gave a heel, and then a lurch to port,
And, going down head foremost—sunk, in short.

52

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
Then shriek'd the timid, and stood still the brave,
Then some leap'd overboard with dreadful yell,
As eager to anticipate their grave;
And the sea yawn'd around her like a hell,
And down she suck'd with her the whirling wave,
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

53

And first one universal shriek there rush'd,
Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hush'd,
Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gush'd,
Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

« « *

56

Juan got into the long-boat, and there
Contrived to help Pedrillo[4] to a place;
It seem'd as if they had exchanged their care,
For Juan wore the magisterial face
Which courage gives, while poor Pedrillo's pair
Of eyes were crying for their owner's case:
Battista, though (a name call'd shortly Tita),
Was lost by getting at some aqua-vita.[o] *brandy*

57

Pedro, his valet, too, he tried to save,
But the same cause, conducive to his loss,
Left him so drunk, he jump'd into the wave
As o'er the cutter's edge he tried to cross,
And so he found a wine-and-watery grave;
They could not rescue him although so close,
Because the sea ran higher every minute,
And for the boat—the crew kept crowding in it.

4. Juan's tutor.

86

"Tis thus with people in an open boat,
They live upon the love of life, and bear
More than can be believed, or even thought,
And stand like rocks the tempest's wear and tear;
And hardship still has been the sailor's lot,
Since Noah's ark went cruising here and there;
She had a curious crew as well as cargo,
Like the first old Greek privateer, the Argo.[5]

67

But man is a carnivorous production,
And must have meals, at least one meal a day;
He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,[6]
But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey:
Although his anatomical construction
Bears vegetables in a grumbling way,
Your labouring people think beyond all question,
Beef, veal, and mutton, better for digestion.

68

And thus it was with this our hapless crew,
For on the third day there came on a calm,
And though at first their strength it might renew,
And lying on their weariness like balm,
Lull'd them like turtles sleeping on the blue
Of ocean, when they woke they felt a qualm,
And fell all ravenously on their provision,
Instead of hoarding it with due precision.

3 3 *

72

The seventh day,[7] and no wind—the burning sun
Blister'd and scorch'd, and, stagnant on the sea,
They lay like carcases; and hope was none,
Save in the breeze that came not; savagely
They glared upon each other—all was done,
Water, and wine, and food,—and you might see
The longings of the cannibal arise
(Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

73

At length one whisper'd his companion, who
Whisper'd another, and thus it went round,
And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
An ominous, and wild, and desperate sound,
And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,

5. In the Greek myth the *Argo* is the ship on which Jason set out in quest of the Golden Fleece. Byron ironically calls it a "privateer" (a private ship licensed by a government in wartime to attack and pillage enemy vessels).

6. Woodcocks probe the turf with their long flexible bills, seeming to suck air as they feed.

7. On the fourth day the crew had killed and eaten Juan's pet spaniel. Byron based the episode of cannibalism that follows on various historical accounts of disasters at sea, including his grandfather Admiral Byron's 1768 narrative of his misadventure off the coast of Patagonia.

'Twas but his own, suppress'd till now, he found:
And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
And who should die to be his fellow's food.

74

But ere they came to this, they that day shared
Some leathern caps, and what remain'd of shoes;
And then they look'd around them, and despair'd,
And none to be the sacrifice would choose;
At length the lots were torn up, and prepared,
But of materials that must shock the Muse—
Having no paper, for the want of better,
They took by force from Juan Julia's letter.

75

The lots were made, and mark'd, and mix'd, and handed,
In silent horror, and their distribution
Lull'd even the savage hunger which demanded,
Like the Promethean vulture,[8] this pollution;
None in particular had sought or plann'd it,
'Twas nature gnaw'd them to this resolution,
By which none were permitted to be neuter—
And the lot fell on Juan's luckless tutor.

76

He but requested to be bled to death:
The surgeon had his instruments, and bled
Pedrillo, and so gently ebb'd his breath,
You hardly could perceive when he was dead.
He died as born, a Catholic in faith,
Like most in the belief in which they're bred,
And first a little crucifix he kiss'd,
And then held out his jugular and wrist.

77

The surgeon, as there was no other fee,
Had his first choice of morsels for his pains;
But being thirstiest at the moment, he
Preferr'd a draught from the fast-flowing veins:
Part was divided, part thrown in the sea,
And such things as the entrails and the brains
Regaled two sharks, who follow'd o'er the billow—
The sailors ate the rest of poor Pedrillo.

7«

The sailors ate him, all save three or four,
Who were not quite so fond of animal food;
To these was added Juan, who, before
Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could
Feel now his appetite increased much more;
'Twas not to be expected that he should,
Even in extremity of their disaster,
Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

8. Because Prometheus had stolen fire from heaven to give to humans, Zeus punished him by chaining him to a mountain peak, where an eagle fed on his ever-renewing iiver.

86

'Twas better that he did not; for, in fact,
The consequence was awful in the extreme;
For they, who were most ravenous in the act,
Went raging mad—Lord! how they did blaspheme!
And foam and roll, with strange convulsions rack'd,
Drinking salt-water like a mountain-stream,
Tearing, and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,
And, with hyaena laughter, died despairing.

« * «

103

As they drew nigh the land, which now was seen
Unequal in its aspect here and there,
They felt the freshness of its growing green,
That waved in forest-tops, and smooth'd the air,
And fell upon their glazed eyes like a screen
From glistening waves, and skies so hot and bare—
Lovely seem'd any object that should sweep
Away the vast, salt, dread, eternal deep.

104

The shore look'd wild, without a trace of man,
And girt by formidable waves; but they
Were mad for land, and thus their course they ran,
Though right ahead the roaring breakers lay:
A reef between them also now began
To show its boiling surf and bounding spray,
But finding no place for their landing better,
They ran the boat for shore, and overset her.

105

But in his native stream, the Guadalquivir,
Juan to lave° his youthful limbs was wont; *bathe*
And having learnt to swim in that sweet river,
Had often turn'd the art to some account:
A better swimmer you could scarce see ever,
He could, perhaps, have pass'd the Hellespont,
As once (a feat on which ourselves we prided)
Leander, Mr. Ekenhead, and I did.[9]

106

So here, though faint, emaciated, and stark,
He buoy'd his boyish limbs, and strove to ply
With the quick wave, and gain, ere it was dark,
The beach which lay before him, high and dry:
The greatest danger here was from a shark,
That carried off his neighbour by the thigh;
As for the other two, they could not swim,
So nobody arrived on shore but him.

9. Like Leander in the myth, Byron and Lieutenant Ekenhead had swum the Hellespont, on May 3, 1810. See "Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos" (p. 611).

107

Nor yet had he arrived but for the oar,
Which, providentially for him, was wash'd
Just as his feeble arms could strike no more,
And the hard wave o'erwhelm'd him as 'twas dash'd
Within his grasp; he clung to it, and sore
The waters beat while he thereto was lash'd;
At last, with swimming, wading, scrambling, he
Roll'd on the beach, half senseless, from the sea:

108

There, breathless, with his digging nails he clung
Fast to the sand, lest the returning wave,
From whose reluctant roar his life he wrung,
Should suck him back to her insatiate grave:
And there he lay, full length, where he was flung,
Before the entrance of a cliff-worn cave,
With just enough of life to feel its pain,
And deem that it was saved, perhaps, in vain.

109

With slow and staggering effort he arose,
But sunk again upon his bleeding knee
And quivering hand; and then he look'd for those
Who long had been his mates upon the sea,
But none of them appear'd to share his woes,
Save one, a corpse from out the famish'd three,
Who died two days before, and now had found
An unknown barren beach for burial ground.

no

And as he gazed, his dizzy brain spun fast,
And down he sunk; and as he sunk, the sand
Swam round and round, and all his senses pass'd:
He fell upon his side, and his stretch'd hand
Droop'd dripping on the oar, (their jury-mast)[1]
And, like a wither'd lily, on the land
His slender frame and pallid aspect lay,
As fair a thing as e'er was form'd of clay.

[JUAN AND HAIDEE]

III

How long in his damp trance young Juan lay
He knew not, for the earth was gone for him,
And Time had nothing more of night nor day
For his congealing blood, and senses dim;
And how this heavy faintness pass'd away
He knew not, till each painful pulse and limb,
And tingling vein seem'd throbbing back to life,
For Death, though vanquish'd, still retired with strife.

1. A mast put up in the place of one that has been carried away or broken.

112

His eyes he open'd, shut, again unclosed,
For all was doubt and dizziness; methought
He still was in the boat, and had but dozed,
And felt again with his despair o'erwrought,
And wish'd it death in which he had reposed,
And then once more his feelings back were brought,
And slowly by his swimming eyes was seen
A lovely female face of seventeen.

'Twas bending close o'er his, and the small mouth
Seem'd almost prying into his for breath;
And chafing him, the soft warm hand of youth
Recall'd his answering spirits back from death;
And, bathing his chill temples, tried to soothe
Each pulse to animation, till beneath
Its gentle touch and trembling care, a sigh
To these kind efforts made a low reply.

114

Then was the cordial pour'd, and mantle flung
Around his scarce-clad limbs; and the fair arm
Raised higher the faint head which o'er it hung;
And her transparent cheek, all pure and warm,
Pillow'd his death-like forehead; then she wrung
His dewy curls, long drench'd by every storm;
And watch'd with eagerness each throb that drew
A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers, too.

" 5

And lifting him with care into the cave,
The gentle girl, and her attendant,—one
Young, yet her elder, and of brow less grave,
And more robust of figure,—then begun
To kindle fire, and as the new flames gave
Light to the rocks that roof'd them, which the sun
Had never seen, the maid, or whatsoe'er
She was, appear'd distinct, and tall, and fair.

116

Her brow was overhung with coins of gold,
That sparkled o'er the auburn of her hair,
Her clustering hair, whose longer locks were roll'd
In braids behind, and though her stature were
Even of the highest for a female mould,
They nearly reach'd her heel; and in her air
There was a something which bespoke command,
As one who was a lady in the land.

117

Her hair, I said, was auburn; but her eyes
Were black as death, their lashes the same hue,
Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies

Deepest attraction, for when to the view
Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
Ne'er with such force the swiftest arrow flew;
'Tis as the snake late coil'd, who pours his length,
And hurls at once his venom and his strength.

123

And these two tended him, and cheer'd him both
With food and raiment, and those soft attentions,
Which are (as I must own) of female growth,
And have ten thousand delicate inventions:
They made a most superior mess of broth,
A thing which poesy but seldom mentions,
But the best dish that e'er was cook'd since Homer's
Achilles order'd dinner for new comers.[2]

124

I'll tell you who they were, this female pair,
Lest they should seem princesses in disguise;
Besides, I hate all mystery, and that air
Of clap-trap, which your recent poets prize;
And so, in short, the girls they really were
They shall appear before your curious eyes,
Mistress and maid; the first was only daughter
Of an old man, who lived upon the water.

125

A fisherman he had been in his youth,
And still a sort of fisherman was he;
But other speculations were, in sooth,
Added to his connection with the sea,
Perhaps not so respectable, in truth:
A little smuggling, and some piracy,
Left him, at last, the sole of many masters
Of an ill-gotten million of piastres.[3]

126

A fisher, therefore, was he—though of men,
Like Peter the Apostle,[4]—and he fish'd
For wandering merchant vessels, now and then,
And sometimes caught as many as he wish'd;
The cargoes he confiscated, and gain
He sought in the slave-market too, and dish'd
Full many a morsel for that Turkish trade,
By which, no doubt, a good deal may be made.

2. A reference to the lavish feast with which Achilles entertained Ajax, Phoenix, and Ulysses (*Iliad* 9.193ff.l.
3. Near-Eastern coins.
4. Christ's words to Peter and Andrew, both fishermen: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4.19).

101

He was a Greek, and on his isle had built
(One of the wild and smaller Cyclades)[5]
A very handsome house from out his guilt,
And there he lived exceedingly at ease;
Heaven knows what cash he got, or blood he spilt,
A sad[6] old fellow was he, if you please,
But this I know, it was a spacious building,
Full of barbaric carving, paint, and gilding.

128

He had an only daughter, call'd Haidee,
The greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles;
Besides, so very beautiful was she,
Her dowry was as nothing to her smiles:
Still in her teens, and like a lovely tree
She grew to womanhood, and between whiles
Rejected several suitors, just to learn
How to accept a better in his turn.

129

And walking out upon the beach, below
The cliff, towards sunset, on that day she found,
Insensible,"—not dead, but nearly so,— *unconscious*
Don Juan, almost famish'd, and half drown'd;
But being naked, she was shock'd, you know,
Yet deem'd herself in common pity bound,
As far as in her lay, "to take him in,
A stranger"[7] dying, with so white a skin.

130

But taking him into her father's house
Was not exactly the best way to save,
But like conveying to the cat the mouse,
Or people in a trance into their grave;
Because the good old man had so much "*vovg,* "[8]
Unlike the honest Arab thieves so brave,
He would have hospitably cured the stranger,
And sold him instantly when out of danger.

131

And therefore, with her maid, she thought it best
(A virgin always on her maid relies)
To place him in the cave for present rest:
And when, at last, he open'd his black eyes,
Their charity increased about their guest;
And their compassion grew to such a size,
It open'd half the turnpike-gates to heaven—
(St. Paul says 'tis the toll which must be given).[9]

* #

5. A group of islands in the Aegean Sea.
6. In the playful sense: wicked.
7. Cf. Matthew 25.35: "I was a stranger, and ye took me in."
8. *Nous,* intelligence (Greek); in England pronounced so as to rhyme with *mouse.*
9. 1 Corinthians 13.13: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

141

And Haidee met the morning face to face;
Her own was freshest, though a feverish flush
Had dyed it with the headlong blood, whose race
From heart to cheek is curb'd into a blush,
Like to a torrent which a mountain's base,
That overpowers some Alpine river's rush,
Checks to a lake, whose waves in circles spread;
Or the Red Sea—but the sea is not red.

142

And down the cliff the island virgin came,
And near the cave her quick light footsteps drew,
While the sun smiled on her with his first flame,
And young Aurora° kiss'd her lips with dew, *dawn*
Taking her for a sister; just the same
Mistake you would have made on seeing the two,
Although the mortal, quite as fresh and fair,
Had all the advantage too of not being air.

143

And when into the cavern Haidee stepp'd
All timidly, yet rapidly, she saw
That like an infant Juan sweetly slept;
And then she stopp'd, and stood as if in awe,
(For sleep is awful)° and on tiptoe crept *awe-inspiring*
And wrapt him closer, lest the air, too raw,
Should reach his blood, then o'er him still as death
Bent, with hush'd lips, that drank his scarce-drawn breath.

148

And she bent o'er him, and he lay beneath,
Hush'd as the babe upon its mother's breast,
Droop'd as the willow when no winds can breathe,
Lull'd like the depth of ocean when at rest,
Fair as the crowning rose of the whole wreath,
Soft as the callow° cygnet° in its nest; *young/swan*
In short, he was a very pretty fellow,
Although his woes had turn'd him rather yellow.

149

He woke and gazed, and would have slept again,
But the fair face which met his eyes forbade
Those eyes to close, though weariness and pain
Had further sleep a further pleasure made;
For woman's face was never form'd in vain
For Juan, so that even when he pray'd
He turn'd from grisly saints, and martyrs hairy,
To the sweet portraits of the Virgin Mary.

150

And thus upon his elbow he arose,
And look'd upon the lady, in whose cheek

The pale contended with the purple rose,
As with an effort she began to speak;
Her eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
Although she told him, in good modern Greek,
With an Ionian accent, low and sweet,
That he was faint, and must not talk, but eat.

s s

168

And every day by day-break—-rather early
For Juan, who was somewhat fond of rest—
She came into the cave, but it was merely
To see her bird reposing in his nest;
And she would softly stir his locks so curly,
Without disturbing her yet slumbering guest,
Breathing all gently o'er his cheek and mouth,
As o'er a bed of roses the sweet south.[1]

169

And every morn his colour freshlier came,
And every day help'd on his convalescence;
'Twas well, because health in the human frame
Is pleasant, besides being true love's essence,
For health and idleness to passion's flame
Are oil and gunpowder; and some good lessons
Are also learnt from Ceres[2] and from Bacchus,
Without whom Venus will not long attack us.

170

While Venus fills the heart (without heart really
Love, though good always, is not quite so good)
Ceres presents a plate of vermicelli,—
For love must be sustain'd like flesh and blood,—
While Bacchus pours out wine, or hands a jelly:
Eggs, oysters too, are amatory food;
But who is their purveyor from above
Heaven knows,—it may be Neptune, Pan, or Jove.

171

When Juan woke he found some good things ready,
A bath, a breakfast, and the finest eyes
That ever made a youthful heart less steady,
Besides her maid's, as pretty for their size;
But I have spoken of all this already—
And repetition's tiresome and unwise,—
Well—Juan, after bathing in the sea,
Came always back to coffee and Haidee.

172

Both were so young, and one so innocent,
That bathing pass'd for nothing; Juan seem'd

1. The south wind.
2. Ceres, goddess of the grain; Bacchus, god of wine and revelry.

To her, as 'twere, the kind of being sent,
Of whom these two years she had nightly dream'd,
A something to be loved, a creature meant
To be her happiness, and whom she deem'd
To render happy; all who joy would win
Must share it,—Happiness was born a twin.

173

It was such pleasure to behold him, such
Enlargement of existence to partake
Nature with him, to thrill beneath his touch,
To watch him slumbering, and to see him wake:
To live with him for ever were too much;
But then the thought of parting made her quake:
He was her own, her ocean-treasure, cast
Like a rich wreck—her first love, and her last.

174

And thus a moon° roll'd on, and fair Haidee *month*
Paid daily visits to her boy, and took
Such plentiful precautions, that still he
Remain'd unknown within his craggy nook;
At last her father's prows put out to sea,
For certain merchantmen upon the look,
Not as of yore to carry off an Io,[3]
But three Ragusan vessels, bound for Scio.[4]

175

Then came her freedom, for she had no mother,
So that, her father being at sea, she was
Free as a married woman, or such other
Female, as where she likes may freely pass,
Without even the encumbrance of a brother,
The freest she that ever gazed on glass:° *in a mirror*
I speak of christian lands in this comparison,
Where wives, at least, are seldom kept in garrison.

176

Now she prolong'd her visits and her talk
(For they must talk), and he had learnt to say
So much as to propose to take a walk,—
For little had he wander'd since the day
On which, like a young flower snapp'd from the stalk,
Drooping and dewy on the beach he lay,—
And thus they walk'd out in the afternoon,
And saw the sun set opposite the moon.

177

It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,

3. A mistress of Zeus who was persecuted by his jealous wife, Hera, and kidnapped by Phoenician merchants.

4. The Italian name for Chios, an island near Turkey. "Ragusan": Ragusa (or Dubrovnik) is an Adriatic port located in what is now Croatia.

With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost;
And rarely ceas'd the haughty billow's roar,
Save on the dead long summer days, which make
The outstretch'd ocean glitter like a lake.

178

And the small ripple spilt upon the beach
Scarcely o'erpass'd the cream of your champagne,
When o'er the brim the sparkling bumpers reach,
That spring-dew of the spirit! the heart's rain!
Few things surpass old wine; and they may preach
Who please,—the more because they preach in vain,—
Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter,
Sermons and soda water the day after.

179

Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
The best of life is but intoxication:
Glory, the grape, love, gold, in these are sunk
The hopes of all men, and of every nation;
Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk
Of life's strange tree, so fruitful on occasion:
But to return,—Get very drunk; and when
You wake with head-ache, you shall see what then.

180

Ring for your valet—bid him quickly bring
Some hock and soda-water, then you'll know
A pleasure worthy Xerxes' the great king;
For not the blest sherbet, sublimed with snow,
Nor the first sparkle of the desert-spring,
Nor Burgundy in all its sunset glow,
After long travel, ennui, love, or slaughter,
Vie with that draught of hock and soda-water.

181

The coast—I think it was the coast that I
Was just describing—Yes, it *was* the coast—
Lay at this period quiet as the sky,
The sands untumbled, the blue waves untost,
And all was stillness, save the sea-bird's cry,
And dolphin's leap, and little billow crost
By some low rock or shelve, that made it fret
Against the boundary it scarcely wet.

182

And forth they wandered, her sire being gone,
As I have said, upon an expedition;
And mother, brother, guardian, she had none,
Save Zoe, who, although.with due precision
She waited on her lady with the sun,

5. The 5th-century Persian king was said to have offered a reward to anyone who could discover a new kind of pleasure.

Thought daily service was her only mission,
Bringing warm water, wreathing her long tresses,
And asking now and then for cast-off dresses.

183

It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,
Circling all nature, hush'd, and dim, and still,
With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill
Upon the other, and the rosy sky,
With one star sparkling through it like an eye.

184

And thus they wander'd forth, and hand in hand,
Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
And in the worn and wild receptacles
Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were plann'd,
In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
They turn'd to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

185.

They look'd up to the sky, whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
They heard the wave's splash, and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other—and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss;

186

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love,
And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above;
Such kisses as belong to early days,
Where heart, and soul, and sense, in concert move,
And the blood's lava, and the pulse a blaze,
Each kiss a heart-quake,—for a kiss's strength,
I think, it must be reckon'd by its length.

187

By length I mean duration; theirs endured
Heaven knows how long—no doubt they never reckon'd;
And if they had, they could not have secured
The sum of their sensations to a second:
They had not spoken; but they felt allured,
As if their souls and lips each other beckon'd,
Which, being join'd, like swarming bees they clung—
Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung.

188

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay,
The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

189

They fear'd no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
They felt no terrors from the night, they were
All in all to each other: though their speech
Was broken words, they *thought* a language there,—
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of nature's oracle—first love,—that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

190

Haidee[6] spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows,
Nor offer'd any; she had never heard
Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
Or perils by a loving maid incurr'd;
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
And flew to her young mate like a young bird;
And, never having dreamt of falsehood, she
Had not one word to say of constancy.

191

She loved, and was beloved—she adored,
And she was worshipp'd; after nature's fashion,
Their intense souls, into each other pour'd,
If souls could die, had perish'd in that passion,—
But by degrees their senses were restored,
Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on;
And, beating 'gainst *his* bosom, Haidee's heart
Felt as if never more to beat apart.

192

Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
And, having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity can not annul,
But pays off moments in an endless shower
Of hell-fire—all prepared for people giving
Pleasure or pain to one another living.

6. Byron said, with reference to Haidee: "I was, and am, penetrated with the conviction that women only know evil from men, whereas men have no criterion to judge of purity or goodness but woman."

'93

Alas! for Juan and Haidee! they were
So loving and so lovely—till then never,
Excepting our first parents, such a pair
Had run the risk of being damn'd for ever;
And Haidee, being devout as well as fair,
Had, doubtless, heard about the Stygian river,[7]
And hell and purgatory—but forgot
Just in the very crisis she should not.

194

They look upon each other, and their eyes
Gleam in the moonlight; and her white arm clasps
Round Juan's head, and his around hers lies
Half buried in the tresses which it grasps;
She sits upon his knee, and drinks his sighs,
He hers, until they end in broken gasps;
And thus they form a group that's quite antique,
Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek.

195

And when those deep and burning moments pass'd,
And Juan sunk to sleep within her arms,
She slept not, but all tenderly, though fast,
Sustain'd his head upon her bosom's charms;
And now and then her eye to heaven is cast,
And then on the pale cheek her breast now warms,
Pillow'd on her o'erflowing heart, which pants
With all it granted, and with all it grants.

196

An infant when it gazes on a light,
A child the moment when it drains the breast,
A devotee when soars the Host[8] in sight,
An Arab with a stranger for a guest,
A sailor when the prize has struck[9] in fight,
A miser filling his most hoarded chest,
Feel rapture; but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

197

For there it lies so tranquil, so beloved,
All that it hath of life with us is living;
So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,
And all unconscious of the joy 'tis giving;
All it hath felt, inflicted, pass'd, and proved,
Hush'd into depths beyond the watcher's diving;
There lies the thing we love with all its errors
And all its charms, like death without its terrors.

7. The Styx, which flows through Hades.
8. The bread or wafer that a priest consecrates to celebrate Mass.
9. When a captured vessel (a "prize") lowers its flag in token of surrender.

101

The lady watch'd her lover—and that hour
Of Love's, and Night's, and Ocean's solitude,
O'erflow'd her soul with their united power;
Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude
She and her wave-worn love had made their bower,
Where nought upon their passion could intrude,
And all the stars that crowded the blue space
Saw nothing happier than her glowing face.

199

Alas! the love of women! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them but mockeries of the past alone,
And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real
Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel.

200

They are right; for man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to women; one sole bond
Awaits them, treachery is all their trust;
Taught to conceal, their bursting hearts despond
Over their idol, till some wealthier lust
Buys them in marriage—and what rests beyond?
A thankless husband, next a faithless lover,
Then dressing, nursing, praying, and all's over.

201

Some take a lover, some take drams[a] or prayers, *drink*
Some mind their household, others dissipation,
Some run away, and but exchange their cares,
Losing the advantage of a virtuous station;
Few changes e'er can better their affairs,
Theirs being an unnatural situation,
From the dull palace to the dirty hovel:
Some play the devil, and then write a novel.[1]

202

Haidee was Nature's bride, and knew not this;
Haidee was Passion's child, born where the sun
Showers triple light, and scorches even the kiss
Of his gazelle-eyed daughters; she was one
Made but to love, to feel that she was his
Who was her chosen: what was said or done
Elsewhere was nothing—She had nought to fear,
Hope, care, nor love beyond, her heart beat *here.*

1. The impetuous Lady Caroline Lamb, having thrown herself at Byron and been after a time rejected, incorporated incidents from the affair in her novel *Glenarvon* (1816).

203

And oh! that quickening of the heart, that beat!
How much it costs us! yet each rising throb
Is in its cause as its effect so sweet,
That Wisdom, ever on the watch to rob
Joy of its alchymy, and to repeat
Fine truths, even Conscience, too, has a tough job
To make us understand each good old maxim,
So good—I wonder Castlereagh[2] don't tax 'em.

204

And now 'twas done—on the lone shore were plighted
Their hearts; the stars, their nuptial torches, shed
Beauty upon the beautiful they lighted:
Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed,
By their own feelings hallow'd and united,
Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed:
And they were happy, for to their young eyes
Each was an angel, and earth paradise.[3]

* # «

208

But Juan! had he quite forgotten Julia?
And should he have forgotten her so soon?
I can't but say it seems to me most truly a
Perplexing question; but, no doubt, the moon
Does these things for us, and whenever newly a
Strong palpitation rises,'tis her boon,
Else how the devil is it that fresh features
Have such a charm for us poor human creatures?

209

I hate inconstancy—I loathe, detest,
Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made
Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
No permanent foundation can be laid;
Love, constant love, has been my constant guest,
And yet last night, being at a masquerade,
I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,
Which gave me some sensations like a villain.

210

But soon Philosophy came to my aid,
And whisper'd "think of every sacred tie!"
"I will, my dear Philosophy!" I said,
"But then her teeth, and then, Oh heaven! her eye!

2. Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, detested by Byron for the ruthlessness he had shown in 1798 as the government's chief secretary for Ireland and for the foreign policy he later pursued as foreign secretary (1812—22). His belligerence with political opponents contributed to his unpopularity. Byron refers to a famously testy speech in which Castlereagh complained of "an ignorant impatience of taxation."

3. This episode rewrites *Aeneid* 4 in which, influenced by the malicious goddess Juno's love spells, the hero Aeneas and Dido, queen of Carthage, consummate their union in the cave in which they have taken refuge from a storm.

I'll just inquire if she be wife or maid,
Or neither—out of curiosity."
"Stop!" cried Philosophy, with air so Grecian,
(Though she was masqued then as a fair Venetian).

211

"Stop!" so I stopp'd.—But to return: that which
Men call inconstancy is nothing more
Than admiration due where nature's rich
Profusion with young beauty covers o'er
Some favour'd object; and as in the niche
A lovely statue we almost adore,
This sort of adoration of the real
Is but a heightening of the "beau ideal."[4]

212

'Tis the perception of the beautiful,
A fine extension of the faculties,
Platonic, universal, wonderful,
Drawn from the stars, and filter'd through the skies,
Without which life would be extremely dull;
In short, it is the use of our own eyes,
With one or two small senses added, just
To hint that flesh is form'd of fiery dust.

213

Yet 'tis a painful feeling, and unwilling,
For surely if we always could perceive
In the same object graces quite as killing
As when she rose upon us like an Eve,
'Twould save us many a heart-ache, many a shilling,
(For we must get them anyhow, or grieve),
Whereas, if one sole lady pleased for ever,
How pleasant for the heart, as well as liver!

216

In the mean time, without proceeding more
In this anatomy, I've finish'd now
Two hundred and odd stanzas as before,
That being about the number I'll allow
Each canto of the twelve, or twenty-four;
And, laying down my pen, I make my bow,
Leaving Don Juan and Haidee to plead
For them and theirs with all who deign to read.

4. Ideal beauty (French), a common phrase in discussions of aesthetics.

From Canto 3

[JUAN AND HAIDEE]

1

Hail, Muse! *et cetera.*—We left Juan sleeping,
Pillow'd upon a fair and happy breast,
And watch'd by eyes that never yet knew weeping,
And loved by a young heart, too deeply blest
To feel the poison through her spirit creeping,
Or know who rested there, a foe to rest
Had soil'd the current of her sinless years,
And turn'd her pure heart's purest blood to tears.

2

Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah why
With cypress branches[1] hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers,
And place them on their breast—but place to die!
Thus the frail beings we would fondly cherish
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish.

3

In her first passion woman loves her lover,
In all the others all she loves is love,[2]
Which grows a habit she can ne'er get over,
And fits her loosely—like an easy glove,
As you may find, whene'er you like to prove" her: *test*
One man alone at first her heart can move;
She then prefers him in the plural number,
Not finding that the additions much encumber.

4

I know not if the fault be men's or theirs;
But one thing's pretty sure; a woman planted[3]—
(Unless at once she plunge for life in prayers)—
After a decent time must be gallanted;
Although, no doubt, her first of love affairs
Is that to which her heart is wholly granted;
Yet there are some, they say, who have had *none,*
But those who have ne'er end with only *one.*[4]

5

'Tis melancholy, and a fearful sign
Of human frailty, folly, also crime,
That love and marriage rarely can combine,
Although they both are born in the same clime;
Marriage from love, like vinegar from wine—

1. Signifying sorrow.
2. An epigram that Bvron translates from the 17th-century French wit Francois de la Rochefoucauld.
3. Abandoned (from the French *planter la,* to leave in the lurch).
4. Another epigram from la Rochefoucauld.

A sad, sour, sober beverage—by time
Is sharpen'd from its high celestial flavour
Down to a very homely household savour.

6

There's something of antipathy, as 'twere,
Between their present and their future state;
A kind of flattery that's hardly fair
Is used until the truth arrives too late—
Yet what can people do, except despair?
The same things change their names at such a rate;
For instance—passion in a lover's glorious,
But in a husband is pronounced uxorious.

7

Men grow ashamed of being so very fond;
They sometimes also get a little tired
(But that, of course, is rare), and then despond:
The same things cannot always be admired,
Yet 'tis "so nominated in the bond,"[5]
That both are tied till one shall have expired.
Sad thought! to lose the spouse that was adorning
Our days, and put one's servants into mourning.

8

There's doubtless something in domestic doings,
Which forms, in fact, true love's antithesis;
Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
But only give a bust of marriages;
For no one cares for matrimonial cooings,
There's nothing wrong in a connubial kiss:
Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?[6]

9

All tragedies are finish'd by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage;
The future states of both are left to faith,
For authors fear description might disparage
The worlds to come of both, or fall beneath,
And then both worlds would punish their miscarriage;
So leaving each their priest and prayer-book ready,
They say no more of Death or of the Lady.[7]

10

The only two that in my recollection
Have sung of heaven and hell, or marriage, are
Dante and Milton, and of both the affection
Was hapless in their nuptials, for some bar
Of fault or temper ruin'd the connexion
(Such things, in fact, it don't ask much to mar);

5. Spoken by Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* 4.1.254: "Is it so nominated in the bond?"

6. The 14th-century Italian poet Petrarch made Laura the subject of his sonnets but loved her only from afar.

7. Alluding to a popular ballad, "Death and the Lady."

But Dante's Beatrice and Milton's Eve
Were not drawn from their spouses, you conceive.

11

Some persons say that Dante meant theology
By Beatrice, and not a mistress—I,
Although my opinion may require apology,
Deem this a commentator's phantasy,
Unless indeed it was from his own knowledge he
Decided thus, and show'd good reason why;
I think that Dante's more abstruse ecstatics
Meant to personify the mathematics.

12

Haidee and Juan were not married, but
The fault was theirs, not mine: it is not fair,
Chaste reader, then, in any way to put
The blame on me, unless you wish they were;
Then if you'd have them wedded, please to shut
The book which treats of this erroneous pair,
Before the consequences grow too awful;
'Tis dangerous to read of loves unlawful.

13

Yet they were happy,—happy in the illicit
Indulgence of their innocent desires;
But more imprudent grown with every visit,
Haidee forgot the island was her sire's;
When we have what we like,'tis hard to miss it,
At least in the beginning, ere one tires;
Thus she came often, not a moment losing,
Whilst her piratical papa was cruising.

14

Let not his mode of raising cash seem strange,
Although he fleeced the flags of every nation,
For into a prime minister but change
His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation;
But he, more modest, took an humbler range
Of life, and in an honester vocation
Pursued o'er the high seas his watery journey,
And merely practised as a sea-attorney.

15

The good old gentleman had been detain'd
By winds and waves, and some important captures;
And, in the hope of more, at sea remain'd,
Although a squall or two had damp'd his raptures,
By swamping one of the prizes; he had chain'd
His prisoners, dividing them like chapters
In number'd lots; they all had cuffs and collars,
And averaged each from ten to a hundred dollars.

19

Then having settled his marine affairs,
Despatching single cruisers here and there,
His vessel having need of some repairs,
He shaped his course to where his daughter fair
Continued still her hospitable cares;
But that part of the coast being shoal and bare,
And rough with reefs which ran out many a mile,
His port lay on the other side o' the isle.

20

And there he went ashore without delay,
Having no custom-house nor quarantine
To ask him awkward questions on the way
About the time and place where he had been:
He left his ship to be hove down next day,
With orders to the people to careen;[8]
So that all hands were busy beyond measure,
In getting out goods, ballast, guns, and treasure.

* * *

27

He saw his white walls shining in the sun,
His garden trees all shadowy and green;
He heard his rivulet's light bubbling run,
The distant dog-bark; and perceived between
The umbrage of the wood so cool and dun
The moving figures, and the sparkling sheen
Of arms (in the East all arm)—and various dyes
Of colour'd garbs, as bright as butterflies.

28

And as the spot where they appear he nears,
Surprised at these unwonted signs of idling,
He hears—alas! no music of the spheres,
But an unhallow'd, earthly sound of fiddling!
A melody which made him doubt his ears,
The cause being past his guessing or unriddling;
A pipe, too, and a drum, and shortly after,
A most unoriental roar of laughter.

* * *

38

He did not know (Alas! how men will lie)
That a report (especially the Greeks)
Avouch'd his death (such people never die),
And put his house in mourning several weeks,
But now their eyes and also lips were dry;
The bloom too had return'd to Haidee's cheeks.

8. To tip a vessel on its side to clean and repair its hull. "To be hove down": to weigh anchor.

Her tears too being return'd into their fount,
She now kept house upon her own account.

39

Hence all this rice, meat, dancing, wine, and fiddling,
Which turn'd the isle into a place of pleasure;
The servants all were getting drunk or idling,
A life which made them happy beyond measure.
Her father's hospitality seem'd middling,
Compared with what Haidee did with his treasure;
'Twas wonderful how things went on improving,
While she had not one hour to spare from loving.

40

Perhaps you think in stumbling on this feast
He flew into a passion, and in fact
There was no mighty reason to be pleased;
Perhaps you prophesy some sudden act,
The whip, the rack, or dungeon at the least,
To teach his people to be more exact,
And that, proceeding at a very high rate,
He showed the royal *penchants* of a pirate.

41

You're wrong.—He was the mildest manner'd man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat;
With such true breeding of a gentleman,
You never could divine his real thought;
No courtier could, and scarcely woman can
Gird more deceit within a petticoat;
Pity he loved adventurous life's variety,
He was so great a loss to good society.

* * *

48

Not that he was not sometimes rash or so,
But never in his real and serious mood;
Then calm, concentrated, and still, and slow,
He lay coil'd like the boa in the wood;
With him it never was a word and blow,
His angry word once o'er, he shed no blood,
But in his silence there was much to rue,
And his *one* blow left little work for *two.*

49

He ask'd no further questions, and proceeded
On to the house, but by a private way,
So that the few who met him hardly heeded,
So little they expected him that day;
If love paternal in his bosom pleaded
For Haidee's sake, is more than I can say,
But certainly to one deem'd dead returning,
This revel seem'd a curious mode of mourning.

If all the dead could now return to life,
(Which God forbid!) or some, or a great many,
For instance, if a husband or his wife
(Nuptial examples are as good as any),
No doubt whate'er might be their former strife,
The present weather would be much more rainy—
Tears shed into the grave of the connexion
Would share most probably its resurrection.

51

He enter'd in the house no more his home,
A thing to human feelings the most trying,
And harder for the heart to overcome,
Perhaps, than even the mental pangs of dying;
To find our hearthstone turn'd into a tomb,
And round its once warm precincts palely lying
The ashes of our hopes, is a deep grief,
Beyond a single gentleman's belief.

52

He enter'd in the house—his home no more,
For without hearts there is no home;—and felt
The solitude of passing his own door
Without a welcome; *there* he long had dwelt,
There his few peaceful days Time had swept o'er,
There his worn bosom and keen eye would melt
Over the innocence of that sweet child,
His only shrine of feelings undefiled.

53

He was a man of a strange temperament,
Of mild demeanour though of savage mood,
Moderate in all his habits, and content
With temperance in pleasure, as in food,
Quick to perceive, and strong to bear, and meant
For something better, if not wholly good;
His country's wrongs[9] and his despair to save her
Had stung him from a slave to an enslaver.

a # #

96

But let me to my story: I must own,
If I have any fault, it is digression;
Leaving my people to proceed alone,
While I soliloquize beyond expression;
But these are my addresses from the throne,[1]
Which put off business to the ensuing session:
Forgetting each omission is a loss to
The world, not quite so great as Ariosto.[2]

9. Referring to the Greek nation's subjugation by the Ottoman Empire.

1. The speeches with which the British monarch opens sessions of Parliament.

2. Byron warmly admired this poet, author of *Orlando Furioso* (1 532), the greatest of the Italian chivalric romances.

97

I know that what our neighbours call "*longueurs,* "[3]
(We've not so good a *word,* but have the *thing*
In that complete perfection which ensures
An epic from Bob Southey[4] every spring—)
Form not the true temptation which allures
The reader; but 'twould not be hard to bring
Some fine examples of the epopee,[5]
To prove its grand ingredient is *ennui.*

98

We learn from Horace, Homer sometimes sleeps;[6]
We feel without him: Wordsworth sometimes wakes,
To show with what complacency he creeps,
With his dear "*Waggoners,*"[7] around his lakes;
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
Of ocean?—No, of air; and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And drivels seas to set it well afloat.[8]

99

If he must fain sweep o'er the etherial plain,
And Pegasus[9] runs restive in his "waggon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?[1]
Or pray Medea for a single dragon?[2]
Or if too classic for his vulgar brain,
He fear'd his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

100

"Pedlars,"[3] and "boats," and "waggons!" Oh! Ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades[4]
Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
The "little boatman" and his "Peter Bell"
Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel!"[5]

3. Boringly wordy passages of verse or prose (French).
4. Robert Southey (1774-1843), poet laureate and author of a number of epic-length narrative poems.
5. Epic poem (French).
6. Horace s *Art of Poetry* 359: "Sometimes great Homer nods."
7. A reference to Wordsworth's long narrative poem *The Waggoner* (1819).
8. In the prologue to his poem *Peter Bell* (1819), Wordsworth wishes for "a little boat, / In shape a very crescent-moon: / Fast through the clouds my boat can sail."
9. The winged horse of Greek myth.
1. The constellation known in the United States as the Big Dipper. "Wain" is an archaic term for wagon.
2. When the Argonaut Jason abandoned Medea to take a new wife, she murdered their sons to punish him, then escaped in a chariot drawn by winged dragons.
3. Wordsworth's Peddler is the narrator of the story in his early manuscript *The Ruined Cottage* (p. 280), which was later incorporated into book 1 of *The Excursion* (1814).
4. A rebel commoner who led an uprising against Henry VI in 1450.
5. I.e., John Dryden, author of the satiric *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), whom Byron greatly admired. Wordsworth had criticized Dryden's poetry in the Essay, Supplementary to the Preface to his *Poems* (1815).

101

T' our tale.—The feast was over, the slaves gone,
The dwarfs and dancing girls had all retired;
The Arab lore and poet's song were done,
And every sound of revelry expired;
The lady and her lover, left alone,
The rosy flood of twilight's sky admired;—
Ave Maria![6] o'er the earth and sea,
That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!

102

Ave Maria! blessed be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft,
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seem'd stirr'd with prayer.

103

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty dove—
What though 'tis but a pictured image strike—[7]
That painting is no idol, 'tis too like.

104

Some kinder casuists[8] are pleased to say, *moralists*
In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
But set those persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest notion
Of getting into Heaven the shortest way;
My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the soul.

* « *

From Canto 4

[JUAN AND HAIDEE]

3

As boy, I thought myself a clever fellow,
And wish'd that others held the same opinion;

6. Hail, Mary (Latin); the opening words of a Roman Catholic prayer. *Ave Maria* is sometimes used to refer to evening (or morning), because the prayer is part of the service at these times.
7. I.e., "those downcast eyes" seize the attention.

They took it up when my days grew more mellow,
And other minds acknowledged my dominion:
Now my sere fancy "falls into the yellow
Leaf,"[1] and imagination droops her pinion,[o] *wing*
And the sad truth which hovers o'er my desk
Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.

4

And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
'Tis that I may not weep; and if I weep,
'Tis that our nature cannot always bring
Itself to apathy, for we must steep
Our hearts first in the depths of Lethe's[2] spring
Ere what we least wish to behold will sleep:
Thetis baptized her mortal son in Styx;[3]
A mortal mother would on Lethe fix.

5

Some have accused me of a strange design
Against the creed and morals of the land,
And trace it in this poem every line:
I don't pretend that I quite understand
My own meaning when I would be *very* fine,
But the fact is that I have nothing plann'd,
Unless it were to be a moment merry,
A novel word in my vocabulary.

6

To the kind reader of our sober clime
This way of writing will appear exotic;
Pulci[4] was sire of the half-serious rhyme,
Who sang when chivalry was more Quixotic,
And revell'd in the fancies of the time,
True knights, chaste dames, huge giants, kings despotic;
But all these, save the last, being obsolete,
I chose a modern subject as more meet.

7

How I have treated it, I do not know;
Perhaps no better than they have treated me
Who have imputed such designs as show
Not what they saw, but what they wish'd to see;
But if it gives them pleasure, be it so,
This is a liberal age, and thoughts are free:
Meantime Apollo plucks me by the ear,
And tells me to resume my story here.

1. Cf. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 5.3.22-24: "My way of life / Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf."
2. A river in Hades that brings forgetfulness of life.
3. The river in Hades into which the nymph Thetis dipped Achilles to make him invulnerable.
4. Author of the *Morgante Maggiore,* prototype of the Italian seriocomic romance from which Byron derived the stanza and manner of *Don Juan* (see headnote, p. 669).

Juan and Haidee gazed upon each other
With swimming looks of speechless tenderness,
Which mix'd all feelings, friend, child, lover, brother,
All that the best can mingle and express
When two pure hearts are pour'd in one another,
And love too much, and yet can not love less;
But almost sanctify the sweet excess
By the immortal wish and power to bless.

27

Mix'd in each other's arms, and heart in heart,
Why did they not then die?—they had lived too long
Should an hour come to bid them breathe apart;
Years could but bring them cruel things or wrong,
The world was not for them, nor the world's art[5]
For beings passionate as Sappho's song;
Love was born *with* them, *in* them, so intense,
It was their very spirit—not a sense.

28

They should have lived together deep in woods,
Unseen as sings the nightingale; they were
Unfit to mix in these thick solitudes
Call'd social, haunts of Hate, and Vice, and Care:
How lonely every freeborn creature broods!
The sweetest song-birds nestle in a pair;
The eagle soars alone; the gull and crow
Flock o'er their carrion, just like men below.

29

Now pillow'd cheek to cheek, in loving sleep,
Haidee and Juan their siesta took,
A gentle slumber, but it was not deep,
For ever and anon a something shook
Juan, and shuddering o'er his frame would creep;
And Haidee's sweet lips murmur'd like a brook
A wordless music, and her face so fair
Stirr'd with her dream as rose-leaves with the air;

30

Or as the stirring of a deep clear stream
Within an Alpine hollow, when the wind
Walks o'er it, was she shaken by the dream,
The mystical usurper of the mind—
O'erpowering us to be whate'er may seem
Good to the soul which we no more can bind;
Strange state of being! (for 'tis still to be)
Senseless to feel, and with seal'd eyes to see.

31

She dream'd of being alone on the sea-shore,
Chain'd to a rock; she knew not how, but stir

5. An echo of Romeo's words to the impoverished apothecary: "The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law" (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* 5.1.72).

She could not from the spot, and the loud roar
  Grew, and each wave rose roughly, threatening her;
And o'er her upper lip they seem'd to pour,
  Until she sobb'd for breath, and soon they were
Foaming o'er her lone head, so fierce and high—
Each broke to drown her, yet she could not die.

32

Anon—she was released, and then she stray'd
  O'er the sharp shingles[9] with her bleeding feet, *loose pebbles*
And stumbled almost every step she made;
  And something roll'd before her in a sheet,
Which she must still pursue howe'er afraid;
  'Twas white and indistinct, nor stopp'd to meet
Her glance nor grasp, for still she gazed and grasp'd,
And ran, but it escaped her as she clasp'd.

33

The dream changed; in a cave she stood, its walls
  Were hung with marble icicles; the work
Of ages on its water-fretted halls,
  Where waves might wash, and seals might breed and lurk;
Her hair was dripping, and the very balls
  Of her black eyes seemed turn'd to tears, and murk
The sharp rocks look'd below each drop they caught,
Which froze to marble as it fell, she thought.

34

And wet, and cold, and lifeless at her feet,
  Pale as the foam that froth'd on his dead brow,
Which she essay'd in vain to clear, (how sweet
  Were once her cares, how idle seem'd they now!)
Lay Juan, nor could aught renew the beat
  Of his quench'd heart; and the sea dirges low
Rang in her sad ears like a mermaid's song,
And that brief dream appear'd a life too long.

35

And gazing on the dead, she thought his face
  Faded, or alter'd into something new—
Like to her father's features, till each trace
  More like and like to Lambro's aspect grew—
With all his keen worn look and Grecian grace;
  And starting, she awoke, and what to view?
Oh! Powers of Heaven! what dark eye meets she there?
'Tis—'tis her father's—fix'd upon the pair!

36

Then shrieking, she arose, and shrieking fell,
  With joy and sorrow, hope and fear, to see
Him whom she deem'd a habitant where dwell
  The ocean-buried, risen from death, to be
Perchance the death of one she loved too well:
  Dear as her father had been to Haidee,

It was a moment of that awful kind—
I have seen such—but must not call to mind.

37

Up Juan sprung to Haidee's bitter shriek,
And caught her falling, and from off the wall
Snatch'd down his sabre, in hot haste to wreak
Vengeance on him who was the cause of all:
Then Lambro, who till now forbore to speak,
Smiled scornfully, and said, "Within my call,
A thousand scimitars await the word;
Put up, young man, put up your silly sword."

38

And Haidee clung around him; "Juan,'tis—
'Tis Lambro—'tis my father! Kneel with me—
He will forgive us—yes—it must be—yes.
Oh! dearest father, in this agony
Of pleasure and of pain—even while I kiss
Thy garment's hem with transport, can it be
That doubt should mingle with my filial joy?
Deal with me as thou wilt, but spare this boy."

39

High and inscrutable the old man stood,
Calm in his voice, and calm within his eye—
Not always signs with him of calmest mood:
He look'd upon her, but gave no reply;
Then turn'd to Juan, in whose cheek the blood
Oft came and went, as there resolved to die;
In arms, at least, he stood, in act to spring
On the first foe whom Lambro's call might bring.

40

"Young man, your sword"; so Lambro once more said:
Juan replied, "Not while this arm is free."
The old man's cheek grew pale, but not with dread,
And drawing from his belt a pistol, he
Replied, "Your blood be then on your own head."
Then look'd close at the flint, as if to see
'Twas fresh—for he had lately used the lock[6]—
And next proceeded quietly to cock.

41

It has a strange quick jar upon the ear,
That cocking of a pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the sight to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off, or so;
A gentlemanly distance,[7] not too near,
If you have got a former friend for foe;
But after being fired at once or twice,
The ear becomes more Irish, and less nice.[8]

6. The part of the gun that explodes the charge.
7. I.e., dueling distance.
8. Finicky. Byron alludes to the propensity of hot-headed young Irishmen to fight duels.

42

Lambro presented, and one instant more
Had stopp'd this Canto, and Don Juan's breath,
When Haidee threw herself her boy before;
Stern as her sire: "On me," she cried, "let death
Descend—the fault is mine; this fatal shore
He found—but sought not. I have pledged my faith;
I love him—I will die with him: I knew
Your nature's firmness—know your daughter's too."

43

A minute past, and she had been all tears,
And tenderness, and infancy: but now
She stood as one who champion'd human fears—
Pale, statue-like, and stern, she woo'd the blow;
And tall beyond her sex, and their compeers,[9]
She drew up to her height, as if to show
A fairer mark; and with a fix'd eye scann'd
Her father's face—but never stopp'd his hand.

44

He gazed on her, and she on him; 'twas strange
How like they look'd! the expression was the same;
Serenely savage, with a little change
In the large dark eye's mutual-darted flame;
For she too was as one who could avenge,
If cause should be—a lioness, though tame:
Her father's blood before her father's face
Boil'cl up, and prov'd her truly of his race.

45

I said they were alike, their features and
Their stature differing but in sex and years;
Even to the delicacy of their hand
There was resemblance, such as true blood wears;
And now to see them, thus divided, stand
In fix'd ferocity, when joyous tears,
And sweet sensations, should have welcomed both,
Show what the passions are in their full growth.

46

The father paused a moment, then withdrew
His weapon, and replaced it; but stood still,
And looking on her, as to look her through,
"Not I," he said, "have sought this stranger's ill;
Not I have made this desolation: few
Would bear such outrage, and forbear to kill;
But I must do my duty—how thou hast
Done thine, the present vouches for the past.

47

"Let him disarm; or, by my father's head,
His own shall roll before you like a ball!"

9. i.e., she was the match in height of Lambro and Juan.

He raised his whistle, as the word he said,
And blew; another answer'd to the call,
And rushing in disorderly, though led,
And arm'd from boot to turban, one and all,
Some twenty of his train came, rank on rank;
He gave the word, "Arrest or slay the Frank."[1]

48

Then, with a sudden movement, he withdrew
His daughter; while compress'd within his clasp,
Twixt her and Juan interposed the crew;
In vain she struggled in her father's grasp—
His arms were like a serpent's coil: then flew
Upon their prey, as darts an angry asp,
The file of pirates; save the foremost, who
Had fallen, with his right shoulder half cut through.

49

The second had his cheek laid open; but
The third, a wary, cool old sworder, took
The blows upon his cutlass, and then put
His own well in; so well, ere you could look,
His man was floor'd, and helpless at his foot,
With the blood running like a little brook
From two smart sabre gashes, deep and red—
One on the arm, the other on the head.

5°

And then they bound him where he fell, and bore
Juan from the apartment: with a sign
Old Lambro bade them take him to the shore,
Where lay some ships which were to sail at nine.
They laid him in a boat, and plied the oar
Until they reach'd some galliots,[2] placed in line;
On board of one of these, and under hatches,
They stow'd him, with strict orders to the watches.

5i

The world is full of strange vicissitudes,
And here was one exceedingly unpleasant:
A gentleman so rich in the world's goods,
Handsome and young, enjoying all the present,
Just at the very time when he least broods
On such a thing is suddenly to sea sent,
Wounded and chain'd, so that he cannot move,
And all because a lady fell in love.

« «

56

Afric is all the sun's, and as her earth
Her human clay is kindled; full of power

1. Term used in the Near East to designate a Western European.

2. Small, fast galleys, propelled by both oars and sails.

For good or evil, burning from its birth,
The Moorish blood partakes the planet's hour,
And like the soil beneath it will bring forth:
Beauty and love were Haidee's mother's dower;[o] *dmvry*
But her large dark eye show'd deep Passion's force,
Though sleeping like a lion near a source.

57

Her daughter, temper'd with a milder ray,
Like summer clouds all silvery, smooth, and fair,
Till slowly charged with thunder they display
Terror to earth, and tempest to the air,
Had held till now her soft and milky way;
But overwrought with passion and despair,
The fire burst forth from her Numidian[n] veins, *North African*
Even as the Simoom[3] sweeps the blasted plains.

58

The last sight which she saw was Juan's gore,
And he himself o'ermaster'd and cut down;
His blood was running on the very floor
Where late he trod, her beautiful, her own;
Thus much she view'd an instant and no more,—
Her struggles ceased with one convulsive groan;
On her sire's arm, which until now scarce held
Her writhing, fell she like a cedar fell'd.

59

A vein had burst, and her sweet lips' pure dyes
Were dabbled with the deep blood which ran o'er;[4]
And her head droop'd as when the lily lies
O'ercharged with rain: her summon'd handmaids bore
Their lady to her couch with gushing eyes;
Of herbs and cordials they produced their store,
But she defied all means they could employ,
Like one life could not hold, nor death destroy.

60

Days lay she in that state unchanged, though chill
With nothing livid,[5] still her lips were red;
She had no pulse, but death seem'd absent still;
No hideous sign proclaim'd her surely dead;
Corruption came not in each mind to kill
All hope; to look upon her sweet face bred
New thoughts of life, for it seem'd full of soul,
She had so much, earth could not claim the whole.

* * *

3. A violent, hot, dust-laden desert wind.
4. This is no very uncommon effect of the violence of conflicting and different passions [Byron's note].
5. I.e., though she was ashen pale,

Twelve days and nights she wither'd thus; at last,
Without a groan, or sigh, or glance, to show
A parting pang, the spirit from her past:° *passed*
And they who watch'd her nearest could not know
The very instant, till the change that cast
Her sweet face into shadow, dull and slow,
Glazed o'er her eyes—the beautiful, the black—
Oh! to possess such lustre—and then lack!

70

She died, but not alone; she held within
A second principle of life, which might
Have dawn'd a fair and sinless child of sin;
But closed its little being without light,
And went down to the grave unborn, wherein
Blossom and bough lie wither'd with one blight;
In vain the dews of Heaven descend above
The bleeding flower and blasted fruit of love.

71

Thus lived—thus died she; never more on her
Shall sorrow light, or shame. She was not made
Through years or moons the inner weight to bear,
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid
By age in earth; her days and pleasures were
Brief, but delightful—such as had not staid
Long with her destiny; but she sleeps well
By the sea shore, whereon she loved to dwell.

72

That isle is now all desolate and bare,
Its dwellings down, its tenants past away;
None but her own and father's grave is there,
And nothing outward tells of human clay;
Ye could not know where lies a thing so fair,
No stone is there to show, no tongue to say
What was; no dirge, except the hollow sea's,
Mourns o'er the beauty of the Cyclades.

73

But many a Greek maid in a loving song
Sighs o'er her name; and many an islander
With her sire's story makes the night less long;
Valour was his, and beauty dwelt with her;
If she loved rashly, her life paid for wrong—
A heavy price must all pay who thus err,
In some shape; let none think to fly the danger,
For soon or late Love is his own avenger.

74

But let me change this theme, which grows too sad,
And lay this sheet of sorrows on the shelf;
I don't much like describing people mad,
For fear of seeming rather touch'd myself—-
Besides Fve no more on this head to add;
And as my Muse is a capricious elf,
We'll put about, and try another tack
With Juan, left half-kill'd some stanzas back.[6]

1818-23 1819-24

Stanzas Written on the Road between Florence and Pisa

Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story—
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy[1] of sweet two-and-twenty
Are worth all your laurels,[2] though ever so plenty.

What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is wrinkled?
'Tis but as a dead-flower with May-dew besprinkled:
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary![3]
What care I for the wreaths that can *only* give glory?

Oh FAME!—if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

There chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found thee;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.

Nov. 1821 1830

6. Juan's adventures continue. He is sold as a slave in Constantinople to an enamored sultana; she disguises him as a girl and adds him to her husband's harem for convenience of access. Juan escapes, joins the Russian army that is besieging Ismail, and so well distinguishes himself in the capture of the town that he is sent with dispatches to St. Petersburg. There he becomes "man-mistress" to the insatiable empress Catherine the Great. As the result of her assiduous attentions, he falls into a physical decline and, for a salutary change of scene and climate, is sent on a diplomatic mission to England. In canto 16, the last that Byron finished, he is in the middle of an amorous adventure while a guest at the medieval country mansion of an English nobleman, Lord Henry Amundeville, and his very beautiful wife.

1. Sacred to Bacchus, god of wine and revelry. "Myrtle": sacred to Venus, goddess of love.
2. A laurel crown was awarded by the Greeks as a mark of high honor.
3. White or gray with age.

January 22nd. Missolonghi

On *this day I complete my thirty sixth year*

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move:
Yet though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm—the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic Isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze
A funeral pile!

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of Love I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

But 'tis not *thus*—and 'tis not *here*
Such thoughts should shake my Soul, nor *now*
Where Glory decks the hero's bier
Or binds his brow.

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
Glory and Greece around us see!
The Spartan borne upon his shield
Was not more free!

Awake (not Greece—she *is* awake!)
Awake, my Spirit! think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake
And then strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down
Unworthy Manhood—unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy Youth, *why live?*
The land of honourable Death
Is here:—up to the Field, and give
Away thy Breath!

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A Soldier's Grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy Ground,
And take thy Rest!

Jan.1824 1824

LETTERS[1]

To Thomas Moore[1]

[CHILDE HAROLD. A VENETIAN ADVENTURE]

Venice, January 28th, 1817

Your letter of the 8th is before me. The remedy for your plethora is simple—abstinence. I was obliged to have recourse to the like some years ago, I mean in point of *diet,* and, with the exception of some convivial weeks and days, (it might be months, now and then), have kept to Pythagoras[2] ever since. For all this, let me hear that you are better. You must not *indulge* in "filthy beer," nor in porter, nor eat *suppers*—the last are the devil to those who swallow dinner.

I am truly sorry to hear of your father's misfortune[4]—cruel at any time, but doubly cruel in advanced life. However, you will, at least, have the satisfaction of doing your part by him, and, depend upon it, it will not be in vain. Fortune, to be sure, is a female, but not such a b * * as the rest (always excepting your wife and my sister from such sweeping terms); for she generally has some justice in the long run. I have no spite against her, though between her and Nemesis I have had some sore gauntlets to run—but then I have done my best to deserve no better. But to *you,* she is a good deal in arrear, and she will come round—mind if she don't: you have the vigour of life, of independence, of talent, spirit, and character all with you. What you can do for yourself, you have done and will do; and surely there are some others in the world who would not be sorry to be of use, if you would allow them to be useful, or at least attempt it.

I think of being in England in the spring. If there is a row, by the sceptre of King Ludd,[5] but I'll be one; and if there is none, and only a continuance of "this meek, piping time of peace,"[6] I will take a cottage a hundred yards to the south of your abode, and become your neighbour; and we will compose such canticles, and hold such dialogues, as shall be the terror of the *Times* (including the newspaper of that name), and the wonder, and honour, and praise, of the Morning Chronicle and posterity.

I rejoice to hear of your forthcoming in February[7]—though I tremble for the "magnificence," which you attribute to the new Childe Harold.[8] I am glad you like it; it is a fine indistinct piece of poetical desolation, and my favourite. I was half mad during the time of its composition, between metaphysics, mountains, lakes, love unextinguishable, thoughts unutterable, and the night-

1. Three thousand of Byron's letters have survived—a remarkable number for so short a life. In general they are our best single biographical source for the poet, providing running commentary on his day-to-day concerns and activities and giving us the clearest possible picture of his complex personality, a picture relatively (but not entirely) free of the posturings that pervade both the romantic poems and the satires. The texts of our small sample here are from Leslie A. Marchand's twelve-volume edition, *Byro?i*'s *Letters and Journals* (1973-82).

1. Irish poet and a good friend of Byron since they met in 1811. Moore's *Life* of Byron in 1830 is the sole source for many of Byron's letters, including this one.

2. I.e., have eaten no flesh (the disciples of the Greek philosopher-mathematician Pythagoras were strict vegetarians).

3. These asterisks (as well as those in the next paragraph and near the end of the letter) are Moore's, representing omissions in his printed text.

4. Moore's father had been dismissed from his post as barrack master at Dublin.

5. A mythical king of Britain.

6. Shakespeare's *Richard III* 1.1.24.

7. Moore's Oriental romance *Lalla Rookh.*

8. Canto 3 of *Childe Harold*'s *Pilgrimage* (1816).

mare of my own delinquencies. I should, many a good day, have blown my brains out, but for the recollection that it would have given pleasure to my mother-in-law; and, even *then,* if I could have been certain to haunt her—but I won't dwell upon these trifling family matters.

Venice is in the *estro* of her carnival, and I have been up these last two nights at the ridotto[9] and the opera, and all that kind of thing. Now for an adventure. A few days ago a gondolier brought me a billet without a subscription, intimating a wish on the part of the writer to meet me either in gondola or at the island of San Lazaro, or at a third rendezvous, indicated in the note. "I know the country's disposition well"—in Venice "they do let Heaven see those tricks they dare not show,"[1] &c. &c.;' so, for all response, I said that neither of the three places suited me; but that I would either be at home at ten at night *alone,* or at the ridotto at midnight, where the writer might meet me masked. At ten o'clock I was at home and alone (Marianna was gone with her husband to a conversazione[2]), when the door of my apartment opened, and in walked a well-looking and (for an Italian) *bionda*[3] girl of about nineteen, who informed me that she was married to the brother of my *amorosa,* and wished to have some conversation with me. I made a decent reply, and we had some talk in Italian and Romaic (her mother being a Greek of Corfu), when lo! in a very few minutes, in marches, to my very great astonishment, Marianna S[egati], *in propria persona,* and after making polite courtesy to her sister-in-law and to me, without a single word seizes her said sister-in-law by the hair, and bestows upon her some sixteen slaps, which would have made your ear ache only to hear their echo. I need not describe the screaming which ensued. The luckless visitor took flight. I seized Marianna, who, after several vain efforts to get away in pursuit of the enemy, fairly went into fits in my arms; and, in spite of reasoning, eau de Cologne, vinegar, half a pint of water, and God knows what other waters beside, continued so till past midnight.

After damning my servants for letting people in without apprizing me, I found that Marianna in the morning had seen her sister-in-law's gondolier on the stairs, and, suspecting that his apparition boded her no good, had either returned of her own accord, or been followed by her maids or some other spy of her people to the conversazione, from whence she returned to perpetrate this piece of pugilism. I had seen fits before, and also some small scenery of the same genus in and out of our island: but this was not all. After about an hour, in comes—who? why, Signor S[egati], her lord and husband, and finds me with his wife fainting upon the sofa, and all the apparatus of confusion, dishevelled hair, hats, handkerchiefs, salts, smelling-bottles—and the lady as pale as ashes without sense or motion. His first question was, "What is all this?" The lady could not reply—so I did. I told him the explanation was the easiest thing in the world; but in the mean time it would be as well to recover his wife—at least, her senses. This came about in due time of suspiration and respiration.

You need not be alarmed—jealousy is not the order of the day in Venice, and daggers are out of fashion; while duels, on love matters, are unknown—at least, with the husbands. But, for all this, it was an awkward affair; and though he must have known that I made love to Marianna, yet I believe he

9. An Italian social gathering. "Estro": fire, fervor.
1. Shakespeare's *Othello* 3.3.206-07. The passage continues: "dare not show their husbands."
2. An evening party. Marianna Segati, wife of a Venetian draper, was Byron's current *amorosa.*
3. Blonde (Italian).

was not, till that evening, aware of the extent to which it had gone. It is very well known that almost all the married women have a lover; but it is usual to keep up the forms, as in other nations. I did not, therefore, know what the devil to say. I could not out with the truth, out of regard to her, and I did not choose to lie for my sake;—besides, the thing told itself. I thought the best way would be to let her explain it as she chose (a woman being never at a loss—the devil always sticks by them)—only determining to protect and carry her off, in case of any ferocity on the part of the Signor. I saw that he was quite calm. She went to bed, and next day—how they settled it, I know not, but settle it they did. Well—then I had to explain to Marianna about this never to be sufficiently confounded sister-in-law; which I did by swearing innocence, eternal constancy, &c. &c. * * * But the sister-in-law, very much discomposed with being treated in such wise, has (not having her own shame before her eyes) told the affair to half Venice, and the servants (who were summoned by the fight and the fainting) to the other half. But, here, nobody minds such trifles, except to be amused by them. I don't know whether you will be so, but I have scrawled a long letter out of these follies.

Believe me ever. &c.

To Douglas Kinnaird[1]

[DON *JUAN:* "IS IT NOT LIFE?"]

Venice. Octr. 26th. [1819]

My dear Douglas—My late expenditure has arisen from living at a distance from Venice and being obliged to keep up two establishments, from frequent journeys—and buying some furniture and books as well as a horse or two—and not from any renewal of the EPICUREAN system[2] as you suspect. I have been faithful to my honest liaison with Countess Guiccioli[3]—and I can assure you that *She* has never cost me directly or indirectly a sixpence—indeed the circumstances of herself and family render this no merit.—I never offered her but one present—a broach of brilliants—and she sent it back to me with her *own hair* in it (I shall *not* say of *what part* but *that* is an Italian custom) and a note to say that she was not in the habit of receiving presents of that value—but hoped that I would not consider her sending it back as an affront—nor the value diminished by the enclosure.—I have ~~not~~ had a whore this half-year—confining myself to the strictest adultery. Why should you prevent Hanson from making a *peer*[4] if he likes it—I think ~~the~~ "*Garretting*" would be by far the best parliamentary privilege—I know of. Damn your delicacy.—It is a low commercial quality—and very unworthy a man who prefixes "honourable" to his nomenclature. If you say that I must sign the bonds—I suppose that I must—but it is very iniquitous to make me pay my debts—you have no idea of the pain it gives one.—Pray do three things—get my property out of

1. Kinnaird, a friend from Cambridge days, was Byron's banker and literary agent in London.
2. I.e., money spent on pleasures of the senses.
3. Byron mentions having fallen in love with Teresa Guiccioli ("a Romagnuola Countess from Ravenna—who is nineteen years old & has a Count of fifty") in a letter of April 6, 1819. Their relationship lasted until Byron set sail for Greece in the summer of 1823.
4. I.e., being made a peer (of the realm). John Hanson, Byron's solicitor and agent before Kinnaird took over his principal business affairs, never realized this ambition.

the *funds*—get Rochdale[5] sold—get me some information from P~~erry~~ about *South America*[6]—and 4thly. ask Lady Noel not to live so very long. As to Subscribing to Manchester—if I do that—I will write a letter to Burdett[7]—for publication—to accompany the Subscription—which shall be more radical than anything yet rooted—but I feel lazy.—I have thought of this for some time—but alas! the air of this cursed Italy enervates—and disfranchises the thoughts of a man after nearly four years of respiration—to say nothing of emission.—As to "Don Juan"—confess—confess—you dog—and be candid—that it is the sublime of *that there* sort of writing—it may be bawdy—but is it not good English?—it may be profligate—but is it not *life,* is it not *the thing?*—Could any man have written it—who has not lived in the world?—and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? against a wall? in a court carriage? in a vis a vis?[8]—on a table?—and under it?—I have written about a hundred stanzas of a third Canto—but it is damned modest—the outcry has frightened me.—I had such projects for the Don—but the *Cant* is so much stronger than *Cunt*—now a days,—that the benefit of experience in a man who had well weighed the worth of both monosyllables—must be lost to despairing posterity.—After all what stuff this outcry is—Lalla Rookh and Little—are more dangerous than my burlesque poem can be—Moore has been here—we got tipsy together—and were very amicable—he is gone on to Rome—I put my life (in M.S.) into his hands[9]—(*not* for publication~~) you~~—or any body else may see it—at his return.—It only comes up to 1816. He is a noble fellow—and looks quite fresh and poetical—nine years (the age of a poem's education) my Senior—he looks younger—this comes of marriage and being settled in the Country. I want to go to South America—I have written to Hobhouse all about it.—I wrote to my wife—three months ago—under care to Mu~~rray~~—has she got the letter—or is the letter got into Rlackwood's magazine? You ask after my Christmas pye—Remit it any how—*Circulars*' is the best—you are right about *income*—I must have it all—how the devil do I know that I may live a year or a month?—I wish I knew that I might regulate my spending in more ways than one.—As it is one always thinks that there is but a span.—A man may as well break or be damned for a large sum as a small one—I should be loth to pay the devil or any other creditor more than sixpence in the pound.—

[scrawl for signature]

P.S.—I recollect nothing of "Davies's landlord"—but what ever Davies *says*—I will *swear* to—and *that's* more than *he* would~~.—So~~ pray pay—has he a landlady too?—perhaps I may owe her something.——With regard to the bonds I will sign them but—it goes ~~again~~st the grain. As to the rest—you *can't* ~~err—~~ so long as you *don't* pay. Paying is executor's or executioner's work. You may write somewhat oftener—Mr. Galignani's messenger[2] gives the outline of your public affairs—but I see no results—you have no man yet—(always excepting Burdett—& you & H[obhouse] and the Gentlemanly leaven of your two-penny loaf of rebellion) don't forget however my charge of

5. An estate that Byron had inherited in Lancashire.
6. Byron was considering the possibility of emigrating to South America, specifically to Venezuela.
7. Sir Francis Burdett, member of Parliament for Westminster, a reformer and leader of opposition to the Tories.
8. A light carriage for two persons sitting face to face.
9. Byron's famous memoirs, which were later sold to John Murray and burned in the publisher's office.
1. Letters of credit that could be exchanged for cash.
2. *Galignani's Messenger,* an English newspaper published in Paris.

horse—and commission for the Midland Counties and by the holies!—You shall have your account in decimals.—Love to Hobby—but why leave the Whigs?

To Percy Bysshe Shelley

[KEATS AND SHELLEY]

Ravenna, April 26th, 1821

The child continues doing well, and the accounts are regular and favourable. It is gratifying to me that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary.[1]

I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats[2]—is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of "Endymion" in the Quarterly. It was severe,—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.

I recollect the effect on me of the Edinburgh on my first poem;[3] it was rage, and resistance, and redress—but not despondency nor despair. I grant that those are not amiable feelings; but, in this world of bustle and broil, and especially in the career of writing, a man should calculate upon his powers of *resistance* before he goes into the arena.

> "Expect not life from pain nor danger free,
> Nor deem the doom of man reversed for thee."[4]

You know my opinion of *that second-hand* school of poetry. You also know my high opinion of your own poetry,—because it is of *no* school. I read Cenci—but, besides that I think the *subject* essentially *un* dramatic, I am not an admirer of our old dramatists *as models.* I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all. Your Cenci, however, was a work of power, and poetry. As to *my* drama,[5] pray revenge yourself upon it, by being as free as I have been with yours.

I have not yet got your Prometheus, which I long to see. I have heard nothing of mine, and do not know that it is yet published. I have published a pamphlet on the Pope controversy, which you will not like. Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope,*[6] and my disapprobation of *his own* style of writing.

1. Byron had recently placed his four-year-old daughter, Allegra, in a convent school near Ravenna, against the wishes of her mother, Mary Shelley's stepsister Claire Clairmont.
2. In a letter to Byron, April 17, 1821: "Young Keats, whose 'Hyperion' showed so great a promise, died lately at Rome from the consequences of breaking a blood-vessel, in paroxysms of despair at the contemptuous attack on his book in the *Quarterly Review*" (see Shelley's *Adonais,* p. 822).
3. The review of Byron's *Hours of Idleness* in the *Edinburgh Revieiv* prompted him to write his first major satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809).
4. Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes,* lines 155—56 (Byron is quoting from memory).
5. *Marino Faliero,* published in London on April 21, 1821. Shelley's *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbonnd* (next paragraph) were written in 1819 and published in 1820.
6. Keats attacked Augustan poetry (but not necessarily Pope) in "Sleep and Poetry," lines 181—206. Byron's pamphlet, *Letter to* ********[John Murray], *on the Rev. W. L. Bowles' Strictures on*

You want me to undertake a great Poem—I have not the inclination nor the power. As I grow older, the indifference—*not* to life, for we love it by instinct—but to the stimuli of life, increases. Besides, this late failure of the Italians has latterly disappointed me for many reasons,—some public, some personal. My respects to Mrs. S.

Yours ever,
B

P.S.—Could not you and I contrive to meet this summer? Could not you take a run *alone?*

the Life and Writings of Pope, had just appeared in London. His best-known comment on Keats, written a year and a half later, is canto 11, stanza 60 in *Don Juan,* beginning "John Keats, who was killed off by one critique" and ending " Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle, / Should let itself be snuffed out by an Article."

7. A planned uprising by the Carbonari, a secret revolutionary society into which Byron had been initiated by the father and brother of his mistress Teresa Guiccioli, failed in Feb. 1821.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
1792-1822

Percy Bysshe Shelley, radical in every aspect of his life and thought, emerged from a solidly conservative background. His ancestors had been Sussex aristocrats since early in the seventeenth century; his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, made himself the richest man in Horsham, Sussex; his father, Timothy Shelley, was a hardheaded and conventional member of Parliament. Percy Shelley was in line for a baronetcy and, as befitted his station, was sent to be educated at Eton and Oxford. As a youth he was slight of build, eccentric in manner, and unskilled in sports or fighting and, as a consequence, was mercilessly bullied by older and stronger boys. He later said that he saw the petty tyranny of schoolmasters and schoolmates as representative of man's general inhumanity to man, and dedicated his life to a war against injustice and oppression. As he described the experience in the Dedication to *Laon and Cythna:*

So without shame, I spake:—"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." 1 then controuled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

At Oxford in the autumn of 1810, Shelley's closest friend was Thomas Jefferson Hogg, a self-centered, self-confident young man who shared Shelley's love of philosophy and scorn of orthodoxy. The two collaborated on a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism,* which claimed that God's existence cannot be proved on empirical grounds, and, provocatively, they mailed it to the bishops and heads of the colleges at Oxford. Shelley refused to repudiate the document and, to his shock and grief, was peremptorily expelled, terminating a university career that had lasted only six months. This event opened a breach between Shelley and his father that widened over the years.

Shelley went to London, where he took up the cause of Harriet Westbrook, the pretty and warmhearted daughter of a well-to-do tavern keeper, whose father, Shelley