

Rome: we met on the road, and our meeting was quite sentimental—*really* pathetic on both sides.⁴ I have always loved him better than any *made* thing in the world.

[TO THOMAS MOORE]

Pisa, March 4th, 1822

Since I wrote the enclosed,¹ I have waited another post, and now have your answer acknowledging the arrival of the packet—a troublesome one, I fear, to you in more ways than one, both from weight external and internal.

The unpublished things in your hands, in Douglas K.'s, and Mr. John Murray's, are "Heaven and Earth, a lyrical kind of Drama upon the Deluge, etc.," "Werner," *now with you*;—a translation of the First Canto of the Morgante Maggiore;—*ditto* of an Episode in Dante;—some stanzas to the Po, June 1st, 1819;—Hints from Horace, written in 1811, but a good deal, *since*, to be omitted; several prose things, which may, perhaps, as well remain unpublished;—"The Vision, &c., of Quevedo Redivivus," in verse.

Here you see is "more matter for a May morning;"² but how much of this can be published is for consideration. The Quevedo (one of my best in that line) has appalled the Row already, and must take its chance at Paris, if at all. The new Mystery is less speculative than "Cain," and very pious; besides, it is chiefly lyrical. The Morgante is the *best* translation that ever was or will be made; and the rest are—whatever you please to think them.

I am sorry you think Werner even *approaching* to any fitness for the stage, which, with my notions upon it, is very far from my present object. With regard to the publication, I have already explained that I have no exorbitant expectations of either fame or profit in the present instances; but wish them published because they are written, which is the common feeling of all scribblers.

With respect to "Religion," can I never convince you that I have no such opinions as the characters in that drama, which seems to have frightened every body? Yet *they* are nothing to the expressions in Goethe's Faust (which are ten times harder), and not a whit more bold than those of Milton's Satan. My ideas of a character may run away with me: like all imaginative men, I, of course, embody myself

⁴ See "Detached Thoughts", numbers 91 and 118.

¹ The previous letter (March 1) to Moore.

² *Twelfth Night*, Act. III, scene 4.

with the character while I *draw* it, but not a moment after the pen is from off the paper.

I am no enemy to religion, but the contrary. As a proof, I am educating my natural daughter a strict Catholic in a convent of Romagna; for I think people can never have *enough* of religion, if they are to have any. I incline, myself, very much to the Catholic doctrines; but if I am to write a drama, I must make my characters speak as I conceive them likely to argue.

As to poor Shelley,³ who is another bugbear to you and the world, he is, to my knowledge, the *least* selfish and the mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of. With his speculative opinions I have nothing in common, nor desire to have.

The truth is, my dear Moore, you live near the *store* of society, where you are unavoidably influenced by its heat and its vapours. I did so once—and too much—and enough to give a colour to my whole future existence. As my success in society was *not* inconsiderable, I am surely not a prejudiced judge upon the subject, unless in its favour; but I think it, as now constituted, *fatal* to all great original undertakings of every kind. I never courted it *then*, when I was young and high in blood, and one of its "curled darlings;"⁴ and do you think I would do so *now*, when I am living in a clearer atmosphere? One thing *only* might lead me back to it, and that is, to try once more if I could do any good in *politics*; but *not* in the petty politics I see now preying upon our miserable country.

Do not let me be misunderstood, however. If you speak your *own* opinions, they ever had, and will have, the greatest weight with *me*. But if you merely *echo* the "monde", (and it is difficult not to do so, being in its favour and its ferment,) I can only regret that you should ever repeat any thing to which I cannot pay attention.

But I am prosing. The gods go with you, and as much immortality of all kinds as may suit your present and all other existence.

Yours, &c.

³ Byron apparently read to Shelley some of Moore's letters, including one in which he deprecated Shelley's influence on Byron's views, especially in *Cain*. Shelley wrote to Horace Smith on April 11, 1822: "Pray assure him [Moore] that I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron, in this particular, and if I had, I certainly should employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which, in spite of his reason, seem perpetually to recur . . ."

⁴ *Othello*, Act I, scene 2.