

Thomas Moore, *Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron*, London: 1830

We have seen from Lord Byron's Journal in 1814, what intense interest he took in the last strugglers of Revolutionary France under Napoleon [...] Since then, he had but rarely turned his thoughts to politics; the tame, ordinary vicissitude of public affairs having but little in it to stimulate a mind like his, whose sympathies nothing short of a crisis seemed worthy to interest. This the present state of Italy gave every promise of affording him; and, in addition to the great national cause itself, in which there was everything that a lover of liberty, warm from the pages of Petrarch and Dante, could desire, he had also private ties and regards to enlist him socially in the contest.

(p. 467)

So various and contradictory, were Lord Byron's attributes, both moral and intellectual, that he may be pronounced to have been not one, but many [...] It was this multiform aspect exhibited by him that led the world, during his short wondrous career, to compare him with that medley host of personages, almost all differing from each other, which he thus playfully enumerates in one of his Journals:

'I have seen myself compared ... within these nine years, to Rousseau, Goethe, Young, Aretine, Timon of Athens, Dante, Petrarch ...'

We have seen that wrings and sufferings were, through life, the main sources of Byron's inspiration. Were the hoof of the critic struck, the fountain was first disclosed; and all the trappings of the world afterwards but forced out the stream stronger and brighter. The same obligations to misfortune, the same debt of the 'oppressor's wrong,' for having wrung out from bitter thoughts the pure essence of his genius, was due no less deeply by Dante! – *'quum illam sub amara cogitatione excitatam, occulti divinique ingenii vim exacerit et inflammavit.'*

In that contempt for the world's opinion, which led Dante to exclaim, '*Lascia dir le genti,*' [*Purg.*, v, 13] Lord Byron also bore a strong resemblance to that poet, - though far more, it must be confessed, in profession than in reality. For, while scorn for the public voice was on his lips, the keenest sensitiveness to its every breath was in his heart; and, as if every feeling of his nature was to have some painful mixture in it, together with the pride of Dante which led him to disdain public opinion, he combined the susceptibility of Petrarch which placed him shrinkingly at its mercy.

His agreement, in some other features of character, with Petrarch, I have already had occasion to remark; and if it be true, as is often surmised, that Byron's want of a due reverence for Shakspeare arose from some latent and hardly conscious jealousy of that poet's fame, a similar feeling is known to have existed in Petrarch towards Dante; and the same reason assigned for it, - that from the living he had nothing to fear, while before the shade of Dante he might have reason to feel humbled, - is also not a little applicable in the case of Lord Byron.

(pp. 643-644)