

Shelley's Prometheus and Milton's Satan: Exploring an Uneasy Kinship

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Abstract:

For those who suffer for the sake of righteousness, the name of Shelley's Prometheus is one which comes to our minds. To Shelley, who was always up in arms against any sort of tyranny, 'Prometheus is, as it were, the type of highest perfection of normal and intellectual nature impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best noblest end'.

Satan is the only imaginary being who resembles Prometheus in many aspects. However, according to Shelley, Prometheus is a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, grandeur, determination and patient opposition to the force of the omnipotence, he is susceptible to being described in Shelley's words as 'exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest'. Both Milton's Satan and Shelley's Prometheus embody a spirit of rebellion. Satan is like Prometheus in his struggle against the universe, but Satan loses his heroic aspect after being turned into a serpent that desires only revenge and becomes an enemy to mankind. Prometheus, as modified by Shelley, has lost the ferocity and pride but he has learnt wisdom and unlike Milton's Satan, he no longer hates the omnipotent force gloating over his impending downfall; but pities him.

Though Prometheus of Prometheus Unbound and Satan of Paradise Lost resemble one another in courage, fortitude and rebellious nature, yet a close scrutiny, which I intend to do in this paper, will show how Shelley's poetic portrayal of Prometheus differs from his prosaic assertions about kinship between these two characters.

Key words: Kinship, Forbidden Knowledge, Suffering, Omnipotent, Rebel, Revenge, Pride, Selfish, Sacrifice.

The Kinship

The majestic Titan, chained to a bare crag for thousands of years for having loved and dared his all for his love of mankind, is a symbol for whatever is good in a dauntless sacrificing spirit, a lover, or a patriot. Prometheus took an active initiative in changing the human lot. He made them intelligent and wise. He stole fire from Heaven and gave it to mankind. It is for this service of Prometheus to humankind that Prometheus was punished so severely. The lyrical drama opens with the imprisonment and torture of Prometheus in a dark cave, which may be taken as Hell and his calling his oppressor such names as 'mighty god', 'almighty' tyrant and the 'ill' tyrant reigning in Heaven indicates a close similarity between Milton's Satan and Shelley's Prometheus. Thus 'Prometheus appears as the fallen angel of Milton's text fighting against the tyranny of God, who, in this context, is Jupiter' (Karadas 2012). Jupiter has condemned him to tremendous suffering for three thousand years for his service to man. Yet his head is not bowed. This condition of Prometheus can be equalled to Satan's situation when Milton's readers first see him lying 'prostrate' in the 'ever-burning Sulphur', 'with Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire' (Milton 2005, 6). Like the Titan whose will remains indomitable even after he is chained to the bare rock, Satan also refuses to be changed by place or time as he believes that 'The mind is its own place, and in itself/ Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n' (Milton 2005 p.10). His spirit too, remains unbent. We find neither in Satan, nor in Prometheus the picture of broken personalities with heads bowed and relaxed resistance; they are portraits of great rebels. C. S. Lewis comments 'Milton's Satan, is or ought to be an object of admiration and sympathy, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the poet or his readers or both' (Lewis 1984 p.94); and this statement is equally applicable for Shelley's Prometheus, who, through his indomitable spirit of rebellion as well as his selfless sacrifice for mankind, gains our sympathy as well as admiration.

In spite of the sleepless suffering, misery, scorn, despair and solitude that Prometheus suffers, he still prefers not to make any compromise. He is not tempted to share with Jupiter

even the tyrannical power which Jupiter wields from his unenvied throne. In his indignation, fortitude and defiance, Prometheus of Shelley is as towering a figure, of as great a magnitude as Prometheus of Aeschylus, perhaps even greater. What Prometheus has suffered, he has done for good reason, for the welfare of human beings. He is suffering for the sake of righteousness and perhaps that knowledge sustains him through his dire condition. He is bound to the rocks, not with shackles made by Hephaestus as in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, but with cold gliding glaciers, which press him down on the rocks. He suffers the icy cold to his bones. An eagle gnaws at his heart. Horrid shapes like nightmares add to this suffering. Earthquakes shake the rock, thereby giving Prometheus unimaginable pain. Yet his head is not bowed down. The physical and mental suffering of Prometheus is graphically embodied forth and objectified by the geography of despair, in which Prometheus is

Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.

(Shelley 2007, 210)

The relentless sequence of adjectives 'black, wintry, dead, unmeasured' corresponds to the painful hammer-blows by which Prometheus is nailed to his precipice, while suggesting the blank hopelessness of this world of deprivation. Jupiter's world defines itself partly through absences – it is without the normal signs of life in plant, insect or animal – 'to one void mass battering and blending' all the productions of earth (Shelley 2007, 279). It is a world of disease and death, based on a cycle of 'unseasonable seasons', without form or colour or the variety of sounds which are associated with animation and activity. It is not unlike Milton's

A universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good,
Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things...

(Milton 2005, 43)

Like the world in which Milton's Satan finds himself, Jupiter's realm is also the product of a curse; like Satan, Prometheus is faced by a 'world whose most terrifying property

is its vertiginous sense of endlessness both in time and space' (Webb 2007, 696).

The Schism Begins

Prometheus' pain seems to be endless, yet he endures it with calm and fortitude; and remains adamant, sustained by the hope of Jupiter's inevitable downfall. Satan too endures his excruciating pains in the hell – '... the thought/ Both of lost happiness and lasting pain/ Torments him' (Milton 2005, 5), but, at the same time Satan with his indisputable logic justifies his present situation by saying: 'To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell: / Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven' (Milton 2005, 10). Even after his absolute defeat and fall and when the only prospect that looms before him is that of eternal punishment, that spirit of high disdain, which once led him to challenge the Almighty, revolts against the idea of submission:

... to bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee and deify his power
Who from the terror of his Arm, so late
Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
That were in ignominy and shame beneath
This downfall...

(Milton 2005, 6)

He plans to overthrow God. Milton's Satan is a megalomaniac. However, Shelley's Prometheus is not like Milton's Satan gloating over the picture of the fall of his 'Arch-Enemy'. Suffering day and night Prometheus still hopes that all these awful hours, days and years will ultimately end. In fact, he knows that a time will come when Jupiter will be dragged down from his throne to his doom as an unwilling beast is taken to the altar by a priest. He will then seek the mercy of his erstwhile enemy. But Prometheus does not feel any joy to think of the day when he will be in a metaphoric position to trample down Jupiter, when 'Fear will be more galling than my chains' (Shelley 2007, 210). Rather he pities him when he thinks of the impending catastrophe, when Jupiter's soul will suffer the hellish torture. Shelley's Prometheus, like Milton's Satan, disliked the spirit of compromise with an autocrat. He waits for Jupiter's fall, although his attitude towards Jupiter is blended with forgiveness and pity born out of his love for human beings

and his own suffering. Prometheus' own suffering has made him too wise to enjoy even the suffering of his enemy. This pity in Prometheus makes him a mightier personality than Milton's Satan who sustains himself only with the idea of revenge.

Prometheus was punished by the all-powerful for bringing knowledge to man. While Prometheus stole fire from heaven and endowed the human beings with the knowledge of fire for their benefit when it was forbidden entirely by Jupiter, Satan, to accomplish his desire of revenge on God, stealthily entered God's Garden of Eden, turned himself into a serpent and provoked Eve to taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, thus endowing her with knowledge that was otherwise forsaken by God. Prometheus' act benefitted human beings but at the same time brought misery in his own life, whereas Satan's act brought misery in the life of Adam and Eve. While Prometheus himself was punished for this act, Satan accomplished his own interests of taking revenge against God by enticing Eve to eat the Fruit of Knowledge. Therefore, it can be said that both Prometheus and Satan were determined to impart 'forbidden knowledge' to man, although their intentions were different; and in both the cases the endowment of this knowledge plays a major role in shaping the destinies of these two legendary figures as well as in the making of the history of universe.

The Prometheus, whom Shelley portrays in *Prometheus Unbound*, from the beginning till the end, is rather a static character. Whatever action is there, the hero has nothing to do with it except for the fact that he enjoys the result. It is Asia, the beloved of Prometheus, who visits Demogorgon and starts the action which ends in Jupiter's dethronement and the emergence of the hero. We might have expected some internal action, a sort of inner conflict, some fluctuations in the mind of Prometheus as a result of a series of conversations he has, as it is found in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. But that also is mostly absent. There is only a defiant attitude towards Jupiter. His interactions with the Earth, the phantasm of Jupiter, Mercury and the Furies only bring out the character of Prometheus. But there is no change, not even sudden revelations of unexpected layers of his character. A faint possibility of an inner conflict arises when Mercury reminds him of his past sufferings and the indefinite period of his future torture and the dazzling contrast

of dwelling among 'the Gods while lapped in voluptuous joy' which will be his if only he would curb his will a bit for the benefits; but Prometheus does not even take the trouble of considering Mercury's words; his mind was made up long ago. Like another Titan, Prometheus will remain indomitable even when he is nailed in that pathetic condition of his body and soul. While this on one hand proves his acceptance of whatever is happening to him, on the other hand, this is a proof of his strong and determined mindset. Similarly Milton's Satan too refuses to change his mind, he is courageous. Prometheus is so determined that his decision is not altered, modified or changed as Samson's is after meeting Deliah, Harapha and Manoa. If there be any change at all, it is found in the scene of his liberation by Hercules, but change too is for a higher cause. At the end of this lyrical drama, Prometheus expresses his inner desire to find out a cave – a cave 'all overgrown with trailing odorous plants', paved with veined emeralds, with curved roof supported by long diamond spires and other gaudy materials (Shelley 2007, 259). There, like a romantic, like Shelley himself, Prometheus will play with Asia, the part of innocent babes in the wood. This idea of Prometheus might appear anti-climactic for a character of such magnitude. It seems hard to imagine that the immortal Titan, who has been suffering unimaginable torture for three thousand years, that too for such a great and noble cause, suddenly just after release would reveal such a romantic and selfish trait in him. This might produce an impression that all the time when he was growling and enduring the eagle gnawing at his liver, he had this nostalgia for the romantic cave and it was his pride and self-respect that has been sustaining him against Jupiter, and not his love for man as he would want everybody to believe. This concept of Shelley would have been spurned by Aeschylus just as the former rejected the latter's version of compromise with Jupiter. Aristophanes in his *Frogs* has made Aeschylus rebuke Euripides for lowering the tone of his drama with erotic heroines and amorous dallying men. It would have been more in keeping with Prometheus' character to have taken the line that Hotspur takes in *Henry IV*: '... This is no world / To play with mamnets and tilt with lips' (Shakespeare 1977, 681).

However, that is not what Shelley intended. Through Prometheus, Shelley expressed his desire of dismantling the whole system. One ruler is replaced by another, but the system of hierarchy continued. Prometheus wanted the spirit of love to remain. He was not selfish. He did not want a change in the surface level only. He wanted to destroy this system and so he refused to ascend the throne after Jupiter was overthrown, because he knew that if he did ascend the throne then the system of hierarchy would perpetuate; instead he desired of a life of cooing doves, of skylarks and flowers in a cave. The success of Prometheus's rebellion lies in the fact that he did not replace Demogorgon, and that is the change that he could bring about. Therefore his retirement to the cave is a part of his rebellion, and Shelley felt that by making Prometheus refuse Demogorgon's offer of ascending the throne after Jupiter, he was doing justice to Prometheus who for him represented 'the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature' (Shelley 2007, 207). That is why Shelley tells us in the *Preface*: 'The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan' (Shelley 2007, 206).

However, the character of Satan as portrayed by Milton is not as flat as Prometheus, as discussed in the few paragraphs above. He has more shades than Prometheus. Milton's Satan stands in complete opposition to Shelley's Prometheus in the aspect of tolerance. While Prometheus submitted himself completely to pains, Satan, though in 'endless misery', plans to overthrow the Omniscient power:

To wage by force or guile eternal War
Irreconcilable, to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th'excess of joy
Sole reigning hold the Tyranny of Heav'n

(Milton 2005, 7)

He is full of internal actions and conflicts; and the conflicts are revealed through his actions and conversations: in Book I with Beelzebub, in Book II with the other fallen angels in the Pandemonium, in Book IV through his conversations with his own self, in Book IX through his conversations with Eve and the way he tempts Eve in the guise of a serpent. Maud Bodkin claimed that the theme of his heroic struggle and endurance against hopeless odds wakens in poet and reader a sense of his own state as against the odds of destiny (Bodkin

2012). In other words, Milton's Satan embodies an active spirit of rebellion. However, in Milton's world, this whole event of Satan being expelled from Heaven and Satan's protest against God, is God's design, He has done everything the way He wanted it to happen. Satan deludes himself by calling his actions a rebellion. He deceives himself through the power of rhetoric, and that is the reason he needs to manipulate his listeners by modulating his speech accordingly. The word rebellion, to a certain extent, is also applicable to Shelley's Prometheus, but, he embodies the spirit of defiance more than the spirit of rebellion. His refusal to agree with the reigning tyranny in religious matters stems from Shelley's own revolutionary ideals, which he took up as Trelawny writes 'as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice' (Webb 2007, 701). In this lyrical drama, the defiance is directed not only at Jupiter but also perhaps at Aeschylus who, in *Prometheus Bound*, failed to rescue Prometheus to Shelley's moral satisfaction: 'The moral interest of the fable, which is powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if he could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary' (Webb 2007, 700). Here, Miltonic influences can be observed behind the heroic recoil from 'unsaying his high language': 'How soon/ What height recall high thoughts? How soon unsay/ What feigned submission swore?' (Milton 2005, 80); while in *Prometheus Unbound* itself the defiance has a strong Miltonic ring in phrases like these 'unrepentant pains'. This is not only defiance but also a refusal to give in to threats or torture: in spite of what Jupiter can do to him, Prometheus will not break down – his eyes remain tearless, his head held high, he is invincible (Webb 2005, 701). Like Prometheus, Milton's Satan too will not surrender even after experiencing the excruciating pains of Hell, he will not bow down under the pressure of the omnipresent, he will make an effort to retaliate. In the words of Macaulay:

the might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an

eternity of unremitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself (Macaulay 1985, 41).

Around this Arch-rebel Milton has 'thrown a singularity of daring, a grandeur of sufferance, and a ruined splendour, which constitute the very height of poetic sublimity' (Coleridge 2005, 391). With the odds against him he struggles in a way that wins our profoundest sympathy and admiration. For investing the Devil with such noble qualities and splendour, Blake, in accordance with many critics observed, 'Milton was of the Devil's party without knowing it' (Blake 2005, 389); and these are the qualities – courage and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, that make Shelley compare Prometheus with Satan.

The Gap Widens

A closer scrutiny reveals that Satan has more kinship with the Prometheus of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* than with the Prometheus of Shelley. In both Satan and Prometheus (of Aeschylus), 'we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. On both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feeling' (Macaulay 1985, 49). Prometheus, as modified by Shelley, has lost that ferocity and pride. He has learnt wisdom and no longer hates Jupiter gloating about his impending downfall, but the courage that he shows in bearing his suffering for indefinite period is passive, he is somewhat given in to the tortures and contemplates even amidst the excruciating pains. This Prometheus, to Shelley, is a 'more poetic character' being 'exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge and a desire for personal aggrandisement which, in the hero of *Paradise Lost* interfere with the interest' (Shelley 2007, 207). Therefore, this study proves that the difference between Prometheus and 'the most exalted and most depraved being' of *Paradise Lost* is immense (Addison 2005, 381).

Satan begins his struggle against the regime of an autocratic ruler, but he loses his heroic aspect after turning

himself into a serpent that desires only revenge and becomes an enemy to mankind. He begins by fighting for 'liberty', however misconceived; but almost at once sinks to fighting for 'Honour, Dominion, Glory, and renown' (Lewis 1984, 96). Milton in the first book describes him as 'Archangel' and in the subsequent passages his attributes fade and become 'Fiend', 'Arch-felon' and finally 'the Devil'. Milton himself opines in Book I, line 98 that Satan is suffering from a 'sense of injur'd merit'; and this sense of 'injured merit' is aroused in Satan because 'he thought himself impaired' (Milton 2005, 125). Amidst the serene world of light and love, of angelic song, feast and dance, what he could only think of was his own prestige; and it is noteworthy that his sense of prestige had no other grounds except for the ground which refused to admit him for the superior prestige of Messiah, any sort of superiority or divine appointment, or both – his exalted position depended upon these issues only. "These are the "wrongs" which Shelley described as "beyond measure"", says C. S. Lewis (Lewis 1984, 96).

Throughout the poem we see Satan 'engaged in sawing off the branch he is sitting on', not only in the quasi-political sense already indicated, but in deeper sense still, since a persona revolting against a creator is revolting against the source of his own powers, including even his own power to revolt (Lewis 1984, 96). This tussle is most accurately depicted in Book VI of *Paradise Lost* 'Heav'n ruining from Heav'n' (Milton 2005, 156), for he was also a part of Heaven, Lucifer, now 'diseased, perverted, twisted, but still a native of Heaven' (Lewis 1984, 97). As a result, the rebellion against the omnipotent, which was the sole objective of Satan, Beelzebub and all the other Fallen Angels, and for which they joined hands, meant nothing but misery for the feelings and corruption for the will, and amounted to nothing for the intellect. Herein lies the difference between Shelley's Prometheus and Milton's Satan. While Satan revolted against God for what Satan considered to be unjust, Prometheus simply went against the dictum of the supremo which refused man the knowledge of fire. Satan was selfish and his revolt will not serve mankind in any way, instead it was Satan who brought miseries in the lives of Adam and Eve symbolising mankind; whereas Prometheus went against Jupiter for the sake of

humankind and suffered intolerable pains for his act. No one had done anything to Satan: he was not hungry, nor over-tasked, nor removed from his place, nor shunned, nor hated – he only thought himself ‘impaired’ and cared too much for his own stature and esteem; whereas Prometheus stands for the desire in the human soul to create harmony through reason and love, and for this he displays an unequalled courage and endurance (Bowra 2009, 107). He is what Shelley, in the *Preface*, regarded as the ‘noblest’ force in the human self, the desire for the good, and the willingness to make any sacrifice for it (Shelley 2007, 207).

Throughout the lyrical drama, even after enduring so much of pain not for his own sake but for the sake of mankind, the character of Prometheus, does not, even for a single moment, reflect the notion of ‘I’, his ego. Prometheus, for a greater cause, for the cause of mankind sacrifices his ego; ‘let my self-centeredness be immersed in love’ (Tagore 1996, 50, self-translation), Prometheus’s love for humankind immerses his ‘I-ness’ in the fathomless sea of ‘egolessness’, he does not even think of the consequences that he would have to face for his daring act of stealing fire from the kingdom of Jupiter. Though he is punished later, he emerges out as a winner. However, Prometheus does not feel proud of his act. Here lies the greatness of Prometheus. On the contrary Satan is someone who just cannot go beyond the notion of the ‘I’. He is egoistic and is desperate for his revenge against God because God has not given him the Divine Supremacy; Satan showed his discontent against God’s decision and so God has thrown him away from Heaven. To protest against such a decision of God, he invokes evil – ‘Evil be thou my good’; he is determined in his desire for the evil. The impatient Satan is full of pride and he lacks controlling power. However, Prometheus, in spite of his suffering from pain and sorrow, has no feelings of jealousy or revenge. Prometheus does not know how to resist Jupiter’s torture, he is merely good, and he has no power to fight, he only accepts his fate; Satan is beaten, yet he never surrenders to his Fate. Unlike Prometheus who has conquered envy and malice, Satan is full of hate and scorn. Satan is not only proud to be the only one who dared to protest against the omniscient, but he is also proud of the other heroic rebels too. Even after the fall

from heaven, he still retains the love for his comrades whom he has dragged down to hell, and this shows his militant qualities. His hatred for God is expressed through his protest with the help of evil. In him are evil passions in which good still lingers; and these are held in one who has genius and all his charm, beauty, intellect, emotion, physical bearing – proudly eminent in all things. The good in him is made immeasurably vivid and attractive by the evil passions surrounding it.

Satan is evil personified. His 'implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy...' make him evil (Shelley 2007, 526). However, Satan is awe-inspiring even in his dark deeds. It has been pointed out earlier in this paper that Milton's attributes of Satan fade into 'the Devil', yet, however faded the Devil is, he is still a more concrete and rounded figure than the mighty Titan. Whenever he appears, whether he floats on the burning lake, walks on the marl which constitutes the land on which he has to reign, or rises aloft incumbent on the dusky air, or flies through the dim chaos, he is a more appealing and lively character than the passive Prometheus, who waits for the fall of Jupiter and does not himself take any initiative to end His autocratic regime. However, according to C. M. Bowra, Milton, in Satan only

displays various qualities that belong to the old type hero... It is clear that Milton quite deliberately fashioned Satan on heroic models, because he rejected the old heroic standard and wished to show that they were wicked... But in his main scheme Satan provides a contrast to something quite different and infinitely more admirable (Bowra 1945, 201).

Shelley's claim about the affinity of Prometheus and Satan proves to be vaguer since 'Shelley could never imagine Satan as a symbol of something other than what he appears to be' (Webb 2007 p.703). It never struck him as it strikes Tillyard that 'If, Satan is unreasoning energy, Christ is intended to be energy as well as reason. He is the creator while Satan is but the destroyer' (Webb 2007, 705).

Unlike Shelley, Milton's portrayal of Satan is more humanistic. Satan has more variety and universal passions than Prometheus. Werblowsky in his book *Lucifer and Prometheus* takes the help of Carl Jung and his school while

observing the 'mythological projections of the human psyche' in them, but he stresses upon the fact that he does not want to deal with the concept of the archetype the way Jung had used it. Instead, his interest is in the mythological aspects of characters of Satan and Prometheus as portraying 'the shortcomings ... of the world as conceived by the human soul'. The connection between 'power' and 'civilization' is studied through the interactive relationship of the concepts of 'sin' in *Old Testament* and Greek 'hubris'. In his analysis, Satan 'becomes the sole power-exponent in this ... universe, and thus stands as the prototype of human civilizing effort' (Werblowsky 2013). Kenneth Gross in his essay writes:

Satan is Milton's picture of what things look like, an image of the mind, of subjectivity, of self – consciousness, a representation of the awkward pressures that we put on ourselves to interpret our own situation within the mind's shifting circle of freedom and compulsion. Satan is Milton's most palpable image of what human thought is like as it is moved, wounded or disowned by its memories, desires, intentions, sensations, as it confronts body and environment, inertia and pain, as it engages the words and stories which shape and misshape it. Satan is an image of mind in its dividedness from both itself and others, in its illusions of inwardness and power. (Gross 2005, 422)

In the character of Satan Milton has 'mingled as it were the elements of human nature, as colours upon a single palette, and arranged them into the composition of his great picture' (Shelley 2007, 526). Kenneth Gross concludes that 'this Satan is not necessarily Romantic, though he may foreshadow the burdens of Romantic subjectivity and self-centering, the self-anxious quests for what Byron called "concenterd recompense"' (Gross 2005, 422).

The Kinship Turns Superficial

Milton's Satan is ambitious, envious, aggressive and vengeful; as well as a rebel. Prometheus is a better symbol of a rebel. His rebellion, defeat and bondage are not the result of his faults, but of his love for humanity. While Satan makes mankind suffer in order to achieve his personal gain, Prometheus suffers in the process of liberation of mankind.

Prometheus symbolises Christ, who sacrifices himself for the good of his people; humanity, which struggles towards freedom under the guidance of the spirit of love; and the poet, the 'unacknowledged legislators of the World' (Shelley 2007, 535) who have made all human progress possible and whose love and creative words are the weapons against the darkness (Bloom 2012). This darkness can be interpreted as the darkness that reigned in the country after the French Revolution:

The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them; there was strife, deceit and fear;
Tyrants rushed in...

(Shelley 2007, 230)

Shelley gives us our first important clue to the French Revolution through these words of Prometheus. By the picture of the collapse of the French Revolution the Furies hope to make Prometheus yield to Jupiter. Though the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty broke the spirit of many intellectuals, yet others, like Prometheus, refused to yield (Cameron 1943). Shelley considered Prometheus as an embodiment of the spirit of an ideal rebellion as opposed to the wasted opportunity of the French Revolution which despite its initial success and lasting legacy could not prevent the restoration of monarchy due to its own weakness; it replaced a system with another system instead of demolishing the concept of system. In the character of Prometheus Shelley anticipates the future prospects of a rebellion which will be beyond such weaknesses. Prometheus thus becomes a symbol of hope for a better future.

However, Prometheus lacks leadership and fighting capacity in comparison to Milton's Satan. In fact, tradition never endowed him with any fighting ability. His foresight saved his skin during the war of Titans with the younger Gods, but heroism of that type that Satan has, is non-existent in Prometheus. Milton's Satan is far superior to Shelley's Prometheus. While Prometheus endures God's autocracy and tyranny, Satan dares to rebel against Him. In *A Defence of Poetry* Shelley writes:

Milton's Devil as a moral being is far superior to his
God as one who perseveres in some purpose which he

has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments ... is the most decisive proof of Milton's genius. (Shelley 2007, 525-526)

In his hero, Shelley fails to ascertain those zealous traits which made up Milton's Satan. In *A Defence of Poetry* Shelley himself acknowledges 'nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*' (Shelley 2007, 526). Thus, from the above discussions, it can be said that rebels they are, courageous, strong and full of resilience and determination, but categorically so far apart that Shelley's claim, in the *Preface to Prometheus Unbound*, about their kinship proves to be superficial.

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