



## Tasso's Aminta Part I

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# Tasso's *Aminta*

## Part I

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### 1. Foreword

*Aminta* by Torquato Tasso (1544-95) is an Italian pastoral drama written for the court of Ferrara and his patron, Duke Alfonso II d'Este. It was composed in the spring of 1573 and first performed on July 31 of the same year, when Tasso was twenty-nine years old, by the Gelosi company on the island of Belvedere del Po, near Ferrara, where the d'Este summer palace stood. We have no accounts of the first performance, but it was apparently well received, as a second was given at the behest of Lucrezia d'Este, younger sister of Alfonso II and wife of Guidobaldo II, Duke of Pesaro, the following year at Pesaro. It "brought great pleasure to the spectators,"<sup>1</sup> according to one account. After that *Aminta* was performed in various Italian cities so frequently and successfully that it made Tasso's reputation.

The first printing of *Aminta* was by Aldo Manuzio in Venice in 1581, when Tasso was already confined to Sant'Anna Hospital, apparently on politically trumped up charges of insanity. It was published in Cremona at about the same time. Manuzio issued a corrected edition in 1581 and other different editions in 1583, 1589, and 1590, called the Aldine editions. The 1590 edition is the basis for B. T. Sozzi's critical edition published in Padua (Padova: Liviana editrice) in 1957.

In 1584 *Aminta* was printed in Paris, first in the original Italian and later the same year in a French translation. In 1591 it was translated into English by Abraham Fraunce, a version which influenced Edmund Spenser

and William Shakespeare. There were three English translations in the seventeenth century, among them one by Henry Reynolds (1628). In 1820 Leigh Hunt translated it in five acts as *Amyntas, a Tale of the Woods*. This was the only complete English translation of the play in the nineteenth century, and it has a dedication to John Keats (London: T. and J. Allman). In the twentieth century there were four English translations, including an Internet version by Malcolm Hayward (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1997). In 2000 *Aminta* was edited and translated into English by Charles Jernigan and Irene Marchegiani Jones (New York: Italica Press). In this paper I deal with *Aminta* mainly through Hunt's version, occasionally referring to the Internet version and the 2000 version.

## 2. Hunt's *Amyntas* and his Dedication to Keats

Hunt's version was reprinted in 1964 in *The Genius of the Italian Theater*, edited by Eric Bentley, but the reprint doesn't have Hunt's dedication to Keats. This dedication goes as follows: "Dedication. To John Keats, Esq. This translation of the early work of a celebrated poet, whose fate it was to be equally pestered by the critical, and admired by the poetical, is inscribed, by his affectionate friend, Leigh Hunt."<sup>2</sup> The "celebrated poet" is, of course, Tasso. Hunt compares Tasso to Keats, who was bedeviled as one of "the Cockney School" and whose *Endymion* (1818) was severely attacked by conservative critics.<sup>3</sup>

We do not know the exact date of the publication of *Amyntas*, but in July 1820 Hunt sent a printed copy of the work along with an original manuscript copy to his friend, Sydney Vincent Novello (Clarke, 203), and on 22 July a review came out in the *London Literary Gazette and Journal of the Bells Lettres, Arts, Sciences* (467-69). At the time Keats was staying with Hunt, nursed since 23 June, because he began spitting blood due to tuberculosis on 22 June. On 1 or 3 July Keats published his third and last collection of poems, *Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St. Agnes, and Other*

*Poems*, which is called the 1820 volume. Charles Lamb praised it in the *New Times* on 19 July. A reprint of this favorable review appeared in the *Examiner*, published by Hunt, on 30 July. Hunt himself applauded the 1820 volume in his second weekly magazine<sup>4</sup>, the *Indicator*, on 2 and 9 August.

Keats spent a comfortable time at Hunt's and wrote to his sister, Fanny, that Hunt did "every thing in his power to make the time pass as agreeably" as possible, on 22 July (Rollins, II, 309). But on 12 August "an accident of an unpleasant nature occurred at Mr Hunt's" (Rollins, II, 313) and Keats left there and moved to stay with his sweetheart, Fanny Brawne, until his departure for Italy on 17 September. The unpleasant incident involved a letter from Fanny Brawne to Keats that had been opened before it was handed to him. In a fit of anger Keats left Hunt's, but he felt sorry for Hunt and wrote a letter to him the next day, addressing him as "Leigh Hunt Esq<sup>re</sup> (An Amyntas)" and saying, "You will be glad to hear I am going to delay a little time at Mrs Brawnes. I hope to see you whenever you can get time for I feel really attach'd to you for your many sympathies with me, and patience at my lones" (Rollins, II, 316).

*Amyntas* resulted from Hunt's economic straits. He wrote in his *Autobiography* as follows: "I translated it [Tasso's *Aminta*] by the falling off in the receipts of the *Examiner*, now declining under the twofold vicissitudes of triumphant ascendancy in the Tories, and the desertion of reform by the Whigs" (44). The *Indicator* was somewhat more successful, but it was also short of money due to his lack of business acumen. According to him *Aminta* was "hardly worth the trouble, though the prologue is a charming presentment of love in masquerade, and the *Ode on the Golden Age* a sigh out of the honestest part of the heart of humanity" (*Autobiography*, 44).

A review in the *London Literary Gazette* ran as follows: "The *Aminta* of Tasso, in which it has been asserted by the most skilful and learned

Italians, criticism could find no fault, is comparatively little known in this country” (467) and decisively asserted that “the gallantry and elegance of the Court of Ferrara [*sic*], at the period of its production, have no corresponding feelings in British bosoms” (467). It then savages Hunt’s work as follows: “we do not consider Mr. Hunt’s choice of subject to be a happy one. Indeed, he has not wasted much labour upon it: his version is a school-boy’s task, and little superior to those *renderings* to see in the books of operas, sold for the edification of the Bull family, when they visit the gallery or pit at the King’s Theatre” (467-68). It maintains that Hunt “translated very faithfully” (468), only to twist the knife, describing his work as a mere primer: “as a lesson book to learners of the Italian, his publication may be useful” (468). In fact, Hunt’s rendering is considerably more ornate than Tasso’s Italian, something the reviewer was apparently ignorant of. The review is not signed, but the reviewer is considered to be William Jerdan, whom Henry Colburn named as editor in July 1817.

In his preface Hunt explains Tasso and *Aminta*, referring to the history of pastoral plays in Italian drama and showing his wide knowledge. He insists that “the *Aminta* had no rival” (xv) and that, compared with the *Pastor Fido* by Giovanni Battista Guarini, Tasso’s contemporary and fellow-courtier, “the great majority of suffrages, both Italian and foreign, has always been in favour of Tasso’s play” (xv). He thinks highly of the characteristics of *Aminta*, referring to: “the brief and touching simplicity” (xv). He describes its merits more concretely as follows:

The persons in the *Aminta*, though placed in a country famous for being misrepresented and frigidized in poetry, —Arcadia,— are all copies after humanity; the action is simple; the incidents necessary, and happily interwoven; the images, as Dryden has observed is contradistinction to those of Guarini, all rural and proper; the event at once new, unexpected, and natural. Lovers, and those who know

lovers, will know how to account for what may seem exaggerations of feeling. (xxiv)

He maintains that the language of the play “is looked upon in Italy as a model of natural and unspiced grace, amounting to the simple and naïve” (xxvi). The more his translation proceeds, the more he is attracted by the play, though he admits that “in point of poetry it is as far surpassed by *Comus* and the *Faithful Shepherdess*” (xxi). He describes the situation as follows: “although in the earlier part of the translation I could not help feeling now and then a yearning out of the pale of the original for the more imaginative and sylvan wealth of Milton and Fletcher, my enthusiasm grew more and more absorbed in Tasso alone” (xxvii). Still, Hunt’s translation stays under the residual sway of his initial enthusiasm.

There are choruses at the ends of each Act, and Hunt points out that most of them “have a lyric majesty that announces the epic poet” (xxxi). In fact, in 1575, two years after *Aminta*, Tasso completed his famous epic, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, or *Jerusalem Delivered*, and presented it to Duke Alfonso II d’Este. Keats had a copy of the translation of this by Edward Fairfax (1600) and wrote his “*Isabella*” in ottava rima, imitating Fairfax’s stanzas. Hunt, on the other hand, judged the translation too artificial and criticized its usage of many antitheses. Hunt himself translated three stories from the epic.

### 3. The Influence of the Classical Pastoral

Alexander Pope discusses the originality of *Aminta* in his “Discourse on Pastoral Poetry” as follows:

*Tasso* in his *Aminta* has as far excell’d all the Pastoral writers, as in his *Gerusalemme* [*sic*] he has outdone the Epic Poets of his country. But as this piece seems to have been the original of a new sort of

poem, the Pastoral Comedy, in *Italy*, it cannot so well be consider'd as a copy of the ancients.

(Audra and Williams, 31)

Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* is also famous, as the first nondramatic Renaissance pastoral. But *Aminta* was the first dramatic pastoral. Pope refers to the influence of classical pastorals as "a copy of the ancients." Indeed, *Aminta* was heavily influenced by Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*.

I want to discuss *Aminta* through Hunt's translation, *Amyntas, a Tale of the Woods*. Hunt's characters are explained in more detail than in the original. Love or Cupid speaks a prologue in the disguise of a shepherd. Daphne is a nymph and Sylvia's elder friend. Sylvia is a maiden nymph, who is loved by Amyntas but completely absorbed in hunting, and so ignores him. Amyntas is a young shepherd, who is in love with Sylvia and suffers from his unrequited love. Thyrsis is a poet and Amyntas' elder friend. Satyr is in love with Sylvia and tries to rape her. Nerina is an older nymph and messenger. Ergasto is a messenger. Elpino is a wise shepherd and a poet older than Thyrsis. A Chorus of Shepherds elaborates on the story, conversing with some characters, and advancing the drama.

The name of the hero, Amyntas, perhaps derives from Theocritus' *Idyll VII*, "The Harvest Festival," where a poet called Simichidas is going to the farm of a noble family in the suburbs with two friends, Eucritus and Amyntas. Amyntas is simply described as "Amyntas" (Ἀμύνταζ, 2) at first, but later, after Simichidas' performance of his own song, Amyntas is depicted as "καλὸς Ἀμύντιχοζ"(132). "καλὸς" means "beautiful" or "fair." A. S. F. Gow translates this as "the fair Amyntas" (34). In Tasso's *Amynta* Thyrsis is a poet and a friend of Aminta. Thyrsis may be identified with Tasso just as Simichidas is identified with Theocritus.

Virgil also refers to Amyntas. In *Eclogue V* Menalcas praises

Mopsus' skilful pipe, saying, "In these hills only Amyntas rivals you" (8). At this Mopsus gets angry and blames Amyntas for his conceit: "What? that man [Amyntas] thinks that he can outsing Phoebus" (9). Before singing himself, Mopsus says, "Listen—then let Amyntas challenge me!" (15). Menalcas agrees with him: "As lowly reed to crimson beds of roses, / So must, I think, Amyntas yield to you" (17-18). In *Eclogue X* Gallus, whose love, Lycoris, has run away with another man, asks the gods to worry about him and seeks solace: "Whether it's Phyllis or Amyntas by me / Or someone else I'm mad for" (37) and imagines that they will console him: "Phyllis would bind me wreaths, Amyntas sing" (41). In this way Amyntas is clearly seen as a good singer.

Thyrsis also comes from Theocritus. In *Idyll I* a shepherd, Thyrsis, sings an elegy for Daphnis, as follows: "Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song. / Thyrsis of Etna am I, and sweet is the voice of Thyrsis" (Gow, 5). Thus, Tasso would willingly take his name, though as a shepherd, Thyrsis also appears in Virgil's *Eclogue VII*, and is beaten by a goatherd, Corin, in a singing match.

Sylvia (*Silvia*) means "inhabiting woods," from the Latin *silvia*, that is, "wood, forest." Rhea Silvia was the mythical mother of the twins Romulus and Remus, who founded the city of Rome. Silvia appears as a daughter of the shepherd serving King Latinus in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book VII. Her pet stag is shot and killed by Ascanius, one of the Trojans who landed with Aeneas. This incident caused the war between the Romans and the Trojans. These events were intended by Juno, who felt resentment at Paris' judgment and hated the Trojans. Tasso may be the first Italian poet to have used Sylvia as the name for a heroine.

Besides the above, Buttus, who is mentioned in Daphne's speech in Act I, Scene i, appears in Theocritus' *Idyll IV*, "The Herdsmen." There he is described as cynical and barefoot. Lycoris, who is also referred to in Daphne's speech, appears in Virgil's *Eclogue X*. There she is Gallus'



sweetheart and has gone to the Alps with another man, leaving him alone and almost dying. Mopsus, a fortune-teller, who is mentioned both by Amyntas and Thyrsis in Act I, Scene ii, appears in *Eclogue V*, where he is a skilful singer and piper. Thus the characters in *Amyntas* obviously come from classical pastorals.

Tasso also develops the drama with traditional pastoral characteristics. In Act I, Scene ii lovesick Amyntas is encouraged by Thyrsis to reveal “What the woods know, and what the mountains know, / And what the rivers know, and man knows not” (44-45). This shows that Amyntas has often visited the woods, the mountains, and the rivers, and has sung his suffering to them to heal his woe, like Corydon in *Eclogue II*. Corydon goes to “the thick-set beeches, with their shady tops” (3) and rambles on about his unrequited love for Alexis “to hills and woods” (5). In *Eclogue X* Virgil sings of Gallus’ troubled love for Lycoris to the woods in the belief that they can hear and answer: “Not to the deaf we sing: woods answer all” (8). This pathetic fallacy is heightened in *Amyntas*.

In Act I, Scene i Daphne says to Sylvia, “Thyrsis went about / Writing, the time he wandered in the forests” (221-22) like a madman full of love for Lycoris and “wrote it on a thousand barks, to grow / Verses and barks together” (227-28). This derives from *Eclogue X*, where Gallus suffers his unrequited love:

In woods and lairs of beasts I choose to languish,  
Carve my love sufferings on the tender trees:  
As they grow up, so you will grow, my loves.       (52-54)

In *Eclogue V* Mopsus says to Menalcas, “I’ll try out some well-set verses which / Lately I carved on the green bark of a beech” (13-14). Similarly, in Act I, Scene ii Amyntas tries to reveal his unrequited love to Thyrsis, saying that he is near death and needs someone to know the reason, adding

“He [someone] can write it / Upon a beech tree near where they will bury me” (49-50). Trees thus serve as notice boards. Amyntas wonders whether Sylvia’s reaction to the notice will be favorable or unfavorable to him.

Apples are standard love-tokens in pastorals. In *Idyll III*, “the Serenade,” an unnamed goatherd goes to sing to Amaryllis and brings ten apples to her. There Theocritus refers to the famous Greek myth that Hippomenes won the race with Atalanta and got her by throwing apples before her. In *Idyll V*, “Goatherd and Shepherd,” Comatas sings in a contest as follows: “With apples too Clearista pelts the goatherd as he passes with his flock, and sweetly she whistles to him” (Gow, 24). In *Idyll VI*, “the Rustic Singers,” Daphnis sings “Galatea pelts thy flock with apples, Polyphemus, and calls thee cursed in love and goatherd” (Gow, 27). In Act II, Scene i of *Amyntas* the Satyr complains about his unrequited love for Sylvia: “Ah me! When I present thee sweet young apples, / Thou putttest them away” (26-27). But he adds words to suggest his sensual desire: “Thou hast more sweet young apples in thy bosom” (28). Such a sensual description does not exist in classical pastorals, but it is a sign of Tasso’s Renaissance perspective.

In the pastoral world a hushed sea without waves serves as a mirror to reflect one’s face or figure. In *Idyll VI*, “the Rustic Singers,” Damoetas sings, playing the part of Polyphemus, who is lovesick for Galatea, a sea nymph, as follows:

For truly I am not even ill-favoured as they say; for of late I looked into the sea, and there was a calm, and fair, as my judgment goes, showed my beard and my one eye, and it reflected the gleam of my teeth whiter than Parian marble. (Gow, 28)

In Act II, Scene i of *Amyntas* the satyr’s monologue continues as follows:

I am not one  
 To be despised, if truly t'other day  
 I saw myself reflected in the sea,  
 When the winds hushed, and there was not a wave. (35-38)

He is proud of his ruddy face, broad shoulders, hairy breast, and shaggy thighs. He thinks that they are marks of manlike strength and addresses the absent Sylvia, "If thou dost not / Believe them, try them" (43-44), further emphasizing his sensuality compared to Theocritus' Polyphemus.

Tasso also depicts a scene, in which Sylvia looks at and adorns herself reflected in a pool, through the mouth of Daphne, as follows:

She looked on one of them [the pools], and hung right over  
 Its clear unruffled glass, as if to see  
 How beautiful she looked, and how to best  
 Advantage she might set the dropping curls  
 About her brow . . . . (38-42)

She is proud of her beauty, but she blushes to know that Daphne has looked at her, a charming conceit.

Lastly I would like to mention the cliché of consolation for a love-sick person that Tasso picked up from the classics. In Act I, Scene ii Thyrsis encourages Amyntas, saying to him, "thou canst find another [girl]"(21). In *Idyll XI*, "the Cyclops," Polyphemus consoles himself by saying to himself, "another and a fairer Galatea wilt thou find, maybe" (Gow, 46). In *Eclogue II* Corydon, suffering unrequited love for Alexis, his master's darling youth, says to himself, "You'll find another lad, if this one's cold" (73).

Thus Tasso makes his drama colorful, attractive and genuine, in terms of the genre, by using many of the traditional pastoral tropes.

#### 4. Allusions to the Alfonso II d'Este's Court

At the same time, however, Tasso is highly conscious of the noble audiences at the d'Este court and inserts many interesting allusions of that fashionable world. For example, Elpino is identified with Giovanni Battista Pigna (1530-75), who was a secretary to Alfonso II d'Este and also a historian and man of letters. Lycoris is associated with Lucrezia Bendidio, who was a lady-in-waiting to Eleonora d'Este, younger sister of Alfonso II. Battus is identified with Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538-1612), author of the pastoral drama *Il Pastor Fido*. Thyrsis is, of course, Tasso himself. In this way Tasso makes his acquaintances and himself appear on the stage or present before the audience under pseudonyms, in a kind of *roman à clé*, without breaking the pastoral conceits.

In Act I, Scene i Daphne tells Sylvia of a recent event, who obstinately does not listen to her advice about love. Daphne retells a story of love that was told by "the wise Elpino to the fair Lycoris" (183), which was also heard by two poets, Battus and Thyrsis, in "Aurora's cavern, over which / 'Tis written, 'Far be ye, profane ones, far'" (189-90). Here, "Aurora's cavern" suggests one room in the d'Este palace in Ferrara, which was adorned with frescoes by Dosso Dossi depicting Aurora. The phrase, "Far be ye, profane ones, far" is quoted from Virgil's *Aeneid*. And Elpino's story of love was told "By that great name that sung of Arms and Loves" (192), an allusion to Ludovico Ariosto, who served Alfonso I, grandfather of Alfonso II. Elpino's description of the suffering of the "ungrateful and denying women" (199) punished in Hell comes from a story of merciless women in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*.

Hearing Daphne's tale, Sylvia takes an interest in Lycoris' reaction to Elpino's story. Daphne describes Lycoris' eyes as follows:

They [her eyes] turned with a sweet smile,  
 And answered thus: Our heart, and we, are thine;  
 More thou shouldst not desire; nor may there be  
 More given. And surely this is all-sufficient  
 For a chaste lover, if he holds those eyes  
 To be sincere as beautiful, and gives them  
 Perfect belief. (213-19)

But Elpino does not believe her eyes. Daphne reveals the reason to Sylvia by pointing out that Thyrsis was also in love with Lycoris and wrote about her eyes on barks in the forests as follows:

*False faithless lights, ye mirrors of her heart,  
 Well do I recognize the tricks ye play!  
 But to what profit, seeing I cannot fly? (229-31)*

The admiration of both Elpino and Thyrsis for Lycoris would incite the audience to remember actual events in Alfonso II d'Este's court. Lycoris represents Lucrezia Bendidio (1546/7-?), the daughter of a Ferrarese nobleman, Nicolò Bendidio, a close adviser of Alfonso II. She began court life at the age of thirteen as a lady-in-waiting to Alfonso's first wife, Lucrezia Medici. By 1561, after the death of the Duchess, Lucrezia had entered the service of the Duke's sister, Eleonora. During this year, on a visit to Padua with her mistress, Lucrezia was introduced to Tasso. The meeting inspired his first *canzoniere* of amorous poetry and the relationship between them was the source of over one hundred poems written throughout the span of his life. The above lines by Thyrsis are almost the same as the last three lines of one of Tasso's love sonnet for Lucrezia:

M'apre talor madonna il suo celeste

riso fra perle e bei rubini ardenti,  
 e l'orecchio inchinando a' miei lamenti  
 di vago affetto il ciglio adorna e veste;  
     ma non avvien però ch'in lei si deste  
 alcun breve doro de' miei tormenti,  
 anzi la cetra e i miei non rozzi accenti,  
 e me disprezza e le mie voglie oneste.

Né pietà vera ne' begli occhi accoglie  
 ma crudeltà, ch'in tal sembianza or mostri,  
 perché l'alma ingannata arda e consumi,  
     Specchi del cor, fallaci infidi lumi,  
 ben conosciamo in voi gl'inganni vostri;  
 ma che pro, se schifarli Amor ci toglie?

The original “conosciamo” is changed into “riconosco” in *Aminta*, but the meaning is almost the same.

From her earliest years, Lucrezia was celebrated particularly for the beauty of her voice. She sang for the Duke and his noble guests. In 1562 she was married to a widower, Conto Paolo Macchiavelli. The marriage was unhappy for her, but she gained influence as the mistress of the Duke's brother, Cardinal Luigi. From the late 1560s, she was openly involved with the Cardinal. Pigna (Elpino in the drama) also chose Lucrezia to be his muse, and asked his colleague, Guarini, to annotate a manuscript copy of his *canzoniere* for her, and furthermore to dedicate it to her mistress, Princess Eleonora. The collection was entitled *Il ben divino*, that is, *The Love of God*. By the way, Guarini was the husband of Lucrezia's sister, Teddea.

The audience would have understood the above situations so well that they must have enjoyed the private references. Among them, Lucrezia in particular would have taken pleasure. Her friendship with Tasso seems not

to have been hindered after the performance of the play. She was allowed to accompany him in his carriage on the way to his hospitalization at San Francesco in 1577, and to correspond with him over the next ten years during his imprisonment in Sant'Anna Hospital.

Others would not have been so pleased, perhaps accounting for Tasso's long hospitalization. In Act I, Scene ii Amyntas tells Thyrsis that his despair over Sylvia was assured by the augury of Mopsus. Thyrsis, however, claims that the fortune-telling of Mopsus is not reliable, and that his own former experience was distorted by the false divination of Mopsus. Here Tasso slyly alludes to Alfonso II himself. "The great city" (232) or "the great spot" (235) alludes to Ferrara, like Rome in *Eclogue I*. Thyrsis says the city "queenslike, holds / The banks of the river" (232-33), whereas Mopsus spitefully describes it as a place, "where keen and crafty citizens, / And courtiers in their malice" (236-37) laugh at rustics and simplicity. "The house of Idle Babbling" (246) alludes to Alfonso II d'Este's court. Mopsus explains the place as follows: enchantresses dwell there; everything precious is a fake; all pieces of furniture "have tongues and speech" (263). He threatens Thyrsis with arrest and transformation into an inhuman thing. Thyrsis, however, is depicted as finding the place joyful: he hears "a delightful harmony" (275), which is "a heavenly noise / Of heavenly things" (276-77) and says it gives him "such delight / That, all admiring, and amazed, and joyed" (278-79), he can only applaud.

In front of the place there stands a noble and strong man, obviously a winking reference to Alfonso II, perhaps to counteract the possible damage done by the Mopsus references. He invites Thyrsis into the place, where he sees beautiful "goddesses and nymphs" (289). "Goddesses" may allude to the princesses, since Alfonso II had three sisters, one elder and two younger. "Nymphs" may allude to their ladies-in-waiting, including Lucrezia Bendidio. Thyrsis sees Elpino with the nine Muses. Thyrsis then, with a witty combination of self-irony and pride, elevates his own stature as

a poet:

. . . and at that moment, I  
Felt myself greater, gifted newly, and full  
Of sudden deity; and I sung of wars  
And chiefs, and trampled the rude pastoral song. (297-300)

The song of “wars / And chiefs” apparently alludes to *Jerusalem Delivered*. Thyrsis / Tasso then explains the development of his poetry as follows:

And though as it pleased others, afterward  
I came home to these woods, I yet retained  
Something of that great spirit, nor did my pipe  
Speak with its old humility; but loud  
And loftier-toned filled the wide-echoing woods,  
The rival of the trumpet. (301-6)

In Act II, Scene ii Tasso compares Alfonso II to “a God” (175 & 176) just as Virgil compares Augustus to “a god” in *Eclogue I*, where Tityrus says to Melibee, “a god grants us this peace” (6). Thyrsis says to Daphne, “’twas a God gave me that ease. / For well may he be deemed a God among us” (175-76). And the rich dukedom of Alfonso II is described as follows:

Whose mighty flocks and herds feed everywhere,  
From sea to sea, both on the cultured smoothness,  
And glad amenity of fertile fields,  
And o’er the mountainous backs of Apennine. (177-80)

According to a note in the 2000 version, this dukedom “stretched from



Comacchio on the Adriatic coast to Carrara on the Tyrrhenian Sea through alliance with the lords of Massa and Carrara. The Apennine range is between the two seas” (179). But the Tyrrhenian Sea is near southern Italy, so this is wrong. Massa and Carrara are near the Ligurian Sea. Therefore, “From sea to sea” refers to lands from the Adriatic Sea to the Ligurian Sea.

The God / Alfonso II says to Thyrsis / Tasso to let others do other work and to “Sing only” (187). Tasso declares his resolve as a poet with a great esteem for Alfonso II as follows:

Therefore 'tis most just, my song  
 Turn not upon the sports of earthly love,  
 But sing the lineage of my great and true  
 (Which name am I to choose?) Apollo or Jove,  
 For in his works and looks, both he resembles  
 A lineage worthy of Saturn and of Coelus. (187-92)

Again Tasso here seems eager to butter his bread on both sides after having bit the hand that fed him: “Thus has a rustic muse, regal reward; / And whether clear or hoarse, he [the God] scorns her not” (193-94), hence: “not forever shall his altars be / Without my flowers” (197-98).

(To be continued)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Jernigan & Irene Marchegiani Jones (eds. & trans.), *Aminta—A Pastoral Play by Torquato Tasso* (New York: Italica, 2000), XVII.

<sup>2</sup> The original dedication goes as follows:

## DEDICATION.

TO

JOHN KEATS, Esq.

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE EARLY WORK  
OF A CELEBRATED POET,  
WHOSE FATE IT WAS  
TO BE EQUALLY PESTERED  
BY THE CRITICAL,  
AND ADMIRER BY THE POETICAL,  
IS INSCRIBED,  
BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

LEIGH HUNT.

<sup>3</sup> In October 1817 *Blackwood's Magazine* carried an article, "On the Cockney School of Poetry, No. I" (Vol. II, No. VII, 38-41). The name was a take-off on "The Lake School" and referred to Hunt and his circle. In this article "Z," that is, John Gibson Lockhart attacked Hunt violently. It begins with a verse by Cornelius Webb, citing "Hunt, Keats, / The Muses' son of promise." Keats was afraid of being attacked in future and later his fear came true. The assaults continued in a series of articles until "No. VII" (Vol. XII, December 1822). In September 1818 John Wilson Croker spitefully reviewed *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review* (Vol. XIX, No. XXXVIII, 204-8).

<sup>4</sup> Hunt later said, "the Indicator (*I fear*) is best of my works" in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries; with Recollections of the Author's Life and of his Visit to Italy*, 270.

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