

# SHELLEY'S POETRY AND PROSE

AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS  
CRITICISM



*Selected and Edited by*

DONALD H. REIMAN

THE CARL H. PFORZHEIMER LIBRARY  
*and*

SHARON B. POWERS

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY  
also publishes

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE  
*edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE  
*edited by Nina Baym et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION  
*edited by R. V. Cassill*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
*edited by M. H. Abrams et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF LITERATURE BY WOMEN  
*edited by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN POETRY  
*edited by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY  
*edited by Margaret Ferguson et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT FICTION  
*edited by R. V. Cassill*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD MASTERPIECES  
*edited by Maynard Mack et al.*

THE NORTON FACSIMILE OF  
THE FIRST FOLIO OF SHAKESPEARE  
*prepared by Charlton Hinman*

THE NORTON INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE  
*edited by Carl E. Bain, Jerome Beaty, and J. Paul Hunter*

THE NORTON INTRODUCTION TO THE SHORT NOVEL  
*edited by Jerome Beaty*

THE NORTON READER

*edited by Linda H. Peterson, John C. Brereton, and Joan E. Hartman*

THE NORTON SAMPLER

*edited by Thomas Cooley*

THE NORTON SHAKESPEARE



The inspired soul supplies  
 With its own deep melodies,  
 And the love which heals all strife  
 Circling, like the breath of life,  
 All things in that sweet abode  
 With its own mild brotherhood:  
 They, not it, would change;<sup>6</sup> and soon  
 Every sprite<sup>7</sup> beneath the moon  
 Would repent its envy vain,  
 And the earth grow young again.

365

370

## Julian and Maddalo;

### A Conversation<sup>1</sup>

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,  
 The goats with the green leaves of budding spring,  
 Are saturated not—nor Love with tears,  
 VIRGIL'S *Gallus*.

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the

6. The literary analogues underlying Shelley's thought in lines 352-370 are Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Dante's sonnet to Guido Cavalcanti beginning, "Guido, I would that Lappo, thou, and I, / Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend / A magic ship . . ." of which Shelley published a translation with *Alastor*.  
 7. Spirit.

1. Late in 1818, Shelley commenced a drama on the love and madness of the Italian epic poet Torquato Tasso. Then abandoning that drama, he began to write, early in 1819, a dialogue between himself (Julian) and Byron (Maddalo), reflecting their conversations in Venice of August 1818 (possibly stimulated by his reading of *Childe Harold*, Canto IV). Finally, while writing *The Cenci* near Leghorn during the summer of 1819, he took the materials thus far composed, incorporated within the Maniac's speeches some emotional lines that probably reflect his own estrangement from Mary Shelley following the death of their son William Shelley at Rome, June 7, 1819, and shaped them into a philosophical

dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentrated and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems by his own account to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo<sup>2</sup>  
 Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow  
 Of Adria towards Venice:<sup>3</sup>—a bare strand  
 Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,  
 Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,  
 Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,  
 Is this;—an uninhabitable sea-side  
 Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,  
 Abandons; and no other object breaks

5

A narrow space of level sand thereon,—  
 Where 'twas our wont<sup>4</sup> to ride while day went down.  
 This ride was my delight.—I love all waste  
 And solitary places; where we taste  
 The pleasure of believing what we see  
 Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:  
 And such was this wide ocean, and this shore  
 More barren than its billows;—and yet more  
 Than all, with a remembered friend I love  
 To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove  
 The living spray along the sunny air  
 Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,  
 Stripped to their depths by the awakening North;  
 And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth  
 Harmonizing with solitude, and sent  
 Into our hearts ærial merriment . . . .  
 So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,  
 Winged itself with laughter, lingered not,  
 But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours—  
 Charged with light memories of remembered hours,  
 None slow enough for sadness: till we came  
 Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.  
 This day had been cheerful but cold, and now  
 The sun was sinking, and the wind also.  
 Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be  
 Talk interrupted with such railery  
 As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn  
 The thoughts it would extinguish:—'twas forlorn  
 Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,  
 The devils held within the dæles of Hell  
 Concerning God, freewill and destiny;<sup>5</sup>  
 Of all that earth has been or yet may be,  
 All that vain men imagine or believe,  
 Or hope can paint or suffering may atchieve,  
 We descanted,<sup>6</sup> and I (for ever still  
 Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)  
 Argued against despondency, but pride  
 Made my companion take the darker side.  
 The sense that he was greater than his kind  
 Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind  
 By gazing on its own exceeding light.<sup>7</sup>  
 —Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,<sup>8</sup>

4. Custom, habit.

5. The allusion in lines 40–42 is to *Paradise Lost*, II, 555–561, where the fallen angel, Satan, is described as being "Of Devils."6. *descant* (verb): *alight*: The exact epithet could renew its vision by flying directly into the sun, which burned the scales from its eyes.8. *light*.

Over the horizon of the mountains;—Oh,  
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow  
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,  
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!  
 Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers  
 Of cities they encircle!—it was ours  
 To stand on thee, beholding it; and then  
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men  
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.<sup>9</sup>—  
 As those who pause on some delightful way  
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood  
 Looking upon the evening and the flood  
 Which lay between the city and the shore  
 Paved with the image of the sky . . . the hoar  
 And aery Alps towards the North appeared  
 Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared  
 Between the East and West; and half the sky  
 Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry  
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew  
 Down the steep West into a wondrous hue  
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent  
 Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent  
 Among the many folded hills: they were  
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear  
 As seen from Lido through the harbour piles  
 The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—  
 And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been  
 Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen  
 Those mountains towering as from waves of flame  
 Around the vaporous sun, from which there came  
 The inmost purple spirit of light, and made  
 Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"  
 Said my Companion, "I will shew you soon  
 A better station"—so, o'er the lagune  
 We glided, and from that funereal bark<sup>1</sup>  
 I leaned, and saw the City, and could mark  
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,  
 Its temples and its palaces did seem  
 Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.  
 I was about to speak, when—"We are even  
 Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,  
 And bade the gondolieri cease to row.  
 "Look, Julian, on the West, and listen well  
 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."  
 I looked, and saw between us and the sun  
 A building on an island, such a one

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

60

65

70

75

80

85

90

95

A narrow space of level sand thereon,—  
 Where 'twas our wont<sup>4</sup> to ride while day went down.  
 This ride was my delight.—I love all waste  
 And solitary places; where we taste  
 The pleasure of believing what we see  
 Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:  
 And such was this wide ocean, and this shore  
 More barren than its billows,—and yet more  
 Than all, with a remembered friend I love  
 To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove  
 The living spray along the sunny air  
 Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,  
 Stripped to their depths by the awakening North;  
 And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth  
 Harmonizing with solitude, and sent  
 Into our hearts ærial merriment . . .  
 So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,  
 Winged itself with laughter, lingered not,  
 But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours—  
 Charged with light memories of remembered hours,  
 None slow enough for sadness: till we came  
 Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.  
 This day had been cheerful but cold, and now  
 The sun was sinking, and the wind also.  
 Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be  
 Talk interrupted with such rallery  
 As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn  
 The thoughts it would extinguish:—'twas forlorn  
 Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,  
 The devils held within the dales of Hell  
 Concerning God, freewill and destiny;<sup>5</sup>  
 Of all that earth has been or yet may be,  
 All that vain men imagine or believe,  
 Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,  
 We descanted,<sup>6</sup> and I (for ever still  
 Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)  
 Argued against despondency, but pride  
 Made my companion take the darker side.  
 The sense that he was greater than his kind  
 Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind  
 By gazing on its own exceeding light.<sup>7</sup>  
 —Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,<sup>8</sup>

4. Custom, habit.

5. The allusion in lines 40–42 is to *Paradise Lost*, II.555–561, where the fallen angels in Hell "reason'd high/ Of Provi-

could renew its vision by flying directly

into the sun, which burned the scales

from its eyes.

8. *light* . . . *alight*: The exact repetition

Over the horizon of the mountains;—Oh,  
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow  
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,  
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!  
 Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers  
 Of cities they encircle!—it was ours  
 To stand on thee, beholding it; and then  
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men  
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.<sup>9</sup>—  
 As those who pause on some delightful way  
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood  
 Looking upon the evening and the flood  
 Which lay between the city and the shore  
 Paved with the image of the sky . . . the hoar  
 And airy Alps towards the North appeared  
 Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared  
 Between the East and West; and half the sky  
 Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry  
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew  
 Down the steep West into a wondrous hue  
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the tent  
 Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent  
 Among the many folded hills: they were  
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear  
 As seen from Lido through the harbour piles  
 The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—  
 And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been  
 Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen  
 Those mountains towering as from waves of flame  
 Around the vaporous sun, from which there came  
 The inmost purple spirit of light, and made  
 Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"  
 Said my Companion, "I will shew you soon  
 A better station"—so, o'er the lagune  
 We glided, and from that funereal bark<sup>1</sup>  
 I leaned, and saw the City, and could mark  
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,  
 Its temples and its palaces did seem  
 Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.  
 I was about to speak, when—"We are even  
 Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,  
 And bade the gondolieri cease to row.  
 "Look, Julian, on the West, and listen well  
 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."  
 I looked, and saw between us and the sun  
 A building on an island: such a one

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

60

65

70

75

80

85

90

95

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY  
also publishes

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE  
*edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE  
*edited by Nina Baym et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION  
*edited by R. V. Cassill*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
*edited by M. H. Abrams et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF LITERATURE BY WOMEN  
*edited by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN POETRY  
*edited by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY  
*edited by Margaret Ferguson et al.*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT FICTION  
*edited by R. V. Cassill*

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD MASTERPIECES  
*edited by Maynard Mack et al.*

THE NORTON FACSIMILE OF  
THE FIRST FOLIO OF SHAKESPEARE  
*prepared by Charlton Hinman*

THE NORTON INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE  
*edited by Carl E. Bain, Jerome Beaty, and J. Paul Hunter*

THE NORTON INTRODUCTION TO THE SHORT NOVEL  
*edited by Jerome Beaty*

THE NORTON READER  
*edited by Linda H. Peterson, John C. Brereton, and Joan E. Hartman*

THE NORTON SAMPLER  
*edited by Thomas Cooley*

THE NORTON SHAKESPEARE  
*edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al.*

# SHELLEY'S POETRY AND PROSE

AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS  
CRITICISM



*Selected and Edited by*

DONALD H. REIMAN

THE CARL H. PFORZHEIMER LIBRARY

*and*

SHARON B. POWERS



W. W. NORTON & COMPANY

*New York · London*

The inspired soul supplies  
 With its own deep melodies,  
 And the love which heals all strife  
 Circling, like the breath of life,  
 All things in that sweet abode  
 With its own mild brotherhood:  
 They, not it, would change;<sup>6</sup> and soon  
 Every sprite<sup>7</sup> beneath the moon  
 Would repent its envy vain,  
 And the earth grow young again.

365

370

## Julian and Maddalo;

### A Conversation<sup>1</sup>

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,  
 The goats with the green leaves of budding spring,  
 Are saturated not—nor Love with tears.  
 VIRGIL'S *Gallus*.

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the

6. The literary analogues underlying Shelley's thought in lines 352-370 are Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Dante's sonnet to Guido Cavalcanti beginning, "Guido, I would that Lappo, thou, and I, / Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend / A magic ship . . ." of which Shelley published a translation with *Alastor*.

7. Spirit.  
 1. Late in 1818, Shelley commenced a drama on the love and madness of the Italian epic poet Torquato Tasso. Then abandoning that drama, he began to write, early in 1819, a dialogue between himself (Julian) and Byron (Maddalo); reflecting their conversations in Venice of August 1818 (possibly stimulated by his reading of *Childe Harold*, Canto IV). Finally, while writing *The Cenci* near Leghorn during the summer of 1819, he took the materials thus far composed, incorporated within the Maniac's speeches some emotional lines that probably reflect his own estrangement from Mary Shelley following the death of their son William Shelley at Rome, June 7, 1819, and shaped them into a philosophical dialogue in the conversational or "familiar" style. Shelley sent the poem to Leigh Hunt to have it published anonymously and—while affirming the impersonal nature of his portrait of the Maniac—told Hunt that the poem had been "composed last year at Este," a remark probably designed to screen the

dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the centered and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems by his own account to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo<sup>2</sup>

Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow  
 Of Adria towards Venice:<sup>3</sup>—a bare strand  
 Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,  
 Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,  
 Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,  
 Is this,—an uninhabitable sea-side

5

Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,  
 Abandons; and no other object breaks  
 The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes  
 Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes

10

2. At least some details of the scene in lines 1-140 are based on Shelley's conversation with Byron of August 23, 1818 (described by Shelley, *Letters*, II, 36).  
 3. The bank of land is the Lido of Venice; Adria: the Adriatic Sea.

A narrow space of level sand thereon,—  
 Where 'twas our wont<sup>4</sup> to ride while day went down.  
 This ride was my delight.—I love all waste  
 And solitary places; where we taste  
 The pleasure of believing what we see  
 Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:  
 And such was this wide ocean, and this shore  
 More barren than its billows;—and yet more  
 Than all, with a remembered friend I love  
 To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove  
 The living spray along the sunny air  
 Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,  
 Stripped to their depths by the awakening North;  
 And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth  
 Harmonizing with solitude, and sent  
 Into our hearts ærial merriment . . .  
 So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,  
 Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,  
 But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours—  
 Charged with light memories of remembered hours,  
 None slow enough for sadness: till we came  
 Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.  
 This day had been cheerful but cold, and now  
 The sun was sinking, and the wind also.  
 Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be  
 Talk interrupted with such railery.  
 As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn  
 The thoughts it would extinguish:—'twas forlorn  
 Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,  
 The devils held within the dales of Hell  
 Concerning God, freewill and destiny.<sup>5</sup>  
 Of all that earth has been or yet may be,  
 All that vain men imagine or believe,  
 Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,  
 We'd descanted,<sup>6</sup> and I (for ever still  
 Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)  
 Argued against despondency, but pride  
 Made my companion take the darker side.  
 The sense that he was greater than his kind  
 Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind  
 By gazing on its own exceeding light.<sup>7</sup>  
 —Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,<sup>8</sup>

4. Custom, habit.

5. The allusion in lines 40–42 is to *Paradise Lost*, II.555–561, where the fallen angels in Hell “reason’d high/ Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate, . . . And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.”

6. Discussed at length, discoursed about.

7. eagle spirit . . . light: According to tradition, the eagle not only possessed the keenest vision of all creatures, but it

could renew its vision by flying directly into the sun, which burned the scales from its eyes.

8. light . . . alight: The exact repetition of the phonetic syllable in two rhyme words, called *rime rîche*, though considered a virtue in French and Italian poetry, is avoided by most English poets; Shelley, however, employs it with some frequency.

Over the horizon of the mountains;—Oh,  
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow  
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,  
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!  
 Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers  
 Of cities they encircle!—it was ours  
 To stand on thee, beholding it; and then  
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men  
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.<sup>9</sup>—  
 As those who pause on some delightful way  
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood  
 Looking upon the evening and the flood  
 Which lay between the city and the shore  
 Paved with the image of the sky . . . the hoar  
 And airy Alps towards the North appeared  
 Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared  
 Between the East and West; and half the sky  
 Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry  
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew  
 Down the steep West into a wondrous hue  
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent  
 Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent  
 Among the many folded hills: they were  
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear  
 As seen from Lido through the harbour piles  
 The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—  
 And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been  
 Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen  
 Those mountains towering as from waves of flame  
 Around the vaporous sun, from which there came  
 The inmost purple spirit of light, and made  
 Their very peaks transparent. “Ere it fade,”  
 Said my Companion, “I will shew you soon  
 A better station”—so, o'er the lagoon  
 We glided, and from that funereal bark<sup>1</sup>  
 I leaned, and saw the City, and could mark  
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,  
 Its temples and its palaces did seem  
 Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.  
 I was about to speak, when—“We are even  
 Now at the point I meant,” said Maddalo,  
 And bade the gondolieri cease to row.  
 “Look, Julian, on the West, and listen well  
 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell.”  
 I looked, and saw between us and the sun  
 A building on an island; such a one

9. That Shelley, here and at lines 139–140, rhymes “gondola” with “way” suggests the contemporary British pronunciation of the word.

1. “These gondolas are . . . finely car-

peted & furnished with black & painted black” (Shelley to Mary Shelley, Aug. 23, 1818). “It glides along the water looking blackly, Just like a coffin clapt in a canoe” (Byron, *Beppo*, 150–151).

As age to age might add, for uses vile,  
 A windowless, deformed and dreary pile;  
 And on the top an open tower, where hung  
 A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung:  
 We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue:  
 The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled  
 In strong and black relief.—“What we behold  
 Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,”  
 Said Maddalo, “and ever at this hour  
 Those who may cross the water, hear that bell  
 Which calls the maniacs each one from his cell  
 To vesper.”—“As much skill as need to pray  
 In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they  
 To their stern maker,”<sup>2</sup> I replied. “O ho!  
 You talk as in years past,” said Maddalo.  
 “‘Tis strange men change not. You were ever still  
 Among Christ’s flock a perilous infidel,  
 A wolf for the meek lambs—if you can’t swim  
 Beware of Providence.” I looked on him,  
 But the gay smile had faded in his eye.  
 “And such,”—he cried, “is our mortality  
 And this must be the emblem and the sign  
 Of what should be eternal and divine!—  
 And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,  
 Hung in a heaven-illuminated tower, must toll  
 Our thoughts and our desires to meet below  
 Round the rent heart and pray—as madmen do  
 For what? they know not,—till the night of death  
 As sunset that strange vision, severeth  
 Our memory from itself, and us from all  
 We sought and yet were baffled!” I recall  
 The sense of what he said, although I mar  
 The force of his expressions. The broad star  
 Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill  
 And the black bell became invisible  
 And the red tower looked grey, and all between  
 The churches, ships and palaces were seen  
 Huddled in gloom;—into the purple sea  
 The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.  
 We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola  
 Conveyed me to my lodging by the way.

The following mom was rainy, cold and dim:  
 Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,  
 And whilst I waited with his child’s I played;  
 A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,

2. The tone in lines 111–113 is ironic.  
 3. Allegra Byron (or Biron), under Shelley’s care from her birth on January 12, 1817, until she was sent to child of Byron and Mary Jane Clara Byron in Venice on April 28, 1818. (Thus “Claire” Clairmont, Mary Shelley’s step-sister. Allegra had been raised by Claire separation from the child.)

A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,  
 Graceful without design and unforeseeing,  
 With eyes—oh speak not of her eyes!—which seem  
 Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam  
 With such deep meaning, as we never see  
 But in the human countenance: with me  
 She was a special favourite: I had nursed  
 Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first  
 To this bleak world; and she yet seemed to know  
 On second sight her antient playfellow,  
 Less changed than she was by six months or so;  
 For after her first shyness was worn out  
 We sat there, rolling billiard balls about.  
 When the Count entered—salutations past—  
 “The word you spoke last night might well have cast  
 A darkness on my spirit—if man be  
 The passive thing you say, I should not see  
 Much harm in the religions and old saws  
 (Though I may never own<sup>3</sup> such leaden laws)  
 Which break a teachless<sup>4</sup> nature to the yoke:  
 Mine is another faith” —thus much I spoke  
 And noting he replied not, added: “See  
 This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;  
 She spends a happy time with little care  
 While we to such sick thoughts subjected are  
 As came on you last night—it is our will  
 That thus enchains us to permitted ill—  
 We might be otherwise—we might be all  
 We dream of happy, high, majestic.  
 Where is the love, beauty and truth we seek  
 But in our mind? and if we were not weak  
 Should we be less in deed than in desire?”  
 “Ay, if we were not weak—and we aspire  
 How vainly to be strong!” said Maddalo:  
 “You talk Utopia.” “It remains to know,”<sup>5</sup>  
 I then rejoined, “and those who try may find  
 How strong the chains are which our spirit bind,  
 Brittle perchance as straw . . . We are assured  
 Much may be conquered, much may be endured  
 Of what degrades and crushes us. We know  
 That we have power over ourselves to do  
 And suffer—what, we know not till we try;  
 But something nobler than to live and die—  
 So taught those kings of old philosophy  
 Who reigned, before Religion made men blind;  
 And those who suffer with their suffering kind

4. In Shelley’s draft this word replaced “o’er” to rhyme with *cast*.  
 5. Acknowledge.  
 6. Unteachable.  
 7. In Shelley’s fair copy manuscript the word is “see”; but *know* completes the rhyme, and all printed texts include it.



Yet feel their faith, religion." "My dear friend,"  
 Said Maddalo, "my judgement will not bend  
 To your opinion, though I think you might  
 Make such a system refutation-tight  
 As far as words go. I knew one like you  
 Who to this city came some months ago  
 With whom I argued in this sort, and he  
 Is now gone mad,—and so he answered me,—  
 Poor fellow! but if you would like to go  
 We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show  
 How vain are such aspiring theories."  
 "I hope to prove the induction otherwise,  
 And that a want of that true theory, still,  
 Which seeks a 'soul of goodness' in things ill  
 Or in himself or others has thus bowed  
 His being—there are some by nature proud,  
 Who patient in all else demand but this:  
 To love and be beloved with gentleness;  
 And being scorned, what wonder if they die  
 Some living death? this is not destiny  
 But man's own wilful ill." As thus I spoke<sup>8</sup>  
 Servants announced the gondola, and we  
 Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea  
 Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.  
 We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,  
 Fierce yells and howlings and lamentings keen,  
 And laughter where complaint had merrier been,  
 Moans, shrieks and curses and blaspheming prayers  
 Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs  
 Into an old courtyard. I heard on high,  
 Then, fragments of most touching melody,  
 But looking up saw not the singer there—  
 Through the black bars in the tempestuous air  
 I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,  
 Long tangled locks flung wildly forth, and flowing,  
 Of those who on a sudden were beguiled  
 Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled  
 Hearing sweet sounds.—Then I: "Methinks there were  
 A cure of these with patience and kind care,  
 If music can thus move . . . but what is he  
 Whom we seek here?" "Of his sad history  
 I know but this," said Maddalo: "he came  
 To Venice a dejected man, and fame  
 Said he was wealthy, or he had been so;  
 Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;  
 But he was ever talking in such sort

8. Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, IV.i.4.

9. G. M. Matthews has explained how this came to be the only unrhymed line in the poem when Shelley elected to drop three and a half lines from the draft.

As you do—far more sadly—he seemed hurt,  
 Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,  
 To hear but of the oppression of the strong,  
 Or those absurd deceits (I think with you  
 In some respects, you know) which carry through  
 The excellent impostors of this Earth  
 When they outface detection—he had worth,  
 Poor fellow! but a humourist<sup>1</sup> in his way"—  
 "Alas, what drove him mad?" "I cannot say;  
 A Lady came with him from France, and when  
 She left him and returned, he wandered then  
 About yon lonely isles of desert sand  
 Till he grew wild—he had no cash or land  
 Remaining,—the police had brought him here—  
 Some fancy took him and he would not bear  
 Removal; so I fitted up for him  
 Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim,  
 And sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,  
 Which had adorned his life in happier hours,  
 And instruments of music—you may guess  
 A stranger could do little more or less  
 For one so gentle and unfortunate;  
 And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight  
 From madmen's chains, and make this Hell appear  
 A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear."  
 "Nay, this was kind of you—he had no claim,  
 As the world says"—"None—but the very same  
 Which I on all mankind were I as he  
 Fallen to such deep reverse;—his melody  
 Is interrupted now—we hear the din  
 Of madmen, shriek on shriek again begin;  
 Let us now visit him; after this strain  
 He ever communes with himself again,  
 And sees nor hears not any." Having said  
 These words we called the keeper, and he led  
 To an apartment opening on the sea—  
 There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully  
 Near a piano, his pale fingers twined  
 One with the other, and the ooze and wind  
 Rushed through an open casement, and did sway  
 His hair, and starred it with the brackish<sup>2</sup> spray;  
 His head was leaning on a music book,  
 And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook;  
 His lips were pressed against a folded leaf  
 In hue too beautiful for health, and grief

1. One who exhibits strong peculiarities in a particular direction, supposedly caused by the predominance of one of the four "humours" or vital fluids of classical medieval physiology—blood, phlegm, cholera (yellow bile), and melan-chole (black bile).  
2. Somewhat salty.

Smiled in their motions as they lay apart—  
 As one who wrought from his own fervid heart  
 The eloquence of passion, soon he raised  
 His sad meek face and eyes lustrous and glazed  
 And spoke—sometimes as one who wrote and thought  
 His words might move some heart that heeded not  
 If sent to distant lands; and then as one  
 Reproaching deeds never to be undone  
 With wondering self-compassion; then his speech  
 Was lost in grief, and then his words came each  
 Unmodulated, cold, expressionless;  
 But that from one jarred accent you might guess  
 It was despair made them so uniform:  
 And all the while the loud and gusty storm  
 Hissed through the window, and we stood behind  
 Stealing his accents from the envious wind  
 Unseen, I yet remember what he said  
 Distinctly: such impression his words made.

"Month after month," he cried, "to bear this load  
 And as a jade<sup>3</sup> urged by the whip and goad  
 To drag life on, which like a heavy chain  
 Lengthens behind with many a link of pain!—  
 And not to speak my grief—o not to dare  
 To give a human voice to my despair,  
 But live and move, and wretched thing! smile on  
 As if I never went aside to groan  
 And wear this mask of falshood even to those  
 Who are most dear—not for my own repose—  
 Alas, no scorn or pain or hate could be  
 So heavy as that falshood is to me—  
 But that I cannot bear more altered faces  
 Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,  
 More misery, disappointment and mistrust  
 To own me for their father . . . Would the dust  
 Were covered in upon my body now!  
 That the life ceased to toil within my brow!  
 And then these thoughts would at the least be fled;  
 Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

"What Power delights to torture us? I know  
 That to myself I do not wholly owe  
 What now I suffer, though in part I may.  
 Alas, none strewed sweet flowers upon the way  
 Where wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain  
 My shadow, which will leave me not again—  
 If I have erred, there was no joy in error,  
 But pain and insult and unrest and terror;

3. A cart horse or a worn-out, inferior horse.

I have not as some do, bought penitence  
 With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence,  
 For then,—if love and tenderness and truth  
 Had overlived hope's momentary youth,  
 My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;  
 But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting  
 Met love excited by far other seeming  
 Until the end was gained . . . as one from dreaming  
 Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state  
 Such as it is.—

"O Thou, my spirit's mate  
 Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,  
 Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes  
 If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see—  
 My secret groans must be unheard by thee,  
 Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood to know  
 Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.

"Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed  
 In friendship, let me not that name degrade  
 By placing on your hearts the secret load  
 Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road  
 To peace and that is truth, which follow ye!  
 Love sometimes leads astray to misery.  
 Yet think not though subdued—and I may well  
 Say that I am subdued—that the full Hell  
 Within me would infect the untainted breast  
 Of sacred nature with its own unrest;  
 As some perverted beings think to find  
 In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind  
 Which scorn or hate have wounded—o how vain!  
 The dagger heals not but may rend again . . .

Believe that I am ever still the same  
 In creed as in resolve, and what may tame  
 My heart, must leave the understanding free  
 Or all would sink in this keen agony—  
 Nor dream that I will join the vulgar cry,  
 Or with my silence sanction tyranny,  
 Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain  
 In any madness which the world calls gain,  
 Ambition or revenge or thoughts as stern  
 As those which make me what I am, or turn  
 To avarice or misanthropy or lust . . .  
 Heap on me soon, o grave, thy welcome dust!  
 Till then the dungeon may demand its prey,  
 And poverty and shame may meet and say—  
 Halting beside me on the public way—  
 "That love-devoted<sup>4</sup> youth is ours—let's sit

4. Sacrificed to love.



If I had been an unconnected man<sup>8</sup>  
 I, from this moment, should have formed some plan  
 Never to leave sweet Venice,—for to me  
 It was delight to ride by the lone sea;  
 And then, the town is silent—one may write  
 Or read in gondolas by day or night,  
 Having the little brazen<sup>4</sup> lamp alight,  
 Unseen, uninterrupted; books are there,  
 Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair  
 Which were twin-born with poetry, and all  
 We seek in towns, with little to recall  
 Regrets for the green country. I might sit  
 In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit  
 And subtle talk would cheer the winter night  
 And make me know myself, and the freelight  
 Would flash upon our faces, till the day  
 Might dawn and make me wonder at my stay:  
 But I had friends in London too: the chief  
 Attraction here, was that I sought relief  
 From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought  
 Within me—'twas perhaps an idle thought,  
 But I imagined that if day by day  
 I watched him, and but seldom went away,  
 And studied all the beatings of his heart  
 With zeal, as men study some stubborn art  
 For their own good, and could by patience find  
 An entrance to the caverns of his mind,  
 I might reclaim him from his dark estate—  
 In friendships I had been most fortunate—  
 Yet never saw I one whom I would call  
 More willingly my friend; and this was all  
 Accomplished not; such dreams of baseless<sup>5</sup> good  
 Oft come and go in crowds or solitude  
 And leave no trace—but what I now designed  
 Made for long years impression on my mind.  
 The following morning, urged by my affairs,  
 I left bright Venice.

After many years

And many changes I returned; the name  
 Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same;  
 But Maddalo was travelling far away  
 Among the mountains of Armenia.<sup>6</sup>  
 His dog was dead. His child had now become  
 A woman; such as it has been my doom<sup>7</sup>  
 To meet with few, a wonder of this earth,  
 Where there is little of transcendent worth,

3. A man without family or other responsibilities.

4. Made of brass.

5. Having no foundation; see Shake-

speare, *The Tempest*, IV.151.

6. Byron was in 1817–1818 studying the

Armenian language in Venice.

7. Fate.

550

555

560

565

570

575

580

585

590

Like one of Shakespeare's women: kindly she  
 And with a manner beyond courtesy  
 Received her father's friend; and when I asked  
 Of the loom<sup>8</sup> maniac, she her memory tasked  
 And told as she had heard the mournful tale:  
 "That the poor sufferer's health began to fail  
 Two years from my departure, but that then  
 The Lady who had left him, came again.  
 Her mien had been imperious, but she now  
 Looked meek—perhaps remorse had brought her low.  
 Her coming made him better, and they stayed  
 Together at my father's—for I played  
 As I remember with the lady's shawl—  
 I might be six years old—but after all  
 She left him" . . . "Why, her heart must have been tough:  
 How did it end?" "And was not this enough?  
 They met—they parted"—"Child, is there no more?"  
 "Something within that interval which bore  
 The stamp of why they parted, how they met;  
 Yet if thine aged eyes disdain to wet  
 Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,  
 Ask me no more, but let the silent years  
 Be closed and ceared<sup>9</sup> over their memory  
 As you mute marble where their corpses lie."  
 I urged and questioned still, she told me how  
 All happened—but the cold world shall not know.

### Stanzas written in Dejection— December 1818, Near Naples<sup>1</sup>

The Sun is warm, the sky is clear,  
 The waves are dancing fast and bright,  
 Blue isles and snowy mountains wear  
 The purple noon's transparent might,  
 The breath of the moist earth is light  
 Around its unexpanded buds;  
 Like many a voice of one delight  
 The winds, the birds, the Ocean-floods;  
 The City's voice itself is soft, like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor  
 With green and purple seaweeds strown;  
 I see the waves upon the shore  
 Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown;

10

8. Abandoned, desolate.  
 9. Sealed up, embalmed (cf. line 433).  
 1. In the title Shelley gives us a place and date of one of his most despairing lyrics, the personal nature of which might give him reason to disguise the circumstances of its composition from Mary or other intimates. It is fairly certain that Shelley enclosed this and other poems in his letter to Charles Ollier of November 10, 1820, urging him to publish most of them ("my saddest verses raked up into one heap") with *Julian and Maddalo*, but all remained unpublished until *Posthumous Poems* (1824). This version is from the author's manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library.