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Prometheus and the Process of Individuation: A Jungian Reading of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*

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Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* has elicited a wide variety of commentaries, ranging from damnation to unalloyed acclamation. The poem is described as an "unwieldy abundance of incoherent words and images" (Lowell 109) and "pure unmixed nonsense" (Zillman 705), as "magnificent" (Hazlitt 706) and "a vast wilderness of beauty" (Zillman 698). Shelley himself writes, "if I may judge by its merits, the 'Prometheus's cannot sell beyond twenty copies" (Ingpen 10: 148); and later stipulates, "it is written only for the elect" (Ingpen 10: 171). The major obstacles to the appreciation and understanding of the poem are a result of the poem's highly symbolic and idiosyncratic method and presentation of images. Carlos Baker sees "the difficulty in the interpretation of *Prometheus Unbound* as arising chiefly from the fact that the leading characters are both characters in a drama and symbolic universals" (111). However, rather than being a barrier to accessing the poem, these conditions provide the primary ingress into the interiority and scope of the poem.

While there has been a “failure” among “critics ... to agree on a single meaning of the poem” (Zillman 82), “nearly all of the critics of the poem as poem have touched on” “the mythopoeic quality” of the work (Zillman 53), much of which revolves around the figure of Prometheus and the myths associated with him. In the preface, Shelley himself writes that the poem’s “imagery” was “drawn from the operations of the human mind” (133). C.M. Bowra sees the poem as a series of “ideas presented in visual shape” (107); Barrell believes that the poem is “to be explained not by human motivation, but by the development of thought” (150); and Wasserman conceives of “the limited domain of *Prometheus Unbound* [as] that unitary *mode* of Being that appears in thought-centered existence” (Shelley 257).

This conjoining of the psychological and the mythopoeic also forms the basis of the system of Analytical Psychology as formulated by Carl Jung. The Jung-*Prometheus Unbound* connection was first made by Eugene Taylor¹ in his article “Shelley as Myth Maker,” where he says “the dialogue and the characters in the drama are purely subjective; Earth, Asia, and the rest, speak not as themselves but as the spirit of Prometheus which vitalizes them; each one plays his part in the mind of Prometheus; each expresses only the attitude which Prometheus has toward him” (83). From this perspective, the lyric-drama (lyric in that the poem is an individual and musical expression, and dramatic in the poem’s structural form and apparatuses) or “lyric with dramatic overtones” (Zillman 52) of *Prometheus Unbound* becomes an externalized presentation of the Prometheus’s internal conflicts. In “The Visions of Zosimos,”² Jung notes that the name “Prometheus” is directly equated, “in allegorical language,” with “soul” (in contradistinction to “Epimetheus,” meaning “body”) (CW 13 par. 126). The entire poem can thus be conceived as being played out against a mental/mythic, terrene/cosmic subjectively shifting backdrop where

everything that arises has its source in the various aspects of, and conflicts in, the mind of Prometheus.

When viewed from a Jungian perspective, *Prometheus Unbound* as a whole can be seen to be a dramatization of the “stages of [the individuation] process” (Norton 172).³ According to Jung, “The meaning and purpose of the [individuation] process is the realization, in all its aspects, of the personality originally hidden away in the embryonic germ-plasm; the production and unfolding of the original, potential wholeness” (CW 7 par. 186). This “realization” of the “personality” specifically “means becoming an ‘in-dividual’” (CW 7 par. 266). “Individuation” can also be conceived as “coming to selfhood” or “self-realization” (CW 7 par. 266), or as a movement toward and into “psychic wholeness” (CW 14 par. 759). Prometheus begins as a consciousness/ego and moves towards the realization/activation of his true “self,” the goal of the individuation process, which “includes [the ego] in a supraordinate concept” (CW 9, Part 2 par. 1). The “self” (as distinguished from the “persona,” which is defined as an “arbitrary segment of the collective psyche” [CW 7 par. 245] and provides a mask which the individual displays to the world in its everyday dealings) requires that “unconscious processes stand in compensatory relation to the conscious mind,” so that the two “complement one another to form a totality, which is the *self*” (CW 7 par. 274). This process is mirrored by the action of the poem, which is primarily comprised of Prometheus and Asia’s re-joining, since “from the end of the first act on, the plot consists almost entirely of Asia’s journey to her reunion with Prometheus” (Abrams 600). In the poem it is Prometheus and Asia who represent respectively dimensions of Prometheus’s conscious and unconscious minds. Prometheus, whose skull compasses all the terms of the poem, thus is “*both the one to be redeemed and the redeemer*” (CW 12 par. 414), for as Shelley himself phrases it, “each to itself must be the oracle” (II.iv.123). The action of the poem represents what Jung also

refers to as the “Transcendent Function” which is each individual’s “continual process of getting to know the counterposition in the unconscious” (CW 14 par. 257), and as such “is synonymous with progressive development to a new attitude” (CW 7 par. 159) – a “new attitude” which finally finds an ecstatic expression in the maelstromic joy of the fourth act.

In the opening of the poem, Prometheus is this “embryonic germ-plasm” of potentiality caught in the no-man’s land between Heaven and its “ever-changing Shadow, spread below” (l.28). Prometheus hangs suspended between ether and solidity, between the unconscious and the conscious (which is equivalent to the “ego” [CW 14 par. 131, note 68]). Jung conceives that such “pairs of opposites constitute the phenomenology of the paradoxical *self*, man’s totality” and “their symbolism makes use of cosmic expressions like *coelum/terra*” (CW 14 par. 4). However, at this time, the opposites have not yet begun to move toward a greater degree of assimilation and synthesis, with Prometheus still suspended in a tortuous position between them.

The “Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus” (Shelley 136), the setting in which the poem begins, and where the husk of Prometheus remains until his release, may be seen as representing a “*temenos*,” which is defined as “a taboo area where [one] will be able to meet the unconscious” (CW 12 par. 63). This state of the setting representing a mental topology may be extended to all the settings of the poem, wherein the “state of the ‘external’ world is relative to the condition of the mind” (Wasserman, Prometheus 40). This location, as well as all the other “place[s] or medium[s] of realization [are] neither mind nor matter, but [those] intermediate realm[s] of subtle reality which can be adequately expressed only by the symbol” (CW 12 par. 400), and as such find their best (which is to say their most approximate, since the symbol when it is not naively conceived does not merely point to something in a one-to-one equivalence of direct signification) expression in mythic/visionary poetry.

In his initial state Prometheus exists only as the possibility of the re-activation of psychic potentiality, neither acting nor reacting, but merely “endur[ing]” (I.24). Prometheus has been “nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain” (I.20) by Jupiter. The ascension of Jupiter brought “First famine and then toil and then disease, / Strife, wounds and ghastly death unseen before” (II.iv.50-1) “on the race of man” (II.iv.49); as well as change and mutability, the “unseasonable seasons” (II.iv.52) which drove humanity to find shelter; “And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle / Of unreal good” (II.iv.56-7). Prometheus, seeing these things, “waked the legioned hopes / which sleep within folded Elysian flowers” (II.iv.59-60) in order to prevent the last tenuous strands of life, already frayed, from completely unwinding. Prometheus, as a benevolent force opposed to Jupiter’s malevolence, “gave man speech” and “thought” (II.iv.72), “Science” (II.iv.74), and the arts of medicine. It was for these “alleviations of his state / Prometheus gave to man” (II.iv.98-9) that Prometheus was bound by Jupiter. This characterization of Jupiter presents him as a figure who is inextricable linked to the change and falseness of the temporal world which imprisons humanity. On the other side is Prometheus, who, through the dispersion of his knowledge seeks to bestow upon humanity the tools with which to strive after continuance and bring life again to an Elysian flowering. In fact, the knowledge which Prometheus delivers has a distinctly unconscious and almost omnipotent component, as the various fields of knowledge are portrayed as having seemingly been invented *ex nihilo* by Prometheus. If Prometheus represents the human mind in an active and creative sense, he would then represent humanity’s will, specifically as the will-to-infinity,⁴ whereas Jupiter then is cast as the physical-natural forces which press upon and subdue the individual subject in contingent and mutable externalities.

Ironically, it was Prometheus who initially “Clothed [Jupiter] with the dominion of wide heaven” (II.iv.46), and in doing so has essentially has incarcerated himself. Jupiter, as a specific

instantiation in the unending procession of divine pantheons, is therefore necessarily related to the temporal/mutable. The chief god is also associated with the “reasoning faculty in man” (Lea 113), and as such is further opposed to the immutable, irrational realms of the unconscious and the archetypes which is the fount from which all gods initially arise, and as such is the seat of permanence even in the midst of change. Prometheus is bound in the “Hell within” (I.56) by Jupiter, who functions as a representation of the tyranny of temporal reason. Under this tyranny of the reason, Asia (the unconscious) has been exiled; and therefore, Prometheus lacks the psychic balance requisite for a healthy self. While some degree of rationality is necessary for psychic integrity, “reason and the will that is grounded in reason are valid only up to a point” (CW 7 par. 72). Viewed in psychological terms, Jupiter is “the personification of all that hinders the free development of the human mind” (Sweet 298). Therefore, Prometheus must get beyond this “point,” represented by his self-imprisonment through the dominance of temporal reason, in order to recognize the world of the unconscious, which will then allow him to activate the will-to-infinity, and thus to begin to freely develop his previously suppressed psychic aspects.

The beginning of Prometheus’s journey towards release / transcendence / “redemption” (Scudder xlv) occurs when he repents of the curse he had cast on Jupiter. His recantation (“it doth repent me” [I.303]) is presented as if the curse has primarily acted on Prometheus himself rather than Jupiter. He begins to feel compassion for Jupiter, and this is also a turning away from the rational mind, for “compassion is based, not upon rational dogma, but upon intuitive empathy with the suffering of others” (Myers 119). It is at this moment that Prometheus begins to consciously recognize some of the displaced facets of his mind, and thereby Prometheus begins the process of “activat[ing] by the intervention of the conscious mind” the “unconscious opposites” (CW 12 par. 438), one pole of which is represented by Jupiter. In this act Prometheus creates the possibility of

the acceptance and integration of previously unavailable psychic contents – though here we must remember that the possibility or initiation of an action is not its completion, and Prometheus's consciousness remains fragmentary, still split into its “functional components” (CW 12 par. 439), and hence not yet fully on the path toward greater integration.

The way toward such integration is not without risks or attendant rewards: “this is a dangerous undertaking” for “only in the region of danger ... can one find the ‘treasure hard to attain’” (CW 12 par. 438). The “treasure” in this instance is Asia, the rejoining with whom represents the possibility of overcoming his current psychic imbalance – yet at this point of the drama, Asia still exists relatively undifferentiated as an isolated element in a morass of fragmentations. If the rejoining is not attained, “the psychological danger that arises here is the disintegration of the personality into its functional components” (CW 12 par. 439). This “danger” is represented primarily in the poem by the Furies, who “come / Blackening the birth of day” (I.440-1) – a “day” born simultaneously with Prometheus's renaissance upon his deliverance from bondage. The torments delivered by the Furies are a common step in the process of individuation, which is paralleled by the alchemical stage of the *mortificatio*. Jung, who witnessed in the alchemical *opus* and its symbolism a detailed analogue to the process of individuation, describes the *mortificatio*⁵ as “a state of dissolution and decomposition which precedes the synthesis” (CW 14 par. 721) and as “the disintegration of personality into its functional components i.e. the separate functions of consciousness” (CW 12 par. 439). Hughes sees that “here, as always, spiritualizing the Greek myths, Shelley makes these ministers of vengeance wound the mind and not the body” (177), a reading which underscores the idea that Prometheus's torments are spiritual / psychological, rather than corporeal. This step is “the first, dangerous, poisonous stage of the anima” (CW 14 par. 168), which will eventually move the *opus* forward.

Prometheus, in an implicit recognition of the non-differentiation of himself from his projected psychic contents, eventually describes something of himself in the “execrable shapes” (I.449) of the Furies: “I grow like what I contemplate” (I.450). This identification at the same time reinforces Prometheus’s passivity as the victim of psychic contents which are not subject to the will as conscious control. Mercury (a figure who in his own right is also an essential part of the alchemical *opus*) is compelled by Jupiter to lead the Furies to Prometheus, also counsels Prometheus to “Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart / For benefits and meek submission tame / The fiercest and the mightiest” (I.377-9). This admonition further underscores the passiveness necessary to tame the “fiercest” (the Furies), and the “mightiest” (Jupiter). The potential for a state of greater synthesis works within Prometheus without the affirmation of his conscious will, which must “kneel.” At the same time this passivity may also be characterized as openness – an openness which is required if the anima shall be allowed to assume its rightful sway as a guide or point of entry into the unconscious.

At the time of the poem’s opening, “Asia waits in that far Indian vale, / The scene of her sad exile” (I.826-7), removed from Prometheus as part of the Jupiter and Prometheus-enforced imprisonment, yet sharing his life and his fate in the dual subjection in “The desert of our life” (II.i.12). Asia comes “from the ether” (I.831), which is the sustenance of the gods, and thus she shares their place of origin. In a Jungian schemata, this is also the demesne of the archetypes and the collective unconscious, for “with the archetype of the anima we enter the realm of the gods” (CW 9, Part 1 par. 59). Asia, the daughter of Oceanus, comes from the fluid depths, and as an anima figure represents an aspect of Prometheus’s unconscious, for “water is the commonest symbol of the unconscious” (CW 9, Part 1 par. 40). The anima is for the male the personification of an element of the unconscious,⁶ and is described as a “magical feminine being” (CW 9, Part 1

par. 53), as well as a “mediator between the conscious and the unconscious” (CW 12 par. 242, note 119). This basic notion seems to be what Carlos Baker has in mind when he characterizes Asia as “epipsyche” to Prometheus’s “psyche” (109). In her role as a “magical being” and “mediator,” Asia is the “transforming presence” (I.832) upon which Prometheus’s complete release and freedom depends. Yet Asia exists in necessary conjunct with Prometheus as a part of his psyche, and thus her “presence ... would fade / If it were not mingled with [that of Prometheus]” (I.832-3). “The two opposing ‘realities,’ the world of the conscious and the world of the unconscious ... do not quarrel for supremacy” in their intermingled, interdependent equality, “but each makes the other relative” (CW 7 par. 354) in a symbiotic relationship.

The anima, through “a living and creative function which is properly her own” (CW 12 par. 242) represents the empowering of Prometheus’s movement toward a greater degree of synthesis through the integration of compensatory elements of the unconscious. Herein Asia “becomes a life-giving factor, a psychic reality which conflicts strongly with the world of the father” (CW 12 par. 73) represented by Jupiter. In this role, Asia is a guide-figure, and thus an “ally to evolving man” (Bush 144). This potentiation is prophesied by Panthea in her second dream as “the glory of that form / Which lives unchanged within” (II.i.64-5), which will replace the “wound-worn” (wounded and worn in the *mortificatio* stage) corporeal “limbs” (II.i.62) in the “azure night” (II.i.63) of the more fully integrated conscious and unconscious minds. Mercury also makes reference to Prometheus’s in-dwelling potential when he says “There is a secret known / To thee [i.e. Prometheus] and to none else of living things / Which may transfer the scepter of wide Heaven” (I.371-3). These lines emphasize both the internal nature of the potential and its exclusiveness, which exists as a single-term dualism; and posits in its enactment a new dominion apart from, and supplanting, that of Jupiter. Asia also represents the imaginative-life-principle and

the possibility of renewal and unending, contiguous progression inherent in the life-process, for she is said to have invested a “desolate and frozen” vale “with fair flowers and herbs” (I.827-8), as some life-bestowing Persephone emerging from Kimmerian lands.

Panthea and Ione, as Asia’s sisters and daughters of Ocean, also symbolize unconscious functions which dwell in proximity to the archetypal godheads. Ione’s nature, however, is somewhat more obscure than that of her sisters. She plays no active part in the unfolding action, and is still sleeping while Panthea visits Asia in the first scene of the second act. She seems to be a part of the poem primarily in order to give Panthea someone to talk to and to ask questions for Panthea to answer. Yet she does function to vocalize stage directions as an on-the-spot witness, tendencies may have led J.A. Cousins to conceive of her as “the out-turned aspect of the mind” (31), in opposition to the more exclusively inward orientations of Panthea and Asia. Ione’s only intrinsically significant line occurs after Prometheus has recanted his curse and is believed by The Earth to have been “vanquished” (I.311), when she contradicts this statement by saying “The Titan is unvanquished still” (I.315). Her assertion appears to have induced James Todhunter to sketchily equate her with the “quality of Hope” (138).

Panthea’s role, on the other hand, is more defined. Returning to Asia at the beginning of act two, Panthea reports her dream-prophecies and Prometheus’s condition. Helen Clark calls Panthea as “a nymph of telepathy” (100) between Asia and Prometheus; Eugene Taylor refers to Panthea as “the messenger between the lovers; and Henry Norton sees both Ione and Panthea as Asia’s “companion figures” (188), who act as “messengers between Prometheus’s ego-consciousness and the unconscious soul symbolized by Asia” (190). All these readings stress Panthea’s meta-physical nature. Panthea, whose name may be translated as “all-the-gods” or “deity-in-all” (Rossetti 152) can be seen as the embodiment of the anima’s connection with the archetypes, and as such is the

existence of the archetypes as they are present in the individual; and therefore, she must accompany Asia on her “imaginative journey” (Norton 179) to the domain of Demogorgon.

The anima exists in close proximity to the archetypes and the collective unconscious, either as “represent[ing] the collective unconscious” (CW 14 par. 128), or as “in Hermes’ treatise, *An die menschliche Seele*, she is called ‘the highest interpreter and nearest custodian (of the eternal)’” (CW 12 par. 242, note 119). This “eternal” is contained in the collective unconscious, which Jung defines as “a potentiality handed down to us from primordial times in the specific form of mnemonic images or inherited in the anatomical structure of the brain” (CW 15 par. 126). Asia, as introducing Prometheus to the unconscious, assists in his accessing the domain of the archetypes. At this stage, the archetypes exist only as potentiality of understanding, and thus need to be encountered in order for a portion of their power to be integrally realized. Prometheus meets his unconscious contents, which, in the form of his projections, are embodiments of the archetypes, through the “ministering spirit” (CW 13 par. 219) of Asia, who leads Prometheus along the royal road into the dim, ancestral recesses of the universal unconscious.

This road leads to Demogorgon, who is described as “Ungazed upon and shapeless – neither limb / Nor form – nor outline; yet we feel it is / A living spirit” (II.iv.5-7). Yet “it is Demogorgon’s lack of definite shape, a problem often wrestled with in the criticism, that makes him a significant symbol for the creative source of change” (Norton 209). In his proximity to the source of all psychic / poetic / mythic truth, Demogorgon is “shapeless” precisely because “the deep truth is imageless” (II.iv.116), and takes on a defined shape only in an individual projection. Norton writes: “In the figure of Demogorgon, Shelley reaches beyond the archetypal feminine to approach the archetype *an sich*, as described by Neumann. Demogorgon, as being near the source of all emerging archetypal patterns” (209), is as such “a-mythic, or pre-mythic” (Herson 385).

Shelley's conception of Demogorgon has its roots in arcane lore. Jung quotes Johannes Braceschus of Brixen's *Lignum vitae*, which refers to Daemogorgon [Brixen's spelling] as the "ancestor of all the gods of the gentiles"; who is "surrounded on all sides by thick clouds and darkness, he walks in the midmost bowels of the earth, and is there hidden ... not begotten of any, but eternal and the father of all things" (CW 13 par. 176, note 39). This description emphasizes Demogorgon's cosmologic / macrocosmic nature and creative force, and describes his domain in words which so closely mimic Shelley's description that I am forced to wonder if Shelley personally knew of this text. Jung also cites "Pernety (*Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique*) [who] defines 'Daimorgon' as 'the genius of the earth,' 'the fire which quickens nature, and in particular that innate and life-giving spirit of the earth of the sages, which acts throughout the whole course of the operations of the great work'" (CW 13 par. 176, note 39). Pernety likewise mentions Demogorgon's cosmologic / macrocosmic nature, and furthermore relates it to the "great work," which is the alchemical *opus* / individuation process. Demogorgon "acts throughout" the "work," just as the archetypes function in various facets of the ongoing individuation process and the projections of the unconscious. Zillman also refers to Demogorgon's creative capacity, and sees the "name Demogorgon" as "appear[ing] to derive from the 'Demiourgos' of Plato's myth of creation (*Timaeus* 28-40), where he was a beneficent power and creator of the cosmos" (313). Demogorgon as the personification of the inborn, primordial power of the collective unconscious is creative not only in relation to the individual's evolving notion of selfhood; but is also creative in the sense that the collective unconscious is the source of all mental, mythic, poetic creation, and as such is also the source of subjective reality, which is the mindscape of *Prometheus Unbound*.

Asia's journey into the "beneficent" realm of the archetypes is depicted in scenes one through three in the second act. Her journey is initiated by the Echoes, whose name conjures up

the idea of the reflected past emanating into the present moment, and whose voices are a function of nature, delivered “upon the ebbing wind” (II.i.195). Asia and Panthea follow the Echoes, who have conveyed the prophecy of Asia and Prometheus’s reunion, through “A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns” (Shelley 166) where the “gloom divine is all around” (II.ii.22). The forest as a symbol is related to “the female principle” or “the Great Mother” and is “the place where vegetable life thrives ... free from any control or cultivation” (Cirlot 112). While the symbolism of the cave is related to the “concealed,” which “for Jung stands for the security and impregnability of the unconscious,” and which “appears ... as the meeting place for the figures of deities ... or Archetypes, becoming therefore an objective image of Hades” (Cirlot 40). These symbolic topographies mark Asia and Panthea’s movement into their appropriate feminine, “unconscious” realm associated with Prometheus’s anima, “free from any [rational] control or cultivation,” which is to say removed from the masculine, rational domain of Jupiter and the conscious mind. Further, it marks the beginning of their descent into “Hades” (the journey into the underworld which is itself conventional), a region which is simultaneously the ground where one may meet “deities ... or Archetypes,” and which is pregnant with the “gloom divine” of the gods concealed in the shadowy depths of the primordial source of the archetypes.

After traversing the Forest, Asia and Panthea ascend “A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains” (Shelley 168), which symbolizes (as another psychic location) the ascension to an “inner ‘loftiness’ of spirit” (Cirlot 219) of the awakening self. The pinnacle is poised above a “wide plain of billowing mist” (II.iii.19), and below are ranged “the keen sky-cleaving mountains” (II.iii.28). Here, in an intermediate realm between the heavens and the earth (which recalls Prometheus’s intermediate, suspended position at the opening of the poem), lies “the realm / Of Demogorgon,” which is described as a “mighty portal, / Like a volcano’s meteor-breathing chasm,

/ Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up” (II.iii.1-4). The volcano is related to the alchemical conception of the “hollow mountain, the hollow being a cavern which is the ‘philosophers’ oven” (Cirlot 219). In relation to the symbolic order of the poem, this setting provides the venue for the preparation for the resolution of oppositions, which is a goal of the alchemical *opus* as well as the individuation process, and as such is a sort of alchemical retort, heralding the poem’s climactic reunion of the oppositions as specifically personified by Asia and Prometheus. Asia and Panthea’s journey, taken as a whole, is a descent (underscored by the repetition of “down” in the third scene of the second act) into the underworld (itself a symbol of the unconscious), a realm beyond the mutable “strife / Of Death and Life” (II.iii.58), in order to attain some vague occult wisdom which will set Prometheus free, “as in all such myths of descent and return, what is brought forth is a boon or elixir” (Campbell 138).

Asia is led out from the archetypal depths in the “the Spirit of the Hour[’s]” (Shelley 177) chariot, which is associated with natural processes, for the “coursers” are said to feed on “lightning,” drink of the “whirlwind’s stream,” and “bathe in the fresh sunbeam” (II.iv.163-6). After she has ascended to “the Top of a snowy Mountain” at the beginning of Act II, Scene 5 (Shelley 177), and upon completion of her encounter with the collective unconscious, Asia assumes control of the chariot of the Spirit of the Hours. Asia is therefore in control of the temporal world, and again ascends to a summit to again indicate her “inner ‘loftiness’ of spirit” (Cirlot 219), although now her spirit is revalued.

Due to the unconscious’s newly activated power over the temporal world the fall of Jupiter occurs as a matter of course. Jupiter’s downfall is pronounced and executed by Demogorgon. Jupiter’s sentence is to “dwell together [with Demogorgon] / Henceforth in darkness” (III.i.55-6). This is the “darkness” of the realm of the collective unconscious, where Jupiter will become

another unactivated / unprojected archetype, like his father Saturn, an irony which Demogorgon points out to him. The control of the world has passed to the Asia-Prometheus pair, a control first evidenced when Asia assumes the reins of the chariot of the Hours, and now “the elements obey” (III.i.80) Jupiter no longer.

One of the results of the transfer of control is the unbinding of Prometheus by Hercules. Hercules, who due to his mythic history is a figure representative of apotheosis, exists in a state of dual consciousness, between humanity and the gods. Partaking of both natures, Hercules is a fitting figure to effect Prometheus’s release, which is a result of the salvation of the earthly / conscious (for Prometheus himself is the son of Earth) domain by the reintegrated unconscious’s opening of the provinces of the divine.

After her emergence from the encounter with Demogorgon, Asia is described as being significantly “changed” (II.v.16), having been imbued with the spirit of “love” (II.v.40). “Love” in this conception imbues the whole universe, for even the “air we breath is Love” (II.v.95). This is the love which Asia describes as “Harmonizing this Earth with what we feel above” (II.v.97), in a seamless synthesis of the earthly and the divine, between the conscious and unconscious. This love is an attractive force which brings together all oppositions. Love conceived as the resolution of opposites “Weave[s] harmonies divine, yet, ever new, / From difference sweet where discord cannot be” (III.iii.38-9); and makes possible the creation of “Strange combinations out of common things” (III.iii.32). Asia and Prometheus retreat into the “Cave” (III.iii.10), a symbol of interiority which resembles the skull, and thus represents Prometheus’s now more integrated and opening mind, providing a place where the conscious and unconscious “will sit and talk of time and change” (III.iii.23) from a perspective of relative permanence.

This resolution presented in the poem has an analogue in the alchemical *coniunctio*, which also marks the realization of a stage in the individuation process. Jung equates the *coniunctio* with “psychic synthesis” (CW 14 par. 657), and more specifically as the “synthesis of the conscious with the unconscious” (CW 14 par. 770), which is “the ultimate phase of the work ... in the form of the *hierosgamos* or ‘chymical wedding’” (CW 12 par. 43). Abrams tentatively posits this interpretation, while also raising the significance of the conjoining to a universal level:

[as] possibly, Shelley’s adaptation of the alchemical marriage between the male and female contraries (symbolically represented by the sun and moon, as well as king and queen) which consummates the Hermetic quest for the principle that will transmute all elements to gold and all mankind to the age of gold. (603)

The fourth act, cast “in the traditional form of a nuptial masque” (Abrams 602), is an analogue of this “chymical wedding,” a microcosmic sacrament translated to a macrocosmic stage, “an immense epithalamion in which the elements of the human mind and of the outer cosmos celebrate the triumph of love” (Abrams 602-3). Yet at the same time, it is primarily a personal triumph wherein Prometheus has completed a stage in the ongoing process of individuation, and attains a more fully integrated selfhood. This progression attains only a form of completion, but remains ever-completing, for the self exists only in, and as, process.

Prometheus, as a symbolic figure, represents the potential indwelling in the mind of each one of us, and as such is a prototype for the potential completion / redemption of everyone – a redemption that must still be undergone by, and enacted in, an individual psyche. Such a process, despite its origins in our collective human nature, must be enacted in specific terms relevant to each individual psyche and its epoch. Prometheus, like the “*filius philosophorum*,”⁷ as a distinct activation of an archetypal figure and pattern, is always potentially a “new light bringer” – a

prophet of the potentiality of psychic development available to any lost or fragmented self, and who may thus become “the salvation or transfiguration of the universe [which] is brought about by the mind of man” (CW 13 par. 163). As such, Shelley’s Prometheus still speaks to us in our moment. “We can conclude ... that the desired realization of the whole man was conceived as a healing of organic and psychic ills” – a realization and a power of healing which over time has had “a thousand names” (CW 14 par. 770) – one of which is “Prometheus.”

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Notes

¹ Taylor's method employs a curious contagion of Jungian and Freudian approaches, viewing the *peregrinus* figure and the feminine/anima/mother image from an Oedipal perspective in its relation to the libido and the incest wish, rather than as a symbol of a split self, and as a player in the process of individuation. In his focus on infantile sexuality and the resultant complexes, Taylor also seems to be unaware of Jung's critiques of Freud's theories as being unequipped to address the growth/development of the mature individual's consciousness; and Jung's view of Freud's method as "reductive" and "purely medical" as it is "directed at a pathological or otherwise unsuitable formation which has taken the place of normal functioning" (CW 15 par. 103).

² "Zosimos of Panopolis [was] an important alchemist and Gnostic of the third century A.D." (CW 13 par. 85).

³ While my analysis follows the same basic controlling idea as that of Dr. Norton, the two diverge in the specifics of the discussion (in regards to both content and sources) as well as in the interpretation of key figures (cf. especially the treatments of Jupiter, the Furies, Panthea, and Hercules [whom Norton neglects]).

⁴ "Will-to-infinitude" is a term of my own coining (with a genuflection to Nietzsche), which is related to Jung's notion of the "Transcendent Function" (the "counterposition" of the "unconscious" being the collective unconscious), and seeks to locate this concept in the individual psyche. The will-to-infinitude is basically the desire to overcome the temporal and the limited, as well as to divine an understanding of origins and teleologies, which is the assumption and motive force behind much of religion and art. The will-to-infinitude also relates to humanity's desires and efforts, both conscious and unconscious, to extend the bounds of being ever outward (or inward), and in this sense is closely related to the German Romantic conception of longing as *Sehnsucht*, and dwells in the environs of the artificial paradise.

⁵ Other synonyms for this stage are: *putrefactio*, *solutio*, *separatio*, and *divisio* – all of which emphasize the essential notion of dissolution / separation (CW 14 par. 721).

⁶ An unconscious aspect of the female being is conversely often personified by a male figure, which as such is termed the *animus*.

⁷ Literally "the Son of the Philosophers," who is both the initiator and product of the alchemical *opus*.