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Lord Byron (1788–1824). Poetry of Byron. 1881.

III. Dramatic
Astarte

(Manfred, Act ii. [Scene 4.](#))

The Hall of Arimanes—Arimanes on his Throne, a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the Spirits.

Enter the DESTINIES and NEMESIS; then 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—
A Magian of great power, and fearful skill!

Third Spirit. Bow down and worship, slave!—What, know'st thou not 5
Thine and our Sovereign?—Tremble, and obey!

All the Spirits. Prostrate thyself, and thy condemned clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.

Man. I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.

Fourth Spirit. 'Twill be taught thee.

Man. 'Tis taught already;—many a night on the earth, 10
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes; I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation. 15

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.

Man. Bid *him* bow down to that which is above him,
The overruling Infinite—the Maker 20
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.

Prince of the Powers invisible! This man

Is of no common order, as his port

And presence here denote; his sufferings

Have been of an immortal nature, like

Our own; his knowledge, and his powers and will,

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—

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,

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,

No other Spirit in this region hath

A soul like his—or power upon his soul.

Nemesis. What doth he here then?

First Des. Let him answer that.

Man. Ye know what I have known; and without power

I could not be amongst ye: but there are

Powers deeper still beyond—I come in quest

Of such, to answer unto what I seek.

Nem. What would'st thou?

Man. Thou canst not reply to me.

Call up the dead—my question is for them.

Nem. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch

The wishes of this mortal?

Ari. Yea.

Nem. Whom would'st thou

Uncharnel?

Man. One without a tomb—call up

Astarte.

NEMESIS.

Shadow! or Spirit!

Whatever thou art,

Which still doth inherit

The whole or a part

Of the form of thy birth,

Of the mould of thy clay,

Which return'd to the earth,

Re-appear to the day!

Bear what thou borest,

The heart and the form,

And the aspect thou worst

Redeem from the worm.

Appear!—Appear!—Appear!

Who sent thee there requires thee here!

[*The Phantom of ASTARTE rises and stands in the midst.*

Man. Can this be death? there's bloom upon her cheek;
 But now I see it is no living hue,
 But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red
 Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf. 75
 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.

NEMESIS.

By the power which hath broken
 The grave which enthrall'd thee, 80
 Speak to him who hath spoken,
 Or those who have call'd thee!

Man. She is silent,
 And in that silence I am more than answer'd.
Nem. My power extends no further. Prince of air!
 It rests with thee alone—command her voice. 85

Ari. Spirit—obey this sceptre!
Nem. Silent still!
 She is not of our order, but belongs
 To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,
 And we are baffled also.

Man. Hear me, hear me—
 Astarte! my beloved! speak to me: 90
 I have so much endured—so much endure—
 Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
 Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
 Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made 95
 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
 This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
 One of the blessed—and that I shall die;
 For hitherto all hateful things conspire 100
 To bind me in existence—in a life
 Which makes me shrink from immortality—
 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; 105
 And I would hear yet once before I perish
 The voice which was my music—Speak to me!
 For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
 Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,
 And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves 110
 Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
 Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—
 Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all.
 Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
 And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee. 115
 Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
 And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
 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— 120
 I reckon not what—but let me hear thee once—
 This once—once more!

Phantom of Astarte. Manfred!
Man. Say on, say on—
 I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!
Phan. Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills. 125
 Farewell!
Man. Yet one word more—am I forgiven?
Phan. Farewell!
Man. Say, shall we meet again?
Phan. Farewell!
Man. One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me. 130
Phan. Manfred!

[The Spirit of ASTARTE disappears.]

Nem. She's gone, and will not be recall'd;
 Her words will be fulfill'd. 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 135
 His torture tributary to his will.
 Had he been one of us, he would have made
 An awful spirit.
Nem. Hast thou further question
 Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?
Man. None. 140
Nem. Then for a time farewell.
Man. We meet then! Where? On the earth?—
 Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
 I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!

[Exit MANFRED.]

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