

ORLANDO FURIOSO (THE FRENZY OF ORLANDO)



*A Romantic Epic by
Ludovico Ariosto*

PART ONE



**TRANSLATED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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PENGUIN BOOKS

CANTO I

1

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.

4

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.

8

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 Namò 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.

12

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.

13

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.

14

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.

15

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.

16

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.

17

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.

18

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:

19

'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.

20

'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.'

21

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.

22

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.

23

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.

24

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.

25

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.

26

In battle-armour 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?

27

'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.

28

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.

52

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.'

53

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 Sacripant, 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.

54

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.

55

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.

56

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.

57

'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.'

58

'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.'

59

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.

60

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.'

68

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.

76

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.

CANTO II

I

Ah, cruel Love! What is the reason why
 You seldom make our longings correspond?
 How is it, traitor, you rejoice to spy
 Two hearts discordant, one repelled, one fond?
 Into the darkest, blindest depths must I
 Be drawn, when I might ford a limpid pond?
 Towards her who loves, you stifle my desire:
 For her who hates, you set my heart on fire.

2

You make Rinaldo love Angelica,
 While he is ugly in her eyes; and yet
 When he seemed handsome and was loved by her,
 He hated her, as much as man can hate.
 Now in vain torment and desire for her
 He suffers retribution, tit for tat.
 She hates him and so fierce a hate he stirs
 That death to his devotion she prefers.

3

Rinaldo called to the Circassian
 With scorn and wrath: 'Thief, from my horse dismount!
 No man shall take what's mine; who dares, I mean
 To make him dearly pay for the affront.
 And I will take from you this peerless queen.
 To leave her in your clutches would amount
 To a grave breach of chivalry indeed.
 No thief shall claim this lady or this steed.'

4

'Who calls me thief', the Tartar king replies,
 Moved by an arrogance of equal force,
 'Lies in his teeth! But that man tells no lies
 Who calls you thief! Let us then have recourse
 To combat, to decide which of us is
 More worthy of the lady and the horse.
 Thus far with your opinion I agree:
 In all the world none is so fair as she.'

5

As when two mastiffs deadly conflict wage,
 Stirred by some jealous rivalry or hate,
 Baring their fangs, the better to engage,
 And, red as fire, their rolling eyes dilate,
 As fearsomely they grapple in their rage,
 With raucous snarls, their bristles stiff and straight,
 So the Circassian and Montaubon
 From goads and challenges to swords moved on.

6

One was on foot, the other on the horse.
 What vantage do you think the pagan had?
 None whatsoever, and his case was worse
 Perhaps than if he'd been an untrained lad.
 The charger, taking an instinctive course,
 Refused to harm its master; and, to add
 To its new rider's troubles even more,
 It would respond to neither hand nor spur.

7

He tries to urge it on: the horse stops dead.
 He tugs the rein: it breaks into a trot;
 Then suddenly it checks and ducks its head,
 Arches its back and with its hoofs kicks out.
 For taming horses like this thoroughbred,
 The pagan, seeing plainly this is not
 The moment, firmly grasps the saddle-bow
 And to the left leaps to the ground below.

8

Thus liberated by a nimble bound
 From the encumbrance of a stubborn steed,
 The pagan with the paladin is found
 To be well matched: a valiant pair indeed.
 Sword upon sword, their mighty strokes resound.
 The hammer-blows of Vulcan with less speed
 Battered the anvil in the smoke-filled cove
 Wherein were forged the thunderbolts of Jove.

9

Now with long thrusts and now with feint and ruse,
 They show themselves past masters in their art.
 Now upright and now crouching low, they choose
 When to be covered, when exposed in part.
 Now they gain ground a little, now they lose,
 Returning blows, or else from blows they dart,
 Whirling around; and where the one gives way,
 The other presses home without delay.

10

Behold, with sword upraised, Rinaldo run
 And all his might against the pagan fling,
 Who looks to safety from his shield of bone;
 Fine steel, well-tempered, is its armouring.
 The blade, Fusberta, severs it in one
 Resounding blow, making the forest ring.
 Like ice, both steel and bone the impact cracks.
 Nerveless, the pagan's arm all feeling lacks.

11

The timid damsel noted with dismay
 The dire effect resulting from this shock.
 From her fair cheek the colour ebbed away
 As when a man condemned surveys the block.
 She saw she must depart without delay
 Or else accept what Fate now held in stock:
 To be the prize of one whom she abhorred
 While she by him was ardently adored.

12

Along a narrow track then, turning tail,
 She galloped where the forest was most dense.
 Behind her many times, her face yet pale,
 She glanced, fearing to see in her suspense
 Rinaldo close behind upon her trail.
 A hermit she encountered not far hence.
 His beard, extending half-way down his breast,
 And all his air, a saintliness suggest.

13

Bowed down in years, by fasting rendered lean,
 He rode astride a donkey, slow and sure.
 No man in all the world had ever been
 Whose heart appeared so scrupulous and pure.
 As soon as the fair damsel he had seen
 Approaching him, though weaker than of yore,
 That organ, by such tender beauty spurred,
 With warmth of feeling and compassion stirred,

14

She asks the hermit to direct her to
 The nearest port, for now her only aim
 Is to leave France and flee to somewhere new,
 Where she will never hear Rinaldo's name.
 The hermit, who the arts of magic knew,
 At once a friend and counsellor became.
 Eager to help the maid in her distress,
 He fumbled in the pocket of his dress.

15

He drew a volume forth, to great effect,
 For scarcely had he read one page aloud,
 A sprite, in servant's livery bedecked,
 Sprang forth to ask his master what he would.
 The genie hastens, as the rules direct,
 To where the knights are fighting in the wood.
 (They have not lain at ease since we have seen them.)
 With great audacity he steps between them.

16

'I pray you, sirs,' he said, 'explain to me
 What will the death of one of you avail?
 What will the outcome of your labours be?
 Though one of you succeed, you both must fail,
 Since Count Orlando, uncontestedly,
 Without a blemish on his coat of mail,
 This very hour accompanies to Paris
 The damsel who the cause of this affair is.

17

'I saw Orlando hence about a mile,
 Riding to Paris with Angelica.
 They joked about you both with many a smile,
 To think how fruitless all your strivings are.
 I would advise you now in the meanwhile
 To go in trace of them: they can't be far.
 Once with his love in Paris he arrives,
 You'll see her ne'er again in all your lives.'

18

Would you had seen the combatants' dismay!
 On hearing this, they cursed their very eyes
 That they had been so blind – the more fools they
 To let their rival carry off the prize!
 To seek his horse, Rinaldo moved away
 And, breathing fire and brimstone with his sighs,
 He swore a solemn oath that he would yet
 Have Count Orlando's heart when next they met.

19

To where Baiardo waits for him he strides
 And, leaping to the saddle, gallops off,
 Leaving the king on foot, to whom, besides,
 To bid farewell he has not grace enough.
 All barriers Baiardo overrides,
 Pricked by the spur, and, where the going's rough,
 Not rivers, ditches, rocks, nor clumps of gorse,
 Suffice to turn the charger from its course.

20

My lord, I would not have you think it strange
 The horse Rinaldo vainly sought for days,
 When it had kept securely out of range,
 Should now obey him without more delays.
 This on its part was no capricious change
 For, being almost human in its ways,
 It led its master where the lady went
 For love of whom it heard him oft lament.

21

When from the duke's pavilion she took flight,
 The good Baiardo followed from afar.
 Rinaldo left the saddle that he might,
 Dismounted, face-to-face, and on a par,
 Engage in combat with a noble knight
 With whom he was well matched in deeds of war.
 The horse, thus freed, followed the lady's track,
 Eager to help its master win her back.

22

Where'er she went, Baiardo led the hunt;
 Rinaldo followed it in hot pursuit;
 And always it refused to let him mount,
 For fear lest he should take another route.
 It found her twice, quite on its own account,
 Yet for Rinaldo neither time bore fruit:
 He was impeded first by Ferrau,
 Then by the king, as you already knew.

23

The sprite, from whom Rinaldo had received
 False tidings, duped the horse as well;
 And so, Baiardo, being thus deceived,
 Stood and submitted to its master's will.
 Burning with love, indignant and aggrieved,
 Rinaldo heads for Paris' citadel.
 His eagerness, however fast they go,
 Would make the wind (still more, a horse) seem slow.

24

At night he is unwilling to resort
To sleep, such his impatience to defy
Orlando, such his faith in the report
Of the magician's sprite (which is a lie).
Just as it seems the time is running short,
He sees at last outlined against the sky
The city where the Emperor Charlemagne
Retreated with such forces as remain.

25

To stem the onslaught of the African,
King Charles's first concern is to prepare
For siege; quickly he carries out his plan,
Reviews his army, lays in stores with care,
Digs a dry moat, restores the barbican,
And looks to his defences everywhere.
He means to send to England for fresh troops
And to deploy them later, as he hopes.

26

He plans to lead his army forth anew
And try once more if vengeance might be won.
He sends Rinaldo without more ado
To Britain (renamed England later on).
The paladin was most unwilling to
Set out again; objection he has none
To Britain - he laments that not one day
Is Charlemagne prepared to let him stay.

27

In all his life he never did a thing
Less willingly, for he was then required
To cease a while from his meandering
In search of her by whom his heart was fired.
Nevertheless, obedient to his king,
He started on the journey as desired;
And so to Calais in a few hours' ride,
Then boards the vessel and awaits the tide.

28

Against the will of all the mariners,
Who urgently advise a homeward tack,
Despite the stormy waters he prefers
To put to sea; the heaven now grows black,
The wind, enraged, that nothing yet deters
The rash adventurer, nor turns him back,
Now lashes out and soon the seas pile up
To crash across the ship from prow to poop.

29

By striking sail the mariners restore
The vessel's trim; in every heart awaken
New longings for the safety of the shore,
Which in an evil moment they'd forsaken.
The wind then blusters with an angry roar:
'I'll not condone the liberty you've taken.'
With shrieks and gusts all headway it denies them.
Each time they turn, it threatens to capsize them.

30

Veering from stem to stern, the cruel gale
Grows ever stronger, granting no release.
Now here, now there, they whirl with shortened sail,
At the storm's mercy tossed on angry seas.
But many threads are needed for my tale
And so, to weave my canvas as I please,
I'll leave Rinaldo and the plunging prow,
And turn to talk of Bradamante now.

31

I mean the celebrated Maid; she is
The one who felled the monarch with her lance:
Daughter of Aymon and of Beatrice,
A sister whom Rinaldo proudly flaunts,
Who for her courage, might and expertise
By Charlemagne and all the Peers of France
Is held in no less honour than her brother,
For they are known to equal each the other.

32

The Maid was loved by a brave cavalier
 Vowed to the service of the African.
 He was the scion of the old Ruggier
 By Agolante's daughter who such pain
 And sorrow suffered; from no cruel bear
 Or lion sprung, the Maid did not disdain
 The love of such a knight, although their fate
 Once only has permitted them to meet.

33

He shares his father's name and pedigree.
 And now in search of him she goes her way,
 As safe, though unescorted, as if she
 A thousand squadrons had in her array.
 When she had fought Circassia's king and he
 Had kissed our ancient mother, as men say,
 She crossed a wood and afterwards a hill,
 Then came at last upon a lovely rill.

34

A stream which through a water-meadow flows,
 Where age-old trees provide a grateful shade,
 With pleasing murmuring invites all those
 Who pass to drink and linger in the glade,
 While to the left a hill with terraced rows
 Gives shelter from the noon-day sun. The Maid,
 Turning her lovely eyes upon the scene,
 A cavalier reclining there has seen.

35

Alone and silent, with a pensive brow,
 Reposing in a shady grove beside
 A green and flowery bank, he watches how
 The limpid, crystal waters slowly glide.
 His shield and helm are hanging on a bough;
 His charger to the tree is also tied.
 His eyes are moist with tears, his face held low,
 And all his air betokens grief and woe.

36

The longing we all harbour in our heart
 To learn about another man's affairs
 Urges the Maid to ask him to impart
 The reason for his sorrows and his cares.
 He willingly relates the whole from start
 To finish and his troubles with her shares,
 For from her noble bearing at first sight
 He takes her for a truly valiant knight.

37

And he began: 'Good sir, as I was leading
 My troops of cavalry and foot to where
 King Charles was camped, the Moor's advance
 impeding,
 And as a lady I escorted there,
 For whom, alas! my stricken heart is bleeding,
 Close to Rodonnes I noticed in the air
 A knight in armour on a horse with wings,
 Wheeling in wide and then decreasing rings.

38

'This thief – whether he was a mortal being
 Or an infernal fiend I cannot say –
 My lovely and beloved lady seeing,
 As when a falcon swoops to seize its prey,
 Dropped like a plummet and, the soldiers fleeing,
 The startled damsel snatched and bore away.
 The whole of this assault escaped my eye
 Until I heard her calling from on high.

39

'So the rapacious kite swoops down upon
 The helpless chick which flutters near its dam.
 For all her squawks and flappings when it's gone,
 She cannot call it back, the poor beldam!
 Likewise, how can I hope to follow one
 Who flies, hemmed in by mountains as I am?
 Among such rocky paths my weary horse
 With laggard steps plods a reluctant course.

40

'But, like a man who would have suffered less
If from his breast his heart had cruelly
Been torn, I left my army leaderless
To face whatever was its destiny.
By paths less mountainous in their access
I went wherever Love directed me,
Hoping to find where the rapacious thief
Had carried off my lady, to my grief.

41

'For six long days I journeyed, morn till night,
Through desolate and unfrequented places.
There was no path, no track, as far as sight
Could reach, nor evidence of human traces.
At last I came upon a valley, quite
Enclosed by crags and bottomless crevasses,
Where on a rock a castle, strong and bold,
Loomed up to heaven, splendid to behold.

42

'From far away it seemed to glow like flame.
No glaze, no marble, has such radiance.
When nearer to the shining work I came
And saw the marvel of its walls, at once
I knew that demon masons of ill fame
With incense, exhalations and weird chants
Had clad the castle walls with finest steel,
Forged in the fires and chilled in streams of Hell.

43

'The steel of every tower shines so bright,
No rust disfigures it, nor any stain.
The robber scours the country day and night,
Then in his fort immures himself again.
Whatever he desires has no respite.
His victims can but curse him and complain.
And there my lady – nay, my heart – is held,
And to abandon hope I am compelled.

44

'Alas! what else is there that I can do
But gaze upon her prison, as distressed
As when a vixen, hearing from below
A piteous yelping in an eagle's nest,
Locates her stolen cub and to and fro
Irresolutely paces without rest.
So high the castle is, I give my word,
No one can there ascend who's not a bird.

45

'While I yet lingered there, two cavaliers,
Escorted by a dwarf, came into sight.
At this, new hope within my bosom stirs;
But hope and longing are both doomed to blight.
In deeds of derring-do the knights are peers.
Gradasso rules all Sericana's might;
The other, young and strong, Ruggiero named,
Among the host of Africa is famed.

46

'The dwarf began: "These knights have come to try
Their strength against the castle's owner, who,
Clad in full armour, travels through the sky
Astride a bird-like quadruped, a new
Unheard-of means of transport." "Sirs," said I,
"Have pity on my wretched case. When you,
As I devoutly hope, have won the day,
Restore my lady-love to me, I pray."

47

'How she was taken from me I explain,
My flowing eyes attesting to my grief.
They promise many times they will regain
Her for me, and descend the rocky cliff.
To watch the combat, eagerly I crane,
Praying that God may grant they bring relief.
A level space was visible below,
And twice as long, perhaps, as a stone's throw.

48

'When they arrive beneath the rock, they wait.
Both had desired to open combat first,
But now, whether it be a quirk of fate,
Or that the young Ruggiero ceased to thirst
For precedence, the walls reverberate
To the Serican's horn; the portals burst
Asunder, as the haughty challenge brings
The knight in armour on the horse with wings.

49

'Little by little he begins to rise,
Just as a crane from foreign lands will do,
Which, running rapidly at first, then flies,
Leaving the ground about a yard or two;
Then in the freedom of the air it tries
Its wings, faster and faster, till from view
It's lost. So does the necromancer soar
As high as eagle ever flew, and more.

50

'When he thought good, he turned his horse's head.
With pinions closed, it hurtled from above,
As when a well-trained falcon drops like lead
Upon a rising sheldrake or a dove;
And with his lance in rest, inspiring dread,
With horrifying noise the air he clove.
Gradasso this descent had scarce perceived
When on himself the onslaught he received.

51

'His lance upon him the magician broke.
In vain Gradasso beat the empty air,
For, flying yet, the horse of which I spoke
Had quickly borne aloft the cavalier.
Such was the impact of the mighty stroke,
It forced to earth the haunches of the mare
(For on an Arab mare Gradasso rode,
The finest mare that ever man bestrode).

52

'Up to the stars the flying charger bears
The knight who, in a flash descending, deals
A blow that takes Ruggiero unawares.
Intent upon Gradasso's plight, he reels
Beneath the shock; his horse no better fares,
And backward moves. Then, as Ruggiero steels
Himself to charge full tilt in a reply,
There is his foe above him in the sky.

53

'Now on Gradasso, now Ruggiero, fall
On brow, on breast, on back, redoubled blows.
The strokes they aim avail them not at all,
Such prowess at evading them he shows.
By his gyrations he can soon forestall
Their moves, but what his next is neither knows.
They cannot tell, his dazzling feints so blind them,
If he is now before them or behind them.

54

'Between two earth-bound knights and one who's not,
The combat lasted till the hour that brings
A veil of darkness which extends to blot
The colour from all lovely earthly things.
This is the truth: I added not one jot.
I saw it and I know, and yet it rings
As false as if my tale were inexact.
Here fiction is less marvellous than fact.

55

'In all this time the flying cavalier
Within a silken cloth had draped his shield.
To me, I must confess, it is not clear
Why he had kept it for so long concealed;
Uncovered, it sends forth a light so sheer,
Whoever sees it, then and there must yield,
Falling to earth as a dead body falls,
To languish in the necromancer's walls.

56

'Red as Bohemian garnet was its ray.
No light to equal it has ever shone.
Beholding it, the knights collapsed straightway,
Their vision dazzled, all awareness gone.
I too lost consciousness, though far away,
And reawoke to find myself alone.
No warriors, no dwarf could I remark:
The field, the plain, the mountain - all were dark.

57

'I thought the necromancer by his spell
Both cavaliers had captured in one swoop.
The blazing beam, which is invincible,
Ended their freedom and destroyed my hope.
So to that place I sadly bid farewell,
Where all my heart's desire is now walled up.
Now judge, of reasons for which lovers pine,
If there be any grief to equal mine.'

58

The knight resumed his attitude of woe
When he had thus accounted for its cause.
His name and lineage you now must know:
Count Anselm Altaripa's son, he was
Named Pinabel, of all true knights the foe.
Born a Maganzan, he obeyed no laws
Of chivalry, and of that breed accurst
In acts of treachery he was the worst.

59

With changing looks the Maid in silence heard
The story the Maganzan thus narrated.
The mention of Ruggiero's name had stirred
Great joy, leaving her countenance elated;
But learning then how her dear love had fared,
When by a magic shield he'd been defeated,
She grew distressed and would not rest content
With one account alone of the event.

60

When she had heard the story through and through,
She said: 'Sir knight, I bid you be of cheer.
This day may yet prove fortunate to you
And serviceable my arrival here.
Let both of us at once press onward to
The robber's den which holds all we hold dear.
Not wasted effort will our journey be
If Fortune treats me not unfavourably.'

61

'Is it your will', the cavalier replied,
'That I should travel back again across
These rugged mountains, acting as your guide?
To me, thus to retrace my steps will be no loss,
For I have lost my all and more beside.
To you this journey is most perilous;
But if, despite my warning, you see fit
To risk imprisonment, then so be it.'

62

Thus having spoken, turning, he remounts
His steed and guides the Maid along the course
She's chosen for Ruggiero's sake; she counts
As naught the risk of capture or of worse.
As they pursue their journey, all at once
They hear behind them, shouting himself hoarse,
A messenger who calls to them to wait.
It is the envoy we have seen of late.

63

From Narbonne and Montpellier report
He brings that all the standards of Castile
Have now been raised, with those of Aigues Mortes;
And to the Maid, Marseilles makes an appeal,
In this predicament, for her support,
Giving the envoy orders to reveal
The need they have of her return; and this
The purpose of his expedition is.

64

This city, with the land that lies between
The estuaries of the Var and Rhône,
To Bradamante by King Charles has been
With confidence entrusted as her own,
For, marvelling, the Emperor has seen
How in great deeds of daring she has shone.
Now from Marseilles an envoy, as I said,
Has come to ask assistance of the Maid.

65

Suspended between yes and no, she tries
To choose: should she return again that day?
Towards Marseilles the path of duty lies;
The flames of love urge her another way.
She chooses finally the enterprise
Of rescuing Ruggiero; come what may,
If to the task she should unequal prove,
At least she'll be imprisoned with her love.

66

She quietens, by means of an excuse,
The envoy's fears and leaves him satisfied.
Turning her horse, her journey she pursues
With Pinabello, who can scarcely hide
His furious annoyance at the news:
Deep is his hatred of the Clairmont side,
And many tribulations he foresees
If she should once discover who he is.

67

Between the Clairmont and Maganza House
The enmity was ancient and intense.
Many a time they'd split each other's brows;
The toll of blood between them was immense,
And so in his black heart the villain vows
That on the first occasion Fate presents
He will betray the unsuspecting Maid
And leave her unescorted, without aid.

68

And, concentrating on his evil scheme,
In hate and fear so deeply did he brood,
That he mistook the way, as in a dream,
And woke to find himself in a dark wood.
There in the very centre, facing him,
Its peak a naked flint, a mountain stood.
And she whose father was the Duke Aymon,
Keeping her guide in sight, still followed on.

69

This is the moment, he now thinks, to try
To rid himself of her who seems a knight.
'Before the sun', he said, 'has left the sky,
We ought to seek a shelter for the night.
Beyond this mountain, in a vale near by,
A splendid castle stands, if I am right.
Wait here for me, while to the naked rock
I now ascend, and with my own eyes look.'

70

With this, along the lonely mountain-slope
He pricked his charger to the topmost peak;
And, looking round about him in the hope
Of finding, in that desolate and bleak
Terrain, a corner where there might be scope
To play his cruel game of hide-and-seek,
He came upon a cavern, dark and deep,
For thirty yards descending, sheer and steep.

71

There was a spacious portal far below
Which to a larger chamber access gave.
From the interior shone forth a glow
As if a torch lit up the mountain cave.
But meanwhile Bradamante was not slow
To follow from afar the scheming knave.
Fearing to lose him if she stayed behind him,
She clambered to the cavern's mouth to find him.

72

And when the traitor knew his first design,
 For all his careful plans, would be in vain,
 To kill or leave her there, or to combine
 Two such betrayals, he began again
 To weave a strange new scheme; first, to refine
 His treachery, he hastened to explain
 That in that deep and dark and hollow place
 He glimpsed a damsel with a winsome face.

73

From her fair aspect and her costly gown,
 She seemed of noble and of high degree;
 But by her attitude of grief she'd shown
 That she resided there unwillingly.
 When, to learn more about her, he'd begun
 The steep descent into the cavity,
 Her captor from the inner chamber stepped
 And forced her back again, for all she wept.

74

Fair Bradamante, who's as credulous
 As she is brave, believes his every word.
 She longs to be of help, but perilous
 She knows descent will be without a cord.
 Then on an elm-tree she sees pendulous
 A long and leafy branch; with her sharp sword
 She quickly cuts it from the parent bole
 And lowers it with care into the hole.

75

The severed end she gave to Pinabel
 To hold, and, climbing down, herself suspended,
 Feet first, into the cavity, until
 She dangled at full length, her arms extended.
 He, smiling, asked the Maid if she jumped well,
 Then flung his hands apart, as he'd intended,
 Shouting in triumph: 'Perish all your breed,
 And would I might deal thus with all their seed!'

76

The fate of her whom Pinabel thus cursed
 Proved other than his traitor's heart had hoped,
 Reaching the bottom of the cavern first,
 The sturdy branch, though breaking as it dropped,
 Softened her fall and saved her from the worst.
 Thus his design to kill the Maid was stopped.
 Unconscious for a space of time she lay,
 And how she later fared I'll later say.

CANTO IV

I

Although deceit is mostly disapproved,
Seeming to show a mind malevolent,
Many a time it brings, as has been proved,
Advantages that are self-evident,
And mortal threats and dangers has removed.
Not all we meet with are benevolent
In this our life, so full of envious spite,
And gloomier by far than it is bright.

2

If long experience and labour too
Are indispensable before you find
A friend who's staunch, reliable and true,
To whom you would confide your inmost mind,
What is Ruggiero's lovely Maid to do?
To Brunel's trickery she is not blind.
She knows his villainy for what it is.
Through all his sly pretence, forewarned, she sees.

3

She too dissembles, as the case demands
With one who is the father of all lies,
And on his thieving and rapacious hands,
As I remarked before, she keeps her eyes.
Then suddenly a mighty uproar rends
The air. The Maid exclaims, 'Lord of the skies!
O Virgin Mother! What is all this din?'
And with these words, she rushes from the inn.

4

She sees the host and all his household there,
Some at the windows, others in the street.
Faces up-turned, into the sky they stare,
As if a comet or eclipse to greet.
So marvellous a wonder in the air
The Maid beholds that few will credit it:
A horse with wings and of enormous size,
Which bears a knight in armour as it flies.

5

Its wings were wide and of the strangest hue.
Between them sat a knight, from heel to crest
In shining armour, polished as if new.
Keeping a steady course towards the west,
Beyond the hills he disappeared from view.
This cavalier, the host informed his guest,
Was a magician (here the truth he spoke),
And, far or near, this was the route he took.

6

Sometimes high up among the stars he flies.
At other times close to the ground he'll skim,
And any lovely women whom he spies
He snatches up and carries off with him.
The wretched damsels he so terrifies
That any who are beautiful, or deem
They are (he takes whichever he can get),
Remain indoors until the sun has set.

7

'He has a castle in the Pyrenees,'
The host continued, 'built by magic art
Of shining steel; so beautiful it is,
In the whole world there is no counterpart.
Of all the cavaliers who visit this
Enchanted palace, none, they say, depart.
It's my belief, good sir, I greatly fear,
They're put to death or held as captives there.'

8

Fair Bradamante to his words attends,
 And it is well, for sooner now than late
 The magic of the ring the Maid intends
 To try (and to succeed will be her fate).
 'Have you a guide', she asks, 'among your friends?
 I must be gone, my longing is so great
 To challenge this magician to a fight
 And test my strength against his magic might.'

9

'You need not lack a guide,' Brunello said;
 'I'll come with you and keep you company.
 I have instructions of the road ahead
 And other aids of use to you and me.'
 He meant the ring, but he left that unsaid
 (To speak of it, he thought, unwise would be).
 'Gladly,' replies the Maid (her meaning is
 The ring will soon be hers, no longer his).

10

What it was good to say she said; on all
 That might endanger her she's wisely mum.
 The landlord had a charger in his stall,
 In battle strong, and roadworthy. The sum
 Required she pays, and buys the animal.
 And when the light of a new day has come
 She takes her way along a narrow vale,
 Brunel now at her head, now at her tail.

11

Mounting from hill to hill, from wood to wood,
 They climb at last to where the Pyrenees
 Reveal, if visibility is good,
 Both France and Spain, together with both seas,
 As on the Apennines whoever stood
 Near the Camaldoli could view with ease
 Two coastlines. By a harsh and weary route
 They clamber downwards to the valley's foot.

12

A massive cliff, its top encircled by
 A wall of steel, they gaze at from below.
 Towards the heavens it ascends so high,
 All near-by peaks, compared with it, seem low.
 Those who would visit it need wings, to fly,
 Else wasted effort it would be to go.
 Brunello said, 'Here's where the sorcerer
 Holds cavaliers and ladies prisoner.'

13

The walls on every side as steeply drop
 As if by line and plummet built, four-square.
 No steps (it seems) give access to the top.
 Winged creatures only can inhabit there.
 This is the place where they must make their stop.
 The hour has come, the valiant Maid's aware,
 For her to take possession of the ring
 And kill Brunello without dallying.

14

And yet a coward's act to her it seems
 To kill a man so lowly, and unarmed.
 To take possession of the ring she schemes
 And leave Brunello helpless but unharmed.
 Of what's in store for him he little dreams.
 Before he has the time to feel alarmed,
 He's seized and fastened to a giant fir,
 The magic ring surrendered up to her.

15

His tears, his groans, his chagrins and his woes
 On valiant Bradamante have no power,
 And down the mountain path she slowly goes
 Till in the plain she stands beneath the tower.
 There, a defiance on her horn she blows,
 Which brings the necromancer from his bower.
 Her challenge sounded, next with many a shout,
 With many a threat, she boldly calls him out.

16

Not long the man of sorcery delayed
 When he had heard the challenge of the horn.
 On his winged horse, towards the warrior Maid,
 Whom he believes to be a man, he's borne.
 She at first sight of him is not afraid.
 Keeping him well in view, she could have sworn
 He had no lance, no sword, no club to harm her,
 No weapon which could pierce or break her armour.

17

His shield in a vermilion cloth was draped.
 In his right hand he held an open book,
 Whence marvellous phenomena he shaped:
 A lance which hurtled through the air and took
 His adversary by surprise, who gaped
 At nothingness, with an astonished look;
 Or with a dagger or a club he smote
 From far away, by a control remote.

18

His horse was not a fiction, but instead
 The offspring of a griffin and a mare.
 Its plumage, forefeet, muzzle, wings and head
 Like those of its paternal parent were.
 The rest was from its dam inherited.
 It's called a hippogriff. Such beasts, though rare,
 In the Rhiphaean mountains, far beyond
 The icy waters of the north, are found.

19

By magic arts he brought it to the West.
 Then with determination and insistence
 He straightway set himself to train the beast.
 Within a month, by patience and persistence,
 He reined and saddled it. At his behest
 It bore him now without the least resistance
 On earth and in the air – no magic creature,
 But real and true, a prodigy of Nature.

20

The rest of the magician's stock-in-trade,
 Unlike the horse, was supernatural.
 This mattered little to the valiant Maid.
 The ring, she knew, made her invulnerable.
 She flashed a cut or two with her good blade
 And put her charger through its paces. All
 Her feints and thrusts she tried as though she fought,
 Obeying the instructions she was taught.

21

When on her charger she had exercised,
 The Maid decided to perform, dismounted,
 The actions her instructress had advised.
 On all his arts the necromancer counted,
 But above all the magic shield he prized,
 Whose piercing ray had never disappointed.
 Thus, of its efficacy being certain,
 From its bright surface he removed the curtain.

22

He could straightway have used it on his foe,
 But he preferred to hold a knight at bay,
 Taking a cruel pleasure in a show
 Of swordsmanship and skilful lance-display,
 As a sly cat, deliberately slow,
 When he has caught a mouse will sometimes play;
 Then, when he wills and only when he wills it,
 He makes a sudden pounce on it and kills it.

23

The knight the mouse, the sorcerer the cat
 Resembled in such contests hitherto;
 But now the case was altered, tit for tat,
 As valiant Bradamante nearer drew.
 Alert, she watched his every move, so that
 No vantage he should gain, and when she knew
 That he intended to expose the shield,
 She shut her eyes and lay stretched on the field.

24

The shining metal had not injured her
As it had injured others who preceded.
Her plan had been to make the sorcerer
Dismount and in that purpose she succeeded.
As soon as she lay down, the hoverer,
Urging his mount as quickly as was needed,
With a yet swifter fluttering of wings
Swooped down to earth in widely-spreading rings.

25

The shield appending to his saddle-bows,
Which in its silken covering he hid,
To the recumbent Maid on foot he goes.
She, like a wolf in ambush for a kid,
Awaits him and, as soon as he is close,
Leaps up and grasps him in a single bid
To overpower him. The wretch, alas !
Has left his book of magic on the grass.

26

With his own chain the valiant Maid belayed him,
Which round his waist the necromancer wore.
She thought no less a fetter would have stayed him
(And often he had used it thus before).
Already helpless on the ground she'd laid him
And quite inert all this affront he bore.
I cannot blame him, helpless, weak and old,
No match for Bradamante, strong and bold.

27

Planning to cut off the magician's head,
Triumphantly she lifted her right arm;
But when she saw his face, all rage she shed.
A poor revenge it seemed to do him harm.
No worthy foe she had undone, instead
A sad, old man who trembled with alarm;
White-haired and wrinkled, in his helplessness
Three score and ten he seemed, or little less.

28

'For God's sake, take my life, young man!' he cried,
In accents both of anger and despair.
Yet, gladly as the old man would have died,
The valiant Maid was loath to grant his prayer.
First, on these points she would be satisfied:
Who was he? And this castle in the air,
Why had he built it in so wild a place?
Why did he prey thus on the human race?

29

'With excellent intentions, woe is me!',
The aged necromancer, weeping, said,
'I built my stronghold yonder, as you see.
Not for my own advantage am I led
To rapine, but to save from jeopardy
A gentle knight, for in the stars I read
That by a traitor's hand he'll meet his death
Ere long, converted to the Christian faith.

30

'The sun, gazing on both the hemispheres,
Sees nowhere else so beautiful a youth.
Ruggiero is his name. From tenderest years
I nurtured him; now Fate, harsh and uncouth,
And thirst for glory bring him where he nears
Disaster, serving Agramant. In truth
I love him more than if he were my son.
All that I do, I do for him alone.

31

'I built the fortress with one aim in view -
To keep Ruggiero safe. I captured him,
Just as today I planned to capture you.
I also caught, to please his every whim,
Brave cavaliers and ladies, not a few,
And men-at-arms, stalwart and strong of limb,
That, though he is deprived of liberty,
He might find solace in their company.

32

'That they may stay contentedly confined,
I make their every need my sole concern.
From every quarter, joys of every kind:
Games, music, clothing, food, at every turn.
All pleasures, all amusements you will find
For which the lips can ask, the heart can yearn.
The seed I sowed was yielding a fine crop,
But now to all my plans you put a stop.

33

'But, if your heart does not your face belie,
Do not divert my purpose from its course.
Accept my magic shield, a gift which I,
Atlante, make to you; take my swift horse
And leave my castle; if you must deny
Me this request, then take without remorse
One or two captives, or take all you meet,
But leave me my Ruggiero, I entreat.

34

'But if to grant this favour you refuse,
Before you take him back to France, I pray,
My soul from its involucre set loose
Wherein it dwells in squalor and decay.'
The valiant Maid thus answered him: 'I choose
To free Ruggiero; nothing you can say
Will alter my resolve. Your shield and horse
I take as mine by right, no longer yours.

35

'But even were they yours to give and take,
It seems to me they would be poor exchange.
You say you hold Ruggiero for his sake,
To save him from his evil stars. How strange!
Either the heavens' portent you mistake,
Else, though you clearly see, you cannot change
His fate. You cannot now foretell your own!
How can another's doom to you be known?

36

'I will not kill you. Vain are all your pleas.
If no one will oblige, the fatal blow
(If you still long to meet with your decease)
You can inflict upon yourself. Now go,
And first, ere your own spirit you release,
Open the doors of all your prisons.' So
The Maid commanded, urging as she spoke
The captive sorcerer towards the rock.

37

So, bound with his own chain, Atlante went,
With the bold warrior-maiden at his back.
She did not trust him, nor did she relent,
Being not convinced by his apparent lack
Of guile. Not far along the gradient
They climbed before they found a hidden crack,
Whence massive stairways spiralled to the top
And to the castle threshold led them up.

38

The necromancer here removes a block,
Inscribed with cabbalistic signs. Below
Are vases which continuously smoke,
Containing hidden fires. With a fell blow
The enchanter breaks them. At this magic stroke
The hill grows desolate and bleak, and lo!
The walls are gone, nowhere a tower is seen,
As if the edifice had never been.

39

The sorcerer that instant from his chain
Escaped, as from a net a thrush will do.
He and his castle went from the terrain
At the same moment, setting free anew
The knights and ladies; some of these (I mean
The ladies) from superb apartments to
The countryside transferred, in no small measure
Were disappointed by such loss of pleasure.

40

Gradasso there is seen, and Sacripante,
 Prasildo also, the brave cavalier
 Who with Rinaldo, when from the Levant he
 Came, had journeyed; Iroldo, too, his peer;
 And finally the lovely Bradamante
 Finds her Ruggiero whom she holds so dear.
 As soon as he is certain it is she,
 He rides to welcome her most joyfully.

41

More than his eyes Ruggiero loved her – nay,
 More than the life-blood of his very heart.
 Long he had sought her ever since the day,
 Glimpsing her golden hair, he knew love's smart.
 And how she then sought him, 'twere long to say.
 Through the dark forest, wandering apart,
 They yearned to find each other, but in vain.
 And now they have their hearts' desire again.

42

So when at last he sees her and he knows
 That it is she alone who freed him, then
 His heart with joy and gladness overflows.
 Calling himself most fortunate of men,
 Along the valley with the Maid he goes,
 Where she achieved her recent triumph when
 She overcame Atlante. In the field
 They find the hippogriff, bearing the shield.

43

Moving towards it, Bradamante tries
 To seize the rein; when almost near enough
 She has approached, it spreads its wings and flies,
 And lands upon a hillside not far off.
 She follows it. Again, to her surprise,
 It moves away on to another bluff,
 Just as a crow will lead a dog a dance,
 Now here, now there, and always in advance.

44

Gradasso, Sacripante, all that band
 Of knights who with Ruggiero came below,
 Scattered about the terrain, took their stand,
 Some on the highest points, some on the low,
 Wherever each foresaw the horse might land.
 It leads them a wild goose chase to and fro,
 Down in the valleys, up the mountain-tops.
 At last, near where Ruggiero waits, it stops.

45

This is the secret work of the magician,
 Who has not yet renounced his cherished scheme
 Of rescuing Ruggiero. This ambition
 Fills all his thoughts and every waking dream.
 It's he who moves the horse to this position,
 That out of Europe it may fly with him.
 Ruggiero reaches out to take the bridle,
 Meaning to lead it, but that thought is idle.

46

So from Frontino he at first dismounts
 (For such the name is of Ruggiero's horse),
 Then to the other creature's saddle mounts
 And, to encourage it, applies the spurs.
 It canters for a while, then all at once
 It takes the air and lighter far it soars
 Than a gerfalcon rises when the hood
 Is lifted, as the falconer thinks good.

47

The Maid, seeing Ruggiero on the steed
 In mortal peril and so high above,
 By this event is horror-struck indeed.
 For a long time she cannot speak or move,
 And all that she has heard of Ganymede,
 Snatched up to heaven by the will of Jove,
 She has no doubt Ruggiero's fate will be,
 For just as fair as Ganymede is he.

92

Requested by the king to tell his name,
 Or let at least his countenance be seen,
 That he may be rewarded, as became
 A knight who so courageously had been
 Inspired with such a noble, gallant aim,
 He moves into the centre of the scene
 And there at last reveals what I'll make clear
 If my next canto you are pleased to hear.

CANTO VI

1

Doomed is the wretch who thinks that he can hide
 All traces of the crime he has committed,
 For if all else is dumb, it will be cried
 Upon the air or from the depths emitted;
 And God Himself events will sometimes guide
 So that the sinner by the sin's outwitted,
 And inadvertently, without being asked,
 He gives himself away and is unmasked.

2

That malefactor, Polinesso, thought
 He'd covered every vestige of his crime;
 And of his one accomplice he had sought
 To rid himself for ever in good time.
 The second subterfuge it was which brought
 To pass the sequel which defeated him.
 This might have been avoided, but he spurred
 Too eagerly and, thus, his death incurred.

3

Friends, dukedom, life he lost, at one fell blow,
 And, what is worse, he died in dire disgrace.
 Now, as I said, they cannot wait to know
 Who the strange knight may be, whom none can place.
 At last he pulls his helmet off, to show,
 To everyone's surprise, the well-loved face
 Of Ariodante, mourned by every Scot
 Who heard the story of his tragic lot,

4

That Ariodante, for whom so many cry,
 For whom Ginevra broken-hearted is,
 The king, the court, his brother – not an eye
 That has not wept for valour such as his –
 They wonder: was the traveller's tale a lie?
 No, it is true that from a precipice
 He saw him make his tragic leap, head first,
 And naturally had presumed the worst.

5

As often happens, when a man's despair
 So drives him that his mind on death is set,
 But when he sees it, harsh and fierce, draw near,
 He finds some recompense in living yet,
 So Ariodante saw the matter clear.
 Once in the sea, his mood changed to regret.
 Exerting all his courage as of yore,
 He swam with mighty strokes to reach the shore.

6

He now despised the impulse which possessed him.
 The urge to end his life he scorned as mad,
 And, once on land, where no one could have guessed him,
 In his wet clothes – the only ones he had –
 He walked until he came where he might rest him.
 Finding a hermit in a cell, who bade
 Him welcome, for a while incognito
 He tarried, for he thought his host might know

7

How the princess the tragic news had taken,
 Whether of joy or sadness she gave sign,
 Hearing that by such sorrow she was shaken,
 Her very life was threatened with decline,
 He wondered if perhaps he was mistaken.
 This made him the more bitterly repine,
 Regretting that his brother had denounced her
 Before her father, and unchaste pronounced her.

8

And he conceived for him as deep a hate,
 As ardent as his love for the princess.
 He did not want him thus to vindicate
 His honour by a deed so merciless,
 And when he heard that there was none to date
 Who offered to defend her in distress
 (Since many cavaliers were hesitant
 To challenge one so strong and militant,

9

For many held Lurcanio to be
 So skilled in single combat that none dared
 To place himself in mortal jeopardy,
 Or, if his prowess were in doubt, none cared
 To take the risk – thus the majority
 Of cavaliers this hesitation shared),
 He, having in his mind all this revolved,
 To fight against his brother then resolved.

10

'Alas!' he thought, 'that the princess should meet
 Her end because of my calamities!
 How bitter and acute were my regret
 If she should die before my own demise!
 She is my lady and my goddess yet,
 She is the day-spring of my very eyes.
 So, right or wrong, I must take up my shield
 In her defence and die upon the field.

11

'Shall I defend the wrong? So let it be.
 So let me die, since little do I care,
 Save that, on my defeat, the penalty
 Of death must then be paid by one so fair.
 There is this single recompense for me:
 That she before the end will be aware
 How ill by Polinesso she was loved,
 Since to her aid the coward has not moved.

12

'But I, to whom she gave such great offence –
When the encounter ends she will soon know –
Shall have laid down my life in her defence;
And on my brother, by the self-same blow,
I'll be revenged for giving such offence
To one I love so well; because his foe,
Whom he'll have slain to vindicate his brother,
Will be discovered to have been none other.'

13

Thus turning matters over in his mind
(With little common sense, I may as well owe)
Some new accoutrements he means to find:
New arms, new horse, shield bordered green and yellow,
Sable the rest, a surcoat of like kind.
Meeting by chance a squire, he takes the fellow
To attend him and rides off, to all unknown,
To fight against his brother, as I've shown.

14

I told you how the sequel went and how
As Ariodante he is known once more.
The king by this is as delighted now
As by his daughter's rescue just before.
'She could not find a truer love, I vow;
His ardour will not wane, of that I'm sure,'
Thus the king mused, 'for, thinking she'd offended,
Yet her good name in combat he defended.'

15

So, as he loved his daughter tenderly,
He yielded to the pressure of the court
And to Rinaldo's most insistent plea.
He gladly named the champion her consort,
Creating him the Duke of Albany,
Succeeding Polinesso for, in short,
The dukedom falling vacant when he died,
It was bestowed in dowry on the bride.

16

Rinaldo for Dalinda begged for grace,
Since little in this evil plot she'd done,
And, weary of the world and all its ways,
She vowed to seek admission as a nun
Somewhere in Denmark, where she'd end her days,
And very soon from Scotland she was gone.
But let us once again Ruggiero find
Who on the hippogriff flies like the wind.

17

He was a valiant cavalier, I know,
Stalwart and brave; and yet it's my belief,
Although of calm he made an outward show,
Within, his heart was trembling like a leaf.
He'd passed the whole of Europe long ago,
And, heading ever West, the hippogriff,
Beyond the pillars fixed by Hercules,
Had ventured over the forbidden seas.

18

That strange, enormous, wingèd quadruped
On beating pinions bore him on so fast,
The lightning-flash, by summer tempest shed,
By such velocity would be surpassed.
All other birds by it would be outsped,
All creatures racing it would be outclassed.
Scarcely the arrow or the thunderbolt
Hurtles to earth, I think, with swifter jolt.

19

And when the bird, unswerving in its flight,
Had travelled on, traversing many a mile,
Weaving wide circles, weary now of height,
It hovered low at last above an isle,
Just such a place where Arethusa might
Have lingered in concealment for a while,
When she had caused her lover grievous pain
And underneath the sea had passed in vain.

20

No lovelier isle, no pleasanter it knew
 In all its many journeys through the air;
 Nor, even had it searched the whole world through,
 Would the great bird have found a land more fair.
 One last wide circle in the sky it drew,
 Then with Ruggiero it alighted where,
 Mid cultivated plains and rounded hills,
 Lush meadows, shadowed banks and sparkling rills,

21

Welcoming groves of laurel, cool and soft,
 Of palm, and myrtle, fragrant and most sweet,
 And orange-trees and cedar gently waft
 Their perfume, as their fruit and flowers meet
 In myriad lovely forms which twine aloft
 A leafy shelter from the summer's heat.
 Among the branches, flying unafraid,
 The nightingales a dulcet music made.

22

Among the roses, which cool breezes keep
 For ever fresh, and lilies, white as snow,
 The hares and conies confidently leap,
 And proudly-antlered stags unhurried go,
 Fearing no trap or hunter in the deep
 Recesses of the wood, or when with slow
 And peaceful gaze they ruminant. Goats frisk,
 And every creature frolics without risk.

23

While the winged horse had been approaching land,
 Ruggiero from a certain height had seen
 That it was safe to leave the saddle, and
 So found himself on the enamelled green.
 He kept the bridle firmly in his hand,
 Then to a myrtle, which he found between
 A laurel and a pine, he tied the beast,
 For to secure it to the earth seemed best.

24

Not far away he saw a spring, set round
 With cedars and date-bearing palms. He drew
 His helm and gauntlets off and on the ground
 Near by set down his shield. Next, on the view
 Of sea and hills he gazed in turn. The sound
 Of the caressing breeze which gently blew
 Released a joyful murmuring and stir
 Among the beech-tree tops and those of fir.

25

From time to time, to cool his burning lips,
 Over the plashing fountain, clear as glass,
 He bends, and from the crystal water sips;
 And to subdue the fire which his cuirass
 Has kindled in his veins, his hand he dips
 And splashes in the pool - no wonder, as,
 Without a pause and armed as for a tourney,
 Three thousand miles he travelled on his journey.

26

And, as he tarries there, the hippogriff,
 Which he has tied among the shady brakes,
 Begins to kick and rear and plunge, as if
 It shied at some strange, lurking form. It shakes
 The myrtle, so that every bough and leaf
 Tosses and twists, and, round about, it makes
 A carpet of the mutilated fronds;
 And even so it cannot break its bonds.

27

As when a log of wood, which once was green,
 Of which the pith has shrivelled, leaving spaces
 Where sappy softness formerly has been,
 Is thrown upon the flames whose warm embraces
 Convert to roars and groans the air within,
 As through the hollow aperture it races,
 So does that injured myrtle moan and shriek,
 As through the splitting bark it tries to speak.

28

A plaintive voice, no longer thus confined,
 Issued at last, articulate and clear,
 And said: 'If you are courteous and kind,
 As from your noble aspect you appear,
 This creature from my tree, I pray, unbind.
 The suffering I undergo is drear
 And harsh enough; let it not be increased
 By the infliction of this restless beast.'

29

Ruggiero, startled by this anguished cry,
 In great astonishment at once turned round,
 And on his senses scarcely dared rely.
 He scrambled to his feet and with one bound
 The hippogriff he hurried to untie.
 And when at last the power of speech he found,
 'O human soul, or woodland sprite,' he said,
 'I pray you, pardon me' - and blushed bright red.

30

'Since I was unaware that you reside,
 A living spirit, hidden in this bark,
 I tethered my winged charger to your side,
 Which on your fronds has sadly left its mark.
 But do not leave me thus unsatisfied,
 I pray you, do not keep me in the dark,
 But tell me who you are, ah! do not fail,
 As you may sheltered be from snow and hail.

31

'If now or ever I can make amends
 To compensate you for the damage done,
 By her who holds my fate in her fair hands
 And of my soul is the custodian,
 I swear that I will labour to such ends,
 You will have cause to bless me.' Whereupon,
 As soon as brave Ruggiero ceased to speak,
 From tip to root the bush began to shake.

32

Along the rugged bark a moisture oozed,
 As when from a green firebrand the sap,
 Yielding at last to the fierce heat, is loosed
 Through many a tiny orifice and gap,
 And, into sound converted, then disclosed
 The story of the spirit's sad mishap:
 'By words so courteous I am induced
 To say by whom and why I'm thus reduced.

33

'Astolfo was my name: a paladin
 Of France, and on the battlefield much feared.
 Orlando and Rinaldo are my kin.
 As cousinly companions we were reared.
 After my father, Otto, I was next in
 Line as king of England (so it appeared).
 Handsome and debonair, by many loved,
 My own worst enemy at last I proved.

34

'Returning from that archipelago
 Which waters of the Indian ocean lave
 Upon the east, where I with Rinaldo
 And others were imprisoned in a cave,
 Whence we were rescued, as perhaps you know,
 By the supreme endeavours of the brave
 Orlando, we travelled on towards the West
 Along the lands by northern tempests vexed.

35

'Led on our weary way by cruel Fate,
 We came one morning to a lovely strand,
 Where stood near by the castle and estate
 Of fair Alcina, ruler of that land.
 She issued at that moment from her gate.
 Alone upon the shore we saw her stand.
 Without a net, without a hook, she fished,
 Making as many catches as she wished.

36

'The dolphins at her call come quickly leaping;
 The tunneys flounder, gasping at her feet;
 Sperm whales and seals are startled from their sleeping;
 Mullet and salmon, pleasurable to eat,
 Crowd in their hundreds, high and higher heaping;
 Pistrices, with the orcs, swim forth to meet
 The physiters, the grampuses, the whales,
 In bulk gigantic and with thrashing tails.

37

'We see one mighty whale, larger than all
 The whales that ever swam in any sea,
 Upon the surface, plainly visible,
 Rising at least eleven paces. We,
 As to a man, into one error fall,
 For, lying motionless, it seems to be
 An island, of proportions vast and wide,
 As from afar we scan it, side to side.

38

'Alcina drew the fishes from the waters
 By words and charms of which she knew the worth.
 She and the fay Morgana both were daughters
 Of the same parents (whether at one birth
 I know not) and both sisters of King Arthur's.
 Alcina looked at me and showed no dearth
 Of cunning (in such things she's skilled enough)
 As from the other knights she cut me off.

39

'She came towards us with a gracious smile,
 With courteous manner and disarming speech,
 And said: "Brave knights, pray linger here a while.
 Allow me to conduct you from this beach.
 To my abode I'll take you and beguile
 You with my fish menagerie, of which
 I have a great variety, as bright
 And countless as the myriad stars of night.

40

"And if a siren some of you would care
 To meet, who with sweet singing calms the sea,
 Explore that territory over there,
 Where at this time of day she's wont to be."
 She pointed to the whale; and I, who dare
 All enterprises with temerity,
 (And I have bitter reason now to rue it)
 Without a moment's pause crossed over to it.

41

'Rinaldo and Dudone quickly sign
 To me that I should look before I leap.
 To no avail, for of her fell design
 I'm now a captive, lost upon the deep.
 Alcina laughs, her eyes with triumph shine.
 The whale, which knows her purpose, does not keep
 Her waiting, but swims rapidly away,
 Far from the mainland, to my great dismay.

42

'Rinaldo flung himself into the ocean
 To try to rescue me; he may have drowned,
 For there arose a furious commotion,
 Stirred by the wind, and darkness wrapped us round.
 So what became of him I have no notion.
 Ways of consoling me Alcina found,
 And all that day and the ensuing night
 She kept me in her company, or sight.

43

'So, speeding on the back of the marauder,
 We journey till we reach this island, where
 Alcina's sister reigned, as was in order,
 She being King Uther's only female heir.
 Alcina had not scrupled to defraud her
 Although, as many people are aware,
 She and Morgana are the fruit of incest.
 To this Ruggiero listened with great interest.

44

'They are as full of vile iniquity
 (Being in sin and infamy well matched)
 As she, who lives a life of purity,
 To all the seven virtues is attached;
 And so they mounted a conspiracy
 And more than once an army they despatched,
 With orders from her island realm to drive her,
 And of a hundred fortresses deprive her.

45

'And scarce an inch of land would she possess
 (Her name is Logistilla, I should say)
 But for a gulf her sisters cannot pass
 And rugged mountain peaks which bar the way,
 As Cheviot hills and Tweed create impasse
 And Scotch and English forces hold at bay.
 And still this evil couple never rest
 But every stronghold from her seek to wrest.

46

'This guilty couple are so filled with sin
 That Logistilla's virtue they both hate.
 But, to resume, how from a paladin
 A myrtle I became, I will relate.
 Alcina in great bliss now held me in
 Her toils, and with a love insatiate
 She burned, and I enamoured was no less
 By every blandishment and sweet caress.

47

'And in her tender limbs I knew such joy
 The sum of all delights it seemed to be,
 Such as no lovers in this world enjoy,
 For bliss to few is granted copiously.
 No memories of war my thoughts employ
 Or come between her lovely face and me.
 Of her and of her only I'm aware;
 Naught can I do but on her beauty stare.

48

'And I by her was loved as much, and more,
 And presently no need had she of others.
 To all her lovers she had shown the door
 (Before my time there had been many others).
 The office of adviser I soon bore
 And I it was gave orders to the others.
 In me she trusted and on me relied,
 And day and night I never left her side.

49

'Alas! my bleeding wounds why do I probe,
 Having no hope of healing medicine?
 Why do I bring to mind these memories of
 A happiness now vanished, as within
 A myrtle-bush I languish in this grove?
 Just when I thought the sum of bliss was mine,
 Just when it seemed most ardently she burned,
 Alcina to another lover turned.

50

'Too late I learn of her inconstancy.
 She loves, or she loves not, as suits her book.
 Scarcely two months had passed, I think, ere she,
 As was her whim, another lover took
 And from all confidence excluded me
 With many an unfriendly word and look.
 I later learned that she had likewise thwarted
 A thousand others by whom she'd been courted.

51

'And, lest her disappointed lovers spread
 Report of this lascivious life of hers,
 She plants them in a very different bed,
 Converting them to palm-trees or to firs,
 Or olive-trees, or cedars, or instead,
 The lesser status of a bush confers,
 Or turns them into animals or streams,
 Or any form that pleasing to her seems.

52

'Now you, who by some unaccustomed way
Have travelled to this isle of doom, my lord,
On your account some wretched lover may
Be changed to stone or water at her word.
On you Alcina will devolve her sway,
And bliss beyond all mortal joy award;
But, be advised, the time must surely come
When rock or tree or fountain you become.

53

'Such knowledge as I have I've gladly shared,
Although I doubt if it will much avail you.
At least, for what you'll find, you are prepared.
Forewarned's forearmed: she can the less assail you.
Perhaps, since I have told you how I fared,
Your own good sense and prudence will not fail you,
And what a thousand others could not do –
Defend themselves – will be achieved by you.'

54

Ruggiero had long known Astolfo's name,
For he was cousin to the Maid he loved.
He grieved to find him fallen to this shame,
Changed to a sterile plant and far removed
From noble deeds which for a knight win fame.
For Bradamante's sake his heart is moved;
He'd gladly rescue him if he knew how.
All he can do is to console him now.

55

He ministered such comfort as he could,
Then asked if there was any path which led
To Logistilla's realm by which he would
Avoid Alcina; and Astolfo said
There was another route, he understood,
A rough and rugged, rock-strewn way to tread,
A little further on, then to the right,
And up a slope, towards the topmost height.

56

Let him not think, however, he will far
Advance along this path so harsh and steep,
For he will meet an enemy who'll bar
The way and with ferocity will keep
The pass. Alcina's frontier guards they are,
Who bring to book whoever would escape.
Then for the information he imparted
Ruggiero thanked the myrtle and departed.

57

Untethering his mount, he held the rein
And walked the creature slowly after him.
He did not choose to ride on it just then,
Lest it take off with him another time.
The right-hand path his purpose was to gain
And to the land of Logistilla climb.
He was determined to use all his skill
Not to fall captive to Alcina's will.

58

Should he perhaps his wingèd charger take
And cross the mountain peak by means of it?
He was afraid this might be a mistake,
For it responded little to the bit.
So then he thought: 'My way by force I'll make,
If circumstance and destiny permit.'
Soon, two miles from the sea-coast, he beholds
The lovely city which Alcina holds.

59

A line of bastions has caught his eye
Which rings the mighty citadel around.
They are so tall they almost touch the sky,
And from their topmost height down to the ground
They seem to be of solid gold (and I
Am told by some that evidence was found
Of alchemy): however that may be,
They glitter so, they look like gold to me.

60

But when he saw those walls so rich and fair
 (In all the world their equal was unknown),
 He shunned the broad, unswerving highway which
 Towards the portals would have led him on,
 And, hoping Logistilla's land to reach,
 Turned to the right towards the hill; but soon
 A horde of deadly enemies engage
 All his attention with their frenzied rage.

61

No stranger band of foes had ever been,
 No faces more repellent or distorted;
 Some, human downwards from the neck, were seen
 With cat or ape-like heads to be ill sorted.
 Some, gambolling, made goat-prints on the green,
 And prancing centaurs round about cavorted.
 Some old and slow, some young, with urchin grins,
 Some naked, and some clad in furs or skins.

62

Some on a charger gallop to and fro
 Without a rein; or on a donkey amble,
 Or on an ox; on centaurs' backs some go;
 On eagles, cranes and ostriches some scramble.
 Some drink from stirrup-cups, some bugles blow.
 Female or male or both, without preamble
 All kinds of tools and implements they brandish -
 Rope-ladders, pikes and shovels, all outlandish.

63

The monster who was captain of this crew,
 His belly swollen and his lips distended,
 Upon a turtle rode; with slow and few
 Alternate steps, its wrinkled feet extended.
 On this side and on that were ruffians who
 With kind solicitude on him attended;
 For he was drunk: his brow and chin some mopped,
 Some fanned, some held him upright when he flopped.

64

One creature with a human trunk and feet,
 With canine neck and ears and proboscis,
 Bellows and barks to make the knight retreat
 Towards the city which behind him is.
 He answers: 'I'll surrender to no threat
 As long as I have strength to handle this':
 He shows his sword and turns the pointed end
 Against his foe, his passage to defend.

65

The monster tries to wound him with a lance.
 Ruggiero quickly presses the attack.
 He drives his weapon through its chest at once -
 Six inches it protrudes behind its back -
 Then, shield on arm, makes ready to advance.
 His foe, alas! for numbers does not lack.
 They goad and harass him at every stride.
 He slashes, cuts and thrusts on every side.

66

Some to the teeth, some to the chine he cleaves:
 Thus the infernal race he decimates.
 They have no shields, no helmets and no greaves,
 No coats of mail, cuirass, or armour-plates.
 And yet, hemmed in, no headway he achieves
 In the congestion which the horde creates.
 He needs - the enemy's so numerous -
 As many arms as had Briareus.

67

If he had been inclined to use the shield
 Which to the sorcerer had once belonged,
 And which Atlante cunningly would wield
 And many a brave knight with it had wronged,
 He could have rendered helpless on the field
 The brutish mob which round about him thronged.
 But it is well perhaps that he refused
 The aid of fraud, and only valour used.

68

But, come what may, he'd rather contemplate
 His death than fall a victim to this host.
 Meanwhile there issue by the city gate,
 Forth from those walls which golden splendour boast,
 Two damsels who must be of high estate:
 So noble is their bearing, of such cost
 Is their attire – no shepherdesses these –
 But ladies born to lead a life of ease.

69

And each is mounted on a unicorn,
 Whiter than ermine these two beasts appear.
 The beauty of the garments which adorn
 The riders so enhances them, I fear
 No man in all the world was ever born
 Who with undazzled vision could declare
 A judgement on their loveliness, which seems
 The embodiment of all our fairest dreams.

70

And now they move towards the meadow grass
 Where brave Ruggiero battles with the band.
 The ruffians stand aside to let them pass.
 Each lady to the knight extends her hand.
 And, with a rosy blush upon his face,
 He thanks the damsels, who thus put an end
 To his ordeal, and gladly he agrees
 To pass the golden gate, if they so please.

71

Above the portal was a pediment,
 In all its surface sculpted in relief.
 No part of it was lacking ornament,
 Being encrusted, it is my belief,
 With precious jewels from the Orient.
 Four pillars give support, as hard as if
 In all their girth hewn from the diamond-stone.
 No fairer, lovelier gate was ever known.

72

And on the threshold, near the colonnade,
 Alluring damsels sported winsomely.
 (If more sedate decorum they displayed,
 More comely and more lovely still they'd be.)
 In garments of bright green they were arrayed,
 With coronals of leaves; seductively,
 With beckoning gestures and with smiling eyes,
 They ushered in the knight to Paradise.

73

Nor would this be too fanciful a name
 For the abode where Love, I think, was born,
 Where everyone in dance or joyful game
 The festive hours employed from early morn;
 Where of sad thoughts no shadow ever came
 To spoil this rosebed life without a thorn.
 There no discomfort was, no cup was empty,
 But endless bounty from the horn of plenty.

74

For here, as with serene and radiant brow,
 April, it seems, forever sweetly smiles,
 Young men and women to each other vow
 Their love; one by a fountain sings, one whiles
 Away the time beneath a leafy bough,
 One on a shady hill the hours beguiles,
 And one with a companion draws aside,
 His thoughts of love the better to confide.

75

Among the topmost branches of the trees,
 Laurels and conifers, tall pine and beech,
 Gaily rejoicing in their victories,
 Small Cupids flutter, chattering each to each,
 And if a heart as yet untouched one sees,
 He shoots; or else, if it be out of reach,
 He spreads a net. Some to a stream are flown
 To temper darts or file them on a stone.

76

They gave Ruggiero a new mount – a bay –
 Strong, spirited, though not for battle bred.
 With precious gems and finest gold inlay
 Its harness was adorned. A stripling led
 The hippogriff; accustomed to obey
 The sorcerer, it seemed content to heed
 The young attendant in that joyful place
 And came behind at a slow, stately pace.

77

The damsels who had given timely aid
 When he was harassed by the ruffian band,
 Which such ferocious opposition made
 When he had tried the path on the right hand,
 As they rode onwards turned to him and said:
 'My lord, your valiant deeds, we understand,
 Have earned you much renown, and we would ask
 For your assistance in a certain task.

78

'A little further on there is a marsh,
 Which you will see divides this plain in two.
 There, Eriphilla, cunning, fierce and harsh,
 Defends the bridge against all comers who
 Desire to cross (if any are so rash).
 She is a monster and gigantic too.
 Her fangs are long, and venomous her bite,
 And bear-like claws she uses in her spite.

79

'Not only in our way does she obtrude,
 Which would be unencumbered otherwise,
 But often in our garden she'll intrude,
 Despoiling it before our very eyes.
 And you must know that of that multitude
 Beyond the gate, who fought you in such guise,
 A number she herself has brought to birth,
 The vilest offspring ever seen on earth.'

80

Ruggiero said: 'This task I'll undertake,
 And hundreds more I am prepared to try.
 So of my humble self be pleased to make
 What use you will and on my sword rely.
 I wear this coat of mail, not for the sake
 Of conquest or of plunder, but that I
 May honourably serve the good and true,
 And, most of all, fair damsels such as you.'

81

The ladies duly thanked the cavalier.
 That he was chivalrous there is no doubt.
 Conversing in such manner, they draw near
 The bridge and marshy tract, where he must rout
 A giantess, whose golden trappings were
 Adorned with emeralds and sapphires; but
 To my next canto I must now postpone
 Ruggiero's battle with this evil one.

CANTO VII

I

He who has left his native country sees
 – As further off he goes – things far removed
 From what he thought to find; and when he is
 Recounting them at home may be reproved
 For telling lies, since ignoramus,
 Unless with touch and sight they've plainly proved
 A thing, will not believe it; thus it comes,
 This canto will seem strange to stay-at-homes.

2

However that may be, I have no need
 To bear the inexperienced in mind.
 To you alone, my lord, do I pay heed,
 Who follow clearly all the threads I wind.
 And I shall feel well recompensed indeed
 If of my labours sweet the fruit you find.
 I left you with Ruggiero in the field
 Beside the bridge which Eriphilla held.

3

Her shining armour is a splendid sight,
 Sparkling with gems of many different hues:
 Vermilion ruby, yellow chrysolite,
 Green emerald, tawny jacinth nothing lose
 Of brilliance in the dazzling eastern light.
 And for a mount a horse she does not choose,
 But sits astride a wolf, alert and keen,
 Upon the richest saddle ever seen.

4

I doubt in all Apulia there howls
 A wolf so large, in stature like an ox.
 No jerking rein with spume has flecked its jowls.
 I know not if with gestures or with looks
 She spurs or checks it when it runs or prowls.
 A sandy-coloured surcoat, like the frocks
 Which prelates wear at court, completes the dress
 Of this accursèd, monstrous giantess.

5

This gruesome being on her shield and crest
 Flaunted a poisonous and swollen toad.
 As he prepared to undergo the test,
 The damsels to the brave Ruggiero showed
 Where she would gallop with her lance in rest
 To harass and impede him on his road.
 And now with deadly menaces she cries.
 His spear in hand, her challenge he defies.

6

With no less readiness her wolf she spurs.
 Behind her saddle-bow she crouches close.
 Her lance in rest she places in mid course,
 Making the terrain thunder as she goes.
 Beneath her helmet, with heroic force,
 Ruggiero flings his spear and overthrows
 Her. And beyond, behind her mount she passes,
 Landing six yards away among the grasses.

7

At once he draws the sword with which he's girt,
 To cut the head of the proud monster off –
 As well he may, for there she lies, inert
 Among the flowers and the emerald turf –
 But both the damsels call: 'Pray do not hurt
 Her further; that she's vanquished is enough.
 And so, brave cavalier, put up your sword
 And let us cross the bridge.' Without a word,

8

Ruggiero acquiesced. The way they tread
Is rocky, harsh and rough, and through a dark
And gloomy wood, a narrow path they thread.
Then next along a mountain-track they hark;
And when they reach the summit far ahead
They come at last upon a spacious park,
Where a fair palace beautifies the green.
No lovelier in all the world was seen.

9

The fair Alcina from the outer gate
Comes forth to meet the knight. In royal style
She welcomes him and ushers him in state
Within the court where thronging courtiers smile
Upon the cavalier and indicate,
By bowing deeply (scanning him the while),
How they revere him. Scarce more honour could
They pay if God Himself before them stood.

10

The palace, of all palaces most fair,
Excelled in rich adornment less, in truth,
Than for the comely personages there,
All courteous and noble, none uncouth.
To one another, all resemblance bear,
All in their prime, all in the flower of youth.
Alcina's the most beautiful by far,
As by the sun outshone is every star.

11

Her person is as shapely and as fine
As painters at their most inspired can show.
Her long, fair tresses, which in ringlets twine,
More brightly than spun gold appear to glow.
White lilies in her tender cheek refine
The rosy tints which softly come and go.
A brow serene, of polished ivory,
Completes a face of perfect symmetry.

12

Beneath two finely pencilled eyebrows, dark
As are the brilliant eyes they frame, her glance,
Compassionate, will lingeringly mark
The target where Love's arrows, not by chance,
Will accurately strike, until the spark
Becomes a flame, so many he implants;
And down the centre is a nose so sweet,
Envy itself can find no fault with it.

13

Below, her lovely mouth, as if between
Two dimpled vales, is set, which Nature's tints,
As though by cinnabar, incarnadine.
Parting to speak, her lips reveal the glints
Of pearls and, shaping gracious words, they win
All hearts, be they as adamant as flints.
So sweet a smile they form that in this wise
They open, here on earth, a paradise.

14

Her round and shapely neck is white as snow.
Her bosom, pure as milk, is large and full.
Two ivory breasts, firm as young fruit, below
Her bodice move, as when soft breezes pull
The waters at the margin to and fro.
Her other parts would be invisible
Even to Argos with his hundred eyes,
But from the rest their beauty we surmise.

15

Comely proportions her two arms display.
Long, tapering and slender, as is fit,
Her hand is seen to be, and white as whey.
No blemish or defect disfigures it.
And where her dainty person ends, there play
Her elegant and sweetly-modelled feet.
Angelic semblances from Heaven hail
And cannot be concealed by any veil.

16

In every part of her there lurks a snare,
 In all her movements, words, or songs, or smiles.
 No wonder, then, if the brave cavalier
 Enamoured is of one who so beguiles
 And so enchants him and, although aware
 (Thanks to the myrtle) of her evil wiles,
 He cannot now believe that base deceit
 Can be concealed behind a smile so sweet.

17

He'd rather now believe that the transfer
 To plant-life of Astolfo on the strand
 Was a just punishment for deeds that were
 So evil that he had been rightly banned.
 And he now thinks that all he heard of her
 Is false, by a desire for vengeance and
 A spiteful envy prompted. In his eyes
 Astolfo's story nothing is but lies.

18

The image of the Maid whom he so loved
 Was in his heart no longer to be found.
 The sorceress by magic has removed
 All trace of any former amorous wound.
 By her alone the cavalier is moved,
 By her his heart engraved. So, on this ground,
 Ruggiero must exonerated be
 Of any blame for his inconstancy.

19

Within the palace, banqueting in state,
 Where harps and lyres and divers instruments
 Make all the air with harmony vibrate,
 Ladies and cavaliers lend audience
 To courtly entertainers who relate
 Stories of love and joyful incidents,
 And all their art and skill exert to please
 With poetry, romance and fantasies.

20

What sumptuous board to feast a victory,
 Such as was held by monarchs of Assyria,
 Or Cleopatra offered Antony,
 Was ever more elaborate or merrier
 Than this Alcina caused the knight to see
 On entering her palace's interior?
 I do not think that such a feast indeed
 Was served to Jupiter by Ganymede.

21

When all the viands have been cleared away,
 The company assembles in a ring,
 And there a merry game begins to play,
 Whereby, each to the other whispering,
 Mysterious and secret words they say.
 And this for lovers is a useful thing:
 Not a few couples, by the evening's end,
 Agree that they'll the night together spend.

22

Much earlier than usual that night
 The game broke up, and guests for bed prepared
 In rooms where pages put the dark to flight
 By flaming torches which with day compared.
 Taking his leave of friends to left and right,
 Ruggiero to his resting-place repaired,
 A welcoming and sweetly fragrant nest,
 Of all those well-appointed rooms the best.

23

And when with fine liqueurs and candied sweets
 The hospitality's renewed to some,
 And with deep, reverent bows each one retreats,
 And everyone at last has gained his room,
 Ruggiero slips between the perfumed sheets,
 So fine, they're worthy of Arachne's loom,
 And to the passing footsteps now lends ear,
 Hoping his fair enchantress he may hear.

24

At every little movement which he heard,
Thinking it might be she, he raised his head.
Sometimes there was a sound, sometimes he erred,
And then he sighed. Sometimes he left his bed,
And round the door, holding it open, peered,
But no one could he see. The hoped-for tread
Was not forthcoming, and this long delay
Occasioned disappointment and dismay.

25

Often he murmured: 'Now this must be she',
And in his mind he'd count the steps along
The passage from his room to that whence he
Supposed Alcina would emerge ere long.
And many such conjectures constantly
Did he indulge in, all of which were wrong.
He greatly feared lest 'twixt the cup and lip
There might occur some unexpected slip.

26

But when Alcina, scented with perfume,
Judged that the time was ripe, but not before,
And all at last was silent as the tomb,
Deciding that she need delay no more,
With quiet steps she glided from her room
And, passing down a secret corridor,
Reached the apartment of the cavalier,
His heart in turmoil between hope and fear.

27

When the successor to Astolfo sees
Those radiant and joyful star-like eyes,
With flaming sulphur all his arteries
Are as on fire and he, for all he tries,
The golden moment instantly must seize.
So, leaping from the bed on which he lies,
Her person to himself he closely presses,
And scarcely can he wait till she undresses.

28

Although no gown, no underskirt she had,
For only in a silken négligé,
Over her night apparel, she was clad,
Soft, white and elegant in every way,
Beneath his hands this garment she now shed.
Her nightgown, as transparent as the day,
Concealed her rounded limbs as little as
The stems of lilies in a crystal vase.

29

Never did ivy press or cling so close,
Rooted beside the plant which it embraced,
As now in love each to the other does;
And on their lips a sweeter flower they taste
Than Ind or Araby e'er knew, or those
Which on the desert air their perfume waste.
To speak of all their bliss to them belongs,
Who more than once in one mouth had two tongues.

30

All that takes place between them in their love,
How they beguile the ensuing nights and days,
Is secret, or at least not spoken of,
For lips are readier to blame than praise.
All pay him homage, showing they approve,
For in her palace everyone obeys
Her wishes and behaves as she desires.
Thus all to favour the affair conspires.

31

No lack of pleasure causes them distress,
For in this fair abode all joys they find.
Two or three times a day they change their dress,
For many different purposes designed.
Always they hold themselves in readiness
For banquets, jousts and feasts of every kind.
By shady hills, or where the fountain plays,
They read of lovers in the olden days.

32

Now in deep vales, now over sunny slopes,
 They chase the hare, or else with well-trained hounds
 They make the pheasant rise from out the copse
 By beating bush and stubble with loud sounds,
 Now bird-lime spread, and now with plaited ropes,
 Where the sweet-smelling juniper abounds,
 Lay traps for thrushes; now with nets or hooks
 They probe the fishes from their hidden nooks.

33

While by such joys Ruggiero is delayed,
 King Charles by Agramante is beset.
 Nor would I have you overlook the Maid,
 Who her beloved knight does not forget,
 But by his absence from her is dismayed.
 For many days she wept and she grieves yet,
 To think how he was carried through the air
 Along a strange highway, she knows not where.

34

So now of Bradamante I will tell,
 Who many days had looked for him in vain,
 Through sunny fields and many a shady dell,
 In towns and cities, over hill and plain;
 But not a trace of him she loved so well
 Was anywhere to see, for all her pain.
 She mingles with the army of the paynim,
 But none can say what obstacles detain him.

35

She asks more than a hundred every day,
 But none can give her an opinion.
 From camp to camp she slowly makes her way,
 To every barrack and pavilion,
 Without being hindered - as, of course, she may,
 Thanks to the magic ring which she has on.
 When in her mouth (I know that it seems risible)
 To everyone it renders her invisible.

36

She cannot, will not, say that he is dead.
 The tidings of so great a man's demise
 From the Hydaspes river would be spread
 To where the westering sun at evening hies.
 Not the least notion has she in her head
 Where he can be on earth or in the skies.
 She'll go on seeking him till the world ends,
 Her sighs, her tears, her sobs her only friends.

37

She wondered, should she to that cave return
 Where lie the prophet Merlin's sacred bones,
 And to compassion try to move the stern
 Unyielding marble with her piteous tones,
 Till from the tomb's responses she might learn
 If he still lived, or if a cairn of stones
 Now marked his grave? She vowed that she would take
 The seer's advice, howe'er her heart might ache.

38

And so, with this resolve, she took the road
 Towards the woods in the vicinity
 Of Pontiero where the seer's abode
 Was hidden in a mountain cavity.
 But she who in the cave foreknowledge showed
 Of the fair Bradamante's progeny
 Has followed her in thought, and since that day
 Has been disposed to give what help she may.

39

For that benign and wise enchantress who
 Has taken Bradamante to her heart -
 Since she would be the ancestress, she knew,
 Of heroes, nay, of demi-gods in part -
 Ponders each day what she will say and do,
 For by the medium of her magic art
 She's seen Ruggiero freed, but gone, alack!
 To India, whence he has not come back.

40

She's seen him riding on the flying horse,
Which neither by the rein nor with his foot
Can he control. It takes him quite off course,
Along a dangerous and unknown route.
She knows that now in idleness and worse
He lives and all his time in the pursuit
Of pleasure spends, forgetful that his word
Is pledged to both his lady and his lord.

41

So now he wastes the flower of his youth,
And in unending idleness this knight
Would have consumed his soul and body, both;
And that which lingers when the rest is quite
Defunct, the fragrant residue, in truth,
Of all our virtues, which, in death's despite,
Preserve us from the oblivion of the tomb,
Would have dispersed upon the wind like fume.

42

But that kind sorceress, who had more care
Than he had for himself, now planned how she
Might pull him up a hard and rugged stair,
Against his will, to virtue's victory,
Just like a good physician who will dare
To cure with poison, knives and cautery,
And, though in the beginning he gives pain,
The patient thanks him when he's well again.

43

She had no special tenderness for him –
Not like Atlante who was blind with love.
That foolish sorcerer had but one aim:
To keep Ruggiero from all danger of
An early death, or risk to life and limb;
And to this hope tenaciously he clove.
For all the fame Ruggiero might have won,
Of the knight's years he would not barter one.

44

He sent him to the island of Alcina
That he might lose his conscience at her court.
Of many necromancers none was keener
In all the wily practice of his art.
By means of it he'd brought about between her
And Ruggiero an amour of such a sort,
His freedom he would never have achieved
If longer than King Nestor he had lived.

45

But, turning now to her who can foresee
The future, both of persons and events,
She goes directly to the path where she
Anticipates with wondrous prescience
That she will meet the Maid: and instantly
All Bradamante's anguish and suspense
Are turned to hope, but then she hears the truth:
Alcina's magic has enslaved the youth.

46

The Maid is near to death when the kind fay
Has told her the extent of the disaster.
Not only is her love so far away
(And remedy is needed all the faster),
But he is captive to Alcina's sway.
The other where the pain is puts the plaster:
She promises the Maid that she will see
Her dear Ruggiero in two days or three.

47

'Since, Lady,' she began, 'you have with you
The magic ring which every other spell
Can counteract, I know that I can do
What is required to bring to naught her fell
Design and your beloved from her woo;
You can rely on me to make all well.
I'll start this very evening on my way
And be in India at break of day.'

48

She tells her how she means to keep her troth,
 How she will set about her wily plans
 To rescue him from decadence and sloth
 And bring him safely back once more to France.
 The Maid gives up the magic ring, and both
 Her heart and soul she'd offer to advance
 The scheme, would any sacrifice have made,
 If she could lend her dear Ruggiero aid.

49

So to the sorceress she yields the ring
 And to her skill entrusts Ruggiero's fate,
 And many loving greetings bids her bring;
 Then for Provence departs, where she will wait.
 The enchantress conjures up a wondrous thing:
 A horse, one foot bright red, but black as jet,
 In all its other parts; so great her skill,
 She summons such phenomena at will.

50

I think it was a sprite or farfarel
 Who thus was metamorphosed as a horse.
 The fay, bare-footed and ungirt as well,
 Her hair dishevelled, started on her course,
 And lest the ring should counteract the spell,
 She took it off and slipped it in her purse.
 Faster she rode than man had ever seen her.
 By morn she's on the island of Alcina.

51

And there miraculously she changed form.
 Over a palm in stature first she grew.
 Her legs and arms she altered to conform
 As in proportion to her height was due.
 Guessing Atlante's size, she chose the norm
 Of all the necromancers whom she knew.
 That done, she draped a beard about her chin,
 Furrowed her brow and wrinkled all her skin.

52

Her imitation of Atlante's face,
 Of his whole aspect, manner, gait and style,
 Is so convincing, she could take his place
 And raise no smallest doubt. First for a while
 She judges it is prudent to efface
 Herself and patiently the time beguile;
 So in the gardens she resolves to bide
 Until Alcina leaves Ruggiero's side.

53

Soon, by good luck, she found him quite alone,
 Taking the fresh and limpid morning air,
 Along a lovely stream which trickled down
 The hillside to a lake serene and clear.
 The exquisite attire which he had on
 Was soft and sensuous, an idler's wear,
 Woven in silk and gold with subtle touch
 By her who held him in her evil clutch.

54

A splendid chain he wears about his neck;
 Glittering with gems, it reaches to his breast.
 Two shining bracelets now his arms bedeck
 (Alas! once of all arms the manliest!).
 Two little threads of gold his ear-lobes prick,
 Forming two rings from which the loveliest
 Of pearls are hung, one dangling at each ear,
 Finer than Indians or Arabs wear.

55

From curling tresses, scented with pomade,
 A costly and delicious fragrance came,
 So amorous was every move he made,
 It was as though, to his undying shame,
 A servile courtship all his life he'd paid
 To women of Valencia. His name
 Alone remains unaltered, nothing else,
 So greatly is he changed by magic spells.

56

The enchantress in Atlante's form appeared,
 In face and aspect venerable and grave,
 Such as Ruggiero ever had revered.
 And just such glances of reproof she gave
 As from his boyhood upwards he had feared.
 And she began: 'Is it for this I have
 Devoted all my energies to you?
 Is this the fruit I am entitled to?

57

'Was it for this on marrow-bones I fed you
 Of lions and of bears? And, as a child,
 Was it for this along ravines I led you,
 Hunting for snakes to strangle in the wild?
 Was it for this I hardened you and bred you,
 To render tigers, boars and panthers mild?
 Of all this, do you think the aim alone is
 To be Alcina's Attis or Adonis?

58

'Is this the man whose destiny I've seen
 In sacred entrails, stars and points combined,
 Responses, auguries and dreams and in
 All signs by which the future is divined
 (In which, alas! my years have squandered been),
 For whom courageous deeds of such a kind
 Have been predicted since his infancy
 That never would his prowess equalled be?

59

'Do you think Alexander sank so low?
 Do you believe that this the method is
 A Caesar to become, or Scipio?
 Who would have thought you capable of this?
 You are Alcina's slave; that all may know,
 She makes you wear her chain and liveries,
 And at her pleasure, everywhere she goes,
 Now here, now there, she leads you by the nose.

60

'And if by thoughts of your own fame and by
 The noble deeds that are your destiny
 You are unmoved, then I will ask you why
 You have no scruple for your progeny,
 And to that womb how long you will deny
 The seed from which a glorious company
 Of offspring will descend, a mighty race,
 Destined in history to take its place?

61

'Do not prevent the noblest souls which dwell
 In Heaven as Ideas eternally
 From taking form on earth and, visible,
 As your descendants, their true destiny
 Achieving; nor impede, I beg as well,
 Your sons, your grandsons, your posterity,
 Who in grim battles, told in epic stories,
 Will Italy restore to her past glories.

62

'Not only do you owe a duty to
 The harvest which your fertile tree will bear,
 Those many valiant sons and daughters who,
 Invincible, illustrious and fair,
 Should turn you from your ways, but there are two
 Who should alone suffice, a noble pair,
 Alfonso and Ippolito, who'll lead
 The world in virtue, and all good exceed.

63

'I told you of these brothers many a time
 And in my stories set them both apart,
 For in their valour they will be sublime.
 Of your descendants, they the greatest part
 Will have in chronicle and epic rhyme.
 My prophecies of them most stirred your heart,
 And greatly you rejoiced that there would be
 Heroes like those among your progeny.

64

'She whom you make a queen, what has she got
More than a thousand whores, that you're enraptured?
You know full well what is the final lot
Of all those whom this concubine has captured.
That you may clearly see the evil plot
And who it is by whom you are denatured,
Take now this ring and put it on your finger;
Return to her and see how long you'll linger.'

65

Stricken by shame, Ruggiero, as though dumb,
Hung down his head and knew not what to say.
Holding between her finger and her thumb
The magic ring of which she spoke, the fay
Slipped it upon his little finger. Numb
Before, his senses spring to life straightway.
Aware now of his state, he is beside himself,
And longs for a deep hole in which to hide himself.

66

And in a flash the enchantress broke the spell
And reassumed the shape she always wore.
For, now that her design had worked so well,
She did not need Atlante's any more.
The time has come, I think, her name to tell:
Melissa – which I've not divulged before.
A full account she gives Ruggiero now
Of who she is and why she came and how.

67

She tells him she is sent by the fair Maid
Who longs for him and cannot live without him,
To cut the chain by which he's captive made,
Wound by Alcina's magic art about him.
Atlante of Carena's form, to aid
Her in her strategy, she took to rout him.
But now that to his senses he's returned,
She wants the truth by him to be discerned.

68

'That valorous, fair Maid, who loves you so,
And who in all respects deserves your love,
To whom (if you do not forget) you owe
Such freedom as you're not divested of,
Sends you this magic ring which, as you know,
Protects the wearer from all spells. To prove
Her true devotion she would gladly send
Her heart as well, if that would matters mend.'

69

Thus does the sorceress her theme pursue
Of Bradamante's love for him, commending
Her valour as a woman warrior too
(Affection with the truth, perhaps, contending),
Her case, as loyal messengers should do,
With every means at her command defending,
Until at last Ruggiero for Alcina
Conceived such hate, no hatred could be keener.

70

And now, as once he loved her, he abhorred her.
Nor is it strange that he has thus awoken,
Since by her spell it was that he adored her,
Which by the magic ring he wears is broken.
To what she truly is, it has restored her,
Of sorcery annulling every token,
And, from her tresses to her feet and legs,
All beauty's gone and nothing's left but dregs.

71

And as a boy who hides a fruit away
And then goes off, forgetting all about it,
On finding it long afterwards one day
Within a drawer or cupboard where he'd put it,
Astonished at the sight of such decay,
Is more than willing now to do without it,
And takes the putrid thing, with mould encrusted,
And flings it far away from him, disgusted,

72

So did Ruggiero, when his former lover
Was altered by the ring which, when it's worn,
Undoes all other magic spells, discover,
Though to her loveliness he could have sworn,
That underneath her magic mask and cover
(No greater shock he'd had since he was born)
She was an aged and a hideous crone;
No uglier in all the world was known.

73

In truth, Alcina was, without a quibble,
Wrinkled and frail; her hair was sparse and white,
And from her toothless mouth there ran a dribble.
Scarcely six palms did she attain in height.
Older than Hecuba or Cumae's Sibyl,
She had outlived all other women quite.
By means of artifice unknown to us,
A girl she could appear, and beauteous.

74

She makes herself so young and beautiful
That many, like Ruggiero, she has snared.
But now the ring enables him to pull
Away the mask which has so long impaired
Men's vision. It is, then, no miracle
That brave Ruggiero, who this madness shared,
Is sane again. No magic can avail her,
And all her beauty's remedies now fail her.

75

But as Melissa has advised, he shows
No sign of his emancipation yet,
But to the palace armoury he goes,
His helmet and his harness thence to get.
And when he has rearmed from head to toes,
Alcina's mind and heart at rest to set,
He feigns to try his skill, which he displays
Like one who has not fought for many days.

76

Next his good Balisarda he put on
(Such is the name Ruggiero's sword possessed).
Then took the shield which blinded everyone,
Or with acute bewilderment oppressed
The senses of all those on whom it shone.
Atlante thus his enemies suppressed.
Its dazzling surface silken folds bedeck.
He hangs it, thus concealed, around his neck.

77

Then in the palace stables he commands
The saddling of a horse as black as pitch.
This is the one the sorceress intends.
She knows how it responds to spur and switch.
Its name is Rabicano to its friends.
It once belonged to the sad myrtle which,
A plaything now of winds along the strand,
The giant whale had carried to this land.

78

He did not choose the winged destrier
Which close to Rabicano had been tied,
For the enchantress said to him: 'Take care;
That animal is dangerous to ride.'
She promised she would bring it to him where
They might essay some practice flights, and guide
The hippogriff with bridle and with bit,
Until at last he learned to master it.

79

To leave the hippogriff likewise averts
Suspicion from the flight which he prepares.
In all Ruggiero does, the fay exerts
An influence and guides him unawares.
The aged hag's abode he now deserts,
That soft, unmanly palace without cares.
A gate in the side wall he means to breach,
Whence Logistilla's kingdom he may reach.

Approaching the portcullis, he surprised
 The guards: he slashed, he thrust, he hit out blind:
 Some he had killed, some wounded, he surmised.
 Across the bridge he galloped like the wind,
 And, long before Alcina was advised,
 He left her half a dozen miles behind.
 In my next canto I go on to say
 How he to Logistilla found the way.

CANTO VIII

I

Enchanters and enchantresses abound,
 Plying their artifice among us all,
 And many a lover to a face is bound
 Which has been changed from plain to beautiful,
 Not by the aid which in the stars is found,
 Nor by the spirits magic spells recall,
 But by dissimulation, fraud and lies
 In never-to-be-loosened knots and ties.

2

He who the ring of fair Angelica,
 Or, better, who the ring of Reason had,
 Could see all countenances as they are,
 Not in an artificial beauty clad,
 Or masked as virtuous phenomena,
 Which ugly are beneath the paint, or bad.
 So, for Ruggiero it's a lucky thing
 That he has seen the truth, thanks to the ring.

3

By using guile, Ruggiero, as I said,
 Has reached the gate on Rabicano's back.
 His Balisarda serves him in good stead.
 The startled guards all preparation lack.
 He wounds a few, and others leaves for dead.
 He crashes resolutely through the wrack
 And gallops towards a wood; but a short way
 He goes, then meets a servant of the fay.

4

Upon his wrist he had a falcon, which,
 Delighting in the chase, he daily brought
 To fly by ponds or open country, rich
 In game of many species which it caught.
 Beside him ran a faithful dog, or bitch.
 A nag, not much adorned, he rode. He thought,
 Seeing Ruggiero ride at such a pace,
 He must be of a mind to leave the place.

5

He rode to meet him and with haughty mien
 Demanded where he galloped at such speed.
 No answer came; so, taking this to mean
 In his conjecture he was not misled,
 Concerning what Ruggiero's aim had been,
 He stretched towards him his left arm and said:
 'What say you if I stop you in your tracks?
 You've no defences if this bird attacks.'

6

He frees the falcon, which so beats its wings
 That Rabicano is outsped by it.
 Next from his palfrey the assailant springs
 And in that instant has removed the bit.
 As through the quivering air an arrow sings,
 Straight to the target it will surely hit,
 Like fire, or wind, behind the falcon ran
 The horse, released, and, after it, the man.

7

The dog has no desire to lag behind,
 But chases Rabicano with the same
 Rapidity as in a pard you'll find
 Pursuing hares. Ruggiero, put to shame,
 Turns to the man who's running like the wind,
 And has no weapon save a stick to tame
 The dog and teach it to obey his word.
 Ruggiero thus disdains to draw his sword.

8

The man, approaching, gives him a sharp blow.
 The dog, in that same moment, bites his foot.
 The horse, unbridled, likewise is not slow
 To rear its mighty crupper and lash out,
 Three times and more – a formidable foe.
 The falcon swooping on him, follows suit,
 And with its shriek so terrifies the horse,
 It will respond to neither rein nor spurs.

9

Ruggiero then has no alternative
 But to unsheathe his sword and with its aid
 Such molestation from him try to drive.
 And so, now with the point, now with the blade,
 He threatens man and beasts, who still contrive
 To importune him. On all sides waylaid,
 He sees his honour is in jeopardy
 If he does not succeed in breaking free.

10

He knows that if obliged thus to delay
 He'll have Alcina's army round his ears.
 Trumpets and drums and bells, both far away
 And close at hand, up hill, down dale, he hears.
 Against the man and beasts but small headway
 He makes with Balisarda, so he fears
 A more effective weapon he must wield:
 The sorcerer Atlante's magic shield.

11

He draws aside the crimson draperies
 Wherein the shield for many days has lain.
 Its shining surface so intensifies
 The light, that by a thousand times again
 Its power's increased. The huntsman senseless lies,
 The dog, the horse, collapse. The bird in vain
 Attempts to fly on wings that droop and fold.
 Joyful, he leaves them sleeping on the wold.

12

Alcina, who has meanwhile heard the news
Of how Ruggiero forced the outer gate
And killed a number of the guards, reviews,
Dismayed, the desperation of her state.
She rends her clothes; in torrents of abuse
She blames her own stupidity, too late.
Straightway she sounds the signal for alarm
And gives commands for all her host to arm.

13

Into two sections she divides them: one
She sends to catch Ruggiero on his way.
The others to the harbour mole have run,
To embark on sailing-ships without delay.
The azure of the ocean turns to dun
Beneath the spreading canvas. Her dismay
Seems to have robbed Alcina of her senses,
To leave her city thus without defences.

14

As no one watches the abode or grounds,
This gives Melissa, who intends to free
The prisoners in which the place abounds,
Every convenience and facility
Of the fell premises to go the rounds,
Inspecting all devices thoroughly.
Seals, knots, rhombs, spirals, images she finds:
She breaks, she burns, she loosens, she unbinds.

15

This done, across the meadowlands she hastes
Where in their hundreds former lovers wait,
Changed into fountains, rocks or trees or beasts.
She reconverts them to their former state.
Not one of them a single instant wastes.
As soon as they can walk, they emulate
Ruggiero, who to Logistilla flees,
Thence make for Persia, Scythia, India, Greece.

16

To her who thus releases them once more
The thanks they owe can never be repaid.
The first of those her magic powers restore
To human semblance is the duke, who bade
Ruggiero be advised; the one who wore
A myrtle's shape, for whom Ruggiero made
A special plea and, that the fay might bring
Him to his former self, gave her the ring.

17

So with this kind entreaty she complies
And to his former shape the English duke
Restores; and yet Melissa in no wise
Will rest content until by hook or crook
She finds his golden lance which, as it flies,
Unerringly its victim brings to book.
From Argalla Astolfo won this lance;
For both it earned renown throughout all France.

18

The lance was taken from him by the witch
And in some secret palace-cupboard stowed,
With all Astolfo's other weapons which
Were stolen likewise in that dread abode.
Melissa found them all without a hitch.
Taking Astolfo pillion, off she rode,
And (while Ruggiero an hour's journey still has)
Making good time, she reaches Logistilla's.

19

Among harsh, rugged rocks and thorny brakes,
To gain the kingdom of the virtuous queen
Now this way and now that Ruggiero takes.
No lonelier, wilder landscape has he seen.
After great labour, at long last he makes,
At the day's hottest hour, a shore between
The ocean and the mountain, facing south,
A region of sterility and drouth.

20

The near-by mountain wall in the sun's glare
 Throws back a blaze of heat so furious,
 It liquefies the sand and turns the air
 To fiercer blast than a glass furnace-house.
 All birds, in the rare shade, are silent there.
 Only the cicadas' monotonous
 Refrain, rising where desert plants abound,
 Fills hills, dales, sky and sea with deafening sound.

21

Along that sandy, sun-exposed terrain,
 The sole companions in his journeying
 Ruggiero knew were heat and thirst and pain.
 Irsome indeed he found such labouring.
 But I must not continue in one strain,
 Nor always harp upon the self-same string;
 So I will leave Ruggiero in the heat,
 To Scotland go and there Rinaldo meet.

22

Seeing that by the king and the princess
 And all the land he's held in high esteem,
 He judges it is timely to address
 The court and to reveal King Charles's scheme
 Of raising troops in Scotland and, no less,
 In England, to assist in his extreme
 Necessity against the Infidel.
 Rinaldo pleads the case and pleads it well.

23

The king without delay replies and says
 That all the forces under his command
 He'll gladly make available; and prays
 Rinaldo to report that a large band
 Of horse and men-at-arms he'll quickly raise
 For the defence of Emperor Charles' land;
 And he himself, if not so full of years,
 Would joyfully have led the cavaliers.

24

And by old age he would not be dissuaded,
 Save that a valiant son he did not lack.
 None worthier to lead, he was persuaded,
 Shrewd in defence, and forceful in attack.
 By him the Emperor would be well aided;
 To Scotland he was soon expected back;
 And that his son might gain thereby great lustre,
 He'd rally all the troops that he could muster.

25

And so his stewards he despatched both far
 And wide, through all his land, to levy horse
 And men; proud vessels he prepares for war,
 Munitions, victuals, and, the public purse
 Depleting, settles each particular.
 To England then Rinaldo shapes his course.
 The king as far as Berwick kindly keeps
 Him company and, on departing, weeps.

26

When favouring breezes blew abaft the poop,
 Rinaldo went on board and waved farewell.
 The pilot, casting off the mooring-rope,
 At once set sail and held his course so well
 That uneventfully he brought the sloop
 Where the fair Thames, meeting the salt sea swell,
 Grows brackish. Thence, along a route well tried,
 They sailed and rowed to London with the tide.

27

With letters patent to the Prince of Wales,
 Rinaldo carries out his embassy.
 King Otto whom the foe likewise assails
 With Charlemagne, has countersigned the plea,
 Which to the prince Rinaldo now retails,
 For all the cavaliers and infantry
 Which England can provide and send to Calais,
 That France against the Infidel may rally.

CANTO XII

1

Ceres, who hastened from her mother's haunts,
 Returning to that lonely valley where
 Etna o'er stricken Enceladus vaunts,
 Crushing his heaving shoulders buried there,
 Finding her daughter gone by evil chance,
 Ravaged her eyes, her cheeks, her breast, her hair;
 And, failing by these means to gain relief,
 Two pines at last uprooted in her grief.

2

At Vulcan's furnace setting them ablaze,
 To light her path in either hand she takes
 A flame which inextinguishable stays,
 And in her chariot, drawn by two snakes,
 All woods and fields and plains and hidden ways,
 All mountains, valleys, streams and ponds she rakes.
 Then, having searched the surface of the globe,
 The Tartarean depths descends to probe.

3

If in his power he were equal to
 The goddess, as in his desire he is,
 To find Angelica, Orlando too
 Would search the world, the heaven and the seas,
 In every secret corner, through and through,
 Descending then to plumb Hell's mysteries;
 But as no snakes he has, nor chariot,
 He manages as best he can without.

4

He's looked for her in France; now he prepares
 To search Italian shores and Germany;
 Next, new and old Castile; from Spain, when there's
 A ship, to Libya he will cross the sea.
 Then, as he ponders on his plans, he hears
 A plaintive voice lamenting piteously,
 And, pressing forward, he beholds a knight
 Advancing on a charger of great height.

5

Upon his saddle-bow, clasped in one arm,
 This knight a damsel holds against her will.
 Weeping and struggling and in great alarm,
 To valorous Orlando in appeal
 She calls; to rescue her at once from harm
 Is his intent, for, drawing closer still,
 He takes her for the one whom night and day
 He's sought throughout all France in such dismay.

6

I do not say myself that it was she,
 But that she seemed to be the one he loved;
 So when his lady and his goddess he
 Beheld, as he believed, Orlando, moved
 By violent and frenzied agony
 Of mind, in a loud voice, as it behoved,
 Meaning them as no idle promises,
 Challenged the knight with fearful menaces.

7

The villain did not wait, nor answer make,
 Upon his priceless booty being intent,
 But galloped off through every briar and brake;
 Orlando followed but the other went
 So fast, the wind he seemed to overtake.
 The woods re-echoed with the maid's lament.
 Towards a meadow finally they rode,
 Where, in its midst, a costly mansion stood.

8

Of inlaid marble, as in days of yore,
 The palace walls appeared to be constructed.
 The knight drew rein beside a golden door
 And entered with the maid he had abducted;
 Running not far behind him, Brigliador
 His master, fierce and menacing, conducted.
 Orlando looked about him when inside,
 But neither cavalier nor damsel spied.

9

He straight away dismounts and in a flash
 He penetrates the dwelling-rooms within.
 Now here, now there, his mighty footsteps crash
 Till not a single nook is left unseen.
 He takes the curving staircase at a dash,
 In every ground-floor chamber having been,
 And so upstairs begins his search again,
 But all his time and trouble spends in vain.

10

A coverlet of silk or gold adorns
 Each bed, and not an inch of wall is bare.
 Now this way and now that his steps he turns.
 Soft draperies and carpets everywhere
 Regale his gaze, but not the sight he burns
 To see, the longed-for presence of the fair
 Angelica; nor can he find the thief
 Within whose grasp he saw her, to his grief.

11

And while in every room he looks in vain,
 Cast down with care, not knowing what to do,
 In similar bewilderment and pain,
 Gradasso, Brandimarte, Ferrau,
 And Sacripante the Circassian,
 With other cavaliers, go wandering through
 The palace as they bitterly reproach
 Its owner for evading their approach.

12

They wander looking for him, and each one
 A private battle with him seeks to wage:
 This knight laments because his horse is gone;
 Loss of his lady makes another rage;
 Some injury or wrong they all bemoan,
 Fixed in their vain regrets as in a cage;
 And many who persist in their delusion
 For weeks and months remain thus in confusion.

13

When he had searched the palace high and low,
 Orlando to himself began to say:
 'It will be time and labour lost, I know,
 If longer in these premises I stay.
 The thief some secret door has not been slow
 To find and may by now be far away.'
 Thus thinking, to the meadow he went out
 Which ringed with green the palace round about.

14

And as he slowly paces the estate,
 Fixing his watchful gaze upon the ground,
 In case, to left, or right, of the ingrate
 The print of recent footsteps may be found,
 He seems to hear a voice disconsolate
 And recognizes that angelic sound,
 Sees that beloved face which has so changed him,
 And from his former self so far estranged him.

15

It is her very voice he seems to hear,
 Angelica he hears who calls in grief:
 'Help me! My virtue, which I hold more dear
 Than life, is threatened; come to my relief!
 Ah! While my dear Orlando is so near,
 Must it be taken from me by this thief?
 Sooner by your own hand would I be killed
 Than to such outrage unprotected yield!'

16

These words compel Orlando to return
 And search through every chamber once again,
 And even twice, for now within him burn
 Such hope and passion that he spares no pain.
 Her voice sometimes he thinks he can discern
 And then he stops and listens, but in vain;
 Her voice is heard wherever he is not,
 For ever moving as he moves about.

17

Returning to Ruggiero, you recall
 He'd followed from a dark and gloomy wood
 A giant brutal and immensely tall,
 Carrying his lady; now to this abode
 (If I can recognize the place at all)
 The giant came and through the portals strode;
 Ruggiero likewise hurried through the gate,
 Pursuing at an undiminished rate.

18

No sooner has Ruggiero stepped inside
 The courtyard than he searches for the pair,
 And every loggia he inspects beside.
 In vain pursuit, he turns now here, now there,
 And wanders up and down; each room is tried
 For any traces of that Maid so fair:
 Without success; he cannot understand
 How they can both have vanished out of hand.

19

Four and five times he visits all the rooms,
 And every nook and cranny in the place;
 Under the stairs he searches, where the brooms
 Are kept, and every single inch of space;
 Hoping to save her from the fate which looms,
 He hurries forth; as in Orlando's case,
 A voice recalls him from a near-by grove
 And he returns inside to seek his love.

20

The self-same voice, the same phenomenon,
 Which for Orlando was Angelica,
 Is now Ruggiero's lady of Dordogne
 And keeps him of himself a prisoner.
 If to Gradasso or to anyone
 It calls of those who in the palace are,
 He takes it for the thing he most desires,
 And longingly, in vain, for it aspires.

21

By this enchantment, hitherto untried,
 Atlante of Carena sought to lure
 Ruggiero, for he hoped to keep him tied
 To that sweet pain and longing, to ensure
 His mad ambition he would put aside,
 And early death in combat thus abjure.
 Alcina and the castle both had failed him,
 So now of this new method he availed him.

22

And many others he intended, too,
 Of those whose prowess was renowned in France,
 Lest they his dear, his loved Ruggiero slew,
 To hold for ever in this magic trance.
 First one and then another knight he drew
 By various means; and for their sustenance
 He'd furnished and equipped the place so well
 His noble guests with pleasure there might dwell.

23

But let us find Angelica once more.
 She has the magic ring, you will recall,
 Which on her finger renders her secure
 And in her mouth makes her invisible.
 Within a mountain cave she's found a store
 Of food, a mare, some clothing; in fact, all
 She needs; to gain the East is now her plan
 And claim once more her kingdom, if she can.

24

She longs to have Orlando's company,
Or Sacripante's; either one would do;
She has no preference, and equally
Their sighs and pleas she is resistant to.
Since on her journey, of necessity,
Towns, cities, garrisons she will pass through,
She needs an escort and a trusty guide,
And well might she in either knight confide.

25

She wandered, looking first for one and then
The other, and through many cities passed,
And regions uninhabited by men;
No sign of them she saw; but, led at last
By Fate, she came where the Circassian,
Orlando, Ferraù, Ruggiero, fast
In strange involvement by Atlante bound,
With many other cavaliers are found.

26

She enters, by the sorcerer unseen,
From all his magic by the ring protected,
And, searching for them both through the demesne,
She finds them vainly seeking her, dejected.
She understands that victims they have been
Of images deceptively projected.
Which of these cavaliers to choose as guide,
She ponders long, unable to decide.

27

She cannot judge which of the two she wants:
The Count Orlando or Circassia's king.
Orlando would the greater valiance
And skill in arms to her protection bring;
But if she chooses him in preference
His very worth may prove embarrassing;
For how will she, when need of him is lacking,
Dismiss so great a knight and send him packing?

28

The other she can manage as she pleases –
Exalt him to the skies, or cast him low.
Of all the pros and cons she ponders, this is
The reason which most weighs with her; and so
The king from his delusion she releases,
And, unintentionally, Ferraù,
Likewise Orlando; thus she is surrounded
By three at once, who gaze at her dumbfounded.

29

And so, by all three cavaliers confronted,
The beautiful Angelica now see.
Through the whole palace, high and low, they've hunted,
Searching in vain for their divinity.
And all around her, too, behold, uncounted,
From their enchantment by the ring set free,
A miscellaneous group of cavaliers
Who bustle, clamouring, about her ears.

30

Two of the cavaliers I now must say
Were clad in armour and were helmeted.
Since entering that palace, night and day
No part of their accoutrement they'd shed.
Each was accustomed to such full array
And scarcely felt the helmet on his head.
But Ferraù, the third, no headpiece wore:
He sought Orlando's, as I said before.

31

He vowed to wear no other till he won
The helmet which the brave Orlando gained
From King Troiano's brother; for the one
Which Ferraù had formerly obtained
Was at the bottom of a stream; unknown
To him, Orlando also was detained
In this enchanted palace, but the spell
Had kept them each to each invisible.

32

Such was the magic of that strange abode,
Of one another they were unaware,
As day and night in full cuirass they strode
With sword and buckler, searching everywhere,
Released from bit and bridle, horses stood,
Still saddled, waiting in a stable where
The mangers were replenished every day
With adequate supplies of oats and hay.

33

Atlante had no power to prevent
The knights from leaping on their saddles once
Again; to follow her was their intent,
Drawn by that rose-and-lily countenance,
That golden hair, and the enravishment
Of those dark eyes. Urging her mare, she runs
O'er hill and dale; she'd take the help of any
One with pleasure: but three are two too many.

34

When long enough she judged the space between
Them and the palace, and no longer feared
Atlante's spell, by which the knights had been
Entranced in a bewitchment strange and weird,
The ring, which had so often helped her, in
Her rosebud mouth she placed, and disappeared,
Quite suddenly, before their very eyes,
To their bewilderment and great surprise.

35

Although at first her plan had been to take
Orlando for her escort, or the king,
When she set out upon her homeward track,
Seeing them thus pursue her in a string,
Such hostile feelings in her breast awake,
To ask their help she finds she cannot bring
Herself, for now to either she is loath
To be obliged: better the ring than both.

36

They turn about the wood, now here, now there,
Their stupefaction written in their faces,
As when a hunting-dog pursues a hare
Or fox, and being close upon its traces,
Loses it suddenly when to its lair
It goes to earth or in the densest places
Of the forest. She sits and watches, mocking,
As helplessly they wander, vainly looking.

37

Because there is one path and only one
Which through the forest leads, so along this
The cavaliers believe her to have gone.
Where else indeed, if only one there is?
Orlando spurs, his rivals follow on,
Their pulses racing equally with his.
She lets them gallop past and does not mind them,
Riding more slowly then, some way behind them.

38

The knights ride on, as far as they can ride,
Until all traces of the path are lost.
They peer among the grass, on every side
And every possibility exhaust.
Then Ferrau, who would surpass in pride
The proudest heart that any age might boast,
Called to the other two in mighty wrath:
'With you I will consent to share no path!

39

'Turn back or take another way instead,
Or else prepare to die here by my hand.
No rivalry in love – be not misled –
I warn you – and all other men – I'll stand.'
Orlando to Circassia's monarch said:
'He scarce could be more bold in his demand
If he'd mistaken us for common riff-raff,
Or timid maidens sitting at their distaff.'

40

And then to Ferrau he said: 'You fool!
But that no helmet I perceive you wear,
And for that reason I am merciful,
How rash you are, I'd make you soon aware.'
The Saracen replied, as cool as cool:
'And if I heed it not, why should you care?
Against you both, no helmet on my head,
I will make good the words which I have said.'

41

'Pray', said the Count to the Circassian,
'Lend him your helmet, to oblige me, while
I castigate the madness in this man,
For such I've never seen'; and in this style
The king replied: 'What greater madness can
There be? But, no offence intended, I'll
Show *you* that I am just as good a tool:
Lend him *your* helmet; I'll chastise the fool!'

42

And Ferrau retorted: '*You* are mad.
If I had cared about a helm, in truth
From one or other of your heads I had
By now snatched one or other helm, or both;
And for your information I will add:
To go without a helm I've sworn an oath
And thus I'll go, until the day I win
The helmet of Orlando, paladin.'

43

'So,' said Orlando, smiling, in response,
'You think that with no helmet on your head,
You'll take that which in Aspromonte once
Orlando from Almonte took? Instead,
I think that when in combat he confronts
You, you will tremble; so, be not misled:
No helmet you will gain, but in dismay
Your arms surrender to him straight away.'

44

The braggart said: 'I've many times before
Orlando pressed so hard that easily
I could have taken all the arms he wore;
If I did not, it was that clemency
Arose within my breast and I forbore.
Now such resolve I feel arise in me
That from all hesitation I am freed.
Next time I have no doubt that I'll succeed.'

45

Orlando lost his patience with him then
And shouted: 'Liar, ugly miscreant!
Where did you fight Orlando? Where and when
Did you perform those exploits which you vaunt?
Anglante's Count, Orlando, paladin,
Stands here before you while you rave and rant,
Thinking him miles away; for I am he.
So, of your boast, the outcome we shall see.'

46

'This slight advantage, furthermore, I scorn.'
And with these words his helmet he removed
And hung it on the branches of a thorn;
Then drew his blade, in many a combat proved.
Next, undeterred, the Spaniard, in his turn,
Drew his and stood *en garde*, as it behoved.
Prepared and resolute, his shield held high,
Orlando's blows to parry he would try.

47

Thus the two warriors begin to fight,
Their horses turning, twisting, every way;
And where their armour does not fasten quite,
Or where the steel is thin, there they essay
To drive their pointed swords with all their might.
In all the world, no other pair, I'd say,
Are so well matched in daring and in strength,
And long they keep each other at arm's length.

48

I think, my lord, that you already know
That Ferraù invulnerable was,
Save in that place where, as our bodies show,
The infant in the womb its nurture draws.
Till he was buried in the earth below,
His armour, all his life, where he had cause
For doubt, was reinforced with plates of steel,
In layers seven-fold, and tempered well.

49

Orlando was invulnerable too,
Save in one portion of his mighty frame.
He could be wounded, as perhaps you knew,
In both soles of his feet and rendered lame.
As strong elsewhere as iron, through and through
(If truth is reconcilable with fame),
Like Ferraù, in arms he chose to be
For ornament more than necessity.

50

The battle grows more gruesome at each bout.
The sight of it alarms and terrifies.
The Saracen with every thrust and cut
Strikes home, and all Orlando's blows likewise
The metal plates, or coat of mail, without
Exception, break, unhinge, destroy or slice.
Angelica, invisible, alone,
Considering the combatants, looks on.

51

King Sacripant, meanwhile, in the belief
That the fair maid was riding on ahead,
And since he saw the others locked as if
For many hours, in that direction sped
In which the knights assumed, to their great grief,
The beautiful Angelica had fled
When she had vanished from their view; and thus
The damsel of the fight sole witness was.

52

When she had watched some little time and seen
How horrible and fierce the battle grew,
She judged the danger to both knights was keen.
At last, desiring to see something new,
She planned to take Orlando's helmet then
And watch what the two cavaliers would do,
When they saw gone the bone of their contention;
But not to keep it long was her intention.

53

She means to give it to Orlando soon,
But first intends this trick on him to play.
Plucking the helmet from the branch it's on,
She puts it in her lap and leaves the fray.
Before the knights have noticed it is gone,
She has already ridden far away;
Such is the frenzied rage with which they burn,
To nothing else can they attention turn.

54

But Ferraù, who first perceived the theft,
From battle disengaged himself and said:
'It seems to me that knight who has just left
Has treated us like blockheads, born and bred.
Whichever of us wins will get short shrift,
For we shall both be now unhelmeted.'
Orlando to the thorn-bush turns his eyes
And sees the helmet gone, to his surprise.

55

With Ferraù's opinion he concurred:
The other knight had stolen it; and so
He turned, enraged; his Brigliadoro, spurred,
To leave the place of combat was not slow.
And Ferraù who saw him leave preferred
To follow; thus in single file they go
Till in the grass they see the prints just made
By the Circassian monarch and the maid.

56

Orlando took the left-hand track, the same
The king had chosen, leading to a valley.
The other chose the hillside path and came
Where he desired to be eventually.
Meanwhile the damsel, tiring of her game,
Beside a fountain was disposed to dally,
Where cooling water and the shade of trees
Invite the passer-by to take his ease.

57

The damsel tarries by the crystal stream.
By virtue of the magic ring she wears
She feels secure, and little does she dream
(For she relies on it) that danger nears.
She's hung the helmet on a handy limb
And now she leads her mount to see if there's
A sturdy shrub or tree where she can tie
The animal and let it graze near by.

58

The cavalier of Spain, having pursued
The print of hoofs, now at the fount arrives.
No sooner does she glimpse him from the wood
Than once again to vanish she contrives.
The helmet she must now renounce for good;
She cannot reach it howsoe'er she strives.
The pagan, who had seen her from the fount,
Approached her, full of joy, upon his mount.

59

She vanished (as I said) before his eyes,
As phantoms of our dreams depart with sleep.
To find her in the wood in vain he tries,
Growing more melancholy with each step.
Against Mahound and Termagant he cries,
And all the Prophet's vile discipleship.
Then near the fountain, as it comes to pass,
He sees the helmet fallen on the grass.

60

No sooner has he seen it than he knows,
From lettering inscribed upon the rim,
This is the very helm for which he goes
In search, for it records Orlando's grim
Encounter with Almonte, of all foes
The one who the most sorely tested him.
For all his sorrow that the maid has fled,
He picks it up and puts it on his head.

61

And when the helm is buckled and done up,
He thinks that one thing only lacking is,
Ere filled to overflowing is his cup,
Or he can reach the apogee of bliss:
That is, Angelica; but soon all hope
Of finding the fair maid he must dismiss.
So, wondering what the progress of the war is,
He turns his thoughts towards the camp near Paris.

62

The grief which burned and raged within his breast
For his desire thus left unsatisfied
Was tempered by the pleasure that his quest
Was now fulfilled; nor could it be denied
That Ferrau had done his very best
To keep the oath he'd sworn that day beside
The stream; nor did he go unhelmeted
Until the day Orlando struck him dead.

63

Angelica, invisible, alone,
Went riding on her way with furrowed brow.
Most bitterly she rued what she had done,
For by her haste Orlando's helmet now,
Which she had left behind, was lost and gone.
'I took the helm,' she said, 'but this, I vow,
Was only meant as recompense to him
To whom I am obliged for life and limb.

64

'I only did it for the best, God knows,
Although results have sadly gone amiss.
I took the helmet in the hope that those
Two combatants would call a halt, and this
My only purpose was; now I suppose
That ugly Spaniard wearer of it is.'
Thus she reproached herself in her lament
About Orlando's loss, as on she went.

65

So she continued, angry and distressed.
With careful choice of roads, she made her way
In the desired direction of the East,
Deciding to be visible one day,
Invisible the next, as she thought best.
Then in a wood she saw a youth who lay
Between two dead companions; with a blow
(Unjust) his breast was wounded by a foe.

66

But now about her I will say no more,
Since many things I have to tell you first;
Nor will I speak of Sacripante, nor
Of Ferrau until I have rehearsed
The sorrows which the brave Orlando bore,
Those pains of love by which the Count is cursed,
Those trials and those never-ending woes
Which will torment him wheresoe'er he goes.

67

As soon as he can find a garrison,
Desiring to remain anonymous,
He puts an undistinguished helmet on,
Whether of tempered steel he does not know,
Nor does he care, for he relies upon
His charmed resistance to each thrust and blow.
By day, by night, come sun, come rain, no rest
He takes, as he pursues his endless quest.

68

It was the hour when over Ocean's rim
Apollo drives his horses, wet with dew,
Along the sky where Dawn, ahead of him,
Has sprinkled gold and crimson flowers anew,
And stars, their nightly dance now ended, seem,
Wrapped in their veils, about to bid adieu,
That close to Paris as one day he passed
Orlando proved his prowess unsurpassed.

69

He met two squadrons; leading one of them
Was Manilard, a white-haired veteran,
Norizia's king; when sound in wind and limb,
He was a formidable foe; a man
More suited now for counsel, he may seem,
Than action. Next, of all the African
Commanders, King Alzirdo's held to be
The very paragon of chivalry.

70

He led the second troop; and both had passed
The winter harassing King Charlemagne,
Some of them close to Paris, others fast
By citadels and strongholds in the plain.
When Agramante was convinced at last
All his assaults on Paris were in vain,
He had resolved a siege to authorize,
Finding he could not take it otherwise.

71

And to accomplish this he had a host
Of great proportions and variety:
Not only those he'd rallied by his boast
And those of Spain who'd followed loyally
Their king, Marsilio, but from the coast
Near Arles to Paris and from Gascony
(Except for a few strongholds), he'd subdued
The French and thus his army had renewed.

72

When timid streams begin once more to flow,
 By gentle warmth released from icy bonds,
 When grasses greener in the meadows grow
 And bushes clothe themselves in tender fronds,
 King Agramante, who desires to know
 How far his present army corresponds
 To present needs, has summoned an array
 Of all his troops; and so, without delay,

73

The king of Tremisen (Alzirdo) and
 Norizia's monarch journeyed towards the place
 Where every squadron, regiment or band
 Would be inspected; thus it came to pass,
 As I have given you to understand,
 The two of them encountered face to face
 The Count Orlando in his quest for her
 Who in Love's fastness held him prisoner.

74

And when Alzirdo saw that Count draw near
 Whose valour has no equal among men,
 Whose mighty strength and pride make him appear
 A second god of war, whose wrathful mien
 And haughty resolution chill with fear,
 He was amazed and judged him there and then
 To be superlative in skills of war;
 But to the king's intent this proves no bar.

75

For he was young and filled with arrogance,
 Strong and courageous, by his peers esteemed.
 His mighty charger spurring to advance,
 To be at once victorious he deemed;
 But, in encounter with Orlando's lance,
 He fell, his heart pierced through; the horse, it seemed,
 Was filled with panic as it fled the scene,
 No rider on its back to check the rein.

76

A terrifying shout at once arose,
 Filling the air for many miles around,
 Soon as the youth was seen to fall, of whose
 Life-blood a pool was forming on the ground.
 Against Orlando rushed a bellicose
 Unruly mob: their thrusts and cuts abound,
 But from their weapons no such tempest hails
 As that by which the Count the horde assails.

77

As when a herd of swine, a savage roar
 Emitting, rush stampeding from the plain
 Or from the hills, a bear pursuing or
 A prowling wolf which left its secret den
 To seize a piglet which away it bore,
 Its piteous squeals and grunts being all in vain,
 So that barbaric rabble set upon him,
 Shouting, 'Have at him! Wreak your vengeance on him!'

78

With arrows, lances, swords, his shield they smite.
 More than a thousand blows his hauberk bears.
 Some strike him with a club with all their might.
 On every side they throng about his ears.
 But he, whose soul has never harboured fright,
 The horde, with all their arms, as little fears
 As, when the shades of night the sky suffuse,
 A wolf is frightened by a flock of ewes.

79

Bared of its sheath he held that flashing blade
 By which he'd slain so many Saracens.
 Thus of the total killed, whoever made
 An estimate, would have to count in tens.
 Already now through streams of blood they wade,
 And, strewn in heaps, the slaughtered lie so dense,
 The ground, so it appears, can scarcely carry them.
 So deadly are his blows that naught can parry them,

80

No cotton quilting which their armour lined,
 No swathes of cloth worn coiled about the head.
 Not shrieks alone re-echoed on the wind,
 But arms and shoulders, legs and top-knots sped
 In all directions. Death in every kind
 Of guise, all horrible, stalked by and said:
 'Orlando's Durindana is more blithe,
 A hundred times more useful than my scythe.'

81

Whoever feels one blow finds one enough.
 Many remaining scatter through the wood,
 Astonished that the combat was so rough;
 Because he was alone they thought they could
 Soon overpower him; now they make off.
 It's *saufe qui pent*, and, while the going's good,
 They go, some here, some there, without delay,
 Nor are they seen to stop and ask the way.

82

They flee from Courage with her looking-glass,
 Which every wrinkle in the soul reveals.
 One man alone does not evade this pass,
 In whom not cowardice, but age, congeals
 The blood; he looks on flight as vile and crass,
 Preferring death with honour to all else:
 I mean Norizia's king, who put his lance
 In rest against the paladin of France.

83

He broke it on the summit of the shield
 Borne by the mighty Count, who had not stirred,
 But ready stood, his naked sword to wield,
 Which to his lance he many times preferred,
 And which to stay the onslaught he now held;
 But, in his grasp, the sword, descending, veered
 So that no cut or thrust was possible.
 Fortune thus favouring the king, he fell.

84

Although it is a monarch who lies stunned,
 Orlando scorns even to look at him.
 Whoever stays, he slashes to the ground,
 While all the others flee for life and limb.
 As in the air, where space and light abound,
 Starlings, a hawk escaping, swerve and stream,
 So of that horde, destroyed in a brief hour,
 Some gallop off, some fall, and others cower.

85

Nor did Orlando grant his sword repose
 Till every living man had fled that day.
 And now he hesitates, although he knows
 The region well, about the choice of way;
 But, whether to the right or left he goes,
 His thoughts from where he is are far away.
 He fears Angelica, no matter where
 He looks for her, is anywhere but there.

86

Enquiring as he went, he chose a route
 Sometimes through woods, and sometimes through a plain;
 And, as he travelled, wandering in thought,
 He wandered from the path and all in vain
 Meandered till, arriving at the foot
 Of a tall cliff, he saw, as plain as plain,
 Pulsating through an opening in the rock
 A light, which drew him up at once to look.

87

As in a wood of lowly juniper,
 Or in the stubble of an open field,
 A hunter will pursue a frightened hare,
 And of the paths which intersect the weald
 Will make uncertain choice, now here, now there,
 Searching whatever bush the prey might yield,
 So did Orlando search, in hope to find
 The damsel who possessed him, heart and mind.

88

Towards that light which twinkled in the dark
Orlando hastened, and arrived at last
Where through a narrow aperture the spark,
Seeming so distant from the woodland, passed.
Bushes and thorny shrubs the entrance mark,
As round a fortress a defence is cast;
And all who lurk within the cave they hide
From outrage, keeping them secure inside.

89

By day the hiding-place would not be seen.
It was the light which in the dark revealed it.
Orlando thought he knew what it must mean,
And, to discover who it was it shielded,
He tethered *Brigliadoro*, and between
The thorny branches creeping, which concealed it,
He penetrated to the secret hole
And entered, unannounced, to pay his call.

90

The cavern floor by several steps descended,
Where living people dwelt, as in a tomb.
The roof, rough-hewn, seemed for a vault intended.
Scarce any daylight to the little room
Could pass the thorns by which it was defended,
But fortunately, to relieve the gloom,
There was an aperture towards the right,
A narrow slit which would admit the light.

91

Within, a damsel with a lovely face
The Count observed, seated beside a hearth.
Not more than fifteen years could she retrace
(So judged Orlando) since her day of birth.
So fair she was, she made that savage place
Appear a very paradise on earth,
Although her lovely eyes were filled with tears,
A token of her sorrows and her fears.

92

A grizzled beldam scolded her meanwhile,
As often is the way with womenfolk;
But as he made his way through the defile,
All disputation ceased and neither spoke.
Orlando greeted them in courteous style
(As it behoved) and thus the silence broke.
They rose at once to greet him in reply;
No courteous exchange did they deny.

93

To tell the truth, they turned a little pale
To hear that voice so masterful and strong,
To see that cavalier in coat of mail,
Armed with the weapons which to war belong.
Orlando bade them tell him without fail
What miscreant had done this fearful wrong,
For he must be a cruel, evil knave
Who'd bury thus a damsel in a cave.

94

The maid can scarcely speak, for all she tries.
Her sobs so interrupt her, she is dumb.
Through precious pearls and coral, only sighs
And broken words, in a sweet voice, will come.
Her flower face is watered by her eyes.
Of all those tears she needs must swallow some.
Please hear the rest, my lord, another day.
It is now time to put the book away.

40

Those whom the table missed or scarcely hurt
 (Precisely seven, Turpin says) rushed in
 A panic to the door; but there, alert,
 Ready for action, stood the paladin.
 He needed no great effort to exert.
 He took them, one and all, to their chagrin.
 Their hands behind them with a rope he bound,
 Which previously in the cave he'd found.

41

First at the entrance of the cave he bags them;
 Then where a gnarled and ancient sorb-tree grows,
 Casting a shadow far and wide, he drags them.
 He prunes the branches where they seem too close,
 Then takes the ruffians by the chin and scraggs them,
 Hanging them up as nourishment for crows.
 He has no need of chains with pointed hooks,
 For well enough they dangle from those stocks.

42

The aged dame, who served the pirate band,
 Seeing her former masters now all dead,
 Her grizzled tresses tearing with each hand,
 Rushed to the wood with cries of grief and fled.
 For miles she trudged through harsh, uneven land,
 By fear her weary footsteps onward led.
 She met a knight beside a stream one day,
 But who this was, much later on I'll say.

43

And to that damsel I return who stayed.
 She begged the Count not to abandon her;
 To the world's end she'd follow him, she said.
 His sure defence he offered then and there.
 When, crowned with roses, pallid Dawn, arrayed
 In purple, as Apollo's harbinger,
 Moved down along her customary route,
 The Count Orlando and the maid set out.

44

They travelled on for many a day and night,
 But nothing worthy of report occurred
 Until they chanced to see a gentle knight
 Who had been taken captive, they inferred.
 To tell now who he was would not be quite
 Appropriate, and so I'll say a word
 Instead about Count Aymon's daughter, whom
 We left dejected and in deepest gloom.

45

The Maid, who all this time has longed in vain
 That her Ruggiero might soon be restored,
 Was at Marseilles, where havoc, death and pain
 Inflicting daily on the pagan horde,
 Who in their ravages o'er hill and plain,
 Through Languedoc and through Provence had poured,
 She well performed the role allotted her,
 As captain of her troops and warrior.

46

But many days and weeks and months had gone
 And still her dearest love was far away.
 She pictured him in peril and, not one,
 But thousands of disasters saw; one day,
 As she sat sadly weeping all alone,
 She saw approach that wise and kindly fay
 Who with the ring had made Ruggiero well,
 When he was captured by Alcina's spell.

47

Seeing her now return without her lover,
 After so long, the Maid grows deathly pale,
 And such a trembling seizes her all over,
 Her limbs for her support will scarce avail;
 But good Melissa knows how to remove her
 Doubts and fears; hastening, as though a tale
 Of joy to tell, with smiling lips and eyes,
 She comforts Bradamante in this wise:

48

'For your Ruggiero have no fear,' she said.
 'Alive and well, he loves you as before;
 But, by your former enemy misled,
 He has been robbed of liberty once more.
 Mount now at once upon that thoroughbred,
 If you desire Ruggiero to restore;
 For, if you will consent to follow me,
 I will instruct you how to set him free.'

49

And the good sorceress began to tell
 The Maid about the plot Atlante wove,
 And how he simulated by his spell
 Her image, which appeared the victim of
 A giant, and how both invisible
 Became, when once they had enticed her love
 Into a magic palace, where illusion
 Held many knights and damsels in confusion.

50

To all, the sorcerer, as they behold him,
 Appears to be their very heart's desire:
 Their lady, lord, companion, friend they hold him,
 Or anything to which they may aspire;
 And in their fruitless longing to enfold him,
 They search the palace through and never tire.
 Such is the hope of all and such the yearning,
 Now here, now there they wander, twisting, turning.

51

'When you arrive in the vicinity',
 Melissa said, 'of that enchanted place,
 Straightway the cunning sorcerer you'll see,
 Wearing Ruggiero's very form and face.
 Then he will conjure with his wizardry
 An enemy who'll bring him to disgrace.
 He means to make you hasten to his aid,
 But if you do, he'll capture you, fair Maid.'

52

'And that you may not fall into this trap,
 Where many knights have fallen, be advised:
 For all he seems to be Ruggiero, *cap-
 à-pie*, and calls for help, be not surprised.
 Stand on your guard and trust him not a rap.
 Such evil must be ruthlessly excised.
 Despatch him; not Ruggiero will be slain,
 But he who thus desires to cause you pain.

53

'It will be difficult, I know full well,
 To slay one who appears to be your love;
 But do not trust your sight, for by the spell
 Impaired, blind to such evil it will prove.
 Resolve at once to be inflexible,
 And from that resolution do not move.
 To kill the wizard is the only course,
 Or else Ruggiero never will be yours.'

54

The valiant Maid, fully intending to
 Obey Melissa's counsel and to kill
 The fraudulent magician, for she knew
 That she could trust the fay, with a good will
 Took up her arms and followed; travelling through
 The woods and fields, Melissa used her skill
 The tedium of the journey to allay
 By pleasing converse as they made their way.

55

Of all the themes the Maid rejoiced to hear,
 To one Melissa many times returned:
 The god-like progeny which she would bear
 In wedlock to the youth for whom she burned.
 As all the secrets of the gods were clear
 To her, the sorceress events discerned,
 And could predict, which many centuries
 Concealed, or which lay hid in mysteries.

56

'Enlightened and illuminating guide,
So that illustrious Maid began, 'I vow,
Long in advance of time you've prophesied
About my male descendants; tell me now,
I beg of you, about the distaff side.
What valiant women do the Fates allow
To issue from my line? What chronicle
Of virtuous deeds or beauty can you tell?'

57

The courteous fay replied: 'From you I see
Mothers of kings and emperors descending,
Famed for their comeliness and modesty,
Like mighty caryatides, defending
Illustrious houses no less worthily
Than men in armour, in due measure blending
Compassion, courage, wisdom, continence
With prudent, womanly intelligence.

58

'Were I to speak of every one of those
Fair daughters who are worthy of your line,
Much time would I require; of many whose
Renown deserves in this account of mine
Not to be passed in silence, I will choose
But three or four. Ah, why did I confine
Myself to your male offspring in the cave,
Where necromancy visions of them gave?'

59

'From your illustrious line there will descend
One who of every noble enterprise
Of art or highest learning is the friend:
Fair Isabella, liberal and wise,
In whom so many rare endowments blend.
This luminary will be seen to rise,
Warming the city where the Mincio flows
And which its name to Ocnus' mother owes.

60

'And there, in honourable rivalry
With her most worthy husband she'll engage
To ascertain which of the two shall be
The greatest host and patron of the age;
And if he claims to rescue Italy
From the invading Gauls' barbaric rage,
She will reply: "Penelope no less is,
By reason of her virtue, than Ulysses."

61

'Great deeds and many in few words I give
Concerning her, and much I leave unsaid,
For in the cave where Merlin still does live,
Though in the sepulchre his bones lie dead,
Much was revealed to me and I believe
Farther than Jason voyaged I should spread
My sails on such a sea; thus I conclude,
She is endowed with all that's true and good.

62

'And there will be her sister, Beatrice,
To whom her name will be appropriate,
Not only for such happiness as is
Permitted to us in our human state,
But for the highest of felicities
Which for the duke, her husband, she'll create,
Who, after she departs this life, will suffer
The keenest woe and anguish Fate can offer.

63

'The name of Sforza and the Snakes will show
Themselves invincible, long as she lives,
From Red Sea shores to hyperborean snow,
From India to the strait which access gives
To your native sea. But once death lays her low,
Them and the Insubrian realm disaster drives
Into subjection to the king of France,
And all her husband's skill is counted chance.

64

'And other Beatrices there will be
 Who many years before her will be born;
 And one of these, as queen of Hungary,
 With a fair crown her tresses will adorn.
 Another who the worldly life will flee
 And earthly joys and satisfaction scorn,
 After her death to sainthood elevated,
 With prayers and incense will be venerated.

65

'Others I must omit, for, as I said,
 To tell you of them all would take too long,
 Though each is worthy to be trumpeted
 In story and immortalized in song.
 Biancas, Costanzas, and Lucrezias, wed
 To dukes or princes, I must leave among
 The glories which the future will reveal,
 Mothers of heroes, guardians of the weal.

66

'Yours, more than any other lineages,
 Good fortune in its womenfolk will know;
 For in the partners of their marriages,
 As in their daughters, faithfulness will glow.
 Concerning two, the many messages
 Which Merlin uttered to me there below
 He charged me to pass on to you, and I
 With his request will gladly now comply.

67

'First I will tell you of Ricciarda, who
 All honour and all strength exemplifies.
 Widowed while young, she will be faithful to
 Her spouse who in the ducal chapel lies.
 Her sons, expropriated, wander through
 Strange lands, in exile, under alien skies,
 Child victims of inexorable foes,
 But recompense she'll have for all her woes.

68

'Of the proud line of ancient Aragon,
 I'll not omit that wise and splendid queen,
 So virtuous that no such paragon
 In Roman times or Greek has ever been,
 Whom Fortune favours more than anyone
 In all the destined futures I've foreseen:
 Alfonso and Ippolito she'll bear,
 And Isabella, wise as she is fair.

69

'This splendid matriarch, named Eleanor,
 Is grafted thus to your life-bearing tree.
 What shall I say now of her successor,
 Alfonso's second wife, Lucrezia, she
 Whose virtue, fame and beauty every hour
 Increase, whom fortune and prosperity
 Combine to favour, like a plant, no less,
 Which fertile soil and rain and sun all bless?

70

'As tin to silver or as brass to gold,
 The poppy of the cornfield to the rose,
 The willow, pale and withered in the cold,
 To the green bay which ever greener grows,
 As painted glass to jewels, thus I hold,
 Compared with her, as yet unborn, all those
 Who hitherto for beauty have been famed,
 Or models of all excellence are named.

71

'And by the many who will sing her praise,
 Both while she lives and after she is dead,
 She'll be esteemed, above all that she'll raise
 Those sons so royally whom she'll have bred.
 Ercole and his brothers will the bays
 Of glorious lustre wear upon their head;
 For fragrance is not easily dispersed,
 Though later vessels equal not the first.

72

'Nor by my silence would I seem to scorn
The wife of Ercole, Renée de France,
Of the twelfth Louis and of Anna born.
All virtues which the gentle sex enhance,
Or ever have or will, while fires burn,
Or waters flow, or the nine circles dance
In heavenly concord, in this queen I see
Joined and combined in perfect harmony.

73

'Celano's countess, Alda of Salogna,
Both these, and others, I must now omit;
Of Blanche Marie, the fair, of Catalogna,
I fain would speak, but time does not permit;
Likewise of lovely Lippa of Bologna,
And Sicily's princess, as would be fit.
But were I to begin to tell you more,
I'd enter on a sea that has no shore.'

74

Thus having spoken of the greater part
Of the descendants who would spring from her,
Melissa warned her of that magic art
Again, which held her love a prisoner.
Then, coming to a place where to depart
Seemed prudent, for the evil sorcerer
Might see her if still closer she approached,
Or on the threshold of his spell encroached,

75

She left the Maid, first warning her again,
As she had done so many times before,
Against Atlante's image, but in vain;
For, riding scarcely two or three miles more,
The Maid beheld Ruggiero, plain as plain,
Between two cruel giants who so bore
Upon him that his death, or so she deemed,
Was imminent, so true the conflict seemed.

76

And when she sees, in every form and feature,
The very likeness of Ruggiero, caught
By two such ruffians of gigantic stature,
In peril of his life, the Maid, distraught
By anguish of an overwhelming nature,
Forgetful now of all she has been taught,
Believes Melissa hates Ruggiero and
Contrives that he shall die by his love's hand.

77

And to herself she said: 'Is not that he
Who's ever present to my heart and eyes?
And if it's not my love whom I now see,
Whom did I ever see or recognize?
Why should I take another's word to be
The truth, and my own senses thus despise?
Without my eyes, and by my heart alone
The presence of my love to me is known.'

78

While she is thus considering, she hears
What seems to be his voice, imploring aid,
Then sees the phantom, for whose life she fears,
Apply his spurs and gallop through the glade.
Each giant, who his enemy appears,
Pursues him with all speed; at this, the Maid
No longer hesitates but soon is gone
And to the magic palace follows on.

79

And there, no sooner has she passed the gate
Than in that same bewilderment she falls.
Along the alleys, tortuous or straight,
Upstairs and down, through corridors and halls,
She looks for him from early morn till late.
So cunning is the spell that, as she calls,
She seems to see Ruggiero and to hear him,
Yet he does not see her, nor she come near him.

80

But let us leave her there; be not distressed
That she is now bewitched, for from that spell,
When the occasion and the time seem best,
I'll save her and her destined spouse as well.
Now, as a hook must many times be dressed
With change of bait, or else the fish rebel,
So now another path I will explore,
Lest those whom I would entertain, I bore.

81

For many other threads, it seems, I need
To finish such a tapestry as this.
So, may it not displease you to pay heed
To how King Agramant, who captain is
Of all the Moors and pagans of like breed,
While menacing the golden fleur-de-lis,
Gave orders that his forces should parade,
That he might know how many troops he had.

82

For many cavaliers, and footmen too,
Had died or had been wounded in the fray.
Captains were missing – Spaniards not a few,
Libyans and Ethiops the light of day
No longer saw, and soldiers wandered through
Inhospitable lands, or lost their way.
From chaos order hoping now to bring,
Those who remain parade before their king.

83

And to replace the many thousands slain
In battles or in fighting hand-to-hand,
One captain Agramante sent to Spain,
And one to Africa, where many a band
Of raw recruits they undertook to train
And bring to Paris under their command.
But now, my lord, in deference to you,
I will defer the tale of the tattoo.

CANTO XIV

1

In the assaults and cruel conflicts waged
By Africa and Spain against fair France,
The number of the dead could scarce be gauged,
Now wolf's or crow's or eagle's sustenance.
Though these afflictions were in part assuaged
By many a territorial advance,
The infidels had dearly paid the cost
In princes and in nobles whom they'd lost.

2

So bloody were the pagan victories,
Small reason to rejoice the victors had.
If present-day with ancient histories
Can be compared, Alfonso, you, who made
Ravenna so regret your expertise
When, sacked and plundered, she so dearly paid
For help against the Spaniard, represent
Of these reverses the equivalent.

3

For, to assist the French of Picardy,
Artois and Normandy and Aquitaine,
Amid the standards of the enemy
You plunged, and plucked the victory from Spain;
And those who followed with such gallantry
Truly deserved that day, for all their pain,
(Although the triumph was so largely yours)
Their gilded sword-hilts and their gilded spurs.

8

His father, Otto, had been gone long since
 To Paris and not soon would he be back,
 And almost every baron, every prince,
 Had followed in his venerable track.
 These tidings the brave paladin convince
 That he must follow them, and with no lack
 Of haste the port of London reaching now,
 To Calais bids the pilot turn the prow.

9

A little breeze upon the port bow blew,
 Tempting the vessel out on to the wave,
 Which gradually strong and stronger grew
 And to the pilot anxious moments gave.
 To windward finally the poop he drew,
 The vessel from capsizing thus to save,
 And down the Channel's length his course he wended,
 A different journey from the one intended.

10

To east, to west, he tacks as best he can,
 Where the wind drives, and comes at last to port.
 No sooner have they docked at Rouen than
 Astolfo, stepping forth at this resort,
 Commands his squire to saddle Rabican.
 He arms himself in haste, for time is short,
 And journeys on; that horn he carries still,
 More than a thousand men more terrible.

11

And as Astolfo travelled through a wood,
 At a hill's foot he found a limpid spring
 When overhead the sun in heaven stood
 And sheep, their grazing-grounds abandoning,
 Sheltered in huts or caves in drowsy mood.
 Both heat and thirst the paladin now bring
 To a brief halt, and where the shade is cool
 He ties his horse and moves towards the pool.

12

He stooped to drink but had not wet his lips
 Before a peasant, hiding there near by,
 Springs from a bush and on his charger leaps.
 Astolfo lifts his head, much startled by
 The noise; his thirst being gone, though by no sips
 Has it been quenched and still his mouth is dry,
 He leaves the pool, and when his loss he sees,
 Fast as he can he sets off through the trees.

13

Lest he should disappear at once from sight,
 The thief does not at first extend his pace.
 His grasp upon the reins now slack, now tight,
 He keeps an even distance in the race,
 First trotting and then galloping outright.
 Leaving the wood behind, they reach the place
 Where many noble lords as prisoners
 Still languish in a prison without bars.

14

Into the palace now the peasant rides
 On Rabicano who goes like the wind.
 By shield and helm and all his arms besides,
 The duke, impeded, follows far behind.
 At last he too arrives with mighty strides,
 But now no further trace of them can find;
 There being now no sign of thief or horse,
 He gazes round, uncertain of his course.

15

With hurried steps he searches here and there
 In every loggia, vestibule and room,
 But cannot find the peasant anywhere;
 Of all his labour no result has come,
 Nor does he know (and this is hard to bear)
 Where Rabican is hidden; in deep gloom
 He spent that livelong day in vain pursuit,
 In and around, up, down, all without fruit.

16

Weary with wandering, the English duke
Perceived the palace was bewitched at last
And he bethought him of the little book
Which Logistilla gave him when he passed
From India and which he always took
With him on journeys lest some spell be cast.
He thumbed the index through and quickly traced
The pages where the remedy was placed.

17

Enchanted castles many pages filled,
Together with instructions as to ways
To thwart the enchanter, and to open sealed
Apartments and the prisoners release.
Under the threshold was a sprite concealed
Who tricks of fraudulent illusion plays,
And if the stone Astolfo raised and broke,
The edifice would disappear in smoke.

18

Eager to bring to a triumphant close
So glorious a deed, the paladin
To test its weight no hesitation shows,
But stoops towards the marble to begin;
But when Atlante sees those hands so close,
Ready to render his enchantment vain,
Afraid of what will come to pass, he plots
To bind him fast by other magic knots.

19

Using a subterfuge of devilry,
Atlante caused Astolfo to assume
Fictitious forms, so that he seemed to be
A giant or a labourer to some;
An evil cavalier still others see.
He makes the duke those many shapes become
Which in the wood he took. The prisoners
Turn on Astolfo now to claim what's theirs.

20

Ruggier, Gradasso, Bradamante and
Iroldo, with Prasildo, Brandimart
And other warriors, in a fierce band,
Determine now to make Astolfo smart;
But in the nick of time he takes his stand
And blows upon his horn – and they depart.
Had he not saved himself by its shrill blast,
That moment would have been Astolfo's last.

21

Soon as his lips have touched the magic horn,
Filling the air with terrifying sound,
As a gun startles pigeons from the corn,
So did the knights now scatter all around.
The necromancer too, his pride and scorn
Abandoning, crept out from under ground,
All pale and trembling, and soon fled to where
The shrilling could no longer strike his ear.

22

Jailer and jail-birds fled as in one troop;
Likewise the horses, tethered there, stampeded.
More than a stable-door and more than rope
To keep them from escaping now was needed.
No cat, no mouse was there but flew the coop,
So thoroughly the deadly noise succeeded,
And Rabicano would have fled, no doubt,
Had not the duke been there as he came out.

23

Astolfo, now the sorcerer is gone,
Proceeds to lift the heavy slab away.
He finds a talisman beneath the stone,
And other things which I forbear to say.
Being eager for the spell to be undone,
He breaks all that he finds without delay,
Obeying the instructions in his book.
The palace vanishes in mist and smoke.