

**Don Juan Canto Ninth**  
*edited by Peter Cochran*

[draft of sts. 1-10:]

July 10.<sup>th</sup> 1819. — —

I.

Oh, Wellington! (or “Villainton” – for Fame  
Sounds the heroic syllables both ways;  
France could not even conquer your great name,  
But punned it down to this facetious phrase<sup>1</sup> –  
Beating or beaten she will laugh the same) 5  
You have obtained great pensions and much praise;  
Glory like yours should any dare gainsay,  
Humanity would rise, and thunder “Nay!” \*

\* Note — Query, Ney? — Printer’s Devil.<sup>2</sup>

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**Canto IX starts with the ten anti-Wellington stanzas, the first eight of which were originally to have gone at the start of Canto III. Stanzas 1 - 8 are fair-copied by Teresa Guiccioli, and 9 - 10 composed by Byron for the occasion.**

**1:** *But punned it down to this facetious phrase: Vilain ton* would translate as *Boorish style*. Wright quotes a French jingle to illustrate:

*Faut qu’Lord Vilainton ait tout pris,  
N’ya plus d’argent dans ce gueux de Paris.*

(Lord “Vilain ton” must have taken everything – there’s no cash left in this beggarly place, Paris.)

**2:** “Ney!” pun on the name of Napoleon’s finest Marshal, Michel Ney (1769-1815) who fought (*inter alia*) at Jena, Smolensk, Borodino, Lützen, Leipzig and, finally, led the French centre at Waterloo – having previously gone over to Louis XVIII before the Hundred Days. He was shot on December 7 1815. This pun is the only reference to him in all of B.’s received writings: it may echo something related to him by Hobhouse, who, in his journal entry for May 14 1818, records himself as “... employed walking to the printer’s and in looking over Lord Kinnaird’s letter to the Duke of Wellington – I had before written a paragraph for Perry, which he was afraid to insert, because the Duke of Wellington is going to prosecute him for something said about his drawing for rations for Wellesley Pole’s family at Paris. Lord Holland repeated to me an epigram on Kinnaird’s *memoir* which turned on the folly of listening to the Duke of Wellington’s guarantee: to all the Duke could say, / you should have answered ‘Ney.’” (BL Add.Mss. 47235 17r: a version is at *Recollections of a Long Life*, II 98). By developing Holland’s epigram, B. is trying to implicate the Whigs in his satire (Wellington had in fact offered Ney no guarantee, saying his trial was an internal French affair).

## 2.

I don't think that you used Kinnaird quite well  
 In Marinêt's affair<sup>3</sup> – in fact 'twas shabby, 10  
 And like some other things won't do to tell  
 Upon your tomb in Westminster's old abbey.  
 Upon the rest 'tis not worth while to dwell,  
 Such tales being for the tea hours of some tabby;<sup>4</sup>  
 But though your years as *man* tend fast to zero, 15  
 In fact your Grace is still but a *young Hero*.<sup>5</sup>

## 3.

Though Britain owes (and pays you too) so much,  
 Yet Europe doubtless owes you greatly more;  
 You have repaired Legitimacy's Crutch –  
 A prop not quite so certain as before; 20  
 The Spanish – and the French, as well as Dutch,  
 Have seen and felt how strongly you *restore*<sup>6</sup> –  
 And Waterloo has made the World your debtor,  
 (I wish your bards would sing it rather better.)<sup>7</sup>

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**3:** *I don't think that you used Kinnaird quite well / In Marinêt's affair:* Lord Kinnaird was the elder brother of B.'s friend Douglas Kinnaird. A Bonapartist sympathiser, he became acquainted in Brussels in 1818 with a man called Marinêt, who told him of a conspiracy to assassinate Wellington. An attempt was in fact made on the Duke's life, and Marinêt agreed to come to Paris and identify the assailant, understanding from Kinnaird that he would be immune from prosecution – but the French government had him arrested and tried. He was acquitted; and Wellington and Kinnaird remained publicly on extremely bad terms, Wellington regarding Kinnaird as a revolutionist. The ethics of the case are confused.

**4:** *Upon the rest 'tis not worth while to dwell, / Such tales being for the tea hours of some tabby:* a tabby was "any spiteful or ill-natured female gossip or tattler" (O.E.D.). Attempts to link the phrase with Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster do not convince, for she, unlike Lady Caroline Lamb, was not famous for gossip – though Wellington's affair with her (he had one with Caroline Lamb, too) might have given B. some annoyance, as he had failed to have one with her himself (see above, notes to I st.99). The lines are a discreet reference to the "respectably-married" Wellington's sexual appetite: in the years before and after Waterloo he enjoyed the carnal (or at the least "hetero-social") favours, not only of the two women just mentioned, but of Harriet Wison, Harriet Arbuthnot, Lady Frances Shelley, Olivia Lady Kinnaird, Lady Frances Cole, Lady Charlotte Greville, the singer Giuseppina Grassini, the actress Mlle Georges (both these had been Napoleon's mistresses as well) and the American merchant's wife Marianne Patterson. B. may intend a polite hint that Wellington is not best-placed to give Europe a "great moral lesson" (see *Ode from the French*, 77-8; above, Preface to Cantos VI VII and VIII; below, XII 434-6, and *TVOJ*, Preface).

**5:** *... though your years as man tend fast to zero, / In fact your Grace is still but a young Hero:* B. jokes about Wellington's enviable virility. Mlle Georges, comparing him with Napoleon (she had slept with both) declared him to *de beaucoup le plus fort*.

**6:** *The Spanish – and the French as well as Dutch / Have seen and felt how strongly you restore:* monarchies restored at the post-Waterloo Congress of Vienna (where England was represented by Castlereagh and Wellington) were the unpopular Spanish monarchy, the Bourbon dynasty of France, and the Kingdom of the United Netherlands (that is, Belgium and Holland).

**7:** *(I wish your bards would sing it rather better):* among many poems about Wellington's victory was Southey's *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo*, in which Wellington's skill as a strategist is praised.

## 4.

You are “the Best of Cut-throats”<sup>8</sup> – do not start – 25  
 The phrase is Shakespeare’s, and not missapplied;  
 War’s a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting Art,  
 Unless her Cause by Right be sanctified;  
 If you have acted *once* a generous part,  
 The World, not the World’s Masters, will decide; 30  
 And I shall be delighted to learn Who,  
 Save you and yours, have gained by Waterloo?

## 5.

I am no flatterer – you’ve supped full of flattery;<sup>9</sup>  
 They say you like it, too – ’tis no great wonder;  
 He whose whole life has been Assault and Battery 35  
 At last may get a little tired of thunder,  
 And, swallowing eulogy much more than Satire, he  
 May like being praised for every lucky blunder;  
 Called “Saviour of the Nations” – not yet saved –  
 And Europe’s Liberator – still enslaved. 40

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**8:** *You are “the Best of Cut-throats”*: echoes Macbeth’s words to the Murderer (*Thou art the best o’th’cut-throats*) at III iv 17 – just before the feast at which Banquo’s ghost appears. B. was not the first to associate Wellington with common crime. In 1814 a condemned highwayman called John Ashton appeared to lose his mind at the foot of the Newgate scaffold, rushed up to the platform, danced, and shouted “Look at me! I am Lord Wellington!” The drop not working properly at first, he hit the platform again with the force of its rebound, and continued to dance, crying “What do you think of me? Am I not Lord Wellington now?” – Christopher Hibbert, *Highwaymen* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967) pp.91-2.

**9:** ... *you’ve supped full of flattery*: another quotation from *Macbeth* (V iv 13-15): *I have supped full with horrors; / Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts, / Cannot once start me*. Two lines later he hears of his wife’s death.



## 8.

Great men have always scorned great recompenses –  
 Epaminondas saved his Thebes and died,  
 Not leaving even his funeral expenses;  
 George Washington had thanks and nought beside,      60  
 Except the all cloudless Glory (which few men's is)  
 To free his Country; Pitt too had his pride,<sup>14</sup>  
 And as a high-souled Minister of State, is  
 Renowned for ruining Great Britain gratis.<sup>15</sup> –

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**14:** *Cincinnatus ... Epaminondas ... George Washington ... Pitt:* examples of the disinterested patriot who insists on taking no reward for his services (Wellington had had a Dukedom and £500,000 voted to him by the Commons in 1814, and was granted another £200,000 after Waterloo: see above, VIII ll.390-1). Other patriots with whom the Duke has implicitly been contrasted are Daniel Boone (above, VIII sts.61-7) and the ultra-Spartan “Suwarrow” himself. *Cincinnatus:* (c. 519-438 B.C.) twice made dictator of Rome in times of disquiet, on each occasion he had to be called from rustic simplicity and toil, back to which he returned as soon as danger was past. *Epaminondas:* (c. 418-362 B.C.) Theban statesman and patriotic leader in the war against Sparta. He reaped so little gain from his public service that when he died his funeral had to be at the public expense. *George Washington:* (1732-99) first President of the U.S.A., famous for his frugal insistence that the Presidential salary was all he was worth. *Pitt:* (1759-1806) William Pitt the Younger, English Prime Minister from 1784 to 1804. When languishing in poverty, he refused £100,000 offered by the City to clear his debts.

**15:** *Renowned for ruining Great Britain gratis:* Pitt was responsible for introducing Income Tax (see above, I, 183, 4) in order to finance the war with France.

## 9.

Never had mortal Man such opportunity, 65  
 Except Napoleon, or abused it more<sup>16</sup> –  
 You might have freed fall'n Europe from the Unity  
 Of Tyrants, and been blest from shore to shore;  
 And *now* – what *is* your fame? shall the Muse tune it ye?  
*Now* – that the rabble's first vain shouts are o'er? 70  
 Go! hear it in your famished Country's cries!  
 Behold the World! and curse your Victories!

## 10.

As these new Cantos touch on warlike feats,  
 To *you* the unflattering Muse deigns to inscribe  
 Truths that you will not read in the Gazettes,<sup>17</sup> 75  
 But which 'tis time to teach the hireling tribe  
 Who fatten on their Country's gore and debts  
*Must* be recited – and without a bribe;  
 You *did* great things – but not being *great* in mind  
 Have left *undone* the *greatest* – and mankind. 80

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**16:** *Never had mortal Man such opportunity, / Except Napoleon, or abused it more:* given the extent to which B. identified – only semi-facetiously – with Napoleon (for example, see below, XI st.56) it is not surprising that he detested Wellington – Napoleon's vanquisher – almost as much as he did Southey or Castlereagh. Soon after Waterloo – in a letter to Moore dated July 7 1815 – he seems judicious: “**Every hope of a republic is over, and we must go on under the old system. But I am sick at heart of politics and slaughters; and the luck which Providence is pleased to lavish on Lord \*\* [Castlereagh] is only a proof of the little value the gods set on prosperity, when they permit such \*\*\* as he and that drunken corporal, old Blucher, to bully their betters. From this, however, Wellington should be excepted. He is a man, – and the Scipio of our Hannibal. However, he may thank the Russian frosts, which destroyed the real élite of the French army, for the success of Waterloo**” (BLJ IV 320). But by the time he came to write his *Detached Thoughts* in 1821-2, his position had become more extreme: “**The Miscreant Wellington is the Cub of Fortune – but she will never lick him into shape – if he lives he will be beaten – that's certain –. Victory was never before wasted upon such an unprofitable soil – as this dunghill of Tyranny – whence nothing springs but Viper's eggs. –**” (BLJ IX 49).

**17:** *Truths that you will not read in the Gazettes:* continues the onslaught on sycophantic journalism of all kinds which B. has been plying since I ll.3 or 1504, at least: see VII l.636 and l.649, or VIII st.18, or ll.993-4.

## 11.

Death laughs; Go, ponder o'er the Skeleton<sup>18</sup>  
 With which Men image out the unknown thing  
 That hides the past World, like to a Set Sun  
 Which still elsewhere may rouse a brighter Spring;  
 Death laughs at all you weep for – Look upon 85  
 This hourly dread of all, whose *threatened sting*  
 Turns life to terror even though in its sheath!  
 Mark! how its lipless Mouth grins without breath!

## 12.

Mark! how it laughs and scorns at all you are!  
 And yet *was* what you are – from *ear* to *ear* 90  
 It *laughs not*; there is now no fleshly bar  
 So called; the Antic<sup>19</sup> long hath ceased to *hear* –  
 But still he *smiles*, and, whether near or far,  
 He strips from Man that Mantle (far more dear  
 Than even the tailor's) his incarnate Skin – 95  
 White, Black, or Copper – the dead Bones will grin. –

## 13.

And thus Death laughs – it is sad Merriment,  
 But still it *is* so – and with such example,  
 Why should not Life be equally content  
 With his Superior? in a smile to trample 100  
 Upon the Nothings which are daily spent  
 Like bubbles, on an ocean much less ample  
 Than the Eternal Deluge, which devours  
 Suns as Rays – Worlds like Atoms – Years like Hours?

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**18:** *Death laughs* ... The conjunction of the newly-attached Wellington stanzas, with their *Macbeth* quotations, and these, originally the opening stanzas of the canto, must have struck B. as a good idea. The address to Wellington, the bringer of Death, enlarges to a mocking account of Death itself. For the idea of Death laughing, DJV and CPW refer us to Old Talbot's words at *Henry VI I* iv 7 18; but ignore the much more famous words of Richard II at III ii 162-3, of which 1.92 here seems also an echo (though B. lessens the effect by changing *scoffs and scorns* at 89 to *laughs and scorns*):

... and there the antic sits,

*Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp* ...

Hamlet's words to the skull of Yorick in V i are another obvious source; although Canto VIII has already been so steeped in blood that to infer Shakespearean allusion at all (see II.105-106 below) seems superfluous.

**19:** *the Antic*: an antic was a fool or professional jester: a zany.

## 14.

“To be or not to be, *that* is the question,” 105  
 Says Shakespeare – who just now is much the fashion;<sup>20</sup>  
 I’m neither Alexander nor Hephæstion,<sup>21</sup>  
 Nor ever had for *abstract* fame much passion,  
 But would much rather have a sound digestion<sup>22</sup>  
 Than Buonaparte’s Cancer; I could dash on<sup>23</sup> 110  
 Through fifty victories to shame or fame;  
 Without a Stomach – what were a good name? –

## 15.

“*O dura Ilia Messorum!*”<sup>24</sup> “Oh  
 “Ye rigid Guts of reapers!” – I translate  
 For the great benefit of those who know 115  
 What Indigestion is – that inward Fate  
 Which makes all Styx through one small liver flow<sup>25</sup> –  
 A Peasant’s sweat is worth his Lord’s estate;  
 Let *this* one toil for bread, *that* rack for rent –  
 He who sleeps best may be the most content.<sup>26</sup> 120

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**20:** *Says Shakespeare – who just now is much the fashion:* given the sudden upsurge in the use of Shakespearean quotations which B. is currently employing, the irony may be defensive.

**21:** *I am neither Alexander nor Hephæstion:* neither Alexander the Great, conqueror of the world, nor his best friend Hephæstion – neither famous, nor associated with fame (irony again, especially if a homosexual joke is inferred).

**22:** *a sound digestion:* B. suffered intermittently from very bad digestive problems throughout his life. The idea is echoed in several passages in Canto IX, including that on the death of Nadir Shah (supposedly from constipation) in st.33.

**23:** ... *Buonaparte’s Cancer:* amongst other causes – including liver failure and arsenic poisoning – stomach cancer has been adduced as a cause of Napoleon’s death on St Helena in 1821. Compare below, XI st.56, especially ll.7-8.

**24:** “*O dura Ilia Messorum!*”: slightly adapted from Horace, *Epodes* III, 4:

*Parentis olim si quis impia manu  
 senile guttur fregerit,  
 edit cicutis allium nocentius,  
 o dura messorum ilia!  
 quid hoc veneni saevit in praecordiis?*

(*Let he who impiously strangles an aged parent eat garlic – deadlier than hemlock; how tough must the guts of peasants be! What poison is this courses through my body?*) Apparently a curse upon Maecenas for sending Horace a meal which he had, for a joke, laced with too much garlic.

**25:** *Which makes all Styx through one small liver flow:* compare above, II, 215, 1-2: *The Liver is the Lazaret of Bile, / But very rarely executes its function ...* the Styx was the principle river of Hades, over which the dead had to be ferried.

**26:** *He who sleeps best may be the most content:* compare the words of Macbeth at II ii 35-43; or of the King at *Henry IV II*, III i (first speech).





## 18.

It is a pleasant voyage perhaps to float,  
 Like Pyrrho, in a Sea of Speculation<sup>29</sup> –  
 But what if carrying sail capsize the boat?<sup>30</sup>  
 Your wise men don't know much of Navigation – 140  
 And swimming long in the Abyss of Thought  
 Is apt to tire; a calm and shallow station  
 Well nigh the shore, where one stoops down and gathers  
 Some pretty shell, is best for moderate bathers.<sup>31</sup>

## 19.

“But Heaven”, as Cassio says, “is above all – 145  
 “No more of this – then let us pray!”<sup>32</sup> We have  
 Souls to save, since Eve's slip and Adam's fall,  
 Which tumbled all Mankind into the Grave,  
 Besides fish, beasts, and birds – “the Sparrow's fall  
 “Is special providence”<sup>33</sup> though how it gave 150  
 Offence we know not; probably it perched  
 Upon the tree which Eve so fondly searched.

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**29:** *Pyrrho*: Greek philosopher (c. 360-270 B.C.) the basis of whose thought was that the best stance was one of persistent scepticism in relation to everything: ... *they* [the Pyrrhonians] *debate after a very gentle manner. They fear no Revenge in their Disputes. When they affirm that heavy things descend; they would be sorry to be believ'd, and would love to be contradicted, to engender doubt and suspence of Judgment, which is their End. They only put out Propositions to contend with those they think we have in our Belief. If you take their Arguments, they will as readily maintain the contrary: 'Tis all one to them, they have no Choice. If you maintain that Snow is Black, they will argue on the contrary that it is White; if you say it is neither the one nor the other, they will maintain that 'tis both. If you hold by a certain Judgment that you know nothing, they will maintain that you do. Yes, and if by an affirmative Axiome you assure them that you doubt; they will argue against you, that you doubt not; or that you cannot judge and determine that Doubt.* (*Essays of Michael Seigneur de Montaigne*, tr. Cotton, second edition 1693, II 278). See also below, XI ll.13-14.

**30:** ... *what if carrying sail capsize the boat?*: compare above, II ll.473-6 and proof altercation, where Bligh's sails do indeed threaten to capsize the boat on the crests of the waves, even though in the troughs there is dead calm.

**31:** ... *where one stoops down and gathers / Some pretty shell, is best for moderate bathers*: recollects the paraphrase of Newton above at VII, ll.39-40.

**32:** “*But Heaven*”, as Cassio says, “*is above all – / “No more of this – then let us pray!*”: at *Othello* II iii 94-5, what Cassio says in the Folio is *Well, God's above all; and there be souls must be saved, and there be souls must be damned* ... He is drunk at the time. B.'s edition was evidently bowdlerised, and borrowed a Quarto reading for the passage – there the line is *Heaven's above all* ... Neither Folio nor Quarto, however, has the summons to prayer. B. uses the quotation (“**Well Heaven's above all!**”) in a letter to Douglas Kinnaird of May 27 1822 (BLJ IX 165).

**33:** “*the Sparrow's fall / “Is special providence*”: another misquotation (perhaps dictated by scansion) for what Hamlet actually says (at V ii 212-13) is, *There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow* ...

## 20.

Oh Ye Immortal Gods! what is Theogony?<sup>34</sup>  
 Oh thou too Mortal Man! what is Philanthropy?  
 Oh World which was and is! what is Cosmogony? – 155  
 Some People have accused me of Misanthropy –  
 And yet I know, no more than the Mahogany  
 That forms this desk, of what they mean; *Lykanthropy*<sup>35</sup>  
 I comprehend, for without transformation  
 Men become Wolves on any slight occasion. – 160

## 21.

But I, the mildest, meekest of Mankind –  
 Like Moses, or Melancthon, who have ne'er<sup>36</sup>  
 Done anything exceedingly unkind –  
 And (though I could not now and then forbear  
 Following the bent of body or of Mind) 165  
 Have always had a tendency to spare –  
 Why do they call me Misanthrope? Because  
 They hate me, not I them; and here we'll pause. –

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**34:** *Oh Ye Immortal Gods! what is Theogony?*: they should know, for it is the study of their births and genealogies; but the implication may be that they are as confused on the subject as mortals are.

**35:** *Lykanthropy*: the derangement whereby men imagine themselves to be wolves. See Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, V ii.

**36:** *Moses, or Melancthon*: compare B. to Moore, March 8 1822: “**With regard to Murray as I really am the meekest and mildest of men since Moses ...**” (BLJ IX 122). Despite the adducement by DJV of quotations from Exodus, Moses protested his diffidence only in public speaking (he always had Aaron upon whom to rely) but was not generally prone to self-effacement in matters of leadership or principle: *And when Moses saw that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me”. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour”. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men ...* (Exodus 32, 25-9). *Melancthon* was the Hellenised version of the surname of Philip Schwarzerd (“Black-earth”: 1497-1560) sixteenth-century German Protestant reformer: holding a theological position midway between Calvin and his colleague Luther, he was often accused – by the followers of both extremists – of favouring Catholicism.

## 22.

'Tis time we should proceed with our good poem –  
 For I maintain that it is really good – 170  
 Not only in the body but the proem,<sup>37</sup>  
 However little both are understood –  
 Just now; but by and by the Truth will show 'em  
 Herself in her sublimest attitude –  
 And till she doth, I fain must be content 175  
 To share her Beauty and her Banishment.

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**37:** *Not only in the body but the proem:* see commentary above to sts.9 and 10 of this canto. The *proem* here is the first ten stanzas.

23.<sup>38</sup>

Our Hero (and I trust – kind reader! – yours)  
 Was left upon his way to the Chief City  
 Of the Immortal Peter’s polished boors,<sup>39</sup>  
 Who still have shown themselves more brave than witty; 180  
 I know it’s mighty Empire now allures  
 Much flattery – even Voltaire’s, and that’s a pity;<sup>40</sup>  
 For me, I deem an absolute Autocrat  
 Not a barbarian, but much worse than that. –

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**38:** B.’s first mention of St. Petersburg at lines 178-9 brings into focus an important subtext for this and for the next Canto of *Don Juan* – the satire *Il Poema Tartaro* by Giambattista Casti, written in the 1780s and published in 1796. Casti was a diplomat in the service of the Austrian ambassador, and seems to have developed a profound Russophobia there – see *Notizie e Appunti sulla Vita e l’Operosita di G.B.Casti negli Anni 1776-1790*, by Antonio Fallico (*Italianistica*, 1972, pp.520-38). No direct evidence exists for B.’s having read it, but given his liking for Casti’s two later works – the *Novelle Galanti* and *Gli Animali Parlanti* – it is unlikely that he was ignorant of its power, and of the apocalyptic way in which it portrays the shortcomings of the Russia of Catherine the Great. Notes on the links between the two works will be given when relevant.

**39:** *the Chief City / Of the Immortal Peter’s polished boors*: that is, St. Petersburg, founded by Peter the Great (*the Immortal Peter*: 1672-1725; *polished boors*: ignorant boyars) in 1703 as Russia’s first and still her principal Baltic port, and second, or even alternative, capital. B. takes as main evidence for his abusive epithet, Casti’s *Il Poema Tartaro*. In Casti’s Canto II, Tommaso, the poem’s hero, is shown the degraded sights of Caracora (St. Petersburg) as Dante is shown by Virgil over the Inferno. In Caracora, the years are named not after consuls, in the Roman fashion, but after the lovers of Catherine the Great: not “Consoli tali” but “tali Amanti” (II, 54, 7-8). The nobles are not noble, but barbarians and slaves, the buyers and the bought (II, St. 75): a cabal rules (II, 68, 8) men unworthy of command are given it, and men worthy to command die of hunger (II St. 70). All Asia believes in the civilisation of Mogollia, but there is no such thing: it is all the creation of foreign imposteurs: those expelled from their own countries always find places there (II, sts.102-3). An illiterate heads the Academy (III, St. 8). Law is a word with no meaning (III, 32, 3-8). Despite the prevalence of Arab (that is, French enlightenment) ideas, unfortunates are still subjected to one thousand blows of the knout: the Empress Cattuna – Catherine – has merely decreed that the punishment need not continue once the victim has died. The state religion is soiled. Finesse is unknown in the commerce between the sexes (III, sts.61-4) and real commerce flourishes on corruption (III, sts.80-81). B. ignores the detail of Casti’s critique: but it can be sensed behind his satire of the Imperial Court itself.

**40:** *Much flattery – even Voltaire’s, and that’s a pity*: Voltaire – ordinarily no friend to tyranny – was sufficiently taken in by the enlightened gestures of Catherine to give her such titles as “Notre Dame de Saint-Petersbourg”. On her famous progress through the Crimea (conquered for her by Potemkin) he wrote (October 18 1775) *Madame, / Après avoir été étonné et enchanté de vos victoires pendant quatre années de suite, je le suis encore de vos fêtes. J’ai bien de la peine à comprendre comment Votre Majesté Impériale a ordonné à la mer noire de venir dans une plaine auprès de Moscou. Je vois des vaisseaux sur cette mer, des villes sur les bords, des cocagnes pour une peuple immense, des feux d’artifice, et tous les miracles de l’opéra réunis. / Je savais bien que la très grande Catherine seconde était la première personne du monde entier, mais je ne savais pas qu’elle fût magicienne.* (Complete Works, ed. Besterman, XLII p.227.) The playfulness in his words might suggest irony.

## 24.

And I will war – at least in words – (and should 185  
 My Chance so happen, deeds) with all who war  
 With Thought – and of Thought’s foes by far most rude,  
 Tyrants and Sycophants have been and are;  
 I know not who may conquer – if I could  
 Have such a prescience, it should be no bar 190  
 To this my plain sworn downright detestation  
 Of every Despotism in every Nation. –

## 25.

It is not that I adulate the people –  
 Without me there are Demagogues enough,  
 And infidels to pull down every Steeple,<sup>41</sup> 195  
 And set up in their stead some proper stuff;  
 Whether they may sow Scepticism to reap Hell,  
 As is the Christian dogma rather rough,  
 I do not know – I wish men to be free  
 As much from Mobs as Kings – from you as me. 200

## 26.

The Consequence is that, being of no party  
 I shall offend all parties – never mind!  
 My words at least are more sincere and hearty  
 Than if I sought to sail before the Wind;  
 He who has nought to gain can have small art; he 205  
 Who neither wishes to be bound nor bind  
 May still expatiate freely – as will I,  
 Nor give my Voice to Slavery’s Jackall cry.

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**41:** *Without me there are Demagogues enough, / And infidels to pull down every Steeple:* B., though theoretically in favour of reform, and even of republics – see the quotation from his letter to Moore, note to this Canto, ll.64-5 above – did not relish the idea of a government by such men as William Cobbett or “Orator” Hunt – see quotations about the former, in commentary to l.162 above. He described democracy as *an aristocracy of blackguards* (BLJ VIII 107). He wrote his *impromptu* levelling song *As the Liberty lads o’er the sea* (BLJ V 149: CPW IV 48) to shock Francis Hodgson; at the same time as he spoke against the death-penalty for frame-breaking, he raised his manorial rents: it is hard to claim him as an enthusiastically active radical. He describes radicals as *no better than Jack Cade, or Wat Tyler* (BLJ VII 63) and as *low designing dirty levellers who would pioneer their way to a democratical tyranny* (BLJ VII 99: words the later Southey would not have disowned). His best friend John Cam Hobhouse was a radical Whig (some way from being a real radical like Hone or Cobbett) and spent time in Newgate on that account: but B. mocked him with a ballad (CPW IV 286) and said that *though I do not disapprove of his cause, I by no means envy his company* (BLJ VII 252 – the reference is not to jailbirds). Only Sir Francis Burdett, the leader of the radical Whigs, had his approval (BLJ VI 166) and even he was *as sweet and silvery as Belial himself* (BLJ IX 14).

## 27.

*That's* an appropriate similie – *that Jackall*;  
 I've heard them in the Ephesian ruins howl<sup>42</sup> 210  
 By night, as doth that mercenary pack all –  
 Power's base purveyors, who for pickings prowl,  
 And scent the prey their masters would attack all;  
 However, the poor Jackalls are less foul  
 (As being the brave Lion's keen providers)<sup>43</sup> 215  
 Than human insects catering for Spiders;

## 28.

Raise but an arm, 'twill brush their web away,  
 And without *that*, their poison and their claws  
 Are useless; Mind – good People! – what I say  
 (Or rather Peoples!) *Go on* without pause; 220  
 The Web of these Tarantulas each day  
 Increases, till you shall make common cause;  
 None, save the Spanish Fly and Attic Bee,  
 As yet are strongly stinging to be free.<sup>44</sup>

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42: *I've heard them in the Ephesian ruins howl*: the fourth time that B. has, in his works, referred to jackals in the ruins of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus (which he had visited with Hobhouse on March 13-15 1810): he first does so in his introduction to the unpublished *Hints From Horace*: “**I have been rambling upwards of two years and heard nothing like the voice of Hewson Clarke, except the yell of the jackalls in the ruins of Ephesus**” (CPW I 430). Next, in a note to lines 1024-5 of *The Siege of Corinth*: “**The jackal's troop, in gathered cry, / Bayed from afar complainingly**”: “*I believe I have taken a poetical license to transfer the jackal from Asia. In Greece I never saw nor heard these animals; but among the ruins of Ephesus I have heard them by hundreds. They haunt ruins, and follow armies.*” Secondly, at *Childe Harold IV*, 1372-4: “**I have beheld the Ephesian's miracle – / Its columns strew the wilderness, and dwell / The hyaena and the jackall in their shade ...**” In a letter to Henry Drury at BLJ II 240, B. mentions Ephesus and its ruins, without referring to any jackals he heard there: however, in a journal entry of November 23rd 1813 (BLJ III 218: he is planning a trip to witness what he hopes will be a revolution in the Netherlands) he writes “**I have heard hyænas and jackalls in the ruins of Asia; and bull-frogs in the marshes, – besides wolves and angry Mussulmans. Now, I should like to listen to the sound of a free Dutchman.**” In fact it seems from Hobhouse's Ephesus diary as if they heard thousands of frogs, which sounded like jackals.

43: ... *the brave Lion's keen providers ... The Web of these Tarantulas ...*: CPW impugns B.'s knowledge of spiders at 215 by pointing out that tarantulas do not weave webs: it is also true that jackals (or hyenas) only function unwillingly as Lions' providers.

44: *None, save the Spanish Fly and Attic Bee, / As yet are strongly stinging to be free*: references primarily to the revolt in Spain against Ferdinand VII, and that in Greece against the Turks: but *Spanish Fly* was an aphrodisiac made from crushed beetles, and an *Attic Bee* would be (primarily) a famous Greek honey-provider and (secondarily) a creature who frequented female pudenda (the “Attic”).





## 31.

At every jolt, and there were many, still  
 He turned his eyes upon his little charge,  
 As if he wished that she should fare less ill  
 Than he, in these sad highways left at large  
 To ruts, and flints, and lovely Nature's skill,<sup>48</sup> 245  
 Who is no Paviour, nor admits a barge  
 On *her* Canals, where God takes Sea and land,<sup>49</sup>  
 Fishery and farm, both into his own hand;

32.<sup>50</sup>

At least he pays no rent, and has best right  
 To be the first of what we used to call 250  
 "Gentlemen Farmers" – a race worn out quite, \*  
 Since lately there have been no rents at all, \*  
 And "Gentlemen" are in a piteous plight,  
 And "farmers" can't raise Ceres from her fall;  
 She fell with Buonaparte – what strange thoughts 255  
 Arise, when we see Emperors fall with oats!

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**48:** ... *ruts, and flints, and lovely Nature's skill*: see Pushkin's objection to this idea, quoted on the previous page.

**49:** ... *lovely Nature's skill, / Who is no Paviour, nor admits a barge / On her Canals, where God takes Sea and land*: a paviour is one who lays stones on pavements or in general surfaces roads (see below, X, ll.569-73, 617 and nn: B. may intend an echo of *Saviour*). The implication is that though God, in his creation of a life fit for an Epic hero – Juan's – has made the way rough, Juan is himself determined that Leila shall be spared similar suffering. However, as we know from above, VIII, 25, 8, the road to Hell is itself *paved* with intentions of this kind.

**50:** St.32 is a semi-facetious meditation on the post-Waterloo economic depression, which hit England as the price of corn – kept artificially high by the war – fell, making farmers bankrupts (251) labourers and small-holders paupers (252) and occasioning acute and wide-spread hardship. The price was at first raised by the Corn Law of 1815, designed by the powerful landowners who dominated the Commons to try and protect their own interests at the expense of everyone else's (it allowed the import of cheap foreign corn only when domestic prices had risen to over eighty shillings a quarter). However, by 1822, when B. was writing, the price of corn had fallen, even though the Poor Rate had risen to £8,000,000. *Ceres* (254: goddess of the harvest) did not *fall* in the sense of not yielding crops, so much as in the sense of not yielding profits, a consequence of the defeat of Napoleon (255). In section XIV of *The Age of Bronze* (written two months after this Canto) B. meditates on the irony that the Tories' part in the winning of the war, and in exiling Napoleon to St. Helena, went counter to their own economic interests. See also below, XI, 77, 8. The stanza cannot really bring itself to debase Ceres completely by making her a mere helpmeet of the English landed interest, and the consequence of the only-partial irony against her is the partial deification of Buonaparte, together with the creation of a uniquely Byronic mythical-Marxist substratum, in which both Goddess and General are formed by and equated with brute economic forces which neither understand.

33.<sup>51</sup>

But Juan turned his eyes on the sweet child  
 Whom he had saved from slaughter – what a trophy!  
 Oh Ye! who build up Monuments defiled  
 With gore, like Nadir Shah, that costive Sophy,                   260  
 Who, after leaving Hindoostan a Wild,<sup>52</sup>  
 And scarce to the Mogul a cup of Coffee<sup>53</sup>  
 To soothe his woes withal, was slain – the Sinner!  
 Because he could no more digest his dinner.

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**51:** Nadir Shah is dragged into *Don Juan* partly at the behest of the rhyme; but he – and his medical problem – fit in well with at least one theme of the poem, namely the dependence of our emotions, and thus of our fates, upon our bodily functions. Compare Juan’s own nausea, above, II sts.18-23, or Potemkin’s death from indigestion, above, VII sts.36-7. The word *costive* has a secondary meaning, which is “verbally hesitant or inarticulate”; Nadir Shah’s problem would in this context associate readily with Castlereagh’s – see above, V, B.’s n to l.695, or this canto, below, references in sts.49-50; or with the poet – this canto, l.282. B. had himself suffered a very bad fit of constipation at Lerici in late September of 1822: “... **Amongst other operations – a Glyster was ordered – and administered in such a manner by the performer – that I have ever since been wondering why the legislature should punish Bishop Jocelyn and his Soldado** [see above, VIII ll.601-2 and n] – **since if the episcopal instrument at all resembled the damned squirt of the Ligurian apothecary – the crime will have carried it’s own chastisement along with it**” (BLJ X 12-13).

**52:** *Nadir Shah*: also known as Nadr Qoli Khan and Thamasp Qoli Khan (1688-1747) he had risen from bandit leader to King of Persia by 1736. He defeated the Afghans, drove the Turks from Persia, forced Russia to relinquish her Caspian provinces, took Bahrain and Oman, invaded Moghul India (ll.261-2) capturing Delhi and returning with (*inter alia*) the Peacock Throne and the Koh-i-Noor diamond. Death and devastation followed him everywhere. In 1741 he blinded his own son on suspicion of treason; and subsequently tried to convert the entire Persian population from Shi-ite to Sunni. In 1746 he achieved his greatest victory, over the Turks near Yerevan. Relentlessly cruel – a soldier who flung himself before Nadir Shah in battle, to save his life, was strangled at once for his presumption – he was finally assassinated upon the rumour that he proposed to kill the entire Persian part of his army (he preferred Uzbek and Tartar soldiers). Père Bazin, the Jesuit who tended him in his last months and who was in the tent next to his when he was assassinated, diagnoses his medical problems thus: *La maladie de Thamas Kouli-Kan étoit une hydropisie commencée: it avoit des vomissemens fréquens; & une heure après ses repas, il rendoit tout ce qu’il avoit pris. Ces accidens étoient accompagnés de beaucoup d’autres: grande constipation, oppilation de soye, sécheresse de bouche, & c. – Sur les dernières années du regne de Thamas Kouli-Kan, & sur sa mort tragique; in Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses, écrites des Missions Étrangères* (Paris 1780, IV p.304). For a not-inapt Shakespearean parallel, see *Macbeth* V iii 50-6.

**53:** ... *costive Sophy*: means “constipated Iranian potentate”; but it is not clear where B.’s information comes from. I doubt whether he read Père Bazin’s account; and the standard early-eighteenth-century work on Nadir Shah – Jonas Hanway’s *An Account of British Trade over the Caspian Sea* (1753) states confidently that *he enjoyed great health* (IV, 280). The first book of the English Orientalist Sir William Jones was a translation (into French) of a Persian life of Nadir Shah: in his English version, Jones merely admits discreetly that *a disorder preyed upon his [Nadir Shah’s] spirits, which gained new force every day ... [he] was attacked with so violent a disorder that he was forced to be carried in a litter ... his disorder grew daily upon him ...* – *The History of the Life of Nadir Shah King of Persia* (London 1773, pp.107, 108 and 111: these phrases are not in the French). The relevant section of Sir John Malcolm’s *History of Persia* (London, 1815: CMP 243) makes no reference to any illness.

## 34.

Oh ye! or we! or he! or she! reflect, 265  
 That *one* life saved – especially if young  
 Or pretty – is a thing to recollect,  
 Far sweeter than the greenest laurels sprung  
 From the manure of human Clay,<sup>54</sup> though decked \*  
 With all the praises ever said or sung, 270  
 Though hymned by every harp; unless within  
 Your Heart joins Chorus, Fame is but a din.

## 35.

Oh! ye great Authors – luminous – voluminous!  
 Ye twice ten hundred thousand daily Scribes  
 Whose pamphlets, volumes, Newspapers illumine us,<sup>55</sup> 275  
 Whether you're paid by Government in bribes,  
 To prove the public debt is not consuming us,  
 Or roughly treading on the "Courtier's kibes"  
 With clownish heel – your popular Circulation<sup>56</sup>  
 Feeds you by printing half the realm's Starvation! 280

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**54:** *From the manure of human Clay*: a not-inapt image, given what B. has just said in st.33 about the digestive problems of Nadir Shah.

**55:** *Ye twice ten hundred thousand daily Scribes / Whose pamphlets, volumes, Newspapers illumine us*: continues the irony against gazettes and media. See this canto, 74n.

**56:** *... roughly treading on the "Courtier's kibes" / With clownish heel*: echoes Hamlet's words to Horatio (about the gravedigger) at V i 134-137: *... the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe*. The quotation relates to the radical press and thus (a) to such writers as Cobbett (see this canto, deleted l.162) or even (b) to Leigh and John Hunt, owners of *The Examiner*, and, in the case of John, publisher of these cantos of *Don Juan*.

## 36.

Oh! ye great Authors – “Apropos des bottes”<sup>57</sup> –  
 I have forgotten what I meant to say,  
 As sometimes have been greater Sages’ lots;<sup>58</sup>  
 ’Twas something calculated to allay  
 All wrath in barracks – palaces – or cots – 285  
 Certes – it would have been but thrown away<sup>59</sup> –  
 And that’s some comfort for my lost Advice,  
 Although no doubt it was beyond all price.<sup>60</sup> –

## 37.

But let it go – it will one day be found,  
 With other relics of “a former World”,<sup>61</sup> 290  
 When this World shall be *former*, under ground,  
 Thrown topsy turvy, twisted, crisped, and curled<sup>62</sup> –  
 Baked – fried – or burned, turned inside out, or drowned –  
 Like all the Worlds before which have been hurled  
 First out of, and then back again to Chaos – 295  
 The Superstratum which will overlay us.

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**57:** “A *propos des bottes*”: a *botte* is either a boot, a bouquet, or any assemblage of objects tied together; *àpropos des bottes* is an idiomatic expression implying that the speaker has no specific motive for saying what he’s saying: *sans motif raisonnable*.

**58:** *I have forgotten what I meant to say, / As sometimes have been greater Sages’ lots*: another Hamlet echo, of Polonius at II i 49-51: *And then, sir, ’a does this – ’a does – What was I about to say? By the Mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave?* Compare below, XV, 1, 1.

**59:** *Certes – it would have been but thrown away*: compare de Laclos, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (translated as *Dangerous Connections*, London, 1812) IV 101 (Letter CXLI: the Marquise de Merteuil writes to Valmont: *I have nothing more to say, but to tell you a trifling story; perhaps you will not have leisure to read it, or to give so much attention to it as to understand it properly? At worst, it will only be a tale thrown away*. For another quotation from the novel, see B.’s Journal entry for November 24 1814 (BLJ III 220).

**60:** *... no doubt it was beyond all price*: echoes Othello at V ii 348-350: *... of one whose hand, / Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe ...* and Matthew 13 45-46: *... the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking good pearls: who, when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it*.

**61:** “a former World”: it is not clear what B. claims to be quoting from here.

**62:** *... twisted, crisped, and curled*: this sequence is echoed below, this canto, 1.619; see also XI 1.605.

## 38.

So Cuvier says<sup>63</sup> – and then shall come again  
 Unto the new Creation rising out  
 From our old Crash, some mystic ancient strain  
 Of things destroyed and left in airy doubt, 300  
 Like to the notions *we* now entertain  
 Of Titans – Giants – fellows of about  
 Some hundred feet in height, *not* to say *miles*,  
 And Mammoths – and your winged Crocodiles.<sup>64</sup> –

## 39.

Think if then George the fourth should be dug up!<sup>65</sup> 305  
 How the new Worldings of the then new East  
 Will wonder where such Animals could sup  
 (For they themselves will be but of the least –  
 Even Worlds miscarry when too oft they pup,  
 And every new Creation hath decreased 310  
 In size, from overworking the Material –  
 Men are but Maggots of some huge Earth's burial);

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**63:** *So Cuvier says:* Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert (1769-1832) French anatomist, paleontologist and educationalist, better known by his *nom de plume* Georges Cuvier, was one of the first scientists boldly to investigate the fossil record, and to speculate upon what dinosaur remains might imply; his most important book on the subject was *Les ossements fossiles des quadrupèdes* (1812). B. leaves few references to him (see his note to the Preface to *Cain*: CPW VI 229-30) but clearly likes the subversive ideas derivable from his work (see also letter to Murray, BLJ IX 53). At *Cain* II ii 132-42, the protagonist is granted a view of dinosaurs as they were before their extinction; at ll.44-62 of the same scene he views an imagined precedent race of what Lucifer – his mentor – describes as *Living, high, / Intelligent, good, great and glorious things* (II ii 67-8) which preceded the dinosaurs but were destroyed by an inscrutable Almighty. In a letter to Moore at BLJ VIII 216 B. describes these as rational *Preadamites*; Cain is impressed by their physical and moral stature, and B. glances at them again here, at ll.302-3. This section of *Don Juan* inverts Cain's awe by putting George IV in the position *either* of the dinosaurs *or* of the pre-Adamite beings; and exploits the comedy consequent upon such a facetious conceit. Cuvier, like Darwin (and B.) was regarded by conservative believers as a major threat to orthodox Christian teaching; despite which he was awarded the Legion d'Honneur by Louis XVIII, and made Minister of the Interior by Louis Philippe. See also below, X 1.412.

**64:** *your winged Crocodiles:* the OED first locates the word *pterodactyl* in 1830.

**65:** *Think if then George the fourth should be dug up!:* George IV was so obese that at certain periods of his life he was ashamed to appear in public. See above, VIII st.126, or *TVOJ*, ll.97-8: *God save the King!* "It is a large economy / In God to save the like ... B. may also be thinking of the occasion when, on April 1 1813, George, as Regent, sanctioned the opening in George's Chapel Windsor of an anonymous coffin which was found to contain the body of Charles I (see B.'s poem *Windsor Poetics*: CPW III 86-7).

## 40.

How will to these young People, just thrust out  
 From some fresh Paradise, and set to plough,  
 And dig, and sweat, and turn themselves about – 315  
 And plant, and reap, and spin, and grind, and sow,  
 Till all the Arts at length are brought about<sup>66</sup> –  
 Especially of War and Taxing – how –  
 I say – will these great relics – when they see 'em –  
 Look like the Monsters of a new Museum? – – 320

## 41.

But I am apt to grow too metaphysical –  
 “The time is out of joint,”<sup>67</sup> and so am I;  
 I quite forget this poem's merely quizzical,  
 And deviate into matters rather dry;<sup>68</sup>  
 I ne'er decide what I shall say, and this I call 325  
 Much too poetical; Men should know why  
 They write, and for what end; but, note or text,  
 I never know the word which will come next.

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**66:** ... to plough, / And dig, and sweat, and turn themselves about – / And plant, and reap, and spin, and grind, and sow, / Till all the Arts at length are brought about: sexual innuendo *passim*. The idea of using the fossil record mythologically may have been suggested to B. by Friedrich Schlegel's *Lectures on the History of Literature Ancient and Modern*, for his reading of which, in January 1821, see BLJ VIII 38-9: *We may almost say that as the traditions of every people go back to an age of heroes, and as nature too has had her time of ancient greatness – a time of mighty revolutions whereof we can still perceive the traces, and gigantic animals of which we are every day digging up the remains; even so both civilisation and poetry have had their time also of the wonderful and the gigantic* (1818 Edinburgh translation, I 192).

**67:** “The time is out of joint,” and so am I: yet another quotation from *Hamlet* (I v 189-190) perhaps designed comically to express B.'s despair at the magnitude of his epic task: *The time is out of joint. Oh, cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!*

**68:** ... deviate into matters rather dry: probably *double entendre*; with a glance both at the Bishop of Clogher (see above, VIII 1.602 and n) and at the dry-bobbing problems of Southey, above, Dedication, II.23-4.

## 42.

So on I ramble, now and then narrating,  
 Now pondering; it is time we should narrate: 330  
 I left Don Juan with his horses baiting,  
 Now we'll get o'er the ground at a great rate;  
 I shall not be particular in stating  
 His journey – we've so many tours of late<sup>69</sup> –  
 Suppose him then at Petersburg – Suppose 335  
 That pleasant Capital of painted Snows;<sup>70</sup>

## 43.

Suppose him in a handsome uniform;  
 A Scarlet coat, black facings, a long plume  
 Waving like new sails shivered in a storm  
 Over a cocked hat in a crowded room, 340  
 And brilliant breeches bright as a Cairn Gorme<sup>71</sup>  
 Of yellow Cassimere,<sup>72</sup> we may presume;  
 White stockings, drawn uncurdled as new milk,<sup>73</sup>  
 O'er limbs whose Symmetry set off the Silk:

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**69:** ... *we've so many tours of late*: compare the similar disclaimer above, at V, st.52. However, where there B. had very little to borrow from in the way of prose sources, here he has more than enough. It is another way of registering his desire not to dwell too long on Juan's stay in Russia.

**70:** *That pleasant Capital of painted Snows*: editors have fished wildly for an allusion in this potent phrase. Coleridge suggests William Tooke's description (in the *Life of Catherine II*) of the Taurid Palace, built by the Empress for Potemkin in recognition of his conquest of the Crimea – a climactic event in which was the taking of Ismail: *The genial warmth ... the voluptuous silence that reigns in this enchanting garden, lull the fancy into sweet romantic dreams: we think ourselves in the groves of Italy, while torpid nature, through the windows of this pavilion, announces the severity of a northern winter*. DJV follows Coleridge. CPW, quoting Cecil Lang, adduces the Bower of Bliss section in *The Faerie Queene*, with special reference to II xii 43-45. Neither reference yielding any direct substantive or even verbal borrowing, I would suggest (i) that B. needs a rhyme for his current cant-word *Suppose*, and that (ii) he is aware, in part from his reading of Casti's *Il Poema Tartaro* (see above, this canto, ll.178-179n) that unreality in Catherine's Russia pervaded so many aspects of life that we should not be surprised if the snow turned out to be unreal as well. Compare the unreality of Constantinople at V, 46, 7-8: *Each Villa on the Bosphorus looks a Screen / New painted, or a pretty Opera Scene*. –

**71:** *brilliant breeches bright as a Cairn Gorme*: a cairngorm (named from the Scots mountain range) is a semi-precious stone; a yellow or wine-coloured rock crystal.

**72:** *yellow Cassimere*: variant on *Kashmir*: “a thin fine twilled woollen cloth used for men's clothes” (OED).

**73:** *uncurdled as new milk*: would imply his purity; see above, the impression Gulbeyaz has of Juan, V 973n.

## 44.

Suppose him sword by side and hat in hand, 345  
 Made up by Youth, Fame, and an army tailor –  
 That great Enchanter, at whose rod's command  
 Beauty springs forth and Nature's Self turns paler,  
 Seeing how Art can make her work more grand  
 (When She don't pin Men's limbs in like a Jailer) 350  
 Behold him placed as if upon a pillar! he  
 Seems Love turned a Lieutenant of Artillery!

## 45.

His Bandage slipped down into a Cravat,  
 His Wings subdued to Epauettes, his Quiver  
 Shrunk to a Scabbard, with his Arrows at 355  
 His side as a small sword, but sharp as ever;  
 His Bow converted into a cocked hat,  
 But still so like, that Psyche were more clever  
 Than some wives (who make blunders no less stupid)  
 If She had not mistaken him for Cupid.<sup>74</sup> 360

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**74:** *so like, that Psyche were more clever / Than some wives (who make blunders no less stupid) / If She had not mistaken him for Cupid:* Psyche and Cupid were in love, but she was forbidden to look at him. Defying the rule, she held a lamp over him as he slept, a drop of oil from which awoke him and made him disappear. After a long search on her part, Zeus took pity on the lovers and reunited them. See Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, sections VII-IX.



## 46.

The Courtiers stared, the ladies whispered, and  
 The Empress smiled;<sup>75</sup> the reigning Favourite frowned –  
 I quite forget which of them was in hand  
 Just then – as they are rather numerous found,<sup>76</sup>  
 Who took by turns that difficult command 365  
 Since first her Majesty was singly crowned;  
 But they were mostly nervous six foot fellows  
 All fit to make a Patagonian jealous.<sup>77</sup> –

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**75:** Compare below, XIV, 44, 1-2. Hope's hero Anastasius harbours ambitions to be Catherine the Great's lover: *Once, therefore, a smart tight laced colonel in Catherine's own Bréobraiskî body guard, who doubted the rest? Not Anastasius for certain! "Chill of age nor of climate," cried I, "shall stop me; I shall grasp at all, become another Potemkin, rule an empire, have a court, alternate between arranging fetes and planning campaigns; pay my card-money in diamonds, make mosaïc-work of provinces, plant orange and citron groves on hanging terraces of icicles, and, when tired of illuminations on the Neva, set on fire the Bosphorus, – and transport the seat of empire from the vicinity of the White Sea, to the shores of the Black Sea!"* (Anastasius III, 14-15). But he never gets to Russia.

**76:** ... *they are rather numerous found:* one of B.'s sources – *Secret Memoirs of the Court of St Petersburg* by C.F.P.Masson (1800 English translation, I 146-71) – lists Sergius Saltikoff, Stanislas Poniatofsky, Gregory Orloff, Vassiltschkoff, Potemkin (above, VII sts.36-37) Zavadovsky, Zoritsch, Korsakof, Lanskoï (this Canto, ll.376, B.'s note, and 430) Yermolof, Momonof (below, l.377) and Platon Zubov (below, st.57 and ll.601nn). In fact this is a discreet estimate. As Casti's *Poema Tartaro* (II, 7) puts it:

*Nulladimen montata poi sul Trono  
 Qualità dispiegò sublimi, e altere,  
 Un animo gentile, umano, e buono  
 Generosi pensier, dolci maniere,  
 Core sempre all'amor, facile, e prono,  
 Fibra sempre sensibile al piacere,  
 E seconda dicevano i maledici,  
 Avute avea quindici amanti, o sedici.*

*[Scarcely had she mounted the throne but she displayed sublime and dignified qualities: a gentle soul, good, humane and generous thoughts, a heart always and easily inclined towards love, senses always delicate for pleasure; and, according to wicked tongues, she had already had fifteen lovers – or sixteen.]*

Merely between 1777 and 1779 her lovers were six in number: Piotr Zavadovskii, Semyen Zorich, Ivan Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Stakhiev, Vasily Levashev, and Alexander Rontsov. A seventh, called Strakhov, was rumoured.

**77:** ... *nervous six foot fellows / All fit to make a Patagonian jealous:* the ancient inhabitants of Patagonia (that is, southern Argentina and Chile) were said to have been of monstrous height. Potemkin and Orloff were the only two of Catherine's lovers to have been of more than average height.

## 47.

Juan was none of these, but slight and slim,  
 Blushing and beardless; and yet, ne' ertheless, 370  
 There was a something in his turn of limb,  
 And still more in his eye, which seemed t' express  
 That though he looked one of the Seraphim,  
 There lurked a Man beneath the Spirit's dress;  
 Besides, the Empress sometimes liked a boy, 375  
 And had just buried the fair-faced Lanskoï. \*

\* He was the "grande passion" of the grande Catherine – see her lives under the head of "Lanskoï".<sup>78</sup>

## 48.

No wonder then that Yermoloff, or Momonoff,  
 Or Scherbatoff, or any other *off*<sup>79</sup>  
 Or *On*, might dread her Majesty had not room enough<sup>80</sup>  
 Within her bosom (which was not too tough) 380  
 For a new flame – a thought to cast of Gloom enough  
 Along the aspect, whether smooth or rough,  
 Of him who, in the language of his Station,  
 Then held that "high Official Situation."<sup>81</sup> –

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**78:** *And had just buried the fair-faced Lanskoï*: Alexander Lanskoï (c. 1760-84) was one of Catherine's youngest and most favoured lovers; his death – probably from diphtheria – plunged her into an uncharacteristic period of violent mourning (most of her lovers survived her). ... *had just buried* throws the poem's chronology out, for Juan is supposed to be visiting Russia in 1791.

**79:** *Yermoloff, or Momonoff, / Or Scherbatoff*: General Fyodor Scherbatov failed to put down the Pugachev rebellion in 1774; he was not one of the Empress' lovers. Prince Mikhail Scherbatov was Court Historian; neither was he. Alexander Yermoloff and Dmitri Momonoff (or Mamonoff) *were* two of Catherine's lovers: Momonoff (or Mamonoff) left her service, *soon disgusted* (the words are Masson's: I 170) *with the faded charms of a mistress of sixty*; he married the Princess Scherbatov. B.'s use of her name in the list shows a characteristic insouciance, exploiting the words' supposedly bizarre sounds and obscene potential at the expense of their immediate relevance (see above, VII sts.15-17).

**80:** *room enough*: compare *Julius Caesar* I ii 156: *Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough, / When there is in it but one only man ...*

**81:** *that "high Official Situation"*: *double entendre*, although the post of favourite was afforded an enormous *de facto* official Court recognition, with apartments, decorations, and salary.

## 49.

Oh gentle ladies!<sup>82</sup> should you seek to know 385  
 The import of this diplomatic phrase,  
 Bid Ireland's Londonderry's Marquess show  
 His parts – of Speech; and, in the strange displays<sup>83</sup>  
 Of that odd string of words all in a row,  
 Which none divine, and every one obeys, 390  
 Perhaps you may pick out some queer *no-meaning* –  
 Of that weak wordy harvest the sole gleaning. –

\* This was written long before the suicide of that person.

## 50.

I think I can explain myself without  
 That sad inexplicable beast of prey –  
 That Sphinx whose words would ever be a doubt,<sup>84</sup> 395  
 Did not his deeds unriddle them each day –  
 That Monstrous Hieroglyphic – that long Spout  
 Of blood and Water – leaden Castlereagh!  
 And here I must an anecdote relate,  
 But luckily of no great length or weight. 400

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**82:** *Oh gentle ladies! should you seek to know:* pastiches Casti, who often addresses his female readers with condescension. See *Novelle Galanti XLV (La Scommessa)* stanza XXI:

*Ancor noi, Donne mie, lo scherzo amiamo  
 Il riso e la gajezza; e col mistero  
 Certe innocenti libertà copriamo;  
 Ma d'ogni oscenità fare un mestiero,  
 Dissolutezze son che detestiamo,  
 E a udirle orror ci fan; non è egli vero?  
 Ma certi dilicati sentimenti  
 Si comuni non son nè sì frequenti.*

[We, too, Ladies, love joking, smiles and jollity; and disguise certain innocent freedoms mysteriously; but to trade in any obscenity is a grossness we detest, regarding it as a horror – is it not so? But there are certain other delicate sentiments which are less common, and arise less frequently.]

**83:** *Bid Ireland's Londonderry's Marquess show / His parts – of Speech ... / Which none divine, and every one obeys:* double entendre, referring perhaps to Castlereagh's homosexuality; though the joke would connect Castlereagh with Nadir Shah (see above, Dedication, 1.88, and this canto, 1.260, notes and commentary). The Persian tyrant could not produce shit, and Castlereagh could not produce effective language; yet both have (or had) huge power over the lives and limbs of others (390). For B.'s examination of the obverse case, see the string of virtuoso talkers in Canto XIII, who use words to disguise their lives' vacancy.

**84:** *That Sphinx whose words would ever be a doubt:* compare below, XIII 1.96: *I'm not Oedipus, and Life's a Sphinx.* Also XIII, 1.98.

## 51.

An English lady asked of an Italian,  
 What were the actual and official duties  
 Of the strange thing some Women set a value on,  
 Which hovers oft about some married Beauties,  
 Called “Cavalier Servente?”<sup>85</sup> – a Pygmalion<sup>86</sup> 405  
 Whose Statues warm (I fear, alas, too true ’tis)  
 Beneath his Art; the dame, pressed to disclose them,  
 Said, “Lady – I beseech you to *suppose them*.”<sup>87</sup>

## 52.

And thus I supplicate your Supposition,  
 And mildest Matron-like interpretation 410  
 Of the Imperial Favourite’s Condition;  
 ’Twas a high place – the highest in the Nation<sup>88</sup> –  
 In fact, if not in rank; and the Suspicion  
 Of any one’s attaining to his Station  
 No doubt gave pain, where each new pair of Shoulders, 415  
 If rather broad, made Stocks rise, and their Holders.

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**85:** “*Cavalier Servente*”: socially respectable lover of a married woman, with society covertly admitting that marriage is for convenience, money, or respectability, and that love may legitimately be sought elsewhere. B. found *Cavaliere Serventi* common in Italy, especially in Venice. However, the convention depends on the lady being married – which Catherine was not. B. depicts such a relationship in *Beppo*; see st.40:

*But “Cavalier Servente” is the phrase  
 Used in politest circles to express  
 This supernumary slave who stays  
 Close to the lady as a part of dress –  
 Her word the only law which he obeys –  
 His is no Sinecure, as you may guess;  
 Coach, Servants, Gondola, he goes to call,  
 And carries fan and tippet, gloves, and shawl.*

B. himself was Cavalier Servente to Teresa Guiccioli; see BLJ VII 28: “**I am drilling very hard to learn how to double a Shawl, and should succeed to admiration – if I did not always double it the wrong side out – and then I sometimes confuse and bring away two – so as to put all the Serventi out – besides keeping their *Servite* in the cold ...**” Hobhouse wrote in his diary during a visit to the poet in Venice on August 6 1817: *Me. Zagati* [B.’s mistress’s husband] *tells me that Cavalieri Serventi are often provided for in the marriage contract, with nobles, and that the higher class may change these cavaliers [as] often as they like – whilst those of her sets can not have more than one except after a reasonable lapse ...* (B.L.Add.M.S. 47234 f.9).

**86:** *Pygmalion*: Cypriot king who made an ivory statue of a woman and fell in love with it. In answer to his prayer, Aphrodite breathed life into it, and it mothered his child. For the *Cavalier Servente* to be Pygmalion, the lady would have to start life as a being innocent of sense.

**87:** “*Lady – I beseech you to suppose them*”: two supplementary late-eighteenth-century meanings of to suppose are to substitute by artifice or fraud and to put or place under something.

**88:** ... *a high place – the highest in the Nation ... made Stocks rise, and their Holders: innuendo passim.*

## 53.

Juan, I said, was a most beauteous Boy,  
 And had retained his boyish look beyond  
 The usual hirsute Seasons, which destroy  
 With beards, and whiskers, and the like, the fond 420  
*Parisian* aspect, which upset old Troy,  
 And founded Doctors' Commons;<sup>89</sup> I have conned  
 The History of Divorces, which, though chequered,  
 Call Ilion's the first damages on record.

## 54.

And Catherine,<sup>90</sup> who loved all things (save her lord, 425  
 Who was gone to his place)<sup>91</sup> and passed for much,  
 Admiring those by dainty dames abhorred  
 Gigantic Gentlemen<sup>92</sup> – yet had a touch  
 Of Sentiment – and he she most adored  
 Was the lamented Lanskoï, who was such 430  
 A Lover as had cost her many a tear –  
 And yet but made a middling Grenadier.<sup>93</sup> –

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**89:** *the fond / Parisian aspect, which upset old Troy, / And founded Doctors' Commons:* Homer's *Iliad* and the entire Trojan myth are levelled down to the bourgeois material of *Beppo* and of this poem, above, I sts.33-6, or 188-9. ... *the fond / Parisian aspect* refers to the good looks of Paris, which seduced Helen, and thus brought the Trojan conflict about. *Doctors' Commons* (see above, I 1.288) the College of Advocates and Doctors of Law, situated near St. Paul's, where ecclesiastical lawyers practised who had a monopoly on divorce questions (they also handled wills and marriage licences). See I, 1.288, above, where visiting it is mentioned as an alternative to dying. For a description of the place and its inmates, see *David Copperfield*, Chapter 23. B., with Hobhouse and Hanson in attendance, consulted its experts on March 5 1816. B. and Hobhouse then dined at Tom Cribb's with Gentleman John Jackson.

**90:** *Catherine:* the name of B.'s mother.

**91:** ... *her lord, / Who was gone to his place:* Catherine's husband, the half-mad Tsar Peter III, had been assassinated in 1762 by a group of army officers and courtiers, who then encouraged Catherine to consider herself a candidate for the throne (Peter is memorably played by Sam Jaffe in von Sternberg's 1934 film *The Scarlet Empress*). Though she almost certainly knew of their plan to kill him, they made sure she was not actively involved. B. half-wants her to have been implicated – hence the hint here, and the reference below to Clytemnestra at 639. Semiramis had, after all, killed her husband, so if Catherine had *not* killed hers, she was unworthy of her famous title ("the Semiramis of the North").

**92:** *Gigantic Gentlemen:* see the reference to Patagonians above, 1.368 and n; also below, 1.572.

**93:** *but made a middling Grenadier:* though an officer of the horse-guards (not of the grenadiers) Lanskoï appealed to Catherine's maternal instincts by his youth, and vulnerable educability.

## 55.

Oh thou “*teterrima Causa*” of all “*belli*”<sup>94</sup> –  
 Thou Gate of Life and Death – thou Nondescript!  
 Whence is our Exit and our Entrance;<sup>95</sup> well I 435  
 May pause in pondering how all Souls are dipt  
 In thy perennial Fountain; how Man *fell*, I  
 Know not, since Knowledge saw her branches stript  
 Of her first fruit; but how he *falls* and rises  
*Since, thou* hast settled beyond all surmises. – 440

## 56.

Some call thee the “*worst Cause of War*”, but I  
 Maintain thou art the *best*; for after all,  
 From thee we come, to thee we go – and why  
 To get at thee not batter down a wall,  
 Or waste a World? since no-one can deny 445  
 Thou dost replenish Worlds both great and small;  
 With, or without thee, all things at a Stand  
 Are, or would be, thou Sea of Life’s dry Land!<sup>96</sup>

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**94:** *Oh thou “teterrima Causa” of all “belli”*: refers to the female organ of generation; from Horace, *Satires*, I iii 106-7:

*nam fuit ante Helenam cunnus taeterrima belli  
 causa ...*

( ... *before Helen’s time a cunt was the most dreadful cause of war ...*) Horace is implying that pre-Homeric warfare was no more noble than Homeric or post-Homeric warfare (of which last Ismail is an excellent example) for being fought (i) over a cunt in exactly the same way and (ii) without the glare, necessarily, of chronicle, gazette, or epic. These two Stanzas show B. subjecting the assertion of Horace – his favourite Latin poet – to a sceptical, even diabolical, interrogation. One of the most strongly antipathetic passages from Masson’s *Secret Memoirs of the Court of St Petersburg* may lie behind his thought here: *At her palace of Tauris, [in fact built by Catherine for Potemkin, but taken over by her after his death] she constantly dined with the two pictures of the sacking of Otchakof and Ismail before her eyes, in which Casanova has represented, with a most hideous accuracy, the blood flowing in streams, the limbs torn from the bodies and still palpitating, the demoniac furies of the murderers, and the convulsive agonies of the murdered. It was upon these scenes of horror that her attention and imagination were fixed, while Gasparini and Mandini displayed their vocal powers, or Sarti conducted a concert in her presence.* (1800 English translation, I 109-10).

**95:** *our Exit and our Entrance*: casts doubt on the standard theatrical reading of *As You Like It*, II vii, 141.

**96:** *With, or without thee, all things at a Stand / Are, or would be, thou Sea of Life’s dry Land!*: echoes Juan and Haidee on the beach, above, II sts.181-98; though see also below, this canto, 1.595. A disturbing conundrum emerges from B.’s tussle with the words of the couplet in rough. The syntax, teased out, is probably, *Without thee, all things (which are or would be the dry land of thee, thou Sea of Life) are at a stand, that is, inert; with thee they are also at a stand, that is, erect.*

57.<sup>97</sup>

Catherine, who was the grand Epitome  
 Of that Great Cause of War, or Peace, or what 450  
 You please (it causes all the things which be,  
 So you may take your choice of this or that);  
 Catherine, I say, was very glad to see  
 The handsome herald on whose Plumage sat  
 Victory,<sup>98</sup> and, pausing as she saw him kneel 455  
 With his dispatch, forgot to break the Seal.

## 58.

Then, recollecting the whole Empress, nor  
 Forgetting quite the woman<sup>99</sup> (which composed  
 At least three parts of this great whole) she tore  
 The letter open, with an air which posed 460  
 The Court, that watched each look her visage wore,  
 Until a royal smile at length disclosed  
 Fair weather – for the day; though rather spacious,  
 Her face was noble – her eyes fine – mouth gracious.<sup>100</sup>

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**97:** The episode which now follows has two precedents: the corresponding section of *Il Poema Tartaro* (Canto IV, sts.1-19) and the section from Masson's *Secret Memoirs of the Court of St Petersburg*, about Platon Zubov, Catherine's last recorded lover, a lieutenant in the horse-guards, who took over the day Momonoff was dismissed (see above, this canto, l.378 and n): *After some secret conferences in presence of the Mentor, Zubov was approved, and sent for more ample information to Miss Protasof [see below, this canto, ll.670-1] and the empress's physician [see below, X, ll.305-6]. The account they gave must have been favourable, for he was named aide-de-camp to the empress, received a present of an hundred thousand rubles (20,000 l.) to furnish himself with linen, and was installed in the apartment of the favourites, with all the customary advantages. The next day, this young man was seen familiarly offering his arm to his sovereign, equipped in his new uniform, with a large hat and feather on his head [see above, this canto, l.338], attended by his patron and the great men of the empire, who walked behind him with their hats off, though the day before he had danced attendance in their anti-chambers. / In the evening, after her card-party was over, Catherine was seen to dismiss her court, and retire, accompanied only by her favourite. / Next day the antichambers of the new idol were filled with aged generals, and ministers of long service, all of whom bent the knee before him. He was a genius discerned by the piercing eye of Catherine; the treasures of the empire were lavished on him, and the conduct of the empress was sanctioned by the meanness and shameful assiduities of her courtiers.* (1800 English translation, I 144-5).

**98:** *The handsome herald on whose Plumage sat / Victory:* all editions quote *Richard III*, V iii 80: *Fortune and victory sit on thy helm!*

**99:** ... *recollecting the whole Empress, nor / Forgetting quite the woman:* echoes Sheridan, *The Critic*, II ii 413-14: *The father softens – but the governor is fix'd!* See *The Two Foscari*, B.'s epigraph.

**100:** *though rather spacious, / Her face was noble – her eyes fine – mouth gracious:* for two contrasting physical descriptions of Catherine, one each from Masson and Tooke, B.'s chief prose sources, see below, this canto, ll.569-70n.

## 59.

Great Joy was hers<sup>101</sup> – or rather Joys – the first \* 465  
 Was a ta'en city – thirty thousand slain;  
 Glory and Triumph o'er her aspect burst,  
 As an East Indian Sunrise on the Main;  
 These quenched a Moment her Ambition's thirst –  
 So Arab deserts drink in Summer's Rain, 470  
 In vain – as fall the dews on quenchless Sands,  
 Blood only serves to wash Ambition's hands!

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**101:** *Great Joy was hers*: see quotation from Masson, above, sts.57-8n; for a verbal echo, see also the covert quotation from Southey, above, VI 1.345. The other major echo is of *Il Poema Tartaro* where Tomasso Scardassale, the big-nosed Irish hero, brings to Cattuna (Catherine) not a letter announcing a victory, but a note from Toto-Toctabei (Potemkin) describing the virility of the bearer, and recommending him as the next favourite:

*Dunque incontro venutagli costei  
 Introdusse Tommaso a Turrachina  
 Che il ricevè benignamente, ed Ei  
 Profondissimamente se le inclina,  
 Ed il foglio le dà di Toctabei:  
 Ella il prende, e mentristi le si avvicina  
 Con maggior agio, contemplò Tommaso,  
 E più si confermò ch'egli era al caso,*

*E mentre che leggeva quei scarabocchi  
 Facea spesso a Turfana un cotal'atto,  
 E pareva s'intendessero cogli occhi  
 Sghignando alla furtiva, e di soppiato;  
 Disseglì poi: pria, che con lui m'abbrocchi,  
 Ritiratevi seco infin che fatto  
 Abbia riflessione sulla proposta,  
 E che ritorni poi per la risposta. (IV, 18-19)*

[Then Tommaso approached her to introduce himself; she received him graciously, and he bowed most profoundly to her, and gave her Toctabei's note; she took it, and beckoning him towards her in the most relaxed way, stared at him, and assured herself that he was as the note said, / And as she read the scribble, she repeatedly made secret gestures to Turfana [Miss Protasoff: below, this canto, 1.670], and appeared to smile indecently and secretly with her eyes, finally saying, "Before I get together with him, you go in with him, until I have thought about the proposal, and then come back for an answer".]



## 60.

Her next amusement was more fanciful –  
 She smiled at mad Suwarrow's rhymes,<sup>102</sup> who threw  
 Into a Russian couplet rather dull 475  
 The whole Gazette of thousands whom he slew;  
 Her third, was feminine enough to annul  
 The shudder which runs naturally through  
 Our veins, when things called Sovereigns think it best  
 To kill, and Generals turn it into jest. 480

## 61.

The first two feelings ran their course complete,  
 And lighted first her eye, and then her Mouth;  
 The whole Court looked immediately most sweet,  
 Like flowers well-watered after a long drouth;  
 But when on the Lieutenant at her feet 485  
 Her Majesty, who liked to gaze on Youth  
 Almost as much as on a new dispatch,  
 Glanced mildly, all the World was on the watch. –

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102: ... *mad Suwarrow's rhymes*: see above, VIII, ll.1063-4 n, and B.'s note.

## 62.

Though somewhat large, exuberant, and truculent  
 When *wroth*, while *pleased*, she was as fine a figure 490  
 As those who like things rosy, ripe and succulent  
 Would wish to look on – while they are in vigour;  
 She could repay each amatory look you lent<sup>103</sup>  
 With interest – and in turn was wont with rigour  
 To exact of Cupid's bills the full amount 495  
 At sight, nor would permit you to discount.<sup>104</sup>

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**103:** *exuberant, and truculent ... succulent ... look you lent*: Masson (*Secret Memoirs of the Court of St Petersburg*, I 76) gives the rhyme-word which B. implies without using: *She [Catherine] was of the middle stature, and corpulent; few women, however, with her corpulence, would have attained the graceful and dignified carriage for which she was remarked.*

**104:** *To exact of Cupid's bills the full amount / At sight, nor would permit you to discount*: sex and money aptly confused. The satire of *Il Poema Tartaro* is much more obvious; B. improves on his model:

*Me di fibra sensibile [says Cattuna to Tomasso], e di vive  
 Tempe, come ben sai formò natura  
 E diemmi ancor molle, e al piacer proclive,  
 Cor, che in van di resistere procura,  
 Alle dolci invincibili attrattive  
 Di bella qual tu sei, maschil figura;  
 E o fanciulla foss'io, vedova, o moglie,  
 Invan m'opposi all'amorose voglie.*

*Or perchè sol regnando amar poss'io  
 Liberamente, e premiar chi degno  
 Parmi de'premi miei, dell'amor mio;  
 Perciò sol di regnar formai disegno;  
 Ne mai sott'altro aspetto a me s'offrìo,  
 Il Diadèma Real; lo Scettro, il Regno,  
 E tutto'altro che il Trono ha in se di pregio  
 Miro con filosofico dispregio. (IV, 76-7)*

[“As you can tell, Nature has made me of sensitive stuff, and of passionate energies, and has given me tenderness, and a liking for pleasure; my heart, which cannot be resisted, obtains for itself those sweet invincible beauties which you, proud man, know all about; and, whether a maiden, a widow or a wife, it has always been impossible for me to resist my loving inclinations. / Now, since I reign alone, I may love liberally, and choose lovers from amongst the finest around me; and everything else that is offered me – the Royal Diadem, the sceptre, the power, and all of value that the throne offers – I regard with philosophical indifference.”]

## 63.

With her the latter, though at times convenient,  
 Was not so necessary – for they tell  
 That She was handsome, and, though fierce, *looked* lenient,  
 And always used her favourites too well; 500  
 If once beyond her boudoir's precincts in ye went,<sup>105</sup>  
 Your "Fortune" was in a fair way to "swell a Man"  
 (As Sir Giles says)<sup>106</sup> for though She'd widow all \*  
 Nations, She liked Man as an Individual.

\* "His Fortune swells him, it is rank – he's married"; Sir Giles Overreach; Massinger. – See *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*.

**105:** ... *her boudoir's precincts*: Catherine's rooms of pleasure are described in *Il Poema Tartaro*:

*Toto intando ei seguida, che alfin si rende  
 In solitaria parte ad altri ascosa;  
 Nel tranquillo silenzio ivi risplende  
 Copia d'accese faci; e diletta  
 Sensazion soave al cor discende  
 In quell'oscurità misteriosa;  
 Pregno è l'aer l'odori, e tutto spira  
 Qui il lusso Perso, e la mollezza Assira.*

*Ogni piacer quì regna altrove ignoto,  
 Se stessa quì la voluttà rassina,  
 Sacro a Venere è il loco, e a quel remoto  
 Recesso mai profano s'avvicina,  
 E n'è permesso sol l'adito a Toto.  
 Questi li bagni son di Turrachina,  
 Ne mai simili a questi a parlar serio  
 Capri voluttuosa offri a Tiberio.*

*Cristalli nitidissimi, e perfetti  
 Pendon sopra le vasche, e col riflesso  
 Van raddoppiando del piacer gli oggetti,  
 Ed in leggiadre camarete appresso  
 Ergonsi intorno in varie foggie i letti,  
 Ove giacer vorebbe amore istesso:  
 Toto a Tommaso allor fece un soghino  
 E in tuon parlagli affabile, e benigno. (IV 9-11)*

[Meanwhile Toto followed him, to a lonely, hidden place; in that tranquil silence, where resplendent torches shine, and a delicious sensation descends into the heart; in that mysterious obscurity, the air is impregnated with odours, and everything breathes Persian luxury and Assyrian softness. / Here pleasures reign which are unknown elsewhere; passion feeds on itself; the place is sacred to Venus, and nothing profane ever comes near; Toto is the only person who has access; these are the baths of Turrachina; to speak truth, Capri never offered such voluptuousness to Tiberius himself. / Translucent and perfect crystals hang over the ponds and with their reflection redouble the objects of pleasure, and, in charming little rooms nearby, are spread around the variously-fashioned beds, on which Love itself would gladly rest. Toto then leered at Tommaso, and spoke to him in an affable, benign tone.]

**106:** Your "Fortune" was in a fair way to "swell a Man" / (As Sir Giles says): Phillip Massinger, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (c.1625) V i, 118-19: *His fortune swells him: / 'Tis rank he's married*. The line is an aside said of Welborne by Sir Giles Overreach. Overreach was one of Edmund Kean's most famous roles: see BLJ VI 206 and VII 194. B.'s joke shows sex and money linked even more intimately than at 495-6 above.. See also below, X 31, 3; and *TVOJ*, 840.

## 64.

What a strange thing is Man! and what a stranger 505  
 Is Woman! what a Whirlwind in her head,  
 And what a Whirlpool full of depth and danger  
 Is all the rest about her! Whether wed,  
 Or Widow, Maid, or Mother, She can change her  
 Mind like the Wind; whatever She has said, 510  
 Or done, is light to what She'll say or do –  
 The Oldest thing on record – and yet New!

## 65.

Oh Catherine! (for of all Interjections  
 To thee both *Oh!* and *Ah!* belong by right  
 In love and war)<sup>107</sup> how odd are the Connections 515  
 Of Human thoughts which jostle in their flight!  
 Just now *yours* were cut out in different sections –  
 First – Ismail's Capture caught your fancy quite –  
 Next – of new knights the fresh and glorious batch;  
 And *thirdly* – he who brought you the dispatch. 520

## 66.

Shakespeare talks of “the Herald Mercury  
 “New lighted on a Heaven-kissing hill”,<sup>108</sup>  
 And some such Visions crossed her Majesty,  
 While her young Herald knelt before her still. –  
 'Tis very true the hill seemed rather high 525  
 For a lieutenant to climb up<sup>109</sup> – but Skill  
 Smoothed even the Simplon's Steep,<sup>110</sup> and, by God's blessing,  
 With Youth and Health all kisses are “Heaven-kissing.”<sup>111</sup>

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**107:** *Oh Catherine!* (for of all Interjections / To thee both *Oh!* and *Ah!* – belong by right / In love and war): probably intended as obscene.

**108:** *Shakespeare talks of “the Herald Mercury / “New lighted on a Heaven-kissing hill”*: it is of course not Shakespeare but Hamlet who talks of this, at III iv, 58-59, while describing his deceased father to his mother. However, the phrases are probably more apt in B.'s context.

**109:** ... *the hill seemed rather high / For a lieutenant to climb up*: probably intended as obscene. See quotation in next note.

**110:** ... *Skill / Smoothed even the Simplon's Steep*: B. had traversed the Simplon Pass, leading out of Switzerland into Italy, in early October 1816. The road had been improved by Napoleon's engineers earlier in the century. See letter to Murray, BLJ V 115: “**The Simplon is magnificent in its nature and it's art – both God & Man have done wonders – to say nothing of the Devil – who must certainly have had a hand (or a hoof) in some of the rocks & ravines through & over which the works are carried.**”

**111:** *With Youth and Health all kisses are “Heaven-kissing”*: scansion difficult.

## 67.

Her Majesty looked down, the Youth looked up,  
 And so they fell in love;<sup>112</sup> She with his face, 530  
 His grace, his God-knows-what; for Cupid's Cup  
 With the first draught intoxicates apace –  
 A quintessential laudanum or “Black Drop”,<sup>113</sup>  
 Which makes one drunk at once without the base  
 Expedient of full bumpers – for the Eye 535  
 In love drinks all Life's fountains (save Tears) dry.

## 68.

He, on the other hand, if not in love,  
 Fell into that no less imperious passion  
 Self-love, which, when some sort of thing above  
 Ourselves – a Singer – dancer, much in fashion, 540  
 Or dutchess – princess – Empress – “deigns to prove”  
 ('Tis Pope's phrase)<sup>114</sup> a great longing, tho' a rash one,  
 For one especial person out of Many,  
 Makes us believe ourselves as good of Any.

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**112:** *And so they fell in love:* B. may have heard that one of Catherine's less-publicised love affairs was indeed with a dashing Hispanic adventurer, Francisco de Miranda (1756-1816) subsequently a flawed hero in Venezuela's fight for freedom from Spain. He had been in Russia in 1787 (four years before Juan's supposed sojourn) and was given 1,000 roubles by Catherine as a present upon his departure. An American called Stephen Stayre reported that “*nothing has escaped his [Miranda's] penetration – not even the Empress of all the Russias, as I believe – a mortifying declaration for me to make, who was 21 months in her capital without ever making my self acquainted with the internal parts of her extensive & well known dominions*” (quoted John T. Alexander, *Catherine the Great Life and Legend* (Oxford 1989, p.258).

**113:** *A quintessential laudanum or “Black Drop”:* Black Drop was a drug prepared from opium and vinegar, with added spices (DJV). B. had some at home in London, and claimed that Annabella opened the box where he kept it locked.

**114:** “*deigns to prove*” / (*'Tis Pope's phrase*) *a great longing:* Pope uses the phrase at 1.87 of *Eloisa to Abelard*:

*Should at my feet the world's great master fall,  
 Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn 'em all:  
 Not Cæsar's Empress would I deign to prove;  
 No! make me mistress to the man I love ...*

In Pope, however, it is the (relatively) lowly who condescend to the proud and great.

## 69.

Besides, he was of that delighted Age 545  
 Which makes all female Ages equal – when  
 We don't much care with whom we may engage,  
 As bold as Daniel in the Lion's den<sup>115</sup> –  
 So that we may our native Sun assuage  
 In the next Ocean, which may flow just then 550  
 To make a twilight in – just as Sol's heat is  
 Quenched in the lap of the Salt Sea, or Thetis.<sup>116</sup>

## 70.

And Catherine (we must say thus much for Catherine)  
 Though bold and bloody,<sup>117</sup> was the kind of thing  
 Whose temporary Passion was quite flattering, \* 555  
 Because each lover looked a sort of king,  
 Made up upon an amatory pattern;<sup>118</sup>  
 A royal husband in all save the *ring*,  
 Which, being the damn'dest part of Matrimony,  
 Seemed taking out the sting to leave the Honey.<sup>119</sup> 560

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**115:** *As bold as Daniel in the Lion's den*: it is not clear how Juan's courage in engaging with Catherine the Great is to be paralled with the faith of Daniel during his adventure in the lions' den (see Daniel 6 1-24).

**116:** *So that we may our native Sun assuage / In the next Ocean, which may flow just then / To make a twilight in – just as Sol's heat is / Quenched in the lap of the Salt Sea, or Thetis*: indecency by implication *passim*. Sol is the Greek Sun god (see *Troilus and Cressida* I iii 89) and Thetis, a Nereid or sea-nymph, was the mother of Achilles (see *Troilus and Cressida* III iii 94). No legend links them romantically (not even one reported by Lemprière) but as CPW points out, Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* has a passage (II ii 30-33) which goes

*The sun had long since, in the lap  
 Of Thetis, taken out his nap,  
 And, like a lobster boiled, the morn  
 From black to red began to turn.*

... and B. has numerous Shakespearean precedents for his use of *lap* to denote female sexuality: see *Much Ado About Nothing* V ii 88-89, or *Romeo and Juliet* I i 213.

**117:** Catherine ... / Though bold and bloody: compare *Macbeth* IV i 79: *Be bloody, bold, and resolute ...*

**118:** Catherine ... *flattering ... pattern*: the rhymes almost work if the "g" in *flattering* is dropped.

**119:** ... *taking out the sting to leave the Honey*: compare B.'s admiration for the Cavalier Servente tradition, above, this canto, 1.405 and n.

## 71.

And when you add to this her Womanhood,  
 In its Meridian; her blue eyes – or Grey<sup>120</sup> –  
 (The last, if they have Soul, are quite as good,  
 Or better, as the best Examples say:  
 Napoleon's, Mary's (Queen of Scotland) should                    565  
 Lend to that Colour a transcendent ray –  
 And Pallas also sanctions the same hue,<sup>121</sup>  
 Too wise to look through Optics black or blue)<sup>122</sup>

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**120:** *her blue eyes – or Grey:* William Tooke (*Life of the Empress Catharine II*, fourth edition, 1800, II 179) writes of the Empress *She has fine large blue eyes*; C.F.P.Masson (*Secret Memoirs of the Court of St. Petersburg*, 1800 English translation, I 78) writes of ... *her grey eyes*; B.'s own eyes were blue-grey (Marchand I 64). See next note but one.

**121:** *Pallas also sanctions the same hue:* Pallas, or Athene, Greek war goddess, protectress of Odysseus and thus a kind of prototype for Catherine, has *grey* (γλανκωπις, or “flashing”) eyes: see *Odyssey* I 178, or XIII 236.

**122:** Byron writes, vertically in the right-hand margin between lines 567 and 568: *Empress / Sempstress ...* as if setting aside a rhyme for later use: see below, ll.615-16.

## 72.

Her sweet smile, and her then majestic figure;  
 Her plumpness, her imperial condescension,<sup>123</sup> 570  
 Her preference of a boy to men much bigger,  
 Fellows whom Messalina's Self<sup>124</sup> would pension; \*  
 Her – Prime of Life – just now in juicy vigour –  
 With other *Extras* which we need not mention –  
 All these – or any One of these – explain 575  
 Enough to make a stripling very vain.

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**123:** *Her sweet smile ... her imperial condescension:* Tooke (II 179-180) quoting a source of 1772-3, gives this description of Catherine: *She is of that stature which is necessarily requisite to perfect elegance of form in a lady. She has fine large blue eyes; her eyebrows and hair are of a brownish colour; her mouth is well-proportioned, the chin round, the nose rather long; the forehead regular and open, her hands and arms round and white, her complexion not entirely clear, and her shape rather plump than meagre; her neck and bosom high, and she bears her head with peculiar grace and dignity. She lays on, as is universally the custom with the fair sex in Russia, a pretty strong rouge ... Her gait is majestic: in the whole of her form and manner there is something so dignified and noble, that if she were to be seen, without ornament or any outward marks of distinction, among a great number of ladies of rank, she would be immediately esteemed the chief. There is withal in the features of her face and in her looks an uncommon degree of authority and command. In her character there is more of liveliness than gravity. She is courteous, gentle, beneficent; outwardly devout. But Masson (I 77-8) describing Catherine in the 1790s (Juan's "period") writes, *If, upon the introduction of a stranger, she presented her hand to him to kiss, she demeaned herself with great courtesy, and commonly addressed a few words to him upon the subject of his travels and his visit: but all the harmony of her countenance was instantly discomposed, and you forgot for a moment the great Catharine, to reflect on the infirmities of an old woman; as, on opening her mouth, it was apparent that she had no teeth. Her voice too was hoarse and broken, and her speech inarticulate. The lower part of her face was rather large and coarse; her grey eyes, though clear and penetrating, evinced something of hypocrisy, and a certain wrinkle at the base of the nose indicated a character somewhat sinister.**

**124:** *Messalina:* the promiscuous wife of the Emperor Claudius; see Juvenal, Satire VI, 115-35. Masson writes (I 88-9): *She [Catherine] had two passions, which never left her but with her last breath: the love of man, which degenerated into licentiousness, and the love of glory, which sunk into vanity. By the first of these passions, she was never so far governed as to become a Messalina, but she often disgraced both her rank and sex: by the second, she was led to undertake many laudable projects, which were seldom completed, and to engage in unjust wars, from which she derived at least that kind of fame which never fails to accompany success.*



## 73.

And that's enough, for Love is Vanity,  
 Selfish in its beginning as its end –  
 Except where 'tis a mere Insanity,  
 A Maddening Spirit which would strive to blend       580  
 Itself with Beauty's frail Inanity,<sup>125</sup>  
 On which the Passion's self seems to depend;  
 And hence some Heathenish Philosophers  
 Make Love the Main Spring of the Universe.<sup>126</sup>

## 74.

Besides Platonic love – besides the love                       585  
 Of God, the love of Sentiment – the loving  
 Of faithful pairs (I needs must rhyme with dove,<sup>127</sup>  
 That good old Steam-boat<sup>128</sup> which keeps verses moving  
 'Gainst Reason; Reason ne'er was Hand-and-Glove  
 With Rhyme, but always leant less to improving       590  
 The Sound than Sense); beside all these pretences  
 To Love, there are those things which Words name Senses.

## 75.

Those movements – those improvements – in our bodies,  
 Which make all bodies anxious to get out  
 Of their own Sandpits, to mix with a Goddess –           595  
 For such all Women are at first, no doubt;  
 How beautiful that moment! and how Odd 'tis,  
 That fever which precedes the languid rout  
 Of our Sensations! What a curious way  
 The whole thing is of clothing souls in clay!           600

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**125:** *Beauty's frail Inanity*: "inanity" here is not merely "stupidity", but is probably meant also to imply "vastness" or "huge vacuity": see Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, last line.

**126:** *And hence some Heathenish Philosophers / Make Love the Main Spring of the Universe*: references to Shelley (DJV, DJP) or to Lucretius (CPW) ignore B.'s game here – he himself has made Love (as embodied in Catherine) the Main Spring of the Universe: see above, this canto, sts.55-6.

**127:** ... *the loving / Of faithful pairs (I needs must rhyme with dove ...*: recalls above, V, 1.3.

**128:** *That good old Steam-boat which keeps verses moving*: as steam-boats were a relatively modern phenomenon, B.'s patronising familiarity towards them is striking; though they had existed from his early years, and he would scarcely have known life without them. The very first British steam-boat was the *Charlotte Dundas*, which sailed on the Forth and Clyde Canal in 1802 – it did not last, for the wash from its rear-mounted paddle-wheel damaged the canal banks: but an American one ran on the Hudson in 1807, and the first completely successful British steam-boat was tested on the Clyde in 1812. We in 2007 might speak similarly of "the good old DVD." Compare X, 2-8: ... *and full soon / Steam Engines will conduct him to the Moon*.

## 76.

The noblest kind of Love is Love Platonical,<sup>129</sup>  
 To end or to begin with; the next grand  
 Is that which may be christened Love Canonical,  
 Because the clergy take the thing in hand;  
 The third sort to be noted in our Chronicle 605  
 As flourishing in every Christian land,  
 Is, when chaste Matrons to their other ties  
 Add what may be called *Marriage in Disguise*.<sup>130</sup>

## 77.

Well – we won't analyze; our Story must  
 Tell for itself; the Sovereign was smitten – 610  
 Juan much flattered – by her love – or lust –  
 I cannot stop to alter words once written –  
 And the two are so mixed with human dust  
 That he who *names one*, both perchance may hit on;<sup>131</sup>  
 But in such matters, Russia's mighty Empress 615  
 Behaved no better than a common Sempstress.<sup>132</sup> –

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**129:** *The noblest kind of Love is Love Platonical, / To end or to begin with:* Catherine's final favourite was Platon Zubov: jesters pointed that she had found Platonic love at last. See Masson I 142n.

**130:** *Marriage in Disguise:* refers to the institution of the *Cavalier Servente*: see above, this canto, l.405 and n.

**131:** ... *hit on*: obscene. Compare *Beppo* 5, 7.

**132:** For the rhyme here, see above, n 120.

## 78.

The whole Court melted into one wide whisper,  
 And all lips were applied unto all ears!<sup>133</sup>  
 The elder ladies' wrinkles curled much crisper<sup>134</sup>  
 As they beheld; the younger cast some leers 620  
 On one another – and each lovely lisper  
 Smiled as she talked the matter o'er – but tears  
 Of rivalry rose in each clouded eye,  
 Of all the standing Army, who stood by.

## 79.

All the Ambassadors of all the Powers 625  
 Inquired who was this very new young man,  
 Who promised to be great in some few hours,  
 Which is full soon (though Life is but a Span);  
 Already they beheld the silver showers  
 Of Rubles rain as fast as Specie<sup>135</sup> can 630  
 Upon his Cabinet – besides the presents  
 Of several ribbands, and some thousand peasants.<sup>136</sup> –

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**133:** *The whole Court melted into one wide whisper, / And all lips were applied unto all ears!:* Casti is, in *Il Poema Tartaro*, again much cruder:

*Le Dame contemplavano Tommaso  
 E taluna dicea: Che ferma coscie!  
 Me ancor costui avrebbe persuaso,  
 Che non mi fan piacer le membra floscie:  
 Tal altra soggiungeva: Oh! Che bel naso  
 Di grande un non so che vi si conosce  
 E tutte conchindean: degna è del Trono  
 Cattuna, che si ben distingue il buono. (IV, 55)*

*Per desio di veder l'Adon novello  
 D'ogni banda ciascun tosto s'è mosso:  
 Ov'è egli? ... ov'è egli? ... eccolo là ... sì quello,  
 Ah, ah quel bel zerbino del naso grosso;  
 Oh che bel tocco d'uomo! oh bello! oh bello!  
 E ognun l'osserva e gli tien l'occhio addosso,  
 E un all'altro chiedea la patria, e il nome,  
 E perchè venne, e d'onde, e quando, e come. (IV, 88)*

[The ladies stared at Tommaso and said to one another, "What firm thighs! There's no fun to be had from flabby members"; others said, "What a nose! I never saw one like it!" and all admitted that he was worthy of the throne of Cattuna, who was always so skilful at distinguishing the good. / In their craving to see this new Adonis they immediately gathered from all sides: "Where is he? where is he? ... there he is ... yes, it's him ... Ah, it's that fop with the big nose; oh, what a fine man! Oh, beautiful! Oh, beautiful!" And they all stare at him, and asked each other his nationality and his name, and why he came, and whence, and when, and how.]

**134:** *The elder ladies' wrinkles curled much crisper:* see above, this canto, 1.292n.

**135:** *specie:* payment in actual coin.

## 80.

Catherine was generous – all such ladies are;  
 Love, that grand opener of the heart, and all  
 The ways that lead there – be they near or far – 635  
 Above, below, by turnpikes great or small<sup>137</sup> –  
 Love (though she had a cursed taste for war –  
 And was not the best wife – unless we call  
 Such Clytemnestra;<sup>138</sup> though perhaps 'tis better  
 That one should die than two drag on the fetter) 640

## 81.

Love had made Catherine make each lover's fortune,  
 Unlike our own half-Chaste Elizabeth,<sup>139</sup>  
 Whose avarice all disbursements did importune,  
 If History, the grand Liar, ever saith  
 The truth; and, though Grief her old age might shorten, 645  
 Because she put a favourite to death,<sup>140</sup>  
 Her vile ambiguous method of Flirtation,  
 And Stinginess, disgrace her Sex and Station.<sup>141</sup>

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**136:** Both DJV and CPW locate the following note on the Beinecke manuscript, intended for ll.631-2: "A Russian estate is always valued by the number of slaves upon it." However, the note appears neither on the manuscript nor in the first edition. It first appears in John Wright's edition for Murray of 1832.

**137:** *all / The ways that lead there – be they near or far – / Above, below, by turnpikes great or small: double-entendre.*

**138:** *unless we call / Such Clytemnestra:* Clytemnestra killed her husband Agamemnon upon his return from the Trojan wars: but no historian thinks Catherine directly implicated in the 1762 assassination of her husband Peter III; though clearly she took advantage of it. See above, this Canto, ll.425-6 and n. B. is very obviously thinking of his own wife, whom he termed *The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord (Lines on hearing that Lady Byron was ill, 1.37)*; see also BLJ V 144 and 198.

**139:** *our own half-Chaste Elizabeth:* the idea of contrasting Catherine with Elizabeth was Masson's: *Assuredly these are very extraordinary features [Catherine's generosity to her ex-lovers], and very rare, in a woman, a lover, an empress. This great and generous conduct is far removed from that of an Elizabeth of England, who cut off the heads of her favourites and her rivals; and from that of a Christina of Sweden, who caused one of her lovers to be assassinated in her presence.* (Masson I 141).

**140:** *Grief her old age might shorten, / Because she put a favourite to death:* Elizabeth did not "put" the Earl of Essex "to death" as a Russian autocrat might have done; but his attempted "rebellion" in 1601, and its aftermath in his execution, certainly cast a shadow over her old age.

**141:** *disgrace her Sex and Station:* see Masson's comment on Catherine, above, this canto, 1.572 n.

## 82.

But when the leve rose, and all was bustle  
 In the dissolving Circle, all the nations' 650  
 Ambassadors began as 'twere to hustle  
 Round the Young man with their congratulations;<sup>142</sup>  
 Also the softer silks<sup>143</sup> were heard to rustle  
 Of gentle dames, among whose recreations  
 It is to speculate on handsome faces – 655  
 Especially when such lead to high places.

## 83.

Juan, who found himself – he knew not how –  
 A General Object of attention, made  
 His answers with a very graceful bow,  
 As if born for the ministerial trade; 660  
 Though modest, on his unembarrassed brow  
 Nature had written "Gentleman"; he said  
 Little to the purpose, but his Manner  
 Flung hovering Graces o'er him like a banner.

## 84.

An order from her Majesty consigned 665  
 Our young Lieutenant to the genial care  
 Of those in Office, and all the World looked kind  
 (As it will look sometimes with the first stare –  
 Which Youth would not act ill to keep in mind)  
 As also did Miss Protasoff then there, 670  
 Named from her mystic office "l'Epreuve"<sup>144</sup> – \*  
 A term inexplicable to the Muse. –

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**142:** *all the nations' / Ambassadors began as 'twere to hustle / Round the Young man with their congratulations:* compare the passage from Masson, above, this canto, sts.57-8 n. B. does not take full advantage of the materials with which his French source provides him.

**143:** *softer silks:* underwear.

**144:** *Miss Protasoff ... / Named for her mystic office "l'Epreuve":* there is very little direct historical evidence that Miss, or Mlle, Protasov actually "proved" the virility of all Catherine's proposed lovers in advance of their taking up residence; but it is such a disgusting idea that posterity has found it impossible to discard it as myth. If she did so – Casti in *Il Poema Tartaro* (IV, 20-5) keeps the encounter between her equivalent and the hero entirely verbal – it was a function she shared with another friend of the Empress, the Countess Bruce (whom B. may have met in Geneva in 1816: see Polidori, Diray, ed Rossetti, Elkin Matthews, 1910, pp.141-3). William Tooke – an Anglican clergyman, anxious to place a dignified interpretation on all things imperial – even goes so far as to assert that the function at least of the later favourites of Catherine was simply decorative: *For a series of seventy years the monarchs of Russia have always had favourites officially: it is no wonder then that the custom, thus sanctioned for so long a period, should be almost decreed a fundamental law of the empire, and an appendage to imperial grandeur; for the age of the late sovereign latterly gave no room to think that she kept hers for any other purpose than in conformity to established usage, and as a property to the magnificence of the court* (Tooke, II 271-2).

## 85.

With *her* then, as in humble duty bound,  
 Juan retired, and so will I, until  
 My Pegasus shall tire of touching ground; 675  
     We have just lit on “a Heaven-kissing hill”<sup>145</sup>  
 So lofty that I feel my brain turn round,  
     And All my fancies whirling like a Mill,  
 Which is a signal to my nerves and brain,  
 To take a quiet ride in some green lane.<sup>146</sup> 680

Aug<sup>t</sup>. - Sept<sup>r</sup>. 1822

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**145:** “a Heaven-kissing hill”: *Hamlet*, III iv 59. See above, this canto, ll.521-2 and n.

**146:** To take a quiet ride in some green lane: compare *Beppo*, st.42:

*I like on Autumn Evenings to ride out  
 Without being forced to bid my Groom be sure  
 My Cloak is round his middle strapped about,  
 Because the Skies are not the most secure;  
 I know too that if stopped upon my route  
 Where the Green Alleys windingly allure,  
 Reeling with Grapes red Waggon choak the way –  
 In England ’twould be Dung, Dust, or a Dray.*

Hobhouse’s diary provides a useful gloss on the Canto’s valedictory line: *walk in the vinehung fields as usual for a singular purpose ... we have flashes of lightning every night – ride with B[yron]. return over the other side of the river from Dolo which is a pretty wild green lane comparatively with the other dusty road – see two women mother and daughter who call themselves English to the people here – but I can only make out that they speak Greek ... and so on* (BL. Add. Mss. 47234, f. 17r: entry for August 20 1817).