PROMETHEUS' CAVE AS THE IVORY TOWER OF POETRY: A MYTHO-ARCHETYPAL READING OF SHELLEY'S PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

*Roohollah **Datli Beigi**, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Iran, r.datlibeigi@fgn.ui.ac.ir*

*Pyeaam **Abbasi**, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran, abbasi@fgn.ui.ac.ir*

*Zahra **Jannessari Ladani**, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran, z.jannessari@fgn.ui.ac.ir*

Original scientific paper
DOI: 10.31902/fll.51.2025.3
UDC: 821.111.09

Abstract: Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1819) portrays a revolutionary hero who, upon being unchained, embarks on a journey that progresses eastward and backward. This article examines Shelley's depiction of specific locations, particularly Prometheus' cave, in relation to Akkerman's myths of the Garden and the Citadel, as well as biblical parables such as the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel. The focus is on exploring the correlation between Prometheus' cave and the Tower of Babel, symbolizing the ivory tower of poetry. By portraying this isolated and solitary place and repressing his communal self, Shelley fashions his poetic identity as an alienated ivory tower poet, whose poetry emanates from the realm of the ivory tower rather than the garden. To realize his vision of the perfect garden of poetry, Shelley posits the need to replace his alienated self with his communal self as the foundation for the myth of the Garden, which also represents the garden of poetry. A thorough analysis of Shelley's play reveals how his depiction of the Elysian place ultimately becomes an excluded non-Elysian realm that aligns more with the myth of the Citadel and the Tower of Babel, separating the poet from human society and his communal self.

Keywords: Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, the myth of the Garden, the myth of the Citadel, the Tower of Babel, Ivory Tower

1. Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1819) delves into the tormented psyche of the mythological figure Prometheus, presenting a psychodrama that unfolds within the tumultuous mind of the poet himself. The play can be seen as a portrayal of the inner workings of the human mind, with Shelley's characters representing different conflicting states of mind. It opens with the triumph of Jupiter, who embodies the prevailing dominance of reason and rationality in the human mind. In contrast, Prometheus represents the resurgence of energy (the Dionysian) and imagination suppressed by the rational and Apollonian force of Jupiter, who was "the god not only of the Capitoline temple but also of the *arx* [citadels]" (Linderski 214). While the play draws inspiration from Aeschylus' trilogy, Shelley's version does not feature a reconciliation between Prometheus and Jupiter following Prometheus' release from captivity. *Prometheus Unbound* employs the structure of Greek tragedy to envision an ideal future rooted in the glory of the past, set in a paradisiacal realm. Shelley's idealism is intertwined with the presence of Elysian places, influenced by the pastoral landscapes of Virgil's works and the prophecies of the Book of Isaiah, in which "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for [people]; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (35.1). Prometheus' solitary cave, where he and Asia descend in Act Three, represents one of these idyllic Elysian places in Shelley's works. By paying tribute to such secluded and solitary paradisiacal realms, Shelley shapes his identity as an alienated ivory tower poet, distanced from society and others.

Accordingly, the objective of this article is to examine Shelley's poetic identity as an ivory tower poet in relation to Abraham Akkerman's myths of the Garden and the Citadel, as well as the parables of the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel. The article aims to argue and illustrate that Prometheus' cave at the end of Act Three symbolizes the ivory tower, where the poet isolates himself as an alienated ivory tower poet. In this context, the article raises the following questions: How can Shelley's constellated idealism, solitude, and poetic identity be compared to the erection of the Tower of Babel? And how does Prometheus' cave represent the Tower of Babel, i.e., the ivory tower of poetry? By focusing on Prometheus' eastward and backward journey and his cave in Act Three, this article seeks to provide relevant insights by exploring the concepts of ivory tower poetry, the Tower of Babel, and Abraham Akkerman's myths of the Garden and the Citadel, which correspond to the biblical parables of the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel, respectively.

1.1.The Myths of the Garden and the Citadel

The origin of Akkerman's myths of the Garden and the Citadel can be traced back to the biblical stories of the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel. In *Phenomenology of the Winter-City* (2016), Akkerman argues that human history has undergone an evolutionary progressive movement from "the myth of the Garden" to "the myth of the Citadel" both in the built environment and human thought. According to Akkerman, over an extended period, the feminine and primordial "myth of the Garden" gradually transformed into the masculine "myth of the Citadel," with the latter eventually dominating and repressing the former. "But whereas the myths of the Citadel," Akkerman notes "[has] come to dominate city-form, the myth of the Garden has been subdued and suppressed" (196). The climax of this evolution, leading to the dominance of reason and rationalism in both human thought and the built environment, was the Age of Enlightenment during which mathematical measurement, calculation, reasoning, and rationality were dominant concepts. Akkerman highlights that from Plato to Descartes and onwards to modernity, where the Enlightenment mentality forms the basis for the modern city, the myth of the Citadel "came to dominate city-form and ensuing aspects of contemplation" (*Phenomenology* 229).

According to Akkerman, these two myths align with Nietzsche's perspective on the dual Dionysian and Apollonian impulses in art (229), which underwent a similar evolution from the former to the latter. Despite being in fierce opposition to each other, these two impulses finally came to accept "the yoke of marriage" and brought about "Attic tragedy which exhibit[ed] the salient features of both parents" (Nietzsche 19). However, over time, the Dionysian impulse gradually waned, and the Apollonian impulse gained prominence from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment period. The Industrial Revolution and Descartes' emphasis on clear ideas further accelerated this shift in environmental design and human thought. More precisely, during the Age of Enlightenment, there was a deliberate imposition of order onto nature, resulting in a reaction against Dionysus. This led to the dramatic growth of urbanization and suppression of both the Dionysian impulse and the myth of the Garden in human thought and the built environment, respectively. Nevertheless, the emergence of Romanticism as longing for naturalness was a reaction to the mathematically ideal paradigms of the Enlightenment period. Disillusioned with the growth of urbanization and industrial cities, Romantic intellectuals rejected what Akkerman calls "conventions exposed as hiding corrupt practices in the urban society"

(*Phenomenology* 114) and began to celebrate nature and the natural man. This Romantic reaction resulted in a "revival of medieval notions toward nature, rejecting the rationalism of the Enlightenment" (87). Accordingly, using the myths of the Garden and Citadel as well as the biblical parables of the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel, we suggest that Prometheus' backward and eastward journey to his cave, with its apparent paradisiacal and Elysian features, reflects Shelley's longing for the revival of the myth of the Garden, offered in the story of the Garden of Eden. Nonetheless, as we will explore, what Shelley offers through Prometheus' cave is alienation and solitude, making the cave the representative of not the Garden of Eden but the Tower of Babel, alienating Prometheus from society. Recognizing Shelley's place in this mythopoeic pattern can indicate the ways the disappointment caused by the post-Napoleonic Europe and the failed promises of the French Revolution changed the external quest for reform and freedom to a psychologically internalized quest in which the collective hero undergoes a journey in an archetypal act or wish of becoming one with his feminine creative counterpart in an alienated place. Doing so, Shelley fashions his poetic identity as a poet of ivory tower who, alienating himself from human society, has shut himself up in the ivory tower of the poetry.

2. Discussion

The opening scene of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1819), in which Jupiter is the ruler, "shows man's mind as it now is, with reasons" (Baker 118). Baker describes this initial scene as "the dark night of Prometheus' soul" (102), illustrating Prometheus' soul overshadowed by the influence of Jupiterian reason and the resulting corruption and violence. Once "a spirit of keen joy" (I. line 158), Prometheus is now overwhelmed by the shadow of reason. The ultimate consequence of reason's dominance, symbolized by Jupiter's authority, is corruption, plague, disease, violence, and fear against which Prometheus, this "man's double" (Kerenyi 78), strives to rebel: "Rain then thy [Jupiter] plague upon me, / Ghastly disease and frenzying fear" (I. 266-67). In *Shelley's Major Poetry* (1948), Carlos Baker makes a distinction between the actual and the ideal in *Prometheus Unbound* and argues that while the opening of the play is Shelley's picture of the actual world, the end of the play "is not intended as a picture of the actual but only of what 'ought to be'" (268), representing the ideal.

The play is considered by Baker to be "a drama of the inner mind, and evil is represented as a deformity of the mind" (109). He also asserts that "Prometheus is not a 'character' at all but rather an image of the

mind of man" (112). Similarly, Roland Duerksen describes Prometheus as "the creativity latent within a person and within society" (631), emphasizing that Prometheus is a state of mind or attribute rather than a traditional character. However, contrary to Baker's and Duerksen's perspectives, this study, using Jungian terminology, argues that Prometheus symbolizes the collective or universal man, while the other characters represent different and conflicting aspects of his mind. From the very beginning of the play, it becomes evident that Prometheus has bestowed power and wisdom upon Jupiter, who represents reason, the Apollonian authority and the myth of the Citadel: "I gave thee power / And my own will" (I. 273-74); "I gave all / He has; and in return he chains me here" (I. 381-82); "Then Prometheus / Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter" (II. iv. 43-44). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the opening scene of the play presents Shelley's portrayal of the actual world, symbolizing the control of man's mind by reason. What Prometheus rebels against is, thus, the reason he himself has empowered. Put differently, in order to transform his purgatorial state in the first act into the ideal state in the third, Prometheus must rebel against and liberate himself from the influence of reason.

Every literary period or movement is either the continuation of or a reaction to the previous one. As a literary period, Romanticism "described a period that not only succeeded a previous age of Enlightenment but also opposed it" (Jarrells 57). Not only did literature and art undergo a shift from mimetic to subjective expression, but other aspects of human life also experienced similar transitions. Accordingly, areas such as philosophy, religion and the sciences witnessed a dramatic transformation from "materialism to idealism," "ecclesiastic dogma to intuitive faith" and "matter-based physics to energy-based physics," respectively (Burwick 168). Most importantly, as Kearney points out, "the *mimetic* paradigm of imagining [was] replaced by the *productive* paradigm" (155). While opposing the Age of Enlightenment as the recent past, British romantic poets looked back to more distant historical periods such as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance for inspiration. Shelley, being the most idealistic of the Romantics, goes even further and looks back to the classical Golden Age that corresponds to man's primordial state in the Garden of Eden, where man had been in a kind of harmonious unity with God as well as his feminine counterpart. Shelley's prophetic poetry, thus, aims for the revival of a new Golden Age, like that of Virgil, where "the ox will have no fear of the lion" (qtd. in Williams 18) or the peaceful millennium of Isaiah "when the lion shall lie down with the lamb" (Gurney 303). What makes Shelley struggle for a new Golden Age in the future is the despair and fatalism prevalent in

his era—a consequence of a long history that witnessed significant shifts from pastoralism to urbanism, from the Garden to the Citadel, from the Dionysian to the Apollonian, and from imagination to reason. This historical trajectory resulted in a purgatorial state of disappointment for Shelley. In the context of Romanticism, Thomas Love Peacock describes a poet in their times as "a semi-barbarian in a civilized community. He lives in the days that are past […] The march of his intellect is like that of a crab, backward" (327). Along with these shifts, Romanticism also called for a return to the temporal over the spatial, the Dionysian over the Apollonian, the myth of the Garden over the myth of the Citadel, and, most importantly, feeling and imagination over reason and abstraction. The Romantics rebelled against the central ideal of the Enlightenment, which they criticized as "the selfish and foolish hope of reasoning" (Wordsworth 279) or "the selfish and calculating principle" and "the owl-winged faculty of calculation" (Shelley, *Selected Poetry* 655-56).

Reason is the faculty, writes Baker referring to Shelley's *Epipsychidion* (1821), that rescues the soul from "false imagination" (235). Under the influence of reason, represented in Shelley by the moon-symbol or its cold light, "the soul in a creative sense is neither alive nor dead, but occupies some middle purgatory" (Baker 235). Prometheus, chained and tormented by Jupiter, experiences this purgatorial state primarily due to reason's control over the creative soul, until imagination (represented by Asia) arrives to bring reconciliation. Additionally, Asia and the two other Oceanids, Panthea and Ione, are described as "member[s] of the enraptured Dionysian worshipers, the *thiasos*" (Gelpi 178), followers of Dionysus, of which, the Maenads are the most significant members. The Maenads, moreover, are described by Jane Harrison as "the mothers and therefore the nurses of the holy child; only a decadent civilization separates the figures of mother and nurse" (39). The decadent Jupiterian civilization has caused a separation between the Maenad (Asia) and Prometheus, leading to his purgatorial state at the opening of the play. An alternative perspective suggests that the separation of Asia from Prometheus, or rather, the repression of Dionysian energy by Jupiter, whom Prometheus himself empowered, has resulted in both his purgatorial state and the decline of human civilization or history. The corruption, ugliness and violence with which the play opens are to a great extent due to this separation and/or repression. In other words, Prometheus' terrible purgatorial condition, combined with the corruption and decadence of the opening scene, is the consequence of his separation from his Dionysian essence, imagination, or anima. Applying this to the action of the play,

particularly the first act, it is proposed that granting power to Jupiter or reason, Prometheus has suppressed the Dionysian essence, resulting in the imperfect condition of man and the violent human history depicted at the play's outset. On a societal level, in societies where rationality, reason, and the Apollonian have been imposed, repressed Dionysian energy manifests itself through social corruption. According to Shelley, the ultimate result of rationality's dominance "is to destroy all sensibility to pleasure; and, therefore, it is corruption" (*Selected Poetry* 647). Overall, both this social corruption and the previously mentioned purgatorial state of Prometheus are to a great extent due to the control of reason over the creative soul until imagination (Asia) arrives to liberate humanity from the confines of reason. As the productive paradigm and the catalyst for change, imagination transforms the ugliness of the actual world into beauty.

In this context, Shelley rebels against the imperfection caused by the long-established dominance of reason and the Apollonian drive, which culminated in the Age of Enlightenment. Ross Woodman describes this period as "the rational triumph of human consciousness over the irrational operations of the mythopoeic imagination" (199). The first act of the play vividly portrays the supremacy of the masculine, calculating, and rational Apollonian impulse (reason) and the repression of the feminine, frenzied, and irrational Dionysian impulse respectively through Jupiter's sovereignty and the wretched state of Prometheus. Shelley, so to speak, projects a backward movement from reason to imagination and the Apollonian to the Dionysian in order to poetically challenge and hopefully reform the imperfect, violent, and corrupted history with which the play opens. To achieve this, Prometheus embarks on a quest for self-knowledge, awareness, or truth, as he recognizes that what he observes under Jupiter's tyranny is not the truth itself but rather "the shadow of the truth" (I. 655). Not surprisingly, "truth" is depicted as a feminine phenomenon, as Peter Brooks describes it as "goddess, as sphinx, or as woman herself" (96), with Diana serving as a representative. The journey of Prometheus here moves backward in time and eastward in place to resurrect the myth of the Garden repressed throughout human history by the myth of the Citadel. Furthermore, this quest represents Prometheus's attempt to awaken his repressed Dionysian side and tap into his feminine creative power embodied in the forms of Demogorgon and Asia, respectively. That is why Gelpi argues that "Prometheus does not desire Asia as an object, nor does he even desire to be with Asia; he desires to be Asia" (174). It is worth mentioning here that imagination or creative power in many of Shelley's poems has a female shape as, according to Baker, he

"reincarnate[s] in woman's shape his conception of the source of true poetic power" (264).[1] Regarding the play's setting, the projection of Prometheus' feminine aspect onto the external world is reflected in the paradisiacal or Elysian place where his cave is located and where he and Asia are destined to reside. It seems worth speculating here about the setting of the play, which undergoes similar backward shifts from the Citadel to the Garden, from history to paradise, and from the west to the east in the second and third acts.

2.1. From the Citadel to the Garden in *Prometheus Unbound*

As Prometheus and his companions embark on their journey, they traverse both a backward movement in time and an eastward movement in space, ultimately arriving at a paradisiacal location, where Prometheus's cave is situated. This journey entails a transition from the Citadel to the Garden, which is symbolically regarded as the garden of poetry. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871), Nietzsche presents the concepts of the Dionysian and the Apollonian as two fundamental impulses that gave rise to Greek tragedy. He juxtaposes these two impulses as contrasting gender types, whose marriage led to the appearance of "Attic tragedy" as the highest form of art "which exhibits the salient features of both parents" (19). These two Nietzschean impulses are, according to Akkerman, "projected onto the environmental archetypes of the Garden and the Citadel," which are presented "in the stories of the Garden of Eden and of the Tower of Babel" (*Phenomenology* 62). These two archetypes, however, underwent an evolution from the former to the latter, and the feminine, Dionysian, time-bound, and altruistic myth of the Garden was gradually evolved into or repressed by the masculine, Apollonian, space-bound, and egoistic myth of the Citadel. As a consequence of this evolution by which the "masculine paradigm of the Ideal City [the Citadel]" came to be dominant in Western city-form, "the feminine myth of the Garden," Akkerman

[1] Emily in *Epipsychidion* and Asia in *Prometheus Unbound* are such female shapes; the former described as a "poor captive bird" prisoned in a "narrow cage" (5), and the latter exiled to a "desolate and frozen" vale, suggest the repression of feminine creative power in the age of reason. See also "'Like Flowers or Creeping Worms': The Poet as Phallic Symbol in Shelley's *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*" where Shelley's hero is assimilated into his anima, a veiled maiden and in this act of assimilation or becoming one with his anima, "the Poet withdraws passively from his constrained maleness and subjectivity and lets the veiled maiden assume control via a sexual act of dissolution" (Datli Beigi et al. 121). As a result of this assimilation, the hero experiences a kind of reverie the final result of which is an impermanent perfection.

argues, "has been all but excluded from a design expression in the city" ("Platonic Myth" 757). Furthermore, "the Bacchants [Maenads]," relates Harrison, "are the Mothers; that is why at their coming they have magical power to make the whole earth blossom" (40). When applied to the unfolding of the drama, this theory suggests that the myth of the Garden, the Maenads, and the Dionysian impulse are notably absent from the initial setting of the first act. By combining these theories, we can argue that the setting of the opening scene, described as the "eagle-baffling mountain, / Black, *wintry*, dead, unmeasured; *without herb*, / Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life" (I. lines 20-22; emphasis added), along with the prevailing presence of Jupiter, aligns with an Apollonian setting associated with the myth of the Citadel. The transition from the Garden to the Citadel can be seen as analogous to the fall of man from paradise to the realm of history that, while granting humanity the consciousness of time, is believed to have gradually led to corruption and violence. *Prometheus Unbound* opens at the culmination of this corrupted and violent history, representing the end of humanity as well. Interestingly, this evolution, or more accurately, decline from paradise to history, similar to the transitions from the Garden to the Citadel or from the Dionysian to the Apollonian, results in corruption. Shelley, in *Prometheus Unbound*, endeavors to envision an end to this corruption or a path back to paradise that begins with the journey of Prometheus and his entourage moving backward and eastward through the Elysian land of Act Three, where Prometheus' cave is located and where he can rediscover his primal unity with Asia, symbolizing a return to the state of harmony and wholeness.

The scene at the beginning of the play is "a ravine of icy rocks in the Indian Caucasus," where Prometheus is bound to a crag with Panthea and Ione seated at his feet. Like the Enlightenment city that, according to Richard Lehan, became "a closed system, entropic, which led to the decline of civilization" when it underwent a process of being "cut off from a source of nourishment" (6), that is, from nature, the setting of the opening scene in *Prometheus Unbound* reflects a civilization in decline. As indicated by the aforementioned lines, this setting portrays a civilization that has been deprived of the presence of the Maenads (represented by Asia) and their magical power to bring forth blossoms on the earth. Additionally, the presence of icy rocks, the wintry landscape adorned with "snow-fed streams" and "The chrystal-winged snow" that "cling round [Prometheus'] hair" (I. 120, 385) establish an association between winter, Apollo, Jupiter, and the myth of the Citadel. This association is reinforced by Jupiter's dominance over both Prometheus and nature in the opening scene of the play. These

elements collectively evoke a symbolic connection between the wintery setting, Apollo as a representation of the Apollonian, Jupiter as the embodiment of power and control, and the overarching myth and themes associated with the Citadel.

In his *Phenomenology*, Akkerman draws an analogy between Belus (Jupiter) and Apollo, associating both deities with winter and the myth of the Citadel. Akkerman asserts that Belus, who is often identified with Zeus or Jupiter in classical Greek and Latin texts, was a "sun-god akin to, or identical with Apollo" (59). Moreover, he argues that Apollo stood "as the patron of colonization" while he was purportedly linked with "the north and the *winter*" (59; emphasis added). Before discussing this issue, it should be noted that in classical Greek and Latin texts, Belus or Belos is often identified with the Greek Zeus and Latin Jupiter as Zeus Belus or Jupiter Belus. In The History of Herodotus, the Greek historian Herodotus also refers to the term "Jupiter Belus" and associates it with a fortress or citadel "with gates of solid brass" and "surrounded by a wall of great strength and size" (181). Similarly, Jerzy Linderski asserts that "Jupiter was the god not only of the Capitoline temple but also of the arx" (214), which is the Latin term for citadel. However, our intention is not to claim that Shelley's Jupiter and Apollo are identical, but rather to highlight the presence of certain Apollonian characteristics in the first act and in the character of Jupiter. Additionally, the play depicts an ongoing conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses throughout. Consequently, the herbless and wintry setting of the first act represents a masculine environment where reason, influenced by the Apollonian impulse, and the myth of the Citadel have become dominant forces shaping the human environment and contemplation.

The setting itself is Apollonian and historical, rather than Dionysian and paradisiacal. Nevertheless, it should not be left unnoticed that, as Shelley says hopefully and prophetically in the concluding line of his "Ode to the West Wind," after the winter, the coming of spring is inevitable: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (70). Similarly, while the opening scene of the play takes place on a wintry night and lacks the presence of Asia, the Maenad and the creative soul or anima of Prometheus, it is worth noting that morning is gradually dawning, symbolizing the potential for change and renewal. Additionally, two other Maenads, Panthea and Ione, are present in the scene, and their role becomes instrumental in the eventual reunion of Prometheus and Asia, serving as the climactic event of the play. Among the Romantics, Shelley was notably the most optimistic, maintaining a belief in the eventual return of a Golden Age. In one of his letters, he expresses the idea of embracing a form of optimism where individuals become their

own gods, stating, "Let us believe in a kind of optimism in which we are our own gods" (*Essays* 188). It is possible that Shelley employs the term "gods" here to allude to the creative power of human imagination, which, akin to the creative power of gods, has the potential to transform the ugliness and distortions of the real world into the beauty and perfection of an ideal realm. This is why Duerksen argues that "truly imaginative creation, in any and all areas, can translate existence from the distorted deathliness […] to genuine life or immortality" (631). Accordingly, it is the creative imagination of Prometheus that translates the distorted deathliness of the first act into the perfect Elysium of the following acts.

In contrast to the wintry, masculine, and Apollonian setting of the first act, the second act presents a feminine and Dionysian atmosphere. It unfolds in "a lovely vale in the Indian Caucasus" during the spring season as depicted by the lines "thou hast descended / Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring" (II. i. 5-6). This shift in setting reflects the transition from the earlier harsh and controlled environment to a more vibrant and lively one, symbolized by the arrival of spring and its association with femininity and the Dionysian aspects of nature. The awakening of spring in the second act serves as a metaphor for the reawakening of the imagination and the Dionysian impulse, and the act functions as a transitional stage, bridging the history and the Citadel depicted in the first act with the paradisiacal setting of the Garden in the third act. Prometheus embarks on his journey back to the Golden Age, symbolizing a return to a paradisiacal land or mankind's prelapsarian state, in the second act. This journey unfolds mysteriously, with Asia's soul likened to "an enchanted boat" drifting towards "a paradise of wilderness" (II. v. 72, 81). The imagery suggests the enchanting and transformative nature of the voyage, transporting Prometheus and the audience towards a realm reminiscent of Edenic bliss and untamed beauty. Despite the apparent absence of Prometheus in the second act, where female characters like Asia and Panthea dominate the stage, Gelpi suggests that "Prometheus does not actually disappear from the action of Act Two" but is there "experiencing the waking dream of reverie," that is, he, in an archetypal act and wish of becoming one, "becomes assimilated into his anima" (174). In this regard, Gaston Bachelard observes that "when the reverie is truly profound the being who comes to dream within us is our anima" (62). In other words, Prometheus is experiencing the profound awakening of his imagination projected externally onto the female character of Asia and, as said above, becomes Asia herself. His reverie is such a deep one that melts him unobtrusively into his productive paradigm that is capable of

inventing a beautiful and ideal world out of the ugliness of the actual one. Accordingly, Prometheus' reverie is indeed a productive paradigm, capable of creating a beautiful world at the end of Act Three, when "The loathsome mask [falls], the man remains / Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man / Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless" (III. iv. 193-95).

In the course of its development, the play in the first scene of Act Three tends to be concerned with the opposition between Jupiterian reason and Promethean imagination, a creative opposition that leads to the Elysian land of the act. As Jupiter declares in the opening lines of Act Three "All else had been subdued to [him]" except for "The soul of man" or imagination that "like an unextinguished fire, / Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt" and has made Jupiter's "antique empire insecure" (III. i. 4-6, 9). In contrast to the Jupiterian reason that is associated with snow falling "flack by flack" on "herbless peaks" (III. i. 11), the Promethean imagination entails fire that melts down the snows and ices of reason and brings about spring. Unlike the fallen imagination of Adam and Eve that resulted in man's entry into history and corruption, the Promethean awakened imagination is a productive paradigm paving the way for man's journey back to Elysium.[2] The Promethean imagination, while being a mythopoeic imagination whose irrational operations release man from the rational triumph of human consciousness, is a harmonizing faculty that reconciles the opposites and effects the peace, unity, and harmony at the end of Act Three. It is perhaps for this reason that Baker argues that when Prometheus "achieve[s] his act of self-reform […] the masks of ugliness fall from all created things" (268). Similarly, implicit in Jeffery Cox's argument that Shelley's characters including Prometheus "are all trapped in false conception of themselves," (69) is the point that Prometheus' rebellion is indeed against himself and he unbinds himself when he comes to a state of self-knowledge. The important point to note here is that after becoming unbound, Prometheus and his retinue

[2] See Richard Kearney's *The Wake of Imagination* (1988), in which he argues that "the story of imagination is as old as the story of creation itself" (39). It goes back to the Original Sin and the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent that activated their imagination and promised that eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge would bestow a God-like power upon them. Although located in the perfect Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were prohibited from eating the forbidden fruit which made them capable of imagining themselves to have a creative God-like power.

get involved in a return journey towards the east, that is, towards man's primordial state and unspoiled condition.

In the third scene of Act Three, the Earth instructs her "torch-bearer" to guide the company "beyond the peak / Of Bacchic Nysa, Maenad-haunted mountain, / And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers" (153-55). Although the location of Nysa is unknown, Gelpi associates it with the east when she makes the point that "the nymphs of Nysa, nurses of the infant Dionysus, raised him to manhood, and the city was the *eastern* center of his cult" (257; emphasis added). Nysa is thus located in the east and is associated with Dionysus, rebirth, and the approach of spring. Likewise, the word "Indus" suggests that the group is heading eastward. Looking back at the prehistoric time of man in Eden, the Book of Genesis reads that, after creating Adam and Eve, God creates the Garden of Eden in the East: "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (2.8). Then, after being tempted by the serpent, Adam and Eve, to use Kearney's words, are "exiled east of Eden into history" (40). While the Bible does not explicitly mention their direction after leaving paradise *Latin Life of Adam and Eve* (1929) suggests that they travelled westward, with Eve even venturing further west: "She then began to walk toward the western regions and began to wail and weep bitterly with great moaning" (Mozley 18.2). On the level of things said, the group's itinerary, unlike that of the fallen Adam and Eve, is eastward and backward, that is, back to the Garden of Eden or the classical Golden Age as a perfect Elysian land.

However, in Act Three of the play, the setting is not portrayed as a perfect or immutable place but rather as a semi-ideal realm subject to change and the passage of time, as indicated by Prometheus' contemplation on human vulnerability to mutability: "What can hide man from mutability?" (III. iii. 25). It is a semi-ideal place subject to time and change, described by Prometheus as "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" (III. iii. 23-4). Furthermore, the depicted place is not an actual physical location at all but a reverie or vision created by Prometheus' imagination. The temple of the act, as the Earth says, "is deserted now, but once it bore / Thy name, Prometheus" (III. iii. 167-68). The temple had once been Prometheus' place as it once bore his name and, hence, is associated with fertility and Dionysian energy.

From the three institutions of the early cities, namely "the temple," "the citadel" and "the market," Lehan argues, the first one, as the feminine part of the city, has been associated with "the fertility of the

earth, animals, and women" and often "inseparable from a goddess like Athena" (20). In contrast to the city's temple described by Akkerman as "the sacred place of communion with deities overlooking the well-being of the city from the sky," is the construction of the citadel and its walls through which "the city's ruler as its deified hero often expressed his own power" (*Phenomenology* 56). As opposed to Jupiter's court and/or citadel in the first act as an Apollonian, infertile, herbless and decadent place from which Jupiter expresses his power, the temple of the third act had once been related to Prometheus, Dionysus and fertility. The temple is now abandoned, but, as a ruin or deserted place, it can excite some romantic feelings associated with the Golden Age in Prometheus, as the poet's persona, and inspire him to rebuild it in his imagination. Related to the points already mentioned, Gelpi relates that "for the temple of his new world [the new Golden Age], then, Shelley turned rather to his own imagination's rebuilding of the classical ruins that so moved him in Pompeii and at Rome" (259). What further suggests that Shelleyan utopia in *Prometheus Unbound* is a reverie is the temple's reflection in a motionless pool. The temple described by the Earth in this act is the reflection of an actual temple in a calm pool: "Beside the windless and crystalline pool, / Where ever lies, on unerasing waves, / The image of a temple, built above" (III. iii. 159-61). The pool which reflects the temple's image functions as a mirror like that of the Tale of Narcissus and is thus symbolic. "The symbolism of mirrors," points out Michael Ferber, "depends not only on what things cause the reflection – nature, God, a book, drama – but also on what one sees in them – oneself, the truth, the ideal, illusion" (126). What is seen in the "crystalline pool" here as the mirror is "the ideal" related to Shelley's perfect realm, utopian place and the new Golden Age suggested by the "Praxitelean shapes" encompassing the temple.[3] The reflected image, moreover, is an illusion or hallucination associated more with the realm of ivory tower poetry than reality.

2.2. The Secluded Garden as the Ivory Tower

The aforementioned pastoral setting of Act Three looks like an Elysium that corresponds both to the myth of the Garden and the mythological Golden Age with which Shelley's mind is continually

[3] Praxiteles, the most renowned of the Attic sculptors of the fourth century BC, was the representative of the climax of ancient Greek sculpture when the method of Greek artists "bore its ripest fruits" and their statues, although "like real human beings" were not unlike "beings from a different, better world" (Gombrich 70).

preoccupied. The pastoralism of the act and the site of Prometheus' cave, whose "rough walls are clothed with long soft grass," (III. iii. Line 21), is, according to Gelpi, reminiscent of "Plato's fantasy of the age of Kronos" (246). Kronos/Saturn, Zeus/Jupiter's father, ruled during the mythological Golden Age, as the first of a series of four ages (gold, silver, bronze and iron), and was known as the patron of harvest and fertility. During his reign, there was no sorrow, turmoil, or grief, and the earth was fruitful:

> [T]he deathless gods who dwell in Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief […] they had all good things; for the fruitful earth unforced bore them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods. (Hesiod 6)

The simple and peaceful dwelling demonstrated in this act with its "odorous plants," "leaves and flowers," "birds and bees," and "mossy seats" (III. iii. 10-11, 19-20) is reminiscent of this Kronosian era. Nevertheless, Shelley's account of Saturn, the Latin version of Kronos, is a bit different from Hesiod's. Although Shelley's Saturn is also associated with a serene paradisiacal era when man lived in "the calm joy" like the one "flowers and living leaves" do now "Before the wind or sun has withered them" (II. iv. 36-37), his reign had been a static and lethargic one in which he refused humankind "The birthright of their being, knowledge, power […] thought / Which pierces this dim universe like light, / Self-empire, and the majesty of love" (II.iv.39-45). The lackadaisical reign of Saturn can be reminiscent of the peaceful but static state of Adam and Eve in paradise, where they were deprived of knowledge, thought, and imagination, resulting in their fallen imagination and exile into history. Similarly, in Shelley's play man's deprivation of knowledge and thought makes Prometheus the collective man to rebelliously "[give] wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter" that, like man's fall from paradise, is itself problematic, bringing about "First famine, and then toil, and then disease, / Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen" (II. iv. 44, 50-1).

Because of the sovereignty of Jupiter or the dominance of reason in the first act, the world is suffused with plague, famine, toil, and corruption till Prometheus sees and wakes "the legioned hopes / Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers," that are such "fadeless blooms, / That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings / The shape of Death"

(II. iv. 59-63). The flowers described in these lines are such fadeless and everlasting blooms prophesying the end of misery and the hopeful coming of a perfect era. Not only do these folded Elysian flowers, but also many similar images in Act Two illustrate Shelley's utopian realm or Elysium: images such as "A paradise of wildernesses"; "happy heavens"; "Elysian garden islets"; "Realms where the air we breathe is love"; "Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee"; "a diviner day / A paradise of vaulted bowers"; and, last but not least, "Wilderness calm and green" (II. v. 81; 87; 91; 95; 101; 103-4; 107). Shelley's choice of words such as "flee" and "a diviner day" suggests a longing to escape the corrupt and flawed world of reality and seek refuge in idyllic "Elysian garden islets." These islands evoke images of a pristine and unspoiled state, reminiscent of humanity's prelapsarian condition in the Garden of Eden. However, this desire for escape is not a literal possibility but rather an imagined one, carried out through the power of reverie that, to borrow Bachelard's words, "is an opening to a beautiful world, to beautiful worlds" (13). Escape, that is escape from materialism to idealism and perfection where there is no state, no church and no edifices as the implications of the myth of the Citadel, is an ever-present theme in almost all Shelley's works.

In order to avoid the materialism and the contagion of the real world and what he calls "Age's icy caves, / And Manhood's dark and tossing waves" (II. v. lines 98-9) in *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley, in his letter to Mary, suggests abandoning "all human society" and retiring with Mary and their child "to a solitary island in the sea" where he can "build a boat, and shut upon [his] retreat the floodgates of the world" (*The letters* 339). Retiring himself to such a solitary island, Shelley writes "I would be alone, and would devote, either to oblivion or to future generations, the overflowings of [my] mind" (339). Analysing these lines of Shelley's letter, Datli Beigi et al. note that Shelley "represents himself here as an ivory tower poet who leaves all human society or, rather, alienates himself from the regenerated world so as to protect himself egoistically against the tribulations of life" ("Monstrosity" 306). The pastoral and paradisiacal setting of Act Three, especially the cave where Prometheus and Asia are to be reunited archetypally, is such a solitary island that, unlike the first act with its herbless crags, is "All overgrown with trailing odorous plants, / Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers" (III. iii. 11-12). However, being isolated and associated with lackadaisical oblivion, it rather resembles an ivory tower in which the poet has shut himself up. It is also worth noting here that, as hiding places, caves function for Romantic poets, especially Shelley, as refuges and secluded places implying "the Romantic notion of the poet as

retreating to a cave." (Ferber 40 In other words, Shelley longs here for a form of seclusion in which he, as an ivory tower poet, can retreat and devote his social and human concerns to oblivion. The solitary island mentioned in Shelley's letter as well as the solitary places and nooks of his poems, such as Prometheus' cave, where his characters would like to retire, are supposed to be paradisiacal secluded realms depicted in many of his works as either an earthly or a posthumous transcendent region. These places in Shelley's poems correspond in many respects to Akkerman's myth of the Garden offered in "the parable of the Garden of Eden" (2016, 58). The cave of Prometheus is such a place that despite being considered a perfect Edenic place is indeed a non-Edenic realm whose lack of community likens it to Akkerman's myth of the Citadel which, as the evolved form of the Tower of Babel, represents "solitude, exclusion, solidity and power" (*Phenomenology* 143). Quite contrary to the myth of the Garden, that of the Citadel is associated with a sense of community and involves "guileless human relations," the most important of which is "sharing in the environment as the only mode of human existence" (141–142). It should be noted that the solitary island Shelley describes in his letter to Mary and Prometheus' cave deny such an altruistic sharing and sense of community. By contrast, implying individuation and alienation, they function as an ivory tower, where the poet shuts himself off, thereby alienating himself from the vicissitude of everyday life as well as social, cultural and political concerns. Depicting such an excluded and solitary place and repressing his communal self, Shelley fashions his poetic identity as an alienated ivory tower poet whose poetry is the poetry of ivory tower rather than the poetry of garden. In order to achieve this garden, Shelley's alienated self should be replaced by his communal self as the basis for the myth of the Garden, which is also the garden of poetry. Thus, the radical Shelley challenges his identity as an ivory tower poet not only in *Prometheus Unbound*'s fourth act – which was added by Shelley a year after having written Act One through three – but also in his later works such as *The Sensitive Plant* (1820) and *The Triumph of Life* (1822), in which the chaos, ruins, and monstrous forms represent the collapse of Shelley's poetic identity as an ivory tower poet. Further studies are needed to explore this challenge and its consequences in the already mentioned works of Shelley.

3. Conclusion

Throughout history, the feminine primordial myth of the Garden has been gradually subdued by the masculine myth of the Citadel. The pinnacle of this evolution was the Age of Enlightenment when the myth

of the Citadel together with reason came to dominate human environment and thought. Applying Akkerman's myths of the Garden and the Citadel as well as the biblical parables of the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel to the dramatic action of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, this article showed how the play's development from Act One through Act Three is in fact Prometheus' regressive movement to a previous state against which he had once rebelled. Although the Garden into which Prometheus falls at the end of Act Three is reminiscent of either the mythological Golden Age of Kronos or the Biblical paradise, it represents the secluded Citadel or the Tower of Babel, where the poet shuts himself up and fashions his identity as an alienated ivory tower poet.

The place to which Prometheus and his retinue descend in Shelley's play exhibits characteristics of exclusion, individuation, and solitude, which parallel the myth of the Citadel, specifically the Tower of Babel. Although the poem initially transitions from the Citadel to the Garden, symbolizing a shift from the Tower of Babel to the Garden of Eden, what Shelley ultimately achieves in Act Three is the depiction of a solitary place, where he isolates himself from human society. This portrayal aligns with the concept of the ivory tower poet, representing Shelley's alienated self. By considering themes of alienation, solitude, and individuation in Shelley's play and examining it through the lens of the Garden and Citadel myths, as well as the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel, we can discern that Shelley's paradisiacal places are, in fact, non-paradisiacal. They correspond more closely to the myth of the Citadel and the Tower of Babel, further alienating him from human society and his communal self.

Works cited:

Akkerman, Abraham. "Femininity and Masculinity in City-Form: Philosophical Urbanism as a History of Consciousness." *Human Studies* 29 (2006): 229–256. DOI 10.1007/s10746-006-9019-4.

---. "Platonic Myth and Urban Space: City-Form as an Allegory." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 83.4 (2014): 757-779. DOI : 10.3138/UTQ.83.4.757.

---. *Phenomenology of the Winter-City: Myth in the Rise and Decline of Built Environments*. New York: Springer, 2016.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Reverie*. Trans. Daniel Russell. Boston: Beacon, 1971.

Baker, Carlos. *Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1948.

Brooks, Peter. *Body Works: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1993.

Burwick, Frederick. "Romantic Sciences: British and Continental Thresholds." *A Concise Companion to the Romantic Age*. Ed. Jon Klancher. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009, 168-188.

Cox, Jeffery N. "The dramatist." *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*. Ed. Timothy Morton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 65-84.

Datli Beigi, Roohollah et al. "'Like Flowers or Creeping Worms': The Poet as Phallic Symbol in Shelley's Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude." *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2022, 117-134.

---. "Monstrosity in P. B. Shelley's The Triumph of Life through Akkerman's Citadel-to-Garden trajectory," *Orbis Litterarus,* vol. 77, no. 5, 2022, 299-313.

Duerksen, Roland A. "Shelley's Prometheus: Destroyer and Preserver." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1978, 625-638.

Ferber, Michael. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

Gelpi, Barbara Charlesworth. *Shelley's Goddess*: *Maternity*, *Language*, *Subjectivity*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art*. New York: Phaidon Publishers Inc, 1995. Print.

Gurney, Stephen. "Byron and Shelley." *English Romantic Poetry*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2004, 289-317.

Harrison, Jane Ellen. *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010.

Herodotus. *The History of Herodotus*. Ed and Trans. George Rawlinson, vol. 1. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1956.

Hesiod. *Works and Days, Theogony and the Shield of Heracles*. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2006.

Jarrells, Anthony. "'Associations Respect[ing] the Past': Enlightenment and Romantic Historicism." *A Concise Companion to the Romantic Age*. Ed. Jon Klancher. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009, 57-76.

Kerenyi, Carl. *Prometheus: Archetypal Image of Human Existence*. Thames and Hudson, 1963.

Kearney, Richard. *The Wake of Imagination*: *Toward a Postmodern Culture*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Mozley. J. H. *Latin Life of Adam and Eve*. Trans. B. Custis. 1929.

Lehan, Richard. *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998.

Linderski, Jerzy. "The Libri Reconditi." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. 89, 1985, pp. 207-234. http://www.jstor.org/stable/311276.

Nietzsche. Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Francis Golffing. New York: Anchor Books, 1871/1956.

Peacock, Thomas Love. "The Four Ages of Poetry." *Classic Writings on Poetry.* Ed. William Harmon. New York: Columbia UP, 2003, 318-329.

Shelley, P.B. *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*. Vol II. London: Edward Moxon, 1852.

---. *The letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley: Vol. II.* Edited by F. L. Jones, Oxford University Press, 1964.

---. *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley.* Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions ltd, 2002.
Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
Woodman, Ross. *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
Wordsworth, William. "Observations Prefixed to *Lyrical Ballads*." *Classic Writings on Poetry.* Ed. William Harmon. New York: Columbia UP, 2003, 279-296.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND (1819) DE SHELLEY MET EN SCÈNE UN HÉROS RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE QUI, UNE FOIS DÉLIVRÉ

Prometheus Unbound (1819) de Shelley met en scène un héros révolutionnaire qui, une fois délivré de ses chaînes, entreprend un voyage progressant vers l'est et vers le passé. Cet article examine la représentation par Shelley de certains lieux, en particulier la caverne de Prométhée, en lien avec les mythes du Jardin et de la Citadelle selon Akkerman, ainsi qu'avec les paraboles bibliques telles que le Jardin d'Éden et la Tour de Babel. L'étude met l'accent sur la corrélation entre la caverne de Prométhée et la Tour de Babel, symbolisant la tour d'ivoire de la poésie. En représentant ce lieu isolé et solitaire et en réprimant son moi communautaire, Shelley façonne son identité poétique comme celle d'un poète de la tour d'ivoire aliéné, dont la poésie émane du domaine de la tour d'ivoire plutôt que du jardin. Pour réaliser sa vision du jardin parfait de la poésie, Shelley pose la nécessité de substituer à son moi aliéné son moi communautaire, fondement du mythe du Jardin, qui incarne également le jardin de la poésie. Une analyse approfondie de la pièce de Shelley montre comment sa représentation du lieu élyséen devient finalement un espace non élyséen, exclu, qui s'apparente davantage au mythe de la Citadelle et à celui de la Tour de Babel, séparant le poète de la société humaine et de son moi communautaire.

Mots-clés: *Prometheus Unbound* de Shelley, le mythe du Jardin, le mythe de la Citadelle, la Tour de Babel, la Tour d'ivoire