

Prometheus Unbound:

A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts.

By Percy Bysshe Shelley

The text is drawn from the old Cambridge edition.

Audisne haec amphiarae, sub terram abdite?¹

Preface

The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar license. The Prometheus Unbound of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim² as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by

¹ Cicero: "Do you hear this, O Amphiaraus, concealed under the earth?" Amphiaraus was a prophet, saved by Jupiter from pursuers by being miraculously swallowed by the earth, after which he became an oracular god. Shelley directs the comment to Æschylus, asking him to hear this reworking of the Prometheus myth.

² his victim: Prometheus, whom he nailed to the rock of the Caucasus for 3,000 years.

the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being, resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla,³ among the flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind; Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candor to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more

³ the Baths of Caracalla: ancient baths in Rome, named after the Emperor Caracalla (188-217 AD).

deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one, who inhabits the same age with such writers⁴ as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature⁵ to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion.⁶ We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the

⁴ such writers: identified in the MS as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Byron.

⁵ golden age of our literature: according to Shelley, the Elizabethan age of Spenser and Sidney.

⁶ the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion: Roman Catholicism.

portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in Nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought and with the contemporary condition of them. One great poet is a masterpiece of Nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of Nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms a 'passion for reforming the world:' what passion incited him to write and publish his book he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus.¹ But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of

¹ Francis Bacon (1561-1626), great English political figure and man of letters, renowned especially for the style of his prose; William Paley (1743-1805), theologian and author of *Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), *Evidences of Christianity* (1794), and *Natural Theology* (1802), which opens with the analogy of a watch found on the heath permitting the inference that "as the watch must have had a maker" so must the natural world; Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), political economist and author of *Essay on Population* (1798).

reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that, until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

Dramatis Personæ

Prometheus.	Asia	}
Demogorgon.	Panthea	} Oceanides.
Jupiter.	Ione	}
The Earth.	The Phantasm of Jupiter.	
Ocean.	The Spirit of the Earth.	
Apollo.	The Spirit of the Moon.	
Mercury.	Spirits of the Hours.	
Hercules.	Spirits. Echoes. Fauns.	
Furies.		

[Summary—Prometheus is chained to a mountain, where he is daily punished by Jupiter's eagle, while the two daughters of Ocean, Panthea and Ione sit silently at his feet. The excerpt below opens the play and reveals the depth of Prometheus' suffering. Later in the first act, aided by his mother, the Earth, he starts to recall his curse of Jupiter: the Phantasm of Jupiter is summoned and repeats Prometheus' curse. Upon hearing his own hatred repeated back to him, Prometheus' hatred for his adversary turns to pity. Mercury is sent by Jupiter with a vast chorus of Furies who tempt him to despair with visions of human inadequacy: war, famine, industrial urbanization, the failure of the French Revolution, and Christ's crucifixion. Panthea reminds Prometheus of his own eternal love Asia, whom he has forgotten. Panthea also proclaims her own love for Asia and goes off to "the far Indian vale" to waken Asia.]

ACT I

Scene. — A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus. Prometheus² is discovered bound to the Precipice. Panthea and Ione are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.

Prometheus.

Monarch of Gods and Dæmons,³ 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 [1.5]
 Request for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
 And toil, and hecatombs⁴ of broken hearts,
 With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
 Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
 Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn, [1.10]
 O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
 Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
 And moments aye⁵ divided by keen pangs
 Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
 Scorn and despair, — these are mine empire: — [1.15]
 More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
 From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!

² Prometheus: "forethinker" in Greek

³ Monarch of Gods and Daemons: Jupiter (Jove). In Shelley's terms, a symbol of political and religious tyranny. Daemons: intermediate beings between gods and mankind.

⁴ hecatombs: numerous sacrifices.

⁵ continually

Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain, [1.20]
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt? [1.25]
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 heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever! [1.30]

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up [1.35]
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind: [1.40]
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.

And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn, [1.45]
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling Hours,¹ one among whom
— As some dark Priest haies² the reluctant victim —
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood [1.50]
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee.³ What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror, [1.55]
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,

¹ Hours: Latin 'Horae', female divinities supposed to preside over the changing of the seasons.

² haies: drags.

³ Ah no, I pity thee: one of the pivotal statements of the play. Prometheus's Christ-like pity for his torturer is his redemption.

As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall.⁴ Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, through the mist [1.60]
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
[1.65]
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish [1.70]
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

Act II.

[Summary—Panthea tells Asia of her dream, in which she sees Prometheus rejuvenated by love. Together the two sisters follow the mysterious echo of a second dream to the dark underworld of Demogorgon, whom Asia, in the scene included below (Act II, scene IV), rouses into action with her passionate declaration of love for suffering humanity. Later in the act, a stream of chariots of the Hours pours across the stage. One of these carries the grim fate of Jupiter, another the happy reunion of Asia and Prometheus.]

Scene IV.

— The Cave of Demogorgon.

Asia and Panthea.

Panthea.
What vèiled form sits on that ebon throne?

Asia.
The veil has fallen.

Panthea.
I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun.

⁴ recall: revoke.

— Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb, [2.4.5]
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

Demogorgon.
Ask what thou wouldst know.

Asia.
What canst thou tell?

Demogorgon.
All things thou dar'st demand.

Asia.
Who made the living world?

Demogorgon.
God.

Asia.
Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination? [2.4.10]

Demogorgon.
God: Almighty God.

Asia.
Who made that sense which, when the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim [2.4.15]
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?

Demogorgon.
Merciful God.

Asia.
And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things, [2.4.20]
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;⁵
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood; [2.4.25]
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech

⁵ Which from the links . . . death: the great chain of being was the doctrine by which England justified its monarchy and its rigidly hierarchical social system for centuries. The image may, as Peter Butter suggests, have been inspired by the sight of convicts chained together in Rome, which Shelley described in a letter to Peacock (6 April 1819).

Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

Demogorgon.

He reigns.

Asia.

Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down. [2.4.30]

Demogorgon.

He reigns.

Asia.

I feel, I know it: who?

Demogorgon.

He reigns.¹

Asia.

Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn,² from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway, [2.4.35]
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms; but he³ refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought [2.4.40]
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, "Let man be free," [2.4.45]
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease, [2.4.50]
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons⁴ drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent, [2.4.55]

¹ He reigns: a statement that fails to identify the force that has taken over a world created by a benevolent deity. It could be Jupiter, or 'Almighty God', or some other force entirely.

² Saturn: or Kronos (time), the origin of evil.

³ he: Saturn.

⁴ unseasonable seasons: in the golden age perpetual spring reigned.

And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers, [2.4.60]
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth,⁵ fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart; [2.4.65]
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms [2.4.70]
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
[2.4.75]
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,⁶
[2.4.80]
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race,⁷ behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs, [2.4.85]
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
[2.4.90]
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,

⁵ Nepenthe is a grief-banishing drug; moly is the magic herb given by Hermes to Odysseus to counteract the poison of the Circe; amaranth is an unfading flower.

⁶ mimicked . . . mocked: imitated . . . created forms more beautiful than the merely natural (i.e. idealized).

⁷ And mothers . . . race: pregnant women, gazing at the statues, gave birth to children like them, whose features reflect the passion with which the statues were made. Yeats reworks this idea in his poem, *The Statues*.

The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
[2.4.95]
The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who rains down [2.4.100]
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone? [2.4.105]
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Demogorgon.

All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil: [2.4.110]
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

Asia.

Whom calledst thou God?

Demogorgon.

I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia.

Who is the master of the slave?

Demogorgon.

If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets . . . But a voice [2.4.115]
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love. [2.4.120]

Asia.

So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As mine own soul would answer, did it know [2.4.125]
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgon.

Behold!

Asia.

The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
 I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds [2.4.130]
 Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
 A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
 Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
 And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
 Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink [2.4.135]
 With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
 As if the thing they loved fled on before,
 And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
 Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
 Sweep onward.

Demogorgon.

These are the immortal Hours, [2.4.140]
 Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia.

A spirit with a dreadful countenance
 Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
 Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
 Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!
 [2.4.145]

Spirit.

I am the shadow of a destiny
 More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
 Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
 Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

Asia.

What meanest thou?

Panthea.

That terrible shadow¹ floats [2.4.150]
 Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
 Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
 Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
 Terrified: watch its path among the stars
 Blackening the night!

Asia.

Thus I am answered: strange! [2.4.155]

Panthea.

See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
 An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
 Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
 Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
 That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope; [2.4.160]

¹ terrible shadow: Demogorgon.

How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
 Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

Spirit.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
 They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
 And when the red morning is bright'ning [2.4.165]
 They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
 They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
 Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
 I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon; [2.4.170]
 Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
 We encircle the earth and the moon:
 We shall rest from long labours at noon:
 Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

ACT III

[Summary— Jupiter is overthrown by Demogorgon, and the unchained Prometheus is reunited with Asia in a forest cave. Later in the act, the Spirit of the Hour describes the universal liberation after the fall of kings and the end of social classes, nations and racial distinctions.]

Scene I.

— Heaven. Jupter on his Throne; Thetis and the other Deities assembled.

Jupiter.

Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
 The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
 Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
 All else had been subdued to me; alone
 The soul of man, like unextinguished fire, [3.1.5]
 Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
 And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
 Hurling up insurrection, which might make
 Our antique empire insecure, though built
 On eldest faith, and hell's coeval,² fear; [3.1.10]
 And though my curses through the pendulous³ air,
 Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
 And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
 It climbs the crags of life, step after step,
 Which wound it, as ice wounds unsaddled feet, [3.1.15]

² coeval: contemporary. Fear and faith allow Jupiter to retain power.

³ pendulous: wavering

It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
 Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall:
 Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
 That fatal child, the terror of the earth,⁴
 Who waits but till the destined hour arrive, [3.1.20]
 Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
 The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
 Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
 To redescend, and trample out the spark.
 Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,⁵ [3.1.25]
 And let it fill the Dædal⁶ cups like fire,
 And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
 Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
 As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
 Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins [3.1.30]
 The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
 Till exultation burst in one wide voice
 Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou
 Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
 Of the desire which makes thee one with me, [3.1.35]
 Thetis, bright image of eternity!
 When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
 God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
 The penetrating presence; all my being,
 Like him whom the Numidian seps⁷ did thaw [3.1.40]
 Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
 Sinking through its foundations": even then
 Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld, [3.1.45]
 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding⁸ the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
 Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
 The earthquake of his chariot thundering up [3.1.50]
 Olympus?

⁴ That fatal child, the terror of the earth: Jupiter's rape of Thetis produced Demogorgon.

⁵ Ganymede: a shepherd-boy from Mt. Ida, abducted to serve as Zeus' cupbearer.

⁶ Dædal: intricately adorned, as if by the mythological craftsman Daedalus.

⁷ Numidia: formerly a country in north Africa. Seps: poisonous snakes of the desert in Numidia.

⁸ griding: piercing, wounding

[The Car of the Hour arrives.
Demogorgon descends, and moves
towards the Throne of Jupiter.

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon.

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 [3.1.55]
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead, [3.1.60]
Put forth thy might.

Jupiter.

Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons¹
I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!

No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge, [3.1.65]
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then, [3.1.70]

We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire, [3.1.75]
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.

Ai! Ai!

The elements obey me not. I sink [3.1.80]
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

Scene II. [omitted]

¹ deep Titanian prisons: after their overthrow by Jupiter, the Titans were imprisoned in Tartarus, far below the earth.

Scene III.

— Caucasus. Prometheus, Hercules, Ione, the Earth,
Spirits, Asia, and Panthea, borne in the Car with the Spirit
of the Hour. Hercules unbinds Prometheus, who
descends.²

Hercules.

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

Prometheus.

Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired [3.3.5]
And long delayed.

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. There is a cave, [3.3.10]
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veinèd emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears [3.3.15]
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats, [3.3.20]
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.³
What can hide man from mutability? [3.3.25]
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shal smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams [3.3.30]
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,

² According to legend, Hercules killed the eagle torturing Prometheus and freed him after Prometheus made his peace with Jupiter.

³ we will sit . . . ourselves unchanged: *King Lear*, V.iii.8-19: "We two alone will sing like birds I' th' cage" and talk with rogues of "Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out . . ."

Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last, [3.3.35]
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds, [3.3.40]
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aëreal Enna⁴ feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,⁵
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard, [3.3.45]
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions, — dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright [3.3.50]
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality —
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy, [3.3.55]
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators⁶
Of that best worship love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
[3.3.60]
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall:⁷
Such virtue has the cave and place around.

[Turning to the Spirit of the Hour.

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old [3.3.65]
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

⁴ Enna: plain in the middle of Sicily often regarded as an earthly paradise.

⁵ Himera: river which nearly bisects Sicily.

⁶ mediators: man's works of art are the mediators of love between him and Prometheus.

⁷ evil and error fall: Shelley regards human nature as progressive.

Ione.

Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
 Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell; [3.3.70]
 See the pale azure fading into silver
 Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
 Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

Spirit.

It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
 Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange. [3.3.75]

Prometheus.

Go, borne over the cities of mankind
 On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
 Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
 And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
 Thou breathe into the many-folded shell, [3.3.80]
 Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
 As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
 Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
 And thou, O, Mother Earth! —

The Earth.

I hear, I feel;
 Thy lips are on me, and their touch runs down [3.3.85]
 Even to the adamantine central gloom
 Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
 And through my withered, old, and icy frame
 The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
 Circling. Henceforth the many children fair [3.3.90]
 Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
 And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
 And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
 Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
 Draining the poison of despair, shall take [3.3.95]
 And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
 Shall they become like sister-antelopes
 By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
 Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
 The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float [3.3.100]
 Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers
 Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose:
 And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
 Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
 And death shall be the last embrace of her [3.3.105]
 Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
 Folding her child, says, "Leave me not again."

Asia.

Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
 Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
 Who die?

The Earth.

It would avail not to reply: [3.3.110]
 Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
 But to the uncommunicating dead.
 Death is the veil which those who live call life:
 They sleep, and it is lifted:¹ and meanwhile
 In mild variety the seasons mild [3.3.115]
 With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
 And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
 And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
 All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
 Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild, [3.3.120]
 Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
 The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
 With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
 And thou!² There is a cavern where my spirit
 Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain [3.3.125]
 Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
 Became mad too, and built a temple there,
 And spoke, and were oracular,³ and lured
 The erring nations round to mutual war,
 And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee; [3.3.130]
 Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
 A violet's exhalation, and it fills
 With a serener light and crimson air
 Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
 It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine, [3.3.135]
 And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,
 And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
 Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
 As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
 Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven, [3.3.140]
 And through their veinèd leaves and amber stems
 The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls
 Stand ever mantling with aëreal dew,
 The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
 Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams, [3.3.145]
 Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
 Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
 Arise! Appear!

[A Spirit rises in the likeness of a winged child.

This is my torch-bearer;
 Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing

¹ They sleep . . . lifted: cf. *Mont Blanc* 50: 'death is slumber'

² And thou: Earth turns from Asia to Prometheus.

³ a temple . . . oracular: perhaps the temple at Delphi, where the priestess uttered prophecies in a state of ecstasy— although Shelley's meaning could be metaphorical.

On eyes from which he kindled it anew [3.3.150]
 With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
 For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
 And guide this company beyond the peak
 Of Bacchic Nysa,⁴ Mænad-haunted mountain,
 And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers, [3.3.155]
 Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
 With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
 And up the green ravine, across the vale,
 Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
 Where ever lies, on unerasing waves, [3.3.160]
 The image of a temple,⁵ built above,
 Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,⁶
 And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
 And populous with most living imagery,
 Praxitelean⁷ shapes, whose marble smiles [3.3.165]
 Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
 It is deserted now, but once it bore
 Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
 Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
 The lamp which was thine emblem;⁸ even as those
 [3.3.170]
 Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
 Into the grave, across the night of life,
 As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
 To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
 Beside that temple is the destined cave. [3.3.175]

ACT IV.

Scene. — A Part of the Forest near the Cave of
 Prometheus.

⁴ They are to be guided from the Indian Caucasus to Greece, passing Nysa (a city in India) where Bacchus was born.

⁵ a temple: the Academy outside Athens, where Plato once taught.

⁶ architrave: in architecture, principal beam and lowest member of the classical entablature, the other main members of which are the frieze and the cornice. Its position is directly above the columns, and it extends between them, thus carrying the upper members of the order.

⁷ Praxitelean: from the Greek sculptor of the fourth century BCE.

⁸ there the . . . emblem: in the Athenian festival in honor of the fire-gods, young men raced from the altar of Prometheus to the city, carrying lighted torches, without letting them go out.

[Summary—The final act, added a few months later by Shelley, is a cosmic coda or epithalamium sung first by a chorus of Spirits of the Hour and another chorus of the Spirits of the Human Mind, then by the Spirit of the Earth and of the Moon, which is included below.]

The Earth.¹

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness, [4.320]
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon.

Brother mine, calm wanderer, [4.325]
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody [4.330]
Through me, through me!

The Earth.

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags,² sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses, [4.335]
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred Curse,³
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction,
sending [4.340]
A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending,

—
Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn, [4.345]
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow,
and fire;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom

¹ Where the Earth of Acts I and III iv was a Hellenic goddess and earth-mother, that which appears here is brother and lover of the moon.

² my cloven fire-crags: volcanoes.

³ Sceptred Curse: Jupiter.

Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire:

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
[4.350]
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.
[4.355]

The Moon.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth [4.360]
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move: [4.365]
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

The Earth.

It interpenetrates my granite mass, [4.370]
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.
[4.375]

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen⁴
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,⁵ [4.380]
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows,
fleeing,
Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;

⁴ has arisen: Love is the subject that governs this verb.

⁵ unremoved for ever: i.e. hitherto not removed.

Which⁶ over all his kind,⁷ as the sun's heaven [4.385]
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move:

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is
poured; [4.390]
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.⁸

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not, [4.395]
Compelling the elements with adamant stress;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free
wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul, [4.400]
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could
be! [4.405]

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
[4.410]
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their
children wear;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,⁹ [4.415]

⁶ Which: i.e. Love.

⁷ his kind: i.e. humankind.

⁸ Leave man . . . restored: Shelley refers to the legend of King Bladud of Britain, a leper who followed a lost pig to the hot springs of Bath, by which he was cured.

⁹ Language is a perpetual Orphic song: i.e. it governs our morals and actions. Orpheus tamed wild beasts and stopped the tortures of Hades with his music.

Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless
were.

The lightning is his slave;¹ heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
[4.420]

The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;²
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

The Moon.

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last, [4.425]
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,³
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep. [4.430]

The Earth.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray [4.435]
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

The Moon.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower [4.440]
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

¹ the lightning is his slave: in the sense that man was discovering how electricity could be harnessed to his purposes.

² he strides the air: Ballooning became all the rage in London only months after the Montgolfier brothers made the first flight in 1783.

³ paramours: lovers.

The Earth.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,⁴
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight, [4.445]
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,⁵
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth
keep.

The Moon.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse, [4.450]
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful, [4.455]
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest [4.460]
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise, [4.465]
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move [4.470]
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave⁶ lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.⁷ [4.475]

⁴ my pyramid of night: as with the 'shadowy cone' at *Paradise Lost* iv 776, Shelley refers to the idea that the earth's shadow is a cone or pyramid of darkness that circles round it in diametrical opposition to the sun.

⁵ As a youth . . . lying: The youth lies under the halo ('shadow') cast by the light of his beauty into the air above him.

⁶ Agave: daughter of Cadmus who became a maenad.

⁷ Cadmaean forest: forest of Cadmus. Cadmus: in Greek legend, son of Agenor and founder of Thebes. Misfortune followed his family because he killed the sacred dragon that guarded the spring of Ares. Athena told him to sow the

Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space, [4.480]
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye [4.485]
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a gray and watery mist
Glow like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfold, [4.490]
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow —

The Earth.

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight [4.495]
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe, [4.500]
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramlings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

Panthea.

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.

Ione.

Ah me! sweet sister, [4.505]
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

Panthea.

Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
[4.510]
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,

dragon's teeth, and from these sprang the Sparti [sown men],
ancestors of the noble families of Thebes.

Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone, [4.515]
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

Ione.

There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

Panthea.

An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

Demogorgon.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies, [4.520]
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:

The Earth.

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon.

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee; [4.525]
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth¹
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

The Moon.

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

Demogorgon.

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
Aethereal Dominations,² who possess [4.530]
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A Voice from above.

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

Demogorgon.

Ye happy Dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray, [4.535]
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered —

A Voice from beneath.

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon.

Ye elemental Genii,³ who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone [4.540]

¹ birth: race.

² Dominations: the fourth of the nine orders of angels, as at *Paradise Lost* iii 392.

³ elemental Genii: the elements.

Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens⁴ on:

A confused Voice.

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

Demogorgon.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds; [4.545]
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes: —

A Voice.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay; [4.550]
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night⁵ of this immortal day:

All.

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon.

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell⁶ yawns for Heaven's despotism,
[4.555]
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs [4.560]
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity, [4.565]
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite; [4.570]
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;

To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent; [4.575]
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

⁴ battens: feeds gluttonously.

⁵ dim night: i.e. the period preceding the eternal day.

⁶ the Earth-born's spell: i.e. Prometheus' revocation of his curse.