

BYRON AND SWINBURNE:  
PROPAGANDISTS OF THE RISORGIMENTO  
The Manipulation of Historical Sources in Twin Dramatizations of Doge  
Faliero and Venetian Republicanism in 19th-Century Italy

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# Abstract

This essay will argue that Lord Byron manipulated historical sources on his fourteenth-century protagonist, Doge Faliero (died 1355), in order to write his historical drama, *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice* (published 1821), as a piece of republican propaganda in support of Italy's nation-building process (the Risorgimento), and that Algernon Swinburne's rewrite of Byron's drama, *Marino Faliero* (published 1885), perpetuated Byron's manipulation of historical sources for the same purpose.

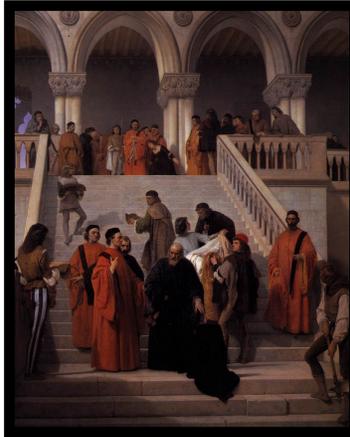
This argument will proceed as follows:

In writing his historical drama, *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice*, Lord Byron covertly manipulated his supporting historical sources under the pretence of adhering to strict historicity. Byron did so in order to characterize Doge Faliero as a hero of Venetian Republicanism. In so doing, Byron dramatized the necessity of a people's revolution in parallel visions of fourteenth- and early nineteenth-century Venice. Then, in rewriting Byron's historical drama for late nineteenth-century Venice and post-unification Italy (after 1870), Algernon Swinburne developed Byron's heroization of Faliero and updated the drama's political representations. Swinburne did so in order to remodel Faliero after Giuseppe Mazzini (died 1872), the foremost Risorgimento leader of the effort to make the newly united Italy into a republic. Byron's and Swinburne's twin a-historic historical dramas about Doge Faliero served as republican propaganda throughout the Risorgimento, and they reflect more than a century of Venice's major role therein.

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# Introduction



Hayez, Francesco. *The Last Moments of Doge Marino Faliero*. 1867. Oil on canvas. Pinacoteca Di Brera, Milan, Italy.

In 1821 the 6th Baron Lord Byron published what is ostensibly more a ‘dramatic history’ than a historical drama: *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice*.<sup>1</sup> In his long preface to this drama, and with the inclusion of a large appendix of supporting historical sources, Byron presented *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice* not as a typical history play, but rather as a 19th-century equivalent to documentary reenactment. “The length I have gone into on this subject will show the interest I have taken in it. Whether I have succeeded or not in the tragedy, I have at least transferred into our language an historical fact worthy of commemoration” (Byron 24). Sixty-four years later, in 1885, another famous English poet, playwright, and lover of Italy, Algernon Charles Swinburne, published his own version of Byron’s play, *Marino Faliero*. Despite the abundance of newly available English-language scholarship on the history of Marino Faliero at that time, Swinburne based his play upon no other historical sources than Byron’s appendix (Martin 154). This essay will argue that Swinburne did so in order to perpetuate Byron’s version of Faliero’s history, and that Byron’s version of Faliero’s history is a propagandistic falsification.

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<sup>1</sup> The doges were the presidential heads of the Venetian Republic.

Both Byron and Swinburne were closely involved with the sweeping changes in Italian politics which spanned the nineteenth century (Chew, *Swinburne* 97-9). All of the states comprising the fragmented Italian peninsula, such as the Republic of Venice and the Kingdom of Sicily, were in the process of joining together to become one country.<sup>2</sup> In the course of this process, the early local revolutions which Byron witnessed against Italy's French and Austrian rulers became, during Swinburne's lifetime, the Italian Unification. The entirety of this process of revolt and unification, divided into the two halves of the nineteenth century, came to be known as the Risorgimento – 'the resurgence' (Killinger 1). The Risorgimento resulted in the Republic of Italy as it stands today, and the Republic of Venice which Byron and Swinburne knew played a central role throughout.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Revolutionary France and the Austrian Empire<sup>3</sup> were at war in the southern-most area between French and Austrian borders: the Veneto<sup>4</sup>. With maximal ignominy, the Republic of Venice was conquered by Napoleon in 1797 and proceeded to change hands no fewer than three times between France and Austria in the coming years (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 17). What Byron found while living in Venice between 1816 and 1819 was that, "the only state in Italy which had never once in all its [millennial] history been subjected to foreign domination – indeed, had always been looked upon as the last refuge of Italian liberty – now found itself, to its shame and disgust, a relatively unimportant province of the Habsburg Empire" (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 19). Nearly every state comprising the Italian peninsula soon met with ignominies similar to Venice's, and suffered

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<sup>2</sup> "...Italy had remained disunited since the decline of the Roman Empire some fourteen centuries earlier. Subjugated in various geographical regions by wave after wave of outside powers... Italians had repeatedly and unsuccessfully challenged foreign rule. Finally, in the second half of the nineteenth century, they began to make progress toward liberating the peninsula by driving out the Austrians... Italians did not complete unification until the acquisition of [Venice] in 1866 and Rome in 1870, and even then they had to overcome centuries of lingering fragmentation in building a nation. At the time of the declaration of the [Kingdom of Italy], former Piedmontese prime minister Massimo d'Azeglio declared: 'We have made Italy; now we must make Italians.'" (Killinger 1)

<sup>3</sup> Known also as the Habsburg Monarchy, even after unifying as the titularly official Austrian Empire in 1804.

<sup>4</sup> The mainland of the Venetian Republic.

alternately under French or Austrian oppression for decades (Durant 541). It was not until 1866, after Byron's lifetime (1788-1824) and during Swinburne's (1837-1909), that the Veneto became the last major Italian province (before Rome) to be reclaimed under Victor Emmanuel II's emerging Kingdom of Italy (Killinger 1). But while the *officially* unified country of Italy took shape during the second half of the nineteenth century, disunity continued between those trying to decide Italy's political future from within. Victor Emmanuel II's monarchy was fiercely contested by Italy's republicans, many of whom looked to Venice for republican leadership (Ginsborg 225). Over all, therefore, nineteenth-century Italy was a battleground, first between France and Austria, and then between its own monarchists and republicans, and Venice was Italy's ground zero. As such, what Risorgimento republicans needed throughout this long external and internal struggle for national identity was a hero representative of their nationalist ideals. And just such a hero, it will be argued in the following pages, is what Byron created and Swinburne perpetuated with manipulated historical sources in their twin dramas about Marino Faliero.<sup>5</sup>

During a tour of the Palace of the Doges, Byron noticed that one of the throne-room dogal portraits had a black veil painted over it. On this veil was written,

HIC EST LOCUS MARINI FALETRI | DECAPITATI PRO CRIMINIBVS<sup>6</sup>

"This is the place of Marino Faliero, beheaded for his crimes". Marino Faliero was elected fifty-fifth

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<sup>5</sup> This essay focuses upon the manufacture rather than upon the effects of Byron's and Swinburne's propaganda: how and why Byron and Swinburne deliberately based their twin dramas upon covert a-historicity, and how and why this amounted to propagandistic portrayals of Marino Faliero. For the complexities of propagandistic effect of *Marino Faliero*, see Simpson's *Closet Performances: Political Exhibition and Prohibition in the Dramas of Byron and Shelley* and Simpson's *Ancestral Voices Prophesying What? The Moving Text in Byron's 'Marino Faliero' and 'Sardanapalus'*. The word 'propaganda', as it is used today, originated in the middle of the nineteenth century and was only popularized in the early twentieth (Diggs-Brown 48). As such, this word has only recently entered the apparatus of literary criticism. Nevertheless, as the first international superstar to live during his fame, Byron was well aware of his influence. His *Marino Faliero* inspired many other artists in various media — from painting to opera — to recreate his version of Faliero throughout Europe (Pomare` 90). Chapter 3 of this essay will examine the literary politics between the most important of these recreations before Swinburne's, which will be examined in Chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 for a photograph of this veiled portrait.

Doge of the Most Serene Republic of Venice on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1354 AD (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 223). At seventy-six years of age, he had already enjoyed a long and successful career as a naval and then as a military commander for Venice, and was still the Venetian ambassador in the Papal Court in Avignon before returning home after his election. His reign, however, was both brief and disastrous. Nowhere in the Venetian state chronicles or government minutes, nor in any independent histories, ancient or modern – including, moreover, those which Byron and Swinburne used in support of their twin dramas – is Faliero described as the hero Byron and Swinburne portrayed (Norwich *A History of Venice*, 228). Indeed, Faliero is described as exactly the opposite: a treasonous monarchist. In order to understand just how different Byron's and Swinburne's Faliero is from the real Faliero, it is necessary to know the details of Faliero's reign. The following excerpt from a history by today's foremost English-language scholar on Venice, John Julius Norwich, summarizes the events which Byron and Swinburne dramatized:

After the public festivities were over the Doge held the usual banquet in the Palace. Here it was, by all accounts, that the trouble started. Among the guests was a young man – later tradition has unconvincingly identified him with Michel Steno, the future Doge<sup>7</sup> – who began drunkenly forcing his attentions on one of the Dogressa's waiting-women. Falier<sup>8</sup> ordered him to be thrown out, but before leaving the Palace he somehow managed to slip into the Council Chamber and to leave a [defamatory] doggerel inscription on the ducal throne.

The effect on the Doge of this insult to his dignity may well be imagined; but his fury was even greater when the [Venetian Senate], instead of pronouncing the severe sentence for which he had hoped, took the age and previous good character of the accused into consideration and let him off with a penalty so light as to be tantamount, in Falier's eyes, to a condonation of the offence. He was a cantankerous old man, with all the intolerance that old men so often show for the brashness and irreverence of the younger generation; the terms of his *promissione*<sup>9</sup> continued to rankle; and as the weeks went by he began to develop an obsessive hatred....

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<sup>7</sup> Byron and Swinburne follow this tradition.

<sup>8</sup> This difference in spelling is significant, and will be addressed in Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> A new article of senatorial legislation which imposed considerable new restrictions upon the Doge's power; not directed at Faliero personally, it would have been implemented by the Senate at this time irrespective of who came to power next. Faliero's *promissione* was the latest in a continuous effort, since 1148, to reduce the acting capacity of the Dogeship and to raise that of the Senate, but this latest version was much more restrictive. Also see Norwich, *A History of Venice* 224 and Grignola 37. This *promissione* is addressed in Chapter 2.

Meanwhile other incidents occurred to fortify his resolve. Two highly respectable citizens, one a sea-captain, the other... director of the Arsenal, lodged separate complaints that they had been publicly insulted and had suffered bodily violence at the hands of young aristocrats. Falier sympathized but pointed out the difficulty that even he himself had experienced in obtaining punishment for such people....

And so the conspiracy took shape. On the night of 15 April, disturbances would be deliberately provoked throughout the city, and a rumour simultaneously spread [by the Arsenal, fiercely loyal to the Doge as his personal guard, and as having served under his previous naval command] of an approaching Genoese war fleet. This would bring the nobility and populace alike crowding into the Piazza [San Marco] where a member of the ducal family... would be waiting with a body of armed men... ready, on the pretext of protecting the person of the Doge, to massacre all the young nobles in sight. Marin Falier would then be proclaimed Prince<sup>10</sup> of Venice, and his title ratified by popular acclamation.

Falier seems to have been impelled, quite simply, by hatred and rancour, by a desire for revenge magnified and distorted by advancing senility into a single overpowering obsession. It may well be that [the director of the Arsenal] and his associates, seeing this, worked upon it further and made the old Doge a tool with which to advance their own political ends; if so, he was less an instigator of the plot than its unconscious victim. Yet it is still impossible to feel much sympathy for a man who, having attained supreme office, attempts to use that office to destroy, by force and with the maximum degree of violence and bloodshed, the government – and, incidentally, the class – that put him there. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 224-6)

When his conspiracy was discovered, Faliero was beheaded for treason against his own state office as doge. Conversely, Byron's and Swinburne's Faliero does not attempt to *overthrow* the Venetian Republic but rather to *restore* it from the corruption of the Venetian Senate. Their Faliero does not seek monarchy, but rather the power to execute unimpeded reform with a people's revolution.

No chronicle credits the historical Marino Faliero with anything approaching tragic dignity. He seems to have been a Venetian mafioso who tried, in his senescence, to go too far, and paid the penalty. But, having caught Byron's imagination, he became for Byron a hero of whom great things might have been expected: "Had the man succeeded, he would have changed the face of Venice, and perhaps of Italy", he writes, at the end of Appendix III, on no evidence at all. Faliero had (in so far as the scanty record shows)<sup>11</sup>, no agenda other than... self-aggrandizement. (Cochran, *Marino Faliero* 2)

In this way, Byron and Swinburne found their Risorgimento hero upon a radical leader of Italy's longest-lived republic, and portray Faliero not as having being beheaded "for his crimes", as is written on his portrait, but rather as having been martyred for his patriotism.

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<sup>10</sup> The Venetian title of 'Prince' (from *principale*, 'first') can be understood as a modest Venetian synonym for King.

<sup>11</sup> Faliero was not well-known beyond Venice, and scholarly sources of information concerning his conspiracy were for the most part rare and/or not translated into English. It will be argued that Byron took advantage of this 'scantiness' of Faliero's nineteenth-century record.

Byron's play was the basis for Swinburne's, and Swinburne used no historical sources other than Byron's appendix (Wise 354). This was because Swinburne was intent upon recreating Byron's hero and therefore needed to use Byron's same a-historicity. As such, the emphasis of this essay will be upon Byron's play. This essay's treatment of Byron's play as propaganda is based upon Michael Simpson's interpretation of Byron's play "as a 'script' for future political action, where radical-minded readers would make a 'directly political materialization of [the play's political] imperatives' by trying to succeed where the Doge's conspiracy fails" (Neziroski 63).<sup>12</sup> Swinburne recreated Byron's script in order to review the political career of Giuseppe Mazzini – King Emmanuel II's foremost opponent as Italy's foremost republican leader – as a failed effort to fulfill this script by making the newly unified Italy into a republic.

In summation, therefore, this essay will make the following argument by contextualizing Byron's and Swinburne's twin dramas within the political history of Italy and by referring to their biographies and most closely related works. In writing his historical drama, *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice*, Byron distorted his supporting historical sources under the pretence of adhering to strict historicity. Byron did so in order to characterize Doge Faliero as a hero of Venetian Republicanism. In so doing, Byron dramatized the necessity of a people's revolution in parallel visions of fourteenth- and early nineteenth-century Venice. Then, in rewriting Byron's historical drama for late nineteenth-century Venice and post-unification Italy (after 1870), Swinburne developed Byron's heroization of Faliero and updated the drama's political representations. He did so in order to remodel Faliero after Giuseppe Mazzini (died 1872), the foremost Risorgimento leader of the effort to make the newly united Italy into a republic.

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<sup>12</sup> Neziroski's summary of Simpson's idea is used for the sake of consistency; see Simpson, *Closet Performances* 2-4.

# Chapter 1

## From Marin Falier to Marino Faliero

Of all the places where the Carnival  
Was most facetious in the days of yore,  
For dance, and song, and serenade, and ball,  
And masque, and mime, and mystery and more  
Than I have time to tell now, or at all,  
Venice the bell from every city bore, –  
And at the moment when I fix my story,  
That sea-born city was in all her glory.

– Byron, “Beppo” stanza X

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the process by which Byron developed a new Doge Faliero from the original Doge Falier, and to explain how and why he presented his play portraying them as one and the same.

In his preface to his historical drama, *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice*, Byron compares eight historical sources on Faliero, which he divides into “ancient chroniclers [/national historians]” (22) and “moderns” (22). From the first group, he identifies his principal overall source as “Marin Sanuto” (21); from the second group, he identifies a source by Dr. John Moore as one which he has rejected as a basis for his play (23). Byron assures his audience that, but for Moore’s account, “the moderns... nearly agree with the ancient chroniclers” (22). However, instead of focusing upon how his principal source and the other six agree upon Faliero’s history, Byron focuses upon his rejection of Moore: “I have searched the chroniclers, and find nothing of the kind” (23).

Unlike his other seven sources, ancient and modern, “all of which I have looked over in the original language” (22), says Byron, Moore’s was the only available account of Faliero composed in English (22). In his *View of Italy*,<sup>13</sup> (1781) Moore speculates that Faliero’s main motivation for treason was spousal jealousy caused by Steno.<sup>14</sup> Byron’s preface aims to introduce Faliero as a political hero, but Moore’s Faliero is a domestic clown incited to rage by suspicions of cuckoldry.

I know not that the historical facts are alluded to in English, unless by Dr. Moore in his *View of Italy*. His account is false and flippant, full of stale jests about old men and young wives, and wondering at so great an effect from so slight a cause. How so acute and severe an observer of mankind as the author of *Zeluco*<sup>15</sup> could wonder at this is inconceivable. (Byron, *Marino Faliero* 22)

Byron defends his version of Faliero by attacking Moore’s credibility as a historian. He does so first by arguing that, even if Steno had only insulted (rather than imposed his attentions upon) the Dogaressa, it would have been more than sufficient *casus belli*. With a flurry of thirteen references to similarly improbable motivations behind other major historical calamities, Byron bullies Moore’s account into apparent inconsistency with all good sense and scholarship (22). Then Byron argues that Moore’s assertions of spousal jealousy are unfounded in the first place, on the grounds that Steno’s advances were not directed at the Dogaressa but rather towards one of her ladies in waiting (22)<sup>16</sup>. Further inspection, however, reveals that Byron’s declamation of Moore’s historicity at the insistence of his own historicity amounts to self-contradiction. Elsewhere in his preface Byron states that one of his other seven sources “attributes the conspiracy to [Faliero’s] *jealousy*; but I find this nowhere asserted by the

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<sup>13</sup> See Cochran, *Marino Faliero* 19 for the relevant section of this work, the title of which Byron abbreviates as such. *A View of the Society and Manners of Italy, with Anecdotes Relating to some Eminent Characters* (1781), Vol. I, pp.144-52. — Cochran’s citation.

<sup>14</sup> See Norwich’s summary of Faliero’s reign, pp. 9-10 of Introduction.

<sup>15</sup> Moore’s plot concerns what might be likewise interpreted as disproportionate retribution. It is therefore interesting to note that Byron writes in his 1813 preface to *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* that the original outline for Harold had been “perhaps a poetical *Zeluco*.”

<sup>16</sup> “The attentions of Steno himself appear to have been directed towards one of her damsels, and not to the ‘Dogaressa’ herself, against whose fame not the slightest insinuation appears” (22).

national historians" (22). And yet, shortly after this, he reveals that another of the seven, "indeed, says, that 'Altri scrissero che... dalla gelosa suspizion di esso Doge siasi fatto (Michel Steno) staccar con violenza'<sup>17</sup> etc., etc.; but" insists Byron, "this appears to have been by no means the general opinion, nor is it alluded to by Sanuto" (22). On the contrary, Sanuto, Byron's principal overall source, is very likely the original author of the version of Steno's doggerel as directed at the Dogaressa (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 225). Norwich translates Sanuto's version of Steno's doggerel thus:

Marin Falier  
Has a wife that is fair,  
He has to keep her while other men lay 'er.

The verse is quoted by Marino Sanudo<sup>18</sup>... He is writing well over a century afterwards, and the text may well be apocryphal. It has, nevertheless, led many later chroniclers and historians to suggest that the object of the youth's attentions was the Dogaressa herself... (*A History of Venice* 225)

In this light, it seems at first bizarre that Byron should reject Moore's account with so much bluster when Moore's is not so very different from Byron's other seven sources after all. But the real reason for Byron's attack on Moore is that he must discredit the only other available account of Faliero composed in English – due to its being unfavourable to his subject. That is, Byron uses his preface to discredit Moore's account of Faliero in order to legitimize his own. In this way, Byron is free to defer his thus uncontested authority on Faliero to the historical sources which he has selected and manipulated for his play's appendix. Moore's pre-existing version of Faliero contradicts Byron's new version, and must therefore be discredited in order for Faliero the republican martyr to take the stage convincingly, and it is necessary for Byron to discredit Moore's English-language account of Faliero because it is the only other contender for the attention of an English audience.

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<sup>17</sup> ['It has been written that... it was jealous suspicion incited by Steno which drove the Doge to violence....']

<sup>18</sup> This modern spelling of the historian's name is significant, as addressed on pg. 16.



I know no justification at any distance of time for calumniating an historical character... The black veil which is painted over the place of Marino Faliero amongst the Doges, and the Giant's Staircase, where he was crowned, and discrowned, and decapitated [see Appendix 5 and 6], struck forcibly upon my imagination, as did his fiery character and strange story. (Byron 23)

In Byron's hands, Faliero's portrait becomes one of new proportions, whose "fiery character" is painted in a light which differs from all precedents. Indeed, it is not too great a leap, one might say, for 'so acute and severe an observer of mankind as the author of *Don Juan*' to outright *disagree* with history under the pretence of doing exactly the opposite.

Where did Moore find that Marino Faliero begged his life? ...It is true that he avowed all. He was conducted to the place of torture, but there is no mention made of any application for mercy on his part; and the very circumstance of their having taken him to the rack seems to argue anything but his having shown a want of firmness, which would doubtless have been also mentioned by those minute historians who by no means favour him: such, indeed, would be contrary to... the truth of history. (Byron 23)

Byron creates his own version of "the truth of history" by altering or ignoring "those minute historians" – to whom he alludes with deliberate vagueness because they are not among his selected seven sources – as he deems necessary (Chew, *The Dramas of Lord Byron* 88). One of those historians, a Venetian patrician by the name of Nicolò Trevisan, is even mentioned in Sanuto's appended extract as a member of the council presiding over Faliero's trial (Byron 130). Trevisan's eye-witness records offer both meticulous detail and sober judgment (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 227), but are, unsurprisingly, of no use whatsoever to Byron and are therefore not among Byron's selected sources in the appendix. Instead, Byron prefers histories by "moderns" – the later dates of which leave them more open to criticism and interpretation – and "ancient chroniclers" which are not really ancient after all. In fact, like Sanuto, all of Byron's seven selected histories date from between one and four centuries after Faliero's death (Pomarè 82). But Byron's unusual spelling of "Marino Sanuo's"<sup>19</sup> modern Italian name bears a contrast of particular significance to his adaptation of Faliero's. While Byron modernizes Marin Falier's

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<sup>19</sup> See Norwich's quote on p. 9 of Introduction for an example of the long-standing and current spelling.

name in his play, he leaves the name "Marin Sanuto" in its original Venetian in his preface, appendix, and notes (22,132,104). The general reader, Italian or otherwise, would not know that Sanuto was "writing well over a century" (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 225) after the events which he describes concerning Faliero, but Byron uses this subtle morphological association "with the ancient chroniclers" to further the play's illusion of authenticity, accuracy, and historicity. Of course, this illusion is not confined to the preface, but extends into the many careful disorganizations in Byron's seven appendices.

At first glance, nothing seems amiss with Byron's impressive array of appendices, all of which support different elements of his play. Appendix I and II are Sanuto's account of Faliero's plot, trial, and execution, in Italian with an English translation (Byron 126); Appendix III is a letter in Italian by the famous poet and politician Francesco Petrarca, followed by an explanatory note in English by Byron (Byron 138); Appendix IV and V are political observations on Venice by Pierre Darú from *Histoire de la République de Venise*, in French with an English translation, also followed by a note in English by Byron (Byron 141); and Appendix VI and VII are a short passage by Pierre-Louis Ginguené from *Histoire Littéraire d'Italie*, also in French with an English translation, and also with a note in English by Byron (Byron 145).

Though four other historians of Venice are quoted (Sandi and Laugier) or mentioned (Sismondi and Navagero) in Byron's preface (22), Sanuto alone is selected for inclusion in the appendix. This is because the other four accounts of Faliero dwell sparsely on the moral and legal abomination of Faliero's conspiracy, whereas, in Byron's words, "honest Sanuto 'saddles him with a judgment,' as

Thwackum did Square"<sup>20</sup> (22). Sanuto's simple and straightforward narrative, composed mostly of dates and deeds, is malleable to Byron's exaggerations and inventions. "For the real facts, I refer to the extracts [of Sanuto] given in the Appendix in Italian, with a translation" (Byron 25). So concludes Byron's preface, and yet, Sanuto's 'translation' even seems to melt under the intensity of Byron's determination to write his own version of events. "This appendix", observes Peter Cochran in his critical edition of the play, "purports to be a translation of Appendix I. But..." (132)

Appendix I is a passage from Muratori's 1748 *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, which is itself an Italian translation of the fifteenth- or sixteenth-century chronicle *Vite dei Doge*, by Marin Sanuto, or Sanudo. Appendix II is a[n English] translation... by Francis Cohen, not of Muratori's eighteenth-century Italian, but of Sanuto's original Venetian. (Cochran 11)

The two versions are by no means identical.... Muratori's Italian is a *rifacimento* of the original, which has been altered or condensed with a view to convenience or literary effect. Proper names of persons and places are changed, Sanuto's Venetian dialect gives place to Muratori's Italian, and... pp.199-200 of the original text are omitted...<sup>21</sup> (Cochran 132)

The effect of this incongruence upon Byron's play is important: Appendix I and II are different translations of the same absent text, and the accuracy of neither translation can be confirmed beyond Byron's authority without further research.<sup>22</sup>

Notable alterations [between the translations of Sanuto] are the character whom Byron calls Israel Bertuccio, called by Sanudo "Admiral of the Arsenal", and not given a working-class pedigree. "Bertucci Israello" is a separate person... (Cochran 11)

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<sup>20</sup> "In one point only they agreed, which was, in all their discourses on morality never to mention the word goodness. The favourite phrase of [Square], was the natural beauty of virtue; that of [Thwackum], was the divine power of grace. The former measured all actions by the unalterable rule of right, and the eternal fitness of things; the latter decided all matters by authority." (Fielding 132)

This perfectly sums up Byron's treatment of both Faliero and Sanuto, wherein "honest Sanuto" wags his finger dutifully — but not too vigorously, lest he be judged — at the Doge's rebellion, not because the rebellion is not 'good' *per se*, but because it divides the powers that be.

<sup>21</sup> Sanuto's own condemnation of Faliero is thus conveniently omitted, "Uomo ambizioso e maligno, se volle far Signore di Venezia" (Robertson 413). ['This man of wicked ambition, *he* wanted to be Lord of Venice']

<sup>22</sup> This would have been especially difficult because much of the contents of the Venetian archives were removed to Paris under the French and to Vienna under the Austrians, to be guarded for censorship (Beatty 23).

By blending these two translations, Byron creates a new character from a real person: Israel Bertuccio from Bertucci Israello. Moreover, Byron creates a *rifacimento* of the original working-class Bertucci Israello in order to situate his new Admiral of the Arsenal, Israel Bertucci, among the common citizenry.

...Part of Faliero's problem (in the play) is the need he's under to associate with such "plebeians" as Israel Bertuccio. Now the historical ["Admiral of the Arsenal"] is in no source identified as being of any class other than the ruling class: making him a "plebeian" is Byron's decision, though he speaks... the same sort of blank verse as everyone else. (Cochran 7)

In this way, Sanuto's anonymous Admiral of the Arsenal, who is the first to conspire with Faliero after suffering a similar affront to his honour, is conceived anew in order to complement Byron's likewise invented Doge: Byron creates an oppressed everyman, urging his leader to glory.

Israel: Ah! dared I speak my feelings!

Doge: Give them breath.

Mine have no further outrage to endure.

Israel: Then, in a word, it rests but on your word

To punish and avenge – I will not say

My petty wrong, for what is a mere blow,

However vile, to such a thing as I am? –

But the base insult done your state and person. (1.2.404-10)

Furthermore, the personal relationship between Byron's Faliero and Israel also embodies the relationship between his Doge and the class which Israel represents. As such, Byron ensures that his Faliero cannot be interpreted as a distant general commanding common canon-fodder as a mere means for political ambition. Instead, his Faliero's motivation to conspire for insurrection against the Venetian Senate is portrayed as being not so much *against* the Senate as *for* the people – albeit to the same end. In Byron's play, it is Israel, acting on behalf of unnumbered fellow Venetians, who proposes a *pre-existing* conspiracy to the Doge.

Israel: Wouldst thou be king?

Doge: Yes – of a happy people.

Israel: Wouldst thou be Sovereign Lord of Venice?



The equestrian statue of which I have made mention in the third act as before that church [where Byron relocates the conspirators' meeting, see above quote: "except that all consultations took place in the palace"] is not, however, of a Faliero, but of some other now obsolete warrior, although of a later date. There were two other Doges of this family prior to Marino: Ordelafo, who fell in battle at Zara in 1117 (where his descendant [Marino] afterwards conquered the Huns), and Vital Faliero, who reigned in [1084]. (23-4)

Byron does far more than 'make mention' of this equestrian statue. It stands before the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo, in which are to be found the tombs of all the Faliero family<sup>25</sup> (Norwich 228). All, that is, except the two Faliero Doges: it is a fact recorded even in Byron's own chronicle sources that, up until Marino Faliero, all Doges were buried in St. Mark's Cathedral (Norwich 223). In spite of this, Byron gives a new identity to the subject of this equestrian statue as Doge Ordelafo Faliero, and has Marino address him as among other dogal and otherwise ruling Falieros buried in the adjacent church crypt.

Doge: Vault where two Doges rest - my sires! who died  
The one of toil, the other in the field,  
With a long race of other lineal Chiefs  
And sages, whose great labours, wounds, and state  
I have inherited - let the graves gape,  
Till all thine aisles be peopled with the dead,  
And pour them from thy portals to gaze on me! (3.1.23-9)

Rather than merely for a change of scenery, Byron relocates the conspirators' meeting from the Doge's palace in order to place his Doge before a falsified monument of Venice's gratitude to another Doge Faliero, who, as Byron notes in his preface, fell in battle upon the same fields which Marino Faliero later conquered<sup>26</sup> (24). This creates the perfect setting for Marino Faliero, before Israel arrives to take him into the conspirators' secret den, to freely address the heroes of his state and family on the problem of

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<sup>25</sup> See Norwich here for more specific details on the construction dates of this church and of adjacent S Maria della Pace; compare with Cochran's criticisms (throughout his edition of the play) of Byron's liberties and errors in setting.

<sup>26</sup> In the most important section of his play, the Doge's dying prophecy (5.3.26), Byron uses these two battles — fought by two Faliero Doges against the Huns — to make a clear connection between the Huns and the Austrian rulers of Venice.

posterity.<sup>27</sup> In a monologue of forty-seven lines, he again explains his motives to risk bringing shame upon his family name and state for the sake of his love of the Venetian people.

Doge:                                 ...Yes, proud city!  
Thou must be cleansed of the black blood which makes thee  
A lazar-house of tyranny...  
...  
Spirits! smile down upon me! for my cause  
Is yours, in all life now can be of yours, –  
Your fame, your name, all mingled up in mine,  
And in the future fortunes of our race!  
Let me but prosper, and I make this city  
Free and immortal, and our house's name  
Worthier of what you were – now and hereafter! (3.1.7-16, 41-7)

He justifies the bloodiness and treachery of the conspiracy as unavoidable necessity, and when Israel arrives, Faliero makes a point of calling the plot what it truly is:

Doge:                                 ...treason. Start not!  
*That* is the word; I cannot shape my tongue  
To syllable black deeds into smooth names,  
Though I be wrought on to commit them. (3.1.56-9)

It is at this point in the play that Faliero's fearless admission of what is at hand assures the audience of his justification. Here, set in the echoing stillness of bright Venetian moonlight, rather than in the privacy of the Doge's palace, the two conspirators come to speak the word with candour. In this way, Byron transforms Faliero's culpability into martyrdom, and the bloodiness of his treason into a Spartan ruthlessness against corruption.<sup>28</sup> Only the problem of posterity – whether he is to be recorded in history as a traitor or as a liberator – now remains.

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<sup>27</sup> See Skerry 92 for more on how this scene relates to the rest of the play in Faliero's confrontation with posterity.

<sup>28</sup> See Cochran, *Marino Faliero* 9, 122 for main reasons why Byron's Faliero compares himself to Agis, King of Sparta.

Byron seeks to support his Doge's transformation into martyrdom with the next extract. Appendix III is an epistle from Petrarch<sup>29</sup>, who had been sent as emissary multiple times to the Doge's court (Norwich 223). However, whereas Byron has his other three appendices translated into English, in this case, Byron has already translated Petrarch's epistle from its original Latin into Italian.

Byron's reasons for not translating it are clear, for the pro-Faliero conclusions he draws from it run clean counter to Petrarch's actual lament at Faliero's folly. Byron's summary, "Had the man succeeded, he would have changed the face of Venice, and perhaps of Italy", seems, to say the least, wilful. (Cochran, *Marino Faliero* 11)

In his accompanying note, Byron argues that, among other things, "the above Italian translation from the Latin epistles of Petrarch, proves –"

5thly, That he had a reputation for wisdom, only forfeited by the last enterprise of his life...<sup>30</sup>

From these [proofs], and the other historical [extracts] which I have collected, it may be inferred, that Marino Faliero possessed many of the qualities, but not the success of a hero.... Had the man succeeded, he would have changed the face of Venice, and perhaps of Italy. As it is, what *are* they both? (Byron 140)

Byron's note reveals the real nature of his heroization of Faliero. In the first place, his manipulation of historical sources focuses not upon the success of a hero, but upon the qualities: not upon Faliero's failure, but upon his motivations. Byron's characterization of Faliero is not one of a senile malcontent, but rather one of a fallen saviour in a just war. In this way, Byron seeks to redeem Faliero's posterity by casting Faliero's failure in a new light. This is clear in his concluding assertion and question: "Had the man succeeded, he would have changed the face of Venice, and perhaps of Italy. As it is, what *are* they both?" (Byron 140) In asking his readers to consider 'what might have been,' Byron achieves the most significant element of Faliero's characterization: Faliero's relationship with modern Venice and Italy.

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<sup>29</sup> Levati, *Viaggi di Petrarca*, vol. iv. p. 323 — Byron's citation (139).

<sup>30</sup> Byron challenges Petrarch's detraction of Faliero. "“He had usurped for so many years a false fame of wisdom;’ rather a difficult task I should think. People are generally found out before eighty years of age, at least in a republic.”

Together with Byron's textual notes, the combination of the remaining two appendices clearly connects Venice at the end of the eighteenth century with the Faliero of Byron's play. Byron appends an extract from Darú's *Histoire de la République de Venise* in which its author unequivocally condemns Venice as a moral, legal, and political miasma, deserving only destruction (Pomarè 82-3). However, this extract comes from the last chapter of Darú's book, and refers to the very last days of Venetian sovereignty and immediately afterwards. That is to say, it does not concern Faliero at all. But Byron uses Darú's descriptions of debauchery and decadence to answer his preceding question on Venice and Italy: "As it is, what are they both?"

"...Darú was an important official in Napoleon's household and his history of Venice, written when he is out of a job after Napoleon's fall, is Napoleonic propaganda" (Beatty 24). At the centre of Darú's description of Venice is his damnation of its oligarchy, past *and* present. His extract concludes, "The corruption of morals had deprived them of their empire. We have just reviewed the whole history of Venice, and we have not once seen them [Venice's oligarchs] exercise the slightest influence" (Byron 144). With another veering departure from "the national historians" of Venice (Byron 22), Byron uses the French apologist's *liberté, égalité, fraternité* to further justify Faliero's attempted insurrection against the patrician Senate.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Byron even concludes his play with a scene directly borrowed from Darú's history of Faliero (found in none of his other sources) and an unmistakable reference to an implicit common theme. In Darú's account, Faliero's decapitated head rolls down the stairs at the site

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<sup>31</sup> See Norwich, *A History of Venice* 616 for more on the dynamic between Venetians and their Senate in the early stages of revolution in France and across the Veneto.

of his execution (195); before this happens in Byron's play, Byron scripts his Faliero with a direct quote from a leader who met his fate at the French revolutionists' guillotine, as he explains in his Appendix

Note 9:

"Tis with age, then."

This is the actual reply of Bailli, [mayor] of Paris, to a Frenchman who made him the same reproach [for seeming to tremble] on his way to execution, in the earliest part of their revolution. (121)

Byron subverts Darú's bias for *la République* in favour of his Faliero's vision of *la Republicca*: though Darú's account by no means condones Faliero's insurrection, his outcry – *against the Senate, for the people* – is exactly what none of Byron's Venetian historians provide. Byron's Faliero thus makes use of the enemy of his enemy to reflect an inverted revolution: instead of *le peuple* deposing the leader of a monarchical institution, the vile Venetian oligarchy slays the people's champion.

Byron's last extract brings Byron's Faliero still more directly into the period which Darú describes. Strangely enough, this extract from Ginguené's *Histoire Littéraire d'Italie*, despite being so short and making no mention of Marino Faliero or the fourteenth century, is the most persuasive of Byron's version of events, if simply by virtue of its sheer uncanniness.<sup>32</sup> Below this extract, Byron adds, "If the Doge's prophecy seem remarkable, look to the above, made by Alamanni two hundred and seventy years ago" (146). Of foremost importance to Byron's characterization of Faliero is his Faliero's relationship with modern Venice and Italy, but of foremost of importance to his Faliero's relationship with modern Venice and Italy is his invention of Faliero's dying prophecy. Here, at the end of the play, the Doge speaks "to Time and to Eternity, / Of which I grow a portion," (5.3.26-7) and foretells exactly how Venice will enter the Risorgimento during Byron's lifetime.

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix 2.

## Chapter 2

# A New Hero in Parallel Visions of Venice

She is reduced to a passive existence. She has no more wars to sustain, peaces to conclude, or desires to express. ...Insensible to insults, she sacrifices all....

– Darú's conclusion to *Histoire de la République de Venise*<sup>33</sup>

But he was of Thoreau's mind, that if you can "make your failure tragical by courage, it will not differ from success."

– R.L. Stevenson, *Studies of Men and Books*

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Byron's play about fourteenth-century Venice represents Venice in the first half of the nineteenth century. This will be illustrated by how Byron's heroized Faliero advocates the necessity of radical empowerment of the Venetian people, and how Byron's Faliero contrasts two foremost early nineteenth-century leaders in Venice. Byron's Faliero advocates the necessity of radical empowerment by contrasting the helplessness of the early nineteenth-century Venetian people; Byron's Faliero contrasts the last Doge of Venice, Lodovico Manin, who failed Venetian Republicanism throughout his Dogeship (1789-1796), and Napoleon I, who betrayed Venetian Republicanism in 1797.

In characterizing his Faliero as a hero, Byron slips history from out of the hands of the victors who wrote it, and rewrites their victory as a tragedy. 'Freed', by hook or by crook, first from the hands of authorized Venetian chroniclers, and then from the hands of Italian and French statesmen, Byron's new history of a fourteenth-century Doge reflects the Italian tragedy of an alternately France- and

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<sup>33</sup> Norwich, *A History of Venice* 583

Austria-ruled Venice. Moreover, Byron's new history of this fourteenth-century Doge also portrays the kind of hero necessary to end the tragedy and write something new. Given Byron's half-millennium hindsight since Faliero's death, the details of his prophecy make for hitherto unrealized accuracy in his version of history. In a complete reversal of tactics, Byron inspires his Doge's last words not with poetic license, but rather with clear allusions to political facts, figures, persons, and events.<sup>34</sup>

Lines 47-50 align exactly with Napoleon's 'conquest' of Venice: more than a thousand years after wooden stakes had been driven into the mud of a malarial salt-marsh by Christians who feared God still more than they feared the Huns, Napoleon strolled into Venice with no formal obstruction. Venice's only real resistance to Napoleon came from the men of two mainly agrarian centres of Veneto mainland, men under strict orders to fight someone else instead. Venice needed to quell local pro-French rebellions against its own government in three small towns near Verona, and, "Since Venice's regular army was obviously inadequate, armed militias raised from the local peasantry were the only alternative... The measures proposed were to be purely defensive, and directed not against the French but against rebellious citizens of the Venetian Republic; every volunteer was to be given the clearest possible instructions in this sense" (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 618). Nevertheless, this brought about unforeseen conflict with two of Napoleon's garrisons which he had left behind for support as he further invaded Austria while in pursuit of retreating Austrian forces. "[Verona] was the one city in which [Napoleon] could take no chances, for as well as being Venice's largest and most important mainland possession it controlled the approaches to the Brenner [Pass, in the Alps], over which he might well wish to return to Italy in due course. Unfortunately, Verona was also the city in which anti-French feeling was strongest" (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 616). The newly-equipped farmers, tradesmen, and serfs, though never having claimed to be adept in political ideologies, saw their chance to do what

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<sup>34</sup> See Appendix 3 for the relevant sections of the Doge's speech.

needed to be done, and took it. Not only were other small rebellions also being overcome in neighbouring local villages – which resulted, before any fighting could take place in Verona, in three-hundred pro-French Venetian prisoners – but now at least 10,000 young Veronesi were marching against French forces. “What nobody seems to have properly foreseen is that these tattered demoralised forces, suddenly finding themselves for the first time with weapons in their hands, might not be over-conscientious in the matter of obeying orders” (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 618). The Veronesi managed not only to wound, kill, or imprison hundreds, but also to endure, unsupported by Venice, the retributive bombardment and siege of their city by 15,000 French troops for a week. Though he soon brought the uprising to an end, Napoleon was furious. He sent a letter to the Venetian Senate, demanding that they bring their militias to order and their anti-French criminals to trial: otherwise, he would declare war. He had known that the Venetian Senate felt too weak to fight, but if it was too weak even to maintain its claims of neutrality, it did not deserve to survive. Not half a month later, he fulfilled his infamous threat, “I shall be an Attila to the state of Venice!” (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 625):

When Lodovico Manin, the 118th Doge of Venice and the last, was elected... on 9 May 1789, he and his subjects were still unaware that, only four days previously, the States General of France had met at Versailles, and that the chain of events had already begun that was to bring France to revolution. It is not likely, however, even if the news had reached the Rialto, that the Venetians would have paid it much heed. For over seventy years now, they had lived in an ivory tower, secure in the belief that their by now traditional policy of neutrality would save them from all ills and that their determination to live at peace with their neighbours would be universally respected. Their mistake – the most tragic mistake in all their history – was to cling to this belief long after they should have seen it to be untenable; and for this disastrous piece of self-deception Lodovico Manin must bear much of the responsibility. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 605)

Byron’s curse bears ruthless criticism of Venice’s last Doge and the Senate, as well as the Venetian city-populace (including the Arsenal) for having allowed itself to be humiliated by inaction under the Senate’s leadership. In his Appendix Note 10, Byron explains line 57 of the curse,

“Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!”



Venetians – Byron’s own generation – living memory remained fresh concerning the Veronese Easter Rising of 1797: that unauthorized revolt by peasants of the Venetian mainland who had been likewise kept beyond the gates of influence and who, when suddenly empowered, took the fate of their nation into their own hands in spite of their Senate. On the eve of insurrection, Byron’s Faliero expresses great regret at not having assembled his own peasant militia, from his mainland fiefdom near the Alps, in addition to the Venetian Arsenal. In this passage, Byron contrives a clear reference to the Veronese Easter Rising, obvious in every detail from the bumbling inertia of Venice’s city-status populace and the indefensible neutrality of Venice’s elite to the militia’s valiant and unsupported patriotism.<sup>36</sup> With this reference, Byron contrasts the Veronese Easter Rising to the shameful complacency of the Venetians among whom he lives, who had allowed themselves to be ruled by a cowardly Senate and an impotent Doge Ludovico Manin. The capital’s populace sits on its hands while the supposedly inferior provincial populace falls only after standing tall.

For half such a crime, Marin Falier had died on the scaffold. ...Manin proceeded with his stutterings to dishonour himself, the [Senate], and his country; and not a hand was raised to pluck from him the ducal mantle and break his head upon the pavement on which the ministers of kings and the legates of popes had knelt! (Ragg 223)

This, in turn, creates a parallel with Byron’s Venetian populace of 1821, when his play is published, and the mid-fourteenth-century Venetian populace: locked outside of the execution of their liberator, kept in by ignorance and rendered helpless by the Senate.

Byron’s tragedy reveals this ignorance and helplessness of the Venetians in his similarly constructed parallel visions of their city. Byron’s Faliero curses Venice in 1355 to the Venice of 1821, and his prophecy reveals that this curse has been wrought by that Venetian body politic – the corrupt Senate – which Faliero sought to crush like a parasite sapping the strength from Venice’s citizens. And

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 4 for the relevant passage from Byron’s play.

yet, in so doing, Byron's Faliero has not completely failed: in illustrating what Venice has lost and why, Faliero's unspoken trial defence is heard after all. If only Venetians would act upon their indignation, Faliero's curse would stand to be lifted upon its fulfilment. Byron does not doom Venice to remain for all time as it is in 1821; all that Faliero prophesies has already come to pass by that time. But "the Venetians were still in a state of shock. Many of them... felt no small degree of shame; for they themselves, as they were well aware, had been largely responsible for the speed and suddenness of their collapse" (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 2). The allusions in Faliero's prophecy proceeding from Venice's fall in line 51 could not have been clearer to those who had witnessed firsthand and now continued to suffer the consequences of their inaction.

The "bastard Attila," (5.3.49) hypersensitive about his obscure lineage, was so pleased with the curators of Venice's Marciana Library for a concoction of papers which suggested that the Bonaparte lineage was descended from the ancient Roman family, Bona Pars, that he left them twenty-three thousand Italian lire (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 42). But Napoleon had no qualms with either buying or selling his newly established "Venetian Municipality" (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 10).

She shall be bought  
And sold, and be an appanage to those  
Who shall despise her! She shall stoop to be  
A province for an empire, petty town  
In lieu of capital, with slaves for senates,  
Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!  
Then when the Hebrew's in thy palaces,  
The Hun in thy high places, and the Greek  
Walks o'er thy mart, and smiles on it for his;                   60  
When thy patricians beg their bitter bread  
In narrow streets, and in their shameful need  
Make their nobility a plea for pity... (5.3.52-7)

The 'democracy' which Napoleon enforced upon Venice could not even pretend to wield the authority of a government elected by popular mandate; its members were appointed by French command, and no Venetian vote was permitted (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 13). But Napoleon had no reason to pretend to dignify a sacrificial pawn in his political strategy.<sup>37</sup> He had already made plans to transfer Venice and most of the Veneto mainland and territories to Austria, and "Napoleon had no intention of making the [Austrian Emperor] a present of a rich and influential city; ...there was still a chance of milking Venice of everything he could lay his hands on" (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 14). Napoleon's troops looted and demolished churches, emptied the treasury, melted crown jewels, and destroyed whatever arsenal supplies they could not carry. Then they left, only to return in seven short years after the Battle of Austerlitz.

Byron explains line 60 of Faliero's curse in Appendix Note 11: "The whole commerce is in the hands of the Jews and Greeks, and the Huns form the garrison" (123). The Huns, being an ironic reference to the Austrians (Cochran, *Marino Faliero* 61), made only one alteration to Venice during their first occupation of the ruined capital. In partially restoring the hereditary aristocracy, "of whom nine hundred assembled on 23 February in... the Doge's Palace, but in ordinary clothes rather than in their former robes of office" (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 19), Austria implemented a Venetian municipal government to deal with issues such as littering and drainage systems. This municipal government was retained to some degree, too, when Napoleon reclaimed Venice in 1806 after defeating the Austrian forces at Austerlitz, and crowned his adopted son, Eugène Beauharnais, Vice-Regent of North Italy – and Prince of Venice (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 26).

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<sup>37</sup> See Norwich, *A History of Venice* "The Eighteenth Century" for the political details of this transaction.

Then, when the few who still retain a wreck  
 Of their great fathers' heritage shall fawn  
 Round a barbarian Vice of Kings' Vice-regent,  
 Even in the palace where they swayed as Sovereigns,  
 Even in the palace where they slew their Sovereign,  
 Proud of some name they have disgraced, or sprung  
 From an adulteress boastful of her guilt 70  
 With some large gondolier or foreign soldier... (5.3.64-71)

It was a "barbarian" (line 66) tribe known as the Franks, which gave their name to what later be known as France. But Beauharnais was no better for Venice than the Huns which Marino Faliero had conquered in the fourteenth century, or those modern Huns who had just quit Venice's garrison. In fact, Beauharnais was little better even than Napoleon (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 26). Still, no Venetians could rejoice when Austria retook the entire Veneto after Napoleon's defeat in Paris in 1814 (Stabler 69).

[Venetians] shall bear about their bastardy in triumph  
 To the third spurious generation<sup>38</sup> – when  
 Thy sons are in the lowest scale of being,  
 Slaves turned o'er to the vanquished by the victors,  
 Despised by cowards for greater cowardice,  
 And scorned even by the vicious for such vices  
 As in the monstrous grasp of their conception  
 Defy all codes to image or to name them... (5.3.72-9)

Seven years later, in 1821, after working at it for four years, Byron published *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice* (Byron 24). The references within the remaining eighteen lines of Faliero's prophecy build upon each other and those preceding them, without interruption and almost without pause, in a crescendo towards five final exclamations. The first among these exclamations, in line 97, is emphasized, and brings the whole of the prophecy together. Moreover, this line brings Byron's Faliero again to the close and to the fore of the tragedy of modern Venice – and even of Italy itself.

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<sup>38</sup> See Exodus 20:5.

Then, when of Cyprus, now thy subject kingdom,<sup>39</sup> 80  
 All thine inheritance shall be her shame  
 Entailed on thy less virtuous daughters, grown  
 A wider proverb for worse prostitution –  
 When all the ills of conquered States shall cling thee,  
 Vice without splendour, sin without relief  
 Even from the gloss of love to smooth it o'er,  
 But in its stead, coarse lusts of habitude,  
 Prurient yet passionless, cold studied lewdness,  
 Depraving Nature's frailty to an Art –  
 When these and more are heavy on thee, when 90  
 Smiles without mirth, and pastimes without pleasure,  
 Youth without honour, age without respect,  
 Meanness and weakness, and a sense of woe  
 'Gainst which thou wilt not strive, and dar'st not murmur,  
 Have made thee last and worst of peopled deserts,  
 Then, in the last gasp of thine agony,  
 Amidst thy many murders, think of *mine!*

To the eyes of the twenty-first century, Byron's Faliero emerges from conflicting histories as from a thick fog,<sup>40</sup> but in the context of heroism at the turn of the eighteenth-century, Byron's characterization of Faliero stands in direct contrast to the two foremost men of modern Venice and Italy: Lodovico Manin, and Napoleon Bonaparte.

In marked contrast to his predecessor, [the last Doge of Venice, Lodovico Manin] was honest; even in the worst of the days that lay ahead, his integrity was never questioned. But in the years during which he was called upon to guide the Republic, there were other qualities more important even than honesty: strength, vision, courage, firmness of will – in a word, leadership. Of these qualities Lodovico Manin seems to have possessed scarcely a trace; indeed, as one reads through the last painful records of the dying Republic, one is tempted to wonder whether they had not disappeared altogether from Venice. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 606)

Doge Manin maintained his integrity with the divisive indecision of the Senate right up until the day that both their titles were forcibly dissolved. At this time, Venice required a leader who was able to

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<sup>39</sup> Reference to Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, wherein the settings of Cyprus and Venice are compared as chaos and civilization. Byron reverses the comparison in this line.

<sup>40</sup> Venetian chroniclers record Faliero's arrival to Venice, upon being elected, as an omen: the fog was so unusually thick that his boatman accidentally had him disembark at the place where criminals were traditionally executed. See 5.3.53-64.

command with executive power, but with such an imbalance of authority, the Doge – let alone such a man as Manin – could achieve nothing even in crisis.

Venice's unique constitution was originally designed by blending systems of monarchical and republican governance<sup>41</sup>: an elected Senate would elect a life-long Prince to direct diplomatic, civic, and military action (Grignola 6-10). But since Marino Faliero's election, the same Senate-issued *promissione* had continued to reduce the Dogeship's power to that of an unconvincing figurehead.<sup>42</sup> Whatever Faliero's motivations in trying to restore the Dogeship's power to that of a real Prince (or "King" or "Sovereign Lord"<sup>43</sup>), his failed insurrection brought about still more effective action from the Venetian Senate to save the state than did Doge Manin's best efforts. At least, in Faliero's case, the Senate's executioner knew where the head of state was.

Wars between France and Austria had almost invariably been fought out on Italian soil; it could not now be long before Lombardy and the Veneto were once again a battleground. When that moment came, Venice, however peaceably inclined, must show herself ready, and able, to fight. If she were not, what hope was there that her territorial integrity would be preserved? In her present condition, her very existence as an independent state was in danger.

To [Venice's] ruling families, the doctrines of the [French] Revolution were every bit as repugnant as they were to the most reactionary of feudal aristocrats in Austria, England or Prussia. The European monarchies, in short, saw no reason why the

*Serenissima* should not prove an enthusiastic, even if a not very effectual, ally in the struggle against the godlessness and chaos that they saw ahead.

They were soon to be disillusioned.

...When, in November 1791, King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia suggested that Venice should join in a League of Italian Princes to resist the Jacobin threat, she [Venice] replied that she did not consider such measures necessary...

Six months later, the war had begun.

In September 1792 the King of Sardinia made a further effort to enlist Venetian aid. This time the invitation was to join with himself and the Kingdom of Naples in a neutral defensive league, to which it was hoped that all the other states of Italy would ultimately adhere. Once again, however, the Republic refused point-blank.... Even when, four months later, King Louis XVI met

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<sup>41</sup> See Pomarè 71.

<sup>42</sup> This *promissione* was not a result, but largely the cause, of Faliero's insurrection, which it preceded. See footnote 7 on p.13, Introduction.

<sup>43</sup> See Byron 1.2.17,18.

his death at the guillotine they refused to be shaken.... In February 1793 the monarchies made their last attempt: Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Holland, Spain and Sardinia had formed a coalition to protect Europe from atheists and regicides. Would Venice not join them in this sacred mission?

Venice would not. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 608, 606, 607, 608)

In 1797, shortly after the dust had settled from the unsanctioned Veronese Easter Rising, conquered Venice remained a divided nation. After all, the Veronese had been given orders to combat their fellow Venetians who had sided with the French. Both within Venice's borders and among Venice's people, Republicanism and Monarchy had battled for supremacy; literally and ideologically, Venice had been caught in the middle.

This latest conflict between Europe's two leading forms of governance was one which Venice's constitution had sought to unite in itself, but now that constitution was nullified, and not everyone in Manin's Venice was disappointed.

The absurdity of events only grew during the next few months as the zeal of the Venetian "revolutionaries" reached new heights. In June, [Napoleon's Venetian] Municipality issued a proclamation praising Bajamonte Tiepolo, the would-be-tyrant who in 1309 had attempted to overthrow the republic and replace it with his own despotic rule. The members of the Municipality claimed that Bajamonte had, in reality, been a freedom fighter who had died trying to topple the closed ruling aristocracy... having thus manufactured both a hero and a villain... (Madden 374)

Had it not been for the fact, known to Venetian historians simply for its irony, that Marino Faliero, earlier in his career, had been specially entrusted by the state to dispose of Bajamonte Tiepolo by whatever means necessary, Faliero, too might have been similarly heroized (Grignola 48). Perhaps this would have happened anyway, but the French heroes of democracy did not stay in Venice long enough to make the necessary revisions to history, and when they returned seven years later in 1806 after winning the Battle of Austerlitz, they were no longer democrats.

The Venetian supporters of the Municipality... truly believed that Venice would rise again as a democratic city. As nationalism spread across Europe, it kindled the dream of a united Italy in Italians across the shattered peninsula. Venice's democrats had every reason to believe that a new Venice, remade in the image of the Enlightenment and supported by the French, would rise to become the leader of a new Italy. They were, however, badly deceived. (Madden 374)

They might have lost their Republic, but Bonaparte had promised them at least their freedom and independence; suddenly, without consulting them or indeed even informing them, he had sold them like chattels to the Emperor of Austria. (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 17)

Their champion, Napoleon, the great dispenser of liberty, had abandoned them to the medieval, aristocratic, and absolutist monarchs, the Hapsburgs. How could he topple the Republic of Venice, they asked, only to deliver it into the hands of a Conservative monarchy? (Madden 375)

The answer to this question was simple: Napoleon had become what he had overthrown. In 1805, when he reclaimed the Veneto, Napoleon had himself crowned as King. Three years earlier, he had created a Republic of Italy from the provinces between France and Venice, and now, Napoleon incorporated these with the Veneto to create his new Kingdom of Italy. By 1809, Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy extended even into Rome. In uniting so much of Italy, Napoleon had accomplished what had seemed impossible for Italians since the fall of the Roman Empire, but the new Italy which democrats had hoped for seemed even more impossible now. From soldier to general, from republican to monarch, a Frenchman had become Italy's new Emperor.

It was under these two men, Ludovico Manin and Napoleon Bonaparte, that Venetians witnessed the period which Byron's prophecy describes (5.3.26-7, 41-101). Manin was dethroned without any discernible difference to his capacity as ruler, and Venice had been used as diplomatic currency for the new Empire of their new King of Italy, Napoleon. Between Manin and Napoleon, the vulnerabilities of republicanism were exploited at both extremes: the shadow-puppet could have done nothing, the pretender could now do anything. Under these two characters was formed the chain of events which Byron's Faliero prophesies, cursing his audience to review, as he concludes, "think of mine!"

Historians today tend to dismiss the cuckold explanation for Falier's actions, emphasizing instead his experiences as a diplomat, which made clear to him how differently politics unfolded outside the lagoon. Venice's republican government was not just rare, it was unique. The world was ruled by powerful autocrats who acted decisively, while Venice was governed by an increasingly complex constitutional system and its ever-growing bureaucracies. No other city-state in Italy still maintained a republic. They were all ruled by signori, powerful men and their families who acquired despotic control while paying lip service to republican ideals. (Madden 205)

Byron, too, knew that the doggerel inscription upon Faliero's throne<sup>44</sup> was not addressed to the Dogressa, and did not use jealousy to motivate his Doge. Byron, too, stressed the wisdom of Faliero's long and honourable career in diplomacy as determining Faliero's actions once 'called' to the Dogeship. Byron, too, scorned the inefficiency, corruption, and cowardice of Venice's Senate. It is difficult, but unnecessary here, to speculate whether Byron also knew that the real Faliero's insurrection was consistent with an overall shift in Italian politics from oligarchies to autocracies – a conflict reflected in the *promissione* which Venice's Senate used, during Faliero's 'rule', to take more of the Dogeship's power for itself.<sup>45</sup> Nor is it important here that this conflict in fourteenth-century Italy echoed the conflict in late eighteenth-century Europe between republicanism and monarchy (Madden 205). What is important is that Byron knew that declining Venice could only be saved by a hero who could match Napoleon, strong enough to make Venice's people strong, too.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See pp. 9-10 of Introduction.

<sup>45</sup> See Grignola, 49 for details on this dynamic in Italy and in Faliero's court.

<sup>46</sup> The Doge describes his intended governmental structure with an architectural metaphor, "Proportioned like the columns of the temple, / Giving and taking strength reciprocal" but also without conceding his rulership anew, as the rebellion will produce, "in a fair free commonwealth / Not rash equality but equal rights". (3.2.169,171-2) See Dennis 127 for varying interpretations of the political structure proposed by Byron's Doge.

If, for example, there had arisen one strong leader of the stamp of... Francesco Foscari<sup>47</sup>... able to focus Venetian energies and to stand firm against Bonaparte's bullying; if Venice had been able, in the summer of 1796, to throw into the field a properly equipped army of perhaps as few as 25,000 determined men under a competent general,<sup>48</sup> she ...aided, as they would have been, by the Kings of Naples and Sardinia – could almost certainly have saved the situation and driven the French from Italy. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 634)

On the one hand, Byron's Faliero represents the revolution which Napoleon betrayed; not the French Revolution – though Napoleon betrayed that, too – but the new, untested revolution which was sweeping over the West, from Rousseau's Lake Geneva to Washington's new-born United States; the intoxicating *idea* of revolution which promised all that social contracts and positive law could offer to unite and emancipate the common man, the Israel Bertuccios of the world (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 606). After all, Byron's Faliero is heroized by his intent: he is not *against* the Senate, but *for* the people, even if his plans for the people's progress remain inexact.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, Byron's Faliero represents the betrayed Venetians themselves: both those who had been betrayed by Napoleon and those who had been betrayed by their own inactive government. In both cases, Venetians were kept in by ignorance and rendered helpless, as much under Manin and the Senate as under Napoleon's Venetian Municipality and ensuing Kingdom of Italy. When Byron's Faliero is beheaded, he is thwarted just as Venetians' self-determination was thwarted under both heads of state. And yet, Faliero *himself* remains unequivocally Venetian: his revolt is that of a Doge of Venice. When he is beheaded, he is indeed thwarted in his plans for the people's progress, but this thwarted progress, however inexact, is contrasted against a quote from Paris Mayor Bailli's beheading.<sup>50</sup> Faliero's revolt is therefore contrasted against Napoleon's, wherein the latter overthrew a monarchical institution of France only to

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<sup>47</sup> Byron dealt with exactly this possibility in a play about Doge Francesco Foscari, also published in 1821, as will be seen in Chapter 3.

<sup>48</sup> Such was Marino Faliero.

<sup>49</sup> Refer to Byron's response to Petrarch in the appendix to *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice*; footnote 30, p. 23, Chapter 1.

<sup>50</sup> Refer to Byron's *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice* Note 9, as examined on p. 24, Chapter 1.

replace it: Napoleon was indeed one who betrayed his revolution so that he “acquired despotic control while paying lip service to republican ideals” (Madden 205). By this contrast, therefore, Byron’s Faliero betrays his ‘republic’ only in order to return it to Venice’s ideal republicanism (Pomarè 91).

It was as if the constitution – that miraculous constitution which had preserved the Republic until it could boast a longer period of unbroken authority than any other state in Europe – had worn out at last, all its former flexibility and resilience gone.... Such a system, whatever its faults, did not necessarily result in weak government, at least in the short term; with a firm hand at the helm, it might have even made for quicker decisions and more determined action at the moment of crisis. But in the hands of mediocrities it could not fail to sap the constitutional strength of the state, rendering it powerless to resist the combined ideological and military threat posed by the philosophy of revolution on the one hand and Napoleon Bonaparte on the other. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 636)

“Had the man succeeded, he would have changed the face of Venice, and perhaps of Italy. As it is, what are they both” (140)? Without postulating exactly what these changes might have been, Byron makes it clear that they would have been uniquely Venetian. Whether as “King” or even as “Sovereign Lord of Venice” (1.2.17,18), Byron’s correspondence describes his play as being “full of republicanism” (Byron, *Letters and Journals* VII: 190), such as could only be adapted to Venice’s singularly mixed constitution. And it is Byron’s “old fiery Doge’s natural character,” if any, which could have accomplished this.

# Chapter 3

## Faliero's Political Stage on Grand Tour

O VENICE! Venice!...  
If I, a northern wanderer, weep for thee,  
What should thy sons do? – anything but weep?  
And yet they only murmur in their sleep.  
In contrast with their fathers...  
O agony! that centuries should reap  
No mellow harvest! Thirteen hundred years  
Of wealth and glory turned to dust and tears...  
And the harsh sound of the barbarian drum...

– Byron, "Ode to Venice"

Ill-minded man! why scourge thy kind  
Who bowed so low the knee?  
By gazing on thyself grown blind,  
Thou taught'st the rest to see.  
With might unquestioned, – power to save, –  
Thine only gift hath been the grave  
To those that worshipped thee...

– Byron, "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte"

The purpose of this chapter is to examine related political information derived from Byron's life in Venice and two of his most closely related works published in 1821: a poem, *The Prophecy of Dante*, and another historical drama about a medieval Venetian doge, *The Two Foscari*. This chapter also reviews the politico-literary context of Byron's *Faliero* as 're-scripted' by other major European artists across Europe before Swinburne's *Marino Faliero* in 1885. This chapter concludes with how Byron's script can be related to the failed Venetian people's revolution of 1848.

Byron's *Marino Faliero* was banned throughout Austrian Italy in the very year of its publication (Cochran, *Marino Faliero* 15). His Appendix Note 9 concludes, "few individuals can conceive, and none could describe the actual state into which the more than infernal tyranny of Austria has plunged this unhappy city" (Byron 123). But this was certainly not the sole cause for the ban. Austrians were already well aware of their reception in Venice; there was considerably more at stake.

...The secret police, not only of every Italian state through which [Byron] passed, but of the Austrian imperialist authorities themselves, were keeping him under... close surveillance. Their dispatches... show what a threat he was seen as representing. Their definition of "Romantic" was "Roma Antica" – that is to say, Ancient Roman, that is to say, republican. (Cochran, *Byron and Italy* 229)<sup>51</sup>

Faliero's urging to "redeem [the Dogeship] / Back to its antique lustre in our annals, / By sweet revenge on all that's base in Venice" (1.2.590-2) – not to mention his innumerable tributes to various Caesars (Pomarè 91) – was the language of rebellion. Byron's play, and especially its prophecy, spoke to the dangerous unrest in the Veneto, and even beyond the Veneto, while the voices of Italian nationalism rose into an undeniable rallying cry (Schmidt 117). After all, Italians had just witnessed Napoleon unifying the majority of their peninsula for the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire. Now, Italians wanted a *national* Italy, under an *Italian* leadership. "The tragedy is finished... We are here upon the eve of evolutions and revolutions" (Byron, *Letters and Journals* VII:137). So wrote Byron in a letter to Murray upon the completion of *Marino Faliero*. And then, two months before the play's publication, "It is no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. It is a grand object – the very *poetry* of politics. Only think – a free Italy!!! Why, there has been nothing like it since the days of Augustus" (Byron, *Letters and Journals* VIII:47). Conversely, in a later letter to the Austrian ambassador in France, Austria's Prince Metternich wrote what would become an infamous quotation: "The word 'Italy' is a geographical expression, a description which is useful shorthand, but

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<sup>51</sup> For a more detailed account, see Johnson, E. D. H. "A Political Interpretation of Byron's 'Marino Faliero'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 3.3 (1942): 417-25. Duke Journals. Duke University Press. Web.

has none of the political significance the efforts of the revolutionary ideologues try to put on it...<sup>52</sup>

Metternich must not have been so sure of this, however, as it was under Austrian orders for more stringent censorship in Italy that *Marino Faliero* was banned for being 'Romantic'.

Only an idealized identification with the historical Republic of Venice could object with indignant surprise that "the people" lack power and are "mere machines" to serve the existing political order. The real point, the genuine novelty of the situation, is the availability of sufficient popular resentment to challenge that order, to demand and perhaps get a share of that power. (Dennis 125)

Byron was conscious that his *Marino Faliero* was just the latest work in a very long tradition of nationalist Italian literature. Indeed, Italy's 'national' poet, Dante Alighieri, had been increasingly celebrated for his nationalism since the real Marino Faliero's lifetime (Schmidt 2). Only now, the sentiments and plots of liberalism seemed far less unrealistic to the general Italian readership under Austrian rule (Schmidt 8).

Among his many compositions banned in Austrian Italy, Byron published two other works in 1821 concerning Italian politics, both of which are inextricably linked to *Marino Faliero*. The first of these is a poem, *The Prophecy of Dante*, which gives a modern voice to Dante, Faliero's contemporary; the second is another Venetian tragedy, *The Two Foscari*, about a medieval Doge of Venice living a century after Faliero (Cochran, *The Two Foscari*). In the latter, Doge Foscari is torn between loyalty to his son, Jacopo, and loyalty to his state. A corrupt Senate conspires to condemn Jacopo for treason based on questionable evidence, but Foscari forces himself to submit to the letter of the law. Even when Jacopo is tortured under dubious circumstances, and despite desperate pleas from Jacopo's wife for moral intercession and then for righteous violence,<sup>53</sup> Foscari allows his heart to be broken

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<sup>52</sup> See note to Roberts citation in Bibliography. Deeming Italy a mere "geographical expression" became an oft-used phrase by Metternich, originating in his *Memorandum to the Great Powers* on August 2, 1814.

<sup>53</sup> It is interesting to note that the name of Jacopo's wife, Marina, is the feminine version of Marino, and that their invectives against the Senate's hypocrisy are almost uniformly interchangeable between the two plays.



The necessity of a people's revolution is addressed directly in the second of Byron's works most closely related to *Marino Faliero*, entitled, *The Prophecy of Dante*. In fact, Byron insisted that all four cantos of this poem be bound together in the same volume with *Marino Faliero* for publication. When Murray warily protested its radical politics and expressed reluctance in publishing it altogether,<sup>56</sup> Byron replied, "The time for the *Dante* would be now... as Italy is on the Eve of great things" (Byron, *Letters and Journals* VII: 158) But even if it had been published separately, and on a different eve, it would still certainly have been banned for continuing Byron's heroization of Faliero as failed liberator of the people locked behind the palace gates.

Nine moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and set;  
The chiefless army of the dead which late  
Beneath the traitor Prince's banner met  
Hath left its leader's ashes at the gate;  
Had but the royal Rebel lived, perchance  
Thou hadst been spared, but his involved thy fate. (Byron, *The Prophecy of Dante* 2.92-7)

As with Byron's Faliero, Byron's Dante 'prophecies' only insofar as he is chronologically situated in his proper century within the text; from Byron's vantage, almost all that he says is history. But when Dante's prophecy comes to that point in time whereat Faliero's ends – in the beginning of the nineteenth century – he ceases to mourn what is inevitable in Byron's retrospect, and instead goes beyond it, into Byron's vision of the future. Moreover, he goes on to make an outright call to arms for a united Italy. In this way, *The Prophecy of Dante* illuminates all that is hidden within and between Byron's two Venetian tragedies: in bringing Faliero and his foil, Foscari, forwards in history as martyrs of patriotism, and in contrasting them against a history of foreign domination, Byron's Dante reveals the internal and external conflicts of Italy as "the martyr'd nation" (*Prophecy of Dante* 3.14).

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<sup>56</sup> See Foot 199 for Byron's dispute with Murray's timid, politic-wary Toryism.

In *The Prophecy of Dante*, the title character looks to Italy's future and laments that his homeland "must wither to each tyrant's will: / The Goth hath been, – the German, Frank, and Hun / Are yet to come." Dante recognizes that "the nations take their prey, / Iberian, Almain, Lombard" and calls out to nature for protection: "Oh! when strangers pass the Alps and Po, / Crush them! ye rocks! floods, whelm them, and forever!" Still, Byron's Dante recognizes that only Italians can save Italy, answering his own rhetorical question: "What is there wanting then to set thee [Italy] free... / To make the Alps impassable; and we, / Her sons, may do this with *one* deed – Unite!"<sup>57</sup> (Schmidt 178-80)

Byron's subtle self-inclusion by Dante in these last lines, "we, / Her sons," (2.144-5) among Italian revolutionists at this time was both well-received and well-deserved (Schmidt 3). While he was writing *Marino Faliero*, Byron joined a nationalist secret society, the Carbonari. Though it was far from a perfect match, Byron's journal of 1821 is not unfavourable in its comparison of their visions of a people's revolution:

They mean to *insurrect* here, and are to honour me with a call thereupon. I shall not fall back; though I don't think them in force or heart sufficient to make much of it. But, *onward!* – it is now the time to act, and what signifies *self*, if a single spark of that which would be worthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchedly to the future? It is not one man, nor the million, but the *spirit* of liberty which must be spread. The waves which dash upon the shore are, one by one, broken, but yet the ocean conquers, nevertheless. (Byron, *Letters and Journals* VIII:47)

Despite the enormous risk – and a lack of confidence in his conspirators' numbers and strength – Byron held Carbonari meetings in his own house in Italy, and stored the society's illegal weaponry, which he had purchased with his publication earnings (Martinengo-Cesaresco 24). Groups of Carbonari in southern Italy had already claimed some important victories. Foremost among these were that King Ferdinand I of The Two Sicilies had been forced, in 1820, to arrange for a constitutional monarchy (Martinengo-Cesaresco 26). This, in turn, inspired groups in northern Italy to demand that the King of Sardinia likewise adopt a constitutional monarchy in 1821 (Martinengo-Cesaresco 36). However, to Byron's great disappointment, by the time his group of Carbonari had made plans to attack Austria's support for Sardinia "when strangers pass the Alps and Po" (*Prophecy of Dante* 2.101), they were daunted by an army 50,000 strong, and let the strangers pass unchallenged (Martinengo-

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<sup>57</sup> 2.70-145

Cesaresco 28). Nevertheless, this was not the only people's revolution to find inspiration in Byron's Faliero – there was an artistic revolution at hand, too:

...The *Prophecy* plays a vital part in the matrix of Byron's Venetian aesthetics.

Taken as a group, the Venetian plays and *The Prophecy of Dante*... turn a critical eye on the figure who feeds on (as in Percy Shelley's "Ozymandias") and survives the "sight of the fact": – the artist. The final canto [all four were bound in one volume together with *Marino Faliero*] attempts to determine a morally acceptable distance for art from suffering and from power.... Byron's Dante condemns Art's "mistaken" service to tyrants "who mar / All beauty upon earth" (4.81-4), and defines as "free" the man of genius who "toils for nations" (3.91). (Stabler 81, 82)

Surprisingly, the first author-acknowledged Continental stage-adaptation of Byron's play was by Casimir Delavigne – a Frenchman (Partridge 222). Less surprisingly, his 1829 drama of the same title re-characterizes Faliero as a proto-Napoleon. Delavigne modifies Byron's play in many respects, but all to the same purpose: his Faliero would have saved Napoleon the trouble. For example, it is Steno (the entitled stereotype) who now strikes the honest labourer of the Arsenal, while the Dogaressa (the typical Venetian prostitute<sup>58</sup>) really is unfaithful to Faliero, and with the Doge's own nephew (Delavigne, *Marino Faliero*). Of course, Delavigne vehemently defends these modifications in his correspondence and preface by insisting that "Byron had missed the point."<sup>59</sup> Though Delavigne retains two of Byron's appendices – Sanuto (in a French translation) and Darú (not Byron's extract of the last chapter, but Darú's section on Faliero) – he does so for the sake of emphasizing Darú's Napoleonic bias, which is clearest in Delavigne's version of Faliero's prophecy. There is no talk of returning Venice to its past glory, or of Huns – much less of Frankish barbarians or of a "bastard Attila". In fact, Delavigne's prophecy contains only one discernible reference:

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<sup>58</sup> In contrast to Byron's more historically accurate characterization, see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

<sup>59</sup> "C'est un sujet que lord Byron a manqué" (Partridge 222).

Doge: ...Made for only some, laws are flails;  
The pressure-point of a people where one has no point of equality.  
Sole inheritors from yourselves of public liberties,  
Your sons will come to succumb to your despotism.

...

When Venice, at last...  
[Is] Dead, with nothing left to her but mourning, but despair,  
But opprobrium by strangers, astonished to see her;  
In sounding her prison cells, in counting her victims,  
They will say: <<She, too, put to death for her crimes!>><sup>60</sup>

That Venice is here characterized as a police-state is less the work of Delavigne than of the likes of

Darú. Still, the 'dramatic irony' is overwhelming.

Napoleon Bonaparte was not the only one to imagine Venetian dungeons swarming with political prisoners whose only crime had been the love of liberty. He must have been astonished to learn that, at the fall of the Republic, there was not a single prisoner anywhere on Venetian territory whose captivity was due to his political opinions. When the French entered the *piombi*, they were found to be empty; the *pozzi* had three prisoners, all murderers. (Norwich, *A History of Venice* 638)

For more than a millennium they had been the freest people in the world. They had no need of liberation. Still, given the circumstances, it was much better to let the French have their party and say nothing. One Venetian onlooker, who quietly jeered... was immediately arrested and jailed. Now, at least, Venice had the political prisoners that Napoleon had sought. (Madden 374)

Not surprisingly, it was an Italian (commissioned by Gioachino Rossini) who next adapted *Marino Faliero* for the international stage, in 1835 (Patmore, "Introduction"). However, Gaetano Donizetti's opera was not based entirely upon Byron's play: instead, his Italian librettists, Emanuele

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<sup>60</sup> This is a literal translation of the text below:

Doge: ...Faites pour quelques uns, les lois sont des fléaux;  
Point d'appuis dans un peuple où l'on n'a point d'égaux.  
Seuls héritiers par vous des libertés publiques,  
Vos fils succomberont sous vos lois despotiques,  
...  
Lorsque Venise enfin de débauche affaiblie,  
Ivre de sang royal, opprimée, avilie,  
Morte, n'offrira plus que deuil, que désespoir,  
Qu'opprobre aux étrangers, étonnés de la voir;  
En sondant ses cachots, en comptant ses victimes,  
Ils diront: <<Elle aussi, mise à mort pour ses crimes!>> (Delavigne, *Marino Faliero* 5.2. pg.156)

Bidéra and Agostini Ruffini,<sup>61</sup> had re-adapted Delavigne's version so as to directly counteract his French influence (Patmore, "Introduction"). *Marino Faliero* had been transformed from Byron's English blank verse to Delavigne's alexandrine couplets, and now to Italian arias for the Dogaressa and laments for the conspirators; from a Doge thwarted to a Doge betrayed, and now to a Doge whose city populace do indeed begin to revolt and who is briefly crowned Lord of Venice (Patmore, "Marino Faliero"). Faliero was now at the centre of a contextual tug-of-war for his political representation. And this tug of war between revolutionary identities had already been introduced to the painting world in 1826 by Eugène Delacroix, whose portrayal of Faliero, "Justice Punishes Traitors"<sup>62</sup> would later be challenged – the Doge beheaded versus the Doge still standing – by Francesco Hayez, a native Venetian.<sup>63</sup> By the time that Byron's original *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice* was republished in official Italian translations in 1838 and again in 1845, Byron's "Venetian aesthetic" (Stabler 81) was greatly needed for full reassertion against Austrian rule.

The first moment of open defiance came on 30 December 1847, when the distinguished Dalmatian scholar and academic Niccolò Tommaseo gave a lecture in the Ateneo Veneto. Its subject was announced as "The State of Italian Literature," but it proved to be an open attack on Austrian censorship... (Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 158)

It is very likely that Tommaseo discussed the Austrian-censored and Italian-beloved works of Byron, who had died in Greece just over twenty years ago, but whose fame as an Italian liberal patriot had only grown since then.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, perhaps Tommaseo spared a moment to consider Faliero's parting words at the end of Act IV:

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<sup>61</sup> Agostini's brother, Jacopo, was the best friend of Giuseppe Mazzini, who led the republican movement during the Risorgimento. Jacopo died for this cause in one of Mazzini's rebellions. See Hearder 188 for more details concerning this relationship.

<sup>62</sup> Delacroix's subtitle for the painting (Plant 91).

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix 5 and 6 for these two paintings.

<sup>64</sup> See Schmidt, *Introduction* for a broad account of Byron's politico-literary status in Italy.



previously great republic to have suffered a thwarted revival in this year. In February of 1849, the Republic of Rome itself had been reinstated under Aurelio Saffi and Giuseppe Mazzini, but it fell again just five months later (Killinger 109). It was clear, therefore, that the time had come for a rulership beyond that of the doges: the heirs of radical republicanism would not be Venetians, or even Romans – they would be *Italians* (Killinger 107). As such, Risorgimento republicans now looked to one of the latest leaders of ancient Italy's first national capital: Risorgimento republicans now looked to Giuseppe Mazzini for national leadership. Sadly, this was also to end in failure.

## Chapter 4

# From Veil to Curtain: Faliero's Farewell

O sunrise of the repossessing day,  
And sunrise of all-renovating right;  
And thou, whose trackless foot  
Mocks hope's or fear's pursuit,  
Swift Revolution, changing depth with height;  
And thou, whose mouth makes one  
All songs that seek the sun,  
Serene Republic of a world made white...  
– Swinburne, "The Eve of Revolution"<sup>66</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Giuseppe Mazzini became the foremost ideological leader in the effort to unify Italy as a republic (Killinger 103). But when he passed away in 1872, the remainder of the nineteenth century brought little hope for his cause. By then, the period which Byron's Dante had prophesied in 1821 as a time of national republicanism in Italy seemed to have come and gone. And by the time Swinburne published his own *Marino Faliero* in 1885, the worst of Risorgimento history was repeating itself on a larger scale. Though the Italian peninsula had indeed united under an Italian leader (1870), this leader, Victor Emmanuel II, was yet another King of Italy. Thus, Venice's republicans had once again been betrayed to monarchy (1866). And as a result, oligarchy – which had ruined Venice in the first place – now threatened to ruin the whole of Italy.

The [Italian] cabinets of the late nineteenth century began to include members... differentiated largely by labels. ...Decisions were made not along the lines of distinct policy disagreements, but through a series of corrupt deals among a group of... politicians who were out of touch with the masses of the population. (Killinger 120)

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<sup>66</sup> From *Songs Before Sunrise*, "The Complete Works" 76.

Like Byron's, therefore, Swinburne's *Marino Faliero* concludes as a tragic reflection upon Italy's republican cause. But unlike Byron's play, which portrays Faliero as a model for the hero yet to be realized from among Risorgimento republicans, Swinburne's play remodels Byron's unrealized Faliero upon Mazzini. That is, whereas Byron's play represents "a 'script' for future political action, where radical-minded readers would make a 'directly political materialization of the play's political imperatives' by trying to succeed where the Doge's conspiracy fails" (Neziroski 63), Swinburne's play represents Mazzini as exactly such a reader, but as one who still fails where Faliero fails.<sup>67</sup> In short, Swinburne's play reviews Mazzini's political career as an attempt to fulfill Byron's script to further republicanism, and mourns Mazzini's failure to do so. Nevertheless, Swinburne's play is not wholly without hope. It concludes by revealing that Byron's script can no longer be fulfilled after Mazzini's failure, but also by revealing the new script yet to be written for Italy's future republican heroes.

The republican cause in Italy would ultimately come to a happy ending, but not even the very last major artist inspired to recreate Byron's Faliero would live to see it. Still, this could not have been known beforehand, and hope remained long after the revolutions of 1849.

[Born in 1837,] Swinburne passed his youth in the years of struggle, defeat, and renewed struggle; and the events of the Risorgimento sank deep into his memory, became part of himself.

When Byron took up his residence in Italy, his unrivalled fame caused English eyes to turn hither with an attention which, for all [Italy's] loveliness and all her sorrows, she had never won before. From Byron Englishmen learned to contrast Italy's past glory and her present desolation; the debt of all the world to her; the duty of England, traditional fount of freedom, to give aid and comfort to a people aspiring towards liberty; above all, the beauty, "the fatal gift of beauty", of the land – the crumbling palaces and silent lagoons of Venice... and the innumerable wonders and storied associations of Rome. He made familiar to Englishmen the thought of a free and united Italy. He voiced the aspirations of a people.

How any critic, mindful of this inheritance, can express wonder... at Swinburne's devotion to Italy, I do not understand. ...He visited Italy [twice, Venice in 1861 (Hare 61).] He wrote to a friend: "At an early age... I became convinced of the truth and justice of the republican principle, and I have always looked to the land of Dante and Mazzini – *magna parens* – to take the lead in realizing that idea in Europe." (Chew, *Swinburne* 100, 97, 99)

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<sup>67</sup> Compare Byron, *Marino Faliero* 3.2.169,171-2 to Swinburne, *Marino Faliero* 3.1.pg. 87.

Early in their careers, Mazzini and Saffi became important figures in Italy's republican movement within the Risorgimento, with Saffi acting as a main support for Mazzini (Griffith 211). By the time they were appointed to Rome in 1849, Mazzini had already made a long career of political violence and radicalism. This included having spent six years in prison for his involvement with the Carbonari<sup>68</sup>, and having been condemned to death *in absentia* for inciting working-class insurrections around southern Italy (Hunt, "Italy"). Afterwards, between periods of exile and hiding, he went on to raise rebellions in Mantua (1852), Milan (1853), and Genoa (1856) – where he was again sentenced to death, but escaped – and to aid the Carbonari's Felice Orsini in an attempted assassination of Napoleon III (1858) (Smith "Further Conspiracies After 1850"). Time after time, though none of his uprisings or conspiracies successfully installed and maintained republican rule, Mazzini persisted.

From his disappointments, disillusionments... his patriotism, and out of both Romantic and Christian texts – Mazzini constituted... the self-sacrificing martyr driven only by duty and his mission for which he had renounced his home as *patria*... (Pesman, 101)

Mazzini persisted even after his fellow Italian, Victor Emmanuel II, was crowned King over the emerging Kingdom of Italy in 1860. In this year, Victor Emmanuel II could still not account for large sections of the Italian peninsula, but he had made a strong start. For many Italians, this monarch was the beginning of deliverance from Austria; for Mazzini, this *non-republican* was the beginning of a return to Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy, just under a more familiar flag. Mazzini knew that Italians throughout the peninsula felt demoralized by their repeated failures to nationalize, but he opposed those who, in their desperation for freedom and unity, would acquiesce indiscriminately to whichever form of Italian power seemed strongest (Mazzini, *Faith and the Future* 11). Mazzini argued that Italians could only remain truly free and truly united if they empowered themselves instead of yet another king, and that

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<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 3 pg. 45.

republicanism was therefore Italy's only hope for real strength (Mazzini, *Faith and the Future* 14). Conversely, before Victor Emmanuel II declared the emerging Kingdom of Italy in 1860, many Italians worshipped Mazzini as no less than a demigod; now, because of Mazzini's criticisms of the new Kingdom of Italy, which was emerging after so long a time of oppression and division, Mazzini was viewed by many Italians as a traitor.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, under Victor Emmanuel II's new Italian regime, Mazzini was denounced for his involvement with the Carbonari as "Chief of the assassins" (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Giuseppe Mazzini"). While Mazzini staged yet another failed insurrection in Rome in the following year, this time with the famous Garibaldi himself, Saffi elsewhere continued to support Mazzini's vision for the future of Italy with equal republican ardour.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, when this, too, proved ineffective, Saffi left for England.

Swinburne's interest in Italy was intensified at Oxford [where he was studying history] through his contact with Aurelio Saffi, lecturer at the Taylolean Institute, the Oxford centre for modern language study. This former associate of Mazzini, an exile from Italy since [taking republican leadership of Rome with Mazzini in] 1849, was a firsthand source of information about the problems and troubles of Italy as well as the activities of Mazzini and the revolutionary party then struggling to throw off the yoke of the tyrants. (Cassidy 50-1)

Swinburne's relationship with Saffi largely defined the development of his relationship with Italy later on. Mazzini joined Saffi as an exile to England in 1867 (Pesman 104). During this time, Victor Emmanuel II's Kingdom of Italy had been growing so that up until the previous year (1866), only two Italian city-states remained apart from the Kingdom of Italy: Venice and Rome. Therefore, Mazzini had much planning to do in England, where he was known as a very different kind of Chief to one of his most skilfully outspoken supporters (Chew, *Swinburne* 100). Here, Mazzini himself came to encourage his young recruit, Swinburne, to contribute to the Risorgimento with republican propaganda (Chew, *Swinburne* 22-3).

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<sup>69</sup> See Mazzini, *Faith and the Future* 12 for some of the heavy criticisms which he sought to overcome.

<sup>70</sup> See Griffith 211 for more on the political and personal dynamic between Mazzini and Saffi.

"You must dedicate your glorious powers to the service of the Republic." [But] his powers were already dedicated to that service, for Swinburne's reply was to recite "A Song of Italy", sitting the while at Mazzini's feet.

Freedom summons Italy to rise: "I were not Freedom if thou wert not free."

A second motif is then introduced: the Italian tricolour [becomes] the symbol of life and hope spread abroad through all nature.... In contrast to the tricolour is the Austrian imperial banner, yellow and black, the symbol of autumnal decay and death.

Various heroic events of the Risorgimento are then passed in review, with a particular allusion to episodes in Mazzini's life; and this historico-biographical portion of the "Song" leads to the great climax in which all Italy, all nature, is summoned to praise and glorify the Chief. (Chew, *Swinburne* 100-1, 102)

In this poem, Swinburne developed a motif which he would continue to use in his descriptions of Mazzini for the rest of his life: sunrise. Swinburne and Mazzini's other most fervent devotees saw this not as grandiose, but rather as only befitting the man who promised to bring new light to Italy by reigniting the republican torch of Ancient Rome (Chew, *Swinburne* 108-10). And Swinburne's "Song of Italy" was just the latest of Swinburne's political poems to have been written for and dedicated to Mazzini (Chew, *Swinburne* 4).

Following Mazzini's last attempt to start an insurrection, in Sicily in 1870, Swinburne published two long collections of poetry on Mazzini's republican cause: "Songs Before Sunrise" (1871), and "Songs of Two Nations" (1875).

"Songs Before Sunrise" appeared in 1871. The tide of English liberalism was then at the flood.

Propaganda in England, directed by Mazzini and other exiles, had by now aroused a considerable body of opinion in favour of a free and united Italy. England's refusal to assist Italy in her struggle had roused Ruskin, Mrs. Browning and Rossetti, as later it was to arouse Morley and Meredith, to protest against the principle of non-intervention. These protests anticipate a dominant "note" in Swinburne's "Songs Before Sunrise", though English liberal sentiment was divided over the monarchical as opposed to the republican solution to the Italian question. (Chew, *Swinburne* 106, 23)

In these two collections, Swinburne is unhesitating in his eagerness for battle, and bloodshed is regarded not simply as the necessary cost of freedom, but as the glorious destruction of foreign oppression and native monarchy alike (Thomas 160). Swinburne shared Mazzini's resentment of those

Italians who were too tired or scared to fight for an Italian republic, and who settled for an Italian monarchy instead. In his poem, *Quia Multum Amavit*, Swinburne writes,

Till the immeasurable Republic arise and lighten  
    Above these quick and dead,  
And her awful robes be changed, and her red robes whiten  
    Her warring-ropes of red.

But thou wouldst not, saying, I am weary and faint to follow,  
    Let me lie down and rest;  
And hast sought out shame to sleep with, mire to wallow,  
    Yea, a much fouler breast... (Swinburne, "The Complete Works" 179)

However, as the new Kingdom of Italy had grown since Swinburne's meeting with Mazzini, foreign control in Italy had decreased proportionately. This posed an obvious problem for Mazzini's political approach to violence and radicalism. It was comparatively easy for Mazzini to rally his countrymen against a foreign enemy, but to divide fellow Italians in battle was exactly what Italy's unifiers sought to avoid (Killinger 118).

It was in 1870 that Rome, the last major Italian city-state, was united with the new Kingdom of Italy, but the means thereof was widely and harshly criticized by republicans as being akin to civil war (Killinger 119). Rome in 1870 had not been ruled by foreign powers, but by the Vatican, Italy's own members of the Catholic church: the army of the Kingdom of Italy had therefore overtaken Italians under an Italian leadership. Still, Italy's monarchists could easily answer with counter-criticisms of Mazzini, whose rebellions and insurrections had often been likewise directed against fellow Italians, and who could not even justify his violence with success. It was in the midst of such problems that the first of these two volumes of Swinburne's poetry, "Songs Before Sunrise", was published in 1871. But then Mazzini, the sunrise itself, died the following year. Consequently, when the second of these two volumes of Swinburne's poetry, "Songs of Two Nations", was published in 1875, readers found more to

do with Italy's past than with its future. Among these poems was a commemoration of the Kingdom of Italy's penultimate city-state unification, with Venice – from almost a decade ago. Mazzini's republican vision of Italy had seemed more vivid then, when Italy's tricolour was contrasted not against itself but against Austria's imperial banner and against an especially infamous Austrian quotation, which Swinburne wrote below this commemorative poem:

"The Burden of Austria: 1866"

Have thy sons too and daughters learnt indeed  
What thing it is to weep, what thing to bleed?  
Is it not thou that now art but a name?<sup>71</sup>

Almost a decade ago, in 1866, Venice had joined with the new Kingdom of Italy, but under circumstances no nobler than those of Rome in 1870. After all, Venice had had little choice in the matter: while the Kingdom of Italy had fought for Venice, Venice had not fought for the Kingdom of Italy (Madden 393). Indeed, Venice had joined only by diplomatic contingency, and with all the ignominy of its 1796 submission to Napoleon I. In order to retake the Veneto from Austria, King Emmanuel II had made a deal with, of all people, Napoleon III of France: in exchange for France's military support, Italy would cede parts of its territories near the French Alps. But when Italy's forces blundered and fell in the very battle which they had instigated, Venice was provisionally annexed from Austria by France (Killinger 118). The result was total embarrassment for Italy. In an agreement similar to that by which his uncle had ceded Venice to Austria in 1797, Napoleon III ceded Venice to King Emmanuel II. And it was no more than an attempt to preserve some semblance of republican dignity when Venetians held a plebiscite on whether or not they were 'volunteering' – rather than being traded again by France – to join the Kingdom of Italy after all (Madden 393). As a result, "the martyr'd

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<sup>71</sup> The quotation which Swinburne added beneath this poem: "A geographical expression' — Metternich of Italy" (Swinburne, "The Complete Works" 351).

nation"<sup>72</sup> that Byron's Dante had lamented was at last uniting, and under an Italian leader, but Victor Emmanuel II's unity was a far cry from what the Austrian censors had called 'Romantic'<sup>73</sup>. Just as it had been under Napoleon I, Italy was divided between republicanism and monarchy, and once again, republicanism was betrayed to monarchy.

It is this divided Italy which Swinburne would depict as the longest-lived fallen republic – Venice – in his *Marino Faliero* nineteen years later. And it is this conflicted Mazzini – torn between his desire to unite and insurrect against his fellow Italians – which Swinburne would portray as Byron's Faliero. Byron's Faliero, after all, had likewise justified insurrection against his fellow Venetians as the cost of renewing his republic. However, the main differences between Byron's and Swinburne's portrayal of a divided Italy and a conflicted Faliero are, but for two instances, purely aesthetic (Chew, *Swinburne* 219). But for these two instances of difference, what is most politically significant about Swinburne's play is that it is a precise recreation of Byron's. And Swinburne's play, deliberately based upon no scholarly sources other than Byron's appendix, is exactly that (Wise 354).

...It is solely Byron's poetic creation, the conception of the aged Venetian Doge who met his fate struggling for the people's liberties; it is Byron's ideal patriot, so different from the reality of history, who forms the hero of Mr. Swinburne's tragedy of *Marino Faliero*. (Martin 154)

[Swinburne's] *Marino Faliero*... following the same chronicle and with the same personages, is a direct challenge to comparison [with Byron's]. (Stedman 437)

The two most politically significant instances of difference in Swinburne's play are his addition of the pre-existing Mazzini-sunrise motif and his conclusion that Byron's political script for republican radicalism can no longer be followed after Mazzini's failure to make the newly united Italy into a republic.

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<sup>72</sup> See Chapter 3 pg. 53.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 3 pg. 41.

In the span between Venice's submission to the Kingdom of Italy in 1866 and Swinburne's play of 1885, Risorgimento republicans' hope still remained. It was in commemoration of Venice's tattered republican dignity that Venice's own Francesco Hayez unveiled his painting of Byron's Doge Faliero in the following year (1867), and it was with 1866 Venice in mind that Swinburne published a collection of poems by and his criticisms on Byron (*Swinburne, Essays and Studies* 238). This collection offers insight on the long chain of events, political and literary, which connects Swinburne's Faliero to Byron's. In this collection can be seen Swinburne's consciousness of the relationship between his Mazzini-sunrise motif and a similar motif shared by Byron and Shelley of Venetian Republicanism/sunset. Swinburne's inversion of his Mazzini-sunrise motif is central to Swinburne's play on Faliero.

In 1866, Swinburne published a collection of selections of and his criticisms on Byron's poetry, *Byron*.<sup>74</sup> In this collection, Swinburne's selections of Byron's poems are from among Byron's most political, including "Ode to Venice" and *The Prophecy of Dante*, which Byron composed while writing *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice* (Cochran, *Byron and Italy* 12). In his assessment of Byron's thwarted 'Romanticism', as the Austrian censors had called it, Swinburne notes how Byron and Shelley influenced each other in these years. Shelley – arguably Swinburne's foremost model in English poetry<sup>75</sup> – had come to stay in Venice with Byron in 1819 to discuss, among other things, revolution and the "fiery character and strange story"<sup>76</sup> of Byron's Doge (Quennell 198-9). Over the course of their many debates on the distinction between rulership and law, Shelley wrote a poem about an especially serious evening he and Byron spent together (Sandy 31). *Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation*, compares Shelley's and Byron's views on rulership, set against a backdrop of metaphorical imagery

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<sup>74</sup> In this book, Swinburne also notes that Byron's career mirrors his own (Thomas 81).

<sup>75</sup> See Chew, *Swinburne* 119, or Tinkler-Villani's "Victorian Shelley" (94), for more on this relationship.

<sup>76</sup> See p. 20, Chapter 1.

(Sandy 31). As the sun fades over the lagoon, so, too, does the two characters' hope for a righteous rulership to be realized among and recognized by those whom it should lead.

The sense that he was greater than his kind  
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind  
By gazing on its own exceeding light.  
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,  
Over the horizon of the mountains... (Shelley 18-19)

In his preface, Swinburne compares at length the work and attitude of Byron with that of Shelley, just as Shelley did in *Julian and Maddalo*. Throughout this comparison, Swinburne maintains the metaphorical imagery of rulership and sunset from Shelley's poem:

...Rebellion and the magnificence of anguish were as the natural food and fire to kindle and sustain [Byron's] indomitable and sleepless spirit. The... martyrdom of rebels; the passion that cannot redeem... Here for once this inner and fiery passion of thought found outer clothing and expression in the ruin of a world. (Swinburne, *Essays and Studies* 246-7)

Swinburne continues this comparison of Byron and Shelley, and concludes with a note on a line from Shelley's poem on Napoleon I's death, also composed in the same year that Byron's *Marino Faliero* was published.

"That most fiery spirit."

The noble verses of Shelley are fitter to be spoken over Byron than over any first or last Napoleon.<sup>77</sup> To no other man could they be so well applied: for the world indeed took more of warmth from the fire of his spirit while alive than from any other then kindled: –

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<sup>77</sup> This is an overt allusion to Napoleon III. Swinburne hung a picture of Napoleon III's would-be assassin and Mazzini's Carbonari compatriot, Felice Orsini (see Chapter 4 pg. 54), beside his picture of Mazzini, both of which reverently bowed before every day (Thomas 36).

In the light of thy morning mirth,  
 The last of the flock of the starry fold?  
 Thou wert warming thy fingers old  
 O'er the embers covered and cold  
 Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled... (Swinburne, *Essays and Studies* 258).<sup>78</sup>

Of course, imagery of the Sun as a metaphor for power in general was not at all a new idea, as evidenced, for example, by Ancient Egypt's god, Ra. But this particular sunset imagery, shared between Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* and Byron's *Marino Faliero* is representative of specific Italian politics (Chew, *Swinburne* 119).<sup>79</sup> Byron himself, as both model for Maddalo and author of *Faliero*, is represented by both in his views on contemporary Venetian Republicanism:

The fallen republic of a post-Napoleonic Venice became, for... the Shelley Circle, a double poetic vision... inextricabl[y] bound to a sense of a corrupted Venice of ruins and the ruinous, decline and fall, decay and death. ...Julian (...Shelley) and Maddalo (modelled after Byron), speak respectively of utopian dream and dystopian reality. For the optimistic idealist... humankind possesses the capacity to break free of all that might "enchain us" and to realize our visionary aspirations... This view stands in contradistinction to the... "rent heart" of failed desires "till the night of death"... ...The city of Venice itself, occupies a curiously geographic, spatial and temporal liminal location enfolded in an uncharacteristically chilly summer's gloaming.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Compare Shelley's imagery here to Swinburne's for that of "any first or last Napoleon" in "The Descent Into Hell" (Chew, *Swinburne* 125). "The Descent Into Hell", part of *Songs of Two Nations*, was written on the occasion of Napoleon III's death in 1873, in commemoration of Napoleon I's death in 1821 (Chew, *Swinburne* 125).

O night and death...  
 Take him, for he is yours, O night and death.  
 Hell yawns on him whose life was as a word  
 Uttered by death in hate of heaven and light,  
 A curse now dumb upon the lips of night. ("The Complete Works" 363)

<sup>79</sup> See Trevelyan, *Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848* for relation between *Julian and Maddalo* and Daniele Manin.

<sup>80</sup> Doge: Thou can'st not have forgot, what all remember,  
 That on my day of landing here as Doge,  
 On my return from Rome, a mist of such  
 Unwonted density went on before...  
 The pilot was misled, and disembarked us  
 Between the pillars of Saint Mark's, where 'tis  
 The custom of the State to put to death  
 Its criminals, instead of touching at  
 The Riva della Paglia, as the wont is —  
 So that all Venice shuddered at the omen. (Byron, "Marino Faliero" (5.2.52-5, 58-63)

Before the cool summer evening is entirely extinguished by the darkness of night, Julian and Maddalo, by way of gondola, glimpse the city of Venice itself momentarily enflamed by the setting sun, as "if the Earth and Sea had been / Dissolved into one lake of fire":....

...Apollonian light turns into Dionysian dark... (Sandy 29-30, 31)

It is upon this basis of specific Venetian political imagery that Swinburne would invert the sunrise motif of his subject in "Songs Before Sunrise" – Mazzini – in order to characterize republican rulership in his own version of *Marino Faliero*, nineteen years later.<sup>81</sup> Compare Byron's Faliero to Swinburne's through their imagery of fire and the Sun:

Doge: 'Tis well. Will the morn never put to rest  
These stars which twinkle yet o'er all the heavens?  
I am settled and bound up, and being so,  
The very effort which it cost me to  
Resolve to cleanse this commonwealth with fire,  
Now leaves my mind more steady. (Byron, "Marino Faliero" 4.2.71-6)

Doge: ...I fought for men that made our commonweal  
A light in God's eye brighter than the Sun...

Our commonweal now groans, knowing herself a thing  
For slaves and kings to scoff at. Shall this be  
With thy goodwill forever? Not with mine  
Shall it; nay, not though scarce a tithe were left  
When justice hath fulfilled her fiery doom... (Swinburne, *Marino Faliero* 3.1. pp. 65, 91-2)

Swinburne had dedicated nearly all of his previous political work to Mazzini, who died in 1872. Now, in 1885, he dedicated *Marino Faliero* to the Foscari-like Saffi. As usual, his dedication is in verse, and begins with the same sunrise-motif from "Songs Before Sunrise" throughout the first six stanzas of nine:

One spirit alone, one soul more strong than fate,  
One heart whose heat was as the sundawn's fire... (Swinburne, *Marino Faliero* vii)

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<sup>81</sup> "In January 1885, [Swinburne] told William Rossetti [*Marino Faliero*] would be 'the most republican thing (bar certain *Songs Before Sunrise*) I ever did'" (Rooksby 255).

But in the last three stanzas, Swinburne inverts his previous sunrise-motif so as to adopt Byron's and Shelley's metaphorical imagery of sunset for tribute to the dead Mazzini: in this line, "sundawn" turns into – though not yet obviated as such – 'sundown'. With this inversion begun, Swinburne addresses Saffi in the seventh stanza on the ideal republicanism which their new Italy still lacks:

Not all as yet is yours, nor all is ours,  
That shall, if righteousness and reason be,  
Fulfill the trust of time with happier hours  
And set their sons who fought for freedom free; [emphasis added to 'set' and 'sons']  
...

Your land and ours wax lovelier in the light  
Republican, whereby the thrones most bright  
Look hoar and wan as eve or blackest night. (Swinburne, *Marino Faliero* vii)

The purpose of Swinburne's inversion of the Mazzini-sunrise motif in his play is to elevate the contrast between republicanism and monarchy to that of good and evil. This is made clear when Swinburne extends this imagery beyond the dedication and into the drama itself. In the very first words of the opening scene, Swinburne's Faliero comments upon the sunset with dramatic irony, such that he is unaware of the sunset's active metaphor. Once more – just as in Shelley's poem and Byron's play – as the sun fades over the lagoon, there is a foreshadowing of doom and loss. But in this case, what stands to be lost is represented by Faliero himself, Swinburne's Mazzinian republican leader. Mazzini fought hard for his republicanism through radicalism, just as Swinburne's Faliero does in the course of the play, but Mazzini was dead now in 1885, and Swinburne's Faliero remains likewise doomed.

Doge:           The Sun fights hard against us ere he die.  
                  Canst thou see westward?  
                  ...



Byron's play in Swinburne's conclusion proceeds from Swinburne's elevated contrast between good and evil. Whereas Byron's Faliero is condemned by Venice's corrupt oligarchs, and in solely legal terms, Swinburne's Faliero condemns himself, and he does so with his very soul.

It was in order to recreate Byron's script that Swinburne used no scholarly sources other than Byron's appendix, despite the many new sources and critical histories on Venice then available in English (Martin 154).<sup>82</sup> However, Swinburne dispensed with all of Byron's political references to the Venice of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century: in 1885, the Veronese Easter Rising and the Prince Beauharnais of sixty-four years ago were no longer fresh in Italy's living memory. Instead, Swinburne ended the contextual tug-of-war for Faliero's political representation where Italy's political stage was alive with opera.<sup>83</sup> In his conclusion, Swinburne builds upon Donizetti's addition of music to the story of Faliero. Swinburne invents a scene wherein his Faliero is held in prison, which not only affords his Faliero ample opportunity for soliloquy, but also the opportunity to overhear and respond to monks singing in the street outside. And the background of such a circumstance is hardly surprising:

"Byron had been one of [Mazzini's] political inspirations in his cell at Savona in 1830. As an exile in England, he had contributed essays on Byron..." (Thomas 159).

"In his prison in Gaeta in September 1870... Byron and Dante were the only books that [Mazzini] was studying" (Pesman 111).

As Swinburne's Faliero broods, the silence is broken by chanted Latin verses – more specifically, by a variant of *Dies Irae*, a hymn on the 'Day of Wrath' ("Athenaeum" 752). Here, Swinburne's hero humbles himself, and regrets the violence of his past.

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<sup>82</sup> See Robertson for subtle differences in how Faliero used Byron's sources.

<sup>83</sup> This tug-of-war was still far from going stale. See Chew, *Swinburne* 215 for a note on the "several German dramas on the subject which had appeared shortly before [Swinburne's *Marino Faliero*]."

...When the conspiracy has been discovered and thwarted, the Doge, in prison, reasons with himself and justifies on public grounds the course of action into which he had been led... These self-communings make clear to him his own imperfections which had rendered him unworthy to be the leader of his people towards liberty. Thus, most movingly, the poet, in Faliero's last long speech, modulates his theme into a prophecy of the ideal leader who shall one day arise. (Chew, *Swinburne* 218)

Doge:            I  
Have erred, who thought by wrong to vanquish wrong,  
To smite with violence violence,<sup>84</sup> and by night  
Put out the power of darkness; time shall bring  
A better way than mine, if God's will be –  
As how should God's will not? – to redeem  
Venice. I was not worthy – nor may man,  
Till one as Christ shall come again, be found  
Worthy to think, speak, strike, foresee, foretell,  
The thought, the word, the stroke, the dawn, the day,  
That verily and indeed shall bid the dead  
Live, and this old dear land of all men's love  
Arise and shine forever. (5.2. p.132)

Swinburne's Faliero thus condemns himself in terms of good and evil. And yet, while Swinburne's Faliero remains defiant against the hypocrisy of the corrupt Senate, he also recognizes his own hypocrisy. He reflects that his efforts to overthrow the oligarchy would have sacrificed republican ideals instead of restoring them, and that his efforts have only injured the republican cause by dividing instead of uniting. In his condemnation, therefore, republicanism remains good but he, its chief moral agent, does not. In this soliloquy, as if transitioning from the first half of the Risorgimento to the second half – from revolt to unification – Swinburne envisions a future republican leader as a Christ-figure who will come to resurrect and redeem Italy as a republic – not by overthrowing monarchy, but by overcoming republican divisiveness among Italians.

The significance of this is that Byron's script concludes again in failure, but this time with repentance and a new insight into Risorgimento republicans' struggle between (political) good and evil. Byron's martyr is appropriate for the first half of the nineteenth century, the revolutionary half of

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<sup>84</sup> See Chew, *Swinburne* 218 for how this line refers also to a poem by Swinburne in which he voices new regrets for Mazzini's involvement with the Carbonari's Felice Orsini in attempting to assassinate Napoleon III.

the Risorgimento, but the script which Daniele Manin failed to fulfill in 1849, no longer applied to the second half of the nineteenth century, the unificatory half of the Risorgimento. To follow Byron's script of violent radicalism against fellow Italians during Italy's unification was divisive, and therefore threatened to weaken a nation whose unity alone could preserve Italians from foreign domination. It was principally for this divisiveness that Mazzini had failed, after his many efforts to restore republicanism through violent radicalism like Byron's *Faliero*. This, then, is the difference between Swinburne's and Byron's conclusion, and the significance of Swinburne's Christ-figure: the new script to be written for future leaders to guide Italy into republicanism would not divide people into good republican and evil non-republican but rather unify them as *Italians* through peaceful, legal, moral, collective reform.

Thus by exploiting selected literary forms, traditions... and mythologies from the medieval period... Swinburne could, as it were, poetically rewrite medieval cultural history from a revisionist... – that is, Romantic – perspective. Doing so would serve a corrective prophetic function... (Harrison 16)

In this way, Swinburne's play reveals that Byron's script can no longer be followed. Nevertheless, the fiery *Faliero* who had been resurrected for insurrection had now once again done his best for the Risorgimento, and in the end, this redeems him, too, in a new light – "the truth of history" (Byron 23) – after all.

# Conclusion

Doge: A spark creates the flame –  
...  
Failing, I know the penalty of failure  
Is present Infamy and Death – the future  
Will judge, when Venice is no more, or free;  
Till then, the truth is in abeyance.  
– Byron, “Marino Faliero” 5.1.244-57

In writing *Marino Faliero: Doge of Venice*, Byron covertly manipulated his historical sources in order to characterize Doge Faliero as a hero of Venetian Republicanism. In so doing, he dramatized the necessity of a people’s revolution in parallel visions of fourteenth- and early nineteenth-century Venice. Then, Swinburne remodelled Byron’s Faliero after Mazzini and updated the play’s political representations for late nineteenth-century Venice. Byron’s and Swinburne’s efforts resulted in an internationally effective piece of republican propaganda for the Risorgimento, concerning more than a century of Venice’s major role therein. Sadly, neither Swinburne nor Daniele Manin nor Saffi could have guessed that republicanism would not return to Italy for almost another century still, in 1946, after two World Wars and many more heroes and villains to come.

And here we come upon one of History’s little ironies. Marin Falier, the irascible individualist... the would-be subverter of the Venetian constitution is remembered; [Venice’s] builders and consolidators are forgotten. The name of the dread omnipotent [Senate], his judges, are known only to curious historians; the name of their prisoner is familiar to every tourist. The opprobrious inscription... ‘This is the place of Marin Falier, beheaded for his crimes,’ is read by all and sundry... The long series of portraits in the [Dogal] Palace is glanced at without emotion, while the black gap in their ranks is felt by a poet and a man of culture to be the most striking sight in Venice. (Ragg 83)

Still, the tourists flooding Venice today can enter the Dogal Palace in the first place only because Italy is now a republic. Irony aside, there is poetic justice in the idea that Faliero might have had something to do with that.



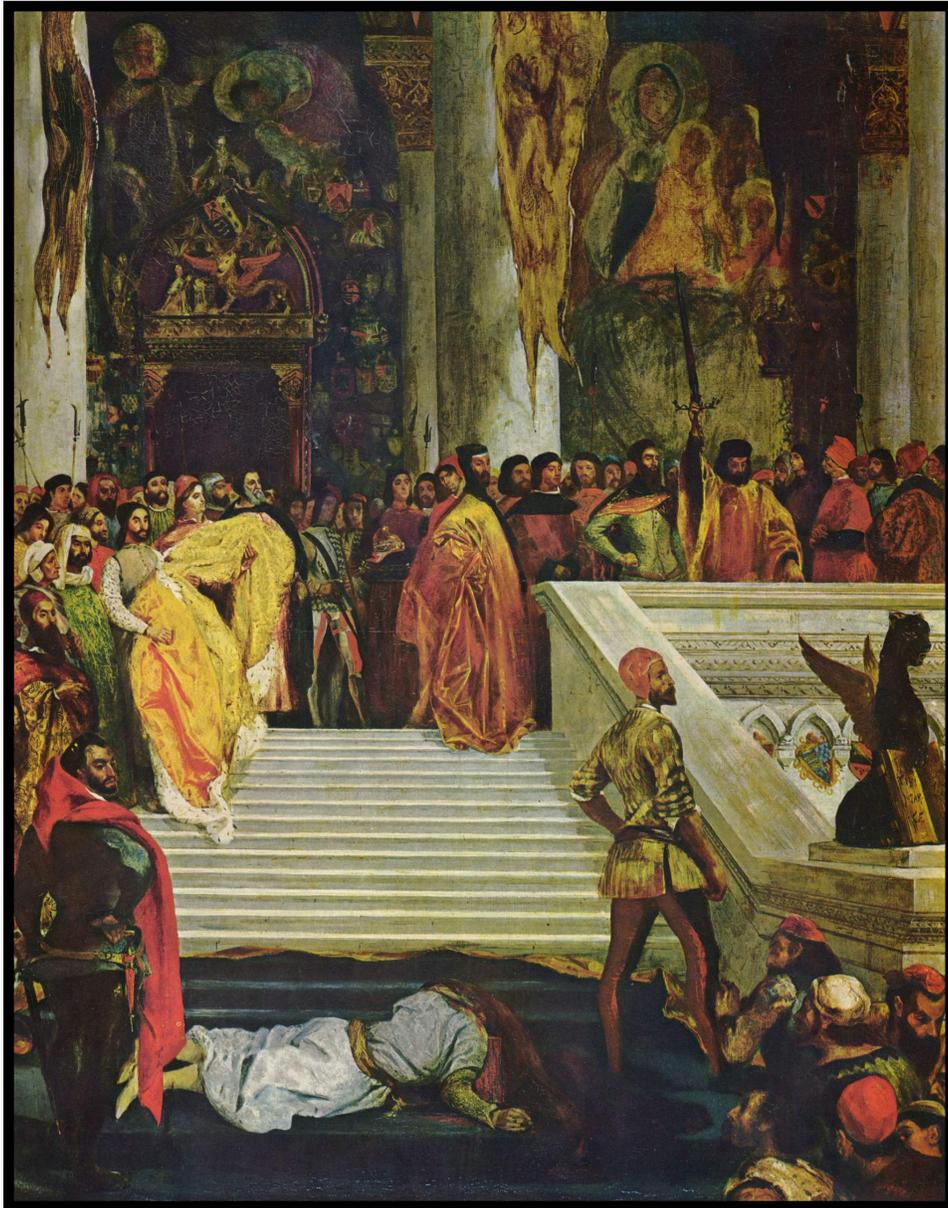
Shall pour in sacrifice. She shall be bought  
 And sold, and be an appanage to those  
 Who shall despise her! She shall stoop to be  
 A province for an empire, petty town  
 In lieu of capital, with slaves for senates,  
 Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!  
 Then when the Hebrew's in thy palaces,  
 The Hun in thy high places, and the Greek  
 Walks o'er thy mart, and smiles on it for his;                   60  
 When thy patricians beg their bitter bread  
 In narrow streets, and in their shameful need  
 Make their nobility a plea for pity;  
 Then, when the few who still retain a wreck  
 Of their great fathers' heritage shall fawn  
 Round a barbarian Vice of Kings' Vice-regent,  
 Even in the palace where they swayed as Sovereigns,  
 Even in the palace where they slew their Sovereign,  
 Proud of some name they have disgraced, or sprung  
 From an adulteress boastful of her guilt                         70  
 With some large gondolier or foreign soldier,  
 Shall bear about their bastardy in triumph  
 To the third spurious generation – when  
 Thy sons are in the lowest scale of being,  
 Slaves turned o'er to the vanquished by the victors,  
 Despised by cowards for greater cowardice,  
 And scorned even by the vicious for such vices  
 As in the monstrous grasp of their conception  
 Defy all codes to image or to name them;  
 Then, when of Cyprus, now thy subject kingdom,                   80  
 All thine inheritance shall be her shame  
 Entailed on thy less virtuous daughters, grown  
 A wider proverb for worse prostitution –  
 When all the ills of conquered States shall cling thee,  
 Vice without splendour, sin without relief  
 Even from the gloss of love to smooth it o'er,  
 But in its stead, coarse lusts of habitude,  
 Prurient yet passionless, cold studied lewdness,  
 Depraving Nature's frailty to an Art –  
 When these and more are heavy on thee, when                         90  
 Smiles without mirth, and pastimes without pleasure,  
 Youth without honour, age without respect,  
 Meanness and weakness, and a sense of woe  
 'Gainst which thou wilt not strive, and dar'st not murmur,  
 Have made thee last and worst of peopled deserts,  
 Then, in the last gasp of thine agony,  
 Amidst thy many murders, think of *mine!*

Thou den of drunkards with the blood of Princes!  
 Gehenna of the waters! thou Sea-Sodom!  
 Thus I devote thee to the Infernal Gods! 100  
 Thee and thy serpent seed! (5.3.26-7, 41-101)

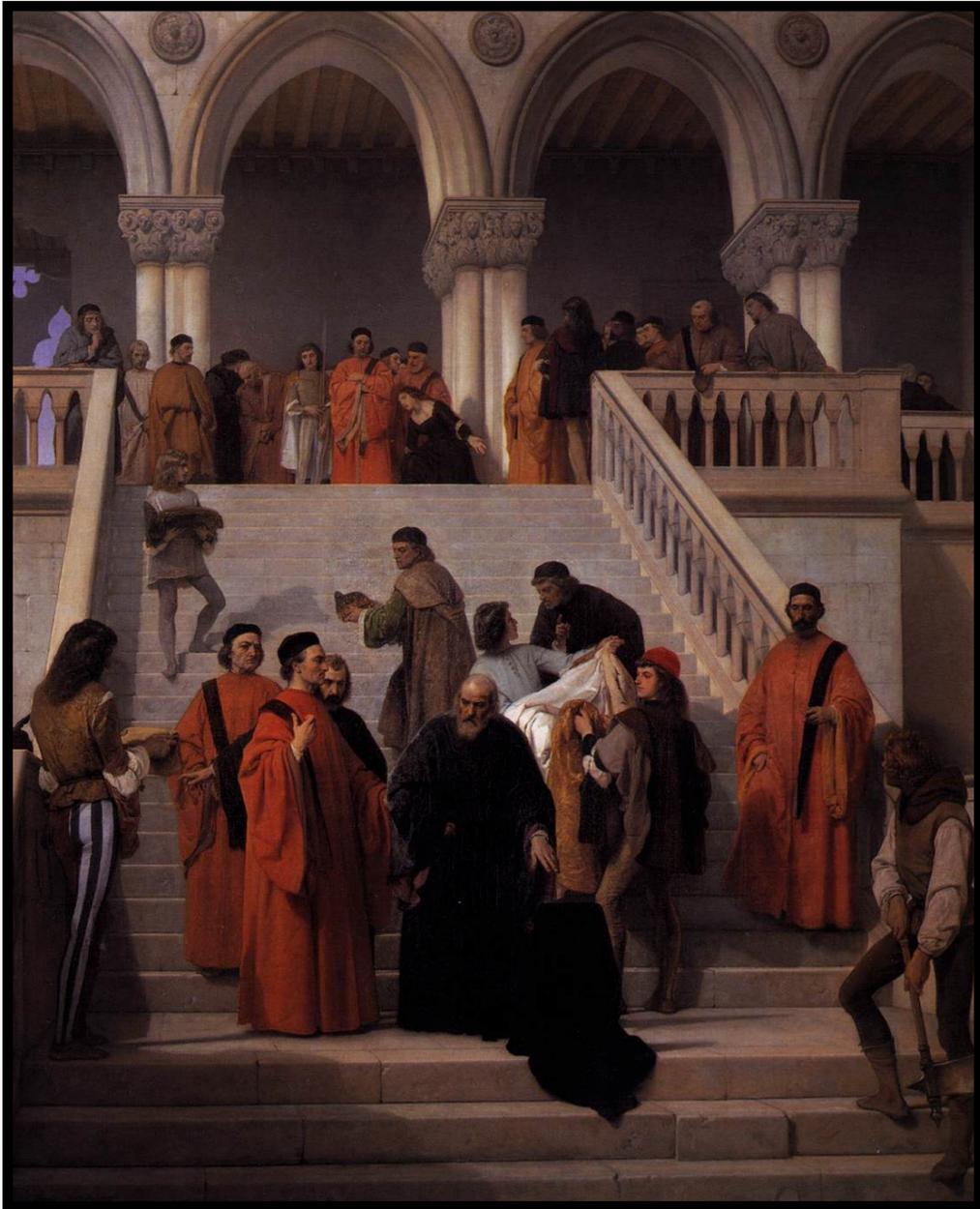
4) Relevant Passage from Byron's Reference to the Veronese Easter Rising:

Doge:	It had been As well had there been time to have got together, From my own fief, Val di Marino, more Of our retainers - but it is too late.	
Bertuccio:	Methinks, my Lord, 'tis better as it is: A sudden swelling of our retinue Had waked suspicion; and, though fierce and trusty, The vassals of that district are too rude And quick in quarrel to have long maintained The secret discipline we need for such A service, till our foes are dealt upon.	10
Doge:	True; but when once the signal has been given, These are the men for such an enterprise; These city slaves have all their private bias, Their prejudice against or for this noble, Which may induce them to o'erdo or spare Where mercy may be madness; the fierce peasants, Serfs of my county of Val di Marino, Would do the bidding of their lord without Distinguishing for love or hate his foes; Alike to them Marcello or Cornaro, A Gradenigo or a Foscari; They are not used to start at those vain names, Nor bow the knee before a civic senate; A chief in armour is their suzerain, And not a thing in robes.	20
Bertuccio:	We are enough; And for the dispositions of our clients Against the senate I will answer.	30
Doge:	Well, The die is thrown; but for a warlike service, Done in the field, commend me to my peasants: They made the sun shine through the host of Huns When sallow burghers slunk back to their tents, And cowered to hear their own victorious trumpet. If there be small resistance, you will find These citizens all lions, like their standard... But if there's much to do, you'll wish, with me, A band of iron rustics at our backs. (4.2.4-40)	40

- 5) Eugène Delacroix. *The Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero*. 1826. Oil on canvas. Wallace Collection, London, England.



- 6) Hayez, Francesco. *The Last Moments of Doge Marino Faliero*. 1867. Oil on canvas. Pinacoteca Di Brera, Milan, Italy.



7) Summary of the Venetian Revolt of 1848 from two histories by Norwich and Madden:

The time for secret societies was over. The moment had now come when the whole population of the city must speak out with a single voice; and the voice with which it spoke was that of Daniele Manin.

...His Jewish father had converted to Christianity in his youth, and had adopted the family name of Pietro Manin – brother of Lodovico Manin, the last Doge of Venice – who had stood godfather to him at his baptism. With the fall of the Republic, however, the stigma of bearing the same name as the man he believed to be the betrayer of the Venetian cause was almost too much for him, and after the birth of his son he would repeatedly urge him to wipe out the stain.

Brought up by his father to share his own republican and liberal ideals, Daniele Manin had already been politically active for some sixteen years when, in 1847, with nationalist feeling growing throughout Italy, he launched what he called his *lotta legale* – legal struggle – against Austrian despotism, principally on the grounds that Austria had never observed the constitution that she had herself granted in 1815. He was not at this stage openly calling for full independence – to do so would have been suicidal; instead, as a tactical measure, he advocated home rule under the Empire. Only when this had been refused (as he knew full well that it would be) would he call his fellow citizens to arms....

[After this,] Daniele Manin followed up [Tommaseo's lecture on "The State of Italian literature"] with a sixteen-point charter, demanding *inter alia* vastly increased rights for all Italians under Austrian rule; a separate north Italian government answerable to the Emperor alone; the army in Italy and the navy in Italian waters to be entirely Italian; and finally, the complete abolition of censorship, and of arbitrary action by police. This, for the imperial authorities, was the last straw. On 18 January, Manin and Tommaseo were arrested and marched to the old prisons opposite the Doge's Palace....

But then, on 17 March, the regular postal steamer from Trieste brought the news that Vienna itself was in revolt, that the rebels had triumphed, and that the hated Prince Metternich had fled for his life. Overnight, the situation was transformed. As the word spread through the city, an immense crowd flocked to the Piazza and collected in front of the Governor's Palace... shouting, "*Fuori Manin e Tommaseo!*" [Free Manin and Tommaseo!] The Venetians, it was clear, would no longer be gainsaid.

It was typical of Daniele Manin that he should have refused to leave the building [even after the crowd had forced the prison doors open] until he had an official order to do so... Only then did the two men emerge, to be carried shoulder high to the Governor's Palace.

... By midnight [of the next day] Manin had recruited two thousand, wearing as their uniform a simple white sash. He himself, with characteristic modesty, would accept no rank senior to that of Captain; the command of the whole force he entrusted to none other than that same Angelo Mengaldo who had raced Byron across the Lagoon thirty years before.

(Norwich, *Paradise of Cities* 157-9)

On March 22, 1848 – a day that would remain hallowed among Venetians – they stormed the *Arsenale*, which was loaded with Austrian munitions and a few warships.... Badly beaten and uncertain of events back home, Austrian forces retreated, evacuating Venice completely. The city was at last free. In an emotional gathering in the Piazza San Marco, Manin declared the restoration of the Republic of Venice to the cheering crowds. Once again the forbidden chant rose from the people: "*Viva San Marco! Viva San Marco!*" But the old order was not so easily put away. All of Europe's 1848 revolutions were soon crushed or made irrelevant.... Venice alone stood defiant. The new Venetian Assembly voted Manin full powers to deal with the emergency. He organized a wide conscription of Venetian men into the Civil Guard and prepared for the worst. The Austrians planned to starve Venice, setting up a land and sea blockade.... In the Great Council Chamber of the Ducal Palace the assembly announced to the world that "Venice will resist Austria at all costs."

And she did.... The blockade of the lagoon was tightened, leading to massive food shortages.... Over the next several weeks, round-the-clock bombardment battered the city. And if that was not bad enough, in August a cholera outbreak... struck the city. Thousands of Venetians died.

The "Year of Revolutions" had ended in Europe, yet only Venice continued to wage its hopeless fight. At last the Venetians realized that it was over for them as well. On August 19 [1849] a small boat waving white flags rowed out to *terra firma* and surrendered to the Austrians. Daniele Manin and the other republican leaders fled or were exiled.

(Madden 388-9)

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