

Ere called but for a time away,
 Affection's mingling tears were ours?
 Ours too the glance none saw beside;
 The smile none else might understand; 30
 The whispered thought of hearts allied,
 The pressure of the thrilling hand;
 The kiss, so guiltless and refined,
 That Love each warmer wish forbore;
 Those eyes proclaimed so pure a mind, 35
 Ev'n Passion blushed to plead for more.
 The tone, that taught me to rejoice,
 When prone, unlike thee, to repine;
 The song, celestial from thy voice,
 But sweet to me from none but thine; 40
 The pledge we wore—I wear it still,
 But where is thine?—Ah! where art thou?
 Oft have I borne the weight of ill,
 But never bent beneath till now!
 Well hast thou left in Life's best bloom 45
 The cup of Woe for me to drain.
 If rest alone be in the tomb,
 I would not wish thee here again:
 But if in worlds more blest than this
 Thy virtues seek a fitter sphere, 50
 Impart some portion of thy bliss,
 To wean me from mine anguish here.
 Teach me—too early taught by thee!
 To bear, forgiving and forgiven:
 On earth thy love was such to me; 55
 It fain would form my hope in Heaven!

October 11, 1811; published 1812

Prometheus¹

1
 Titan! to whose immortal eyes
 The sufferings of mortality,
 Seen in their sad reality,
 Were not as things that gods despise;
 What was thy pity's recompense? 5
 A silent suffering, and intense;
 The rock, the vulture, and the chain,

1. Prometheus, greatest of the Titans of classical mythology, came to represent for many of the Romantic poets—Shelley and Keats as well as Byron—the archetype of the visionary, revolutionary mind. It was Prometheus who first gave man the gift of fire, stealing it from Zeus and the Olympian gods, and it was Prometheus (whose name means “far-

seeing”) who knew the secret of Zeus’s eventual defeat. To punish him for his theft of the fire, and to coerce the secret out of him, Zeus chained Prometheus to a mountain where, every day, a vulture was sent to consume his entrails. He never capitulated, though, and was eventually liberated by Hercules.

All that the proud can feel of pain,
 The agony they do not show, 10
 The suffocating sense of woe,
 Which speaks but in its loneliness,
 And then is jealous lest the sky
 Should have a listener, nor will sigh
 Until its voice is echoless.

2

Titan! to thee the strife was given 15
 Between the suffering and the will,
 Which torture where they cannot kill;
 And the inexorable Heaven,
 And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
 The ruling principle of Hate, 20
 Which for its pleasure doth create
 The things it may annihilate,
 Refused thee even the boon to die:
 The wretched gift Eternity
 Was thine—and thou hast borne it well. 25
 All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
 Was but the menace which flung back
 On him the torments of thy rack;
 The fate thou didst so well foresee,
 But would not to appease him tell; 30
 And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
 And in his Soul a vain repentance,
 And evil dread so ill dissembled,
 That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

3

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind, 35
 To render with thy precepts less
 The sum of human wretchedness,
 And strengthen Man with his own mind;
 And baffled as thou wert from high,
 Still in thy patient energy, 40
 In the endurance, and repulse
 Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
 Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
 A mighty lesson we inherit:
 Thou art a symbol and a sign 45
 To Mortals of their fate and force;
 Like thee, Man is in part divine,
 A troubled stream from a pure source;
 And Man in portions can foresee 50
 His own funereal destiny;
 His wretchedness, and his resistance,
 And his sad unallied existence:
 To which his Spirit may oppose
 Itself—and equal to all woes,
 And a firm will, and a deep sense, 55

Which even in torture can descry
 Its own concenter'd recompense,
 Triumphant where it dares defy,
 And making Death a Victory.

Diodati, July 1816

Epistle to Augusta²

1

My Sister! my sweet Sister! if a name
 Dearer and purer were, it should be thine.
 Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
 No tears, but tenderness to answer mine:
 Go where I will, to me thou art the same— 5
 A loved regret which I would not resign.
 There yet are two things in my destiny—
 A world to roam through, and a home with thee.

2

The first were nothing—had I still the last,
 It were the haven of my happiness; 10
 But other claims and other ties thou hast,
 And mine is not the wish to make them less.
 A strange doom is thy father's son's,³ and past
 Recalling, as it lies beyond redress;
 Reversed for him our grandsire's fate⁴ of yore,— 15
 He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.

3

If my inheritance of storms hath been
 In other elements, and on the rocks
 Of perils, overlooked or unforseen,
 I have sustained my share of worldly shocks, 20
 The fault was mine; nor do I seek to screen
 My errors with defensive paradox;
 I have been cunning in mine overthrow,
 The careful pilot of my proper woe.

4

Mine were my faults, and mine be their reward. 25
 My whole life was a contest, since the day

2. The "Epistle" was written in the summer of 1816 at the Villa Diodati, where Byron was living—on the shore of Lake Geneva, Switzerland. It was not published until 1830, however, since Augusta (Augusta Byron Leigh, his half sister) refused permission for its publication. Byron had left England in self-imposed exile on April 25, 1816, amid the scandal of his separation from his wife (Lady Anne Isabella Milbanke) and widespread rumors of his incestuous affair with Augusta. The veneration of nature in this lyric—and in *Childe Harold III*, on

which Byron was also working at the time—marks a new stage in his poetry, perhaps influenced by his new friendship with Shelley and his reexamination (at Shelley's urging) of the poetry of Wordsworth.

3. Genealogically precise: Byron and Augusta were children of the same father by different wives.

4. Byron's grandfather, Admiral Byron (nicknamed "Foul-weather Jack") was celebrated for never making a sea voyage that did not encounter a tempest.