

[1]

CANTO I

I

Of ladies, cavaliers, of love and war,
Of courtesies and of brave deeds I sing,
In times of high endeavour when the Moor
Had crossed the sea from Africa to bring
Great harm to France, when Agramante swore
In wrath, being now the youthful Moorish king,
To avenge Troiano, who was lately slain,
Upon the Roman Emperor Charlemagne.

2

And of Orlando I will also tell
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,
Of the mad frenzy that for love befell
One who so wise was held in former time,
If she who my poor talent by her spell
Has so reduced that I resemble him,
Will grant me now sufficient for my task:
The wit to reach the end is all I ask.

3

Most generous and Herculean son,
The ornament and splendour of our age,
Ippolito, pray take as for your own
Your humble servant's gift, that men may gauge
The debt I owe to you, which words alone
Cannot repay, nor ink upon the page.
And let it not be said my gift is small,
For giving this, my lord, I give my all.

Among the heroes most deserving praise
Whose catalogue of names I now prepare,
Ruggiero I will bring before your gaze,
The founder of the lineage you bear.
His valiant deeds which time cannot erase
I will make known to you if you'll lend ear
And from your lofty thoughts your mind incline
To grant admittance to this tale of mine.

5

Orlando who for long had loved in vain,
Seeking the fair Angelica to please,
India, Media and the Tartar plain
And all the booty of his victories
Had left, to bring her to the West again
Where, at the foothills of the Pyrenees,
He found the host of France and Germany
Encamped with Charlemagne in company,

6

To make two monarchs bitterly repent
The folly of their arrogant advance:
The African who from his continent
Had mustered every sword and every lance,
And King Marsilio, on havoc bent,
Who rallied Spain to devastate fair France.
Orlando at this point rejoined the fray,
But scarce had done so than he rued the day;

7

For then it was his dearest love he lost.
See now how often human judgement errs!
She whom he championed from coast to coast
In endless combat, meeting no reverse,
Is taken from him now amid a host
Of friends, on his own ground, and, what is worse,
Without a sword being drawn. King Charles the wise
To quench a flame this remedy applies.

Some days before, a rivalry arose
Between Rinaldo and his cousin, Count
Orlando, who both languish in the throes
Of love upon Angelica's account;
Than hers no greater beauty either knows.
Charles, to forestall their enmity, the fount
Of the dispute, the fair Angelica,
Consigned to Namor of Bavaria,

9

Pledging that he would grant her in reward
To which of them in the impending fight
More infidels impaled upon his sword,
Excelling thus in prowess and in might.
Events, alas! with prayers did not accord,
For scattered was the Christian host in flight.
The duke, with others, prisoner was taken
And his pavilion in the rout forsaken.

10

Angelica did not prolong her stay.
She, who was promised as a victor's bride,
Into the saddle leapt and straight away,
Choosing her moment well, set out to ride.
She had foreseen the fortune of the day
Would bring disaster to the Christian side.
Along a forest glade she took her course
And met a cavalier without a horse.

11

His helmet on his head, in full cuirass,
Girt with his sword and on his arm a shield,
As swift as if bare-limbed she saw him pass,
Like one who for the red cloak led the field.
No shepherdess who spied amid the grass
A cruel serpent did to terror yield
More than Angelica, who quickly turned
As soon as she the knight on foot discerned.

He was a valiant paladin of France,
The son of Aymon, lord of Montaubon,
Whose horse, Baiardo, by a strange mischance,
Had slipped from his restraining hand and gone.
This knight who now approached at the first glance
Had recognized, though from afar, the one
Who with angelic beauty unsurpassed
In amorous enchantment held him fast.

The lovely damsel turns her palfrey round
And through the wood full pelt she gallops off.
Whether in clearings or where briars abound,
Not caring if the going's smooth or rough,
She lets her plunging palfrey choose the ground:
She, pale and trembling, scarce has wits enough.
Deep in a savage wood, as in a dream,
She roams, and comes at last upon a stream.

Seated upon the bank was Ferrau.
Covered with dust and sweating freely still,
From battle he but recently withdrew.
To rest and quench his thirst had been his will.
This cost him, though, more trouble than he knew,
For, stooping hastily to drink his fill,
He let his helmet tumble in the stream;
Try as he might, it still eluded him.

The maiden then arrived upon the scene,
Her shrieks of terror ringing loud and clear.
And at her voice up leapt the Saracen,
Gazing upon her face as she drew near.
Beyond all doubt he recognized her then,
Though she was pallid and distraught with fear.
Of her vicissitudes he had no inkling,
And there she is before him in a twinkling.

He was a gallant cavalier, in whom
Love burned no less than in the cousins' breast,
And proved, despite his lack of helm and plume,
A brave defender, equal to the test.
Drawing his sword, he ran with shouts of doom
Where Montaubon, unknowing, onward pressed.
The knights to one another were not strangers.
They'd vied in many trials of strength and dangers.

Cruel are then the deadly blows that hail,
Soon as the knights close in with weapons bare,
Piercing the armour and the coats of mail
And sturdy bucklers which no better fare.
Leaving the combatants in dire travail,
To urge her palfrey onwards her sole care,
The damsel claps her heels against his sides
And over hill and dale away she rides.

The warriors with long endurance seek
To overcome each other, but in vain.
Each through the other's guard attempts to break,
But neither can for long advantage gain.
Young Montalbano is the first to speak,
Asking a parley of the knight of Spain,
Like one whose heart, on fire with love, will burst
Unless emotion find an outlet first:

'You strive to do me harm, but I will prove
That on yourself you also vent your ire;
For if it happens that two rays, as of
The rising sun, have set your heart on fire,
To hinder me will not advance your love.
If I am vanquished or I here expire,
This will not make the lovely damsel yours:
While we delay she takes another course.

'If you still love her, would it not be wise
To intercept her path without delay
And, coming thus upon her by surprise,
Detain her ere she gallops far away?
Let her then be awarded as a prize
To which of us by swords shall win the day;
Else no result, as far as I can see,
Will come of our long strife but injury.'

The pagan found this offer not displeasing,
And so it was the contest was deferred.
The enmity between the rivals ceasing,
By hate and wrath they were no longer stirred.
The pagan, from a tree his horse releasing,
The son of Aymon, who at first demurred,
Prevailed upon to mount behind him pillion
To search for her who fled the duke's pavilion.

O noble chivalry of knights of yore!
Here were two rivals, of opposed belief,
Who from the blows exchanged were bruised and sore,
Aching from head to foot without relief,
Yet to each other no resentment bore.
Through the dark wood and winding paths, as if
Two friends, they go. Against the charger's sides
Four spurs are thrust until the road divides.

They gaze all round but cannot tell which way
Angelica has taken, for the mark
Of hoofs in both directions made that day
Seeming identical, they're in the dark.
The cavaliers but a brief time delay:
Along two paths, as Fortune prompts, they hark,
One here, one there. The pagan round about
Meanders and returns where he set out.

He came once more upon that very bank
Where he had dropped his helmet from his head.
Hope of Angelica, if he were frank,
Was now remote, so he resolved instead
To try to raise the helm from where it sank;
And, stepping to the edge, began to wade.
Little he knows the work he'll have on hand,
So deep the helm is buried in the sand.

First from a tree a branch he pulled and stripped,
Shaping and smoothing it to form a pole,
Which delicately in the stream he dipped,
Poking with care in every nook and hole,
Although with patience he was ill-equipped.
Boredom at last began to try his soul,
When, rising from the stream — a gruesome sight —
He saw the head and shoulders of a knight.

In battle-armor he was fully clad,
Save that his head was bare; from his right fist
A helmet swung, the same the pagan had
In all this time been probing for and missed.
To Ferrau he spoke, irate and sad:
'Disloyal knight! How long will you persist?
You leave this helmet here so grudgingly
Which once you promised to restore to me?'

'Think back to the occasion when you slew
The brother of Angelica, for I
Am he; my arms, you will recall, you threw
Into the stream; ere many days went by
You promised you would throw my helmet too.
If Fortune intervenes to ratify
Your vow, why do you grieve? But if you must,
Grieve only that you failed to keep your trust.'

'If a fine helmet you aspire to get,
With knightly honour let the deed be done:
Orlando wears a splendid helm, or yet
Rinaldo a perhaps still finer one,
The former from Almonte when he met
His death, the latter from Mambrino, won.
Leave me this helmet, pledged to me by you,
And make your promise in effect come true.'

29

So startled is the Saracen of Spain,
His hair stands up erect and from his face
All vestiges of colour seem to drain.
He tries to speak but can emit no trace
Of sound. That Argalia, whom he'd slain
Not long ago and in this very place,
Should thus rebuke him for his breach of faith
Sets him ablaze inside and out with wrath.

30

He had no time to think of an excuse.
The truth of what was said must be allowed.
He stood and not a word could he produce.
Pierced to the heart with shame, his head he bowed.
He then and there determined he would use
(And by his mother solemnly he vowed)
No helmet but the one in Aspromonte
Orlando pulled from off the proud Almonte.

31

This vow, to tell the truth, he duly kept;
That this was best, experience now taught him.
Morose and sullen, on his horse he leapt,
To chase the paladin until he caught him.
For many days he scarcely ate or slept,
Now here, now there, now everywhere he sought him.
As for Rinaldo, that's another tale,
For he set off upon a different trail.

32

Rinaldo had not travelled far, when lo!
He saw his charger galloping ahead.
'Baiardo! my Baiardo! ho, there, wo!
Without you weary is the road I tread.'
The horse, a deaf ear turning, did not slow
Its pace, but galloped further off instead.
Rinaldo, fuming, followed from afar;
But let us follow fair Angelica.

33

Through dark and terrifying woods she flees,
In lonely, wild, uncultivated places.
The rustle of the undergrowth, the trees,
Beech, rowan, elm, her terror interlaces,
Weaving an evil dream in which she sees
Of all she most abhors the dreaded traces.
O'er hill and dale, each shadow a reminder,
She seems to feel Rinaldo close behind her;

34

Just like a fallow fawn or new-born roe
Which from its safe and leafy shelter spies
Its dam seized by a leopard and brought low:
With bleeding throat and breast and flank she lies,
And never more the light of day will know;
From wood to wood the orphaned creature flies
And of the cruel pard it seems to feel,
With every bramble-scratch, the jaws of steel.

35

All day and night and half another day
She wandered endlessly, she knew not where.
At last within a grove she chose to stay,
Made fresh and cool by the caressing air.
Two crystal streams flow past, not far away,
Keeping the grasses green and tender there,
And, murmuring among the little stones,
Give forth a dulcet harmony of tones.

36

This seems to her to be a safe retreat
 And distant from Rinaldo many miles.
 Tired by her ride and by the summer's heat,
 Her fear with need for rest she reconciles.
 Along a flowered path she moves her feet,
 Letting her palfrey freely range the whiles.
 To the luxuriant river-bank it passes
 And in the water-meadow crops the grasses.

37

Not far away she sees a charming nook
 Where flowering thorn with the vermilion red
 Of roses is made gay, glassed in the brook,
 With shady oak-trees arching overhead.
 In its recess, as she draws near to look,
 She finds a sheltered space, untenanted.
 Branches and leaves together so entwine,
 No sunlight can within directly shine.

38

To all who enter, sweet young grasses lend,
 To rest inviting, couches soft and deep.
 The lovely damsel's tempted to extend
 Her weary limbs thereon and falls asleep.
 Too soon, alas! her slumber's at an end:
 A sound of footsteps makes her pulses leap.
 Softly she rises and, from shelter peering,
 She sees a cavalier in arms appearing.

39

If he be foe or friend she cannot tell.
 Her heart by hope and fear at once is shaken.
 Waiting to see if all may yet be well,
 Her apprehensions once again awaken.
 The knight, meanwhile, passing beyond her dell,
 Towards the river-bank his way has taken.
 Propped on his elbow, cheek on hand, he rests,
 So deep in thought, a statue he suggests.

40

More than an hour, this knight, whom I will dub
 The cavalier of grief, like this remained.
 I swear, my lord, when he began to sob,
 The very stones to pity he constrained,
 And might have wooed a tigress from her cub.
 The tears along his cheeks so freely rained,
 He seemed more like a river, and the fellow's
 Chest, heaving and sighing, was like a bellows.

41

'Alas!' he said, 'my heart both burns and freezes,
 Now that my love is rendered null and void.
 What shall I do? Each hour my grief increases;
 I know the fruit is gathered and enjoyed.
 While scarce a word or look my anguish eases,
 Others are more delightfully employed.
 If I am left with neither fruit nor flower,
 Why do I pine for her at this late hour?

42

'A virgin may be likened to a rose
 Which on its slender stem, by thorns defended,
 Within a garden unmolested grows.
 To pluck it no despoiling hand's extended.
 The morning dew, the breeze that gently blows,
 The rain, the earth, its loveliness have tended.
 No sweeter pledge young lovers yearn to wear
 Upon their breast or to adorn their hair.

43

'But when from the maternal stalk men sever
 The rose in bloom, far from its verdant tree,
 All nurture of the heaven and earth for ever
 Vanish and benisons no more can be.
 Even so the flower of maidenhood, whenever
 Yielded, loses its cherished purity.
 With zeal a virgin should, more than her eyes,
 More than her life itself, defend this prize.

44

'On him by whom she's loved let her bestow
This priceless treasure, and all others shun.
Ah! thankless Fortune, why this cruel blow?
While other lovers triumph, I alone,
All joys denied, must empty-handed go.
How can love's labour from defeat be won?
Yet rather would I end my life today
Than the devotion of my heart gainsay.'

45

To anyone who asks me who this man is,
Who waters thus the river with his tears,
I will reply that he no African is,
But Sacripante, who great sorrow bears –
Circassia's monarch; how it all began is
Soon told: he's loved Angelica for years,
And she who is the cause of his sad plight
Has straightway recognized him at first sight.

46

From the Far East, his heart's desire to gain,
He journeyed where the sun sinks down to rest.
He heard in India with grief and pain
She'd gone with Count Orlando to the West,
Then learnt in France how Emperor Charlemagne
To part her from the cousins thought it best,
Pledging her as a prize to which of these
Most ably helped the golden fleur-de-lis.

47

He saw the camp and heard the tidings there
Of the defeat which threw the Christians over.
He sought the lovely damsel everywhere,
But not a trace of her could he discover.
This is the sad and sorrowful affair
Which pierced the anguished bosom of the lover,
Making him moan, lament and utter cries
Which stopped the sun for pity in the skies.

48

While Sacripante lies there sorrowing,
Making a fountain of his streaming eyes,
Saying first one and then another thing
I see no reason to immortalize,
Coincidence his fortune favouring,
His lady overhears these words of his.
Thus in an instant comes to pass what he
Could scarcely hope for in eternity.

49

The lovely maid observes with close attention
The words, the weeping and the air of one
Whose love for her she finds is no invention.
Of his devotion she has long since known,
And yet to help him she has no intention,
Being cold and hard, more than a block of stone.
She holds the world in such contempt and scorn,
No man deserving her was ever born.

50

And yet, here in the woodlands, unescorted,
She is inclined to take him as her guide.
The drowning man who waits to be exhorted
To cry for help must be a man of pride!
Who knows, if to his aid she'd not resorted,
When such a friend would rally to her side?
For long experience by now had taught her
He was the truest of all those who sought her.

51

Yet she has no intention to relieve him
Of the keen anguish which his life destroys,
Or in her fond embraces to receive him,
Still less to yield the sweetest of love's joys,
But by a shrewd evasion to deceive him.
She plots and schemes and all her wits employs,
How, by her charm, her servant she can make him,
And then, ungrateful, afterwards forsake him.

So, from the dark recess which shelter gave,
 Angelica stepped forth upon the scene,
 As when, emerging from a wood or cave,
 Dian or Venus on the stage is seen.
 'With you be peace,' she greeted him; 'God save
 My honour and preserve it ever green;
 And from your mind for ever cancelled be
 The false opinion which you hold of me.'

No mother with such joy and stupor raised
 Her eyes to see the face of her lost son
 Whom, when his regiment without him blazed
 Its homeward way, she mourned as dead and gone,
 As when King Sacripante, who stood amazed,
 Such grace and noble bearing looked upon,
 And in the presence of that priceless treasure
 His joy and stupefaction knew no measure.

With sweet and amorous affection filled,
 His goddess he approached without delay.
 She, with her arms about him, cooed and billed –
 Something she never ventured in Cathay –
 And of returning home began to build
 Fresh hopes; for, now she held him in her sway,
 Her prospects brightened and some promise showed
 That she might gain once more her royal abode.

She gives King Sacripante an account
 Of what has happened since the day when she
 For help and reinforcements bade him mount
 And eastward ride to him who holds in fee
 The Chinese Nabathees; of how the Count
 From death, dishonour and all jeopardy
 Defended her, and how she was, in fact,
 As when she left her mother's womb, intact.

It may be true, but no man in his senses
 Would ever credit it; yet possible
 It seems to him, for, lacking in defences,
 To what is plain, but made invisible,
 The king is blind (or with his sight dispenses),
 Since what is not, love's power makes credible.
 Thus he believes her for, as all men do,
 He gives assent to what he hopes is true.

'If by ineptitude the Cavalier
 Anglante has mishandled thus his lance,
 He is the loser by it, for I fear
 That Fate will not provide a second chance.'
 (These words of his the damsel does not hear.)
 'But I will lead my love another dance,
 For if this gift of Fortune I neglect
 I shall for ever lose my self-respect.'

'So I will pluck the early-morning rose
 Forthwith, lest I by dilly-dallying
 The moment of its perfect freshness lose.
 Than this, no sweeter or more pleasing thing,
 In spite of her reluctance, woman knows,
 Though she shed tears at her deflowering.
 Thus no repulse or coyness will prevent
 The prompt embodiment of my intent.'

Such were his thoughts; and now, as he prepares
 For sweet assault and in his aim persists,
 A clamour sounding through the forest tears
 His ear-drums; he reluctantly desists,
 And dons his helmet, for he always wears
 Full armour, as for battle or the lists.
 He finds his horse and bridles it at once,
 And, mounting to the saddle, takes his lance.

Along the forest soon there rides a knight
 Who has the semblance of a valiant man.
 The armour which he wears is snowy white,
 Likewise his plume. The Tartar sovereign,
 Being put out by the unwelcome sight
 Of one whose coming has thus foiled his plan,
 Such interruption of his pleasure brooks
 With anger undisguised and stormy looks.

61

Awaiting his approach, the king defies
 The cavalier, thinking to come off best;
 But, in comparison of strength and size,
 The oncomer, I think, would pass the test.
 Cutting the king's boast short, the knight applies
 His spurs and quickly puts his lance in rest.
 The other, furious, retorts; then both
 Full tilt are galloping in all their wrath.

62

No lions run, no bulls advance with rage
 In enmity so deadly or so fierce
 As these two foemen in the war they wage.
 With equal skill each other's shield they pierce.
 The mountain trembles, as the knights engage,
 From its green base to the bare peak it rears.
 And well it is the hauberks stand the test,
 Else would each lance be driven through each breast.

63

The chargers ran unswerving on their course.
 Like rams colliding head to head they were.
 The pagan's failing to withstand the force
 Of impact, fell at once and did not stir
 (Although so fine a steed). The other horse
 Went down, but rose at once, touched by the spur.
 The horse of Sacripante lay prostrate,
 Its rider pinned beneath its lifeless weight.

64

The unknown champion, who sat erect,
 Seeing the other underneath his steed,
 Judged he had done sufficient in respect
 Of that encounter, and no further need
 Was there to fight; a path which ran direct
 Ahead he chose and galloped off at speed.
 Before one from his tangle could unwind him,
 The other put a mile or so behind him.

65

As when a ploughman, dazed with stupefaction,
 After a thunderbolt has struck, aghast,
 Slowly uprights himself where by its action
 Beside his lifeless oxen he was cast,
 And views, dismayed, the shrivelling contraction
 Of pine-trees stripped and withered by the blast,
 So Sacripante rises to his feet,
 The damsel having witnessed his defeat.

66

He sighs and groans, but not because a foot
 Or arm is broken or is out of place,
 But shame alone so makes his colour shoot
 That never has he worn so red a face.
 Not only has he been defeated, but
 Angelica, to add to his disgrace,
 Now lifts the heavy burden from his back
 And, save for her, all power of speech he'd lack.

67

'O, pray, my lord,' said she, 'be not dismayed:
 Your honour's not impugned because you fell;
 But rather should the blame be squarely laid
 Upon this hack, which served you none too well,
 Its jousting days being over. I'd have said
 Yon knight gained little glory and, to tell
 The truth, he now the victory should yield,
 For he, not you, was first to leave the field.'

And while the damsel thus consoles the king,
They see, with horn and wallet at his side,
An envoy on a nag come galloping.
Weary he seems, and breathless from his ride.
He has, they find, no messages to bring,
But asks the king if he by chance has spied
On horseback in the forest a brave knight
With armour, shield and helmet-plume of white.

69

The pagan answered: 'Here, as you can see,
He has unhorsed me, and not long ago
He left; and who it was thus dealt with me,
In case we meet again, I fain would know.'
The envoy said: 'In my capacity
I will inform you without more ado:
You have been felled from horseback by a foeman
Who is a valiant and courageous woman.

70

'She is as beautiful as she is brave;
Nor will I hide her celebrated name:
She at whose hands just now you suffered have
Such ignominy and undying shame
Is Bradamante.' Then the envoy gave
His nag its head. The king, his cheeks aflame,
Knows neither what to say nor what to do
In the dishonoured state he's fallen to;

71

For, having failed to fathom what had come
To pass, he recognizes finally
That by a woman he was overcome.
The more he thinks, the worse it seems to be.
He mounts the other horse, morose and dumb;
No word escapes his lips, but silently
He takes the maid, departing at a trot,
Deferring pleasure to some quieter spot.

72

And scarce two miles they go before they hear
Through the encircling wood a deafening sound:
A clamour and a crashing, far and near,
Making the forest tremble all around.
Soon afterwards they see a horse appear.
Its costly harnessing with gold is bound.
It leaps across the streams and over brakes,
And anything that an obstruction makes.

73

'If tangled foliage and dusky air',
The damsel said, 'do not deceive my eyes,
Among those inter-lacing branches there,
That horse which clears its passage hurdle-wise
Must be Baiardo. Yes, I know, I swear
It's he. How well he seems to recognize
That two upon one horse fare ill indeed,
For here he comes to satisfy our need.'

74

The monarch of Circassia dismounts
And to the horse draws near, the rein intending
To lay hold on; at once Baiardo flaunts
His crupper and, as quick as light, up-ending,
Answers with his heels. Were he now to trounce
The hapless king, no prospect of defending
Him there'd be, for Baiardo's in such fettle,
His hoofs could split a mountain-side of metal.

75

But tame and docile near Angelica
With human gentleness he takes his stand.
No dog more welcoming or friskier
Greeted his master home with leaping and
Great joy. Baiardo still remembers her,
For often she would feed him from her hand
When in Albracca for Count Aymon's son
Great love she had, while he for her had none.

Her fair left hand the bridle ornaments
 And with her right she strokes his chest and neck.
 The horse, of marvellous intelligence,
 Submissive as an angel, to her beck
 And call responds. The pagan, with good sense,
 Then mounts Baiardo, holding him in check.
 Her palfrey being thus lightened, from its croup
 She moves and to the saddle now mounts up.

77

She chances, casting round her glance, to see
 A knight on foot, his weapons as he hies
 Clashing against his armour. Angrily
 Duke Aymon's son her senses recognize.
 He loves her more than life itself, but she
 Abhors him as a crane from falcons flies.
 Once she loved him and he abhorred her worse
 Than death; and now their fates are in reverse.

78

Two magic fountains are the cause of this.
 They rise in the Ardennes, not far away
 One from the other. Who drinks from one is
 Filled with amorous longing; those who essay
 The second are to all love's joy and bliss
 Rendered immune, and cold as ice are they.
 Rinaldo tasted one and love prostrates him,
 Angelica the other and she hates him.

79

The water, with a secret poison mixed,
 So altered her who formerly adored him
 On whom her glance with hatred now was fixed,
 Her tear-filled eyes becoming more and more dim,
 She urged the king, and in a voice betwixt
 Forlorn and fearful, anguished she implored him
 To wait no longer for the cavalier
 Who fast approaches, but to flee with her.

80

‘Have you so little trust?’ the king replied,
 ‘And do I stand so low in your esteem?
 You look on me as useless by your side?
 Unable to defend you I now seem?
 Do you forget so soon how I defied
 Opponents at Albracca? On this theme,
 What of the night when I, alone and nude,
 King Agrican and all the field withstood?’

81

She does not answer, nor know what to do.
 Rinaldo is approaching much too close.
 Already he makes threatening gestures to
 The Tartar king who on Baiardo goes,
 As he can see. The angelic damsel who
 Has set his heart ablaze he also knows;
 But what between these two proud knights occurred,
 In the ensuing canto will be heard.

he grew and he grew and he grew (so the gods had
decreed), till the whole
of the sky with all of its stars could now bed down on his
ranges.

The winds had all been imprisoned by Aëolus, god of the
tempests,
inside his cave. The morning star which summons to
work
665 had risen, bright in the sky. So Perseus fastened the wings
of his sandals again on his feet and girded himself with
his hooked sword.
Soon he was cutting a path through the air on his
fluttering anklets,
passing an infinite number of countries around and
below him.
He finally sighted the realm of Ethiopian Cépheus,*
where Ammon, the god of the land, had unjustly
670 ordered the princess
Andrómeda, innocent girl, to pay the price for her
boastful
mother who claimed to surpass the daughters of
Néreus in beauty.
When Perseus noticed the maiden tied by the arms to a
jagged
rock-face (but for the light breeze stirring her hair and
the warm tears
coursing over her cheeks, he would have supposed she
was merely
a marble statue), unconscious desire was kindled
675 within him.
Dumbly amazed and entranced by the beautiful vision
before him,
he almost omitted to move his wings as he hovered in
air.
Then once he'd alighted, he said to the maiden, 'Shame
on such fetters!

You shouldn't be bound by these but the ties of passionate
lovers.
I ask you to tell me your name, sweet girl, and the name of
your country. 680
Tell me why you are chained here.' At first she was silent,
constrained
by maidenly shyness in front of a man; if her hands had
been free
of their bonds, she'd have lifted them up to her face to cover
her blushes.
Her eyes could speak, though, filled as they were with
welling tears.
He continued to press her and therefore, not to appear to
be hiding 685
a fault of her own, she told him her name and the name of
her country,
and how her mother had wickedly boasted about her
beauty.
Her story was still unfinished, when out of the sea there
resounded
a sinister roar and, advancing across the expanse of ocean,
breasting the surge of the waves, there emerged a menacing
monster. 690
Andromeda screamed; her sorrowing father and with him
her mother
arrived on the scene, both greatly distressed, though the
mother more justly.
They brought no help but simply engaged in the usual
rituals
of weeping and beating of breasts. As they clung to the girl's
chained body,
the stranger protested: 'Your tears and laments can be
safely indulged 695
later on and at length; a rescue is needed now and with all
speed.
I am the Perseus fathered by Jove and mothered by Danaë,
impregnated by Jupiter's gold as she languished in prison,

the Perseus who killed the snake-headed Gorgon and
 ventured to fly
 through the air on fluttering wings. If I were courting this
 700 maiden,
 I'd be the suitor you surely preferred for her
 husband-to-be.

To these most splendid endowments, if heaven is kind,
 I shall add
 my valiant service. These are my terms: if I rescue your
 daughter,
 she shall be mine.' Her parents agreed – they could
 hardly refuse –
 and to crown their entreaties they promised Perseus the
 705 kingdom as dowry.

There comes the monster, parting the waves with the
 thrust of his huge breast,
 just as a war-galley, strongly propelled by its sweating
 oarsmen,
 speedily furrows a path with its sharp-beaked prow
 through the ocean.

Now it was steadily nearing the cliffs, as close as the
 range
 of a spinning bullet discharged through the air from a
 710 Bálearic sling;

when suddenly Perseus, pushing away from the earth
 with his sandals,
 soared aloft to the clouds. When the hero's shadow
 appeared
 on top of the water, the frightened monster fiercely
 attacked it.

Imagine an eagle sighting a serpent, sunning its dark
 blue
 715 back in an empty field, and swooping down on its prey
 from behind; to escape the poison discharged from the
 fangs, it greedily
 grips the scaly neck in its talons. So valiant Perseus
 swooped straight down through the air to stab the
 beast in the back,

and through its right shoulder he buried his sword-blade
 up to the curved hilt.
 Roaring with pain and severely wounded, the monster
 720 reared itself
 high in the air, then plunged down into the waves, then
 turned
 like a savage but terrified boar when the dogs are baying
 around him.

Poised on his swift wings, Perseus eluded his ravening
 enemy's
 jaws and went for his weak points, hacking away with his
 hooked sword,
 now at its barnacled back and then at the ribs, then
 again
 at the narrowest point of the tail where it tapered into a
 fish.

The monster spewed forth seawater mingled with crimson
 blood,
 drenching Perseus' sandals in spray and weighing them
 down.

Not daring to trust his sodden wings any further, the man 730
 caught sight of a rock whose summit projects from a calm
 sea's surface

but cannot be seen when the ocean is rough. So Perseus the
 valiant,
 bracing himself against this, gripping its top with his left
 hand,
 plunged his weapon again and again through the monster's
 vitals.

The shouts of applause re-echoed along the shore and
 above
 735 in the halls of Olympus. Andromeda's mother, Cassiopeía,
 and Cepheus, her father, were both delighted; Perseus was
 hailed
 as their daughter's betrothed and proclaimed as the saviour
 and stay of the house.

The princess, quickly released from her chains, came
 forward to greet him.

Her danger had prompted his feat; she was now the
reward for his courage.

The victorious hero cleansed his hands in the water they
drew for him.

740 Fearing to bruise the Gorgon's snake-covered head on
the hard sand,
he softened the ground with leaves and covered it over
with seaweed,
to serve as a mat for the head of Medusa, the daughter
of Phorcys.

The fronds which were fresh and still abundant in
spongy pith

745 absorbed the force of the Gorgon and hardened under
her touch,
acquiring a strange new stiffness in all the stems and
the foliage.

The sea-nymphs tested this miracle out on additional
fronds
of seaweed. Excited to find this yielded the same result,
they repeated the marvel by tossing the plant's seeds
over the waves.

750 Coral even today preserves this identical property:
contact with air induces its hardness and what was a
flexible
shoot under water is turned to rock on the ocean's
surface.

Next Perseus built three altars of turf to three of the
gods:*

the one on the left to Mercury, that on the right to
Minerva,

755 the central altar to Jupiter. Victims were duly offered:
a cow for the warlike maiden, a calf for the
wing-footed guide
and a bull for the king of the gods. Without any further
delay,

Perseus claimed the reward for his valiant deed,
Andromeda,
seeking no further dowry. The wedding torches were
flourished
by Hymen and Love; the fires were richly supplied with
incense;

garlands hung from the palace roof; and everywhere
singing
to music of lyre and pipe auspiciously signified joy.
And now the doors were flung open, the golden halls were
revealed

with a sumptuous banquet prepared, and Cepheus' court
was admitted.

760 The feasting was over and hearts were relaxed with the
flowing wine,
when the bridegroom asked a few questions about the land
and its products,
social customs and attitudes held by the people who lived
there.

The prince who replied went on: 'Now, Perseus, bravest of
heroes,

please will you tell us the story of how your remarkable
courage

770 and skill combined to remove the head of the snake-haired
Gorgon?'

Their guest then mentioned a freezing glen at the foot of
Mount Atlas,

tightly enclosed by a fortification of massive rocks.

Two sisters had lived by the valley's entrance, the daughters
of Phorcys,*

who shared the use of a single eye, which Perseus had
craftily

775 stolen as one was passing it on to the other, by slipping
his hand underneath, thus forcing the Graiae to give him
directions.

He travelled through rocky regions remote and secluded,
littered

'Kildare's achievement shows a burning pine.
By argent, a pale sanguine, Desmond's known.
Welsh, English, Scots and Irish thus combine
To help King Charles; but they are not alone,
For Sweden, Norway, Thulë, now align;
From distant Iceland, even, troops are gone,
And every land there is in the Far North,
By nature warlike, sends its warriors forth.

89

'From caves they come, from rugged forest-lands,
Horde upon horde; their faces and their chests,
Their sides, their backs, their legs, their arms, their hands,
Are covered with long hair like savage beasts.
The sixteen thousand lances of those bands
Create a forest where their banner rests.
Moratto hopes, who holds it on the plain,
Its whiteness in the blood of Moors to stain.'

90

While on this splendid host, which thus prepares
To aid the French, his gaze Ruggiero turns,
And the insignia each banner bears
And all the British captains' names he learns,
At him one man and then another stares,
As each the rare phenomenon discerns.
In stupefied astonishment they flock
And round him in a circle stand, to look.

91

Ruggiero, to astonish them the more
And to derive amusement from the game,
To his winged quadruped applied the spur
And rose into the air from whence he came.
With slackened rein he let the creature soar,
While those below still more amazed became.
Then, after viewing all the English force,
To Ireland in the west he turned his course,

92

[x]

That legendary island where, men tell,
The venerable elder made a cave
Wherein whoever for a space should dwell
Remission from his sins him Heaven gave;
Then, flying farther on, as it befell,
Towards waters which the Breton coastline lave,
Whence, passing to the outer Hebrides,
Angelica chained to the rock he sees,

93

To the bare rock, upon the Isle of Tears
(For thus the savage island now is named),
That isle of inhumanity and fears,
Whose natives for their cruelty are famed,
As in my story earlier appears.
I told you how they forage unashamed
From shore to shore, all lovely women stealing
To feed an orc, voracious and unfeeling.

94

That very morning she'd been brought and bound
To where the orc would swallow her alive.
Such giant monsters in those seas abound
And on such monstrous diet seem to thrive.
I have related how the maid was found
Asleep upon the shore and taken live,
With the enchanter, where the horse had fetched her,
And where the fell magician had bewitched her.

95

The harsh, inhospitable islanders
Exposed the lovely maiden on the strand.
So absolute a nakedness was hers,
She might have issued then from Nature's hand.
No veil or flimsiest of gossamers
Had she to hide her lily whiteness and
Her blushing roses, which ne'er fade nor die,
But in December bloom as in July.

He might have thought she was a statue, made
 By skilful and ingenious artistry
 Of alabaster or fine marble, laid
 Upon the rock, but that he chanced to see
 A tear steal down her countenance, amid
 The roses and white lilies, tenderly
 Bedewing the young fruit, so firm and fair,
 And breezes softly lift her golden hair.

As on her lovely eyes his eyes he fixed,
 His dearest Bradamante came to mind.
 Love and compassion both his heart transfixed,
 Tears he could scarce restrain, and in a kind
 And gentle voice, much puzzled and perplexed
 (His mount to immobility confined),
 'O lady, worthy of no chains', he said,
 'Save those in which Love's servitors are led,

'Not this, nor any other such abuse
 Do you deserve. Who has thus cruelly
 Enchained you, marking with a livid bruise
 Those lovely hands of polished ivory?'
 As craftsmen with a rosy dye suffuse
 White ivory, so, at his words, now she,
 Her hidden charms uncovered, blushed for shame
 And at Ruggiero's gaze abashed became.

She'd fain have hid her face, but that her hands
 Are fastened to the rock, and so her tears,
 Which she is free to weep, she freely sends
 To veil her cheeks; her head held low, her fears
 And sobs she tries to quell; he understands
 At last some syllables which reach his ears
 In a low tone; but suddenly she ceases,
 Arrested by a roaring, which increases.

And there the giant monster can be seen,
 One half submerged; as, buffeted in sport
 By Auster and Boreas having been,
 A long, sea-going vessel comes to port,
 So this foul creature, ravenously keen,
 Comes for its food. The interval is short.
 The damsel in her terror is half dead,
 Nor by assurance is she comforted.

Ruggiero did not place his lance in rest
 But, holding it on high, the orc he smote.
 A writhing, twisting mass describes it best.
 No other feature can Ruggiero note
 By which to recognize it as a beast,
 Save head and eyes and tusks and gaping throat.
 Upon its front he strikes, between the eyes,
 But fails to pierce it, howsoe'er he tries.

The first stroke having failed, he smites once more.
 The orc the shadow of the beating wings
 Perceives, which moves across the ocean floor
 Now here, now there, in ever-widening rings.
 Leaving its certain prey upon the shore,
 It follows after vain imaginings.
 Twisting and turning, in pursuit it goes.
 Ruggiero swoops and deals it many blows.

When from on high an eagle fixes on
 A wily serpent gliding through the grass
 Or, on a naked rock, coiled in the sun
 To preen its glistening, golden carapace,
 Not on that side the bird will strike whereon
 Its weapons of attack the reptile has,
 But, swooping from the rear, the venom misses,
 And claws the writhing snake, for all it hisses.

104

Just so Ruggiero with his lance and sword,
Not where the muzzle with sharp fangs was armed,
But where the hateful monster might be gored
To death and he himself escape unharmed,
Struck out and, ever watchful, swooped and soared
As prudence guided him; yet, as though charmed,
The more in these manoeuvres he persisted,
The more the beast, like adamant, resisted.

105

Sometimes a battle such as this a fly
Against a mastiff boldly undertakes
In August, or September, or July,
Those months of dust, of vintage, or of stacks
Of ripened grain, well garnered and laid by.
Stinging his snout and eyes, the insect makes
Unceasing darts and sallies, till, mayhap,
The mastiff is revenged in one fell snap.

106

The monster with its tail the ocean lashes
In frenzy so extreme, it's my belief
The water to the very welkin dashes.
Ruggiero on occasion wonders if
He flies or swims; he is afraid the splashes,
Continuing to drench the hippogriff,
May waterlog its wings, which will in vain
Attempt to lift him from the sea again.

107

So now he thinks he'll try a new attack,
Using that weapon of surprise and shock,
The shield which he keeps hidden in its sack,
Which all opponents senseless seems to knock.
But first, as a precaution, he flies back
To where Angelica lies on the rock
And on the little finger of one hand
He quickly slips the magic, golden band.

108

I mean the ring which Bradamante had,
To free Ruggiero, wrested from Brunel;
To liberate him later from the bad
And sinister Alcina, she did well
To give it to Melissa when she sped
To India; to break that magic spell,
As you'll recall, Melissa did not scorn it;
Ruggiero ever afterwards had worn it.

109

But to Angelica he gives it now,
Lest she be injured by the magic beam,
For loath he is such danger to allow
To those fair eyes of hers which dazzle him.
The monster now approaches and I vow
No vaster creatures in the ocean swim.
Ruggiero bides his time; the veil he raises:
And lo! a second sun in heaven blazes.

110

The magic luminance the monster's eyes
Assails and has its usual effect.
As when a shoal of fish in waters dies
Which mountain fishermen with lime infect,
So on that foaming margin supine lies
The orc, which land and sea alike reject.
Ruggiero strikes it here and there, but no
Impression can he make with any blow.

111

The lovely damsel, during the commotion,
Ruggiero's movements eagerly had followed.
'Fair sir,' she called to him in deep emotion,
Fearing the orc might wake where now it wallowed,
'Release me first, then drown me in the ocean!
Ah! let me by this monster not be swallowed!'
Ruggiero saw the justice of her plea.
Leaving the orc unslain, he set her free.

The hippogriff, responding to the spur,
 Braces its hoofs and rises in the air;
 Away Ruggiero pillion carries her,
 Depriving thus the monster of its fare.
 It was, indeed, no fitting connoisseur
 For this *bonne bouche*, so delicate and rare.
 He looks behind and thinks he can surmise
 A thousand kisses promised in her eyes.

He did not take the course, as he'd intended,
 Of circumnavigating all of Spain,
 But on a shore near by instead descended,
 Where Brittany juts out into the main.
 A spot he chose by shady oaks defended,
 Where Philomel's lament is heard again,
 And where, beside a clearing, is a fountain,
 Set round about on both sides by a mountain.

The eager cavalier his daring flight
 Brought to a halt, and straight away dismounted.
 One horse he'd curbed, and yet to a new height
 Upon another he would fain have mounted.
 One obstacle alone impedes the knight:
 His armour – and on this he had not counted –
 His armour keeps him back from his desire
 And causes him delay, for all his fire.

And so, in frantic haste to be without it,
 Disorderedly his armour he removed;
 And never had he been so long about it,
 His tackle tangling as he pulled and shoved.
 My canto is too long (I do not doubt it)
 And wearisome, my lord, perhaps has proved,
 And so this history is now postponed
 Until an hour more pleasing shall be found.

CANTO XI

Although a rein has often served to check
 The impetus of a careering horse,
 The curb of reason seldom will turn back
 A lover's ardour from its frenzied course
 Where pleasure lies to hand; as from its track
 A prowling bear the smell of honey lures,
 Or from the jar its tongue may catch a drop,
 And nothing will induce it then to stop,

So now, what reason will the knight deter
 From present pleasure of the lovely maid
 Whom at his mercy he holds naked there
 In that convenient and lonely glade?
 No memories of Bradamante stir
 His heart and conscience; even if they did
 (For many times sweet thoughts of her arise)
 He would be mad to forgo such a prize.

The harsh Xenocrates himself that day,
 I swear, would have responded to her charms.
 His shield and spear already cast away,
 Ruggiero struggled to remove his arms
 When, lowering her eyes in her dismay
 To her bare limbs, now cause of grave alarms,
 The damsel saw once more upon her hand,
 What she had lost, that priceless golden band.

4

This was the very ring Brunello took,
The ring she'd carried all the way to France,
Escorted by her brother, who to Duke
Astolfo yielded up his magic lance;
With it proud Malagigi's spell she broke
In Merlin's shrine; she'd freed Orlando once,
Together with his peers, from servitude
To Dragontina and her evil brood;

5

And with it she'd escaped, invisible,
From the dread tower where she was left to die.
But to what end these wonders chronicle
To you who know them better far than I?
E'en to Albracca's very citadel,
With Agramante's wishes to comply,
Brunello followed her and by his theft,
Of fortune and of realm she was bereft.

6

Now that she sees it on her hand again,
So filled with stupor and with joy is she
That all appears a dream, or else in vain
Imaginings her sight and touch must be
Deceiving her; drawing it off, at pain
To hide her every movement, furtively
She puts it in her mouth, and is concealed,
As when the sun behind a cloud is veiled.

7

Ruggiero looked about him everywhere,
Turning and twisting like a man deranged,
Until, the ring recalling, to a stare
Of stupefaction his expression changed.
He cursed his inattention then and there,
Railing against her who had thus exchanged
In recompense for all his help and tact
This rude, ungrateful disappearing-act.

8

'O thankless damsel! Is this the reward
You render me', he said, 'for what I've done?
I gave that ring to you, but you preferred
To steal it from me. Why take that alone?
My wingèd horse, my magic shield, my sword,
Myself I give to you, my cruel one.
Do with me what you will, but do not hide
Your lovely face.' She not a word replied.

9

Now by the fountain, now in many a place,
He groped as if he played at blind-man's-buff.
How often did his arms in an embrace
Close on the empty air! She, making off,
Across the country ran at a good pace
Until, beneath a mountain, to a rough
But roomy cave she came, wherein were stored
Supplies of food whence she could be restored.

10

For there a herdsman lived, who many mares
At pasture tended in the vale below,
Among the water-meadows where no tares
Or weeds among the tender grasses grow.
To stalls within the cave the herd repairs
For shelter from the noon-day sun; and so
Angelica her refuge took therein,
At leisure resting and by no-one seen.

11

At last, at evening, when the air was cool,
And she had been restored by ample rest,
Some rustic garments, made of homespun wool,
She draped about her – ah! how strangely dressed,
Compared with the gay robes which as a rule
She chose to wear! But not the lowliest
Of clothing could disguise her noble grace
Of bearing, nor the beauty of her face.

12

No longer, shepherds, sing the praise of Phyllis,
 Neæra, or the bashful Galatea;
 They'd own one lovelier than Amaryllis,
 Could Tityrus and Meliboeus see her!
 To choose a mare out of the herd her will is,
 Whose speed from all entanglements may free her;
 For, having once possession of the beast,
 Angelica intends to seek the East.

13

Meanwhile Ruggiero, who had hoped in vain
 The lovely damsel to discover near him,
 His error saw at last, for it was plain
 That she was far away and could not hear him;
 And, moving now to mount that horse again
 Which equally by land or sky could bear him,
 He found the hippogriff had slipped the bit
 And soaring high above he spotted it.

14

Thus Fortune deals him yet another blow.
 To lose his flying horse is a sad thing,
 And grievous, too, it is himself to know
 The dupe of female guile; a sharper sting
 Than either has inflicted, is the woe
 Of having lost the precious magic ring
 Which his belovèd Bradamante gave him
 From evil sorcery or death to save him.

15

Downcast and melancholy, without hope,
 His armour he resumed and hung his shield
 About his neck; along a grassy slope,
 Leaving the sea, he made towards the weald,
 Where a well-trodden pathway seemed to drop
 Away from pasture-lands, beyond a field,
 Towards the right; there a tall, shady wood
 He entered, and a clamour chilled his blood.

16

The clamour was a terrifying sound
 Of clashing arms; the brave Ruggiero strode
 From tree to tree until at last he found
 Two combatants to whom the noise was owed.
 What enmity or vengeance held them bound,
 I know not, but no mercy either showed.
 One was a giant, a ferocious sight;
 The other was a bold and valiant knight.

17

The latter with his shield and with his sword,
 Leaping now here, now there, himself defends
 And a descending cudgel tries to ward
 Which by his foe is wielded with both hands.
 A horse is lying dead upon the sward.
 Looking upon the scene Ruggiero stands,
 And soon a hope is kindled in his heart
 That the brave knight may play the victor's part.

18

Yet not on that account did he lend aid,
 But, standing to one side, all action shunned.
 The mighty giant, more robustly made,
 The other with one stroke felled to the ground,
 Both hands upon the heavy cudgel laid,
 And when he saw his victim lie there stunned,
 Removed the helmet for the *coup de grâce* -
 And then it was Ruggiero saw his face.

19

He sees the dearest, loveliest, most sweet
 Belovèd countenance made visible -
 For Bradamante's face his eyes now meet,
 And she it is the giant means to kill.
 Losing no time, Ruggiero rushes fleet
 Of foot, sword drawn; but, having had his fill
 Of duelling, the giant in a rough
 Embrace picks up the Maid and hurries off.

20

He carries her across his shoulder as
 A wolf an infant lamb will sometimes fling,
 Or as an eagle carries in its claws
 A dove or other creature on the wing.
 Ruggiero understands there is good cause
 To hurry and he runs, a frenzied thing.
 The giant moves with strides of such a size
 Ruggiero scarce can follow with his eyes.

21

So, as one travels with gigantic tread,
 A distant follower the other is,
 Along a dark and gloomy path which led
 To a broad meadow; but enough of this,
 And to Orlando let us turn instead,
 Who carried off Cimosco's thunder-piece.
 He'd cast it to the bottom of the sea,
 That never more discovered it might be.

22

To no avail, because that impious foe
 Of humankind who first invented it,
 Inspired by thunderbolts which crash below,
 Tearing the clouds asunder, then saw fit,
 Causing the world an almost equal woe
 As by the apple and by Eve's deceit,
 To let a wizard seek it out once more
 In our grandfathers' time, or just before.

23

The hellish instrument, which fathoms deep
 (More than a hundred) hidden in the sea
 For years remained, was by vile craftsmanship
 Raised to the top; and first in Germany,
 Where they experimented, step by step,
 To find what sort of engine this might be,
 The devil sharpening their acumen,
 They learned the damage it could do to men.

24

France, Italy and all the other lands
 Have not been slow to learn the cruel skill;
 And so, to casting bronze some turn their hands
 And hollow forms with molten metal fill;
 To bore the iron others give commands.
 They make them of what size and form they will.
 Bombards or carbines some their weapons name,
 Or cannon, light or heavy, of ill fame.

25

Another type is called an arquebus;
 Still other names the craftsmen may employ,
 Such as a falcon or a blunderbuss.
 Stone walls and iron portals they destroy
 And scatter all before them as they pass.
 Hand in your weapons, soldier, for alloy,
 Even your sword, for, if you'd take the shilling,
 To shoulder these new arms you must be willing.

26

O hideous invention! By what means
 Did you gain access to the human heart?
 Because of you all glory's fled long since;
 No honour now attaches to the art
 Of soldiering; all valour is pretence;
 Not Good but Evil seems the better part;
 Gone is all courage, chivalry is gone,
 In combat once the only paragon.

27

How many lords, alas! how many more
 Among the bravest of our cavaliers
 Have died and still must perish in this war
 By which you brought the world to bitter tears
 And Italy left stricken to the core?
 This is the worst device, in all the years
 Of the inventiveness of humankind,
 Which e'er imagined was by evil mind.

28

And I believe the author of these wrongs
 And the unending ill which thence ensued has
 Is now consigned by God where he belongs,
 In the Abyss beside accursèd Judas.
 But let us follow now the knight who longs
 To reach in time that coastline of Ebuda's,
 Where lovely women, delicate and tender,
 The natives to an orc as food surrender.

29

But now the more his haste, the less the wind,
 From whatsoever compass-point, would blow.
 For signs of wind he searched the hyalined
 Horizon, peering from the poop or prow.
 At times the lack of headway filled his mind
 With deep despair at all the miles to go.
 Then by the head so violently it blew,
 He had to run before or heave her to.

30

It was God's will that he delayed should be,
 The king of Ireland's coming to await,
 In order that with more facility
 Events might come to pass, which I'll relate.
 But when at last the island he could see,
 Orlando to his pilot said: 'Here wait;
 Give me the landing-craft, which I will row
 To yonder rock, for there alone I'll go.

31

'And look me out likewise the strongest cable;
 And, next, the largest anchor I will take.
 To see why I require them you'll be able
 If contact with the monster I can make.'
 The skiff was duly lowered and, when stable,
 All that he needed for the journey's sake
 (No weapons, save his sword) on board was laid,
 And for the dreadful rock, alone, he made.

32

Pulling the oars towards his chest, he looks
 In the reverse direction from the one
 He gains, as from the sea towards the rocks
 Or to the shore a crab will sideways run.
 It was the hour when Dawn her golden locks
 Has shaken loose and flowing in the sun,
 Her loveliness half clad, half naked, shown us,
 Stirring the jealousy of old Tithonus.

33

As far as a strong arm a stone might throw
 The island was when, still approaching it,
 He seems to hear, yet not to hear, a low
 Lament which breezes fitfully repeat;
 And, to the left, he glimpses there below
 (The water gently lapping at her feet),
 Bound to a tree, a damsel all forlorn,
 As naked as the day when she was born.

34

As he is still too far away and she
 Her face holds low, he cannot yet discern
 It, nor be sure of her identity.
 Both oars he plies in eagerness to learn,
 When a great roar arises suddenly;
 The woods and caves resound, the waters churn,
 And lo! the dreadful monster now appears
 And half the sea beneath it disappears.

35

As from a gloomy vale a cloud of rain,
 Laden with tempest, rises in the air,
 The daylight quenching with so dark a stain
 That blindest night may not with it compare,
 So now the orc approaches, of the main
 Enveloping an all-embracing share.
 The waters shake; unmoved Orlando stays,
 The monster fixing with a haughty gaze.

36

Like one who has resolved what he will do,
 With rapid movements, calm and purposeful,
 Between the damsel and the orc he drew,
 Thus with one stroke to make it possible
 To save her and attack the monster too,
 His good blade leaving in its scabbard still,
 He took the cable, to the anchor mated,
 And for the monster, with high courage, waited.

37

The monster, which the paladin soon spied,
 Opened its mouth to gulp him down its throat,
 Forming a cavern where a man might ride
 On horseback; there Orlando entered, boat
 And all, if I mistake not; and inside,
 The gaping gullet with the anchor smote.
 One of the flukes was from its palate hung;
 The other was embedded in its tongue.

38

Thus neither jaw the monster can move up
 Or down; just so, as further underground
 A miner burrows, with a metal prop
 He underpins the earth above all round,
 Lest, as he works, it should collapse on top
 Of him and bury him beneath its mound.
 So far apart the anchor's arms extend,
 Orlando cannot reach from end to end.

39

Knowing the monster cannot close its jaws,
 For he has made the anchor well secure,
 His Durindana from its sheath he draws
 And lays about him in that cave obscure.
 As the besieged will every hindrance cause
 To those who in their walls a breach procure,
 So every method then of self-defence
 The orc employed to spew Orlando hence.

40

Weakened by pain, it thrashed to either hand,
 Exposing now its flanks and now its spine,
 Or, diving, with its belly stirred the sand,
 Which in a shower rose to cloud the brine.
 So, judging it was time to make for land
 (Or to a watery grave himself resign),
 Leaving the monster's gullet thus imbrangled,
 He seized the rope which from the anchor dangled.

41

Then he began with rapid strokes to swim
 Towards the naked rock, where he sets foot
 And gradually hauls in after him
 The rope, the anchor and, at last, the brute,
 In mortal peril of its life and limb
 By virtue of his strength, of world repute,
 That strength which with one single tug pulls more
 Than any capstan pulled ten times before.

42

As a wild bull, which feels about his horn
 The sudden tightening of a hunter's noose,
 Will leap and plunge and rear and twist and turn,
 In all its vain endeavours to break loose,
 So, from its ancient element now torn
 By that strong arm, the orc, with many a ruse,
 With many a sudden jerk, and many a twist,
 The rope in vain attempted to resist.

43

So copiously from its mouth it bled,
 Its lashing tail so furiously plied,
 The sea that day might well be called the Red,
 And might be seen to open and divide.
 The tossing waves to such a height are sped,
 They reach the welkin, and the sunlight hide.
 The woods, the mountains and the distant shores
 Re-echo with the savage monster's roars.

44

The ancient Proteus from his grotto came,
 He'd seen Orlando enter and then leave
 That gaping mouth; then, witnessing its shame,
 He'd seen him to the shore the monster heave.
 And at this uproar, heedless he became
 Of all his flock, and fled; and I believe
 That Neptune's dolphins harnessed were that day
 To speed to Ethiopia straight away.

45

Ino, all tears, her offspring in her arms,
 The Nereids, their tresses loose and flowing,
 The followers of Glaucus, all alarms,
 The Tritons fled, in all directions going.
 Orlando so disables and disarms
 The orc, no vestige now of life is showing;
 By pain and travail sorely mortified,
 Before it reached the water's edge, it died.

46

Quite a few islanders had run to see
 The strange event in which the orc was slain.
 A deed so holy seems profanity
 To those who hold to heathen creeds and vain.
 They said it would renew the enmity
 Of Proteus, who would send his flock again
 To ravage and despoil their island shore,
 The ancient quarrel flaring up once more.

47

They judge it will be best to sacrifice
 To the offended god ere worse occur,
 And, to placate him, deem it will suffice
 To cast the body of the warrior
 Into the raging sea; as in a trice
 A flame is caught from torch to torch, so there
 A burning hatred, spread from heart to heart,
 Destined Orlando for the victim's part.

48

With bows and arrows, slings and swords and spears,
 The natives now descend upon the shore.
 From this side and from that a group appears,
 Far off, approaching, near, behind, before.
 With all this bestial rabble round his ears,
 Which threatens to assail him more and more,
 Orlando, in astonishment, perceives,
 Not thanks, but blows and insults he receives.

49

As when a bear, by Lithuanians led,
 Or Russians, who divert the visitors
 To fairs, goes by unmoved with plodding tread,
 By the shrill insolence of yapping curs
 So unperturbed it scarce will turn its head,
 So, at this onrush, not a tremor stirs
 The paladin, who, with one single breath,
 That savage horde could scatter to their death.

50

A space in front of him was quickly made
 Where, sword in hand, he turned to face the mob.
 The rabble so deluded were and mad,
 They thought, because he was divested of
 Cuirass, and neither helm nor buckler had,
 Without resistance he would let them rob
 Him of his life; if only they had known,
 From top to toe he was as hard as stone.

51

And what against him others cannot do,
 Orlando, for his part, can do full well.
 Thirty he kills, with but ten strokes, or few
 More, if the truth precisely I must tell.
 He turns, thus disencumbered, to undo
 The damsel's bonds, when tumult, audible
 From yet another quarter, meets his ears
 And echoes of it everywhere he hears.

52

For while, upon this side, the paladin
Has held the heathen rabble thus engaged,
The king of Ireland's army has moved in
And, unresisted, through the island raged.
Attacks upon the populace begin;
On every side ferocious war is waged,
A holocaust which no compunction checks,
In which no heed is paid to age or sex.

53

The cruel islanders make no defence,
Partly because they're taken by surprise,
Partly because of poor intelligence
The population is, and small in size.
Thus they submit to fire and violence
And every battlement in ruin lies;
At every home and farmstead troops arrive
And not a single soul is left alive.

54

Orlando all this time remains aloof
To all the tumult and the shrieks he hears.
Thinking by now his foes have had enough,
The rock whereon the damsel waits he nears.
He looks, he seems to know her, and for proof
He draws still closer to the maid in tears:
It is, it is Olimpia indeed,
Betrayed by so iniquitous a deed,

55

Wretched Olimpia, to whom when Love
Had done his worst, relentless, cruel Fate
Had sent a band of pirates to remove
Her to the Isle of Tears, there to await
A dreadful death! Seeing Orlando move
About the rock, she knows him by his gait,
But, naked, and ashamed of her disgrace,
She cannot bear to look him in the face.

56

Orlando asked by what iniquity
To this dread island she had been transferred.
He'd left her in her consort's company,
Serene and joyful; what, then, had occurred?
'I know not if I owe you thanks', said she,
'For saving me from death, which I preferred
To this my wretched life, or if instead
I should reproach you that I am not dead.

57

'For this I thank you, that I have not shared
A death so cruel in the hideous
Vile belly of that monster, where I feared
To make an end so ignominious;
And yet I do not thank you that I'm spared,
For death alone to me is bounteous.
I'll render thanks to you for but one thing,
That sweet release which death alone can bring.'

58

And, weeping bitterly, she told him then
How she had been abandoned by her spouse,
Who left her sleeping on the island when
He had betrayed her and his marriage-vows,
And how brought hence by pirates she had been.
As far as the restricted space allows,
She turns while speaking, as in paint or stone
We see Diana turn from Actaeon.

59

As best she can she hides her breast and loins,
Leaving exposed the beauty of her thighs.
Orlando, who has freed her from her chains,
To bring his drifting boat to harbour tries
(To find some garments for her there he plans);
But now upon the scene Oberto hies,
The king of Ireland, whom the news had reached
How on the shore the deadly orc lay stretched.

60

He'd heard, too, how a cavalier had plugged
The monster's gullet with an anchor and
The creature to the water's edge had lugged,
As sailors pull a boat, hand over hand,
Against the current; some indeed had shrugged
In disbelief, but he had come, as planned,
To verify the rumour, as, meanwhile,
His troops were sacking the barbaric isle.

61

Although Orlando was much stained with blood
And drenched with water beyond recognition –
For owing to the bleeding which ensued
When he had slashed the orc, his own condition
The gory nature of the exploit showed,
The king of Ireland, as by intuition,
Already had deduced and now could see
That no one but Orlando it could be.

62

He knew him well, for he had been a page
Of honour at the court of France, whence he,
His father dying at a goodly age,
Returned to claim the Irish crown, only
A year ago; and often they'd engage
In converse, each the other's company
Desiring; now Orlando to embrace
He ran, the visor raising from his face.

63

The Count is no less pleased to see the king
Than is the king to see the Count again.
Their arms round one another's neck they fling,
Not once, but many times; Orlando then
Resolved to tell Oberto everything.
Olimpia's wrongs he started to explain,
How by Bireno she had been betrayed,
Her spouse on whom a sacred trust was laid.

64

He told him of the tokens of her love,
How, her relations dead, her kingdom gone,
Her deep devotion further still to prove,
Her readiness to die for him she'd shown;
And he himself had been a witness of
A number of the noble deeds she'd done.
While truly thus Orlando testifies,
The tears are flowing from Olimpia's eyes.

65

As in an April sky the sun is seen,
Parting the misty curtain of the rain,
So was Olimpia's lovely face, wherein
Her eyes shine through those tears which still remain;
And, as amid the tender, leafy green
A songbird sweetly carols once again,
So Love, his wings refreshing in her tears,
In beams of light to sun himself appears.

66

And from those radiant orbs a spark he takes
To tip his golden shaft, and in the stream
Which waters the fair blossoms of her cheeks
He tempers it; then, with unerring aim
And deadly force, the youth his target makes,
Whose shield, whose mail, are no defence to him,
For, gazing on her eyes, her hair, her brow,
He's wounded in the heart, and knows not how.

67

Her beauty is indeed beyond compare:
Not only on her brow, her eyes, her nose,
Her cheeks, her mouth, her shoulders and her hair
The observer's glance may with delight repose,
But from her breasts descending, down to where
A gown is wont to cover her, she shows
A miracle of form, so exquisite
None in the world, perhaps, can equal it.

Whiter than snow unstained by the earth's smutch
 The perfect lily-whiteness of her skin,
 And smoother far than ivory to touch;
 Like milky curds but freshly heaped within
 Their plaited moulds, her rounded breasts, and such
 The gently curving space which lies between,
 It calls to mind a valley 'twixt two hills
 Which winter with its snowy softness fills.

69

Her lovely hips, the curving of her thighs,
 Her belly, smooth as any looking-glass,
 Her ivory limbs, were rounded in such wise
 They might have been the work of Phidias.
 Those other parts which to conceal she tries
 I will, as it behoves, in silence pass,
 Content to say that she, from top to toe,
 Embodies all of beauty man can know.

70

If Paris on Mount Ida's slopes had seen
 Her beauty, Venus, who so far outshone
 The other goddesses, surpassed had been;
 And he himself perhaps would not have gone
 To Sparta, saying, rather, to the queen:
 'Remain with Menelaus, for no one
 Do I desire, none other do I love
 Save this fair maid I am enamoured of.'

71

If she had lived in ancient Croton when
 The painter Zeuxis wished to decorate
 The shrine of Juno (that he might attain
 Perfection, so historians relate,
 He chose five maidens, and elected then
 The finest points of each to imitate),
 One model only he had then desired:
 In her was all the beauty he required.

I do not think Bireno ever saw
 That lovely body naked, for, if so,
 His cruelty had been against the law
 Of Nature; King Oberto, you must know,
 That to its end her story I may draw,
 Is kindled by her with a flame whose glow
 Cannot be hid; to comfort her he tries,
 And in her tender breast new hopes arise.

73

He promises that he will go with her
 To Holland, saying he will ne'er depart
 Till he has ousted thence that usurper
 And with a dreadful vengeance made him smart;
 And all resources, every follower
 Which Ireland can supply, he will divert,
 If need be, to make good his word. Meanwhile
 He sent his underlings about the isle,

74

Among the ruined houses, to seek out
 Some women's garments for Olimpia;
 And plenty they would find, there is no doubt,
 Left by the monster's victims; thus not far
 Had they to search, and they returned without
 Undue delay, bearing a plethora
 Of clothing, of all styles; and one of those,
 Unworthy though it be, Oberto chose.

75

The fairest silk, the finest cloth of gold
 Which Florentines can weave with all their skill,
 All the designs which craftsmen have of old
 Embroidered patiently, or ever will,
 Unworthy, King Oberto would now hold
 Of her whose lovely limbs before him still
 He sees - Minerva's skill would scarce be fine
 Enough, all goldsmiths' art they would outshine.

76

Orlando is delighted by this turn
 In the events; not only will the king
 The miscreant Bireno cause to learn
 A lesson for his vile manoeuvring,
 But he himself, released, can now return
 To the main purpose of his wandering:
 Not for Olimpia has he travelled here,
 But to assist the damsel he holds dear.

77

He'd straight away perceived it was not she
 Thus chained upon the rock, but none could say
 If she had suffered this iniquity,
 For every islander was dead; next day
 The troops of King Oberto put to sea,
 And to the coast of Ireland made their way.
 The paladin goes with them, for his plan
 Is to return to France as best he can.

78

Scarcely a day in Ireland he remained;
 By no cajoling pleas could he be won,
 For love in him such mastery had gained,
 Relentlessly it drove him on and on.
 So, hoping that his word would be maintained,
 He charged the king be faithful, and was gone.
 But there was no necessity for this.
 The king did more than keep his promises.

79

In a few days he gathered all his host
 And with the king of England made alliance,
 Likewise with Scotland's king; some on the coast
 Of Frisia landed, others to defiance
 Zealand roused, or Holland seized; in almost
 No time the war is over; full reliance
 Olimpia now might feel, for her new lord
 Had justly put Bireno to the sword.

80

Oberto took Olimpia as his wife
 And from a duchess made her thus a queen.
 But let us turn once more to him whose life
 So largely spent in wandering has been.
 His sails unfurling to the windy strife,
 He comes to St Malo, where he was seen
 Before; on Brigliadoro once again,
 He leaves behind the dangers of the main.

81

I well believe that all the winter long
 Many a noble deed Orlando did,
 Which I would gladly tell of in my song,
 But to this day all news of them is hid;
 For he was readier to right the wrong
 Than waste his breath in idle talk; indeed,
 His brave exploits were never known about
 Unless some witness gave the tidings out.

82

He passed the winter months so quietly
 That nothing certain of him then was known;
 But when the Sun once more in company
 With the mild Ram, in March and April, shone,
 And gentle Zephyr imperceptibly
 Led the sweet Spring a few more paces on,
 Orlando's deeds to blossom then were seen
 Amid new flowers and the tender green.

83

Up hill, down dale, in country, by the shore,
 He travels, filled with sorrow and despair,
 When, in a wood where he's not been before,
 A piercing shriek of terror smites his ear.
 To Brigliadoro he applies the spur
 And hurries where a voice he seems to hear.
 I'll tell you later on what then ensued;
 Till later then, if you will be so good.