

1967

Shelley's Prometheus unbound : a critical analysis and interpretation

Emily Carol Braxton

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SHELLEY'S PROMETHEUS UNBOUND: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
AND INTERPRETATION

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Emily Carol Braxton

August 1967

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PREFACE

As a basis for his Prometheus Unbound, which he completed in 1819 and which is his masterpiece, Shelley used Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound. In Aeschylus' play, Prometheus is the benefactor of man and has bestowed upon him gifts from heaven--fire, number, writing, medicine, and the arts. Zeus, chief of the gods and enemy of man, becomes enraged at Prometheus' impudence and has Prometheus chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where at the conclusion of Aeschylus' play he remains cherishing the secret that is his alone: that should Zeus marry Thetis, he would father a son more powerful than he. Unless Prometheus confesses the secret, he is doomed to remain chained to the mountains for thirty thousand years, during which time his entrails will daily be devoured by an eagle. Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound is the second part of the trilogy, which was completed by the lost Prometheus Unbound, in which Prometheus became reconciled to Zeus.

Shelley's Prometheus, however, does not become reconciled to Zeus or Jupiter but continues to suffer until the moment when Demogorgon--the son of Jupiter and Thetis--overthrows Jupiter. After Jupiter's defeat, Hercules liberates or unbinds Prometheus. Shelley, unlike Aeschylus, could not allow Prometheus to be reconciled with Jupiter because,

unlike Aeschylus, who saw both Jupiter and Prometheus as forces of good, Shelley saw Jupiter as the force of evil and Prometheus as the force of good. Furthermore, in Aeschylus' play, Jupiter obtained his power by overthrowing Saturn, whereas Shelley would not allow Jupiter such power. On the contrary, Prometheus "gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter" (II. iv. 44).

Shelley used the Prometheus myth to express his own ideas about present evils and his hopes for man's future as a result of his belief that man was capable of perfectibility. Shelley believed that the anthropomorphic God of religion, represented by Jupiter, was the source of all evil and that he existed only because man chose to believe in him. When man chose to deny his existence, he ceased to exist. Thus, while in Prometheus Unbound, the anthropomorphic God of religion is very much in evidence, he rules only because Prometheus permits him to do so. As soon as Prometheus casts off hatred and pride--the only two attributes of the Deity or Jupiter which are still exhibited by him in his opening soliloquy in Act I--Jupiter loses his power and his existence.

In Prometheus Unbound--in spite of the fact that he considered God a tyrant--Shelley depicted Christ as a saviour and benefactor of mankind; for Christ, like Prometheus, suffered at the hands of the tyrant in order to spare man. Furthermore, Christ, like Prometheus, was king over himself; and in his refusal to submit to evil--even though he was subjected to excruciating pain--he set the example

for man to follow.

INTRODUCTION

Shelley's Prometheus Unbound was not composed at a single sitting but over a period ranging from September, 1818, to December, 1819, while Shelley was travelling on the continent. The breakdown of the period of composition into time allotted for specific acts is as follows: Act I, September through October, 1818, while Shelley was at Este, near Venice; Act II and Act III, March through April, 1819, while Shelley was at Rome and at the Baths of Caracalla; and Act IV, November through December, 1819, while Shelley was at Florence.¹

The critics differ among themselves concerning the genre of Prometheus Unbound. King-Mele, like Shelley, refers to Prometheus Unbound as "a lyrical drama in four acts."² Milton Wilson also considers the work a lyrical drama but restricts the definition somewhat in calling it a lyrical drama like Prometheus Bound, Oedipus at Colonus, Paradise Lost, and Samson Agonistes--a series of temptations.³ In addition, he finds the structural features un-

¹ Desmond King-Mele, Shelley the Man and the Poet (New York, 1963), p. 169.

² Ibid.

³ Milton Wilson, Shelley's Later Poetry: A Study of His Prophetic Imagination (New York, 1959), pp. 45-46.

dramatic and maintains that there is no conflict at the climax because Jupiter's fall follows the change in Prometheus in Act I and that the play is static.⁴ Clutton-Brock agrees with Milton Wilson in that he condemns Prometheus Unbound as a drama because it contains no action, but he goes further in stating that Prometheus Unbound is not interesting because it does not add to our knowledge.⁵ He praises the play, however, as being nearer to music than any drama with which he is acquainted and thereby nearer to symphony than to drama.⁶

⁴ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁵ A. Clutton-Brock, Shelley, the Man and the Poet (New York, 1909), pp. 133-139.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 191-192.

CHAPTER I

In his college pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Atheism," Shelley first expressed his views concerning God--a Being destined to be a recurring topic in much of Shelley's major poetry, including Queen Mab (1813); The Revolt of Islam (1817); Prometheus Unbound (1818-1819); and Hellas (1822). Unlike the later works, however, "The Necessity of Atheism" is a direct statement--rather than an indirect dramatization--of Shelley's beliefs. Another difference between "The Necessity of Atheism" and the other works mentioned above is that only in it does Shelley express the conviction that the existence of a Deity cannot be proved.

A comparison of "The Necessity of Atheism" with Prometheus Unbound, however, reveals that both express the idea that God can have existence only if man chooses to believe he does. When man chooses to deny his existence, he ceases to exist. Thus, while in Prometheus Unbound, the existence of the anthropomorphic God of religion, Jupiter, is very much in evidence, he rules only because Prometheus--the Saviour of Mankind and representative of good--permits him. As soon as Prometheus casts off hatred and pride--the only two attributes of the Deity or Jupiter which are still exhibited by him at the start of Act I--Jupiter loses his power.

and his existence; for, as Joseph Barrell points out, evil finally disintegrates into Not-Being.¹

The beliefs held by Shelley when he was twenty are recorded in Queen Mab, a poem of some 2,300 lines. Many of the ideas it contains came from Godwin's Political Justice, which was published in 1793 and which Shelley read at Oxford in 1810. The plot itself has its basis in the eighteenth-century artifice of the conducted tour, "probably with Volney's once-famous book The Ruins as the immediate model." As King-Mele points out, Shelley's tour covers the entire universe. The fairy Mab comes down to earth and abducts Ianthe, a sleeping girl, who must watch passively while Mab unfolds to her Shelley's chosen world-picture.²

The first two cantos of the poem are devoted to Ianthe's abduction and to a hasty survey of the past. Cantos III through VII constitute an attack on present ills--including tyrants, war, commerce, wealth, and religion--and Cantos VIII and IX, the two concluding cantos, contain a description of the utopian future. At the conclusion of Mab's speech in Canto IX, Ianthe, who has been thoroughly indoctrinated, is returned to earth.³

¹ Joseph Barrell, Shelley and the Thought of His Time: A Study in the History of Ideas (New Haven, 1947), p. 154.

² Desmond King-Mele, Shelley the Man and the Poet (New York, 1963), p. 31.

³ Ibid.

A comparison of Queen Mab with Prometheus Unbound reveals some similarity between the two works. First of all, in Queen Mab as in Prometheus Unbound, God is seen as a revengeful tyrant and prototype of human misrule, who sits on a throne in heaven like an earthly king. In Queen Mab, Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, rails against the cruelty of God's persecution--just as in Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus speaks out against Jupiter's tyranny--and Ianthe recalls having seen an atheist burned. As a substitute for God, Queen Mab proposes the Spirit of Nature or Necessity--who needs neither prayer nor praise:

Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requiest no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony: . . .

All that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regardst them all with an impartial eye
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.⁴

(VI. 197-203; 214-219)

In Prometheus Unbound, Demogorgon or Necessity is also seen as impartial--"Mother of many acts and hours"--but is not proposed as a substitute for God. It is evident from Demogorgon's statement to Jupiter at the time of Jupiter's fall

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, citations from Shelley in my text are to The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter N. Peck (New York, 1927).

that there will be no substitute for God; for Demogorgon tells Jupiter that none may retain, reassume, or hold the tyranny of heaven thereafter.

A striking difference between Queen Mab and Prometheus Unbound is Shelley's treatment of Prometheus in Queen Mab as opposed to his treatment of Prometheus in Prometheus Unbound. In his "Notes to Queen Mab," Shelley describes Prometheus as follows:

Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus, inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence.--Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. . . . There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried.

In Prometheus Unbound, on the other hand, Prometheus is represented as the saviour and benefactor of man who has eradicated death and disease. Furthermore, he is punished by Jupiter for having helped man and for having withheld from Jupiter the secret that should Jupiter marry Thetis, he would father a son who would bring about his downfall.

In additional notes to Queen Mab, Shelley discusses his views on wealth and chastity--views which are of interest

both because they had not been expressed previously and because they are not mentioned in Prometheus Unbound. In his notes on wealth, Shelley says:

There is no real wealth but the labour of man [Which according to Shelley is required for physical improvement]. Were the mountains of gold and the vallies of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race.

In comparison to wealth, however, Shelley sees chastity as the greater evil:

Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage. . . . In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude

In conclusion of His discussion of Queen Mab, King-Hele notes that although Shelley later retracted most of the opinions he expressed in Queen Mab, he never recanted his early opinion of the marriage laws.⁵

⁵King-Hele, p. 41.

CHAPTER II.

In the Revolt of Islam, a poem in twelve cantos, Laon and Cythna, like Prometheus and Asia in Prometheus Unbound, struggle against a tyrannic king. The struggle of Laon and Cythna, however, ends in martyrdom, while that of Prometheus and Asia ends in the defeat of Jupiter. Despite some differences in their method of dealing with the opposition, though, Othman, the tyrant of the Revolt of Islam, and Jupiter of Prometheus Unbound are basically alike; for both represent "the tyranny of man-made institutions and superstitions" or "the evil of established and unchecked power."⁶

Another point of similarity between the Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound is the imagery of the eagle and the snake locked in mortal combat. In the first act of the Revolt of Islam, a youth who has ascended a promontory to watch the dawn sees an eagle and a snake wreathed in fight. After a day-long battle in the air, the eagle emerges victorious while the vanquished snake falls into the sea. The youth descends from the promontory and hurries down the beach where he finds a woman nursing the wounded snake. Upon the woman's invitation, the youth gets into the boat with her

⁶Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision (New York, 1961), p. 63.

and the snake. As they sail, the woman reveals to the youth that the snake is the incarnation of the Spirit of Good and that his defeat was only temporary.

In Prometheus Unbound, the image of the snake and the eagle or vulture is introduced in the description of Jupiter's fall. After Jupiter's struggle to retain his power has proven futile, Jupiter acknowledges his defeat to Demogorgon:

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea.⁷

(III. i. 70-74)

In scene ii, the image is sustained in the description of Jupiter's fall given by Apollo to Ocean:

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at
length
Prone, and the aerial ice clings over it.
(III. ii. 11-17)

While in the Revolt of Islam the snake is specifically interpreted as the spirit of good and the eagle as the spirit of evil, in Prometheus Unbound the symbols are not explained. Furthermore, in Jupiter's description, it is impossible to identify either combatant as victor; for they

⁷ Citations from Prometheus Unbound in my text are to Anthology of Romanticism, ed. Ernest Bernbaum (New York, 1948).

fall together. Apollo's description in scene ii, however, associates Jupiter with the symbol of the eagle.

There is a further reference to the snake in Demogorgon's concluding speech in Act IV:

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
 These are the seals of that most firm assurance
 Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
 And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
 Mother of many acts and hours should free
 The Serpent that would clasp her with its
 length;
 These are the spells by which to re-assume
 An empire o'er the disentangled doom.
 (IV. 562-569)

From Demogorgon's speech one may hypothesize that Demogorgon associates the snake with the forces of evil--although it is also possible that Demogorgon is merely using the serpent image for effect. Within the framework of the play itself, though, the distinction would not appear to be particularly important since good and evil are clearly distinguished.

CHAPTER III

Having composed the first act of Prometheus Unbound, Shelley put the work aside for six months during which he read The Republic of Plato. Joseph Barrell states that it is obvious that Shelley was still thinking of his most recent reading when he returned to his composition; for the action of Prometheus Unbound takes place not in the realm of historical myth but in the realm of Platonic myth wherein action is representative of thought. Barrell points out that Shelley's "Preface" reveals his familiarity with the historical legend of Prometheus which records the reconciliation of Prometheus with Zeus, the atonement of Prometheus for his presumption, and thereby the restoration of the primitive Greek balance. Supposedly, Aeschylus' lost play was based upon the legend, but in the century from Aeschylus to Plato, the notions of right and wrong changed; and in Plato one finds no mention of retributive justice. To Shelley, the ending of Aeschylus' play was repugnant because Prometheus, the champion of mankind, yielded to Zeus. Therefore in Shelley, it is evident that the champion of mankind will overcome the Oppressor because good is inherently superior to evil.³

³ Barrell, p. 142.

According to Plato, the real world was of the nature of mind, and it could be understood by the mind. Man, therefore, was not only the measure of all things but the knower of all things as well. Shelley was attracted by the future that Plato's philosophy offered man and by its harmony with the scientific point of view--"that there is a structure to matter and energy, that there is a system to the universe, that there is an organization to life."⁹

Prometheus' retraction of his curse in Act I is followed by miraculous events in Act II. Panthea's and Asia's dreams are related while from the cliffs echo the words "Follow, follow!" Echoes and Choruses of Spirits take up the cry, and Asia and Panthea are conducted to Demogorgon's cave. The external events following the internal act of renunciation of the curse by Prometheus are reminders that henceforth the drama is to be interpreted on the intellectual plane. Instead of allegory, there is philosophic myth in which the explanation of the action is not governed by human motivation but by the development of thought. The events of Act II and Act III, therefore, are a revelation of the consequences attendant upon the conception of absolute good. The dialogue itself, according to Barrell, may be explained in accord with the philosophical meaning of the play--specifically by reference to its Platonic content.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 150.

As a specific example of dialogue which may be understood in terms of Platonism, Barrell gives the dialogue between Asia and Demogorgon after Asia's arrival at Demogorgon's cave. Their discussion, according to Barrell, is a "straightforward philosophic debate."¹¹ Asia asks Demogorgon who is the author of good, and he, like Plato, readily answers that it is God. When asked who is responsible for evil, though, Demogorgon replies that he reigns. Asia knows that Jupiter reigns, but she cannot believe that he is the author of evil because he trembled like a slave upon hearing Prometheus' curse. Thus, she questions Demogorgon again: "Who is his [Jupiter's] master? Is he too a slave?" Demogorgon then tells her that all spirits which serve evil are enslaved--"an answer suggesting the many places in Plato, especially in Book IX of the Republic, where evil is construed as the topsy-turvy mastery of the higher faculties by the lower, as the enslavement of the better by the worse."¹²

A possible source for Demogorgon or Necessity is also Plato. In the myth of Er in Book X of the Republic, Necessity is seated on a throne at the center of the universe. Seated near Necessity are his three daughters. One of the daughters, Lachesis, has in her lap lots from which the

11 Ibid., p. 151.

12 Ibid., p. 152.

souls of men may choose their destinies. An interpreter for Lachesis addresses the souls as follows:

No Destiny shall cast lots for you, but
 You shall all choose your own Destiny;
 Let him that draws the first lot choose
 a life, and thereto he shall cleave of
 necessity. But Virtue knows no master:
 as each honours or despises her he
 shall have more or less of her. The
 blame is for the chooser; God is blame-
 less.¹³

In Prometheus Unbound, the Spirit of the Hour expresses a philosophy similar to that of the interpreter in the Re-public:

Man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,--but man:
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless,
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
 Over himself . . . free from guilt or pain,
 Which were, for his will made, or suffered
 them . . .

(III. iv. 193-197; 198-199)

In addition, Demogorgon, like the interpreter, states that Virtue--in the person of Asia or eternal Love--is free: "To these [Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change] all things are subject but eternal Love--(II. iv. 119-120)."

Asia herself takes on Platonic attributes. Barrell points out that Asia--to whom Shelley ascribes the legend of Anadyomene [Aphrodite]--is understood in one respect as a representation of love. In particular, Asia is the great creative force depicted in the Symposium. In Act I of Pro-

¹³ Great Dialogues of Plato, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (New York, 1967), p. 419.

metheus Unbound, for example, the Indian Vale to which Asia is exiled is seen as

rugged once
 And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
 But now is invested with fair flowers and herbs,
 And haunted by sweet airs and sounds which flow
 Among the woods and waters, from the aether
 Of her [Asia's] transforming presence.
 (I. 327-332)

At other times, Asia represents the general Platonic idea of aspiration toward the good and the beautiful in all things.

In Act II, for example, Asia addresses Earth as follows:

How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
 The Shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
 Though evil stain its work, and it should be
 Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
 I could fall down and worship that and thee.¹⁴
 (II. iii. 12-16)

Although Shelley in Act III of Prometheus Unbound returns to the historical legend of Prometheus, he is able to adapt it to fit the conclusion of his philosophic myth.¹⁵ In Act III, Demogorgon comes before Jupiter and summons Jupiter to follow him into the abyss, where they will dwell together henceforth in darkness. Jupiter struggles, but his struggles are futile; and he and Demogorgon sink--like a vulture and a snake locked in mortal combat--into the void below. In terms of Platonic philosophy, Jupiter, being evil, has been engulfed by eternity. Having lost his spuri-

¹⁴Barrell, p. 151.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 153.

ous power as a result of the pity aroused in Prometheus--representative of 'good--Jupiter passes from the realm of Being, through the region of Becoming, and into the abyss of Not-Being, "that into which evil finally breaks down."¹⁶

After Jupiter's overthrow, Hercules unbinds Prometheus. At the time of his liberation, Prometheus is seen as the embodiment of Platonic philosophy. Hercules addresses to him the following speech:

Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth Strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who are the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

(III. iii. 1-4)

Instead of thanking Hercules, however, Prometheus turns to Asia and proposes to her an idyllic retreat to a cave where they will be entertained by philosophic discussions--reminiscent of those of the philosopher-kings in the Republic. In the concluding scene of Act III, Prometheus and his companions arrive at the cave; and the Spirit of the Hour returns from earth bringing good tidings of the "effect of his annunciation."¹⁷

According to Barrell, Act IV is almost purely lyrical, and there is no return to the philosophic interests treated in the earlier part of the play. Only in the concluding speech of Demogorgon is philosophy again touched upon. Demo-

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

gorgon reveals that it is the day upon which conquest will be "dragged captive through the deep" and that Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance are the means by which "to bar the pit over Destruction's strength."

Barrell notes that in the above-mentioned speech of Demogorgon the grasp of Platonic ethics weakens. While he admits that there never was a complete carry-over of the entire scheme of the Platonic Virtues, he adds that as late as Hercules' address to Prometheus in the third scene of Act II, the ideology of the drama had remained within the framework of Platonic philosophy. Yet in Demogorgon's concluding speech, Virtue, which according to Plato is the category of wisdom, is ranked with Wisdom and joined with Gentleness and Endurance--a condition far from that of the Platonic tetralogy. Barrell remarks, though, that the weakening of Platonic philosophy is not a result of Shelley's unfamiliarity with Plato but arises "from a deeper level of Shelley's personality than the understanding of Plato, and that the essential Shelley was less affected by Plato than the first three acts of Prometheus Unbound might imply."¹³

CHAPTER IV

A second undercurrent in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is scientific. It is in Act II, though, that the first sustained use of scientific imagery occurs. In Act II, Asia and Panthea journey to Demogorgon's cave in order to learn the hour of Prometheus' release. As the act opens, Asia is alone in her lovely vale; and dawn is approaching as she awaits Panthea's return from Prometheus. Upon Panthea's arrival, Panthea and Asia begin discussing their dreams, which suggest that Prometheus is to be released. The image, sustained through nineteen stanzas, of Panthea's dissolution into vapor beneath the warmth of Prometheus' sun-like beams and becoming absorbed into him is, according to King-Hele, the first of many sublimations of sexual feeling into scientific form; for dispersals of morning mists in Act II often carry indirect sexual references.¹⁹ While one might expect that the image of the sun dispersing mist implies the destruction of what is represented by the mist, the conceit instead is taken further; and the molecules of the droplets, being activated by the sun, dance in his beams more vigorously after the mist has evaporated than they had before.²⁰

19 King-Hele, p. 169.

20 Ibid., p. 177.

As opposed to Act II of Prometheus Unbound, King-Hele finds in Act IV a more sustained use of science. The discussion commences with a description of the winged infant who is driving the moon chariot and whom King-Hele sees as the "essence of mooniness"; for

Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing
 folds
 Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
 Its hair is white, the brightness of white
 light
 Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are hea-
 vens
 Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
 Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
 From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes.
 Tempering the cold and radiant air around
 With fire that is not brightness.²¹

(IV. 222-230)

King-Hele uses the above speech in a meticulous explication de texte. The features of the moon's face become human features, and the silver whiteness of the moon is reinforced by the repetition of "white" and "bright" and is relieved only by "dark." The wind-flowing folds of the robe in their immobility are comparable to sculpture and represent the "straggling, corrugated lunar mountain ranges." The eyes of darkness are craters on the moon and, according to King-Hele, are described as "liquid" because Shelley is referring to the craters in the dark patches of the moon's surface which Galileo named "seas" but which Shelley knew were dry, as evidenced by his later calling them "solid oceans" (line 358).

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 21

Ibid., pp. 133-139.

Bright lines radiate from some of the craters and form ray-systems, which are only now being satisfactorily explained. The craters near the rays become their "arrowy lashes," which farther away form "white hair . . . scattered in strings." Shelley further imagined that the darkness of the eyes pours itself out in radiation which infects the cold air around Ione with "fire that is not brightness." Shelley is possibly referring to the "dark heat rays" which were not discovered until 1830, by Herschel. King-Hele admits that it is fanciful to imply that all of the moon's infra-red radiation is emitted from a small part of the surface but adds that "the rest of the imagery is so precise that an imaginative touch does not come amiss."²²

As King-Hele points out, one of Shelley's most involved combinations of science and art is seen in Act IV in Panthea's description of the sphere, which may be intended to summarize in one figure the "ultimate constituents of matter, the spirit and method of science, and a microcosm of the earth."²³ Panthea sees

A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
 Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
 Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
 Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
 Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
 Sphere within sphere; and every space between
 Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
 Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,

--- --
 22

Ibid., p. 139.

23

Ibid., p. 190.

Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
 Over each other with a thousand motions,
 Upon a thousand sightless axes spinning,
 And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
 Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
 Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
 Intelligible words and music wild.
 With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
 Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
 Of elemental subtlety, like light;
 And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
 The music of the living grass and air,
 The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
 Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
 Seem kneaded into one aereal mass
 Which drowns the sense.

(IV. 238-261)

Using the above lines in support of his statements, King-Hele says that the notion that liveliness extended even to the smallest particles appealed to Shelley and that Shelley therefore had an "intuitive feel for modern theories." As a result Shelley's words in such lines as those above can be interpreted in accordance with modern knowledge. The "many thousand spheres" (line 1) or the "ten thousand orbs" (line 4) can be seen as individual atoms each of which consists of series of concentric electron shells ("sphere within sphere"--line 6), the outermost shells of neighboring atoms often becoming interlinked ("involved"--line 4). Stray electrons ("unimaginable shapes"--line 7) vacillate through the "space between" (line 6) the atoms. As they shift their energy levels, the electrons cause a "flow" or radiation, the "music and light" of line 3. Entire atoms continuously change position ("they whirl over each other"--lines 9-10), simultaneously rotating ("upon a thousand sight-

less axes spinning"--line 11). Seen externally the entire process is recognizable as vibration ("the force of self-destroying swiftness"--line 12).²⁴

In spite of his thoroughly modern scientific analysis of Shelley's words as contained in the above speech, King-Hele states that Shelley did not foresee such analyses and that the previous passage is not even a good example of Shelley's scientific style. King-Hele also thinks that Shelley is deliberately vague and adds that "it is only because of his correct intuition of molecular movement that the lines are satisfying today." King-Hele apparently thinks that Shelley was an original thinker, though; for he points out that in spite of the fact that in Shelley's day there was little support for the idea that heat was a form of motion, Shelley unconsciously linked heat and movement, a connection which was first suggested by Bacon in Novum Organum and which was mathematically interpreted by Daniel Bernoulli in 1738.²⁵

King-Hele further points out that Shelley's intuition that the molecular dance mounts to a frenzy as the temperature rises was confirmed by the kinetic theory of gases. Shelley went further, however, in his attempt to combine odor, light, and sound as support for his idea of the unity

24
Ibid.

25
Ibid.

in nature; odor, light, and sound "seem kneaded into one." King-Hele believes that Shelley's thought may have been stimulated by Adam Walker, whom King-Hele describes as being most impressed by Newton's observation that the widths of spectrum occupied by each of the seven colors corresponded exactly with the frequency differences between the seven musical notes. It was Newton's observation which suggested the idea of "luminous music" in which the colors corresponding to the notes would be projected on a screen.²⁶

CHAPTER V

Shelley in Prometheus Unbound used as basis for his work Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound. In Aeschylus' play, Prometheus is the benefactor of man and has bestowed upon the previously ignorant and beast-like creature as gifts from heaven fire, number, writing, medicine, and the arts. Zeus, chief of the gods and enemy of man, becomes enraged at Prometheus' impudence and has Prometheus chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where at the conclusion of Aeschylus' play he remains cherishing the secret that is his alone: that should Zeus marry Thetis, he would father a son more powerful than himself. Unless Prometheus confesses the secret, he is doomed to remain chained to the mountains for thirty thousand years, during which time his entrails will daily be devoured by an eagle. Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound was the second part of the trilogy, which was completed in the lost Prometheus Unbound in which Prometheus became reconciled with Zeus.²⁷

According to King-Hele, Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is a new myth based upon the old. In his Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus continues to suffer until the moment when Demogorgon, the son of Zeus and Thetis, overthrows Zeus. After Jupiter's defeat, Hercules liberates or unbinds Pro-

²⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

metheus. The drama, therefore, observes King-Hele, operates on two levels: ostensibly there is a shift in power on Olympus, and, on another level, each character symbolizes some trait in man--"preferably a trait associated with that character in legend." King-Hele also believes that Prometheus' unavoidable suffering implies that unnecessary chains cruelly restrict man; at the same time he considers Jupiter's fall the more impressive because Jupiter was in Greek legend the embodiment of irresistible power.²⁸

Peter Butter notes that in Aeschylus' play Prometheus is chained by Hephaestus, who pities him but who must obey Zeus' command. Io, the mortal girl who is pursued by Zeus' love and Hera's jealousy, comes before Prometheus, who foretells her sufferings and wanderings and reveals that from her will descend Herakles, a glorious archer who will deliver him from captivity.²⁹ Butter further observes that Mercury's role in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is comparable to that of Mercury in Aeschylus, but his character is more like that of Hephaestus, who is an unwilling servant of tyranny.³⁰

According to Carlos Baker, Shelley's treatment of the Prometheus myth differs somewhat from Aeschylus' treatment

28

Ibid.

29

Peter Butter, Shelley's Idols of the Cave (Edinburgh, 1954), p. 165.

30

Ibid., p. 163.

of it. First of all, Shelley introduces Demogorgon into the father-son succession scheme according to which Jupiter came to power by overthrowing his father, Kronos or Saturn. Supposedly, in Baker's opinion, Demogorgon is not the son begotten by Jupiter on Thetis but Jupiter's son only in the sense that he will be the agent of Jupiter's destruction--just as Jupiter, Saturn's son, was the agent of Saturn's destruction. Second, Baker states that in Aeschylus, Jupiter and Prometheus were reconciled because, unlike Aeschylus--who saw both Jupiter and Prometheus as cardinal virtues--Shelley saw Jupiter as the force of evil and Prometheus as the force of good.³¹

As a result of Aeschylus' different point of view, Baker notes that in his play Prometheus revealed to Jupiter the secret that were he to consummate his marriage with Thetis, he would father a son who would cause his downfall. Jupiter then acted upon Prometheus' information and married Thetis to Pelus and rewarded Prometheus by having Hercules release him from bondage. To Shelley, however, Prometheus' yielding would have been a degrading weakness, which he could not allow.³² Third, Shelley differs from Aeschylus in that he presents Prometheus as the power responsible for placing Jupiter on the throne. According to Aeschylus, Jupiter obtained his power by overthrowing Saturn, whereas Shelley would not allow Jupiter such power. On the contrary,

³¹ Baker, pp. 231-233.

³² Idem.

Prometheus "gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter" (II. iv. 44).³³

³³Ibid., p. 231.

CHAPTER VI

Critics of Prometheus Unbound disagree among themselves about the purpose of the work. Clutton-Brock, for example, holds that Shelley's purpose was to express his sense of the present evil conditions of the world, to depict a sudden and miraculous change in that condition, and to glorify the transformed world;³⁴ whereas Newman Ivy White agrees with Shelley's statement of purpose in the "Preface to Prometheus Unbound": "My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence."³⁵ In his "Preface to Prometheus Unbound," Shelley further admits that he had a passion for reforming the world although he adds that he does not dedicate his poetical compositions "solely to the direct enforcement of reform." He also states that he does not propose to offer a "reasoned system on the theory of human life," but later he expands his statement of purpose by explaining that he hopes to "produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society"³⁶

³⁴A. Clutton-Brock, Shelley, the Man and the Poet (New York, 1909), p. 180.

³⁵Newman Ivy White, Shelley, II (New York, 1940), 124.

³⁶Bernbaum, p. 1200.

Shelley's "Preface to Prometheus Unbound," then, reveals that neither Clutton-Brock nor White is completely wrong in stating his purpose although neither gives the whole picture.

CHAPTER VII

Other sources of disagreement among critics are the point at which the action of Prometheus Unbound commences and the point at which Prometheus' regeneration occurs. According to Carlos Baker, three thousand years before the commencement of the action in Act I, Prometheus

Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide heaven.
(II. iv. 44-46)

Jupiter, however, kept "faithless faith" (III. iii. 130); for in taking on omnipotence, he put off love and law (IV. 47-48). In spite of the fact that Prometheus had given hope and love to man and had given him knowledge of arts and sciences in order to lighten his burdens, Jupiter's reign, in Baker's opinion, continued and was destined to continue so long as man's will gave sanction to it by continuing in hatred (II. iv. 50-100). Prometheus, interpreted by Baker as the imperfect champion of man, was (as Baker points out) chained to a ravine of icy rocks among the mountains of the Indian Caucasus; and Asia, who had until then been his inseparable companion, was exiled in a far-distant Indian vale, a place as desolate and frozen as the scene of Prometheus' own agony.³⁷ For three thousand years

Prometheus and Asia have been separated, Prometheus has been tortured and therefore has continued to hate Jupiter, and Asia has mournfully longed for reunion with Prometheus.

Baker observes that Prometheus Unbound is in its entirety the biography of an hour, the hour of man's redemption made possible through Prometheus' self-reform, and of the events immediately preceding and immediately following it. While stress is placed upon the hour itself when the occasion demands it, the main emphasis is on the preparatory circumstances because the drama is one of the mind, rather than one of outward action. Everything depends upon Prometheus' readiness. Baker further notes the fact that the hour is mentioned as "of many, one" indicates that "it is not a particular predestined time," but any hour when Prometheus attains the growth which he has apparently attained before his opening speech in Act I.³⁸ Milton Wilson, however, disagrees with Baker's premise that Prometheus' regeneration had occurred before the beginning of the play and that Prometheus' opening speech echoes the regeneration. Prometheus' misery does eradicate hate, but it still exists after the commencement of the play. The day of Prometheus' regeneration is therefore, according to Milton Wilson, the day that witnesses Jupiter's fall.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

³⁹ Milton Wilson, Shelley's Later Poetry: A Study of His Prophetic Imagination (New York, 1959), pp. 45-46.

In his opening speech, Prometheus foresees Jupiter's fall "as some dark priest hales the reluctant victim," and he predicts that Jupiter will kiss the blood

From these [Prometheus'] pale feet, which then
 might trample thee
 If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
 (I. 51-52)

Although Prometheus immediately says that he has not spoken in pride, Baker sees the very suddenness of the denial as serving to emphasize the comparative recency of Prometheus' conversion:

Disdain! Ah, no! I pity thee. What ruin
 Will hunt thee undefended through the wide Heaven!
 How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
 Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
 Not exultation, for I hate no more,
 As thou ere misery made me wise. The curse
 Once breathed on thee I would recall.⁴⁰
 (I. 53-59)

While Prometheus can see no end to his misery, he welcomes the passing hours because he knows that some day one of them will preside over Jupiter's fall. Since, in King-Hele's opinion, each hour owns the time labelled by it and even has some control over the pattern of events, the hour of Jupiter's fall is, in a sense, his executioner.⁴¹ By means of his opening soliloquy, Prometheus reveals that once his resentment concerning his punishment caused him to hate Jupiter and to speak against him. Prometheus now pities him because ruling as an absolute tyrant unloved by his sub-

⁴⁰Baker, p. 93.

⁴¹King-Hele, p. 171.

jects, he is doomed to fall. Prometheus concludes his speech with the request that he might hear again the words of his curse. According to Milton Wilson, it is necessary that Prometheus repeat the words; for in order to repudiate the curse, he must repudiate the words themselves.⁴²

Earth, Prometheus' mother, in answer to Prometheus' request counters with a question of her own: "How canst thou hear/ Who knowest not the language of the dead?" Earth's speech or language, as Earl Wasserman points out, is not meaningful to Prometheus because Earth speaks in the tongue of those who die, and Prometheus is immortal.⁴³ Yet Earth promises that his words will be told him if he but call upon his own ghost or that of Jupiter, which must answer him. Unwilling to hear again the horrible words from one of his own likenesses, Prometheus calls upon the ghost of Jupiter.

Baker thinks that Prometheus' conversion from pride to pity is rendered effectively when Prometheus acts in accordance with his promise to recall the curse.⁴⁴ The Phantasm of Jupiter, while imitating Prometheus' original gestures, recalls the curse:

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse,
 Ill deeds; then thou be damned, beholding good;
 Both infinite as is the universe,
 And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
 An awful image of calm power
 Though now thou sittest, let the hour

⁴²Wilson, p. 62.

⁴³Earl Wasserman, Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Critical Reading (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 47-51.

⁴⁴Baker, p. 97.

Come, when thou must appear to be
 That which thou art internally;
 And after many a false and fruitless crime,
 Scorn tract thy lagging fall through bound-
 less space and time!

(I. 292-301)

Thus, Prometheus, as Joseph Barrell observes, reveals that he has acquired spiritual knowledge since the commencement of his punishment by Jupiter and his subsequent curse upon Jupiter.⁴⁵ By cursing Jupiter that he be damned beholding good, Prometheus shows that he had a knowledge of good, if not of wisdom, at the time of his confinement by Jupiter. Barrell notes, though, that there is a vast difference between a first conception of good and the wisdom evidenced by Prometheus in the course of the play; for during the three thousand years of the "Platonic period" which have elapsed between the pronouncing of the curse and the revocation of the curse at the commencement of Act I, suffering has changed Prometheus' hate to love and has taught him that Jupiter is to be pitied for what he lacks.⁴⁶ Prometheus' ability to pity prompts him to revoke his curse just as later his pity at the conclusion of his tortures instigates the departure of the last Fury. With the revocation of his curse, Prometheus commences his liberation; and, according to Barrell, the action is transposed to a purely intellectual plane: "good loses its impotence and evil its power."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Barrell, p. 144.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

When Earth affirms that the words repeated by the Phantasm of Jupiter are those once uttered by Prometheus, he expresses regret that he spoke them:

It doth repent me; words are quick and vain;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.
(I. 304-306)

Baker maintains that Prometheus' moral reformation is thus complete and that he can now endure with equanimity the remaining tortures which Jupiter heaps upon him for having had the curse repeated.⁴⁸

In spite of Prometheus' good qualities, Shelley in his "Preface to Prometheus Unbound" compares him with Milton's Satan. Shelley says

The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. . . . But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.⁴⁹

Baker notes that while it is true that Prometheus has always possessed saving grace, he has not always been "the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature." As opposed to Milton's Satan, Prometheus is free of envy,

⁴³ Baker, p. 98.

⁴⁹ Bernbaum, p. 1199.

malice, and self-aggrandizing ambition; however, like Satan, Prometheus has an immortal hatred of the Omnipotence; and that hatred gives him the courage never to submit or yield and a variety of unregenerate pride, which at first causes him to exult in Jupiter's coming fall.⁵⁰ Of his inability to submit to Jupiter, Prometheus says

Submission, thou dost know I cannot try;
 For what submission but that fatal word,
 The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
 Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
 Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
 Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
 (I. 395-400)

Prometheus' speech echoes that of Milton's Satan, who laments his state but who, like Prometheus, will not yield.

O then at last relent: is there no place
 Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?
 None left but by Submission; and that word
 Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame.⁵¹
 (PL. IV. 79-82)

King-Hele states that Shelley contrasts Prometheus with Milton's Satan as a hero, for Shelley believes that Prometheus can gain approval whereas Satan cannot.⁵² However, in his Defense of Poetry Shelley describes Milton's Satan as a moral being far superior to his God; for Satan perseveres in the purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture. His God, on the other hand,

⁵⁰ Baker, pp. 96-97.

⁵¹ Citations from Milton in my text are to John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957).

⁵² King-Hele, p. 207.

Shelley condemns as one who sure of triumph "inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments."⁵³

In spite of Shelley's statement, Prometheus resembles Satan only in his refusal to yield to Omnipotence; in all other respects it is Jupiter who most resembles Satan. In Paradise Lost, for example, Satan reveals his evil nature:

yet all his [God's] good prov'd ill in me,
And wrought but malice
(PL. IV. 47-48)

while in Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus describes Jupiter's nature:

Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has
(I. 383-384)

Earlier Prometheus cursed Jupiter, saying:

let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally.
And after many a false and fruitless crime,
Scorn track thy lagging fall thro' bound-
less space and time!
(I. 297-301)

Prometheus' inference about Jupiter's nature is reminiscent of Satan's speech describing his own inner state:

Under what torments inwardly I groan:
While they adore me on the throne of Hell,

53 -----
Bernbaum, p. 935.

With Diadem and Sceptre high advanc'd,
The lower still I fall, only Supreme
In misery; such joy Ambition finds.

 all Good to me is lost;
Evil be thou my Godd; by thee at least
Divided Empire with Heav'n's King I hold
By thee, and more than half perhaps will
 reign;
As Man ere long, and this new World shall
 know.

(PL. IV. 88-92; 110-114)

The fall of Satan as seen in Paradise Lost is also similar to the predicted fall of Jupiter as described in Prometheus' curse:

 Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal
 Sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition

(PL. I. 44-47)

In reply to Mercury, who has expressed pity for his plight, Prometheus advises Mercury that he

 Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind peace sits se-
 rene

(I. 430-431)

Later Prometheus speaks of his own power in contrast to that of those who are evil:

 Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

(I. 492-495)

Demogorgon himself defines the nature of those who serve evil:

All spirits are enslaved which serve things
 evil:
 Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.
 (II. iv. 110-111)

In Paradise Lost, Abdiel explains the nature of servitude to Satan:

This is servitude,
 To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd
 Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
 Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd.
 (PL. VI. 179-181)

In summation, therefore, Jupiter, like Satan, will bring evil deeds upon himself; and like him, Jupiter will be damned beholding good. Satan, too, will come to be outwardly that which he is internally, "an image of evil." Finally, Jupiter, like Satan, will fall through boundless space and time to "the wide waves of ruin . . . into a shoreless sea," (III. i. 71-74).⁵⁴

Douglas Bush states that in Prometheus Unbound there is conflict between God and Satan, whose roles have been reversed.⁵⁵ A Fury first suggests Prometheus' nature when he shows Prometheus the vision of Christ on the cross.

Behold an emblem: those who do endure
 Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but
 heap
 Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.
 (I. 594-596)

Prometheus himself under the strain of the Furies' torments reveals that

⁵⁴Baker, p. 93.

⁵⁵Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (New York, 1957), p. 154.

Peace is in the grave.
 The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
 I am a God and cannot find it there,
 Nor would I seek it:

(I. 633-641)

The Earth in sympathy with Prometheus' suffering sends as comforters to him spirits from the human mind. The chorus of spirits predicts that

Tho' Ruin now Love's Shadow be,
 Following him, destroyingly,
 On Death's white and winged steed,
 Which the fleetest cannot flee,
 Trampling down both flower and weed,
 Man and beast and foul and fair,
 Like a tempest thro' the air;
 Thou Prometheus shalt quell this horseman
 grim,
 Woundless though in heart or limb.

(I. 730-733)

In Paradise Lost, Christ says:

But I shall rise victorious, and subdue
 My Vanquisher [Death], spoil'd of his
 vaunted spoil;
 Death his death's wound shall then receive
 and stoop
 Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarm'd.

(PL. III. 249-252)

As further evidence that he is a Christ-figure (if not God, as Bush maintains), Prometheus says:

I would fain
 Be what it is my destiny to be,
 The savior and the strength of suffering man . . .

(I. 315-317)

In the second section of Act I, lines 311-657, Panthea and Ione, two daughters of Ocean, visit Prometheus and like a Greek chorus comment upon the action. Ione asks the questions to which Panthea (described by King-Hele as "all see-

seeing")⁵⁶ supplies the answers. Meanwhile, Mercury arrives from Jupiter and informs Prometheus that he must reveal his secret at once or be set upon by the Furies, who have accompanied him and who are eager for prey. Prometheus states that he prefers to be tortured and that his comfort is that each hour brings nearer the destined hour of Jupiter's fall. Mercury, unable to persuade Prometheus to submit, unleashes the Furies and takes his departure.

Mercury, in King-Hele's opinion, impresses one as a "conscientious courtier too humane for his messages," and he exhibits the divided loyalty of a "good-natured state servant employed by a brutal dictator."⁵⁷ King-Hele observes that Jupiter himself is more than an anthropomorphic God in that he is the controlling force behind evil institutions and essence of orthodoxy and reaction. As such he is hostile toward man's aspirations.⁵⁸

Although Prometheus falters momentarily upon the onslaught of the Furies, he has some consolation:

Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.
(I. 492-494)

Among the torments inflicted upon Prometheus by the Furies is their revelation of the evils which are to befall man and their depiction of the agony of Christ upon the cross,

⁵⁶King-Hele, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 174.

⁵⁸Ibid.

a reminder that

those who do endure
 Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but
 heap
 Thousandfold torment upon themselves and him.
 (I. 594-596)

One of the Furies, notes King-Hele, then makes explicit the meaning of what Prometheus has been shown by predicting that the forces of good on earth will accomplish nothing because they act at cross purposes. Expanding his statement, King-Hele gives a political interpretation through his suggestion that it is the rulers who either embrace custom or "who are conditioned by hypocrisy, if born a member of the ruling class. If they were humbly born and have struggled to acquire their power, they rationalize that a system which has permitted them to rise cannot be predominately bad."⁵⁹ Regardless, though,

They [the ruling classes] dare not devise good
 for man's estate,
 And yet they know not that they do not dare.
 The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
 The powerful goodness want: worse need for
 them.
 The wise want love; and those who love want
 wisdom;
 And all best things are thus confused to ill.
 Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
 But live among their suffering fellow-man
 As if none felt: they know not what they do.
 (I. 623-633)

Baker points out that Prometheus, like Jesus Christ, is impervious to temptation and serene in self-mastery.⁶⁰

 59

Ibid.

60

Baker, p. 99.

Although Mercury comes from Jupiter's domain in heaven, he reveals that whenever he has left Prometheus, heaven in comparison "seems Hell" (I. 367-370). Furthermore, Mercury pities his prospective victim; yet being under Jupiter's power, he carries out Jupiter's commands and suggests that Prometheus in yielding might "dwell among the Gods the while, Lapped in voluptuous joy" (I. 424-426). Baker adds, however, that Prometheus, like Jesus, refuses to give up his Golgotha and the agonies to come because he knows that the reign of evil will end.⁶¹

After Mercury's departure, the Furies begin their tortures, all of which are designed to attack Prometheus' mind rather than his body. Prometheus' serene self-dominance, however, enables him to withstand their onslaughts, even the most painful and almost unbearable one of Jesus on the cross. Worst of all is that the faith inspired by Jesus had been "abused" and his "words" have, like swift poison, withered up truth, peace, and pity. Thereafter crimes have been committed in His name (I. 549). The Fury, speaking in an ironic manner, ends with the following words of Jesus: "They know not what they do." Like Jesus, however, Prometheus pities man's ignorance; and, as a result, the indignant Fury takes leave of him.

In summarizing his analysis of Act I, Baker concludes that Shelley "has suffused a myth of pagan origin with deep-

ly felt Christian symbolism. He has begun with Aeschylus and ended by the representation of an ethic which is close to that of the New Testament."⁶²

During the remainder of Act I, as King-Hele points out, the built-up tension is relieved as spirits reminiscent of those in Act I of Byron's Manfred voice prophetic lyrics. King-Hele further believes that each spirit represents an admirable human quality and that together they foretell Prometheus' liberation through the implication that he has acquired--or is on the verge of acquiring--the virtues they represent.⁶³

In the first four lyrics tidings are brought of men who are combatting evil on earth. The First Spirit, whom King-Hele sees as representative of heroism, tells of those who are fighting for freedom. The Second Spirit, described by King-Hele as representative of altruism, tells of the survivor of a shipwreck who "gave an enemy / His plank, then plunged aside to die" (I. 721-722). The Third Spirit, whom King-Hele refers to as representative of wisdom, describes a savant who once made his mark in the world; and the Fourth Spirit tells of a poet who could create "forms more real than living man." Love is the theme of the Fifth and Sixth Spirits, whose songs, according to Frederick Pottle, have

⁶² Ibid., p. 101.

⁶³ King-Hele, p. 175.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 176.

been ignored more than any other part of Prometheus Unbound.⁶⁵ Ione (I. 756-757) observes that their voices are despair combined with love and that despair is not too strong a word for the sentiments expressed by the spirits. The Fifth Spirit acknowledges that Love exists, for he has seen him; but he adds that Love was closely followed by Ruin. The Sixth Spirit agrees but characterizes the Ruin as that which is disguised as Love in order to betray the best and gentlest. The Chorus admits that the spirits accurately describe the state of things but is confident that Prometheus will overcome Ruin; for, as Pottle observes, the words they have felt breathe from Prometheus

Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
 [Which] When they struggle to increase,
 Are to us as soft winds be.⁶⁶
 (I. 796-798)

Pottle notes Shelley's explicit statement that Prometheus will begin and end the action; he observes, though, that one can begin and end an action without being capable of performing all the intervening parts of it. Love [Asia] alone can help Prometheus, and she is far away (I. 303). Furthermore, Pottle points out that although the seasonal metaphor makes Prometheus' triumph seem nearer than his

⁶⁵ Frederick A. Pottle, "The Role of Asia in the Dramatic Action of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound," in Shelley: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. George M. Ridenour (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), p. 133.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 134.

vision of it as coming only after innumerable years of agony (I. 424), it remains conditional and ambiguous. Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace must continue their struggle to increase; and even after the coming of spring, delays and setbacks might occur--"frost may blast the young blossoms."⁶⁷

While the spirits' songs comfort Prometheus, the mention of Love saddens him, for it reminds him of his beloved Asia, from whom he has been separated. King-Hele states that while Asia was unimportant in the ancient myth, love is the main theme of Prometheus Unbound; and through his love for Asia, Prometheus shows himself to be ready for liberation and to be a possessor of positive virtues in addition to the stoicism which has kept him safe through torture and temptation.⁶⁸ The act, as Peck remarks, ends with the approaching dawn and Panthea's revelation to Prometheus that Asia has transformed the vale in which she awaits the hour of her reunion with him from a scene of desolation to one of beauty.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ King-Hele, p. 176.

⁶⁹ Walter Edwin Peck, Shelley, His Life and Work, II (Boston, 1927), 131.

CHAPTER VIII

In Act II, which commences with Asia's soliloquy, Asia and Panthea journey to Demogorgon's cave in order to learn the hour of Prometheus' release. As the act opens, Asia is alone in her lovely vale; and dawn is approaching as she awaits Panthea's return from Prometheus. Panthea arrives and excuses her lateness to Asia on the grounds that the delight of her "remembered dream" made her weak. Looking into Panthea's eyes, Asia sees Prometheus joyously transformed.

In the first of her two dreams, Panthea sees Prometheus as freed, unscarred, rejuvenated, and as a bridegroom ardently awaiting his bride. The second dream shows the present state of things with the vision of Ruin following close upon Love. Panthea's second dream and Asia's dream, as Baker points out, serve to start Asia on her journey from her place of exile.⁷⁰ Upon the fallen leaves of the almond tree, Panthea saw the words "Follow, follow," and in Asia's dream the words appeared on every herb and in the shadows of the morning clouds. Asia repeats the message, and the Echoes take it up, giving a clue to the sisters' destination:

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;

By thy step alone
 Can its rest be broken;
 Child of Ocean!

(II. i. 190-194)

Pottle, using as support for his position the above speech, says that it is expressly stated that only Asia can arouse Demogorgon and that the spell in his care is reserved for her alone. Thus Asia performs an independent and separate part of the action.⁷¹ King-Hele agrees with Pottle that Asia has a definite function. Although King-Hele describes Demogorgon as the supreme executive, he considers him powerless to act unless the participants' states of mind warrant it. King-Hele in describing Demogorgon says that he waits in readiness as a catalyst to precipitate the great change after man has taken on the ideals of universal love and forgiveness. In Act I, according to King-Hele, Prometheus--man's representative--has cast hate, envy, and revenge from his mind; but he must also show love before he can obtain his release. King-Hele points out that Prometheus in Act II shows love through Asia, who can be aroused to act only through the power of his love. Therefore King-Hele concludes that Asia's journey to Demogorgon is a forerunner of Prometheus' release and the sign that Demogorgon can commence his work.⁷²

Peter Butter and Harold Bloom, however, see Asia's function as limited if not insignificant. Butter describes

71 Pottle, p. 136.

72 King-Hele, p. 179.

Asia as the epipsyche, or perfect second self, of Prometheus and remarks that as such she reflected only what was good in her lover and functioned as the shadow of divine beauty. Thus, Asia was "like a golden chalice to bright wine" (I. 810) and the "shadow of beauty unbeheld" (III. iii. 7).⁷³ In discussing Asia's function, Bloom limits it to a mere embodiment of Prometheus' desire for her; he maintains that Asia in going down to Demogorgon finds only her own beauty, which is merely the "objective exemplification" of Prometheus' desire and "a means of good reconcilable with the gratification of good, the realization of human sexual completion." Further, Butter observes that while truth does exist in the depths, being the deep truth of Demogorgon, it is imageless.⁷⁴ While Butter and Bloom may not be completely wrong, the text supports Pottle and King-Hele in reserving for Asia a definite function in the accomplishment of Prometheus' release.

In scene ii occurs the soliloquy of the Fauns, whose speech is reminiscent of Caliban's description of the enchanted island and whose function is to predict. One of the Fauns foretells Prometheus' triumph and reveals his own delight in words which are anticipatory of Asia's questions to Demogorgon:

⁷³ Butter, p. 183.

⁷⁴ Harold Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry (Garden City, 1961), p. 302.

Those wise and lovely songs
 Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
 And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
 And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
 One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer
 Our solitary twilights, and which charm
 To silence the unenvying nightingales.

(II. ii. 91-98)

Butter notes that the nightingales' singing represents the beauty of the physical world but concludes that such may also be a reflection of intellectual beauty and not of necessity opposed to it. He further remarks that nightingales are also associated with love and thus are appropriately associated with Asia and Panthea.⁷⁵

After Panthea's dissolution into vapor by Prometheus, the scientific vein is again taken up when Asia and Panthea end their discussion and follow the beckoning Echoes. According to the Second Faun, the Choruses of Spirits, who are described by King-Hele as "quite at home with the rhyme-scheme abba**b**dd**c**beef**g**ff**h**gg**i**," and who cheer them on their way, live in strange places:

The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
 Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
 The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
 Are the pavilions where such dwell and float.

.
 And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
 The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
 Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
 They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
 And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
 Under the waters of the earth again.⁷⁶

(II. ii. 71-74; 77-82)

75 Butter, p. 136.

76 King-Hele, p. 177.

King-Hele utilizes the above passage in support of his position that Shelley included contemporary scientific theories in Prometheus Unbound. He explains that in Shelley's time shooting-stars were not thought of as coming from outside the earth. "Lightning, the aurora, shooting-stars, and other aerial phenomena were referred to as 'meteors'" and, according to King-Hele, the gloss to Shelley's lines is found in Adam Walker's Familiar Philosophy:

'In muddy ponds . . . bubbles of inflammable air will rise from the mud'. The gas then either 'ignites in the character of Will-o'-th'-Wisp' or 'ascends to the upper regions, often forming meteors, falling stars'. 77

Carl Grabo, however, believes that Shelley's primary source was Erasmus Darwin, whom Shelley was known to have read,⁷⁸ although Shelley supplemented Darwin with information acquired from contemporary scientists. In support of his statement, Darwin first cites the following passage from Darwin's Botanic Garden:

In some seas, as particularly about the coast of Malabar, as a ship floats along, it seems during the night to be surrounded with fire, and to leave a long tract of light behind it. Whenever the sea is gently agitated it seems converted into little stars, every drop as it breaks emits light, like bodies electrified in the dark. Mr. Bomare says, that when he was at the port of Cettes in Languedoc, and bathing with a companion in the sea after a very hot day, they both appeared covered with fire after every immersion, and that laying his wet hand on the arm of his companion, who had not then dipped himself, the

77
Ibid., p. 173.

73
Carl Grabo, A Newton Among Poets: Shelley's Use of Science in Prometheus Unbound (Chapel Hill, 1930), p. 30.

exact mark of his hand and fingers were seen in characters of fire. As numerous microscopic insects are found in this shining water, its light has generally been ascribed to them, though it seems probable that fish-slime in hot countries may become in such a state of incipient putrefaction as to give light, especially when by agitation it is more exposed to the air; otherwise it is not easy to explain why agitation should be necessary to produce this marine light.⁷⁹

Grabo notes that Darwin does not in his note ascribe an electric origin to the ignition of the gas but adds that contemporary works of science did. As an example, Grabo gives the following quotation from Cavallo (Treatise on Air and Other Elastic Fluids):

Several meteors seen in the atmosphere have been suspected to be the effects of inflammable air fired by electricity. The weak lightnings, without any explosion, that are sometimes observed near the horizon in serene weather, especially in hot climates, are considered, by a very judicious philosopher, to be nothing more than inflammable air hydrogen detached from the earth by the heat, etc. and fired by electricity, or by some other unknown cause. Mr. Volta of Como supposes, that the ignes fatui are occasioned by the inflammable air which proceeds from marshy grounds, and is set on fire by electric sparks. Those meteors called falling stars, he supposes to be fired by the same means.⁸⁰

In clarification of Cavallo, Grabo concludes with a quotation from Beccaria (Artificial Electricity):

Low and thick fogs (especially when in their rising, they find the air above them pretty free from moisture) carry up to the exploring wire, when they reach it, an electricity which becomes manifested by frequent little sparks.⁸¹

79 Ibid., pp. 123-124.

80 Ibid., pp. 124-125.

81 Ibid., p. 127.

Grabo interprets the significance of his evidence as follows:

The most plausible interpretation of these allusions in the passage from Prometheus Unbound is . . . the ignis fatuus, or will o' the wisp . . . That electric properties were supposed to pertain to it was shown in the citation from Cavallo, which, too, . . . refers to shooting stars, meteors, and such phenomena . . . Will o' the wisp, shooting stars, and meteors are all supposedly electrical phenomena.³²

Thus, while it is possible that Shelley received his information from Adam Walker alone--as King-Hele believes--it is equally possible that Shelley obtained his information from Darwin, Cavallo, and Beccaria.

Scene iii commences with the arrival of Asia and Panthea at the pinnacle of rock above Demogorgon's cave. Here, they are beckoned by the Spirits' song:

To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and bar
Of things which seem and are,
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!
(II. iii. 54-62)

Richard Fogle states that Shelley uses images to express an absolute truth or beauty beyond the range of imagery. Demogorgon, for example, is symbolic of the Absolute and is seen as a "mighty darkness," having neither limbs,

32
Ibid., p. 123.

form, nor outline; and his answers to the questions addressed to him by Asia and Panthea are, in the judgment of Fogle, shadowy, ambiguous, and inconclusive. Furthermore, Fogle sees Demogorgon's reply to Asia's question "Whom called'st thou God?" as most illustrative of Shelley's own predicament:

If the abyss
 Could vomit forth its secrets--but a voice
 Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless.⁸³
 (II. 113-115)

Having come into Demogorgon's presence, Asia begins questioning him, and he gives to all her questions the same answer--God. Baker states, however, that God takes no part in the action, for His work was completed long ago. In answer to Asia's queries about the origin or author of evil, Demogorgon replies only that he reigns. Since Jupiter reigns, Baker considers Demogorgon's meaning quite clear.⁸⁴

Through Asia the events prior to Jupiter's reign are revealed. After her recital, Asia renews her questioning of Demogorgon concerning evil. Asia asks Demogorgon who Jove's Master is, if not God; but Demogorgon says only that "the deep truth is imageless." He asserts, though, that all things are subject to Fate, Time, Occasion, Change, and Chance except eternal Love. Therefore, according to Baker, Jupiter is subject to Fate or Necessity, and as a result of Prometheus' self-mastery the change bringing about the re-

⁸³ Richard Harter Fogle, "The Abstractness of Shelley," in Shelley: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. George M. Hidenour (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), pp. 17-18.

⁸⁴ Baker, p. 106.

union of eternal Love (which Baker identifies as Asia) with mankind (which Baker identifies as Prometheus) can occur.³⁵

Later in Act II, Asia questions Demogorgon about God and about Jupiter and finally asks him when Prometheus will be released. Immediately there appears a procession of cars which are drawn by rainbow-winged steeds and driven by wild-eyed charioteers. These are the immortal Hours, one of whom, grim-faced, informs Asia that he is the Hour destined to preside over Jupiter's fall, which is now imminent. The other Hour is a young spirit who has the dove-like eyes of hope and whose conveyance is "an ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire" in which he invites Asia to accompany him. His car, as King-Hele notes and as the Hour makes clear, has a unique form of traction:

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I
deem.

Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon.³⁶
(II. iv. 163-167; 171-173)

On a superficial level, the above lyrics can be regarded as background music for Asia's journey. King-Hele remarks, however, that on the deeper scientific level they voice the contemporary theory that atmospheric electricity was drawn

³⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁶ King-Hele, pp. 180-181.

from the earth by the sun in the morning, became quiescent at noon, and came to earth again at nightfall. King-Hele adds further that while the explanation, confirmed in Act IV (by a reference which he does not identify) does not add to the development of the drama, it does show that beneath the obscurity of Prometheus Unbound lies "an esoteric idea formulated in precise detail."³⁷

A final instance of science in Act II is the transfiguration of Asia, which, according to King-Hele, is praised by Prometheus himself in the "Life of Life" lyrics in which love is identified with light and fire:

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
 With their love the breath beneath them;
 And thy smiles before they dwindle
 Make the cold air fire; then screen them
 In those looks, where whoso gazes
 Faints, entangled in their mazes. . . .³⁸
 (II. v. 48-53)

As King-Hele points out, Asia's response to the hymn of praise commences with a "vivid complex of sense images":

My soul is an enchanted boat,
 Which, like a sleeping swan doth float
 Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
 And thine doth like an angel sit
 Beside a helm conducting it,
 Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.³⁹
 (II. v. 72-77)

King-Hele classifies the symbolism as Neoplatonic, for an individual life is seen as a river upon which the soul travels in a boat in order to reunite with the sea of the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 131-182.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 132.

infinite. Asia's soul floats upon the waves of the sweet singing, which leads to a profound sea of ever-spreading sound similar to the "timeless Platonic heaven of pre-existence":

Till through the Elysian garden islets
By thee most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided.

.
We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day.⁹⁰
(II. v. 91-94; 98-103)

Fogle notes that Asia's song, which concludes Act II, is, according to Grabo, "the emotional counterpart of her earlier philosophical quest, when with Panthea she [met with] Demogorgon in his cave beyond 'the veil and bar of things which seem and are'."⁹¹

90

Ibid.

91 Fogle, pp. 89-92.

CHAPTER IX

Act III opens on Olympus, where Jupiter, like Ozymandias, is seen rejoicing in his omnipotence.⁹² Like Prometheus in Act I and Asia in Act II, Jupiter introduces himself with a soliloquy. He knows that the destined Hour is near, but he misinterprets it; for he believes that Demogorgon will rid him of the troublesome soul of man and that he will afterwards reign omnipotent. Demogorgon, however, heralds Jupiter's fall; and when Jupiter realizes that there is no escape for him, he yields to the inevitable. In spite of his authority over Jupiter, Demogorgon will not be his successor, for Demogorgon explicitly states that none may retain the tyranny of heaven. King-Hele therefore concludes that Demogorgon's only function is to observe the state of man's mind and to see that man gets his reward at the proper moment.⁹³

Bloom believes that although Jupiter is fated to be suppressed by his "fatal child" begotten upon Thetis, he has actually begotten no child; for he is sterile. Therefore the car of the Hour bears Demogorgon himself.⁹⁴ Demogorgon informs Jupiter that he is Eternity and adds

92 Bush, p. 149.

93 King-Hele, p. 183.

94 Bloom, p. 307.

I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
 Mightier than thee: and we must dwell to-
 gether
 Henceforth in darkness.
 (III. i. 54-56)

Bloom therefore concludes that Demogorgon is Jupiter's son only in that he displaces Jupiter as Jupiter had displaced Saturn.⁹⁵

The text, however, does not support Bloom's conclusion. First of all, when Mercury comes to confront Prometheus before setting the Furies upon him, he informs Prometheus that

there is a secret known
 To thee, and to none else of living things,
 Which may transfer the sceptre of wide
 Heaven,
 The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
 Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his
 throne
 In intercession
 (I. 371-376)

Jupiter's soliloquy at the beginning of Act III reveals that Prometheus' secret is the same as the secret ascribed to Prometheus in Aeschylus' play--that should Jupiter marry Thetis, he would father a son greater than he:

Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
 That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
 Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
 Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
 The dreadful night of ever-living limbs
 Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
 To redescend, and to trample out the spark.
 (III. i. 19-25)

In his address to Thetis, Jupiter's meaning becomes, if

--- --⁹⁵--- --
Ibid., p. 303.

possible, even more explicit:

and thou [Thetis]

Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
 Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
 Thetis, bright image of eternity!
 When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
 God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick
 flames,
 "The penetrating presence; all my being,
 "Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
 "Into a dew with poison is dissolved,
 "Sinking thro' its foundations:" even then
 Two mighty spirits mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.

· · · · ·
 Awful Shape, what art thou? Speak?
 (III. i. 33-48; 52)

That Jupiter does not recognize his son is explainable in the above soliloquy in which Jupiter describes him as "unbeheld." Furthermore, the fact that Demogorgon had in giving his identity referred to himself as "thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child" does not, of necessity, restrict the meaning to any one sense of the relationship. Jupiter, in other words, was Saturn's child in the sense that Saturn fathered him and in the sense that he was the agent of his father's overthrow. Demogorgon's revelation to Jupiter that he is the agent of Jupiter's downfall, however, does not preclude his being Jupiter's son and, in fact, the text supports Demogorgon as Jupiter's son.

After the new order has been confirmed, Hercules unbinds Prometheus. Hercules appears only because the occasion demands it; after performing what is required of him, he dis-

appears to be heard of no more.

Prometheus, now reunited with Asia, assures her that they will never again be separated; and the Spirit of the Hour, whom Baker compares to Ariel, who must perform one more act before he receives his freedom,⁹⁶ circumnavigates the world, proclaiming by means of the conch-shell man's redemption. Earth then presents a spirit in the form of a winged child to conduct Asia and Prometheus to their new dwelling near the far-off temple. There the Spirit of the Earth tells of the "miraculous effects of the sky-borne-shell-music," and the Spirit of the Hour arrives to describe his journey and the state of man in the changed world:

The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colors idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
Passionless--no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might over soar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven.

(III. iv. 190-203)

⁹⁶ Baker, p. 109.

CHAPTER X

Act IV, according to King-Hele, provides the exultation needed to balance the grimness of Act I.⁹⁷ The fourth act consists of three successive choric movements, all of which are introduced and interpreted by Panthea and Ione. The first movement depicts the confused departure of the pre-reformed hours "to the dark, to the past, to the dead," and the arrival of the hours of the new order accompanied by the powers of might and pleasure from the mind of man. Baker observes that prior to the change in Prometheus they had been trammelled in darkness, but now they celebrate their new freedom, "which they owe to the rebirth of love and light in the human mind."⁹⁸

The second movement contains the love dialogue between the feminine Moon and the masculine Earth. The rebirth of love in the Earth initiated a response in the Moon who is thereby warmed and made fruitful.⁹⁹

Further in Act IV Shelley thoroughly humanizes the Earth and the Moon. The Earth, according to King-Hele, represents the astronomical object Earth, but like the Mother Earth of Act I, he is affected by changes on his sur-

⁹⁷ King-Hele, p. 136.

⁹⁸ Baker, p. 111.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

face. The joy he feels upon man's new freedom also spreads to the Moon, his satellite. Her 'solid oceans' begin to flow, and 'green stalks' and 'bright flowers' spring from her sterile surface as a result of the benign influence of the "newly replenished atmosphere."¹⁰⁰

Man has mastered language and has made progress in science:

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll
on!

The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, has thou secrets? Man unveils me; I
have none.

(IV. 418-423)

King-Hele sees the above speech as containing four of Shelley's prophecies, three of which have been fulfilled by the electric motor, the progress of astrophysics, and the airplane. The fourth, King-Hele believes, has been partly fulfilled; for although the secrets of the earth's interior have not yet been "laid bare," knowledge has been acquired through the measurement of the rumbles of earthquake waves, possibly referred to by Shelley as shouts from the deep abyss. It is also possible that it was merely a coincidence that the wording suits modern techniques; and if so King-Hele thinks even more curious is Shelley's reference to "love waves," meaning certain surface earthquake waves; for it is unlikely that Shelley foresaw the career of Professor

A. E. H. Love, for whom the earthquake waves are named.¹⁰¹

The concentration upon the erotic myth, of which King-Hele gives a thorough analysis, commences with the Earth's speech:

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly
sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
While round his rest a watch of light and warmth
doth keep.

(IV. 444-449)

As King-Hele explains it, the totally black shadow which the earth casts into sunlit space becomes a mere point at a distance of about 900,000 miles, and the earth therefore forms the base of a slender cone of darkness. King-Hele points out that Shelley's use of "pyramid," rather than "cone," indicates that Shelley may have been thinking of some pre-Copernician writer, such as Pliny, who did not know that the earth was a sphere. "His beauty," King-Hele observes, is the illuminated hemisphere of the earth, which is comparable to a bright mantle "round" the sleeper at the earth's center. The cone of darkness enters the picture in the Moon's reply. King-Hele points out that Shelley saw light and dark as practically tangible, and therefore man's most intimate contact with the Earth takes place upon her eclipse:

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips. . . .
So when thy shadow falls on me.

(IV. 450-451; 453)

In spite of the emotional tone, the Moon carefully reports her own experience of gravitation:

Thou art speeding round the sun
 Brightest world of many a one;
 Green and azure sphere which shinest
 With a light which is divinest
 Among all the lamps of Heaven
 To whom life and light is given;
 I, thy crystal paramour
 Borne beside thee by a power
 Like the polar Paradise,
 Magnet-like of lovers' eyes;
 I, a most enamoured maiden
 Whose weak brain is overladen
 With the pleasure of her love,
 Maniac-like around thee move
 Gazing, an insatiate bride,
 On thy form from every side. . . .
 Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
 I must hurry, whirl and follow
 Through the heavens wide and hollow,
 Sheltered by the warm embrace
 Of thy soul from hungry space,
 Drinking from thy sense and sight
 Beauty, majesty, and might,
 As a lover or a chameleon
 Grows like what it looks upon. . . .
 (IV. 457-472; 476-484)

In the above speech, Shelley, according to King-Hele, emphasizes the features of the moon's motion confirming his equation of love with gravitation. The moon always presents the same face to the earth and is therefore "gazing" on him lover-like. Although the gravitational pull of the sun is more than twice as strong as that of the earth, the moon looks at him and revolves around him; she is faithful to him against odds and reveals that "wheresoe'er thou soarest I . . . follow." As the moon goes around, her face seems to wobble ('libration,' according to King-Hele, is the technical term) and she is consequently madly in love and "maniac-like" in her behavior. King-Hele thinks that Shelley also

makes use of the phenomenon of earth-light--'the old moon in the new moon's arms'--when he says that the moon "grows like what it looks upon." Hughes, however, holds that the old moon seen in the new moon's arms is instead a "clear representation of the emergence of the potential from the actual."¹⁰² In concluding his interpretation, King-Hele notes that Shelley not being content with linking gravitation and love, suggests that magnetism is also involved; for he refers to the attraction between the poles of magnets ("the polar Paradise, magnet-like").¹⁰³

In the third and final movement Demogorgon invokes the spirits of men living and dead, "of the earth, moon and stars, and of all fauna and flora, and of all the elements, to hear a final proclamation upon the significance of this great day in the evolution of the universe":¹⁰⁴

This is the day, which down the void abysm
 At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's
 despotism,
 And Conquest is dragged captive through
 the deep;
 Love from its awful throne of patient power
 In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
 Of dread endurance, from the slippery,
 steep,
 And narrow verge of crag-like agony springs
 And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
 These are the seals of that most firm as-
 surance

102 D. J. Hughes, "Potentiality in Prometheus Un-
bound," SIR, II (1963), 111.

103 King-Hele, pp. 193-195.

104 Baker, p. 111.

Which bars the pit over Destruction's
strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with
its length;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates:
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan! is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!
(IV. 554-578)

CHAPTER XI

In December 1820, Shelley met "Prince" Alexander Mavrocordato, who later became Prime Minister of Greece. In October 1821, Shelley completed the drama Hellas and dedicated it to Mavrocordato. In writing Hellas, Shelley's aim was "to weave songs of Greece's ancient glories into the fabric of current events--a fabric which failed to materialize, because the war had not really started and news of it was sporadic and garbled."¹⁰⁵ For his source, Shelley turned to Aeschylus' The Persians, which is centered around the battle of Salamis, news of which is brought by a messenger to the "stay-at-home Persians in Susa."¹⁰⁶

One of the most outstanding differences between Hellas and Prometheus Unbound is the description of Christ's suffering. In the "Prologue to Hellas" Satan addresses Christ as follows:

Be as all things beneath the empyrean,
 Mine! Art thou eyeless like old Destiny,
 Thou mockery-king, crowned with a wreath of thorns?
 Whose sceptre is a reed, the broken reed
 Which pierces thee! whose throne is a chair of
 scorn;
 For seest thou not beneath this crystal floor
 The innumerable worlds of golden light
 Which are my empire, and the least of them
 which thou wouldst redeem from me?

¹⁰⁵ King-Hele, p. 323.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 323-324.

Know'st thou not them my portion?
 Or wouldst rekindle the--strife
 Which our great Father then did arbitrate
 Which he assigned to his competing sons
 Each his apportioned realm?

(120-133)

Later in his description of Ahasuerus, Hassan reveals that he, like Satan, had no love for Christ:

Some say that this is he whom the great prophet
 Jesus, the son of Joseph, for his mockery,
 Mocked with the curse of immortality.

(149-151)

One must turn to Queen Mab, however, to discover the exact nature of Ahasuerus' mockery:

I stood beside him: on the torturing cross
 No pain assailed his unterrestrial sense;
 And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed
 The massacres and miseries which his name
 Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
 Go! go! in mockery.
 A smile of godlike malice reillumined
 His fading lineaments.--I go, he cried,
 But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
 Eternally.

(VII. 174-183)

While it is not surprising that Satan would mock Christ, it is strange that Ahasuerus would; for he apparently mocks Christ without any provocation. Carl Grabo, however, sheds some light upon the matter. According to Grabo, Ahasuerus is an early personification of a theme which Shelley developed successively in The Wandering Jew, Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam, and Prometheus Unbound--"the theme of the rebel and heretic defying tyranny, whether secular or divine, and, though suffering torments, remaining master of his soul and in his steadfastness giving assurance of the

tyrant's ultimate overthrow."¹⁰⁷ Ahasuerus, then, saw Christ as a tyrant.

Satan's description of Christ, however, is not the only description of Christ given in Hellas. The Chorus composed of Christian Greeks also describes Christ:

A power from the unknown God;
 A Promethean conqueror came;
 Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.
 A mortal shape to him
 Was like a vapour dim
 Which the orient planet animates with light;
 Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
 Like blood-hounds mild and tame,
 Nor prey'd until their lord had taken flight.
 The moon of Mahomet
 Arose, and it shall set:
 While blazon'd as on heaven's immortal noon
 The cross leads generations on.
 (211-224)

The Chorus' description of Christ is as different from Satan's description of Him as is the description of Christ in Prometheus Unbound.

In Hellas, as in Prometheus Unbound, the image of the eagle and the serpent appears. The first appearance of the image in Hellas occurs in Hassan's speech to Mahmud about the progress of their battle against the Greeks:

Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
 Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
 Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
 To stoop upon the victor;--for she fears
 The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine:
 (307-311)

In Prometheus Unbound, Jupiter's visualization of his overthrow by Demogorgon echoes Hassan's description in spite of

the fact that Hassan describes a kite and crane, rather than a vulture and snake:

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea.

(III. i. 70-74)

A further reference to the snake in Prometheus Unbound occurs in the speech of the Spirit of the Hour in Act III. In his description of the temple within which his car will be kept, the Spirit of the Hour reveals that a representation of his steeds will be yoked to his car by means of the amphisbaenic snake, which signifies eternity.

In Prometheus Unbound, there is a final reference to the snake in Demogorgon's concluding speech in Act IV:

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours should free
The Serpent that would clasp her with its
length;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

(IV. 562-569)

From Demogorgon's speech, as has been pointed out earlier, one may hypothesize that Demogorgon associates the snake with the forces of evil--although it is also possible that Demogorgon is merely using the serpent image for effect. Within the framework of the play itself, though, the distinction would not appear to be particularly important since good and evil are clearly distinguished.

In Hellas, the vulture is mentioned in the speech of the Semi-chorus, composed of Greeks, in anticipation of Moslem victory:

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned
lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.
(940-945)

The image of the snake appears twice in Hellas. It first appears in the speech of an unidentified person who announces the Moslems' victory:

Victory! victory! Austria, Russia, England,
And that tame Serpent, that poor shadow,
France,
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs
speak.
(967-969)

Since the Moslems represent evil and their opponents, especially the Greeks, represent good, the serpent in the above speech must also be identifiable with the spirit of good-- in spite of the fact that the speaker means to be derogatory.

The second use of the serpent or snake image in Hellas occurs in the prediction of a bright future for the Greeks in spite of their defeat:

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn. . . .
(1060-1064)

According to King-Hole, the serpent in the above speech was, like the amphisbaenic snake mentioned by the Spirit of the

Hour in Prometheus Unbound, probably the tail-eating serpent, symbolizing eternity.¹⁰³ Thus, in Hellas, as in Prometheus Unbound, the serpent represents not only good or evil but eternity as well.

Although in Hellas the Greeks are defeated, their defeat, like that of Laon and Cytina in the Revolt of Islam, is temporary; for Hellas concludes with a prophecy of their eventual triumph:

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter woods outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serene far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning-star.
Where fairer Tempos bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

(1060-1067)

CHAPTER XII

Milton Wilson defines Prometheus Unbound as a lyrical drama like Prometheus Bound, Oedipus at Colonus, Paradise Lost, and Samson Agonistes--a series of temptations.¹⁰⁹ In addition he finds the structural features undramatic and maintains that there is no conflict at the climax because Jupiter's fall follows the change in Prometheus in Act I and that the play is static.¹¹⁰ A. Clutton-Brock agrees with Milton Wilson in that he condemns Prometheus Unbound as a drama because it contains no action.¹¹¹

In comparing Prometheus Unbound with Samson Agonistes, however, Milton Wilson provides an opening for refutation of his statements about the defects of Prometheus Unbound. Samson Agonistes, like Prometheus Unbound, is preeminently a psychological study of the development of the main character.¹¹² The first act of Samson Agonistes begins with Samson's soliloquy, just as the first act of Prometheus Unbound begins with Prometheus' soliloquy. In his soliloquy, Samson, like Prometheus, reveals his thoughts about his present condition and laments his suffering:

109 Milton Wilson, pp. 45-46.

110 Ibid., pp. 41-42.

111 Clutton-Brock, pp. 191-192.

112 Marjorie Nicolson, John Milton: A Reader's Guide to His Poetry (New York, 1963), p. 357.

I seek
 This unfrequented place to find some ease;
 Ease to the body some, none to the mind
 From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
 Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
 But rush upon me thronging . . .
 O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
 Twice by an angel . . .
 Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
 As of a person separate to God,
 Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
 Betray'd, Captiv'd, and both my Eyes put out,
 Made of my enemies, the scorn and gaze . . .
 Promise was that I
 Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver,
 Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
 Eyeless in Gaza, at the Mill with slaves
 Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke . . .
 (I. 16-21; 23-24; 30-34; 38-42)

Later in his soliloquy, though, Samson, like Prometheus, shows signs of reformation:

Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
 Divine Prediction; what if all foretold
 Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
 Whom have I to complain of but myself?
 (I. 43-46)

Samson's reformation, however, is not complete. He immediately returns to lamentation. Samson's friends, who form the Chorus, come to comfort Samson, just as Prometheus' friends came to comfort him. Shocked by the change in Samson, they contrast his present servitude and weakness with his former greatness and strength and lead Samson into another tirade against his miserable plight. This time, however, Samson places the blame first upon Dalila--"That specious monster, my accomplisht snare"--and then upon the governors of Israel, who would not enter Israel into war against the Philistines. It is not until Manoa, Samson's father, pays Samson a visit and questions God's treatment

of Samson--just as Samson had done earlier--that Samson reveals that his reformation is now complete:

Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,
 Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
 But justly; I myself have brought them on,
 Sole Author I, sole cause:
 (I. 373-376)

In Prometheus Unbound, just as in Samson Agonistes, there is conflict at the climax; and, as in Samson Agonistes, the conflict is an internal one. The conflict in Prometheus Unbound takes place within Prometheus' mind, just as in Samson Agonistes the conflict takes place in Samson's mind. In his opening soliloquy in Act I, Prometheus addresses himself to Jupiter:

Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
 Will hunt thee undefended thro' wide Heaven!
 How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
 Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
 Not exultation, for I hate no more,
 As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
 Once breathed on thee I would recall. . . .
 If then my words had power,
 Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
 Is dead within, although no memory be
 Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
 What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.
 (I. 53-59; 69-73)

The tension in Prometheus' soliloquy is heightened by the use of the word "recall" in reference to the curse. According to Webster, "recall" can mean either "to remember" or "to revoke." Within the context of the speech, "to revoke" would at first appear to be the meaning intended because the sentence in which "recall" appears immediately follows Prometheus' revelation that he speaks in grief and no longer hates Jupiter as he had before misery taught him

wisdom. With the conclusion of the soliloquy, however, it would appear that "to remember" is the meaning signified by "recall"; for Prometheus says "If then my words had power . . . let them not lose it now! What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak."

After those upon whom Prometheus calls refuse to repeat the curse, Prometheus turns to Earth for advice. Earth then tells Prometheus that he may hear his curse repeated if he call upon the Phantasm of Jupiter or upon his own ghost. Prometheus chooses to have the Phantasm of Jupiter recite his curse, for he does not wish anyone resembling him to recite it. The Phantasm of Jupiter is summoned and obediently recites the curse. After hearing the curse and being assured that he did indeed pronounce it, Prometheus says

It doth repent me: words are quick and vain:
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.
(I. 304-306)

In revoking the curse, Prometheus demonstrates that his reformation is complete.

Following his reformation, Prometheus, like Samson, undergoes temptation. Jupiter's messenger, Mercury, is sent to Prometheus with a message from Jupiter. Mercury tells Prometheus that Jupiter will release him if he will reveal his secret since that secret may transfer the power of heaven. If Prometheus will not make his secret known, Mercury must subject him to the torture of the Furies--the "thought-

executing ministers"--he has brought with him. In spite of the horrible appearance of the Furies and Mercury's eloquent speech on Jupiter's behalf, however, Prometheus chooses to suffer rather than to acquiesce or submit to the tyranny of evil.

The reformation of Prometheus is followed by many external changes--including the fall of Jupiter. While Prometheus' reformation does pave the way for Jupiter's fall, it is the indirect cause--rather than the direct cause--of Jupiter's fall; for in his conversation with Asia in Act II, Demogorgon says "He reigns" when Asia asks him who is the author of evil. Furthermore, in Act III, Jupiter still retains his throne in heaven. The immediate or direct cause of Jupiter's fall is Jupiter's failure to win the struggle with Demogorgon; following his defeat by Demogorgon, Jupiter immediately plunges into the abyss.

Some critics consider it a defect in Prometheus Unbound that no confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus occurs. Although one cannot prove by analogy that the lack of a confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus is not a defect, it might be pointed out that Shelley did have a precedent for the omission. In Samson Agonistes, for example, no confrontation takes place between Samson and God--although, of course, God is not Samson's enemy in spite of Samson's having broken his vow to God--and no confrontation takes place between Samson and the Philistines en masse; the triumph of Samson and God is reported by a messenger. Fur-

thermore, in Paradise Lost--which has more often been compared with Prometheus Unbound than has Samson Agonistes--there is no confrontation between God and Satan after Satan has been defeated by God, although in Paradise Regained, there is a confrontation between Christ and Satan during Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness. With one exception--the occasion of Satan's journey towards heaven after his escape from hell, when Uriel speaks on God's behalf to Satan--when God wants to communicate with Satan, his communication is given by means of deeds, rather than words.

In Prometheus Unbound, Jupiter also once makes his desires known to Prometheus through a messenger; Mercury acts as Jupiter's messenger in telling Prometheus that Jupiter will release him if he will reveal his secret and that if he will not reveal his secret, he must undergo torture by the Furies. Thus, with one exception, Jupiter too communicates by means of deeds.

It might also be pointed out that a confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus in Prometheus Unbound would serve no purpose. In the first place, Prometheus has already been tried, convicted, and sentenced before the opening of the play. Second, Jupiter does not have to leave heaven in order to communicate with Prometheus, and he does not have to leave heaven in order to see Prometheus because he is capable of observing the events on earth from his throne in heaven. Third, and last, Prometheus' descriptions of his suffering, the terrifying appearance of the Furies,

and their torture of Prometheus have been rendered so dramatically and effectively that a confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus would be at best--if it did not so strain the emotions that it appeared ludicrous--a let-down.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that Prometheus had given hope and love to man and had given him knowledge of arts and sciences in order to lighten his burdens, Jupiter's reign, in Baker's opinion, continued and was destined to continue so long as man's will gave sanction to it by continuing in hatred (II. iv. 50-100).¹¹³ Since Prometheus, the saviour of man or the One Mind, shows imperfection in hating Jupiter, then imperfection must also appear in the external world--which was created by the One Mind in its perfection. The evil brought about by Jupiter, for example, is described as imperfection and the product of "the mis-creative mind of Jove." In hating Jupiter, Prometheus had taken on attributes of Jupiter or imperfection, and that imperfection was manifested in disorder in the external world.

It is evident from Prometheus' soliloquy at the beginning of Act I that Prometheus' regeneration had not occurred before the commencement of the play. While Baker stated that Prometheus' soliloquy echoes his regeneration, he reveals that his interpretation hinges upon his misinterpretation of the word "recall" in Prometheus' soliloquy as "re-

voked"; for later Baker observes that Prometheus' conversion from pride to pity is rendered effectively when Prometheus acts in accordance with his promise to recall the curse.¹¹⁴ A close reading of the soliloquy, however, reveals that "recall" means "remember" rather than "revoke."

Although Shelley in his "Preface to Prometheus Unbound" compares Prometheus with Milton's Satan, Prometheus resembles Satan only in his hatred of the Omnipotence and his refusal to submit. In all other respects, it is Jupiter who most resembles Satan. Jupiter, like Satan, is envious and malicious and will bring about his own destruction. Prometheus, on the other hand, resembles Christ; for, like Christ, Prometheus is the Saviour of mankind, and, like Christ, he will triumph over death.

Critics differ concerning the function of Asia in Prometheus Unbound. Frederick Pottle cites the speech of the Echoes (II. i. 190-194) in support of his statement that only Asia can arouse Demogorgon and that the spell in his care is reserved for her alone.¹¹⁵ King-Hele agrees with Pottle that Asia has a definite function. King-Hele further believes that Asia can only be aroused to act through the power of Prometheus' love and that Asia's journey to Demogorgon is a forerunner of Prometheus' release and the sign that Demogorgon can commence his work.¹¹⁶

114 Ibid., p. 97.

115 Pottle, p. 136.

116 King-Hele, p. 179.

Peter Butter and Harold Bloom, however, see Asia's function as limited if not insignificant. Butter states that Asia is the perfect second self of Prometheus and the embodiment of the good in Prometheus.¹¹⁷ Bloom considers Asia merely the embodiment of Prometheus' desire for her and adds that in going down to Demogorgon, Asia finds only her own beauty--"a means of good reconcilable with the gratification of good, the realization of human sexual completion."¹¹⁸

In refutation of Butter's description of Asia as the perfect second self of Prometheus and the reflection of the good in Prometheus, it might be pointed out that if Asia is the representative of perfection in Prometheus Unbound, she--and not Prometheus--should have been the protagonist of Jupiter. Furthermore, since Asia herself is not seen until after Prometheus' reformation, there is no basis for comparing the picture of her after the reformation with that of Prometheus before the reformation.

While Bloom's description of Asia as the embodiment of Prometheus' desire for her and of her beauty as a means of realizing human sexual completion is interesting, there is absolutely no basis within the context of the play for such an interpretation. In the first place, Asia is immortal, rather than human; and in the second place, Prometheus Unbound is not a celebration of sexual relations.

117 Butter, p. 183.

118 Bloom, p. 302.

Bloom believes that although Jupiter is fated to be suppressed by his "fatal child" begotten upon Thetis, he has actually begotten no child; for he is sterile. Therefore the car of the Hour bears Demogorgon himself.¹¹⁹ Demogorgon informs Jupiter that he is Eternity and adds

I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
 Mightier than thee: and we must dwell to-
 gether
 Henceforth in darkness.

(III. i. 54-56)

Bloom, therefore, concludes that Demogorgon is Jupiter's son only in that he displaces Jupiter as Jupiter had displaced Saturn.¹²⁰

The text, however, does not support Bloom's conclusion. First of all, when Mercury comes to confront Prometheus before setting the Furies upon him, he informs Prometheus that

 there is a secret known
 To thee, and to none else of living things,
 Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
 The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
 Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
 In intercession . . .

(I. 371-376)

Jupiter's soliloquy at the beginning of Act III reveals that Prometheus' secret is the same as the secret ascribed to Prometheus in Aeschylus' play--that should Jupiter marry Thetis, he would father a son greater than he:

Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
 That fatal child, the terror of the earth,

 119 Ibid., p. 307.

120 Ibid., p. 303.

Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
 Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
 The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
 Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
 To redescend, and to trample out the spark.

(III. i. 19-25)

In his address to Thetis, Jupiter's meaning becomes, if possible, even more explicit:

and thou [Thetis]

Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
 Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
 Thetis, bright image of eternity!
 When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
 God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick
 flames,
 "The penetrating presence; all my being,
 "Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
 "Into a dew with poison is dissolved,
 "Sinking thro' its foundations:" even then
 Two mighty spirits mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.

. . . Awful Shape, what art thou? Speak? . . .
 (III. i. 33-43; 52)

That Jupiter does not recognize his son is explainable in the above soliloquy in which Jupiter describes him as "unbeheld." Furthermore, the fact that Demogorgon had in giving his identity referred to himself as "thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child" does not, of necessity, restrict the meaning to any one sense of the relationship. Jupiter, in other words, was Saturn's child in the sense that Saturn fathered him and in the sense that he was the agent of his father's overthrow.

While King-Hele states that Shelley's source for meteors or shooting stars was Adam Walker's Familiar Philoso-

phy,¹²¹ Grabo gives Erasmus Darwin's Botanic Garden as the primary source, possibly supplemented by Cavallo's Treatise on Air and Other Elastic Fluids and by Beccaria's Artificial Electricity as secondary sources.¹²² Since, as Grabo indicated, several scientists whom Shelley might have read described the same phenomena in similar terms, it is impossible to confine Shelley's information to any one source--in spite of the fact that the lines King-Hele gives from Shelley show greater similarity to the passage from Walker than to any of the passages cited by Grabo from other scientists.

Richard Fogle sees Demogorgon's reply to Asia's question "Whom called'st thou God?" as most illustrative of Shelley's own predicament.¹²³ Since Demogorgon says that the deep truth is imageless, Fogle apparently implies that he believes that Shelley himself did not know the answer. It would be more accurate to say that Shelley believed the deep truth to be imageless; for Shelley in Prometheus Unbound revealed his dislike for the anthropomorphic God of religion and at the same time offered no substitute for such a God.

Of the works of Shelley discussed in this paper, "The Necessity of Atheism" stands alone in being the only work in which the ideas are presented directly, rather than dramatically and the only work concerned with proving that God

121 King-Hele, p. 173.

122 Grabo, p. 30.

123 Fogle, pp. 17-18.

does not exist.

A comparison of Prometheus Unbound with Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam, and Hellas, however, reveals that in all four works the representative of Omnipotence--whether human, as in The Revolt of Islam and Hellas, or divine, as in Queen Mab and Prometheus Unbound--is a tyrant. First of all, in Queen Mab as in Prometheus Unbound, God is seen as the revengeful tyrant and prototype of human misrule, who sits on a throne in heaven like an earthly king. In Queen Mab, Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, rails against the cruelty of God's persecution--just as in Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus speaks out against Jupiter's tyranny--and Ianthe recalls having seen an atheist burned. Othman, the chief power in The Revolt of Islam, is also a tyrant as is Mahmud, the dominant force in Hellas.

While in Queen Mab, Christ, like God, is depicted as evil, in Prometheus Unbound and Hellas, He is depicted as good--favorably and sympathetically treated by the representatives of good within the two works. In Queen Mab, for example, Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, describes his reaction to Christ on the cross as follows:

I stood beside him: on the torturing cross
 No pain assailed his untrerrestrial sense;
 And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed
 The massacres and miseries which his name
 Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
 Go! go! in mockery.
 A smile of godlike malice reillumined
 His fading lineaments.--I go, he cried,
 But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
 Eternally.

(VII. 174-183)

In Prometheus Unbound, Christ is sympathetically treated by Prometheus, representative of good, although the vision of Christ on the cross is presented by the Furies, who are forces of evil and who treat Him with scorn. Likewise in Hellas, Christ is praised by the Chorus of Christian Greeks, "Like a triumphal path he trod the thorns of death and shame," and mocked by Satan--"Thou mockery-king, crowned with a wreath of thorns."

A recurring image in The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, and Hellas is that of the vulture and the snake. In The Revolt of Islam and in Prometheus Unbound, the vulture or eagle and snake are locked in mortal combat. In the first act of The Revolt of Islam, a youth who has ascended a promontory to watch the dawn sees an eagle and a snake wreathed in fight. After a day-long battle in the air, the eagle emerges victorious while the vanquished snake falls into the sea. The youth descends from the promontory and hurries down the beach where he finds a woman nursing the wounded snake. She explains to the youth that the snake is the incarnation of the Spirit of God and that his defeat was only temporary.

In Prometheus Unbound, the image of the snake and the eagle or vulture is introduced in the description of Jupiter's fall. After Jupiter's struggle to retain his power has proved futile, Jupiter acknowledges his defeat to Demogorgon:

Sink with me then,
 We two will sink in the wide waves of ruin,
 Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
 Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
 Into a shoreless sea.

(III, 1, 70-74)

In scene ii, the image is sustained in the description of Jupiter's fall given by Apollo to Ocean:

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
 On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
 Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
 Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
 By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
 Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at
 length

Prone, and the aerial ice clings over it.

(III. ii. 11-17)

While in The Revolt of Islam the snake is specifically interpreted as the spirit of good and the eagle as the spirit of evil, in Prometheus Unbound the symbols are not explained. Furthermore, in Jupiter's description, it is impossible to identify either combatant as victor; for they fall together. Apollo's description in scene ii, however, associates Jupiter with the symbol of the eagle.

Although in Hellas the combatants are different, the basic image is the same. The first appearance of the image in Hellas occurs in Hassan's speech to Mahmud about the progress of their battle against the Greeks:

Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
 Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
 Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
 To stoop upon the victor; for she fears
 The name of Freedom, even as she hates Thine:

(307-311)

In Prometheus Unbound, Jupiter's visualization of his overthrow by Demogorgon echoes Hassan's description in spite of

the fact that Hassan describes a kite and crane, rather than a vulture and snake:

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea.

(III. i. 70-74)

In Hellas, as in The Revolt of Islam, the vulture is associated with evil and the serpent with good:

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned
lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.

(940-945)

The image of the snake appears in the speech of an unidentified person who announces the Moslems' victory:

Victory! victory! Austria, Russia, England,
And that tame Serpent, that poor shadow,
France,
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs
speak.

(967-969)

Since the Moslems represent evil and their opponents, especially the Greeks, represent good, the serpent in the above speech must also be identifiable with the spirit of good--in spite of the fact that the speaker means to be derogatory.

The snake in Hellas and Prometheus Unbound, unlike the snake in The Revolt of Islam, signifies eternity as well as good or evil. In Hellas, the image occurs in the prediction of a bright future for the Greeks in spite of their de-

Foot:

The world's great age begins anew,
 The golden years return.
 The earth doth like a snake renew
 Her winter weeds outworn.
 (1060-1064)

According to King-Hele, the serpent in the above speech was, like the amphisbaenic snake mentioned by the Spirit of the Hour in Prometheus Unbound, probably the tail-eating serpent symbolizing eternity.¹²⁴

A comparison between Queen Mab and Prometheus Unbound alone reveals that there is a striking difference between Shelley's treatment of Prometheus in Queen Mab as opposed to his treatment of Prometheus in Prometheus Unbound. In his "Notes to Queen Mab," Shelley describes Prometheus as representative of the human race and as having brought evil and disease into the world by his use of fire for culinary purposes. In Prometheus Unbound, on the other hand, Prometheus is represented as the saviour and benefactor of man who has eradicated death and disease. Furthermore, he is punished by Jupiter for having helped man and for having withheld from Jupiter the secret that should Jupiter marry Thetis, he would father a son who would bring about his downfall.

A comparison of Queen Mab with the other works of Shelley considered in this study reveals that only in Queen Mab does Shelley express his views on wealth and chastity. In his notes on wealth, Shelley says:

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 King-Hele, p. 323.

There is no real wealth but the labour of man [Which according to Shelley is required for physical improvement]. Were the mountains of gold and the vallies of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race.

In comparison to wealth, however, Shelley sees chastity as the greater evil:

Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage. . . . In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude

In conclusion of his discussion of Queen Mab, King-Hele notes that although Shelley later retracted most of the opinions he expressed in Queen Mab, Shelley never recanted his early opinion of the marriage laws.¹²⁵

Milton Wilson considers the absence of conflict at the climax of Prometheus Unbound a defect because Jupiter's fall follows the change in Prometheus in Act I.¹²⁶ Prometheus Unbound, however, is, like Samson Agonistes, preeminently a psychological study of the development of the main character; and while there is conflict at the climax, it is the internal conflict which takes place in Prometheus' mind-- just as in Samson Agonistes the internal conflict is that which takes place in Samson's mind. Furthermore, while pro-

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 41.

¹²⁶ Wilson, pp. 45-46.

metheus' reformation does pave the way for Jupiter's fall, it is the indirect--rather than the direct--cause of Jupiter's fall; for in his conversation with Asia in Act II, Demogorgon says "He reigns" when Asia asks him who is the author of evil. Furthermore, at the opening of Act III, Jupiter still retains his throne in heaven. The immediate or direct cause of Jupiter's fall is Jupiter's failure to win the struggle between him and Demogorgon; following his defeat by Demogorgon, Jupiter immediately plunges into the abyss.

Some critics consider the lack of confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus a defect in Prometheus Unbound. It might be pointed out that Shelley had a precedent in Samson Agonistes in which there is no confrontation between Samson and God or between Samson and the Philistines en masse and in Paradise Lost, exclusive of Paradise Regained, in which there is no confrontation between God and Satan after Satan's fall from heaven. Furthermore, a confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus would serve no purpose. In the first place, Prometheus had been tried, convicted, and sentenced long before the action of the play begins. Second, Jupiter did not have to leave heaven in order to communicate with Prometheus, and he did not have to leave heaven in order to see Prometheus because he could see everything on earth from his throne in heaven. Finally, Prometheus' descriptions of his sufferings, the terrifying appearance of the Furies, and their torture have been rendered so dramatically and effec-

tively that a confrontation between Jupiter and Prometheus would be at best a let-down.

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