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Prometheus Unbound: Atheism, Supernaturalism, and Their Union in Love

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Prometheus Unbound:
Atheism, Supernaturalism, and Their Union in Love

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Language and Literature
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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I call myself the last philosopher because I am last human being. I myself am the only one who speaks with me, and my voice comes to me as the voice of someone who is dying. Let me commune with you for just one hour, beloved voice, with you, the last trace of the memory of all human happiness; with your help I will deceive myself about my loneliness and lie my way into community and love; for my heart refuses to believe that love is dead; it cannot bear the shudder of the loneliest loneliness and it forces me to speak as if I were two persons.

— Fragment from the History of Posterity
by Friedrich Nietzsche

Contents

Introduction:	Troubleshooting Deism	.....	1
Chapter I:	Oppressor and Champion	.....	9
i.	Ruling over Pain	.....	13
ii.	The Identity of God	.....	16
iii.	A Static Prison	.....	19
Chapter II:	Recalling the Curse	.....	25
i.	A Forgotten Hatred	.....	26
ii.	Language of the Dead	.....	28
iii.	Beyond the Grave	.....	31
iv.	Confronting the Curse	.....	34
v.	The Woe-Illumined Mind	.....	39
Chapter III:	Prometheus Unbound	.....	41
i.	Love and Prophecy	.....	43
ii.	Demogorgon	.....	47
iii.	The Fall of Jupiter	.....	50
Conclusion:	Reforming the Mind	.....	55
Bibliography		.....	60

Introduction: Troubleshooting Deism

The enigma that is Percy Shelley's personal beliefs has puzzled academics for years; essays and books have been written on the array of personas presented in his poetry and prose. In the most extreme cases, he has been found a Radical and an Atheist, where the physical, mental, and verbal violence of his work fully color him Red. Such clear-cut portrayals of Shelley, however, are too often too volatile to work with, because he isn't just a Radical or an Atheist. The binaries that are so often imposed on poets and authors cannot be applied to Shelley, since singling out one attribute of a diametrically opposed pair means to ignore part of his repertoire.

The same doubled faced nature can also be applied to Shelley's stance on Religion, since while he may come off as a staunch Atheist to some—primarily due to his essays—he often worked with Christian, Pantheist, and Pagan images and values in his poetry. However, by no means is Shelley to be considered Christian, or even Pantheist for that matter, for it would be improper to label Shelley with a religious dogma simply because his work delves into the non-secular. The importance of a mindset devoid of assumption cannot be stressed enough, though that is not to say a reader should be criticized for consulting his or her previous experiences with the works of an author.

In an ambitious book called *Shelley and Scripture*, Bryan Shelley sets out to put Shelley into perspective, specifically in terms of his relationship with Christianity. While it is never explicitly stated in the text, I am convinced that it was written with a reevaluation of Shelley's religious perspective in mind, especially because it begins not with assertion of his belief or disbelief in anything, but an observation on how his beliefs and disbeliefs have been determined by other scholars:

There are, ironically, two opposed misconceptions about Shelley's religious beliefs which have persisted since his death. One is that his diverse speculations on the idea of God may be safely subsumed in the term 'atheism'; the other is that he was in some sense a Christian (Bryan, 17).

This irony which Bryan speaks of is rather humorous, since he shows through the writing of Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Edward Trelawny Leigh Hunt, and Thomas Medwin that not even Shelley's peers could agree on what his beliefs were. While some of their views have slight discrepancies between them, each one can be situated in either the atheist or Christian camps, alongside more contemporary names such as Newman Ivey White, Robert Browning, Bernard Shaw, and Rev. George Gilfillan. This diversity in opinion is frequently noted in the first section of the book, though it primarily focuses on the life of Shelley from 1810-1818 and the intellectuals that greatly influenced him during this time. Of these intellectuals, Bryan asserts that Spinoza might have been the most influential in informing Shelley's analysis of scripture, where

Shelley's reading of the Bible was coloured to a large degree by the more radical criticism of the Bible that began to emerge in the Enlightenment. This radical critique was characterized by two essential traits: a resolute anti-supernaturalism and preoccupation with the ethical content of the Scriptures (Bryan, 22) .

The method of stripping supernaturalism from Scripture and concerning oneself with the remaining ethics is clearly outlined in Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*: an essay that greatly impacted the young Shelley. While, I am hesitant to call Shelley a 'resolute' anti-supernaturalist, especially since in later years of his life he expressed a great capacity for supernatural belief, it seems as if he scrutinized the moral implication of the Bible in great detail.

This becomes most apparent in *A Refutation of Deism*, which interestingly enough is structured as a dialogue between two characters: Eusebes and Theosophus. While it is

unclear whether these two are supposed to represent specific people from classical antiquity, they do have some connections to Ancient Greece and Rome. For instance, Eusebes could be the Christian polemicist Eusebius, which would make sense given the character tells Theosophus that “The love of paradox, an affectation of singularity, or the pride of reason has seduced you to the barred and gloomy paths of infidelity. Surely you have hardened yourself against the truth with a spirit of coldness and cavil” (A Refutation of Deism, 32). Here, Eusebes is advocating the truth of Christianity and the falsity of its contrary, reason, at the same time—the definition of a polemic argument. What might be considered odd, however, is the first part of his statement, for it seems more likely that a Christian would be affected by “the love of paradox” and “an affectation of singularity”, rather than a lover of reason. In addition, Theosophus is also accused of “hardening himself against the truth”, the exact opposite of what an advocate of reason might do. There is something strange in the way that Eusebes portrays himself, an awkward dissimilarity between his attitude toward truth and his attitude toward reason. He then continues using the Bible and the account of miracles within as evidence for the truths of religion, which explains the paradox that he alludes to at the beginning. That is, those who call themselves lovers of reason are skeptical when confronting the Bible and deny the truths within it, yet call themselves advocates of truth.

In response to Eusebes, Theosophus takes a slightly harsh, if not hostile approach to refuting Christianity. His name is rather interesting, for it could be derived from *theosophia* (literally meaning “divine wisdom”), a system of philosophy that concerns itself with seeking knowledge of divinity. One might ask why Shelley would use a character who inherently practices theosophy to refute deism? The answer is not obvious

by any means, but may be seen when Theosophus states, “I can no more conceive that a man who perceives the disagreement of any ideas should be persuaded of their agreement, that that he should overcome a physical impossibility” (A Refutation of Deism, 38). Theosophy, being a marriage between philosophy and divinity, can be taken as a kind of impossibility. That is, philosophy and its patron, reason, follow a system of logic that is so unflinchingly rigid, it inheritably clashes with divinity and its patron, faith, which seems to necessitate logical gaps. To call this a physical impossibility, however, expresses that no matter how hard Theosophus might try otherwise, he cannot accept Eusebes’ argument based on the Bible as evidence.

From here, Theosophus lists example after example where the Bible and Christian teachings contradict themselves, most notable when concerned with religious wars such as the Crusades. He even goes to say reason necessarily views God as more compatible with his immutability and omnipotence than benevolence (A Refutation of Deism, 43). It is this stance toward God that leads him to state the following:

“You lay great stress upon the originality of the Christian system of morals. If this claim be just, either your religion must be false, or the Deity has willed that opposite modes of conduct should be pursued by mankind at different times, under the same circumstances; which is absurd” (A Refutation of Deism, 46).

To those who follow reason as a philosopher might, God indeed may be seen as an absurd character, as he can be cruel when testing his subjects, and act lovingly when massacring his creations. Theosophus even anticipates the counterargument which labels these cruel acts—especially when performed by humans—as some sort of bastardization of Christian values, and dismisses it using Eusebes’ reasoning. That is, in an argument which considers the Bible as evidence for truth, then these moral paradoxes must also put

forth as evidence for the same truth. The fact remains that there are some aspects of God that are uncomfortably similar to monarchs and tyrants of the past.

It is probably because of this unsettling similarity that Shelley was urged to argue against proofs for the existence of a deity in *The Necessity of Atheism*. Sadly, many contemporaries of his were confused by the title and thought he was arguing against the existence of God, rather than the proofs of His existence. Even modern readers are subject to this misinterpretation, though atheists today seem to have taken it a step further. That is, modern atheism is usually characterized by a feeling of animosity held towards religion, which leads atheists to not only speak out against God, but also faith in general. Because of this warping of atheism, the term “agnostic” has come to encompass those that do not feel this animosity, but still cannot accept belief in the existence of God.

By these modern understandings of atheism and agnosticism, Shelley seems to have an agnostic’s disposition, since he believes that “our knowledge of the existence of a Deity is a subject of such importance that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced” (*The Necessity of Atheism*, 1). The unbiased nature of Shelley’s method for examining these proofs cannot be stressed enough, because as soon as any germ of animosity creeps in, then the reader will diverge from his purpose: to acutely examine mankind’s relationship to belief in a deity. Indeed, most agnostics today claim to adopt a neutral stance unclouded by judgment when faced with arguments for the existence of God, which is what Shelley advocates.

However, by no means is Shelley to be considered an agnostic because the difference between atheism and agnosticism is now determined by one’s attitude towards

religions and their deities, rather than his or her relationship to belief, then people who reject belief in God yet accept belief in other supernatural concepts feel reluctant to associate with atheists and agnostics alike¹. As such, Shelley is susceptible to misinterpretation when one uses these modern standards, since although many of his essays argue against evidence for deism they still leave room for faith:

“Does [God] not imply ‘the soul of the universe, the intelligent and necessarily beneficent, actuating principle.’ This it is impossible not to believe in; I may not be able to adduce proofs, but I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are, in themselves, arguments more conclusive than any which can be advanced, that some vast intellect animates infinity” (Ingpen, 29)

This passage comes from a letter addressed to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, the person with whom Shelley co-wrote *The Necessity of Atheism*. It was dated January 3rd, 1811, a mere two months before their expulsion from Oxford University. The question is, how can a belief in God as the soul of the universe be reconciled with a disbelief in the existence of a Christian deity? Did Shelley have some radical shift in his stance towards deism before or after he worked on *The Necessity of Atheism*? As stated before, something as simple as the binary of belief and disbelief in God cannot be applied to Shelley, since the same logic which is used to disprove the existence of God can simultaneously be used to prove the existence of a Pantheistic God. He leaves room for this loophole at the beginning of *The Necessity of Atheism*, where he explains that the negation of God “must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit coeternal with the universe remains unshaken” (*The Necessity of Atheism*, 1). Since the Pantheist conception of God is inclusive with the phrase “spirit co-eternal with the universe,” then Pantheism remains an accepted form of belief

¹ I believe it is these peculiar circumstances that cause many people today to label themselves as spiritual, without defining what spirituality entails.

according to Shelley; it is only a creative deity he has qualms with. By no means is Shelley to be considered a pantheist, though, as he seems to demonstrate a kind of belief in between Pantheism and Christian Deism. After all, he does indicate that the “soul of the universe” is “intelligent and necessarily beneficent.” At the same time, he considers this soul to be an “actuating principle,” so at the same time that it pervades the universe, it also serves to animate the universe.

At some point during Shelley’s life, he came to call this amalgamation of Pantheist and Christian concepts “Love”, usually characterizing it as a force embodied by a female figure. While Love can be found in many of his poems, she plays an especially important role in Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*. In a timeline divergent from Aeschylus’ *Promethia*, Prometheus has been bound for three thousand years, all the while experiencing a torment typical of many Romantic protagonists. Having taken solace in his pain, he gradually comes to terms with the sins of his past, namely the destruction his disdain for Jupiter wreaked on the world. It is when Prometheus confronts his past hatred that he cultivates the means to reach out toward Asia, the poem’s representation of Love. As a result, her return from exile animates the world that has been dead due to Jupiter’s rule, and by listening to the spirits of the land she comes to the cave of Demogorgon so that she may spur him into action and fulfill the prophecy Prometheus divined long ago: the demise of Jupiter at the hands of his son. By closely examining the rhetoric of *Prometheus Unbound*, the reader can identify Shelley’s argument against deism interspersed throughout the narrative, since there is clear connection drawn between Jupiter and God. At the same time, it also becomes apparent that certain aspects of God’s being have been divided among a few of the characters. The unique combination of

Christianity and Greek mythology allows Shelley to flush out the problems he finds with the Biblical portrayal of God, while simultaneously giving him the opportunity to craft Prometheus into an acceptable deity by using those aspects of divinity he has no qualms with. Yet like many other poems by Shelley, his purpose is not entirely self-serving. It is in this poetic inquiry that the reader may find the tools to overthrow monarchs of the mind and refine him or herself into an individual worthy of the title “Promethean.”

Chapter I: Oppressor and Champion

Abbreviations:

APB – *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus

APU – *Prometheus Unbound* by Aeschylus

APFB – *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer* by Aeschylus

SPU – *Prometheus Unbound* by Percy Shelley

According to Greek mythology, there was a ten-year war called the Titanomachia that occurred before the Olympian Gods came to power. It was fought between two factions: in one, the first and second generation Titans, lead by Cronus; in the other, the first generation Olympians, lead by Zeus, Cronus' son. Prometheus, as the Titan of foresight, used his prophetic powers to aid his brethren by divining the future, yet it was in this future that he saw the fall of Cronus at the hand of Zeus. When he told Cronus of this vision, warning him to be wary of his son, the prophecy was merely disregarded; Cronus had an inflated ego like his father, Uranus¹. As a result, Prometheus switched sides and supported the Olympian Gods instead, so when Zeus triumphed Prometheus was one of the few spared from the punishment dealt to his fellow Titans.

Some time after the end of the Titanomachia and the formation of Mount Olympus, Zeus delegated the task of creating creatures to Prometheus. During this process, Prometheus shaped bodies out of clay, while his brother, Epimetheus, assigned traits to these figures (i.e. swift, stout, claw-bearing, fur-covered). After these inanimate beings were formed, Athena breathed life into them, thus populating the earth. Yet since Epimetheus, being the Titan of afterthought², did not equally distribute attributes amongst

¹ Uranus was known as the primal god of sky and father of all titans. He hated the children Gaia bore him, so he imprisoning the youngest in Tartarus. In an act of defiance, Cronus castrated Uranus and tossed his testicles into the sea. It was after this display of initiative that Cronus came to power.

² Comparing Prometheus and Epimetheus along with their respective forethought and afterthought, one may speculate that perhaps Prometheus could not see into the past (in other words, he lacked the capacity for memory) in the same way that Epimetheus could not see into the future.

the creatures, by the time they got to humans the best ones had already been used. To make up for this, Prometheus made man stand upright like the gods and gave them fire from Mount Olympus. It was out of this fire that technology and the arts were born.

When Zeus learned of these new beings called “humans,” he decreed that they must present sacrifices to the gods in exchange for being allowed to keep their divine fire. Loving his creations more than the Olympians, Prometheus set up a scheme that would let man keep the good meat by tricking Zeus into accepting the fat and bones as tribute instead. In some versions of the story Zeus notices Prometheus’ ploy, and in others he only learns of it afterwards. No matter what source the reader consults, the Titan’s conniving only results in Zeus’ wrath, leading the Olympian to snuff out man’s fire. However, Prometheus did not give up, and by lighting a torch with the sun he brought fire to man once again. When Zeus learned of this second transgression, he punished Prometheus by having Force, Violence, and Hephaestus chain him to the highest mountain in the Caucasus³. Furthermore, Zeus decreed that an eagle would come down once a day and devour Prometheus’ liver, which grew back overnight. So like most iconic punishments of Greek myth, the repetitive rending and renewal of Prometheus created a vicious cycle that tortured the creator of man in eternal imprisonment.

In the trilogy of Ancient Greek tragedies named *The Promethia*, Aeschylus recounts the binding of Prometheus, his time spend chained in the Caucasus, and his inevitable unbinding at the hand of Zeus’ son, Heracles. In APB, the quarrel between Olympian and Titan is described as the ultimate waiting game; given that Prometheus and Zeus are immortal beings—stubborn ones to boot—victory can only be achieved by

³ A mountain range on the borders of Europe and Asia, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It was considered to be a pillar supporting the world in Greek mythology.

exercising a patient endurance that outlasts the other contender's. In this way, Aeschylus describes Zeus and Prometheus very similarly, where the former, with a "mind that bends not", and the latter, with a "stout heart", both approach the conflict between them with an unrelenting nature (Aeschylus, 142-143). It seems that a sturdy mind is rather common among powerful divine figures, the concept being especially popular in classical artwork. Ancient Greek statues and Renaissance paintings typically render Zeus and Prometheus as bearded men with defined bodies that match their strong, unyielding demeanors.

Because of the similarity between these two Greek figures, the beginning of APB appears to be a stalemate: an unrelenting force cannot triumph over an immovable mind, and vice versa. However, this changes when the chorus explains the possible conditions for Prometheus' release. It is revealed that Zeus will only cease his punishment when "he satisfies his heart, or someone takes the rule from him—that hard-to-capture rule—by some device of subtlety" (Aeschylus, 142-143). The first condition that could quell Zeus' fury, a satisfied heart, ultimately never comes to pass in *The Prometheia*. Taking into account his immortal status, rigid mind, and immense disdain for Prometheus, it is even questionable whether Zeus could be satisfied in the first place. The second condition dictated by the chorus, the foreshadowing of "some device of subtlety," is later revealed to be a prophecy divined by Prometheus. Later the audience is told it concerns the downfall of Zeus, though the exact details concerning the prophecy are withheld from him in APB and APU. The paranoia of knowing his own demise yet not the hour or cause wears Zeus down, draining his endurance until he finally gives in and has Heracles unbind Prometheus. However, the Olympian and Titan are still at odds even after the latter is freed from his prison, so some scholars theorize that in APFB, Prometheus finally

tells Zeus the prophecy: if Zeus were to consummate his marriage with Thetis, their union would bear a child greater than his father. Thus, *The Promethia* is generally thought to be a trilogy of tragedies resolving in reconciliation and harmony.

While Shelley keeps most of Prometheus' history up to his binding the same in SPU, he greatly alters the timeline from then on, since "in truth [he] was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind (Norton, 206). Resolution through reconciliation, something normally considered in a positive light, is portrayed as a catastrophe. Shelley is obviously looking for something other than creating harmony between Champion and Oppressor, but it is not quite clear what alternative he seeks. In saying he is "averse to a catastrophe so feeble," one could extrapolate that Shelley is not averse to catastrophe itself, but a feeble one, meaning he actually desires a greater catastrophe than Aeschylus provides.

Regardless, it seems that Shelley believed Prometheus and Zeus must remain enemies to the end, perhaps out of necessity. That is, in simply calling one Champion and the other Oppressor, he is establishing very specific, antagonistic roles for these Ancient Greek characters, and taking into account Shelley's history with the concept of oppression, then the reader can expect Prometheus to come out on top in his quarrel with Zeus. Since Shelley creates these roles before he even presents the poem, the experience seems to take on theatrical elements in addition to its poetic ones. The very structure—its division into acts and scenes, its limited stage directions, its monologues and dialogues, and its use of the chorus—draws from the tradition of theatre that dates back to Ancient Greece. The notions of "roles" or "parts" in a play, in so far as they relate to the casting of an actor, make it seem as if the mythological characters were cast based on their ability

to fit the part. It is within these templates of Oppressor and Champion that Shelley begins to refine Jupiter and Prometheus into cruel and benevolent gods respectively.

i. Ruling Over Pain

Jupiter, the roman name for Zeus, is the more appropriately casted character when compared to Prometheus. That is, he has always been an oppressive force of sorts, especially cruel when facing his enemies. Thus, it makes sense that the quality of Jupiter's disposition has not changed at all from APB to SPU; he is still the same old unyielding god. Yet while he retains his fixed mind, his regard for mankind—those he rules over—may have gotten worse since Prometheus was bound:

Monarch of the Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling Worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope
(Prometheus Unbound I, 1-8).

The word “monarch” usually holds many negative connotations, just as any variant of “tyrant” is almost considered synonymous with “cruel”. Some people believe that anything which holds too much power, or simply more power than themselves, will necessarily abuse that power. Shelley, like most other Romantics, was enamored with the French Revolution, so he was no stranger to such thoughts that consider monarchy as inherently cruel. As such, it is easy to recognize a correlation between the word “monarchy” and the imagery which proceeds from it, as well as understand why this correlation exists. The monarch Jupiter has subjects, referred to as slaves, who pray to,

toil for, worship, and praise him, presumably for nothing in return considering they are slaves in the first place. While the relationship between gods and humans might be described as a commerce of sorts⁴, it is obvious in SPU that their relationship is rather one sided, a comment on how the monarchs of history tend to receive more than they give to others.

These discouraging work conditions end up filling the subjects of Jupiter with fear, self-contempt, and barren hope, where their broken hearts serve as sacrifices—an image surprisingly similar to Aztec religion. Even though these hearts may not have been ripped from their bodies, the unique combination of “hecatombs” and “hearts” calls upon the great temples in Central American that once ran with the blood of its people. One difference is that Jupiter’s subjects do not rejoice in sacrifice as Aztecs did, though the revelry is not all lost it seems. There is this lurking, disturbing notion that maybe Jupiter savors the pain that fills these hearts. Sacrifice is intended for a god’s benefit anyways, so the specific request for broken hearts implies that Jupiter prefers to enjoy this kind of offering. After all, if he truly had no preference he would not have gotten so angry with Prometheus when offered the fat and bones of man’s sacrifice instead of the good meat.

With emphasis on the cruelty of a corrupt monarchy, Prometheus continues to describe the state of affairs at the beginning of SPU, though it becomes immediately apparent that something has changed from APB. Aeschylus pointedly draws a correlation between Zeus and Prometheus by assigning them the same disposition.

⁴ In Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Euthyphro considers the thought in his attempt to define piety. With the help of Socrates, though, he concludes that the commerce between Gods and man is unequal in its exchange of sacrifice for favors.

Shelley, on the other hand, keeps the former relatively the same since he fits the part of Oppressor, while drastically altering the latter:

Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
 Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
 O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.—
 Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours
 And moments—aye divided by keen pangs
 Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
 Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire:—
 More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
 From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
 (Prometheus Unbound I, 9-17)

The most notable change is Prometheus' acceptance of pain. Before, he was boasting that ten thousand years of time would not be able to wear him down, meaning he primarily took a position of resistance. Yet after a fraction of that time, he seems to have accepted his punishment, even if it may not be willingly. Prometheus also comments on how he is "eyeless in hate", which signifies that the disdain he once held for Jupiter is now lost to him since he can no longer see it. Therefore, the two essential characteristics that use to connect Prometheus and Jupiter in APB—an unyielding mind and disdain for the enemy—are no longer present in the former. With the dissipation of his disdain and iron will, Prometheus is left with the pain of his imprisonment. The way that he seizes his turmoil and identifies with it, however, also reveals a different connection with Jupiter; in the same way that Jupiter rules over the land, Prometheus reigns over his own misery, stating that keen pains, torture, solitude, scorn, and despair are his empire. The Titan also claims that his domain is more glorious than what Jupiter "surveyest from [his] unenvied throne." That is, even though the Olympian rules over pain like Prometheus does, his reign is less glorious because he only rules over the pain of others, while Prometheus rules over his own pain.

ii. The Identity of God

By presenting this comparison between the domains of Jupiter and Prometheus and evaluating one as more glorious than the other, Shelley begins to question the former's relationship to identity. Considering that Prometheus establishes identity through his pain, and Jupiter has no pain of his own to rule over, then it is unknown whether the monarch in heaven has any connection to his identity as a ruler. Looking back at the very first lines of the poem, Jupiter is called "Monarch of the Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits/ But One." The illusive spirit that does not fall under Jupiter's reign is not named, which is slightly suspicious. Based off Aeschylus' conception of Prometheus, the most likely candidate would be the Titan himself. In SPU, however, he seems to have given up his act of outright defiance in favor of his reign over the keen pangs of torture and solitude. The only other character the reader is aware of at the moment is Jupiter, so the only alternative is that the monarch does not rule over his own spirit. There is evidence to suggest this in APB, where Might states, "There is nothing without discomfort except the overlordship of the Gods. For only Zeus is free" (Aeschylus, 138). By this logic, freedom is only achieved when one is not subject to the overlordship of a higher power. The chain of command begins with Jupiter at the top, so there is no one who rules over him, meaning he is the only one that is free. At the same time, it is implied that no one rules over him, including himself. As such, the connection between ruling over one's self and identity makes the reader wonder whether Jupiter lacks the power to identify with any part of his being.

Even if Jupiter cannot access his identity, that does not mean he has none. After all, a character without identity is an incredibly strange concept to wrap one's head

around; its very presence within a work of fiction can be considered an identity, however empty it may feel. Instead, some characters are described as lacking an identity of their own, meaning their identity is only defined by some external factor. Again, this is another hard-to-define concept, but it is useful to keep in mind when Prometheus names Jupiter “O Mighty God.” There are some who consider God to be one of the most influential fictional characters in history. As a mental construct, His identity is inseparable from human belief, meaning He will always be defined by the thoughts of believers. Since belief is not determined by God, but the mind that believes, then He will never be able to influence the factors which determine his identity. One may argue that God does in fact influence the minds of believers through miracles, but even the testimonies of those who claim to commune with God or experience supernatural phenomena or are subject to belief.

When thinking about God in this way, His identity becomes much more malleable; the characteristics He exhibits are picked apart like clay in the hands of Shelley. Given the how deeply rooted Christianity has become in history, the concept of God is not so easily tampered with. But when introduced into Shelley’s world, his qualities may be modified, and divvied up between Prometheus and Jupiter. The way in which this is done is dictated by a combination of Shelley’s personal beliefs and the mythology which supports his poem. In the Bible, God has many associations that contribute to His identity, some of which are directly represented by the Holy Trinity. He is most notably known as the creator of the universe and ruler in heaven, while also recognized as an immortal, omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent, and occasionally cruel being. There are some practitioners of Christianity who might reject God’s association

with cruelty, given they believe He is only a benevolent being and any claim that He is cruel is only a misreading of the Bible. These individuals tend to turn towards the New Testament and give evidence for His love, usually citing the life of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament, however, describes a number of times where He has displayed His wrath, sometimes in questionable circumstances. Two of the most noteworthy examples include the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the flooding to the earth, which killed everyone except for Noah and his wife in. In regards to one of humanities less offensive acts, God divided language so that Babel could not build towards Heaven. It is this sterner portrayal of God in the Old Testament that Jupiter relates to; the same God that Shelley considers to have questionable morals.

Since SPU primarily takes place within the world of Greek myth, then Jupiter cannot retain God's status as creator. Prometheus, instead, is the one who is known as the creator of man. As well, Jupiter was not known for omniscience, whereas Prometheus' power of foresight is probably as close to an all-knowing state that Shelley will permit. Given that Jupiter has already been set up as the Oppressor of man, only known for the cruelty of his rule, then there would be no sense in calling him benevolent. In fact, at one point the Earth comments on how the Prometheus is "more than God/ Being wise and kind" (Prometheus Unbound I, 144-145). It becomes apparent that Shelley is setting up a scheme where Prometheus represents the more favorable characteristics of God, while Jupiter represents His worst traits. After Prometheus has taken the defining qualities of man's creator, omniscience, and benevolence, Jupiter is left with his reign over man, omnipotence, and cruelty. While the Holy Trinity provides

a sliver of connection between them⁵, God is effectively cleaved in two halves, where one is distributed to Jupiter, and the other to Prometheus. By doing so, Shelley sets up a situation where he can finally deal with God's conflicting morals. Yet, instead of absolving this conflict by simply removing the less favorable qualities of God, Shelley pits these antagonistic traits against each other.

At the same time, the way that these traits are separated set the stage for Jupiter's defeat. Since the titles of "creator of man" and "ruler of man" are no longer held by the same being, Jupiter's claim to power is weakened; He is essentially a king who did not labor to earn his throne and subsequent reign over man, a quality rather befitting of Oppressor. In turn, the throne becomes somewhat devoid of meaning. That is, if Jupiter has no right to rule, yet he came to power anyway, then there seems to be no rhyme or reason to determining monarchs, which causes an emptiness to pervade his domain. In a world devoid of life, the expanding time of Prometheus' keen pains—each of which seeming years—is countered by his unique experience of eternity.

iii. A Static Prison

Infinity, including all its variations, has complex significance in ideological systems. Beyond the lemniscate in modern mathematics, the concept of "endlessness" encompasses space, time, being, and mind, amongst other things. Religion in many cases capitalizes on infinity, whether it is through immortality, the afterlife, or the mind of God; even the concept of nirvana in Buddhism is comparable to a boundless state. Percy Shelley has demonstrated a dislike, if not phobia of boundaries time and time again; some of his favorite words are "measureless," "without measure," and "immeasurable." Yet

⁵ The Holy Trinity will be revisited when the Phantasm of Jupiter appears.

even though he uses these concepts often, he continuously struggles with them, as most representations of a measureless state provide an “insufficient void⁶.” As such, Prometheus’ punishment might seem to be what Shelley strives for, but in actuality it is the realization of Shelley’s worst nightmare. While infinity usually calls upon thoughts of expansion—the use of an arrow when plotting points on a number line and the implications of Hubble’s constant⁷ with regards to the universe—Prometheus’ experience tells us that his unique relationship with eternity approaches a single point, which is a different kind of binding. In the same way that infinity can approach an extreme, it can also approach something infinitesimally small.

The differences between Aeschylus’ Prometheus and Shelley’s Prometheus show this divide between the two interpretations of infinity, or how one approaches infinity. After he is chained to a mountain in the Caucasus, Prometheus states, “I shall wrestle ten thousand years of time,” boasting his resilience to Zeus’ punishment. In SPU, he does not even endure a third of that, having lost himself within a kind of stasis imposed by his prison:

Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me, alas, pain, pain ever, forever!
(Prometheus Unbound I, 18-23).

⁶ Shelley’s *On Love*: “Thou demandest what is Love. It is that powerful attraction towards all we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves.”

⁷ While calculating the velocities of stars and galaxies, Edwin Hubble discovered that generally objects in space further away from Earth travel faster. Given that most of these objects are traveling away from rather than toward Earth, this implies that the further away an object gets, the faster it goes, which means it is accelerating. Hence, it has been hypothesized that not only our galaxy, but also the universe itself is expanding.

The quality of solitude that Prometheus experiences makes him feel changeless, since during his imprisonment on this mountain his senses have been bombarded by the same sensations: “black, wintry, dead, unmeasured.” As stated before, Shelley plays with the concept of measurement in many of his poems and essays, though he does not explicitly define what he means by “unmeasured,” perhaps because he thinks any direct attempt to measure such words would only be in vain. This does not mean that Prometheus’ plight is incomprehensible, however, since further description of the mountain, “without herb, insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life,” illuminates the quality of his experience. That is, measurement is only capable through comparisons and relationships: distance is the relationship between two points; mass the relationship between matter and space, time the relationship between two moments, etc... With a lack of life—indicated by the absence of “shape or sound”, i.e. sensory experience—and hence a lack of any juxtaposition to death, there is only a constant state of being which is neither life nor death. At the beginning of the first act, Prometheus lacks the to measure the state he finds himself in.

To live yet experience death; this is Prometheus’ static prison. Faced with such daunting circumstances, there does not seem to be much hope for his escape. As such, his keen pangs only multiply and he is left to call out to the inanimate world around him in a desperate attempt to end his solitude:

No change, no pause, no hope!—Yet I endure.
 I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
 I ask yon Heaven—the all-beholding Sun,
 Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm
 Heaven’s ever-changing Shadow, spread below—
 Have its deaf waves not hear my agony?
 Ah me, alas, pain, pain ever, forever!
 (Prometheus Unbound I, 24-30)

The repetition of the last line throughout the first act resonates with the unchanging stasis of infinity; in the same way that Prometheus has been bombarded by the same senses, he has felt the same pain for three thousand years. For this reason, there is “no change, no pause, no hope,” where even though time does not “pause” or yield, without change to distinguish between each moment Prometheus experiences—this can be done with a differentiation in sense perception or emotion—time becomes eternity. However, despite the statement that no change has occurred, Heaven has a shadow that is “ever-changing,” which is rather odd. The shadow Prometheus mentions refers to is the sea, which may be a nod to Oceanus in APB. Among the first to visit Prometheus, Oceanus presents himself as an advocate for change, urging the Titan to yield to his misfortunes and give up his stoic demeanor. On the other hand, the “ever-changing” quality of the shadow can simply be attributed to the fact that the Sea is never still, whether in “storm or calm.” Other than this, there are hardly any modifiers which might describe why the shadow would be “ever-changing.” Despite being somewhat ambiguous, the shadow of Heaven should not be written off for its lack of description, since to give anything such a name is to place great significance on it.

By conceptualizing the physical space of the poem, one realizes that something missing from the equation Shelley presents. For one, where is the sun in this relationship between Heaven, shadow, and sea? Plain and simple, shadows are produced by a light source and an object that partially blocks it out. Applying this logic to the passage, there is something which emits light and is partially blocked out by Heaven, that something presumably being the “all-beholding sun.” In the absence of light, the shadow of Heaven

is cast and the sea is “spread below”. It is implied that Heaven is a corporeal object capable of blocking light and casting a shadow—a terrifying thought in its own right.

Through the casting of its shadow, Heaven becomes an unfamiliar concept, since it is typically portrayed as illuminated by light, as seen in canonical texts such as Dante’s *Paradiso*. However, not only does it not contain light in SPU, but it is also composed of solid matter, the opposite of what Heaven normally represents. As for the light source, Ocean and Apollo appear after Jupiter sinks into the abyss alongside Demogorgon, commenting on how Heaven is now “illumined,” and the sea is “Heaven-reflecting” (Prometheus Unbound III.ii, 2-34). Since Apollo is the patron god of the sun, his appearance in this instance coupled with his lack of presence beforehand indicates that the sun was unable to manifest and illuminate Heaven when Jupiter resided there. In this way, the reason for Heaven’s solid state and consequent shadow is because Jupiter’s presence forced a phase transition from ethereal to corporeal matter. In addition, since it was a corporeal heaven which blocked the Sun’s sight and made the Sea’s waves deaf, then Jupiter is also responsible for preventing Prometheus’ pain to be experienced by others. As well, Prometheus’ unique prison, categorized by a lack of shapes and sounds, was a punishment delegated by Jupiter. The Olympian can be seen using his power to alter the laws of nature in exacting punishment on Prometheus, an action understandably within the purview of an omnipotent being. The altering of nature prevents perception, which does more to trap the Champion of man in a solitary state.

It is mysterious why Prometheus asks whether or not a deaf thing can hear, but perhaps this is to point out that he knows waves are not capable of hearing. Despite the impossibility of his hope, he still longs for them to perceive his pain. It could be that the

waves are somehow made deaf by Jupiter's influence through the shadow of heaven, so it would not be a stretch for Prometheus to believe that the waves could hear him in the first place. Yet, there is no reason to think that inanimate things are or will be animated when the world around Prometheus is devoid of life. As such, when he asks the Earth, "Have not the mountains felt?", he does not expect an answer to his question, but still hopes for one.

Chapter II: Recalling the Curse

Faced with a desolate world, Prometheus is forced to confront his painful solitude since there is nothing else for his mind to focus on during his imprisonment. But instead of submitting his will to Jupiter and collapsing under the weight of his torment, he embraces the pain he experiences, calling it his own. By establishing a firm foundation for his identity with his emotions, he is filled with newfound strength. It is with this strength that he calls out to the world around him, hoping for a response. It is puzzling, however, as to exactly why Prometheus wants his pain to be recognized by others. It might seem like a natural phenomenon, since usually people in extreme psychological pain exhibit “cries for help,” as called by some. Yet the acute awareness Prometheus possesses of himself, along with his not so subtle way of getting the world’s attention, makes this explanation of his actions fall a little short. His desire to make his pain known seems to contribute to some other motive other than the reorganization of his pain; it is not the end Prometheus seeks.

Before he can even begin to make others acknowledge him, however, Prometheus must first animate the lifeless world around him, since it is incapable of sensory experience. To do so, he relies on the power of language to provide him with the means for community. It is a strange concept to comprehend, for all the reader knows is that at first the world is dead, and that after Prometheus invokes the Earth it starts exhibiting signs of life; there is nothing to explain the cause and effect relationship between them. Considering that the newly animated land also reflects the pain Prometheus feels, then it appears that it is his suffering which breathed life into his surrounding. After all, the mountains “never bowed [their] snowy crest/ as at the voice of [his] unrest” (Prometheus

Unbound I, 91-92). By voicing his desire for the recognition of his pain, he infuses the land with his emotions and makes them feel his torment.

In addition, he also requests to recall the curse he placed on Jupiter by invoking these. Thus, the apparent purpose of making the world recognize his pain, and in turn become animate, is so he may recall the curse he once placed on Jupiter. But even this does not seem to be the end he seeks, because when he does encounter the curse again, he banishes it, instead of seizing it again and openly opposing Jupiter as he once did. Therefore, in the same way that he confronted the pain of his solitude and embraced it, he also seeks to confront his former self in order to exorcize the hatred which still lingers in the world as a ghost beyond the grave.

i. A Forgotten Hatred

Before Prometheus accepted his plight, he was given a fair warning in APB about the dangers of disdain. Oceanos—father of the Oceanids Ione, Panthea, and Asia⁸—was one of the first characters to visit Prometheus once he had been bound. During the visit, Oceanos tries to reason with the Titan, saying, “that tongue of yours which talked so high and haughty: you are not yet humble, still you do not yield to your misfortunes, and you wish, indeed, to add some more to them” (Aeschylus, 148). At this point, Prometheus has yet to “yield to [his] misfortunes,” so he continues to use his haughty tongue to increase them, meaning his previous use of language was a form of self-destruction. At the same time, he has also told “words are healer of the sick temper” (Aeschylus, 150). That is, language has both destructive and healing power.

⁸ A subtle but noteworthy connection between father and daughters is made in SPU. Oceanos advocates change, while the Oceanids, especially Asia, inspire change.

In SPU, he has indeed yielded and become humble, indicating that perhaps he learned from Oceanos. Using the dual nature of language, he takes the power that caused his own misfortune and calls upon the curse he once uttered in order to confront his sick temper:

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 hear me speak
(Prometheus Unbound I, 69-73).

Despite being estranged from hate, Prometheus seeks to revisit it, which might seem a bit strange. Usually one would think that it would be fine to leave alone a disdain that has been forgotten; people even use the phrase “forgive and forget” to express the sentiment. One might even be concerned that the act of recalling the curse would reawaken the hatred in Prometheus, though this does not seem to be a concern of his. Rather, because “that aught evil wish is dead within”, and he can no longer feel the hatred associated with that wish, he can examine the curse as if it belonged to another person. As well, without any connection to his previous disdain he can utilize the power embedded in his hateful words to heal the destruction he wrought by uttering them; there is no negative emotion to dictate the way in which he uses the power of language.

Yet his initial request to recall the curse is denied, precisely because the Earth—along with the four Voices from the Mountains, Springs, Air, and Whirlwinds—remember the destructive power that Prometheus’ curse contained. As a consequence of his hatred, the still realm of the Air was riven⁹ so that “When its wound was closed, there

⁹ The lines are “By such dread words from Earth to Heaven,/ my still realm was never riven” (PU I, 99-100). The phrase “never riven” is to be taken as “never before riven”, meaning the uttering of Prometheus’ curse was the first instance where the Air’s realm was rent by dread words.

stood/ Darkness o'er the Day, like blood" (Prometheus Unbound I, 101-102). In addition, the Whirlwinds "shrank back—for dreams of ruin/ To frozen caves [their] flight pursuing/ Made [them] keep silence" (Prometheus Unbound I, 103-105). The phrase "Darkness o'er Day" is vaguely reminiscent of the Shadow of Heaven, which would imply that it was actually Prometheus' fault a shadow was cast over the sea and the Earth was silent for so long. That is, even though "Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove/ both [the Earth] and [the four Voices] had vanished like thin mist", it was Prometheus who provoked Jupiter and increased the misfortunes of those ruled by him (Prometheus Unbound I, 115-116).

It is for this reason that Prometheus means to atone for his hatred and attempt to heal the wounds of the Earth. With this understanding, his previous words concerning the act of recounting the curse take on another meaning. That is, when he says "The Curse/ Once breathed on thee I would recall", he is using both meanings of the word "recall"; Prometheus wants to recount the curse by having it relayed to him, which will give him the opportunity to rescind it as well. Eventually he does exactly this, but in the process he runs into another problem, namely his immortality.

ii. Language of the Dead

Being an immortal, Prometheus is unable to associate with the dead. Normally this would not be a problem, but for some reason only the dead can utter his curse. Although he does have some capability to access the realm beyond the grave through his experience of a death-like state for an extensive amount of time, he can never cross the

border between life and death as one who never dies. Because of this, he must seek alternative means to overcome a seemingly impossible barrier. In a conversation between Prometheus and the Earth, however, the answer can be glimpsed for an instant:

Prometheus:
 Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
 I only know that thou art moving near
 And love. How cursed I him?

The Earth:
How canst thou hear
 Who knowest not the language of the dead?

Prometheus:
 Thou art a living spirit—speak as they.

The Earth:
 I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell king
 Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
 More torturing than the one whereon I roll
 (Prometheus Unbound I, 135-142).

The fact that the Earth speaks with an inorganic voice might seem a little unsettling to some readers, since with the industrial revolution anything befitting of the word “inorganic” is related to machinery. Given that the Earth is most certainly not a machine, such an interpretation can be ruled out, but there are other senses of the word which may apply. For one, inorganic can simply mean “not natural”. That is, the Earth does not speak under the normal circumstances of nature, so she speaks inorganically. As well, the fact that the Earth is a “living spirit”, as Prometheus says, could mean her voice is inorganic because it is not corporeal. After all, it is somewhat strange to call an ethereal being organic, because the components that make up a spirit are different from those than make up a body.

It is this divide that also separates the language of the living and the language of the dead. If ethereal beings and corporeal beings speak with different voices—inorganic and organic respectively—then who is to say that they speak the same language? However, the language spoken beyond the grave seems to be an incredibly complex thing, as it is used by “inarticulate people of the dead” (*Prometheus Unbound* I, 183). There are instances where words that indicate an inability to speak, such as “mute” or “tongueless”, are used to describe something which does in fact speak. This is such an incomprehensible concept to a living mortal, though, so the reader cannot be expected to make sense of it. In this way, the word “inarticulate” describes the situation perfectly, since it can account for the inability to speak and an inability to speak articulately at once; there is no way to precisely describe a being which cannot speak but does so anyways.

Because Prometheus is unable to commune with the dead by using their illusive language, he must instead use the language of the living. This presents another problem, though, since the Earth is unwilling to “speak like life” out of fear that Jupiter might hear and exact his wrath on her. This makes the one wonder, though, what language has been spoken this entire time. If not the Mountains, nor the Springs, nor the Air, nor the Whirlwinds, nor the Earth spoke like life because of the fear they held for Jupiter, then what were they speaking like? Given there is only one alternative, then they must have been speaking as the dead do while remaining living spirits—a rather strange combination. The Earth eventually concludes that Prometheus does not hear her, since “[her] tongue is known/ only to those who die”, though it makes a little sense that the Titan is able to commune with her when thinking back to his unique experience of

eternity (Prometheus Unbound I, 150-151). That is, since he felt something like death when he was trapped in a static prison, then it is feasible that he at least acquired the ability to understand the language of the dead.

iii. Beyond the Grave

Prometheus' complex relationship with life and death allows him to interact with both realms, though he has much less influence with regards to the latter. As such, he can only view the realm of the dead through vague shadows that impress themselves upon his mind. However, since these shadows are cast by the forms of life forms of life, it makes more sense why Prometheus is able to see them at all.

For know there are two worlds of life and death:
 One that which thou beholdest, but the other
 Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
 The shadows of all forms that think and live
 Till death unite them, and they part no more;
 Dreams and the light imaginings of men
 And all that faith creates, or love desires,
 Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
 (Prometheus Unbound I, 196-202)

Analysis of the word "beholdest" would seem to contradict the notion of Prometheus experiencing death, since the Earth is implying that of the two worlds, life and death, he beholds life. This is determined through process of elimination; Prometheus does not behold the one "beyond the grave" (in other words, death), which means he beholds the other, life. However, just because he in actuality beholds life when it seems like he is beholding death does nothing to diminish Prometheus' experience. He continues to remain static, despite the fact that an experience of life is normally nothing of the sort.

In addition, the Earth's description of a world beyond the grave also reinforces the death-like quality of Prometheus' strange experience. The grave, a blatant representation of death, is remarkably shallow here and lacks any further description. It is difficult to interpret this since there is always danger in extrapolating too much when faced with the absence of something. Regardless, it seems as if alluding to death in this way, insofar as it is given a place with the word "grave" yet has no qualities and lacks description, is to comment on how the state of death exists, but there are no means to measure it or describe it. Immortals are eternal denizens of the living world, so they may never know death or anything beyond death for that matter.

However, Prometheus may be the only loophole in this logic, since his immortality roots him in the land of the living, while he curiously feels the shadows of death: "Obscurely through [his] brain like shadows dim/ Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick" (Prometheus Unbound I, 146-147). When the reader first encounters Prometheus' shadows, its significance is pretty easily lost, but by the time he or she gets to the Earth's description of what lies "underneath the grave", then the connections should become apparent. Beyond death are "the shadows of all forms that think and live," where these forms are "dreams", "the light imaginings of men", "all that faith creates", and "all that... love desires". Prometheus experiences "awful thoughts", which are "like shadows dim". Comparing the two, these shadows cast by the "terrible, strange, sublime, and beauteous shapes" mentioned by the Earth and these shadows cast by Prometheus' "awful thoughts" seem related to one other. From this, it may seem as if Prometheus is somehow partaking in the world of death, but the fleeting quality of their rapid, sweeping movements indicates that he is only tangentially interacting with it. The process is vaguely

reminiscent of an oracle partaking in some divine reading, which resonates with the notion of prophecy, the Titan of foresight's trademark. The clarity with which Prometheus sees is questionable, though, which may be why he cannot apprehend the shadows in his mind. He once may have seen the future in its entirety, but his faculty of foresight is about as precise as his faculty of hindsight after three thousand years of stasis—the blunting of his senses has taken its toll.

There is one moment, though, when the Earth says something so bizarre, it can be simply glanced over in an initial read-through. She explains the world of death and the shadows that inhabit it, but then mentions that they reside there “till death unite them, and they part no more.” This is supposed to occur “beyond the grave,” which is already death, unless the beyond the grave and death are two separate things. The implications of such a statement are extremely strange, as the Earth is basically saying that there is the initial state of life, a secondary state where shadows of life are cast beyond the grave, and finally a third state of death. By this model of life and death, one starts off as a living thing, becomes a shadow of a living thing, and then dies, ultimately uniting with all the shadows of living things. It is unclear how one transforms from a living thing to the shadow of a living thing, since normally one travels from life to beyond the grave by dying. In this way, life and death seem like parallel dimensions with no form of travel between them. The forms that inhabit life are left to cast shadows in death without ever mingling with their shadows.

Yet because death is only achieved after one has gone beyond the grave, then beyond the grave and death cannot mean the same thing. In considering what “beyond the grave” could possibly mean, the relationship between time and the grave is worth

examining. After all, the fact that something lives and then dies indicates a timeline, and since Prometheus has the ability of foresight, it is feasible that he can see past life and into the grave. However, this would not be of much use to the Titan, given he is trying to recall the curse he uttered in the past. So instead of looking into the graves of future deaths, Prometheus might be looking into the graves of those that have already passed. Indeed, history could be described as a grave of sorts, where the passing of civilizations and cultures can be taken as a type of death. By this logic, the shadows of an immediate past are cast by objects in the present blocking out the light of the future. The more time that has passed, the longer these shadows get, until they become so large that they overlap and “part no more.” Eventually the objects which once casted distinct shadows cease to exist, and they are only remembered by this unified shadow of life—history.

iv, Confronting the Curse

When Prometheus calls upon the Phantasm of Jupiter so that he may hear his forgotten curse, the apparition appears in the likeness of both Jupiter and Prometheus. One might think that the name “Phantasm of Jupiter” should invoke the monarch of heaven only, but the ghost clearly speaks Prometheus’ words and recounts the Titan’s memories. It seems that as a ghost of the past, the Phantasm is subject to the overlapping of shadows in this way. He first appears in the image of the Prometheus, at least that of “[the Titan’s] lips, or those of aught resembling [him]” (Prometheus Unbound I, 220). Besides his name, the only likeness to Jupiter he seems to possess is be the image of him holding “a scepter of pale gold/ To stay steps proud, o’er the slow cloud (Prometheus Unbound I, 235-236). Scepters have long been a symbol of monarchy, which signifies

two things: first, to hold a scepter indicates that a person is powerful, and second, this power has lineage, just as a scepter is passed down from king to successor, which in most cases is father to son. Because of this, the Phantasm's scepter seems to stand as a representation of Jupiter's power; Jupiter is both omnipotent and the son of a previous monarch, from whom he got his power.

When he speaks, however, he describes himself as a "frail and empty phantom," which indicates that even though the Phantasm appears in the image of omnipotence, he does not have power (*Prometheus Unbound* I, 241). In this way, he truly takes on the ethereal quality of ghost—he can be ascertained by the senses, but lacks any substance. Immediately after he appears, however, he is slowly be affected by the living realm and is filled by language. He begins by asking, "What unaccustomed sounds/ Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice/ With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk/ In darkness?" (*Prometheus Unbound* I, 242-245). Because the Phantasm's "pallid race" is inarticulate, then he is suddenly confused by the sounds he emits when speaking the more precise language of the living. As a ghost of the past, he must speak using a different language which resides in the present so that he may be understood by Prometheus. His relationship with the language he now speaks is somewhat strange, though, since "no thought[s] inform [his] empty voice" (*Prometheus Unbound* I, 249). Still an empty being, the Phantasm can speak without thinking. As such, he is not able to recount the curse once uttered; lacking the capacity to for thought, he cannot remember in the same way the Prometheus has forgotten his past disdain. Instead, he serves as conduit, where a "spirit seizes [him], and speaks within" (*Prometheus Unbound* I, 255).

Appearing in the same image as Prometheus and displaying the symbol of Jupiter's power, the Phantasm of Jupiter can be interpreted as the previous representation of Prometheus in *The Promethia*. As such, one of the first memories that recalled is he Titan shouting, "Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,/ All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do" (Prometheus Unbound I, 262-263). Again, Prometheus once took up a more outright position of resistance against Jupiter. In defiance, the Titan faced his oppressor convinced that he could withstand his torment. At the same time, it is ambiguous as to who possess the "fixed mind"; it could be that Prometheus defies with a fixed mind, or Jupiter inflicts all he canst with a fixed mind. This phrasing indicates that Shelley saw the connection Aeschylus drew, using it to allow Prometheus interact with his hatred while he lacks the capacity for hatred. It is under these circumstances that the curse is finally recounted:

I curse thee! Let a sufferer's curse
 Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse,
 Till thine Infinity shall be
 A robe of envenomed agony;
 And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain
 To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.
 (Prometheus Unbound I, 286-291)

One might have expected Prometheus to curse Jupiter by referring to the prophecy of his demise, yet it seems like the nature of Jupiter's very existence will end up being his own undoing. Infinity is revisited, and much like Prometheus' static prison it is supposed to inspire suffering in Jupiter. It is specifically and infinity infused with power—omnipotence—that will be a crown which burns and dissolves the monarch's brain. The way in which omnipotence is converted into something that brings pain lies in Jupiter's "self-torturing solitude" (Prometheus Unbound I, 295). It is implied that Jupiter has

always existed in solitude, though the reasoning behind this is not explicit within the poem. When thinking back to his relationship to freedom, though, then it can be argued that Jupiter is trapped in solitude because he is the only one who is free, given that he is monarch of the world. In this way, the Oppressor's power sets him apart from everyone else, and his apparent freedom actually becomes a prison much like Prometheus'.

After the Phantasm has vanished, Prometheus questions whether these words were his, supposedly so shocked in disbelief that he would have ever uttered such hateful words. When the Earth confirms that the curse was indeed his, he immediately recalls it, saying, "It doth repent me: words are quick and vain:/ Grief for a while is blind, and so was mine./ I wish no living thing to suffer pain" (Prometheus Unbound I, 303-305). In a moment of repentance, Prometheus becomes extremely vulnerable, and the Earth cries out because she believes him to be vanquished. Ione reassures her that it is only a "passing spasm", but at the same time exclaims that winged hounds, lead by Mercury, are bounding towards the Titan, perhaps sensing his vulnerability (Prometheus Unbound I, 314-324). The subsequent conversation between Mercury and Prometheus reveals that the latter's clarity of sight has somewhat returned. It seems that though his previous grief was blind, by repenting his hatred Prometheus begins to see clearly again. With this newfound sight, Prometheus begins to "plunge/ into eternity, where recorded time,/ Even all that we imagine, age on age,/ Seems but a point" (Prometheus Unbound I, 416-419). The mention of "recorded time" strengthens the notion that Prometheus is indeed delving into history by interacting with these previously described shadows of life. Yet in this instance, Mercury also includes imagined timelines as part of the past Prometheus can

delve into. When the Titan exercises his newfound clarity, the Furies—those winged hounds—force him to suffer terrible visions.

One of the visions that affects Prometheus the most is that of Jesus Christ's ghost despairing at the sight of a smoldering city. When the image of Christ is conjured, there is a correlation drawn between Prometheus and the Son of God. The sights of adamantine nails driven through the Titan's hands and feet, chains binding his body to the mountain are reminiscent of "A woeful sight—a youth/ With patient looks nailed to a crucifix" (Prometheus Unbound I, 584-585). As a result, the Holy Trinity can be drawn within the poem. Separate yet unified, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost maintain a strange relationship to one another in the Bible. Although they are different characters with different roles, they all participate in the existence of God. In this way, the division of God's qualities amongst Jupiter, Prometheus, and the Phantasm of Jupiter does not seem to indicate that God has truly been divided; he still exists in whole by tracing the Trinity. Yet, it becomes apparent that Shelley does not even allow God to exist in this way, since the Phantasm's disappearance effectively exorcises the Holy Ghost. As well, the possible correlation between Jupiter and Prometheus through Father and Son is undermined by the fact that Jupiter did not father Prometheus. In the place of this contradiction, Demogorgon¹⁰ is introduced as the child born between Jupiter and Thetis. As such, the blood bond between Father and Son is severed, and God is distinctly divided. The role of Oppressor now combines the properties of Father, ruler of man, omnipotence, and cruelty with Zeus from Greek mythology, making Jupiter a true patriarchal monarch.

¹⁰ In Aeschylus' plays, the marriage of Zeus and Thetis is only prophesized, so their son is never born. As such, the character Demogorgon is Shelley's alone. Still, there is some speculation that in the Archaic Period, Demogorgon was a pagan deity thought to be a demon of the underworld and an object of cult worship.

v. The Woe-Illumined Mind

After Prometheus emerges from his plunge into eternity, he seems to have taken on Christ's suffering in addition to his own. The vision that he saw afflicts him, multiplying his woes. This has an interesting effect on the Champion of man, though, and a sense of reprise comes. Relying on familiar words, the narrative forms a circle through his words, yet the pain he feels has produced change within him:

Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, forever!
 I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
 Thy works within my woe-illuminated mind,
 Thou subtle Tyrant! . . . 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.
 (Prometheus Unbound I, 635-641)

Once again, Prometheus' pain is reiterated in the first line, though what follows is different. It seems as if the Titan is beginning to access something he lost a long time ago: clarity of mind. While three thousand years of stasis may have blunted his senses, excruciating pain has made his mind clear, indicated by the word "woe-illuminated." That is, suffering seems to have some connection with light in this passage, which may come from Aeschylus' concept of *Páthei máthos*¹¹. Learning has an illuminating quality to it, allowing an individual to see more clearly. When this learning is achieved through some sort of suffering, then pain which brings about knowledge in turn also has an illuminating quality. As such, pain, being a new source of light within Prometheus, begins to banish the shadows that clouded his mind, and he comes to terms with his pitiful state: peace, his release from pain, can be found readily in the grave, but he can never achieve peace this way as an immortal, which he is aware of. At the same time, he realizes that "the grave

¹¹ *πάθει μάθος* in Ancient Greek. Translates to "suffer and learn", or "learning through suffering". Appears in the first play of the *Oresteia*.

hides all things beautiful and good.” This can be interpreted in two ways. First, the beautiful and good are hidden in the grave. Second, the beautiful and good are hidden by the grave. The subtle distinction between them lies in questioning where this beauty resides. Since it was stated before that the world “beyond the grave” has “sublime and beautiful shapes,” then it seems that these beautiful and good things actually are beyond the grave, or in the past. Prometheus, as an immortal, can never die, therefore preventing him from crossing over into history; he can only view this peace through the lens of the present.

With this realization, Prometheus no longer seeks peace by those means. His previous encounter with the Phantasm of Jupiter could be considered an attempt to make peace with himself. In this way, he now understands how foolish he was in thinking that simply by recalling—both remembering and rescinding—the curse he once uttered he could achieve serenity. Using the knowledge attained by these means, he calls out to Asia, the symbol of Love he communed with before being imprisoned. Yet as he is physically bound to the mountain, he is left to send Panthea in his stead. This action sets forth a chain of events that allows the poem to reach into the future, rather than the past. From this moment forward, the reader is presented with Shelley’s own visions, rather than the ones he borrows from history. As such, Prometheus fades for the time being, having served his purpose. Now, it is Love’s turn to animate the world.

Chapter III: Prometheus Unbound

As Prometheus taps into the power of monarchy by asserting ownership of his individuality and heals the earth by recalling his curse, the landscape around him begins to transform. Imagery of flowers, herbs, and weeds—the long awaited signs of life—suddenly appear, though not directly before him; he only learns of their presence through the testimony of spirits who hearken to his call. Eventually even Asia, the representation of Shelley's Love, is spurred into action by the budding world around her after having been exiled for so long. By comparing Prometheus and Asia, one can see there is a strange mirroring between the animating forces which each represent, hinting at a strong relationship between the Champion of mankind and Love. For in the same way that Prometheus is able to animate the world, Asia signals the turning of seasons and the coming of spring. It is in this new, colorful world that the future unfolds.

It is understandable that Shelley would draw a correlation between animation and Asia, since he has a peculiar relationship her patron, Love. Just the very notion that he has a tendency to capitalize the word indicates the importance with which he regarded Love. Most basically, she represents the unity between two antagonistic mindsets that Shelley exhibited: "one attitude of reasonable, reflective skepticism" and another of "intuitive, feeling belief" (Bandy, 70). While Shelley's skepticism prevents him from accepting deism, his intuition tells him he should believe in something, the contrast of which normally creating turmoil within an individual. As such, it was probably this divide that made him infuse the emotion of love with certain supernatural qualities such as spirit, transforming it into Love. *Mind Forg'd Manacles: Evil in the Poetry of Blake*

and Shelley attempts to explain this characterization of Love, where Melanie Bandy examines the power she has in the eyes of Shelley:

Shelley places Love in the universe as the one element not subject to the changefulness and uncertainties of lesser deities. And if there is any “answer” to the problem of evil in *Prometheus Unbound* it lies in the unchanging and eternal—as he conceived it—of the deity Shelley worshipped (Bandy, 77).

The “changefulness and uncertainties” Bandy mentions refers to what one might consider the whims of a god. Even the Christian God seems to change his attitude towards mankind from time to time. Yet Love does not seem subject to whims, as it is questionable whether or not she has desires of her own. At least, it cannot be known one way or the other, since even if she does have desires, she is incapable of serving herself and acting upon them. Her influence is often described by Shelley as an animating force; Love’s very nature indicates that her power lies in assisting the denizens of the universe by giving them life and compelling them to move. Because Love is never selfish, she is a very reliable, allowing Shelley to invest his trust in her. Yet, the thought that the answer to evil that Shelley seeks lies in the “unchanging and eternal” is somehow off. Prometheus was imprisoned in an unchanging world, so if anything eternity seems to facilitate the evil that Jupiter represents. Hence, Shelley requires something more of Love in order to overcome the Oppressor. Because it is Jupiter’s influence which created the Prometheus’ static prison and caused him to feel many keen pangs, he must be overthrown before the Titan can recover. Yet, the way in which he can be removed from power is mysterious. As a result, the reader is thrust into an unfamiliar future alongside the Oceanids Asia and Panthea, where he or she know the endpoint—the Hour of Jupiter’s demise—but not how to get there or where to even begin.

i. Love and Prophecy

Asia first appears surrounded in scenery full of life, commenting on how spring has come. Where isolation and lack of life pervaded the land before, now the turning of seasons is bringing forth new life; this is one of the first signs that time is now moving forward. As she describes the scenery around, she feels the presence of Panthea approaching. With the realization that she will be united with her sister Asia exclaims, “This is the season, this the day, the hour;/ At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine . . ./ Too long desired, too long delayed, come!” (PU II.i, 13-15). The mention of sunrise seems to be particularly important here. At the beginning of the play, Prometheus begins his monologue before daybreak, where slowly the sky would become brighter as he shouted out to his surroundings. Yet the image of sunrise before was a bleak one—a lifeless mountain with a raging tempest around. As such, Asia’s sunrise is much brighter, where the negative energy that once pervaded the poem is converted to positive energy.

In a new beginning Asia greets Panthea with a warm welcome, especially pleased to discover that her sister “wearest/ the shadow of that soul by which [she lives]” (Prometheus Unbound II.i, 30-31). The soul mentioned is describe in the likeness of Prometheus, so it seems safe to assume that they are one in the same. The notion that Asia lives through this soul, though, is a bit confusing. The exact relationship between her and Prometheus is unclear; all the reader knows is that they seek to unite once more. In this way, the power of attraction that the emotion of love possess is reaches a new height, for the number or hurtles that stand between Prometheus and Asia are vast. She must travel to Demogorgon’s lair, compel him to combat Jupiter, find the Hour of Jupiter’s demise, and lead Demogorgon to heaven so that Prometheus’ prophecy may be

fulfilled. In addition, there seem to be these supernatural barriers between each of these steps, so the journey ahead does not seem to be a kind one.

Asia begins this process by asking Panthea to look into her eyes, since apparently see is able to see into one's mind by doing so. At first, Panthea refuses, opting to tell her sister about these two peculiar dreams she had while sleeping at the feet of Prometheus for the three thousand years he was imprisoned there. The first is momentarily forgotten, but the other seems to be embodied in a male figure without a name. All the reader knows is that his "pale, wound-worn limbs/ fell from Prometheus" before he turns to Panthea (Prometheus Unbound II.i, 62-63). During her encounter with this dream, she is asked to look into his eyes, presumably to look into her soul like Asia. However, instead of simply perceiving Panthea's mind, the dream begins to pervade her being when they make eye contact:

I lifted them—the overpowering light
 Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
 By love; which from his soft and flowing limbs
 And passion-parted lips, and keen faint eyes
 Steamed forth like vaprous fire; an atmosphere
 Which wrapt me in its all-dissolving power
 As the warm ether of the morning sun
 Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew
 I saw not—heard not—moved not—only felt
 His presence flow and mingle through my blood
 Till it became his life and his grew mine
 And I was thus absorbed—until it past
 (Prometheus Unbound II.i 71-82).

While the dream is an invasive presence, the experience is not all that unpleasant to Panthea. In fact, his "passion-parted lips" and "soft and flowing limbs" which "steamed forth with vaprous fire" produce a very sensual image, so that when the dream wraps around Panthea the love that shadows of the his immortal shape is tinged with lust. In

this embrace, Panthea seems to dissolve in this passion, while the dream also dissolves within her. Yet, the parasitic quality with which he overtakes her body, absorbing the life from her blood, is a little unsettling. Panthea, though, can only feel ecstasy, and all other senses are drowned out. The most significant detail, however, is the fact that after the dream invades and steals her life, her life is formed again out of their union. Reborn, Panthea emerges from her dream to find herself in the embrace of Ione. After waiting to see how long the feeling her dream left lingers, Ione tells her that she felt something pass between them. It appears as if the spirit of Ione mysteriously transferred to Panthea in their sleep, so that when they kiss the former could feel the “sweet air that sustained [her]” (Prometheus Unbound II.i, 104). In this way, the relationship between Panthea and Ione takes on an incestuous quality. The mingling between Panthea and her dream—an erotic depicting of the fusing of bodies—mirrors the transfer of Ione’s spirit to Panthea. As such, there seems to be a connection between the two experiences, indicating that as Panthea absorbed the spirit of Ione, her body was reformed by her sister’s spirit.

With this infusion of life, Panthea does not respond to Ione, perhaps being too embarrassed, and seeks out Asia. After recounting hearing about Panthea’s sexuality, though, Asia seems to be unmoved; the words Panthea utters have no meaning to her and make her feel nothing. In fact, she completely ignores the dream, only requesting to see for herself what has become of Prometheus by establishing eye contact between them and delving into her sister’s memory. The two different instances of eye contact are extremely different, which might be a comment on the different kinds of love Asia and Panthea represent. That is, Asia’s representation of love towards Prometheus is much more platonic than Panthea’s display of incestuous love. In addition, Panthea is timid

and hesitant when faced with the prospect of looking into another's eyes, even being embarrassed afterwards, while Asia is mostly straightforward and tries to get to the point. This indicates that the act of making eye contact is not inheritably a sexual one, and is only made so by the kind of love Panthea exhibits.

When Asia does look into Panthea's eyes, she is able to perceive Prometheus and his suffering in great detail, yet she also notices that there is some vague figure which stands between them. Puzzled, Asia asks what this figure is, while Panthea responds that it was the first dream she had forgotten before. This dream strangely comes to life, urging both Oceanids to "follow, follow" (Prometheus Unbound II.i, 131). As both Panthea and Asia repeat this short phrase, an Echo replaces the dream while saying the same words. It is the Echo which leads Asia through part of her journey to encounter Demogorgon, explaining the first step she must make in order to begin:

In the world unknown
 Sleeps a voice unspoken
 By thy step alone
 Can its rest be broken,
 Child of Ocean!
 (Prometheus Unbound II.i, 190-194)

The specific words "unknown" and "unspoken" raise a few questions about exactly where this voice resides. An unknown world would seem to indicate that Asia must travel to a land that has not been discovered. But since the voice exists without having been spoken, then it becomes apparent that it is not a matter of discovering or physically searching for the land the voice resides in. After all, the only world containing things which have yet to exist is one which does not yet exist as well. In this way, Asia must travel into the realm of prophecy to wake this sleeping voice.

ii. Demogorgon

As Asia travels, lead by spirits who inhabit the world, she approaches mountainous landscapes, eventually arriving at a “Pinnacle of Rock,” as indicated by Shelley’s stage direction. The reader is taken back briefly to the imagery of Prometheus’ solitude, yet instead of inspiring pain in Asia and Panthea, they experience a kind of sublime wonder, reveling in the Earth’s wonder. Once this scenery passes, a thick mist roll in, so that thin shapes can be made out through the veil of fog. They are identified as a chorus of spirits singing, where they repeat the lyric “Down, Down!” numerous times. It is unclear where exactly the Oceanids are headed, but the mist that obscured these spirits is so thick that it seems like Asia and Panthea are descending into ambiguity. This paints a strikingly different picture than Prometheus’ plunge into Eternity, during which he saw with absolute clarity. It seems that one is able to see more clearly into the past than the future, an idea strangely contrary to the notion that the past is filled with shadows, when the future is filled with the light of hope.

Finally arriving at Demogorgon’s cave, the world around Asia is shrouded in darkness, and most of the figures she sees are either unclear or undefined. As such, she can no longer use their senses to ascertain the spirits around, and instead must feel their presences. Demogorgon included is one of these shapeless spirits, though being the most imposing one of them all he appears as darkness incarnate:

I see a mighty Darkness
Filling the seat of power; and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian Sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless:—neither limb
Nor form nor outline, yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.
(Prometheus Unbound II.iv, 2-7)

A different kind of light is emitted from Demogorgon, but it seems to defy the laws of physics. As such, one cannot use his or her eyes to see these rays, and therefore they remain “ungazed”. In his shapeless state of gloom-light, he has no defining characteristics. Yet at the same time, he can take up space, indicated by his ability to fill “the seat or power”. Something which is made of light has no mass, though, and as such should not be able to fill anything. Maybe it would be more accurate to describe Demogorgon as an absence of space, which would make a little more sense. Though by this understanding, an outline would be created where space and the absence of space met.

He is darkness yet emits light. He has takes up space yet has no form. He is ungazed yet can be sensed. No matter which approach the reader takes, there is absolutely no way for him or her to conceptualize Demorogon physically, and must only rely on his presence within the poem to trust that he actually exists. The question is, how does one interact with such a nature-less being? Considering that he is still identified as a living spirits, he should be able to speak the language of the living even though he is a “voice unspoken”. While he this does prove to be true when he begins to answer Asia’s questions, he does not speak much. Still, the very fact that he responds is a relief. The first few questions Demogorgon is asked pertain to who rules in heaven, to which he replies “God”. When urged to utter the monarch’s name, he only responds “He reigns”. This continues, for a couple of more questions until Asia gives a lengthy recounting of Prometheus’ tale, specifically mentioning the sacrifices he made for mankind. In addition, she also points out the benefits that came about because of his heroic actions; to name a few, Prometheus gave man speech, thought, Science, music, sculpture, medicine,

and astronomy. At the end of her story, Asia mentions the curse that Prometheus placed on Jupiter, ending by asking whether Jupiter is slave.

It seems that after he is presented with the Champion's good deeds, Demogorgon becomes a bit more talkative, so in response to this question he answers, "All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil" (*Prometheus Unbound* II.iv, 110). While the word "evil" does not appear many times in the poem, the concept maintains a clear theme throughout. The Oppressor that Shelley described at the very beginning is finally named under the banner of evil as a slave. The connection between evil and slavery is not all that clear, however. The answer may lie in Jupiter's omnipotence, since his absolute power yet inability to rule over himself created a prison of false freedom. That is, Jupiter is a slave because he has no control over himself, and the quality of his existence is solely determined by omnipotence. But can evil and omnipotence be considered as interchangeable? In terms of SPU, Shelley has given the reader every indication that excess power, especially the power Jupiter wields, is evil. As such, the stereotype of a monarch who abuses his power is used to describe Jupiter's role as Oppressor.

While Jupiter's status of a slave is determined by his relationship to evil and omnipotence, his master is never named. All Demogorgon says is that "the deep truth is imageless" (*Prometheus Unbound* II.iv 116). It appears as if the answer to this particular question will never be known, and any answers put forth are merely speculation. Still, the way in which such an important question is simply written off just begs the reader to answer for him or herself. Thinking back to Prometheus' curse, he named Infinity as one of the forces which will cause Jupiter to suffer. Since omnipotence—infinite power—has been ruled out as Jupiter's master, then the other alternatives are eternity and infinite

space. The more likely of the two is eternity, since infinite space does not have a major role in the poem, if any at all. This begins to take shape when Demogorgon explains how in terms of “Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change... All things are subject but eternal Love” (Prometheus Unbound II.iv 119-120). The way in which the word “subject” is used seems vaguely similar to its use when mentioning a monarch’s subjects. That is, Eternity—an amalgamation of fate, time, occasion, change, and change—can be thought of as a force which rules over everything but eternal Love. By this understanding, only things that can stand the test of infinite time are absolved from Eternity’s reign. As such, powerful monarchs rise and fall over the years, while Love remains eternal according to Shelley. It would seem as if the answer to evil is indeed found within the changeless, but in order to access this Love one must take several steps. So far, Prometheus has embraced his pain, animated the world, and recalled his disdain. All that is left is to overthrow the monarch.

iii. The Fall of Jupiter

With this last hurdle, the Spirit of the Hour descends at last, taking Demogorgon, Asia, and Panthea along with him on his winged chariot. During their flight to heaven, Asia sees “Realms where the air we breath is Love/ Which in the wind and on the waves doth move,/ Harmonizing this Earth with what we feel above (Prometheus Unbound II.v, 95-97). As if already celebrating victory, it is now certain that Prometheus’ prophecy will be fulfilled, and that the world will be reformed in the image of heaven. Once Jupiter is gone, there is nothing to stand in the way of Love. It seems as if Jupiter even senses his demise, since he notices that Demogorgon’s throne is empty, and he knows

that it can mean only one thing: his time is coming. As such, he does not seem all too surprised when Demogorgon appears. Still, when faced with the shapeless non-figure of his adversary, he cannot help but ask “what art thou?” to which Demogorgon answers, “Eternity—demand no direr name./ Descend, and follow me down the abyss;/ I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn’s child,/ Mightier than thee; and we must dwell together/ Henceforth in darkness” (PU III.i, 52-56). The fact that Demogorgon names himself “Eternity” places new meaning on his formless quality. It is understandable that one cannot perceive him through any physical or mental means given that he embodies a variant of infinity, and only an infinite mind may comprehend the infinite. By interpreting Demogorgon as infinity, the prospect of descending into the abyss becomes all the more frightening. If it is anything like Tartarus from Greek mythology, then Jupiter’s fall will be worse than any punishment imaginable; it would be like the fall of Lucifer, yet lasting for eternity. Hence, the darkness that Demogorgon embodies becomes a void which will imprison and torture Jupiter, just as the monarch inflicted so much suffering upon Prometheus.

In his greatest moment of weakness, Jupiter begs for mercy while recalling the Titan he bound long ago. He entertains the thought that even though Prometheus was subject to Jupiter’s long revenge, his enemy would not doom him to such a fate. That is, even Jupiter recognizes that Prometheus still lacks a capacity for hatred, and therefore only pities the monarch. This prompts him to ask, “Gentle and just and dreadless, is he not/ The monarch of the world? (PU III.ii, 68-69). With Jupiter’s recognition of Prometheus’ power, the roles are reversed. The reader is given the illusion that Prometheus now rules, yet this is simply a misinterpretation on the part of Jupiter. That

is, since the Titan possess a strength cultivated through ruling his own self, he appears to command the world. However, Prometheus does not, and will never reign in the same way that Jupiter reigned. For although he can be called a ruler of sorts, he has no subjects other than his pain and will. With these final thoughts, the Oppressor is vanquished by Demogorgon and completely disappears from the world.

In the next scene, Hercules, another son of Jupiter, unbinds Prometheus. While this is only a minor point, it is important to note that even though he alters a great deal of information from Aeschylus's plays, the prophecy is kept exactly the same throughout. In this respect, SPU truly becomes an alternate, imagined timeline. The bare necessities of its foundations in Greek mythology and Christianity are kept, while the rest is Shelley's invention. As such, he paves the way for an ending which he desires greatly for himself: union with Love. Seeing the Oceanids, Prometheus first calls to the one who he holds dearest, saying, "Asia, thou light of life,/ Shadow of beauty unbeheld, and ye/ Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain/ Sweet to remember through your love and care:/ Henceforth we will not part" (PU III.iii, 6-10). With the long awaited union between Prometheus and Asia, resolution is finally achieved as the Titan's bindings fall to the ground. As he is no longer mentally bound by hate or physically bound by monarchy, he is free to experience the newfound world with Love at his side. Yet not completely disregarding the past, he gives thanks to Panthea and Ione for remaining by his side for so many years, allowing his remembrance of pain to take on the sweetness of nostalgia. One might think that such memories of suffering would fade from Prometheus' mind after being released from their influence, but as the ruler of his keen pangs he shall never forget. It is this regard for memory and history which is crucial in

keeping the joy of freedom alive. This becomes even more apparent when Spirits and Hours converge into a single chorus later on, their combination forming an ocean of revelry:

Then weave the web of the mystic measure
 Form the depths of the sky and the ends of the Earth
 Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure
 Fill the dance and the music of mirth
 As the waves of a thousand steams rush by
 To an of Ocean of splendour and harmony!
 (Prometheus Unbound IV, 129-134)

In the formation of this body of ether, the Hour which have passed on “to the dark, to the past, to the dead” after Jupiter’s fall join with the “the Spirits of the human mind”. Since these Hours have now passed on, then this implies that the Spirits are rejoicing with past in mind, specifically the dissolution of monarchy. It is within this celebration with dance, music, and mirth that both the past and present are harmonious. Just as Prometheus looks upon his memory of pain with fondness, the Spirits and Hours do the same. By uniting together and forming an Ocean, all the supernatural aspects which animate the poem form one body, where the liquid ether that composes the various Spirits flows together and parts no more. However, in this understanding of their union which implies that they experience the same death as those Spirits which lie beyond the grave. That is, in forming one body of water, the Spirits and Hours can no longer be distinguished from one another, creating a different kind of eternity. When the present begins to reflect the past, this indicates that nothing has changed between them. As more time passes, the mirroring between them approaches infinity, and each moment becomes indistinguishable. However, while Prometheus suffered pain from this stasis, the Spirits only feel pleasure. The difference is this: Prometheus forgot, while the Spirits

remembered. By keeping history close, then one is anchored within the ocean of peace;
the moment memories begin to fade, things begin to part again.

Conclusion: Reforming the Mind

Ending in a world where there is no more conflict, where the spirits of the world rejoice alongside mankind, the political narrative of *Prometheus Unbound* comes off heavy-handedly. In this envisioned future, there are no monarchs, nor nations. Everyone rejoices—there are no exceptions. Mankind is “one harmonious Soul of many a soul” (*Prometheus Unbound* IV, 400). Completely unified as a result of Love’s influence, mortals can co-exist freely in a world without deities who require worship. Even though the amalgamation of many souls into one Soul might be considered a death of individuality, we are to welcome that death with open arms. Some might disagree with such a notion, saying that the individual identities of citizens must be preserved even when united under a nation. To this, Shelley would probably claim those who disapprove do not see clearly. In solitude, the world is empty. As such, the senses are clouded, allowing one to be trapped and imprisoned. However, when they begin to feel pain in the face of solitude, then the fog around their minds begin to clear, even if it might take a while for clarity to be achieved.

The loss of individual identity is a small price to pay for a world where “thrones [are] kingless, and men [walk]/ One with the other even as spirits do” (*Prometheus Unbound* III.iv, 131-132). By following the process of confronting hatred and monarchy within Shelley’s poem, the reader comes to realize that identity is only appropriately established through a collective. This collective, though, cannot be fueled by anything other than Love, or else it begins to fall apart. Being “equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless,” men are transformed into “King[s]/ Over himself; just, gentle, wise” (*Prometheus Unbound* III.iv, 195-197). The mirroring between the spiritual realm—the

envisioned future—and the realm of men indicates the purpose of Shelley’s poetry: to inspire social change by setting an example with in literature. In this way, he seeks to elevate people to the status of “king”, where everyone rules over themselves and seizes their will just like Prometheus did.

Yet, the stark solitude that Prometheus emerged from implicates that perhaps this is not a poem of community at all. The supernatural aspects can break the illusion of an organic timeline by superimposing themselves in a manner that seems artificial., giving an inorganic feel. That is, the way in which characters and forces are introduced at the convenience of Prometheus allow one to see Shelley’s cold calculations in constructing the text. As such, there seems to be something else going on as well. Who is to say the reader cannot exercise his or her own skepticism when analyzing the poem? The eerie way in which there is not a single representative of mankind in *Prometheus Unbound* signals that the narrative lies in an imaginary timeline, no matter how much it tries to resemble reality. This in itself is nothing special, for any work of fiction can be considered as such. However, given that Prometheus was trapped on a mountain with no signs of life and no one to perceive his pain, the reader is left to question how momentum was generated in the first place. Panthea and Ione were asleep, the sun could not see, the ocean could not hear, the land was dead, and Jupiter was not about to release his prisoner. Yet despite all this, the Earth, an inanimate thing, responded to his call. The question is, where did this power of animation come from. As stated before, Prometheus animated the world, and thus the Earth could speak. In order to do so, he had to rely on language. Other than this, the reader is told nothing more.

Considering Prometheus' solitude again, it is very well possible that instead of animating the world with life, he animated it with imagination. In this way, Prometheus does not establish community with the world around, but lie his way into community for the sake of love. His spoken words are merely the conversations an isolated sufferer who converses with himself. In this way, all the gods and spirits Prometheus encounters are just the products of his mind. Even taking a further step back, then one arrives at the self-evident conclusion that *Prometheus Unbound* takes place within the mind of Shelley. While this may seem boring, the hidden potential of this thought lies in its ability for reform. Prometheus represents the "truest and most noble ends", according to Shelley, which is reminiscent of his essay *On Love*. At one point, he describes this weird phenomenon where "We dimly see within our intellectual nature a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of every thing excellent or lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man" (*On Love*, 504). In his contemplation of God, Shelley applied the concepts of an ideal prototype to Him, thus forming the benevolent Champion of man, embodied by Prometheus. However, all of the negative qualities He has do not just disappear even though they are separated. Instead, they coalesce into the cruel Oppressor, embodied by Jupiter. The divided mind established through the opposition between Prometheus and Jupiter could be considered a kind of torment in its own right. Love's uniting force is rejected with division, and therefore exiled for the time being. The first step to reform requires that this pain of division is accepted. By doing so, one is able to associate with the ideal prototype, creating identity through woe. Then, the hatred which fuels the division must be exorcised, so that one can see clearly all of these little

other divisions and judge them impartially. Next, Love is awakened, and the mind becomes a little lighter inside. Now ready to face the future, Love travels into the realms of imagined futures, bringing one which effectively destroys the Oppressor and casts it into the abyss. As such, the qualities which were separated from the ideal prototype and removed from the mind, Love creates harmony and the ideal prototype within matches the mind that contained in.

When thinking about Prometheus in this way, however, and considering him to be a resident of someone's mind, then it becomes apparent that he never leaves the solitude that imprisons him. Instead of reaching out to society, self-reform delves inward, arguable isolating individuals from one another. Yet the two models of reformation are not entirely separate in. In fact, because they both can be seen within *Prometheus Unbound*, and therefore occur simultaneously, they seem to work hand in hand. One could even argue that this standard for self-reformation aids the evolution of society, since those who are truly changed by Shelley's model reform themselves into the same kind of mind, allowing for unity between them. Making suffering a perquisite for social change and self-reform might seem little harsh, but it is true that pain has proved to be one of the greatest aids to reformation. At the same time, it gives this process context. That is, if one is not in a position in which they suffer acutely, then he or she probably does not need to reform. In the case of those who are perfectly satisfied, then they are not motivated as those who are dissatisfied. However, there are also those that are incapable of reform. In the case of monarchs like Jupiter, it is questionable whether Shelley thinks that they could reform themselves, since they have a role to play as the Oppressor. In this way, Jupiter is a sacrifice for the sake of Prometheus' and the world's development. In

order to arrive at Shelley's Love, one must find a balance between Atheism and Supernaturalism. There can be no gods or deities which are portrayed as monarchs and selfishly request for worship—these must be removed to refine the miniature within us. At the same time, belief in spirits, both living and dead, allow one to utilize imagination in foreseeing the future. This allows one conceptualize the process within which he or she arrives at this miniature. And finally, when the two reach a point of harmony, then Love animates the mind and unbinds it, allowing an individual to freely explore his or her ideal prototype.

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