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ROMANTICISM

AN ANTHOLOGY

Fourth Edition

EDITED BY DUNCAN WU

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Manfred, A Dramatic Poem (composed September 1816–15,
February 1817; published 1817)¹

*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*²

Dramatis Personae

Manfred
Chamois Hunter
Abbot of St Maurice
Manuel
Herman
Witch of the Alps
Arimanes
Nemesis
The Destinies
Spirits, etc.

The scene of the drama is amongst the higher Alps – partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the mountains.

ACT I, SCENE I¹

*Manfred alone. Scene: a Gothic gallery.*² *Time: midnight.*

MANFRED. The lamp must be replenished, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch;
My slumbers (if I slumber) are not sleep
But a continuance of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not. In my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within – and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.
But grief should be the instructor of the wise –
Sorrow is knowledge;³ they who know the most

5

10

Notes

MANFRED, A DRAMATIC POEM

¹ This verse drama is one of Byron's most explicit and earnest discussions of the concept of the overreacher.

² *Hamlet* I v 166–7. The epigraph underlines Byron's belief in the supernatural and metaphysical – of which he was, to put it mildly, highly sceptical by the time he published *Don Juan*, two years later.

ACT I, SCENE I

¹ The first scene of the play betrays its source in Goethe's *Faust*, which M. G. Lewis (author of *The Monk* (1796)) translated for Byron, aloud, in August 1816. Goethe recognized the debt, and when he read *Manfred* declared it 'a wonderful phenomenon'.

² *a Gothic gallery* Byron means a covered balcony designed in the Gothic manner.

³ *But grief...knowledge* Ecclesiastes 1:18: 'For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'

Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth:
The tree of knowledge is not that of life.
Philosophy and science,⁴ and the springs
Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world
I have essayed,⁵ and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself,
But they avail not. I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men –
But this availed not. I have had my foes
And none have baffled,⁶ many fallen before me –
But this availed not. Good or evil, life,
Powers, passions, all I see in other beings
Have been to me as rain unto the sands
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb that beats with hopes or wishes
Or lurking love of something on the earth.
Now to my task.

15

20

25

Mysterious agency!⁷

Ye spirits of the unbounded universe
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light;
Ye who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler⁸ essence; ye to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And earth's and ocean's caves familiar things –
I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you: rise, appear!

30

35

(a pause)

They come not yet. Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you; by this sign
Which makes you tremble; by the claims of him
Who is undying⁹ – rise, appear! Appear!

40

(a pause)

If it be so. Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me: by a power
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell
Which had its birthplace in a star condemned,
The burning wreck of a demolished world,
A wandering hell in the eternal space;
By the strong curse which is upon my soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will. Appear!

45

Notes

⁴ *science* knowledge, although it includes subjects which today would be described as 'science' (physics, chemistry, and so forth).

⁵ *essayed* attempted.

⁶ *baffled* confounded.

⁷ *Mysterious agency!* Significantly, Byron avoids the use of the word 'God'.

⁸ *subtler* i.e. more refined than human flesh.

⁹ *him / Who is undying* deliberately ambiguous – calculated to permit a reference to Satan as well as God.

A star is seen at the darker end of the gallery. It is stationary, and a voice is heard singing.

*First Spirit*¹⁰

Mortal,¹¹ to thy bidding bowed 50
 From my mansion in the cloud
 Which the breath of twilight builds
 And the summer's sunset gilds
 With the azure and vermilion
 Which is mixed for my pavilion, 55
 Though thy quest may be forbidden,
 On a starbeam I have ridden,
 To thine adjuration¹² bowed;
 Mortal – be thy wish avowed!

*Voice of the Second Spirit*¹³

Mont Blanc¹⁴ is the monarch of mountains, 60
 They crowned him long ago
 On a throne of rocks,¹⁵ in a robe of clouds
 With a diadem of snow.
 Around his waist are forests braced,
 The avalanche in his hand; 65
 But ere it fall that thundering ball¹⁶
 Must pause for my command.
 The glacier's cold and restless mass
 Moves onward day by day,¹⁷
 But I am he who bids it pass 70
 Or with its ice delay.
 I am the spirit of the place,
 Could make the mountain bow
 And quiver to his caverned base –
 And what with me wouldst thou? 75

*Voice of the Third Spirit*¹⁸

In the blue depth of the waters
 Where the wave hath no strife,
 Where the wind is a stranger
 And the sea-snake hath life,
 Where the mermaid is decking¹⁹ 80
 Her green hair with shells,

Notes

¹⁰ The Spirit of the air.

¹¹ Mortal The spirit puts Manfred in his place from the start.

¹² *adjuration* appeal.

¹³ The Spirit of earth.

¹⁴ Byron visited Mont Blanc with Hobhouse in late August–September 1816.

¹⁵ *throne of rocks* an image stemming back to *Childe Harold* iii 932–4, and picked up by Shelley in *Mont Blanc* 15–17.

¹⁶ *that thundering ball* i.e. the rock which starts the avalanche.

¹⁷ *The glacier's...day by day* an observation made by Shelley on his visit to Mont Blanc and Chamounix; see p. 1101.

¹⁸ The Spirit of water.

¹⁹ *decking* adorning.

Like the storm on the surface
 Came the sound of thy spells;
 O'er my calm hall of coral
 The deep echo rolled – 85
 To the spirit of ocean
 Thy wishes unfold!

*Fourth Spirit*²⁰

Where the slumbering earthquake
 Lies pillowed on fire,
 And the lakes of bitumen 90
 Rise boilingly higher;
 Where the roots of the Andes
 Strike deep in the earth,
 As their summits to heaven
 Shoot soaringly forth; 95
 I have quitted my birthplace,
 Thy bidding to bide –
 Thy spell hath subdued me,
 Thy will be my guide!

Fifth Spirit

I am the rider of the wind, 100
 The stirrer of the storm;
 The hurricane I left behind
 Is yet with lightning warm;
 To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
 I swept upon the blast; 105
 The fleet I met sailed well and yet
 'Twill sink ere night be passed.

Sixth Spirit

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
 Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

Seventh Spirit

The star which rules thy destiny 110
 Was ruled, ere earth began, by me;
 It was a world as fresh and fair
 As e'er revolved round sun in air;
 Its course was free and regular,
 Space bosomed not a lovelier star. 115
 The hour arrived, and it became
 A wandering mass of shapeless flame,

Notes

²⁰ The Spirit of fire.

A pathless comet and a curse –
 The menace of the universe.
 Still rolling on with innate force,
 Without a sphere, without a course,
 A bright deformity on high,
 The monster²¹ of the upper sky!
 And thou beneath its influence born,
 Thou worm whom I obey and scorn!
 Forced by a power (which is not thine,
 And lent thee but to make thee mine)
 For this brief moment to descend,
 Where these weak spirits round thee bend
 And parley with a thing like thee –
 What wouldst thou, child of clay, with me?

The Seven Spirits

Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds, thy star,
 Are at thy beck and bidding, child of clay!
 Before thee at thy quest their spirits are –
 What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals? Say!

MANFRED. Forgetfulness –

FIRST SPIRIT. Of what, of whom, and why?

MANFRED. Of that which is within me; read it there –
 Ye know it, and I cannot utter it.

SPIRIT. We can but give thee that which we possess.

Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
 O'er earth, the whole or portion, or a sign
 Which shall control the elements whereof
 We are the dominators, each and all –
 These shall be thine.

MANFRED. Oblivion, self-oblivion –
 Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
 Ye offer so profusely what I ask?

SPIRIT. It is not in our essence, in our skill;
 But – thou mayst die.

MANFRED. Will death bestow it on me?

SPIRIT. We are immortal and do not forget;
 We are eternal and to us the past

Is, as the future, present. Art thou answered?

MANFRED. Ye mock me – but the power which brought ye here
 Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!
 The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,
 The lightning of my being, is as bright,
 Pervading, and far-darting as your own –
 And shall not yield to yours, though cooped in clay!
 Answer, or I will teach ye what I am.

Notes

²¹ *monster* in the sense of an unnatural and extraordinary phenomenon.

SPIRIT. We answer as we answered; our reply
 Is even in thine own words.

MANFRED. Why say ye so?

SPIRIT. If, as thou say'st, thine essence be as ours,
 We have replied in telling thee, the thing
 Mortals call death hath nought to do with us.

MANFRED. I then have called ye from your realms in vain;
 Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.

SPIRIT. Say;
 What we possess we offer, it is thine.

Bethink ere thou dismiss us, ask again;
 Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length of days –

MANFRED. Accursed! What have I to do with days?

They are too long already. Hence! Begone!

SPIRIT. Yet pause. Being here, our will would do thee service;
 Bethink thee, is there then no other gift
 Which we can make not worthless in thine eyes?

MANFRED. No, none – yet stay one moment ere we part,
 I would behold ye face to face.²² I hear

Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
 As music on the waters, and I see
 The steady aspect of a clear large star –

But nothing more. Approach me as ye are,
 Or one, or all, in your accustomed forms.

SPIRIT. We have no forms beyond the elements
 Of which we are the mind and principle.
 But choose a form – in that we will appear.

MANFRED. I have no choice; there is no form on earth
 Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him
 Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
 As unto him may seem most fitting. Come!

SEVENTH SPIRIT (*appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure*).²³
 Behold!

MANFRED. Oh God! If it be thus, and *thou*
 Art not a madness and a mockery,

I yet might be most happy. I will clasp thee,
 And we again will be – (*the figure vanishes*)
 My heart is crushed!

Manfred falls senseless. A voice is heard in the incantation²⁴ which follows.

When the moon is on the wave
 And the glow-worm in the grass,

Notes

²² *face to face* Exodus 33:11: 'And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.'

²³ The Spirit appears in the form of Astarte, but, as McGann observes, ll. 232–51 were written with Lady Byron in mind.

²⁴ The incantation (ll. 192–261) was one of the earliest parts of *Manfred* to be composed, certainly by 14 August 1816,

when Byron was resident at Villa Diodati in Geneva. Most of the remainder of the play was composed during Byron's tour of the Bernese Alps the following month, and during his residence in Venice, winter 1816–17.

And the meteor on the grave
 And the wisp on the morass,²⁵ 195
 When the falling stars are shooting
 And the answered owls are hooting,
 And the silent leaves are still
 In the shadow of the hill,
 Shall my soul be upon thine 200
 With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep
 Yet thy spirit shall not sleep;
 There are shades which will not vanish,
 There are thoughts thou canst not banish; 205
 By a power to thee unknown
 Thou canst never be alone;
 Thou art wrapped as with a shroud,
 Thou art gathered in a cloud –
 And forever shalt thou dwell 210
 In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
 Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
 As a thing that, though unseen,
 Must be near thee, and hath been; 215
 And when in that secret dread
 Thou hast turned around thy head,
 Thou shalt marvel I am not
 As thy shadow on the spot,
 And the power which thou dost feel 220
 Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
 Hath baptized thee with a curse;
 And a spirit of the air
 Hath begirt thee with a snare; 225
 In the wind there is a voice
 Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
 And to thee shall night deny
 All the quiet of her sky;
 And the day shall have a sun 230
 Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distill
 An essence which hath strength to kill;
 From thy own heart I then did wring
 The black mood in its blackest spring; 235
 From thy own smile I snatched the snake,
 For there it coiled as in a brake,²⁶

Notes

²⁵ *morass* bog, marsh. The 'wisp' is a phosphorescent light seen hovering or flitting over marshy ground, supposed to be due to the spontaneous combustion of an inflammable gas

(phosphuretted hydrogen) derived from decaying organic matter; popularly called *Will-o'-the-wisp*.

²⁶ *brake* bracken.

From thy own lip I drew the charm
 Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
 In proving every poison known, 240
 I found the strongest was thine own.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
 By thy unfathomed gulfs of guile,
 By that most seeming virtuous eye,
 By thy shut soul's hypocrisy, 245
 By the perfection of thine art
 Which passed for human thine own heart,
 By thy delight in others' pain,
 And by thy brotherhood of Cain,²⁷
 I call upon thee, and compel 250
 Thyself to be thy proper²⁸ hell!

And on thy head I pour the vial
 Which doth devote²⁹ thee to this trial;
 Nor to slumber, nor to die,
 Shall be in thy destiny; 255
 Though thy death shall still seem near
 To thy wish, but as a fear;
 Lo! the spell now works around thee
 And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
 O'er thy heart and brain together 260
 Hath the word been passed: now wither!

ACT I, SCENE II¹

The mountain of the Jungfrau.² Time: morning. Manfred alone upon the cliffs.

MANFRED. The spirits I have raised abandon me,
 The spells which I have studied baffle me,
 The remedy I recked³ of tortured me;
 I lean no more on superhuman aid, 5
 It hath no power upon the past, and for
 The future, till the past be gulfed in darkness,
 It is not of my search. My mother earth,
 And thou fresh-breaking day, and you, ye mountains –
 Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
 And thou, the bright eye of the universe 10
 That openest over all, and unto all

Notes

²⁷ Cain murdered his brother Abel, and was cast out, a fugitive and vagabond; Genesis 4:8–12. Manfred has been cursed in a similar manner to Cain. Byron was preoccupied with Cain's story too, and dramatized it in 1821.

²⁸ *proper* own.

²⁹ *devote* condemn.

ACT I, SCENE II

¹ As McGann notes, this scene reworks that of Prometheus bound on the rock of the Caucasus in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*.

² Byron first saw the mountain of the Jungfrau 23 September 1816 (Marchand v 101–2).

³ *recked* thought.

Art a delight – thou shin'st not on my heart.
 And you, ye crags upon whose extreme edge
 I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
 Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs 15
 In dizziness of distance, when a leap,
 A stir, a motion, even a breath would bring
 My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
 To rest for ever – wherefore do I pause?
 I feel the impulse, yet I do not plunge; 20
 I see the peril, yet do not recede;
 And my brain reels, and yet my foot is firm.
 There is a power upon me which withholds
 And makes it my fatality to live⁴ –
 If it be life to wear within myself 25
 This barrenness of spirit, and to be
 My own soul's sepulchre,⁵ for I have ceased
 To justify my deeds unto myself
 (The last infirmity of evil).⁶ (*an eagle passes*) Aye,
 Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister, 30
 Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,
 Well may'st thou swoop so near me – I should be
 Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets. Thou art gone
 Where the eye cannot follow thee, but thine
 Yet pierces downward, onward, or above 35
 With a pervading vision. Beautiful!
 How beautiful is all this visible world,
 How glorious in its action and itself!
 But we who name ourselves its sovereigns, we
 Half-dust, half-deity, alike unfit 40
 To sink or soar,⁷ with our mixed essence make
 A conflict of its elements, and breathe
 The breath of degradation and of pride,
 Contending with low wants and lofty will
 Till our mortality predominates – 45
 And men are what they name not to themselves,
 And trust not to each other. (*The shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.*)
 Hark! the note,
 The natural music of the mountain reed
 (For here the patriarchal days are not
 A pastoral fable) pipes in the liberal⁸ air, 50
 Mixed with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd!
 My soul would drink those echoes. Oh that I were
 The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
 A living voice, a breathing harmony,
 A bodiless enjoyment, born and dying 55
 With the blessed tone which made me!

Notes

⁴ *my fatality to live* a clever paradox that echoes Hamlet, who mentions the 'calamity of so long life' (*Hamlet* III i 68).

⁵ *My own soul's sepulchre* cf. Milton's *Samson Agonistes* 102: 'Myself, my sepulchre, a moving grave.'

⁶ *The last infirmity of evil* an echo of *Lycidas* 71, in which fame is 'That last infirmity of noble mind'.

⁷ *How beautiful...sink or soar* There is a general recollection here of Hamlet's famous speech, *Hamlet* II ii 293–310.

⁸ *liberal* abundant.

Enter from below a Chamois Hunter

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Even so
 This way the chamois⁹ leapt. Her nimble feet
 Have baffled me; my gains today will scarce
 Repay my breakneck travail. What is here
 Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reached 60
 A height which none even of our mountaineers,
 Save our best hunters, may attain? His garb
 Is goodly, his mien manly, and his air
 Proud as a freeborn peasant's, at this distance.
 I will approach him nearer.
 MANFRED (*not perceiving the other*). To be thus; 65
 Grey-haired with anguish like these blasted pines,
 Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
 A blighted trunk upon a cursed root,
 Which but supplies a feeling to decay –
 And to be thus, eternally but thus, 70
 Having been otherwise! Now furrowed o'er
 With wrinkles; ploughed by moments, not by years;
 And hours all tortured into ages – hours
 Which I outlive! Ye toppling crags of ice,
 Ye avalanches whom a breath draws down 75
 In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me!
 I hear ye momentarily above, beneath,
 Crash with a frequent conflict, but ye pass
 And only fall on things which still would live –
 On the young flourishing forest, or the hut 80
 And hamlet of the harmless villager.
 CHAMOIS HUNTER. The mists begin to rise from up the valley;
 I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
 To lose at once his way and life together.
 MANFRED. The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds 85
 Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury
 Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell
 Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
 Heaped with the damned like pebbles.¹⁰ I am giddy.
 CHAMOIS HUNTER. I must approach him cautiously; if near, 90
 A sudden step will startle him, and he
 Seems tottering already.
 MANFRED. Mountains have fallen,
 Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
 Rocking their Alpine brethren, filling up
 The ripe green valleys with destruction's splinters, 95
 Damming the rivers with a sudden dash
 Which crushed the waters into mist and made
 Their fountains find another channel – thus,

Notes

⁹ *chamois* antelope found in the highest parts of the Alps.

¹⁰ *The mists...pebbles* Typically, Manfred sees everything in terms that reflect his sense of his own damnation.

Thus in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg;¹¹
Why stood I not beneath it?

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Friend, have a care, 100
Your next step may be fatal! For the love
Of him who made you, stand not on that brink!

MANFRED (*not hearing him*). Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth; 105
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime, as thus – thus they shall be,
In this one plunge. Farewell, ye opening heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully,
Ye were not meant for me. Earth, take these atoms!

As Manfred is in act to spring from the cliff, the Chamois Hunter seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Hold, madman! Though weary of thy life, 110
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty¹² blood!
Away with me – I will not quit my hold.

MANFRED. I am most sick at heart – nay, grasp me not,
I am all feebleness; the mountains whirl 115
Spinning around me – I grow blind. What art thou?

CHAMOIS HUNTER. I'll answer that anon. Away with me;
The clouds grow thicker – there, now lean on me;
Place your foot here – here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub. Now give me your hand 120
And hold fast by my girdle¹³ – softly, well.
The chalet will be gained within an hour;
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath washed since winter. Come, 'tis bravely done –
You should have been a hunter! Follow me. 125

As they descend the rocks with difficulty, the scene closes.

ACT II, SCENE I

A cottage amongst the Bernese Alps.¹ Manfred and the Chamois Hunter.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. No, no – yet pause, thou must not yet go forth;
Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other for some hours, at least.
When thou art better, I will be thy guide –
But whither?

MANFRED. It imports not. I do know 5
My route full well, and need no further guidance.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of high lineage –

Notes

¹¹ On 2 September 1806 part of Mt Rossberg fell and buried four villages.

¹² *guilty* i.e. guilty of suicide; but there is an irony, because Manfred is guilty of other sins of which the Chamois Hunter knows nothing.

¹³ *girdle* belt.

ACT II, SCENE I

¹ Byron toured the Bernese Alps with Hobhouse, 17–29 September 1816.

One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys. Which of these 10
May call thee lord? I only know their portals;²
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths
Which step from out our mountains to their doors
I know from childhood – which of these is thine? 15

MANFRED. No matter.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Well sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come taste my wine,
'Tis of an ancient vintage – many a day
'T has thawed my veins among our glaciers; now 20
Let it do thus for thine. Come, pledge³ me fairly.

MANFRED. Away, away! There's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never, never sink in the earth?

CHAMOIS HUNTER. What dost thou mean? Thy senses wander from thee.
MANFRED. I say 'tis blood – my blood! The pure warm stream 25

Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed.⁴ But still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds that shut me out from heaven,
Where thou art not, and I shall never be. 30

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Man of strange words and some half-maddening sin
Which makes thee people vacancy, whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet –
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience –

MANFRED. Patience and patience hence! That word was made 35
For brutes of burden, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,
I am not of thine order.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Thanks to heaven!
I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell! But whatsoe'er thine ill, 40
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.

MANFRED. Do I not bear it? Look on me – I live.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. This is convulsion, and no healthful life.

MANFRED. I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now 45
To those which I must number: ages, ages,
Space and eternity – and consciousness
With the fierce thirst of death – and still unslaked!

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far. 50

MANFRED. Think'st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth, but actions are our epochs. Mine

Notes

² *portals* gateways.

³ *pledge* toast.

⁴ *The pure warm stream...shed* The archetypal model of Manfred's sins is again Cain, who killed his brother Abel.

Have made my days and nights imperishable,
 Endless, and all alike as sands on the shore,
 Innumerable atoms, and one desert, 55
 Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break
 But nothing rests save carcasses and wrecks,
 Rocks, and salt-surf weeds of bitterness.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Alas, he's mad – but yet I must not leave him.

MANFRED. I would I were, for then the things I see 60
 Would be but a distempered dream.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. What is it
 That thou dost see, or think thou look'st upon?

MANFRED. Myself and thee, a peasant of the Alps;
 Thy humble virtues, hospitable home 65
 And spirit patient, pious, proud and free;
 Thy self-respect, grafted on innocent thoughts;
 Thy days of health and nights of sleep; thy toils
 By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes
 Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave 70
 With cross and garland over its green turf,
 And thy grandchildren's love for epitaph –
 This do I see, and then I look within –
 It matters not; my soul was scorched already.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. And would'st thou then exchange thy lot for mine?

MANFRED. No, friend! I would not wrong thee, nor exchange 75
 My lot with living being. I can bear –
 However wretchedly, 'tis still to bear –
 In life what others could not brook⁵ to dream,
 But perish in their slumber.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. And with this,
 This cautious feeling for another's pain, 80
 Canst thou be black with evil? Say not so.
 Can one of gentle thoughts have wreaked revenge
 Upon his enemies?

MANFRED. Oh no, no, no!
 My injuries came down on those who loved me,
 On those whom I best loved. I never quelled 85
 An enemy, save in my just defence,
 My wrongs were all on those I should have cherished,
 But my embrace was fatal.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Heaven give thee rest,
 And penitence restore thee to thyself;
 My prayers shall be for thee.

MANFRED. I need them not, 90
 But can endure thy pity. I depart;
 'Tis time, farewell! Here's gold, and thanks for thee –
 No words, it is thy due. Follow me not.
 I know my path, the mountain peril's past –
 And once again I charge thee, follow not! 95
Exit Manfred.

Notes

⁵ brook endure.

ACT II, SCENE II

A lower valley in the Alps. A cataract. Enter Manfred.

It is not noon. The sunbow's rays still arch
 The torrent with the many hues of heaven,¹
 And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
 O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular, 5
 And fling its lines of foaming light along,
 And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
 The giant steed to be bestrode by death,
 As told in the Apocalypse.² No eyes
 But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
 I should be sole³ in this sweet solitude, 10
 And with the spirit of the place divide
 The homage of these waters. I will call her.⁴

Manfred takes some of the water into the palm of his hand, and flings it in the air, muttering the adjuration. After a pause, the Witch of the Alps rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.

Beautiful spirit, with thy hair of light
 And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
 The charms of earth's least mortal daughters grow 15
 To an unearthly stature in an essence
 Of purer elements, while the hues of youth –
 Carnationed like a sleeping infant's cheek,
 Rocked by the beating of her mother's heart,
 Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves 20
 Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,
 The blush of earth embracing with her heaven –
 Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame
 The beauties of the sunbow which bends o'er thee;
 Beautiful spirit, in thy calm clear brow 25
 Wherein is glassed⁵ serenity of soul,
 Which of itself shows immortality,
 I read that thou wilt pardon to a son

Notes

ACT II, SCENE II

¹ 'This iris is formed by the rays of the sun over the lower part of the Alpine torrents. It is exactly like a rainbow come down to pay a visit, and so close that you may walk into it. This effect lasts until noon' (Byron's note). Byron described the effect in his journal sent to Augusta Leigh, 23 September 1816: 'Before ascending the mountain went to the torrent ... again – the sun upon it forming a rainbow of the lower part of all colours – but principally purple and gold' (Marchand v 101).

² *the Apocalypse* i.e. the Book of Revelation of St John the Divine 6:8. Lines 3–8 versify remarks made by Byron in the journal for Augusta Leigh, 22 September 1816: 'the torrent is in shape curving over the rock – like the tail of a white horse streaming in the wind – such as it might be conceived would be that of the "pale horse" on which Death is mounted in the Apocalypse' (Marchand v 101).

³ *sole* single, alone.

⁴ *her* i.e. the spirit of the place, the Witch of the Alps.

⁵ *glassed* reflected.

Of earth, whom the abstruser⁶ powers permit
 At times to commune with them, if that he
 Avail him of his spells, to call thee thus
 And gaze on thee a moment. 30

WITCH. Son of earth!
 I know thee and the powers which give thee power;
 I know thee for a man of many thoughts
 And deeds of good and ill (extreme in both),
 Fatal and fated in thy sufferings. 35

I have expected this – what wouldst thou with me?
 MANFRED. To look upon thy beauty, nothing further.
 The face of the earth hath maddened me, and I
 Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce
 To the abodes of those who govern her,
 But they can nothing aid me. I have sought
 From them what they could not bestow, and now
 I search no further. 40

WITCH. What could be the quest
 Which is not in the power of the most powerful,
 The rulers of the invisible? 45

MANFRED. A boon –
 But why should I repeat it? 'Twere in vain.

WITCH. I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

MANFRED. Well, though it torture me, 'tis but the same;
 My pang shall find a voice. From my youth upwards
 My spirit walked not with the souls of men,
 Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes;
 The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
 The aim of their existence was not mine;
 My joys, my griefs, my passions and my powers
 Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
 I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
 Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
 Was there but one⁷ who – but of her anon.
 I said, with men, and with the thoughts of men
 I held but slight communion, but instead
 My joy was in the wilderness – to breathe
 The difficult air of the iced mountain's top
 Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
 Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
 Into the torrent, and to roll along
 On the swift whirl of the new-breaking wave
 Of river-stream or ocean in their flow.
 In these my early strength exulted – or
 To follow through the night the moving moon,⁸
 The stars and their development; or catch 70

Notes

⁶ *abstruser* hidden, concealed; i.e. not perceptible to the senses.⁷ *one* i.e. Astarte, his sister.⁸ *the moving moon* borrowed from Coleridge, *The Ancient Mariner* (1817) 263: 'The moving moon went up the sky.'

The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
 Or to look, list'ning, on the scattered leaves
 While autumn winds were at their evening song.
 These were my pastimes, and to be alone; 75
 For if the beings of whom I was one
 (Hating to be so) crossed me in my path,
 I felt myself degraded back to them
 And was all clay again. And then I dived
 In my lone wanderings to the caves of death,
 Searching its cause in its effect, and drew 80
 From withered bones and skulls and heaped-up dust
 Conclusions most forbidden.⁹ Then I passed
 The nights of years in sciences untaught,
 Save in the old time, and with time and toil 85
 And terrible ordeal, and such penance
 As in itself hath power upon the air,
 And spirits that do compass air and earth,
 Space and the peopled infinite, I made
 Mine eyes familiar with eternity, 90
 Such as, before me, did the Magi¹⁰ and
 He¹¹ who from out their fountain dwellings raised
 Eros and Anteros at Gadara,
 As I do thee. And with my knowledge grew
 The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy 95
 Of this most bright intelligence, until –

WITCH. Proceed.

MANFRED. Oh, I but thus prolonged my words,
 Boasting these idle attributes,¹² because,
 As I approach the core of my heart's grief –
 But to my task. I have not named to thee 100
 Father or mother, mistress, friend or being
 With whom I wore the chain of human ties;
 If I had such, they seemed not such to me.
 Yet there was one¹³ –

WITCH. Spare not thyself; proceed.

MANFRED. She was like me in lineaments – her eyes,
 Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone 105
 Even of her voice, they said were like to mine,
 But softened all and tempered into beauty.
 She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
 The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind 110

Notes

⁹ *And then I dived... forbidden* Manfred's dabbling among corpses has much in common with the researches of Victor Frankenstein in Mary Godwin's novel, conceived at the same time as Byron's poem, summer 1816, though not published until 1818. Byron is probably thinking, however, of Shelley's Alastor, who 'made my bed / In charnels and on coffins' (ll. 23–4).¹⁰ *the Magi* the ancient Persian priestly caste.¹¹ *He* 'The philosopher Iamblicus. The story of the raising of Eros and Anteros may be found in his life, by Eunapius. It is well-told' (Byron's note). Iamblicus (died c.330 CE) summoned by magic Love and its opposite from fountains in Syria.¹² *attributes* achievements.¹³ *one* Astarte.

To comprehend the universe – nor these
 Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine:
 Pity and smiles and tears (which I had not)
 And tenderness (but that I had for her),
 Humility (and that I never had). 115
 Her faults were mine; her virtues were her own –
 I loved her, and destroyed her!

WITCH. With thy hand?

MANFRED. Not with my hand, but heart – which broke her heart:
 It gazed on mine and withered. I have shed
 Blood, but not hers, and yet her blood was shed – 120
 I saw and could not staunch it.

WITCH. And for this,
 A being of the race thou dost despise,
 The order which thine own would rise above,
 Mingling with us and ours, thou dost forego
 The gifts of our great knowledge, and shrink'st back 125
 To recreate mortality? Away!

MANFRED. Daughter of air, I tell thee, since that hour –
 But words are breath; look on me in my sleep
 Or watch my watchings – come and sit by me!
 My solitude is solitude no more, 130
 But peopled with the Furies;¹⁴ I have gnashed
 My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
 Then cursed myself till sunset; I have prayed
 For madness as a blessing – 'tis denied me;
 I have affronted death, but in the war 135
 Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
 And fatal things passed harmless – the cold hand
 Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
 Back by a single hair which would not break.
 In fantasy, imagination, all 140
 The affluence of my soul (which one day was
 A Croesus in creation),¹⁵ I plunged deep,
 But like an ebbing wave, it dashed me back
 Into the gulf of my unfathomed thought.
 I plunged amidst mankind; forgetfulness 145
 I sought in all save where 'tis to be found,
 And that I have to learn; my sciences,
 My long-pursued and superhuman art
 Is mortal here. I dwell in my despair
 And live – and live for ever.

WITCH. It may be 150
 That I can aid thee.

MANFRED. To do this thy power
 Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
 Do so, in any shape, in any hour,

Notes

¹⁴ *Furies* avenging agents of the gods.

¹⁵ *A Croesus in creation* i.e. endlessly creative. Croesus was the last king of Lydia, of fabulous wealth; Byron may be recall-

ing the legend that when Croesus met Solon, Solon distinguished between the imagined happiness of being Croesus and the genuine happiness of being dead.

With any torture – so it be the last.
 WITCH. That is not in my province, but if thou 155
 Wilt swear obedience to my will and do
 My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.

MANFRED. I will not swear!¹⁶ Obey? And whom? The spirits
 Whose presence I command – and be the slave
 Of those who served me? Never!

WITCH. Is this all? 160
 Hast thou no gentler answer? Yet bethink thee,
 And pause ere thou rejectest.

MANFRED. I have said it.

WITCH. Enough! I may retire then – say!

MANFRED. Retire!

The Witch disappears.

MANFRED (*alone*). We are the fools of time and terror. Days
 Steal on us and steal from us, yet we live, 165
 Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.

In all the days of this detested yoke
 (This heaving burden, this accursed breath,
 This vital weight upon the struggling heart
 Which sinks with sorrow or beats quick with pain, 170
 Or joy that ends in agony or faintness);

In all the days of past and future – for
 In life there is no present – we can number
 How few, how less than few, wherein the soul
 Forbears to pant for death and yet draws back 175
 As from a stream in winter, though the chill

Be but a moment's. I have one resource
 Still in my science; I can call the dead
 And ask them what it is we dread to be.

The sternest answer can but be the grave,
 And that is nothing; if they answer not... 180
 The buried prophet answered to the hag

Of Endor,¹⁷ and the Spartan monarch drew
 From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
 An answer and his destiny – he slew 185
 That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,

And died unpardoned, though he called in aid
 The Phyxian Jove, and in Phigalia roused
 The Arcadian evocators¹⁸ to compel
 The indignant shadow¹⁹ to depose²⁰ her wrath 190
 Or fix her term of vengeance; she replied

Notes

¹⁶ Manfred's defiance of the supernatural powers is a distinctively Byronic departure from the *Faust* legend.

¹⁷ Samuel was raised from the dead by the Witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28:7.

¹⁸ *evocators* those who invoke spirits.

¹⁹ *shadow* ghost.

²⁰ *depose* lay aside.

In words of dubious import, but fulfilled.²¹

If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I loved would still be beautiful, 195
Happy and giving happiness. What is she,
What is she now? A sufferer for my sins,
A thing I dare not think upon – or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain,
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare. 200
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze
On spirit, good or evil; now I tremble
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart.
But I can act even what I most abhor
And champion human fears. The night approaches. 205

Exit

ACT II, SCENE III

The summit of the Jungfrau mountain. Enter First Destiny.

The moon is rising broad and round and bright,
And here on snows where never human foot
Of common mortal trod,¹ we nightly tread
And leave no traces. O'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice, 5
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment – a dead whirlpool's image;
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork² of some earthquake where the clouds 10
Pause to repose themselves in passing by,
Is sacred to our revels or our vigils.
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes, for tonight
Is our great festival. 'Tis strange they come not. 15

A VOICE WITHOUT, SINGING

The captive usurper³
Hurled down from the throne,⁴
Lay buried in torpor,
Forgotten and lone;
I broke through his slumbers, 20

Notes

²¹ The story of Pausanias, King of Sparta (who commanded the Greeks in the Battle of Plataea, and afterwards perished for an attempt to betray the Lacedaemonians), and Cleonice, is told in Plutarch's life of Cimon, and in the Laconics of Pausanias the Sophist, in his description of Greece' (Byron's note).

ACT II, SCENE III

¹ The Jungfrau had been scaled in 1811.

² *fretwork* figurative; usually refers to carved, decorative woodwork.

³ *The captive usurper* Napoleon Bonaparte who, at the time of writing, was in exile on St Helena. These lines should be read in the light of Byron's meditation on Napoleon, *Childe Harold* iii, stanzas 36–42.

⁴ *Hurled down from the throne* Napoleon crowned himself Emperor in 1804, and abdicated in 1814. He was 'hurled down' when the combined might of the allies defeated him at Waterloo, 1815.

I shivered⁵ his chain,
I leagued him with numbers⁶ –
He's tyrant again!⁷
With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a nation's destruction, his flight and despair. 25

SECOND VOICE WITHOUT

The ship sailed on, the ship sailed fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his wreck,
Save one whom I held, as he swam, by the hair, 30
And he was a subject well worthy my care –
A traitor on land and a pirate at sea –
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me!

FIRST DESTINY (*answering*)

The city lies sleeping;
The morn, to deplore it, 35
May dawn on it weeping;
Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it –
Thousands lie lowly;
Tens of thousands shall perish; 40
The living shall fly from
The sick they should cherish,
But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from. 45
Sorrow and anguish
And evil and dread
Envelop a nation;
The blessed are the dead
Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation. 50
This work of a night,
This wreck of a realm, this deed of my doing –
For ages I've done and shall still be renewing!

Enter the Second and Third Destinies

THE THREE

Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves; 55
We only give to take again
The spirits of our slaves!

FIRST DESTINY. Welcome! Where's Nemesis?

SECOND DESTINY. At some great work,

Notes

⁵ *shivered* shattered.

⁶ *numbers* i.e. of soldiers.

⁷ The Spirit prophesies the return of Napoleon from St Helena. It was not to happen.

But what I know not, for my hands were full.
 THIRD DESTINY. Behold, she cometh.
 Enter Nemesis
 FIRST DESTINY. Say, where hast thou been? 60
 My sisters and thyself are slow tonight.
 NEMESIS. I was detained repairing shattered thrones,⁸
 Marrying fools,⁹ restoring dynasties,
 Avenging men upon their enemies,
 And making them repent their own revenge; 65
 Goadng the wise to madness, from the dull
 Shaping out oracles¹⁰ to rule the world
 Afresh – for they were waxing¹¹ out of date
 And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
 To weigh kings in the balance,¹² and to speak 70
 Of freedom, the forbidden fruit.¹³ Away!
 We have outstayed the hour; mount we our clouds!
 Exeunt

ACT II, SCENE IV

*The Hall of Arimanes,¹ Arimanes on his throne, a globe of fire, surrounded by the spirits.
 Hymn of the Spirits*

Hail to our master, Prince of earth and air!
 Who walks the clouds and waters – in his hand
 The sceptre of the elements, which tear
 Themselves to chaos at his high command!
 He breatheth, and a tempest shakes the sea; 5
 He speaketh, and the clouds reply in thunder;
 He gazeth – from his glance the sunbeams flee;
 He moveth – earthquakes rend the world asunder.
 Beneath his footsteps the volcanoes rise;
 His shadow is the pestilence, his path 10
 The comets herald through the crackling skies,
 And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
 To him war offers daily sacrifice,
 To him death pays his tribute; life is his,
 With all its infinite of agonies, 15
 And his the spirit of whatever is!

Notes

⁸ *I was detained repairing shattered thrones* Byron has in mind the Treaty of Vienna in 1815, following the restoration to power of the monarchies of Spain and France.

⁹ *Marrying fools* perhaps a sardonic reference to Byron's own marriage to Annabella Milbanke, which had resulted in acrimonious separation and Byron's exile from England.

¹⁰ *oracles* effectively, prophets and priests, empowered to utter the will of God. Byron may have in mind Joanna Southcott (1750–1814), who claimed to be pregnant by the

Holy Ghost, with Shiloh, the saviour of the world. After her death the 'pregnancy' was diagnosed as dropsy.

¹¹ *waxing* growing.

¹² *To weigh kings in the balance* Daniel 5:27: 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.'

¹³ Nemesis is effectively an anti-Revolutionary force.

ACT II, SCENE IV

¹ Arimanes derives his name from Ahriman, the principle of darkness and evil in Persian dualism.

Enter the Destinies and Nemesis

FIRST DESTINY. Glory to Arimanes! On the earth
 His power increaseth; both my sisters did
 His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty. 20
 SECOND DESTINY. Glory to Arimanes! We who bow
 The necks of men, bow down before his throne.
 THIRD DESTINY. Glory to Arimanes! We await
 His nod.
 NEMESIS. Sovereign of Sovereigns! We are thine,
 And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
 And most things wholly so; still to increase 25
 Our power increasing thine, demands our care,
 And we are vigilant. Thy late commands
 Have been fulfilled to the utmost.

Enter Manfred

A SPIRIT What is here?
 A mortal? Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
 Bow down and worship!
 SECOND SPIRIT. I do know the man, 30
 A Magian² of great power and fearful skill.
 THIRD SPIRIT. Bow down and worship, slave! What, know'st thou not
 Thine and our sovereign? Tremble, and obey!
 ALL THE SPIRITS. Prostrate thyself and thy condemned clay,
 Child of the earth, or dread the worst!
 MANFRED. I know it, 35
 And yet ye see I kneel not.
 FOURTH SPIRIT. 'Twill be taught thee.
 MANFRED. 'Tis taught already; many a night on the earth,
 On the bare ground have I bowed down my face
 And strewed my head with ashes.³ I have known 40
 The fullness of humiliation, for
 I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
 To my own desolation.
 FIFTH SPIRIT. Dost thou dare
 Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
 What the whole earth accords, beholding not
 The terror of his glory? Crouch, I say! 45
 MANFRED. Bid *him* bow down to that which is above him,
 The overruling Infinite, the Maker
 Who made him not for worship; let him kneel,
 And we will kneel together.
 THE SPIRITS. Crush the worm!
 Tear him in pieces!
 FIRST DESTINY. Hence! Avaunt! He's mine. 50
 Prince of the powers invisible! This man
 Is of no common order, as his port⁴

Notes

² *Magian* magician, wizard.

³ *strewed my head with ashes* an expression of grief and repentance.

⁴ *port* bearing, deportment.

And presence here denote. His sufferings
 Have been of an immortal nature like
 Our own; his knowledge and his powers and will, 55
 As far as is compatible with clay
 (Which clogs the ethereal essence), have been such
 As clay hath seldom borne; his aspirations
 Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
 And they have only taught him what we know – 60
 That knowledge is not happiness, and science
 But an exchange of ignorance for that
 Which is another kind of ignorance.
 This is not all. The passions, attributes
 Of earth and heaven, from which no power nor being 65
 Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
 Have pierced his heart, and in their consequence
 Made him a thing which I, who pity not,
 Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine,
 And thine, it may be; be it so or not, 70
 No other spirit in this region hath
 A soul like his – or power upon his soul.
 NEMESIS. What doth he here then?
 FIRST DESTINY. Let *him* answer that.
 MANFRED. Ye know what I have known, and without power
 I could not be amongst ye; but there are 75
 Powers deeper still beyond. I come in quest
 Of such, to answer unto what I seek.
 NEMESIS. What wouldst *thou*?
 MANFRED. Thou canst not reply to me.
 Call up the dead – my question is for them.
 NEMESIS. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch 80
 The wishes of this mortal?
 ARIMANES. Yea.
 NEMESIS. Whom would'st thou
 Uncharnel?⁵
 MANFRED. One without a tomb. Call up
 Astarte.
 NEMESIS.
 Shadow or spirit,
 Whatever thou art, 85
 Which still doth inherit
 The whole or a part
 Of the form of thy birth,
 Of the mould of thy clay
 Which returned to the earth, 90
 Reappear to the day!
 Bear what thou borest,
 The heart and the form,

Notes

⁵ *Uncharnel* i.e. raise from the dead. A charnel is a cemetery.

And the aspect thou worst
 Redeem from the worm. 95
 Appear! Appear! Appear!
 Who sent thee there requires thee here!

The phantom of Astarte rises and stands in the midst.
 MANFRED. Can this be death? There's bloom upon her cheek,
 But now I see it is no living hue
 But a strange hectic,⁶ like the unnatural red 100
 Which autumn plants upon the perished leaf.
 It is the same! Oh God, that I should dread
 To look upon the same – Astarte! No,
 I cannot speak to her; but bid her speak –
 Forgive me or condemn me. 105

NEMESIS.
 By the power which hath broken
 The grave which enthralled⁷ thee,
 Speak to him who hath spoken,
 Or those who have called thee! 110

MANFRED. She is silent,
 And in that silence I am more than answered.
 NEMESIS. My power extends no further. Prince of air!
 It rests with thee alone; command her voice.
 ARIMANES. Spirit – obey this sceptre!
 NEMESIS. Silent still! 115
 She is not of our order, but belongs
 To the other powers. Mortal, thy quest is vain,
 And we are baffled⁸ also.

MANFRED. Hear me, hear me –
 Astarte, my beloved, speak to me!
 I have so much endured, so much endure –
 Look on me! The grave hath not changed thee more 120
 Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
 Too much, as I loved thee; we were not made
 To torture thus each other, though it were
 The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
 Say that thou loath'st me not, that I do bear 125
 This punishment for both, that thou wilt be
 One of the blessed, and that I shall die,
 For hitherto all hateful things conspire
 To bind me in existence, in a life
 Which makes me shrink from immortality – 130
 A future like the past. I cannot rest.
 I know not what I ask nor what I seek;
 I feel but what thou art and what I am,
 And I would hear yet once before I perish
 The voice which was my music: speak to me! 135
 For I have called on thee in the still night,

Notes

⁶ *hectic* a flush or heightened colour on the cheek, often a symptom of fever.

⁷ *enthralled* imprisoned.

⁸ *baffled* defeated.

Startled the slumbering birds from the hushed boughs,
 And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
 Acquainted with thy vainly-echoed name,
 Which answered me – many things answered me, 140
 Spirits and men, but thou wert silent all.
 Yet speak to me! I have outwatched the stars
 And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
 Speak to me! I have wandered o'er the earth
 And never found thy likeness – speak to me! 145
 Look on the fiends around; they feel for me.
 I fear them not, and feel for thee alone –
 Speak to me, though it be in wrath, but say –
 I reck⁹ not what – but let me hear thee once –
 This once – once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred!
 MANFRED. Say on, say on; 150
 I live but in the sound – it is thy voice!
 PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred! Tomorrow ends thine earthly ills.
 Farewell!
 MANFRED. Yet one word more: am I forgiven?
 PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Farewell!
 MANFRED. Say, shall we meet again?
 PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Farewell!
 MANFRED. One word for mercy; say thou lovest me. 155
 PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred!
The spirit of Astarte disappears.
 NEMESIS. She's gone and will not be recalled;
 Her words will be fulfilled. Return to the earth.
 A SPIRIT. He is convulsed; this is to be a mortal
 And seek the things beyond mortality.
 ANOTHER SPIRIT. Yet see, he mastereth himself and makes 160
 His torture tributary to his will;
 Had he been one of us, he would have made
 An awful¹⁰ spirit.
 NEMESIS. Hast thou further question
 Of our great sovereign or his worshippers?
 MANFRED. None.
 NEMESIS. Then for a time farewell.
 MANFRED. We meet then – 165
 Where? On the earth?
 NEMESIS. That will be seen hereafter.
 MANFRED. Even as thou wilt; and for the grace accorded
 I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!
Exit Manfred.

Notes

⁹ reck care.¹⁰ awful awe-inspiring.

ACT III, SCENE I'

A hall in the castle of Manfred. Manfred and Herman.

MANFRED. What is the hour?
 HERMAN. It wants but one till sunset,
 And promises a lovely twilight.
 MANFRED. Say,
 Are all things so disposed of² in the tower
 As I directed?
 HERMAN. All, my lord, are ready;
 Here is the key and casket.
 MANFRED. It is well; 5
 Thou mayst retire.
Exit Herman.
 MANFRED (*alone*). There is a calm upon me –
 Inexplicable stillness, which till now
 Did not belong to what I knew of life.
 If that I did not know philosophy
 To be of all our vanities the motliest,³ 10
 The merest⁴ word that ever fooled the ear
 From out the schoolman's⁵ jargon, I should deem
 The golden secret, the sought kalon,⁶ found
 And seated in my soul. It will not last,
 But it is well to have known it, though but once; 15
 It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
 And I within my tablets⁷ would note down
 That there is such a feeling. Who is there?
Re-enter Herman.
 HERMAN. My lord, the Abbot of St Maurice craves
 To greet your presence.
Enter the Abbot of St. Maurice.
 ABBOT. Peace be with Count Manfred!⁸ 20
 MANFRED. Thanks, holy father; welcome to these walls!
 Thy presence honours them, and blesseth those
 Who dwell within them.
 ABBOT. Would it were so, Count;
 But I would fain confer with thee alone.
 MANFRED. Herman, retire. (*Exit Herman.*) What would my reverend guest? 25
 ABBOT. Thus, without prelude. Age and zeal, my office,

Notes

ACT III, SCENE I

¹ This scene reworks Faust's meeting with an Old Man in *Faust V* i.² *disposed of* arranged, prepared.³ *motliest* most foolish.⁴ *merest* most insignificant.⁵ *schoolman's* scholar's.⁶ *kalon* the ideal good, the morally beautiful.⁷ *tablets* research documents.⁸ An ironic greeting, given the circumstances.

And good intent, must plead my privilege;
 Our near, though not acquainted neighbourhood
 May also be my herald. Rumours strange
 And of unholy nature are abroad 30
 And busy with thy name – a noble name
 For centuries. May he who bears it now⁹
 Transmit it unimpaired!

MANFRED. Proceed, I listen.

ABBOT. 'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things
 Which are forbidden to the search of man; 35
 That with the dwellers of the dark¹⁰ abodes,
 The many evil and unheavenly spirits
 Which walk the valley of the shade of death,¹¹
 Thou communest. I know that with mankind,
 Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely 40
 Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
 Is as an anchorite's, were it but holy.

MANFRED. And what are they who do avouch these things?

ABBOT. My pious brethren, the scared peasantry –
 Even thy own vassals, who do look on thee 45
 With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril.

MANFRED. Take it.

ABBOT. I come to save, and not destroy.¹²
 I would not pry into thy secret soul,
 But if these things be sooth,¹³ there still is time
 For penitence and pity: reconcile thee 50
 With the true church, and through the church to heaven.

MANFRED. I hear thee. This is my reply: whate'er
 I may have been, or am, doth rest between
 Heaven and myself. I shall not choose a mortal
 To be my mediator. Have I sinned 55
 Against your ordinances?¹⁴ Prove and punish!

ABBOT. My son, I did not speak of punishment,
 But penitence and pardon; with thyself
 The choice of such remains. And for the last,
 Our institutions and our strong belief 60
 Have given me power to smoothe the path from sin
 To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
 I leave to heaven – 'Vengeance is mine alone!'¹⁵
 So saith the Lord, and with all humbleness
 His servant echoes back the awful word. 65

MANFRED. Old man! There is no power in holy men,
 Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
 Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,

Notes

⁹ *he who bears it now* i.e. Manfred himself.

¹⁰ *dark* means both 'lacking in light' and 'evil'.

¹¹ *the valley of the shade of death* Psalm 23:4: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'

¹² *I come to save, and not destroy* cf. Christ's words at Matthew 5:17: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'

¹³ *sooth* true.

¹⁴ *ordinances* laws.

¹⁵ See Romans 12:19.

Nor agony – nor, greater than all these,
 The innate tortures of that deep despair 70
 Which is remorse without the fear of hell
 But all in all sufficient to itself
 Would make a hell of heaven, can exorcise
 From out the unbounded spirit the quick¹⁶ sense
 Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge 75
 Upon itself. There is no future pang
 Can deal that justice on the self-condemned
 He deals on his own soul.

ABBOT. All this is well –
 For this will pass away, and be succeeded
 By an auspicious hope which shall look up 80
 With calm assurance to that blessed place¹⁷
 Which all who seek may win, whatever be
 Their earthly errors, so they be atoned;¹⁸
 And the commencement of atonement is
 The sense of its necessity. Say on, 85
 And all our church can teach thee shall be taught,
 And all we can absolve thee shall be pardoned.

MANFRED. When Rome's sixth Emperor¹⁹ was near his last,
 The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
 To shun the torments of a public death 90
 From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
 With show of loyal pity, would have staunch'd
 The gushing throat with his officious²⁰ robe;
 The dying Roman thrust him back and said
 (Some empire²¹ still in his expiring glance), 95
 'It is too late – is this fidelity?'

ABBOT. And what of this?

MANFRED. I answer with the Roman,
 'It is too late!'

ABBOT. It never can be so,
 To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
 And thy own soul with heaven. Hast thou no hope? 100
 'Tis strange; even those who do despair above
 Yet shape themselves some fantasy on earth
 To which frail twig they cling like drowning men.

MANFRED. Aye, father! I have had those earthly visions
 And noble aspirations in my youth – 105
 To make my own the mind of other men,
 The enlightener²² of nations, and to rise
 I knew not whither; it might be to fall,
 But fall even as the mountain-cataract
 Which, having leaped from its more dazzling height, 110

Notes

¹⁶ *quick* living, vital.

¹⁷ *that blessed place* i.e. heaven.

¹⁸ *atoned* reconciled (with God).

¹⁹ According to Suetonius, the sixth Roman emperor was Nero. Manfred's use of his words is ironic because Nero's deeds (the burning of Rome and the first major persecution

of Christians) overshadow the circumstances of his death. The line quoted here was spoken to a former soldier who had turned against him.

²⁰ *officious* dutiful.

²¹ *empire* i.e. some sense of his emperorship.

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²² enlightener guide, teacher.

Even in the foaming strength of its abyss
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the reascended skies)
Lies low but mighty still. But this is passed;
My thoughts mistook themselves.

ABBOT. And wherefore so? 115

MANFRED. I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway, and soothe, and sue,²³
And watch all time, and pry into all place –
And be a living lie, who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean (and such 120
The mass are). I disdained to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader – and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

ABBOT. And why not live and act with other men? 125

MANFRED. Because my nature was averse from life,
And yet not cruel – for I would not make,
But find a desolation. Like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone simoom,²⁴
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast, 130
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly; such hath been
The course of my existence. But there came
Things in my path which are no more.

ABBOT. Alas, 135
I 'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would –

MANFRED. Look on me! There is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become 140
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age
Without the violence of warlike death –
Some perishing of pleasure, some of study,
Some worn with toil, some of mere weariness,
Some of disease, and some insanity, 145
And some of withered or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are numbered in the lists of fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! For even of all these things
Have I partaken, and of all these things 150
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or, having been, that I am still on earth.

Notes

²³ *sue* follow.

²⁴ *simoom* a hot, dry, suffocating sand-wind which sweeps across the African deserts at intervals during the spring and summer.

ABBOT. Yet hear me still –

MANFRED. Old man! I do respect 155
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain.
Think me not churlish;²⁵ I would spare thyself
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy²⁶ – and so farewell.

Exit Manfred

ABBOT. This should have been a noble creature; he 160
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,²⁷
Had they been wisely mingled. As it is,
It is an awful²⁸ chaos – light and darkness,
And mind and dust, and passions and pure thoughts, 165
Mixed and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive: he will perish,
And yet he must not. I will try once more,
For such are worth redemption, and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end. 170
I'll follow him – but cautiously, though surely.

Exit Abbot

ACT III, SCENE II

Another chamber. Manfred and Herman.

HERMAN. My Lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
He' sinks behind the mountain.

MANFRED. Doth he so?
I will look on him.

Manfred advances to the window of the hall.

Glorious orb!¹ The idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race 5
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons
Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits who can ne'er return;²
Most glorious orb, that wert a worship ere 10
The mystery of thy making was revealed!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladdened on their mountain-tops the hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds,⁴ till they poured
Themselves in orisons!⁵ Thou material god

Notes

²⁵ *churlish* ungracious.

²⁶ *colloquy* conversation.

²⁷ *A goodly frame of glorious elements* The Abbot echoes Hamlet's description of the earth as 'this goodly frame' (II ii 298), and there is a general recollection of Hamlet's comments on man's innate nobility, II ii 303–10.

²⁸ *awful* awesome.

ACT III, SCENE II

¹ *He* the sun.

² This is a pagan address to the sun.

³ See Genesis 6:1–4.

⁴ *the Chaldean shepherds* renowned astronomers; see *Childe Harold* iii 118.

⁵ Compare *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* iii stanza 91, above, *orisons* prayers.

And representative of the unknown, 15
 Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief star,
 Centre of many stars, which mak'st our earth
 Endurable, and temperest the hues
 And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
 Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes 20
 And those who dwell in them (for near or far,
 Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
 Even as our outward aspects), thou dost rise
 And shine and set in glory – fare thee well,
 I ne'er shall see thee more! As my first glance 25
 Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
 My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
 To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
 Of a more fatal nature. He is gone;
 I follow. 30
Exit Manfred

ACT III, SCENE III

The mountains. The castle of Manfred at some distance. A terrace before a tower. Time: twilight. Herman, Manuel, and other dependants of Manfred.

HERMAN. 'Tis strange enough; night after night for years
 He hath pursued long vigils in this tower
 Without a witness. I have been within it –
 So have we all been oft-times; but from it,
 Or its contents, it were impossible 5
 To draw conclusions absolute of aught
 His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
 One chamber where none enter; I would give
 The fee of what I have to come these three years¹
 To pore upon its mysteries.
 MANUEL. 'Twere dangerous; 10
 Content thyself with what thou knowest already.
 HERMAN. Ah, Manuel! Thou art elderly and wise,
 And could'st say much; thou hast dwelt within the castle –
 How many years is't?
 MANUEL. Ere Count Manfred's birth 15
 I served his father, whom he nought resembles.
 HERMAN. There be more sons in like predicament.
 But wherein do they differ?
 MANUEL. I speak not 20
 Of features or of form, but mind and habits:
 Count Sigismund was proud, but gay and free,
 A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
 With books and solitude, nor made the night

Notes

ACT III, SCENE III

¹ The fee of what I have to come these three years i.e. his next three years' salary.

A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
 Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
 And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
 From men and their delights.

HERMAN. Beshrew the hour, 25
 But those were jocund times! I would that such
 Would visit the old walls again; they look
 As if they had forgotten them.

MANUEL. These walls
 Must change their chieftain first – oh, I have seen
 Some strange things in them, Herman!

HERMAN. Come, be friendly, 30
 Relate me some to while away our watch;
 I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
 Which happened hereabouts, by this same tower.

MANUEL. That was a night indeed. I do remember 35
 'Twas twilight, as it may be now, and such
 Another evening; yon red cloud, which rests
 On Eiger's pinnacle,² so rested then,
 So like that it might be the same; the wind
 Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
 Began to glitter with the climbing moon. 40
 Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,
 How occupied we knew not, but with him
 The sole companion of his wanderings
 And watchings – her, whom of all earthly things
 That lived, the only thing he seemed to love, 45
 As he indeed by blood was bound to do,
 The lady Astarte, his³ –

Hush! Who comes here?

Enter the Abbot

ABBOT. Where is your master?

HERMAN. Yonder, in the tower.

ABBOT. I must speak with him.

MANUEL. 'Tis impossible.

He is most private, and must not be thus
 Intruded on. 50

ABBOT. Upon myself I take
 The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be;
 But I must see him.

HERMAN. Thou hast seen him once
 This eve already.

ABBOT. Sirrah, I command thee
 Knock and apprise the Count of my approach! 55

HERMAN. We dare not.

Notes

² Eiger's pinnacle The Eiger is a mountain, east of the Jungfrau, which Byron first saw on 22 September 1816.

³ his – This is the closest anyone in the play gets to saying that Astarte is Manfred's sister.

ABBOT. Then it seems I must be herald
Of my own purpose.
MANUEL. Reverend father, stop,
I pray you pause.
ABBOT. Why so?
MANUEL. But step this way,
And I will tell you further.
Exeunt

ACT III, SCENE IV

Interior of the tower. Manfred alone.

MANFRED. The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains – beautiful!
I linger yet with nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man, and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness
I learned the language of another world.
I do remember me that in my youth
When I was wandering, upon such a night¹
I stood within the Colosseum's wall
Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;²
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bayed beyond the Tiber, and
More near from out the Caesars' palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach³
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot,⁴ where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night; amidst
A grove which springs through levelled battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;⁵
But the gladiators' bloody circus⁶ stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection,⁷

Notes

ACT III, SCENE IV

¹ *upon such a night* There is a general recollection, throughout this speech, of the exchange between Jessica and Lorenzo, *Merchant of Venice* V i 1–22, which uses the repeated tag, 'In such a night ...'

² Byron first visited Rome in April 1817. This passage may have been inspired partly by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; Gibbon is celebrated as a freethinker at the conclusion of *Childe Harold* iii.

³ *breach* break in the old city walls.

⁴ *Within a bowshot* i.e. within about 300 yards.

⁵ *Ivy...place of growth* Ivy (a plant of death) has taken over where the laurel (a plant of victory) once grew.

⁶ *circus* oval arena.

⁷ *A noble wreck in ruinous perfection* Manfred is effectively describing himself.

While Caesar's chambers and the Augustan halls
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light
Which softened down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and filled up,
As 'twere, anew, the gaps of centuries,
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old⁸ –
The dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.

'Twas such a night!

'Tis strange that I recall it at this time,
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array⁹
Themselves in pensive¹⁰ order.

Enter the Abbot

ABBOT. My good Lord!
I crave a second grace for this approach,
But yet let not my humble zeal offend
By its abruptness; all it hath of ill
Recoils on me. Its good in the effect
May light upon your head – could I say *heart*,
Could I touch *that*, with words or prayers, I should
Recall a noble spirit which hath wandered
But is not yet all lost.
MANFRED. Thou know'st me not;
My days are numbered and my deeds recorded.
Retire, or 'twill be dangerous – away!
ABBOT. Thou dost not mean to menace me?
MANFRED. Not I;
I simply tell thee peril is at hand
And would preserve thee.
ABBOT. What dost mean?
MANFRED. Look there –
What dost thou see?
ABBOT. Nothing.
MANFRED. Look there, I say,
And steadfastly; now tell me what thou seest?
ABBOT. That which should shake me, but I fear it not;
I see a dusk and awful figure rise

Notes

⁸ *till the place...great of old* These lines prove that, even at this late stage, Manfred might still be redeemed to the cause of orthodox religion.

⁹ *array* arrange.

¹⁰ *pensive* meditative, reflective.

Like an infernal god from out the earth,
His face wrapped in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds. He stands between
Thyself and me, but I do fear him not. 65

MANFRED. Thou hast no cause; he shall not harm thee, but
His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.¹¹
I say to thee, retire!

ABBOT. And I reply
Never, till I have battled with this fiend. 70
What doth he here?

MANFRED. Why, aye, what doth he here?
I did not send for him, he is unbidden.

ABBOT. Alas, lost mortal! What with guests like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake;
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him? 75
Ah! he unveils his aspect: on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of hell –
Avaunt!

MANFRED. Pronounce – what is thy mission?

SPIRIT. Come! 80

ABBOT. What art thou, unknown being? Answer! Speak!

SPIRIT. The genius¹² of this mortal. Come, 'tis time!

MANFRED. I am prepared for all things, but deny
The power which summons me. Who sent thee here?

SPIRIT. Thou'lt know anon; come, come!

MANFRED. I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine, 85
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!

SPIRIT. Mortal, thine hour is come. Away, I say!

MANFRED. I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee;
Away! I'll die as I have lived – alone. 90

SPIRIT. Then I must summon up my brethren. Rise!
Other spirits rise up

ABBOT. Avaunt, ye evil ones! Avaunt I say!
Ye have no power where piety hath power,
And I do charge ye in the name –

SPIRIT. Old man!
We know ourselves, our mission, and thine order; 95
Waste not thy holy words on idle uses,
It were in vain – this man is forfeited.
Once more I summon him: away, away!

MANFRED. I do defy ye, though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye; 100

Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye, earthly strength
To wrestle (though with spirits): what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb.

SPIRIT. Reluctant mortal!
Is this the Magian who would so pervade 105
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal? Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life – the very life
Which made thee wretched?

MANFRED. Thou false fiend, thou liest!
My life is in its last hour – *that* I know, 110
Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels; my past power
Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science, penance, daring, 115
And length of watching, strength of mind, and skill
In knowledge of our fathers – when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
And gave ye no supremacy. I stand
Upon my strength: I do defy, deny,
Spurn back, and scorn ye! 120

SPIRIT. But thy many crimes
Have made thee –

MANFRED. What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punished but by other crimes
And greater criminals? Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel; 125
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know.
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine.
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,¹³ 130
Is its own origin of ill and end,
And its own place and time; its innate sense,
When stripped of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorbed in sufferance or in joy, 135
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me,
I have not been thy dupe nor am thy prey –
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter. Back, ye baffled fiends, 140
The hand of death is on me – but not yours!

The demons disappear

Notes

¹³ *The mind...thoughts* cf. *Paradise Lost* i 254–5: 'The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.'

Notes

¹¹ *palsy* paralysis.

¹² *genius* guardian spirit.

ABBOT. Alas, how pale thou art! Thy lips are white
 And thy breast heaves, and in thy gasping throat
 The accents rattle; give thy prayers to heaven;
 Pray, albeit but in thought – but die not thus. 145

MANFRED. 'Tis over; my dull eyes can fix thee not,
 But all things swim around me, and the earth
 Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well;
 Give me thy hand.

ABBOT. Cold, cold, even to the heart;
 But yet one prayer – alas, how fares it with thee? 150

MANFRED. Old man! 'Tis not so difficult to die.
Manfred expires

ABBOT. He's gone; his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight –
 Whither, I dread to think – but he is gone.

*Letter from Lord Byron to Thomas Moore,
 28 February 1817 (extract) (including
 'So we'll go no more a-roving')*¹

I feel anxious to hear from you, even more than usual, because your last indicated that you were unwell. At present, I am on the invalid regimen myself. The Carnival – that is, the latter part of it – and sitting up late o' nights, had knocked me up a little. But it is over, and it is now Lent, with all its abstinence and Sacred Music.

The mumming² closed with a masked ball at the Fenice,³ where I went, as also to most of the ridottos,⁴ etc., etc. And, though I did not dissipate much upon the whole, yet I find 'the sword wearing out the scabbard', though I have but just turned the corner of twenty-nine.

So we'll go no more a-roving
 So late into the night,
 Though the heart be still as loving,
 And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath, 5
 And the soul wears out the breast,
 And the heart must pause to breathe,
 And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
 And the day returns too soon, 10
 Yet we'll go no more a-roving
 By the light of the moon.

Notes

LETTER FROM LORD BYRON TO THOMAS MOORE

¹ This important letter was written from Venice, and presents Byron's famous poem, 'So we'll go no more a-roving', in the context in which it was first composed. For Moore see p. 961 n. 23.

² *mumming* revelries conducted behind masks.

³ *the Fenice* Venetian opera theatre, principal venue for the carnival, which closed on the evening of 18 February. It was destroyed by fire in summer 1996.

⁴ *ridottos* entertainment or social assembly consisting of music and dancing.