SHELLEY’S POETRY
AND PROSE

AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS
CRITICISM

Selected and Edited by
DONALD H. REIMAN
THE CARL H. PFORZHEIMER LIBRARY

and

SHARON B. POWERS
Julian and Maddalo

A Conversation.

Julian 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 on the island of Lido. He is person of the most consummate genius, and capable of directing his countrymen in the most important concerns of the state. He is a master of the art of war, and possesses some good qualities of the Mannerist. He has given information of his own mind, and the most serious improvements of society. His manner of life is exemplary, and he has travelled much; and there are different accounts of his travels in different countries.

Maddalo is a Philosopher of good family, passionately attached to his own wishes and sensations, which are held by him in so high a degree of respect that he never consents to it. He is thought to be the greatest philanthropist of his time; and his travels have been extremely useful to human nature. In social life, he is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxications, and there are a few that are not excited by it. He has travelled much; and his travels have been extremely useful to human nature. In social life, he is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxications, and there are a few that are not excited by it. He has travelled much; and there are different accounts of his travels in different countries.

Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. He is a complete infidel and an atheist, and is not at all afraid of religion. What is said of Man in these expressions is not particularly concerned by his friends. It is said that the reader will be more serious in his own mind, and the most serious improvements of society. His manner of life is exemplary, and he has travelled much; and there are different accounts of his travels in different countries.

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme, and the gale of Venus in the face of the winds. The gale of Venus is the gale of the winds of Mount Calvario. The mountains are green with the shades of spring. The gale of Venus is the gale of the winds of Mount Calvario. The mountains are green with the shades of spring. The gale of Venus is the gale of the winds of Mount Calvario. The mountains are green with the shades of spring.
A narrow space of level sand thereon,—
Where 'twas our wont 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 aerial 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 raillery
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:—
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 descended, and (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,
—Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,

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,—
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 embazonry
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 Laguna
We glided, and from that funeral bark
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 gondolier 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

4. Custom, habit.
5. The allusion in lines 40–42 is to Paradise Lost, II.555–561, where the fallen

"... to a state of perfect knowledge from its eyes.

8. light... alight: The exact rendering

114 • Julian and Maddalo

Julian and Maddalo • 115
A narrow space of level sand thereon,—
Where 'twas our wont 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 aerial 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 tane.
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: 4,5
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 descended, 6 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.
—Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight. 7

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. 8
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 lump 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 I
Lanced, 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

4. Custom, habit.
5. The allusion in lines 40–42 is to Paradise Lost, II.355–561, where the fallen
angels in Hell "reason'd high." Of Prov-
could renew its vision by flying directly
into the sun, which burned the scales
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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; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

Julian and Maddalo;
A Conversation

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 Gallia.

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of antient 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 Shel-
ley's thought in lines 352-370 are Shake-
speare's The Tempest and Dante's sonnet

to Guido Cavalcanti beginning, "Guide,
I would that Lasso, thou, and I / Led by
some strong enchantment, might ascend/
A magic ship ...", of which Shelley
published a translation with Alastor.

7. Spirit.

1. Later in 1818, Shelley commenced a
play 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 prob-
ably 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 imp-
personal nature of his portrait of the Maniac—told Hunt that the poem had
been "composed last year at Estes, 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 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 un-
assuming 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 inexplicable
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 ex-
tinction 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.
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice.—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
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes

2. At least some details of the scene in
lines 1-140 are based on Shelley's con-
versation with Byron of August 23, 1818
(described by Shelley, Letters, II, 83).
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 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 aerial 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 raffery
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:5
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 descended,6 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.7
—Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight.8

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.9—
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 immost 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 funeral bark1
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 gondolier 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

4. Custom, habit.
5. The allusion in lines 40-42 is to Paradise Lost, 11.555-561, where the fallen angels in Hell "reason'd high, Of Prov- enance, Fire, and Fate, . . . And found no end, in wandering mazes lost."
6. Discussed at length, discussed 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 . . . slight: The exact repetition of the phonetic syllable in two rhyme words, called rime riche, though considered a virtue in French and Italian poetry, is avoided by most English poets; Shelley, however, employs it with some frequency.
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 case" (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 vespers."—"As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern maker," 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 sign
Of what should be eternal and divine!—
And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illumined 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 morn was rainy, cold and dim:
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,
And whilst I waited with his child® I played;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,

2. The tone in lines 111–113 is ironic.
3. Allegra Byron (or Brion), natural child of Byron and Mary Jane Clara.
   "Clairmont, Mary Shelley's step-
   sister. Allegra had been raised by Claire
   under Shelley's care from her birth on
   January 12, 1817, until she was sent to
   Byron in Venice on April 28, 1818. (This
   line 155 refers to the six months or so of
   separation from the child.)
4. In Shelley's draft this word replaced
   "b授" to rhyme with cast.
5. Acknowledgment.
6. Unforgettable.
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
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 clasp 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 humourist1 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 you 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 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 wretched 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 brackish2 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, choler (yellow bile), and melancholy (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-compasion; 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 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 falsehood 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 falsehood 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;

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 youth is ours—let's sit

3. A cart horse or a worn-out, inferior horse.
Beside him—he may live some six months yet.'
Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
May ask some willing victim, or ye friends
May fall under some sorrow which this heart
Or hand may share or vanquish or avert;
I am prepared: in truth with no proud joy
To do or suffer aught, as when a boy
I did devote to justice and to love
My nature, worthless now!19...

"I must remove
A veil from my pent® mind. 'Tis torn aside!
O, pallid as death's dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not woe like thee? at the grave's call
I haste, invited to thy wedding hall.
To greet the ghastly paramour, for whom
Thou hast deserted me... and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed... But I beseech thy feet
Will lie and watch ye from my winding sheet—
Thus... wide awake, though dead... yet stay, o stay!
Go not so soon—I know not what I say—
Hear but my reasons... I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o'erwrought... thou art not here...
Pale art thou, 'tis most true... but thou art gone,
Thy work is finished... I am left alone—

"Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast
Which, like a serpent, thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said, 'You kiss me not
Ever, I fear you do not love me now'—
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her, who would fain forget these words: but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

"You say that I am proud—that when I speak
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses... Never one
Humbled himself before, as I have done!
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wound not—then with prostrate head
Sinks in the dust and withres like me—and dies?
No: wears a living death of agonies!

As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass
Slow, ever-moving,—making moments be
As mine seem—each an immortality!

"That you had never seen me—never heard
My voice, and more than all had ne'er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace—
That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face—
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne'er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there
To disunite in horror—these were not
With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought
Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind...

Thou sealest them with many a bare broad word,
And cearest® my memory o'er them,—for I heard
And can forget not... they were ministered
One after one, those curses. Mix them up
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup,
And they will make one blessing which thou ne'er
Didst imprecate for, on me,—death.

A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
If such can love, to make that love the fuel
Of the mind's hell; hate, scorn, remorse, despair;
But ne'er—whose heart a stranger's fear might wear
As water-drops the sandy founain-stone,
Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with the glance of phantasy,
And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
Me—who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth
When all beside was cold—that thou on me
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony—
Such curses are from lips once eloquent!
With love's too partial praise—let none relent
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
Henceforth, if an example for the same

6. Locked up, imprisoned.
7. The lines of asterisks indicate breaks in the intermittent quatrains of the Maniac; none of Shelley's poem is here omitted.
8. Wrapped in waxed cloth, embalmed; previous editors have changed the word to "searedst."
If I had been an unconnected man, 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 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 firelight
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 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,
His dog was dead. His child had now become
A woman; such as it has been my doom?
To meet with few, a wonder of this earth,
Where there is little of transcendent worth,
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 18, 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.