SHELLEY'S CHANGING CONCEPT OF MUTABILITY

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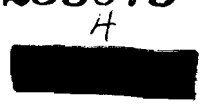

PREFACE

Shelley has often been accused of "singing beautifully," but of saying little. I became interested in what he and the other poets of the Romantic Period were really saying after being carefully guided through a study of Wordsworth's major poems. Similarly, the subject of mutability per se was suggested by Wordsworth's solution to this enigma. To assemble the material for this investigation, I consulted the 1965 reprint of the Julian edition of Shelley's complete works edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck--Poems, volumes I-IV; Prose, volumes V-VII; and Letters, volumes VIII-X. Since Shelley's letters to Jefferson Hogg were printed with Hogg's emendations, these letters were collated with the original holographs in Jones' edition of Shelley's letters.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Charles E. Walton, Chairman of the Department of English at Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, for his invaluable assistance and his careful criticism of this thesis. In addition, I am indebted to Dr. June Morgan also of Kansas State Teachers College, who offered encouragement and advice in serving as second reader of the following study.

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CHAPTER I

"NAUGHT MAY ENDURE BUT MUTABILITY"

> Proud change (not pleased in mortall things
> Beneath the Moone to raigne)
> Pretends as well of Gods as Man
> To be the Soveraine.
> --The Faerie Queene, VI

"Is the soul subject to annihilation?" Is absolutely everything that pertains to man and nature ". . . infinitely divisible and in a state of perpetual change?" These were the questions about mutability that the poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, explored in a letter to Elizabeth Hitchner early in his career.[1] They were questions that colored his scepticism, his materialism, his immaterialism, and his radical reaction to institutions throughout his life; and they are questions that have caused confusion in the honest reactions of his more objective critics. Even a cursory investigation into the problem of Shelley's philosophy of mutability reveals a developing trend in his use of mutable, immutable, and immortal. An explication of each of these terms indicates the poet's rather consistent use of mutable and immutable in "Queen Mab" and "Hellas" for earth-bound concepts, operative within the framework of his theme of the perfectibility of man on earth. Immortal is more closely associated with some bright world of

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[1]Percy B. Shelley, Letters, VIII, 106.

the hereafter and is used by Shelley to identify the permanent in "Laon and Cythna" and "Prometheus Unbound." In "Queen Mab," mutability is the "aspiring change" that brings the "ultimate perfection of earth." It reflects the influence of Lucretius, Godwin, and the French materialists. It is a change that has been delivered from "restraint," and is "moderate," "imperceptible," and "continual."[2] It clearly involves Shelley's adaptation of the principles of necessity, free will, and reason. In "Laon and Cythna" and "Prometheus Unbound" mutability remains "moderate," "imperceptible," and "continual"; but perfectibility which controls mutability is to be attained through regeneration and a perception that is not taught, but inspired. On the other hand, in his poems of 1821, Shelley speaks of "incestuous change," "wolfish change," and the "dragon wings of change." In essence, the principle of necessity remains the same in these poems, however, the poet seems to suggest that perfection is not possible on earth since the past controls the future.

In "Queen Mab" Shelley uses immutable to qualify three abstractions: virtue, the indifferent soul of nature, and earth-bound change. In "Prometheus Unbound" and in many of his later works, immutability becomes immortality and is associated with his undefined Platonic, "Bright Being," that

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[2]A. E. Rodway (ed.), Godwin and the Age of Transition, p. 165.

may be partially observed in his descriptions of intellectual beauty. In "Hellas" he again attempts to identify the elements of virtue and thought with immutability. Hence, the problem areas involved in determining the shifts in Shelley's thought which led to his changed reaction to mutability are those concerning necessity, free will, reason, perception, and perfection. An analysis of Shelley's two mutability poems brings into focus his conflicting views and identifies more clearly each facet of the two poles of the problem areas. Shelley's cataloging, which defines the characteristics of mutability in the first poem, "Mutability," (1814) involves necessity, the senses, and reason. In this poem, the clouds speed, quiver, and streak through the night, and the lyres react to each varying blast in involuntary response to the motivating forces of necessity. In man, the principle of necessity is illustrated by varied feelings activated by casual thoughts or dreams. The first mutability poem ends with Shelley's reasoned observation, "Man's yesterday may ne'er be like this morrow; / Naught may endure but mutability."[3] Many scholars have rightly observed that the concluding line of this mutability poem clearly sets forth Shelley's most prevailing belief in change relative to matter, to systems of thought, and to emotion. Solve, agreeing with this theory, suggests

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[3]Shelley, "Mutability," Poems, I, 203.

that Shelley ". . . imagines cycles in matter of morals as in the seasons . . . ."[4] Bagehot also believes that Shelley was really indifferent to change, since he ignored the "absolute" laws of the world. Bagehot describes this indifference as follows:

> Nothing in human life to him was inevitable or fixed, he fancied he could alter it all. His sphere is the unconditioned; he floats away into an imaginary Elysium or an expected Utopia . . . .[5]

In contrast to the mutability of love, virtue, friendship, and joy, the perceived, more perfect world of dreams is emphasized in Shelley's second mutability poem, "Mutability" (1821).[6] This bitter poem also stresses the frequency of thwarted wishes, dying smiles, and mockery. It ends by implying the futility of the waking world: "Dream thou--and from thy sleep / Then wake to weep." The trapped persona in the poem reacts to motivating forces by necessity, as he does in the first mutability poem. In both poems time's measure is less than a dying moment, an inference reflecting Shelley's intense, painfully pleasant, awareness of mutability. It is an awareness that perhaps accounts for some of the taut,

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[4]Milton T. Solve, Shelley, His Theory of Poetry, p. 39.

[5]Walter Bagehot, "Shelley," Literary Studies, I, 102.

[6]Shelley, "Mutability," Poems, I, 94.

vibrating tone in parts of his work.[7] In his analysis of the poet's doctrine of necessity, Gingerich associates the attitudes that are expressed in Shelley's second mutability poem with the poet's inability to cope with the complex forces of life and his intense longings, ". . . for a changeless state in a changing world, an immutable and eternal order of things."[8] In addition, Gingerich points out that ". . . Shelley's co-eternal, uncreated and undying spirit was the fulfillment of such intense longings."[9] Baker concurs with Gingerich, in principle, stating that

> . . . in "The West Wind," "The Cloud," and "The Skylark" one finds [Shelley] seeking in the material world for analogies by which to reassure himself that regeneration follows destruction, that change does not mean extinction . . . .[10]

As this brief survey of the problem indicates, Shelley's concept of mutability reflects his indebtedness to a number of

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[7] In his prose analysis of time, Shelley proposes that perfectability might be extended to the senses. It is his belief that the life of a man of virtue and talent who dies in his thirtieth year is longer than that of a "century of dulness." He further suggests that, if sensibility could become perfected, a minute could become an eternity; Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab," Poems, I, 157.

[8] S. F. Gingerich, "Shelley's Doctrine of Necessity Versus Christianity," PMLA, XXXIII (1918), 451.

[9] Loc. cit.

[10] Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision, p. 201.

literary predecessors. Hence, it is necessary to examine the most basic of these concepts before considering mutability as it is revealed in Shelley's poems.

Probably the greatest continued influence upon Shelley's writing and his concept of mutability was his belief in the teachings of Plato. Although Hogg states that, while at Oxford, both he and Shelley used Dacier's translation of Plato,[11] he later contradicts himself, admitting that Shelley translated Greek with ease and that a ". . . pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, or Euripides (without interpretation or notes), or of the Septuagint, was his constant companion . . . ."[12] The basic Platonic concepts which Shelley echoed throughout much of his life concern a belief that sensuous phenomena are the imperfect pictures of the knowledge of ideas and that ultimate perfection is possible for man on earth. For Plato, this ultimate perfection, either in art or nature, was that which was least susceptible to being changed by any external influence.[13] Although Shelley did not believe in the Platonic system of rewards and punishment, all of his Utopias are peopled, nevertheless, with the selected good who have exercised a "resolute will." Thus, a perfect environment

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[11]Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Shelley at Oxford, p. 76.

[12]Ibid., p. 109.

[13]Shelley, "Fragments from the Republic," Prose, IX, 259.

for these Utopias has been created. Woodman, with some degree of support, states that, early in his career, Shelley looked upon Plato as a "mere dreamer."[14] It is true that both "Queen Mab" and "On a Future State" reflect scepticism and the use of Lucretian arguments against reincarnation; however, it is also true that Shelley's letters, of this period, to Hogg and to Elizabeth Hitchner, often express a wish for the type of regeneration described in Plato's Phaedo. ("What is generated from life?" "Death." "And what from death?" "I can only say in answer--life.")[15] On January 12, 1811, Shelley wrote to Hogg:

> I love what is superior, what is excellent, or what I conceive to be so, and I wish, to be profoundly convinced of the existence of a Deity, that so superior a spirit might derive some degree of happiness from my feeble exertions.[16]

He found his superior spirit in Plato's Absolute Beauty. In the Jowett translation of Plato's "Symposium," Diotima describes this learned attribute. One recalls that, after her initial statement, "All men will necessarily desire immortality together with good, if love is of the ever-lasting

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[14] Ross G. Woodman, "Shelley's Changing Attitude to Plato," JHI, XXI (October, 1960), 497.

[15] B. Jowett, "Phaedo," The Works of Plato, p. 205.

[16] Shelley, Letters, VIII, 43.

possession of good,"[17] she asserts that Absolute Beauty ". . . is ever-lasting--not growing and decaying; or waning and waxing."[18] Diotima further suggests that when the neophyte ". . . beholds beauty with the eyes of the mind," he will thereafter see not just images alone, but reality.[19] If Grabo's belief is correct that Shelley was influenced by the doctrines of the Neo-classicists who rationalized the ancient myths, his summation of the Neo-classic view of mutability has merit for this investigation. Grabo suggests that, for the Neo-classicists, perfection was the motivating force for creativity and the evolutionary process.[20] In their interpretation, he shows that they saw the world of matter aspiring to the eternal, the unchangeable. In their world of forms, nature contained ideal patterns, and the world of ideas represented that which is beautiful and perfect.[21]

If Shelley had a "brother of his soul" among the ancient writers, it must have been Lucretius, for the same cosmic conception of the grandeur of the universe permeates the writing of this ancient Latin poet. In his early period, Shelley not

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[17] Ibid., p. 337.

[18] Ibid., p. 342.

[19] Ibid., p. 343.

[20] Carl Grabo, The Meaning of the Witch of Atlas, p. 61.

[21] Loc. cit.

only refers to a concept of atoms, of primordial seeds, and of an electric life force, he also quotes from Lucretius in his Latin notes to "Queen Mab."[22] He was probably introduced to the works of Lucretius through the French materialist, d' Holbach, who ". . . followed Lucretius to the logical bitter, and dangerous end,--that the soul is mortal."[23] In a letter to Miss Hitchner (June 25, 1811), Shelley states, "From nothing, nothing can come; to nothing, nothing can return."[24] Further on in this letter, he presents his argument against the concept of complete annihilation, although, here, he does not indicate a belief in immortality. In his 1814 essay, "On a Future State," he similarly argues against the improbability of a future existence of a knowing soul. He concludes that ". . . when scattered through all the changes which matter undergoes, [the soul] cannot then think."[25] Lucretius uses almost the same arguments to support his belief in the continued existence of primordial elements, not in a knowing soul. After explaining, "Nothing from nothing ever yet was born,"[26] he concludes, ". . . things cannot / Be born from nothing, nor

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[22]Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab," Poetry, I, 139.

[23]George D. Hadzsits, Lucretius and His Influence, p. 322.

[24]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 114.

[25]Shelley, "On a Future State," Prose, VI, 208.

[26]Titus Corus Lucretius, Of the Nature of Things, p. 8.

the same, when born, to nothing be recalled . . . ."[27] Furthermore, Lucretius frequently uses this concept in the first book of his work, often applying it to time: "Even time exists not of itself; but sense / Reads out of things what happened long ago / What happened long ago, / What presses now, and what shall follow after . . . ."[28] Again, in a letter written on June 11, 1811, Shelley inquires of the existing power of existence: ". . . what are vegetables without their vegetative power? stones without their stoney?"[29] Lucretius in exploring this property that cannot be disjointed, refers to a "latent unseen quality," the primordial germs that are imperceptible and without void.[30] In "Queen Mab" Shelley describes "immutable necessity" as being indifferent, uncreated, immune from peril, and unmoved by gifts. Lucretius also felt that the Gods were indifferent, uncreated, and contained within the universe. He states: ". . . nor sea, nor breakers pounding on the rocks / Created them; [the Gods] but earth it was who bore / The same today who feeds them from herself."[31] Although Shelley called

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[27] Ibid., p. 12.

[28] Ibid., p. 19.

[29] Shelley, Letters, VIII, 101.

[30] Lucretius, op. cit., p. 31.

[31] Ibid., p. 93.

himself a "Stoic,"[32] the influence of the earlier Epicurian doctrine upon his work is, nevertheless, apparent. He accepted the Lucretian doctrines of necessity; of the catalistic, life force; or the common elements in things and words; and of free will. In Mary Shelley's Journal, one finds that Shelley had read Lucretius in 1815, 1819, and, again, in 1820.[33]

While the pageantry of mutability in Ovid's "Pythagoras" of the Metamorphoses does little more than summarize the overall concepts of the Greek reaction to mutability, its significance for Shelley is probably suggested by his use of "to come" in reference to the future in "Hellas" and the name, Ianthe, for his heroine in "Queen Mab."[34] He was also probably persuaded that a vegetarian diet had merit after reading this work, since his explanation of the first cause of evil in "Queen Mab" follows Ovid's argument, in much the same language as that found in the Pythagorian account. For example, Shelley uses Ovid's epithets in describing this "greedy-gutted craving," He further tells of a Golden Age when no man "tainted his lips" with blood. His conclusion is also to be found in Ovid's account: ". . . but some innovator, / A good-for-

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[32]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 124.

[33]Frederick Jones (ed.), Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 223.

[34]Shelley also named his first daughter Ianthe. The name appears in the Ninth Book of Metamorphoses, cf. Ovid's Metamorphoses, p. 245.

nothing . . . / Stuffed meat into his belly like a furnace, / And paved the way for crime."[35] In a letter to Miss Hitchner (March, 1812), Harriet Westbrook, Shelley's first wife, confirms the poet's acceptance of the "Pythagorian system" for his personal life.[36] In addition, Shelley's later admiration of John Frank Newton probably was based, in part, upon their mutual acceptance of the philosophy of vegetarianism.

The Oxford English Dictionary lists Chaucer as the first English author to use the word, mutability. In Troilus and Criseyde (1374), it describes the wheel of fate, that portion of overall mutability especially associated with man. Under the Ptolemaic system emphasizing an ordered universe, the stars dictated the general mutability of sublunary things. Although all things were related to the whole under the "Great Chain of Being," all things under the moon were considered to be mutable. In later Renaissance England, mutability became one of the great subjects of thought. Edmund Spenser's Garden of Adonis and the "Mutability Cantos" of The Faerie Queene both discuss the mutability of nature and man's part in a larger stability. Wilson claims that, in the "Revolt of Islam" (in this investigation, "Revolt of Islam" is referred to as

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[35]Rolfe Humphris (trans.), Ovid: Metamorphoses, pp. 368-369.

[36]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 296.

"Laon and Cythna"),[37] Shelley learned "with immense labor" to write Spenserian stanzas;[38] however, there is evidence of Spenser's influence upon the poet earlier than 1817. Cameron, who edited the Esdaile Notebook belonging to Shelley's daughter, Ianthe, states that one of the unpublished poems in this manuscript is superior to the others, namely, "Henry and Louisa," in which Shelley uses Spenserian stanzas.[39] The Faerie Queene was also a popular book in Shelley's lists, appearing in 1814, 1815, and again in 1817.[40] Although Shelley probably did not borrow directly from Spenser in "Laon and Cythna," some of his reactions to mutability, nevertheless, resemble those expressed in Spenser's "Mutability Cantos." In Spenser, "vile mutability, bred of bad seed" can make "bad of good."[41] Similarly, Shelley emphasizes the natures of good and bad in a subtle use of mixed imagery. Spenser traces mutability through all of its facets from the mutability of the fortunes of man to the mutability of the stars and time.[42]

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[37] Shelley changed the name of Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century, to the "Revolt of Islam" after the unfavorable publicity of the first edition.

[38] Milton Wilson, Shelley's Later Poetry, p. 10.

[39] Kenneth N. Cameron (ed.), The Esdaile Notebook, p. 8.

[40] Frederick Jones (ed.), Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 226.

[41] Edmund Spenser, "The Two Cantos of Mutabilitie," The Faerie Queene, VI.vi.427.

[42] Ibid., VI.vi.444-452.

His conclusion is that, since basic primordial elements cannot be changed, victory over mutability may be accomplished by perfection and a "turning to themselves again."[43] In the "winter" of "Laon and Cythna," Shelley describes the mutability of all material things. Here, perfection is to be attained through the permanent elements of the universal mind which "turn to themselves again."[44]

For the most part, the poets of the eighteenth century interpreted the mutability of man and the seasons as a part of the greater order of the universe. As a general rule, they concluded that, since the universe represented God's creativity, nothing could be altered or omitted. Under this system, apparent evil, if it were considered in relation to time rather than space, became an actual good. The poets of the Romantic Period reacted against the didacticism of this "best of all possible worlds" by emphasizing individualism and self analysis. Wordsworth's study of the "thinking heart" in his "Prelude" or in the earlier "Tintern Abbey" presents the clearest statement of the process involved in this discipline. Although Shelley did not emphasize the "overlay" process of "wise passiveness," some of his idealistic poems do reflect the awe, the wonder, and the worship of the subline in nature that are so

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[43] Ibid., VII.ivii.453.

[44] Shelley, "Laon and Cythna," Poems, I, 349.

apparent in the poems of the "eye and ear" poet. Wordsworth's answer to the mutability of man was to be found in the instinctive uniting of each unadorned soul with its fellow soul into a oneness that consumes the individual. Shelley's "brothers" and "sisters" of his soul were initially visualized from the same pattern of perfection. Perhaps, the answer to mutability which Wordsworth depicted in "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" was the most meaningful for Shelley throughout much of his life. In this poem, Wordsworth states that in its slumber the primordial element of the mind and spirit will have no human fears, since

> No motion has she now, no force;
> She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks and stones, and trees.[45]

Notwithstanding the supporting philosophies that made substantial contributions to Shelley's concept of mutability, in each period, his interpretation of the controlling factor, perfection, and his means of attaining it by freeing men's minds are his own. These, then, are the concepts that merit the scholar's interest in considering Shelley's use of the mutability of nature and things to rationalize the mutability of man.

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[45] William Wordsworth, Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, p. 149.

CHAPTER II

"O HAPPY EARTH! REALITY OF HEAVEN!"

> And turning to themselves at length againe,
> Do worke their owne perfection so by fate:
> Then over then Change doth not rule and raigne,
> But they raigne over Change, and do their
> states maintaine.
>
> --The Faerie Queene, VI

That all nature is "infinity within, / Infinity without . . ." is the Lucretian key to Shelley's concept of mutability expressed in "Queen Mab." This poem, called ". . . the most revolutionary document of its age,"[46] encompasses his world view and presents his conclusions on the "relation of man to society and of society to nature."[47] Here, in relating man to society, Shelley defines mutability on two levels: first, in reference to institutions; then, in relation to perfectibility. Since Shelley felt that man was in a state of "perpetual mutation"[48] and that customs established by institutions were the perpetual enemies of change,[49] much of his "Queen Mab" is directed toward an examination of past and present evil created by those institutions. Shelley's four

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[46] Kenneth N. Cameron, The Young Shelley, p. 240.

[47] Ibid., p. 273.

[48] Rodway, op. cit., p. 177.

[49] Loc. cit.

uses of mutability per se occur in these sections where by inference and by specific example he extends his socio-political concept of mutability to include all that is material.

The mutability that Shelley associates with the perfection of man in his relation to society is expressed in terms of "aspiring" or "immutable" change, a gradual perfecting change, that reflects the work of "immutable necessity," and the equally "immutable laws of nature." In the poem, the two immutables, necessity and change, are aided by the "deathless memory of virtue," "endless peace," "changeless purity, wisdom, and natural good" in uniting mankind with "nature's unchanging harmony." To support his belief in a "glorious" change that leads to perfectibility, Shelley presents an "atomic" Lucretian account of primordial elements:

> Throughout this varied and eternal world
> Soul is the only element, the block
> That for uncounted ages has remained.
> The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
> Is active, living spirit. Every grain
> Is sentient both in unity and part,
> And the minutest atom comprehends
> A world of loves and hatreds; these beget
> Evil and good: hence truth and falsehood spring:
> (IV.139-147)

These lines, which describe the elementary essence in man, imply that Shelley is recognizing immutable good and evil; however, he primarily emphasizes the fact that "every heart contains perfection's germ."[50] He believes that, if it is

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[50] Shelley, "Queen Mab," Poems, I, 102.

fostered and cared for in an environment of love, this seed of virtue, truth, and honor will triumph over all evil. Therefore, to eliminate the mistakes of the past, based upon inequality and promoted by the existing systems of morality, religion, economics, and politics, Shelley proposes an adherence to the precepts of an activated will and the basic goodness of necessity. The concurrent spheres suggested in the imagery of "infinity within, and infinity without" serve as an excellent vehicle for describing Shelley's term, "immutable necessity." The spaceless, containing surface of both spheres is necessity. In the outer sphere, necessity is equated with good. It involves eternity. The necessity of the smaller sphere is amoral, and it encircles civilization and decay. The necessity that controls the inherent activity of the smaller sphere is Shelley's principal interest in "Queen Mab."

Throughout his brief life, Shelley did not change his view of the immutability of "immutable necessity." Gingerich Cameron, Baker, and Solve agree about the imperviousness of this precept in his poetry. Their collective reactions are the following: "Demogorgon is the eternal law of amoral necessity . . ."; [51] "Shelley did not express any change of heart regarding necessity"; [52] "Even when he later accepted the

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[51] Baker, op. cit., p. 116.

[52] Gingerich, op. cit., p. 452.

Berkelian position, he still held to the doctrine of immutable necessity";[53] and necessity was a "balance wheel" which acted "upon his too enthusiastic faith in the regenerative power of the mind."[54] In describing his theory of necessity, Shelley asserts that, since the variables involved between causal relationship cannot be measured, man really cannot know. He, therefore, chooses the action, or idea that presents the greatest appeal to his natural urge to seek pleasure and avoid pain.[55] In their investigations of this theory, Evans, Rodway, and Pulos reveal the parallels between Godwin, Hume, and Shelley.[56] For example, Rodway sums up Godwin's philosophy as follows: "If man starts as a blank, then he is what he is by virtue of necessity. Having no innate moral ideas his social morality will also be determined on the pleasure-pain principle."[57] Pulos reveals that Hume's premise claimed that men ". . . infer the existence of one object from that of another entirely from custom and experience."[58] Evans further clarifies

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[53]Kenneth N. Cameron, The Young Shelley, p. 286.

[54]Baker, op. cit., p. 115.

[55]Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab," Poems, I, 145.

[56]Hogg notes that Locke and Hume were favorite reading for Shelley; Shelley at Oxford, p. 71.

[57]Rodway, op. cit., p. 24.

[58]Pulos, op. cit., p. 17.

this concept, suggesting that, for Hume, the necessary connection between cause and effect ". . . is not discoverable by a priori reasoning. No amount of reasoning or analysis, for example, would enable us to predict in advance of experience the explosive qualities of gunpowder."[59]

The Godwin-Shelley concept of the principle of necessity modified the Helvitus-d'Holback "extreme environmentalist" theory, by emphasizing "sincerity and individuality."[60] Since Godwin also believed that ". . . the enlightened mind necessarily chooses the good (since evil is merely error springing from lack of knowledge),"[61] he, therefore, accepted the principles of voluntary and involuntary action, but qualified them, suggesting that ". . . no motion is voluntary, any further than it is accompanied with intention and design and has for its proper antecedent, the apprehension of an end to be acomplished."[62] Godwin also pointed out that ". . . voluntary actions are determined by a judgment of the future."[63] In conclusion, he argued that "enlightenment by making the mind conscious makes involuntary action even smaller," since the

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[59]F. B. Evans, "Shelley, Godwin, Hume, and the Doctrine of Necessity," SP, XXXVII (October, 1940), 639.

[60]Barrell, Shelley and the Thought of His Time, p. 38.

[61]Rodway, op. cit., p. 29.

[62]Ibid., p. 28.

[63]Ibid., p. 128.

mind will choose good rather than error.[64] In other words, whether good or bad, the event that occurs is the only one that can occur. It can be the worst as easily as the best.[65] It is significant that, in his "Notes to Queen Mab," Shelley even further qualifies these interpretations of the principles of necessity:

> Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity, if they admit that those two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is, to voluntary action in the human mind, what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty as applied to mind is analogous to the word chance, as applied to matter . . . .[66]

In addition, he states that it is ". . . equally certain that a man cannot resist the strongest motive, as that he cannot overcome a physical impossibility." He concludes, "The doctrine of necessity tends to introduce great change into established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion."[67] For an analysis of any aspect of Shelley's poetry, this last statement is of profound importance, since it is clear that the great motivating force of his entire life originates in this belief. His early unhappy experience with his

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[64] Loc. cit.

[65] Ibid., p. 141.

[66] Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab," Poems, I, 144.

[67] Ibid., p. 145.

Oxford tract, "The Necessity of Atheism," may be traced to the doctrine embodied in these statements.[68] Later, his efforts to bring about parliamentary reform; and his four socio-literary poems, "Queen Mab," "Laon and Cythna," "Prometheus Unbound," and "Hellas," derived their import from these statements. "Queen Mab" which is the first of his literary efforts "to perform his duty,"[70] to teach his doctrine, followed the failure of his pamphleteering in his personal Irish campaign of 1812. In the poem, "immutable necessity" is associated with the "Spirit of Nature" and is an "all-sufficing Power." This "mother of the world" (VI.197-198) is a force that requires no prayers or praises. She is not interested in man's

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[68] Shelley and Hogg were expelled from Oxford in March, 1811, because they published this little tract. The argument that it presents uses reason to eliminate the possibility of knowing that there is a God. In it, Shelley maintains that the senses are the source of knowledge. The existence of God may not be proved by one's own experience or by the experience of others; therefore, religion is passion; it is not voluntary. Therefore, belief or disbelief should not merit praise or blame; Shelley, Prose, V, 207.

[69] Shelley's campaign for the Irish people was conducted in 1812. In his Address, he reaffirms his faith in goodness and challenges the Irish to reform. He offers the rather negative reassurance that "persecution may destroy some, but it cannot destroy all." He urges the Irish peasants to enter into habits of sobriety, regularity, and thought. During his campaign in Ireland, he made numerous speeches; however, as an overall program, his campaign was not successful. His broadside printing of his Bill of Rights, and his Proposal for an Association of Charity to promote disinterested, virtue, both met with public indifference; Shelley, Prose, V.

[70] Shelley, Letters, VII, 301.

weak will, his passions, or his desire for creature comforts. She is indifferent to joy and sorrow, because she cannot feel, because she does not have "human sense" or a "human mind."[71]

Much of the rhetorical vigor of "Queen Mab" is directed toward Shelley's refutation of the fallacies promoted by the enemies of "aspiring" change and "immutable" necessity. Using a format based upon past fallacies, present fallacies, and a possible error-free future, Shelley's Mab points out two lessons to Ianthe, the bright spirit of immutable virtue: i.e., a system of rewards and punishment, as practiced by institutions, will not promote the perfection of man on earth; and a heaven on earth is possible if the good exercises a "fixed and resolute will" in learning the "power of imparting joy." Thus, his attack upon institutions concerns their influence upon man's evil nature. For example, in his notes to "Queen Man," he states, ". . . good and evil are not the provinces of God! If so, then we must blame as well as praise!"[72] Furthermore, he explains, ". . . we are taught that there is neither good nor evil in the universe otherwise than as events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being."[73] He believes that

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[71]Shelley, "Queen Mab," Poems, I, 119.

[72]Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab," Poems, I, 146.

[73]Loc. cit. Shelley uses this argument, again, to support precepts of order and disorder in his 1814 Refutation of Deism; Shelley, Prose, VI, 52.

> . . . man's evil nature is that apology
> Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
> For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
> Which desolates the discord-wasted land. (IV.75-77)

Hence, one thinks that Babbitt is unjust in asserting that, "For a Rousseau or a Shelley [evil] is something mysteriously imposed from without on a spotless human nature."[74] Shelley's own lists of what he considers to be the real sources of evil hardly involve mystery. In fact, he asserts, ". . . look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince! / Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts / Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor." (IV.236-238) After cataloging his sources of evil, he then adds, "the evil joys of tainting luxury," "unnatural war," "pitiless power," "venal commerce" and the evil of eating meat as specific enemies of "natural goodness and kindness."[75]

Shelley emphasizes the complete mutability of all man-made things that wear "earth's stain" in all of his socio-literary poems; moreover, his 1819 sonnet, "Ozymandias," is on this theme. Here, as in "Queen Mab," he shows that the "playthings of man's childhood" are to be regarded with the

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[74] Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 256.

[75] Shelley felt that, under the existing system, both kings and subjects were injured since ". . . many faint with toil, / That few may know the cares and woe of sloth"; (III. 116-117) "Queen Mab" also infers that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. Shelley wrote two essays on this subject: "A Vindication of Natural Diet," and "On the Vegetable System of Diet"; Shelley, Prose, VI.

proper contempt. After describing the "trunkless legs of stone" and the "wrinkled" lip that reflect the evil nature of the original model, Shelley almost laughingly points to the inscription on the pedestal:

> "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
> Look on my works, Ye Mighty, and despair!"
> Nothing besides remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
> The lone and level sands stretch far away.[76]

In "Queen Mab," therefore, Ianthe is instructed that an institutionalized system of reward and punishment has retarded the natural progress that should be made; however, time and necessity will destroy the system.

Ianthe's second lesson was directed toward perfectibility and embodied the following point of view: ". . . when the power of imparting joy / Is equal to the will, the human soul / Requires no other heaven." (III.11-13) Here, Shelley conceives of "virtuous will" as being resolute, unchanging, unalterable, fixed, all-subduing, giving, and elevated. As he had suggested earlier, it is that element of perfectibility which can defy time. In a letter to Elizabeth Hitchner, he states:

> Thou art conqueror, Time. All things give way before thee, but "the fixed and virtuous will," the sacred

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[76]Shelley, "Ozymandias," Poems, II, 62.

> sympathy of soul which was when thou wert not, which shall be when you perishest.[77]

For Shelley, a "virtuous will" could use the lessons of the past to direct the present and the future to perfectibility, to harmony with nature. At first glance, Ianthe's second lesson may appear to be an over-simplification of Shelley's mutability problem, but in principle, the solution is the same as that offered by Spenser in the "Mutabilitie Cantos." It is the one which Shelley discusses in "Alastor," and it is inherent also in the last lines of "The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." It is the song of the skylark and the essence of the mighty decision of Prometheus. It is love. It is knowledgeable, disinterested virtue. It is virtue that rejoices in the good that is done by others and to others. It is a "choosing will" motivated by the primordial seeds of goodness that make the earth

> . . . a pure dwelling place,
> Symphonious with the planetary spheres,
> When man with changeless nature coalescing,
> Will undertake regeneration's work. (IV.40-43)

Although Shelley advocated a gradual "aspiring" change in the first cantos of "Queen Mab," when he eventually describes his millenium, one sees that change is now harnessed, even in nature. The happy earth described by Queen Mab for the selected

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[77]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 271.

"day-star" spirit of Ianthe has no icy regions and no deserts, because the obliquity of the earth's axis now has been adjusted. Hence, the regeneration of the seasons and death itself are mild. Time and space cease to act, and "All-prevailing wisdom then reaps the harvest of its excellence . . . O Happy Earth! reality of Heaven!" (IX.1) Emotion becomes paramount, and the reader is "mesmerized" by Shelley's wand-created world, by his aery songs of green and gold vitality, by his purple, golden cloud islands and his silver seas. In his paradise of changeless peace, liberty, equality, unbending will, kindness, and virtue all become immutable; and by the magic of "deeds of living love," time, the conqueror, flees, and ". . . man once fleeting o'er the transient scene / Swift as an unremembered vision, stands / Immortal upon earth!" (VIII.209-211) Hence, in "Queen Mab," under the banner of perfection, Shelley demonstrates his sincere belief in the omnipotency of truth and goodness. For him, as for Godwin,[78] truth was ". . . air, water, earth or electricity," and goodness might be found "even in Shakespeare's Caliban."[79]

In spite of the fact that Shelley advocated a system which would defeat time, he does not dismiss his earlier belief that eternal life would be a curse. In "Queen Mab," Ahasuerus

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[78]Rodway, op. cit., p. 149.

[79]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 82.

is the victim of the mighty avenger. He is committed to eternal life. The Ingpen notes to "Queen Mab" suggest that Shelley's source for Ahasuerus was a German poem,[80] a fact of more significance as a further indication of a literary trend, than as Shelley's source, since Southey's "The Curse of Kehama" also concerns this theme.[81] Godwin's St. Leon,[82] Shelley's early novel St. Irvyne: The Rosicrucian, and the long poem, The Wandering Jew are also based upon the curse involved in having an elixer of life, of being confined forever to the "clay" of the body.[83] Certainly, Southey's "The Curse of Kehama" has more points of similarity with Shelley's "Queen Mab," for in the former's poem virtue and love are indestructible;[84] but the significance of the curse of the elixer of

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[80] Shelley, Poems, I, 420.

[81] At this time Shelley expressed admiration for Southey. He called "The Curse of Kehama" his favorite poem in a letter dated, June 11, 1811. However, by the end of 1812, his letters indicate a growing resentment toward Southey. Kenneth Cameron has traced the overt indications of mutual disapproval to Southey's review of A Proposal for Putting Reform to a Vote in 1817. Kenneth Cameron, "Shelley Versus Southey," PMLA, LVII (June, 1942), 495.

[82] Shelley also quarreled with Godwin and expressed contempt for many of his one-time favorites. Included in the list are Miss Hitchner (the "Brown Demon" November 14, 1812); the Gisbornes ("filthy, odious animals," October 29, 1820); and Wordsworth ("A beastly and pitiful wretch," July 25, 1818).

[83] Hogg suggests that, when Shelley was a student at Oxford, some of his electrical and chemical experiments were motivated by a curiosity about the possibility of prolonging life. Hogg, op. cit., pp. 20-23.

[84] Robert Southey, The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, VIII, 78.

life seems worth noting, since Shelley also uses it in "Hellas" (1822).

Shelley began the little poem that eventually developed into the nine cantos of "Queen Mab" in August of 1810; and as he suggested to Hookham at the time, the work explores ". . . the past, the present, and the future."[85] Although "Queen Mab" was not widely acclaimed in 1813, and although Shelley referred to it as "villainous trash" when it was pirated in 1819,[86] it was later used by the benevolent employer, Robert Owen, to promote reform.[87] In fact, its great popularity with the Owenites accounted for fourteen additional pirated editions.[88] It is interesting that Shelley objected to the first pirated edition, however, principally upon literary grounds.[89] The inferior label given the poem by modern critics seems, nevertheless, to justify Shelley's 1819 evaluation of the work. For example, Baker believes that nearly every "creaking cog" in the machinery of the poem was borrowed from the eighteenth-century stock-pile of moral allegories.[90] Although the poem

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[85] Shelley, Letters, VIII, 324.

[86] Ibid., X, 274.

[87] G. M. Trevelyan, History of England, III, 277.

[88] Barrell, op. cit., p. 13.

[89] Shelley, Letters, X, 277.

[90] Baker, op. cit., p. 17.

echoes Thomson and Gray, Cameron's following appraisal is, perhaps, more nearly correct:

> . . . in the deepest sense, Queen Mab is original. In spite of the wide reading behind it, it is not a bookish poem but a poem arising from life, the reaction of a mind sharpened by shattering experience to social realities of the world around it.[91]

Agreeing with the limited merit of the poem, Wilson believes that its finest blank verse is to be found in the challenge of Canto IX:[92]

> Yet, human Spirit! bravely hold thy course,
> Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
> The gradual paths of an aspiring change:
> For birth and life and death, and that strange state
> Before the naked soul has found its home,
> All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
> The restless wheels of being on their way,
> Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life
> Bicker and turn to gain their destined goal;
> For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
> Of outward shows, whose unexplained shape
> New modes of passion to its frame may lend; . . . .
> (IX.146-154)

These lines are also a concise statement of Shelley's major position on the problem of human change. In addition, the last lines hint at his newly acquired belief in the innate passions. Earlier, he had tried to follow Godwin's basic creed that ". . . knowledge and reason were synonymous to

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[91]Cameron, The Young Shelley, p. 241.

[92]Wilson, op. cit., p. 6.

perfection";[93] however, he could not adjust to these precepts of pure reason. The conflict that he experienced in evaluating this discipline is clearly suggested in his letter to Elizabeth Hitchner (June 11, 1811):

> I intended to mention to you something essential. I recommend reason--why? Is it because, since I have devoted myself unreservedly to its influencing, I have never felt Happiness? I have rejected all fancy, all imagination; I find that all pleasure resulting to self is thereby completely annihilated.[94]

Shelley made much the same kind of an observation on June 20.[95] However, he had partially solved the problem by June of 1812, when one finds him referring to a new belief in innate passions.[96] While he more clearly spells out the union of empiricism and the heart in "Laon and Cythna," the Spirit of Ianthe in "Queen Mab" feels the fairy's "burning speech" with "all touch, all eye, and all ear,"[97] although many of Shelley's arguments, here, are directed to reason. In spite of its didactic tone, the poem's many-colored message is the hope of a happy, happy earth where mild regeneration and perfectibility control mutability.

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[93] Hoxie N. Fairchild, The Romantic Quest, p. 29.

[94] Shelley, Letters, VIII, 103.

[95] Ibid., p. 107.

[96] Ibid., p. 328.

[97] Shelley, "Queen Mab," Poems, I, 105.

Part I of "The Daemon of the World," published as a fragment in the Alastor edition, is a 620-line version of the longer "Queen Mab." As such, it presents many of the same basic reactions to mutability, to immutability, and to immortality to be found in the parent work. The doctrines of necessity, good and evil, and will are supported with many of Shelley's previous arguments. The fragment reveals, as well, trends in his changing emphasis on reason, the mind, and the senses. Just as Shelley's mental conflict over reason's dominating feeling was expressed in many of his letters from 1811 to 1812, so is his conflict with materialism and immaterialism. For example, on July 7, 1812, he wrote to Godwin:

> Immateriality seems to me nothing but a simple denial of the presence of matter, of the presence of all the forms of being with which our senses are acquainted, and it surely is somewhat inconsistent to assign real existence to what is a mere negation of all that actual world to which our senses introduce us.[98]

By 1816, he was praising Drummond and supporting the following concept, "The mind cannot create, it can only perceive." The relationship between mutability, necessity, and this immaterialistic view appears in detailed form in "Laon and Cythna," with his "The Daemon of the World" serving as a work in transition. Probably, one of the most significant changes in the two poems occurs in Shelley's selection of Ianthe. In "Queen

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[98]Shelley, Letters, IX, 11.

Mab," the fairy selects Ianthe for her virtue and "resolute will"[99] In "The Daemon of the World," the Daemon tells her that she has been chosen because, "The truths which wisest poets see / Dimly, thy mind may make its own, / Rewarding its own majesty . . . ." (I.85-87) Shelley's other changes, which indicate a growing awareness of point-of-view and a new emphasis upon the mind, are embodied in his comprehension of a "new life" that is caught from transitory death. In "Queen Mab," it is the "stream of feeling"; in "The Daemon of the World," it becomes the "sweet dream of thought," or the "mighty tide," or "ocean" of thought. In "Queen Mab," he argues, ". . . birth but wakes the spirit to the sense / of outward shows whose unexperienced shape / New modes of passion to its frame may lend." (IX.155-157) In "The Daemon of the World," he alters the lines, thus: ". . . birth but wakes the universal mind / Whose mighty streams might else in silence flow . . . ." (II. 539-540) Shelley also clarified his meaning through similarly effected changes in the third stanza of "The Pale, The Cold, The Moony Smile." In The Esdaile Notebook version of the poem, this stanza reads as follows:

> All we behold, we feel that we know;
> All we perceive, we know that we feel;
> And the coming of death is a fearful blow
> To a brain unencompassed by nervestrings of steel--

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[99] Shelley, "Queen Mab," Poems, I, 70.

When all that we know, we feel and we see
Shall fleet by like an unreal mystery.[100]

However, when the poem appeared in the Alastor edition, Shelley had revised the stanza so as to read:

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow,[101]
To a brain unencompassed with nerves of steel,
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.[102]

"The Daemon of the World" also reflects Shelley's growing belief in immortality in his deletion of the Lucretian lines which suggest that all of man returns to matter: "There's not one atom of yon earth, / But once was living man; / Nor the minutest drop of rain, / That hangeth in the thinnest cloud, / But flowed in human veins." (II.210-215) This same trend of thought is also reflected in two of his earlier essays. Although "On a Future State" (1814) supports the Lucretain concept of a mortal soul, Shelley qualifies this argument by suggesting man's desire for permanency: "This desire to be forever as we are: the reluctance to a violent and unexperienced

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[100]Kenneth N. Cameron (ed.), The Esdaile Notebook, p. 79.

[101]It is interesting to note Mary Shelley's use of a rephrasing of these lines in Frankenstein. "Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change." Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, p. 188.

[102]Shelley, Poems, I, 204.

change . . . is, indeed, the secret persuasion which has given birth to the opinions of a future state."[103] In "On Life" (1815), he further observes, "Whatever may be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within [man] at enmity with nothingness and dissolution."[104]

Although Stoval points to Shelley's use of "the proud Power of Evil"[105] and of "Erebus,"[106] which appear in Part II of "The Daemon of the World," as indications that the poet had now altered his view of "unchanging necessity,"[107] it is clear that Shelley's emphasis is still upon the evil work of the kings and priests of the world. Certainly, the arguments are elipsed and more subtle than those in "Queen Mab," but for Shelley, evil and hell are still the confederates of institutions, as his unflattering pictures of kings and priests illustrate:

> . . . his right hand
> Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
> By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart
> Concealed beneath the robe, and motley shapes
> A multitudinous throng around him knelt. (I.273-377)

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[103] Shelley, "On a Future State," Prose, VI, 209.

[104] Shelley, "On Life," Prose, VI, 194.

[105] Shelley, "The Daemon of the World," Poems, I, 217.

[106] Ibid., p. 218.

[107] Floyd Stovall, "Shelley's Doctrine of Love," PMLA, VL (1930), 283.

Shelley's undying Utopia of Part II, that happy heaven on earth which all men shall one day enjoy, is the point of closest similarity between the two poems. Into both, Shelley introduces his song of perfection, his hymn to immutable virtue:

> O Happy Earth! reality of Heaven!
> To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
> Throng through the human universe, aspire;
> Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
> Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
> Verge to one point and blend forever there:
> Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!
> Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
> Languor, disease, and ignorance, dare not come:
> O happy Earth, reality of Heaven! (IX.1-11)

Although "Alastor," has been referred to as "the spirit of solitude," "the spirit of evil genius," and "the spirit of evil," Shelley's own clue to the meaning is probably the most valid.[108] Certainly, it is the one that best fits his concept of the change that occurs within the solitary spirit and is reflected by the luxuriant and the bleak, barren scenes of the poem. In his quest of the ideal being of his imagination for pure, immutable virtue, the youth earlier is mildly disturbed by the varying roof of heaven, by the changes in the weird clouds; but when his frenzied search reaches its climax in

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[108] Ingpen quotes Thomas Love Peacock as saying that he suggested the name for the poem. Peacock's definition of the Greek word is "evil genius." He states further that Alastor was not the name of the hero, Shelley, "Alastor," Poems, I, 420.

"grey, bare rocks" and "grasping roots," the youth notes: "A gradual change was here, / Yet, ghastly. For, as fast years flow away, / The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin / And white . . . ." (532-535) It is the prelude to death--the fate of the sensitive ones who forsake human sympathy. In his "Preface," Shelley gives the following account of the youth:

> The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the function of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.[109]

He also points out that the lesson, here, is not only for those who shun society and human sympathy, but for those "meaner spirits" who cannot, or will not feel or see. The shorter poem, "To _____," printed in the Alastor volume, isolates Shelley's personal conflict during the writing of "Alastor."[110] Here, the soul is shattered by the inconstancy of earth, and, although it is still true to _____, it has been changed into a "foul fiend through misery":

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[109] Shelley, "Preface" to "Alastor," Poems, I, 173.

[110] The personal problems that Shelley experienced after he left Harriet Westbrook, his first wife, to elope with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin are described in detail in his Letters, IX, or in any number of biographies.

> This fiend, whose ghostly presence ever
> Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
> Dream not to chase;--the mad endeavour
> Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
> Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
> Dark as it is, all change would aggravate. (31-35)[111]

Yet another clue to the meaning of "Alastor" is contained in Shelley's "Speculations on Morals," conjecturally dated as 1814 or 1815. In this fragment, he clarifies his distinctions between the selfish and virtuous man. For Shelley, the imagination of the selfish man is confined within a narrow limit," while that of the virtuous man "embraces a comprehensive circumference."[112] Shelley, however, makes no reference to "resolute will" in "Alastor." In spite of the fact that the youth's final resting place has great natural beauty, he seems to have arrived there by chance, by wandering. He follows his dream, caught in the ebb and flow of nature, in silence and solitude, and in the speechless, tuneless whispers of the brotherhood of earth, ocean, and air.[113] In his analysis of this "groping" poem,[114] Brown states that the problem being explored is the ". . . love of necessity versus the

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[111]Shelley, "To _____," Poems, I, 202.

[112]Shelley, "Speculation on Morals," Prose, VII, 76.

[113]J. L. De Palacio, "Music and Musical Themes in Shelley's Poetry," MLR, LIX (July, 1964), 346-347.

[114]Barrell, op. cit., p. 17.

necessity of love,"[115] the great conflict that exists between immutable, benevolent necessity and human sympathy. The poem ends with the lament that ". . . Art and eloquence, / And all the shews o' the world, are frail and vain / To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade. / It is a woe 'too deep for tears' . . . ." (710-713) Since the passage suggests Wordsworth, a number of scholars think that the older poet may have offered Shelley a more stable philosophy and a pattern for his poetry at a time when the reason and feeling of "Queen Mab" and the mind, reason, and feeling of "The Daemon of the World" presented a terrible paradox for the young poet.[116]

"Alastor" was the first of Shelley's major poems. It depicts his own world, the whispers of his own heart. It has significance for his reaction to mutability, since it defines more clearly his concept of immutable virtue. In addition, it is the first of a trend which becomes a trait of the author's work. In his analysis of Shelley's poems, Brown points to Shelley's "quick change" artistry in switching from "his world of mankind and its hopes," to the "other world of his own heart."[117] This "quick change" may also be associated more

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[115] Brown, op. cit., p. 60.

[116] Wilson, op. cit., p. 8.

[117] Brown, op. cit., p. 47.

specifically with Shelley's great dream of equality; for, here, the locale of the act becomes either a happy heaven or, as is true of his poetry at this time, a happy earth.

Shelley sorted all of the conflicting views in his letters, in "Queen Mab," "The Daemon of the World," and "Alastor," into "useable" and "useless" categories in his essay, "On Life." Here, he openly defied materialistic views that divorced feeling from reason and indicated an acceptance of the immaterialistic opinions of Sir William Drummond.[118] In accepting immaterialism, Shelley was able to combine reason, feeling, and perception, but of more significance for his concept of mutability, it allowed him to disclaim his alliance with "transcience and decay," and with "annihilation."[119] His new doctrine permitted him to associate his views with those of "Oneness," as well as with "unity through perception" that became the theme of "Laon and Cythna." In his "Speculations on Metaphysics" written in this same period, he emphasized the importance of an idea by stating, "Thoughts, or ideas, or notions, call them what you will, differ from each other, not in kind, but in force."[120] In this work and in "Speculations on Morals," he proposed universal continuums that would tie

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[118] Shelley, "On Life," Prose, VI, 194-195.

[119] Ibid., p. 194.

[120] Shelley, "Speculations on Metaphysics," Prose, VII, 59.

the force of human thoughts together[121] and identify all of the principles of justice and benevolence from "Solomon to--Perfectibility."[122] In both proposals, Shelley felt that the science of the mind could reach perfection since "We, ourselves [hold] the subject which we consider."[123]

The summer following his writing of "On Life" was a crucial one for Shelley's thought, for it was at this time that Drummond's philosophy became firmly fixed in his mind and colored his writing, throughout the remainder of his life. On September 27, 1819, he wrote of this philosophy:

> One, especially, struck me as being the assertion of a doctrine, of which even then I had long been persuaded, and on which I had founded much of my persuasions regarding the imagined cause of the Universe--"Mind cannot create, it can only perceive."[124]

The principal poems of this summer were his lyric, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and his modified blank verse poem, "Mont Blanc." In the first of these "idealistic experiments,"[125] Shelley relates mutability to the fleeting magic moment of knowing the unknowable. Specifically, he states that no form

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[121] Ibid., p. 60.

[122] Shelley, "Speculations on Morals," Prose, VII, 72.

[123] Shelley, "Speculations on Metaphysics," Prose, VII, 63.

[124] Shelley, Letters, X, 87.

[125] Barrell, op. cit., p. 74.

of man-made religion can ". . . avail to sever, / From all we hear and see, / Doubt, chance, and mutability." (29-31) The "awful shadow" of a shadow, the unseen power, is catalogued in intangibles reflecting his acute awareness of his brief union with something that is more than truth, something that is more than thought. Unlike "Queen Mab," the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" includes love, hope, and self-esteem as being mutable. The poem is important, not only because it points to Shelley's intense desire for permanent, immortal perfection, but also because it introduces two diametrically opposed concepts. In the first, he gives testimony to his conversion to a faith in the "awful loveliness" of the "Spirit of Beauty." He states: "Sudden, thy shadow fell on me; / I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!" (59-60) In the second, he expresses his scepticism, questioning the probability of probability:

> Thou, that to human thought art nourishment
> Like darkness to a dying flame!
> Depart not as thy shadow came:
> Depart not, lest the grave should be,
> Like life and fear, a dark reality. (44-48)

These contraries appear simultaneously and as a single focal point in many of Shelley's later poems. One of the most interesting observations that occur in the various analyses of the poem suggests that "intellectual beauty" as represented, is not a Platonic absolute beauty. Probably the strongest

statement to this effect is that of Barrell, who bases his proof upon Gingerich's contention that Shelley "arrives" without former "labor" and bibliographical data.[126] Barrell believes that Shelley's use of "intellectual beauty" in the title was probably intended merely to imply that, for him "supreme beauty" was abstract rather than concrete. He further states that, for Shelley, feelings dominated, concluding, therefore, that "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" is, ". . . in point of sober fact, not Platonic at all."[127] Fairchild seems to agree with him, believing that the poem represents Shelley's devotion to Plato, but cautions that since Shelley's "beauty" has a "fleshy" element, it cannot be called Platonic without many qualifications. He suggests that Shelley's vision is ". . . not really a climb at all, but a stripping away of a veil of appearances that hides the ideal beauty."[128] Pulos, in basic agreement with those who point to irreconcilable differences in the two philosophies, thinks that Shelley's "beauty"

> . . . unlike Plato's is not dialectically arrived at; nor does it involve a theory of ultimate reality . . . . It is essentially an unknown and "awful" power, which man apprehends only as an ecstasy "within his heart."[129]

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[126] Barrell, op. cit., p. 126.

[127] Ibid., p. 109.

[128] Fairchild, op. cit., p. 390.

[129] Pulos, op. cit., p. 109.

Bibliographical data, although recognizing earlier references to Plato, emphasizes his influence on Shelley's writing at a later period. Certainly it is true that the young Shelley doubted the utility of classical learning in promoting an ideal society. In a letter to Godwin, dated July 29, 1812, he states that the followers of the classical tradition were ". . . tracers of a circle which is intended to shut out from real knowledge, and to which this fictitious knowledge is attached, all who do not breathe the air of prejudice . . . ."[130] In this evaluation of the classics, Shelley mentions Lucretius but not Plato, as his only exception.[131] However, in spite of the apparent validity of these arguments when they are applied to some of Shelley's poems, other facts would discredit his use of the term "intellectual beauty" merely to indicate the abstract. Scholars have often recognized the natural affinity between Shelley and Plato.[132] Shelley, himself, indicates that perfection through "aspiring" change is not to be accomplished momentarily. In his defense of Shelley's elevated principles, Lewis observes that for a soul, a nation, or a world, Shelley knew that the "final

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[130] Shelley, Letters, IX, 14.

[131] Loc. cit.

[132] Pulos, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

remaking" was "long and arduous."[133] Although Shelley indicates his belief in the creative moment, he feels that these moments should be reënforced by diligent effort and by a desire to reproduce and arrange new materials of "knowledge, power, and pleasure" into something "beautiful and good."[134] In his "Preface" to "Laon and Cythna," he points to the time, effort, and experience involved in the learning-to-see process.[135] Furthermore, in his translation of the Symposium, he uses the term, "intellectual beauty," to describe the dialectic process. The Jowett translation of Plato's "Symposium" reads: ". . . but looking at the abundance of beauty and drawing towards the sea of beauty, and creating and beholding many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom . . . ."[136] Shelley's translation reads: ". . . but would turn towards the wide ocean of intellectual beauty, and from the sight of the lovely majestic forms which it contains would abundantly bring forth his conceptions in philosophy . . . ."[137] Finally, his persona in "Hymn to Intellectual

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[133] C. S. Lewis, "Shelley, Dryden and Mr. Eliot," in English Romantic Poets, p. 264.

[134] Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," Prose, VII, 134.

[135] Shelley, "Laon and Cythna," Poems, I, 243.

[136] Jowett, op. cit., p. 341.

[137] Shelley, "The Banquet of Plato," Prose, VII, 206.

Beauty" ends the poem with a declaration of a Platonic solution to life: "To fear himself and love all human kind."[138] The "awful" shadow of Shelley's intellectual beauty is, in many aspects, the antitype of Wordsworth's "awful" light, of his "awful" power and of his "awful" notes that furnish the harmony for his poem "Mutability."[139] Similarly, "Mont Blanc," Shelley's earlier poem of the summer of 1816, reflects the influence of Wordsworth, most obviously in the use of "rolls its rapid waves," "rolls its loud waters," and "rolls its perpetual stream." In the poem, the restless, ceaseless, mutability of nature furnishes the canvas for Shelley's restatement of many of his "Queen Mab" concepts of regeneration and of the force of cosmic energy for nature and for man. Again he proclaims: ". . . dreamless sleep / Holds every future leaf and flower;--the bound / With which from that detested trance they leap . . . ." (89-91) Man's works and possessions are included in those things that "Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell." (95) As in "Queen Mab," the "Power" is detached and tranquil. In an attempt to identify this power, Pulos suggests that it may be equated with necessity,[140] but he admits that Shelley consistently asserts that since "awful"

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[138] Elizabeth Nitchie, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," PMLA, LXII (1948), 753. Nitchie defines fear as "esteem."

[139] Wordsworth, op. cit., p. 353.

[140] Pulos, op. cit., p. 95.

power is unknowable, it can only be "like." In the case of "Mont Blanc," as in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," it is "like" the permanent, the sublime: it is "The secret Strength of things / Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome / Of heaven is a law . . . ." (139-141) The two areas of emphasis which Shelley stresses in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" are introduced as major issues in this poem, i.e., the power of the mind, and the "awful" doubt that makes even the precepts of immaterialism doubtful: "And what were thou, and earth, and stars and sea, / If to the human mind's imaginings / Silence and solitude were vacancy?" (142-144)

Unlike Shelley's emphasis upon the mutability of the magic moment and upon thought, Mary Shelley's undocumented use in Frankenstein of Shelley's "Mutability" (1814, published in January, 1816)[141] illustrates the importance of the senses. The last two stanzas appear in her novel and are used in support of Victor Frankenstein's observation:

> Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute, it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulse were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows and chance word or scene that word may convey to us.[142]

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[141] A. S. Glover (ed.), "Textual, Bibliographical and Other Notes," Shelley, p. 1108. (Published with "Alastor" January, 1816.)

[142] Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, pp. 93-94.

In this same section of the novel, Frankenstein refers to the immutable laws of nature, to an "awful," majestic nature, to the sublime ecstasy, to a flight from the obscure world to joy and light, and to the "Awful majesty" of Mont Blanc. Whether the work is primarily biographical, autobiographical, or neither is a matter of conjecture;[143] however, for its concepts on mutability, the novel serves as an excellent framework for a review of Shelley's major premises up to this point in his poetical career. Similarities occur in three areas--in Shelley's early obsession with the elixer of life, in his acute awareness of slight, subtle change, and in his doctrine of necessity. The persona in a number of Shelley's poems and the villain of St. Irvyne all have an impelling curiosity about an elixer of life. Shelley has his antagonist state, "I was now about seventeen: I had delved into the depths of

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[143] In her preface, Mary Shelley acknowledges Shelley's suggestion that she develop her few pages into a longer tale; however, she states: "I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident nor scarcely one train of feeling to my husband." Frankenstein, p. xi. Shelley in a letter to Lackington and Company, October 23, 1817, stated ". . . I have paid considerable attention to the correction of such few instances of baldness of style as necessarily occur in the production of a very young writer . . . ." Frederick Jones (ed.), Letters, 418, p. 564. Harold Bloom in his "Afterward" of the Signet Classic discredits any similarity between Victor Frankenstein and Shelley. He suggests that Cerval is more like the poet. Yet, when Frankenstein is described in the novel, he has a great love for virtue and benevolent intentions. He has a desire for solitude and death. He searches for solace in a little boat. He has recurring fevers. He uses Laudanum. He has intense feelings. He has sympathy for the oppressed; and he has fine, lovely eyes and a volcanic rage.

metaphysical calculations. With sophistical arguments I had convinced myself of the nonexistence of a First Cause."[144] Genotti also tells of his great fear of death and asks, "Will not this nature--will not the matter of which it is composed--exist to all eternity?"[145] One recalls that, early in the conflict between materialism and idealism in "Alastor," the youth states that he has visited charnels, "Hoping to still these obstinate questionings / Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost / Thy messenger, to render up the tale / Of what we are . . . ."[146] Later, he undergoes a mystical experience in which he sees "The thrilling secrets of the birth of time . . . ."[147] In "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the persona states that, as a boy, he sped, "Thro many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin . . ." with the hope of talking with the "departed dead." When he discovers the beauty of truth, he gasps and shrieks aloud.[148] Victor Frankenstein has similar experiences. In his youth, he searches for the secrets of heaven and earth--the substance of things, the inner spirit of nature, and the mysterious soul of man.[149] In his search, he

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[144] Shelley, St. Irvyne, Prose, V, 181.

[145] Ibid., p. 180.

[146] Shelley, "Alastor," Poems, I, 177.

[147] Ibid., p. 180.

[148] Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," Poems, II, 61.

[149] Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, p. 37.

learns about the more obvious laws of electricity, hoping to find an elixer of life to ". . . banish disease and render man invulnerable to any but violent death."[150] He also experiences rapture when he makes a discovery. Victor Frankenstein's awareness of change, a vital part of his character throughout the novel, is indicated when he states:

> One sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees made other alterations, which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive.[151]

Later, he and Elizabeth both re-echo the "The Pale, the Cold, the Mooney Smile" in their reaction to sudden change.[152] Not only is Victor's sensitivity to time observed, but also his general sensitivity.[153] Walton observes that, "Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the painting of beauties of nature."[154] Walton further points to Victor's "double existence," one that is marked by suffering; and the other, "when retired into himself" is that of,

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[150] Ibid., p. 40.

[151] Ibid., p. 72.

[152] Ibid., p. 188.

[153] Mary Shelley's note to "Speculations on Metaphysics" describes Shelley's agitation and deep feeling. In evaluating his sensitivity, she says, "No man, . . . had such keen sensations as Shelley." Mary Shelley, "Note 1," Prose, VII, 67.

[154] Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, p. 27.

"a celestial spirit."[155] Victor confirms Walton's opinion when, in the story of his life, he admits: "The sight of what is beautiful in nature or the study of what is excellent and sublime in the productions of man could always interest my heart . . . ."[156]

In Frankenstein, the necessity of nature is regulated by immutable laws and therefore, it represents stability.[157] The evil that the "Being" finally depicts is man-made. In his native state, the "Being" is a vegetarian; he loves knowledge and mankind.[158] The evil of institutions, such a major factor in Shelley's doctrine of necessity, is reflected in Mary Shelley's novel when she shows, through the death of Justine, the wretched mockery of justice and the bigotry of a religion that presents falsehood in the form of truth.[159] In the novel, virtue is represented as disinterested brotherly love. Both Walton and the blind DeLacey ascribe to a "knowing" virtue that is not motivated by self interest.[160] While the will of the "Being" is often misguided, it is resolute,

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[155] Loc. cit.

[156] Ibid., p. 153.

[157] Ibid., p. 63.

[158] Ibid., p. 139.

[159] Ibid., pp. 78-89.

[160] Ibid., pp. 19, 128.

unchanging, unalterable, and fixed, so that even death on an icy ocean is by choice. The conflict between reason and feeling, which characterizes Victor Frankenstein's reactions throughout the novel, is reflected in the "Being's" final speech in which he laments the loss of the wind and the stars of his earlier, "Happy, happy earth! Fit habitation for gods . . .,"[161] but he welcomes the time when his ". . . spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus."[162] The "Being's" last lines, which echo the conclusions to "On a Future State" provide a guide to Shelley's future writing. If the spirit "does not think thus," how, then, does it think? If mutability may be controlled by perfection, if a regeneration into perfection is possible, then, How?, When?, and Where? are the questions Shelley attempted to answer.

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[161] Ibid., p. 110.

[162] Ibid., p. 211.

CHAPTER III

"TO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE"

> Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
> Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
> But stedfast rest of all things, firmely stayd
> Upon the pillours of Eternity.
> --The Faerie Queene, VIII

"To the pure all things are pure" (VI.xxx.261) is Shelley's creed in the socio-literary poem, "Laon and Cythna," his principal work in 1817.[163] Just as "Queen Mab," his first major literary expression of his plan for perfectibility, followed his frustrated, overt Irish action, he wrote "Laon and Cythna" after having made an unsuccessful attempt to bring about parliamentary reform in the House of Commons. Shelley's renewed interest in man's possible earthly perfectibility was probably aroused and fed by his association with Hunt in the winter of 1816.[164] Evidence of his revived enthusiasm is embodied in a political tract, "A Proposal for Putting Reform

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[163] A few copies of "Laon and Cythna" were printed in November. The poem was withdrawn from circulation in December, to be reissued by Ollier, Shelley's printer, in January as the "Revolt of Islam." In spite of the adverse criticism that appeared in the Quarterly Review after the November printing and again in 1819, Hunt expounded Shelley's message and gave the poem "a just evaluation" in three articles that appeared in the February and March Examiner (1818). Walter Graham, "Shelley's Debt to Leigh Hunt and the Examiner," PMLA, XL (March, 1955), 186.

[164] Barrell, op. cit., p. 15.

to the Vote throughout the Kingdom." The reform which he proposed did not include a national franchise; but it did make appeals that were directed toward arousing the will to be chosen for a responsibility which would insure just representation and implant seeds for a millenium of liberty.[165] Shelley signed this work, "The Hermit of Marlow." The anti-reform leaders were quick to react, and, in April, The Quarterly Review published Southey's ad hominem attack upon the Hermit. Cameron believes that the Hermit's identity was not unknown at this time and suggests that Shelley was particularly vulnerable, since his personal problems recently had been exposed during the trial for the custody of his children.[166]

Shelley's solution to the failure of the pamphlet is outlined in his "Preface" to "Laon and Cythna." He explains, here, that the voice of perfection, the instrument that will enlighten and improve mankind, is the "harmony of metrical language." In addition, he suggests that "The mind cannot create, it can only perceive." To achieve a slow, gradual, silent change through poetry, Shelley states that he has chosen for this work the most exacting of metrical forms, the Spenserian stanza. He clearly implies that this work is his

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[165] Shelley, "A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom," Prose, VI, 63.

[166] Kenneth Cameron, "Shelley Versus Southey," PMLA, LVII (June, 1942), 494-495.

attempt to give pleasure and to create enthusiasm, not by didactic methods, but by ". . . a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of the individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind."[167] He announces his qualifications for writing such a work[168] and suggests the following ideas in a note:

> In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in the works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.[169]

He also warns that some readers may be startled by his candid challenge to the outworn opinions of convention and established institutions.[170] Thus, Shelley prepares the reader for the acceptance of his basic contentions by qualifying the area of his attack. In other words, since he thinks that the mind cannot create, but only perceive, his purpose in "Laon and Cythna" is to instill doubt, to confuse good, to insult concepts of morality, and to teach perception.[171]

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[167] Shelley, "Preface" to "Laon and Cythna," Poems, I, 239.

[168] Graham states that the Hunt reviews were directed toward showing the genuine Christianity of Shelley's spirit, and that his hope was that, his "poetry might somehow help to make men fearless, independent, happy, wise, affectionate, and infinitely social." Graham, op. cit., p. 192.

[169] Shelley, "Preface" to "Laon and Cythna," Poems, I, 243.

[170] Ibid., p. 246.

[171] Ibid., p. 247.

In "Laon and Cythna, or The Revolution of the Golden City," his single use of the word, immutable, occurs in reference to the immutability of the mind. From the depths of her empathy for mankind, Cythna asks ". . . what was this cave? / Its deep foundation on purpose knows / Immutable, resistless, strong to save, / Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave." (VIII.xxxi.249-252) Mutability, per se, is not used in the poem; rather, Shelley substitutes two terms probably more fitting to the overall chaos of a "winter of the world." These terms are "chains of fate" and an unqualified "change." Perfectibility in "Laon and Cythna" is to be accomplished by regeneration from winter to a hoped-for spring. While Shelley uses the traditional Orphic answer to mutability (the dying and reviving vegetation), it is subordinate to the regeneration which takes place on two levels: first, outside and encompassing the entire universe, and secondly, on the earth in the minds of men. Regeneration of the universe is the key to his introductory myth, and regeneration of the earth serves the same purpose for the narrative portion of the poem. However, in both sections, the final regeneration that brings perfection occurs in the aery heights of a Shelleyan heaven. For example, in the myth, the initial conflict of the elements is featured in an aerial battle depicting the birth of good and evil. From "inessential nought," says Shelley, two immortal powers burst forth to hold dominion

over mortal things. Although these powers are "Twin Genii," or equal Gods, they are also associated with "life and thought." Illustrating the confusion in the minds of men over recognition of good and evil, the first battle takes place between a blood-red comet and the Morning Star. The earliest dweller on the earth identifies himself with the combatants, and when the Morning Star fell, ". . . he turned and shed his brother's blood."[172] Shelley repeats this Promethean conflict again on an earthly level in his ancient myth involving an eagle and a snake.[173] Here, the snake, the symbol of good, is defeated, but he is rescued by a bright earthling who, when she relates her history, tells of her mystical experience. This experience recalls the cry of divine joy which Shelley experienced in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." It implies the same devotion to goodness which he makes in his dedication to "Laon and Cythna." Here, Shelley's vow to his redemptive vision is stated as follows:

> I will be wise,
> And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
> Such power, for I grow weary to behold
> The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
> Without reproach or check. ("To Mary," IV.31-35)[174]

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[172] Shelley, "Laon and Cythna," Poems, I, 264.

[173] Baker lists the Iliad, the Aeneid, and the Metamorphoses, or the Faerie Queene as sources. Baker, op. cit., p. 75.

[174] André Maurois has Shelley make this vow after a series of persecutions at Eaton. (André Maurois, Ariel, p. 8.) Ingpen states that it relates to Brentford, since there was no grass at Eaton. Poems, I, 424.

The bright earthling tells the narrator that she is the beloved of the Morning Star. Later, the three--the snake, the maiden, and the narrator--return to the bright realms of aery goodness, which Shelley describes in terms of fire and crystal air. Then, as the narrator's maiden guide sees the Bright Being, she dissolves. The snake becomes two bright eyes which unite to become a regenerated planet, the Morning Star. In the first canto of his poem, Shelley is more specific in his descriptions of his immortal Bright Being than he is at any other time in his writing.[175] Just as the myth ends in aery realms of goodness, the crucified martyrs of the last portion of the poem are also united in the regions of heavenly necessity.

Shelley ends Canto I with the sound of a voice instructing the narrator to listen and learn. The following romance is oriental in setting. In this respect, it may resemble the work of Peacock and Southey,[176] but in tone and thought, many of its cantos restate and support the immaterialistic trends which Shelley had included in "The Daemon of the World," i.e., perfectibility through the regeneration of "One mind the type of all." In the eleven remaining cantos, Cythna incorporates this immaterialistic philosophy into her advice to the oppressed.

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[175] Shelley, "Laon and Cythna," Poems, I, 271-274.

[176] Baker, op. cit., p. 71.

She challenges them to recognize ". . . All mortal thoughts confess a common home," and continues,

> Disguise it not--ye blush for what ye hate,
> And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
> Look on your mind--it is the book of fate.
> Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name,
> Of misery--all are mirrors of the same;
> But the dark fiend who with his iron pen,
> Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
> Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
> Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their
> hearts his den. (VIII.xx.167-171)

Just as Cythna's advice emphasizes will, reason, and perception, almost every stanza in each of these cantos has, as its focal point, some reference to the "warp and woof" of mind, wisdom, thought, or reason; and supports the contention, "Reason cannot know / What sense can neither feel nor thought conceive . . . ." (IX.xxxiii.290)[177] Although Shelley made it clear in his "Preface" that his purpose in writing "Laon and Cythna" was not didactic, the protagonists, Laon, Laone, and Cythna, all teach Shelley's "Queen Mab" lessons on "immutable" necessity, on institutions, and on virtue by stressing that "the Past is Death's." All three talk of framing thoughts anew and of leading human nature to a second birth. Furthermore,

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[177] This is the answer to his conflict that Shelley found in Sir William Drummond's Academical Questions. In his preface Shelley states that Drummond's work is, ". . . a volume of every acute and powerful metaphysical criticism." Shelley, "Preface," Poems, I, 242.

Shelley's prevailing tendency in this poem again equates evil with the duplicity of tyrants and priests who bribe "hoary men" to declare that God, nature, and necessity demand that ". . . among / Mankind, the many to the few belong." While the facts seem to confirm the observation that there has been little change in Shelley's concept of necessity and in his sources of good and evil, many scholars feel that Canto I presents proof of Shelley's recognition of a "power of evil" and, of course, that by such a recognition, he admits to heaven and hell. Stovall, who suggested that an evil spirit is described in "The Daemon of the World," employs similar arguments to explain the inherent, god-like evil of the genii in "Laon and Cythna." He rightly suggests that, here, good has been defeated many times.[178] He contends, further, that each defeat was accompanied by some violent evil among men, i.e., Cain, The French Revolution.[179] Although these arguments are probably those which Shelley, himself, intended, Stovall distorts Shelley's basic purpose by assigning this evil power to an immortal world. Even as late as 1819, when Shelley wrote his essay, "On the Devil, and Devils," he had suggested that such a being was, ". . . the weak place of the popular

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[178] Stovall, op. cit., p. 292.

[179] Ibid., p. 293.

religion--the vulnerable belly of the crocodile."[180] Shelley, at that time, further stated that evil and good were reflections of pleasure and pain, and, as such, it is a simple vulgar reaction to ". . . give to that which is pleasing perpetual or ultimate superiority, and to brand that which is displeasing with epithets ludicrous or horrible . . . ."[181] Even earlier in 1814 in his "Refutation of Deism," Shelley had expressed this belief: "Exclude the idea of relation, and the words good and evil are deprived of import."[182] His stand on the nature of good and evil in relation to his concept of a sightless, immutable, amoral necessity of the smaller sphere, clearly seems to make it an earthly creation. Shelley's use of the expression, "genii," is not unique with "Laon and Cythna." It appears in "Queen Mab," in "Alastor," in "The Witch of Atlas," and in "Prometheus Unbound." Grabo's excellent account of the characteristics of the Neo-Platonic interpretation of ancient myths identifies these genii as reporting agents who inhabit the region between the earth and the moon. They were electric, magnetic, and were not seen by the eyes, but were "discovered" by the mind.[183] In "Laon and

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[180] Shelley, "On the Devil and Devils," Prose, VII, 87.

[181] Loc. cit.

[182] Shelley, "A Refutation of Deism," Prose, VI, 53.

[183] Grabo, op. cit., p. 84.

Cythna," these genii are similarly conceived, since Shelley explains that they originated at a time ". . . when life and thought sprang forth." In "Laon and Cythna," Shelley's equally confusing use of the snake to represent good and evil is probably an expression of "Clear elemental shapes whose smallest change / A subtle language within a language wrought." (VII.xxxii.283-284)[184] Although the Snake is representative of good in Canto I, in the remaining cantos, he is described as being toothless and rabid, and becomes a snake of hell, of custom, and of evil priests. The eagle follows a similar pattern: he is evil in Canto I, and in the remaining cantos he represents liberty. With each of these symbols Shelley is inconsistent only once in the narrative cantos: he equates the snake with eternity, and he allows Cythna's kindness to change a preying eagle into a companion for its intended victim. In this situation, as in his use of the theme of incest, and Laon's mad, cannibalistic dream, Shelley is creating and cancelling impressions to demonstrate his basic premise that ". . . the mind cannot create, it can only perceive."

In addition to their illustrations of the sources of

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[184]Wilson tells of a dialogue between Byron and Shelley which appeared in the New Monthly and The London Magazine, eight years after Shelley's death. In it Shelley shows the perfect harmony of the line, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank," by referring to the unity of the relationship of each word to the individual words and to the whole; Wilson, op. cit., p. 15.

evil, Laon and Cythna obviously teach Shelley's "Queen Mab" lessons--that war is hate, ". . . even when thy life thou shed'st / For love . . ." (VI.xvi.138); and that a vegetarian diet promotes the health, happiness and longevity of mankind.[185] They also reveal that faith is an "obscene worm" since the cause of life, the spirit ". . . vast and deep as Night and Heaven" (V.2.323), is imageless. It is not a god created by "Some moon-struck sophist who stood / Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown / Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood / The form he saw and worshipped was his own." (VIII.vi.46-49) In their hope for the victory of justice, truth, and honor, the two emancipators suggest that science and poetry "Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!" (V.5.535) Although Laon and Cythna are defeated on earth, their hope for regeneration and perfection in the mind of man is repeated by Cythna throughout the poem:

> Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
> Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
> When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain.
> (III.xlix.429-431)

Again, she states:

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[185]John Frank Newton's syllogism for proving the value of a natural diet was, "Old Parr, healthy as the wild animals, attained to the age of 152 years. All men might be as healthy as the wild animals. Therefore, all men might attain to the age of 152 years." Shelley repeats this syllogism in his Appendix to "A Vindication of Natural Diet." Shelley, Prose, VI, 19.

> . . . turn thine eyes
> On thine own heart--it is a paradise
> Which everlasting spring has made its own,
> And while drear Winter fells the naked skies,
> Sweet streams of sunny thought and flowers fresh blown,
> Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.
> (IX.xxvi.230-235)

She concludes:

> In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
> Which made them great, the good will ever find;
> And tho' some envious shade may interlope
> Between the effect and it, one comes behind,
> Who aye the future to the past will bind--
> Necessity, whose sightless strength forever
> Evil with evil, good with good must wind . . . .
> (IX.xxvii.237-240)

Cythna's hope is also repeated by Laon at the end of the poem when his aerial spirit promises "a slow, gradual, silent change," and states "That virtue, tho' obscured on Earth, not less / Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness." (XII. xxvii.331-333)

Regeneration of matter is suggested in Cythna's concepts of the regeneration of good; it is described in detail in the speeches of Laone and of Cythna. For the most part, however, Shelley's use, here, of regeneration of matter is a traditional belief and a mere background for his impassioned plea for the Spring of "Truth's deathless germs." Solve makes the proper evaluation of Shelley's overall use of nature when he states, "Sensitive as Shelley was to external nature, it

was not of the highest interest to him."[186] Shelley's recurring imagery of emerald water, purple tinted clouds, mighty oaks, and bubbles on the river of time, is used to reënforce his evaluation of man in society and implies the harmony possible between society and nature.[187] Although Babbitt states that it is ". . . falling from illusion into dangerous delusion to associate Shelley's faith with that of Plato or Christ,"[188] one suggests that Shelley's creed has many points of similarity with these earlier doctrines. Probably, his best statement of this creed occurs in "Coliseum"; here, he has the blind father define the true meaning of love:

> It is because we enter into the meditations, designs and destinies of something beyond ourselves, that the contemplation of the ruins of human power excites an elevating sense of awfulness and beauty. It is therefore that the ocean, the glacier, the cataract, and the tempest, the volcano, have each a spirit which animates the extremities of our frame with tingling joy. It is therefore, that the singing of birds, and the motion of the leaves, and the sensation of the odorous earth beneath, and the freshness of the living wind around is sweet. And this is Love. This is the religion of eternity.[189]

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[186] Solve, op. cit., p. 71.

[187] In his letters written in 1819 to Thomas L. Peacock, Shelley applies this principle to the poetry and art of the Greeks. In accounting for its unity, perfection, and uniform excellence, he states: "They lived in perpetual commerce with external nature and nourished themselves upon the spirit of its forms." Shelley, Letters, X, 26.

[188] Babbitt, op. cit., p. 360.

[189] Shelley, "Coliseum," Prose, VI, 303-304.

Willey has suggested that, when Shelley and Keats were confronted with the seventeenth-century rejection of the myth as "a superstitious inheritance from the past," they merely fabricated "a genuine new mythology of their own."[190] Woodman associates the mythology of "Laon and Cythna" with that of the Hindu Orphic system which Shelley had studied with John Frank Newton early in 1813.[191] In Hindu Orphic mythology, ". . . the future was the visionary form of the present," and Time, as a mode of perception, was annihilated. Under this system, mutability was controlled only at the end of four cycles--the creation, preservation, destruction, and the renovation.[192] Hindu Orphic mythology is closely associated with Platonic Orphic mythology; therefore, Neo-Platonic concepts are also applicable to the interpretation of the mythology in Shelley's poetry. Grabo, who relates Shelley's mythology to that of Thomas Taylor, states that a Neo-Platonic interpretation of myths rationalized them into a system that revealed the veiled scientific knowledge of the priestly caste of both Egypt and Greece.[193] Thus, for a study of mutability, the most important

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[190]Basil Willey, "On Wordsworth and the Locke Tradition," in English Romantic Poets, p. 85.

[191]Woodman, op. cit., p. 500.

[192]Ibid., p. 501.

[193]Grabo, op. cit., pp. 103-147.

of these rationalizations are those related to color and to permanency. The colors, red, green, and blue, represented Spirit, the earthly living form, and matter. The fountain was the symbol for creative energy, and the cave represented mortal life, the wind, or the ent... world, as it does in "Prometheus Unbound." The boat was used as a vehicle for the soul. Cosmic force was equated with an element similar to electricity. In the Neo-Platonic triune, the sun was the mind; the moon, the soul; and the earth, the body. For "Prometheus Unbound" and for many of Shelley's later poems, the most important of these Neo-Platonic interpretations explained that the great world was only a product of the imagination of the universal mind and that the ". . . multiform world was mutable, and yet, mysteriously one."[194]

On April 16, 1819, Shelley wrote to Thomas L. Peacock informing him that he had just finished a lyrical drama, "Prometheus Unbound." After briefly describing his play, he added, "I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts."[195] Although recent evaluations of this drama support Shelley's statement, in his own time The Quarterly Review, The Literary Gazette, and the Monthly Review, printed unfavorable criticism following its publication in 1820.[196] Shelley

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[194] Ibid., p. 43.

[195] Shelley, Letters, X, 48.

[196] Newman I. White, "Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound,'" PMLA, XL (March, 1925), 176.

does not mention his reactions to these reviews as he did following the 1819 Quarterly Review criticism of "Laon and Cythna,"[197] but, if he "laughed and laughed" as he did in 1819, he was justified; for these reviews described the work as obscure nonsense.[198] Time, however, befriended the poet, and few would find fault, today, with Baker's conclusion that the play is a ". . . beautifully exact, and skillfully devised piece of work"; that it has ". . . sonorous masterful blank verse"; and that its ". . . lyrics express lightness without sacrifice of dignity."[199] Others have used the work to defend Shelley against those who refer to him with Arnold's epithet, "ineffectual angel,"[200] synonymous with "angelic adolescent."[201] Indeed, Grabo feels that "Prometheus Unbound" is the expression of Shelley's ". . . complete faith in philosophy," adding that rather than the "mad mutterings of withdrawal," the poem is "more real" and more logical than "Queen Mab" or "Laon and Cythna."[202] Barrell points to the Hellenic cast of the

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[197]Graham, op. cit., p. 186.

[198]Ibid., p. 188.

[199]Baker, op. cit., p. 117.

[200]Mathew Arnold, "Essays in Criticism," The Works of Mathew Arnold, IV, 185.

[201]C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 255.

[202]Grabo, op. cit., p. 115.

idealism expressed in the drama.[203] But states, "It is wholly modern, thoroughly un-Platonic, and indeed entirely Shelleyan."[204] The play, which was begun in September of 1818, was written under the bright, blue skies of Rome and utilizes the city's surrounding countryside as a model for its observations on the mutability and regeneration of nature. Here, as in his two earlier socio-literary poems, Shelley is concerned with man's mutability. However, his answer, now, does not reside in institutional reform, but rather, in a moral regeneration of mankind. As in "Laon and Cythna," his emphasis is once more upon perception, and, as in the earlier work, he repeats, "Didactic poetry is my abhorrence."[205] In his preface, he further qualifies his stand:

> . . . 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.[206]

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[203] Barrell, op. cit., p. 18.

[204] Ibid., p. 132.

[205] Shelley's philosophy of the role of the poet is clearly stated in his "Philosophical View of Reform": "They are the priests of unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, . . . Poets and philosophers are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." This last statement is also made in "A Defense of Poetry." Shelley, Prose, VII, 20, 140.

[206] Shelley, "Preface to Prometheus Unbound," Poetry, II, 174.

In "Prometheus Unbound," however, instead of using a protagonist who is a synthesis of mind and body, Shelley concentrates almost entirely upon the universal mind of man. Although White objects to referring to the play as an allegory (since he does not think it uses allegorical situations or allegorical mechanisms), he agrees, however, that Prometheus probably represents the mind of man in search of "deep truth."[207] It is a mind that by an act of "all-enduring will," retracts the curse, a burning crown of gold. It is a noble mind made whole by empathy with suffering and with pain, a mind that "fears" itself and "loves mankind."

As in "Laon and Cythna," Shelley begins the myth at dawn in an aery, thought world. It portrays a universal cyclic pattern starting with the beginning of evil when, by will, Prometheus joins his mind-created adversary, Jupiter, and, like Victor Frankenstein, corrupts himself with his own evil anathema. When he retracts his curse, perfectibility of the universe begins. Since Prometheus represents the Platonic immortality of the idea of the Ideal, Shelley uses the term, immortal, to qualify his deeds and thoughts. However, unlike "Laon and Cythna," the prevailing emphasis of Act I is upon evil rather than upon purity. Early in the first act, Prometheus laments that "He who is evil can receive no good; /

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[207] White, op. cit., p. 176.

And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost, / He can feel hate, fear, shame, not gratitude." (I.389-391) The evil that Prometheus observes is reaffirmed by the tempting furies who, then, point out the mutability of human desires: "The good want power, but to weep baren tears. / The powerful goodness want; worse need for them. / The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom; / And all blest things are thus confused to ill." (I.624-627) The problem of identifying the proper relationship of this evil to Shelley's doctrine of necessity (a necessity amoral, earth-bound, and, thus, subject to the control of the mind of man, and the immortal necessity of the universe) is once again apparent in "Prometheus Unbound." Although scholars have discovered immortal qualities in both Prometheus and Jupiter, Mary Shelley's following answer to the problem is still the one that offers the most valid support:

> The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of creation, but an accident that might be expelled.[208]

The evidence that Jupiter is mind-created and that Demogorgon's answers to Asia about the origin of evil seem to point to Jupiter, also support her contention. In addition, Demogorgon,

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[208]Mary Shelley, "Notes to Prometheus Unbound," Poems, II, 269.

(earth's amoral necessity) instructs Asia (immortal love) on the mutability of things on earth when he states: "Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these / All things are subject but eternal Love." (II.iv.116)

The regeneration that begins in Act III is heralded by the regeneration of the world-surrounding ether, a process that is described by the Second Fawn in Act II. The prelude to regeneration is also re-echoed in Panthea and Asia's trip to Demogorgon's Cave. (II.iii.70-82) Grabo suggests that, here, the dense forest symbolizes the world of sensation, of sight, and of sound, and that the entire trip is directed back to a Platonic pre-existence.[209] In Act III, immortal intelligence and immortal love unite, and, again, as in his earlier socio-literary poems, Shelley describes a world without flux. Prometheus and Asia, who are to remain forever unchanged, retire to a cave where they talk of time and change; and perhaps give answers to the question, "What can hide man from mutability?" (III.25) The cave, itself, is filled with music and ever-perfecting lovely thoughts. Here, Shelley does not describe mutability in emotional epithets, but his use of the word, hide, foreshadows Demogorgon's warning at the end of the fire and light of Act IV. In this act, which Lewis categorizes as "complicated and uncontrolled splendor,"[210] the entire

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[209] Grabo, op. cit., p. 62.

[210] Lewis, op. cit., p. 266.

universe is united in an imaginative breath-taking dance of unity. The hours, thoughts, the spheres, and man, who has become ". . . one harmonious soul of many a soul, / Whose nature is its own divine control, / Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea" (IV.400-403), unite to become a part of a lovely whirlwind that whispers a perpetual Orphic song of universal love. (IV.415) However, Shelley's faith in his optimistic belief in a world in which the mind of man is his own God is not without doubt. Thus, Demogorgon reveals the spells that may be used for perpetuating forever this utopia:

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> 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;
> This, like thy glory Titan! is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!
> (IV.570-578)

In "Prometheus Unbound," therefore, Shelley presents, again, a universal pattern for eternal spring in the perfectibility of man on earth; he also demonstrates the rules which a poet must follow in becoming a prophet of perception, an "unacknowledged legislator of the world." In 1821, following the publication of Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry, Shelley, in defense of his art, set down these principles in his argument,

"A Defense of Poetry." Probably, the whole essay is supported in the theme of "Prometheus Unbound"; however, three of his basic precepts seem to fit his concept of immortality. Shelley believes that the ". . . poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the One."[211] In Act I of "Prometheus Unbound," the fourth spirit explains that she slept on the lips of the poet and that they created from reflections ". . . forms more real than living man, / Nurslings of immortality." (I.748-749) Moreover, Shelley feels that, by removing time and space, the poet could not only behold the ". . . future in the present as it is," but that he could discover ". . . the future in the present as it should be." Furthermore, Shelley states that if a man is to be "greatly good," he must "imagine intensely." He must make the joys and sorrows of the species his own. However, he also states that the poet will ". . . do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time . . ." into his work.[212] Although in the "Cenci," he discusses evil with an air of sad, gruesome reality, and presents the problem of over-analysis of self, of the what "must be thought and may be done," his usual pattern was to "teach morality through self-knowledge and

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[211] Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," Prose, VII, 112.

[212] Ibid., p. 118.

self-respect."[213] In a letter to Charles Ollier, he further refutes Peacock's arguments, stating:

> He would extinguish Imagination which is the Sun of Life, and grope his way by the cold and uncertain and borrowed light of that moon which he calls Reason, stumbling over the interlunar chasm of time where she deserts us, and with the Owl rather than eagle, stare with dazzled eyes on the watery orb which is the Queen of his pale Heaven.[214]

Perfection through regeneration that occurs in "Prometheus Unbound" becomes a theme of hope in many of Shelley's visionary poems of 1818-1820. Now, the hope of regeneration comes in the song of the bird, in the loud whisperings of the West Wind, and in the scent of the not-yet-dead dream flowers. It is a regeneration which takes note of the revolving year, of cycles of regeneration in the centuries, and of the mutability of the less-than-a-second, magic moment. Taken as a whole, Shelley's statement on mutability in these poems includes the revolving year and the destructive season (winter) of the "The Sensitive Plant" and the "Ode to the West Wind"; the Necessity of man which is personified by the necessity of the insects of the "The Sensitive Plant" and the indestructibility of energy and matter which is the theme of "The Cloud"--"I change, but I cannot die." Although these poems

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[213] Ibid., p. 121.

[214] Shelley, Letters, X, 245.

reflect Shelley's belief in a vision of harmony and permanency, the vision is qualified by Shelley's melancholy longing, questioning, doubting "If" of scepticism: "If I were a dead leaf"; "If winter comes," "If I were a swift cloud"; "If we were things born / Not to shed a tear"; "If we could scorn / Hate, and pride, and fear . . . ." Shelley's scepticism is also apparent in the unrevived garden of "The Sensitive Plant"; however, in this poem, Shelley is also true to his Platonic belief that for ". . . love, and beauty, and delight, / There is no death nor change; their might / Exceeds our organs, which endure. No light, being themselves obscure." (Conclusion. 21-24) In Shelley's undefiled paradise, "'Tis we, 'tis ours," that decay, and not ideas, for they are impervious to the laws of dissolution. In his prayer-poem, "Ode to the West Wind," he again expresses his belief in the power of the "unacknowledged legislators" of the world, the prophet poets. Wilcox suggests that the "lovely unattainable perfection" in the Skylark's song embodies the song of Shelley's ideal poet.[215] It is the song of the world as it "ought to be," one which the world can not, or will not hear, for it ". . . is full of Woodmen who expel / Love's gentle Dryands from the haunts of life, / And vex the nightingales at every dell."[216] Thus,

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[215] S. C. Wilcox, "Sources, Symbolism, and Unity of Shelley's Skylark," SP, XLVI (October, 1949), 561.

[216] Shelley, "The Woodman and the Nightingale," Poems, III, 207.

Shelley expresses a growing realization that earthly perfection is not possible. The bitter poems of the last two years of Shelley's life reveal his reaction to this realization.

CHAPTER IV

"FAR IN THE UNAPPARENT"

> In all things else she beares the greatest sway:
> Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle.
> --The Faerie Queene, VIII

Shelley's poems of 1821 and 1822 follow the trend indicated in the last lines of his second mutability poem, "Dream thou--and from thy sleep, / Then wake to weep."[217] All seem to support Maddalo's observation, "Most wretched men / Are cradled into poetry by wrong, / They learn in suffering what they teach in song." (544-546)[218] All reflect a growing despair which cannot be subdued. Shelley cannot repeat the song of perfectibility of man on earth. For example, "Hellas" begins the regeneration theme, but its last lines are a prelude to the bitter message of the "Triumph of Life." Similarly, "Adonais" affirms Shelley's faith in undying good, "The One remains, the many change and pass" (LII.460); however, he concludes by pointing to the earth's stain of "many-coloured glass" which has marred the "white radiance of Eternity." In this poem the conflict between the transitory and the permanent has no answer for Shelley; therefore, he seems to long for the

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[217] Shelley, "Mutability," Poems, IV, 94.

[218] Shelley, "Julian and Maddalo," Poems, III, 194.

warmth of death.[219] Amoral necessity is still a force in these poems; however, it is no longer a necessity that can be directed toward a future which has been predetermined by the will of the present; instead, it submits to customs of a past that determine the future. Hence, for Shelley, perfectibility of man becomes impossible, since mutability rules. Thus, he voices his despair in the fragment, "Triumph of Life":

> "Let them pass,"
> I cried, "the world and its mysterious doom
>
> "Is not so much more glorious than it was,
> That I desire to worship those who drew
> New figures on its false and fragile glass
>
> "As the old faded."--"Figures ever new
> Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may;
> We have but thrown, as those before us threw."
> (243-250)

His changed attitude toward mutability probably began to take form in his writing of the "Witch of Atlas," in August of 1820.[220] Although Grabo suggests that, except for its playful mood, "The Witch of Atlas" and "Prometheus Unbound" have much in common.[221] Perkins believes that the poem makes an ". . . unequivocal statement summing up the inevitable

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[219] E. N. Hutchins, "Cold and Heat in Adonais," MLA, LXXVI (February, 1961), 126.

[220] David Lee Clark, "What Was Shelley's Indebtedness to Keats," PMLA, LVI (June, 1941), 481.

[221] Grabo, op. cit., p. 115.

decomposition of all material things from fountains to the 'stubborn center' of the earth itself."[222] "Hellas," which resembles "Prometheus Unbound," since it is a lyrical drama, and the fourth of Shelley's socio-literary poems, ends with the same hopelessness:

> O cease! must hate and death return?
> Cease! must men kill and die?
> Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
> Of bitter prophecy.
> The world is weary of the past
> O might it die or rest at last! (1096-1101)

The battle in the prologue of this poem, written to commemorate the Greek attempt to obtain freedom, presents Christ as the defender of benevolent good. Here, Shelley returns to his attack upon institutions, now focusing his invective upon the bungling stupidity of kings who follow policies which insure the incorporation (into the present and the future) of all that has contributed to the imperfectibility of the past. Mahud, who deplores "wolfish" change, the "dragon wings" of change, is aware of this situation; however, since he is unwilling to relinquish any of his earthly power, he laments:

> The future must become the past, and I
> As they were to whom once this present hour,
> This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
> Seemed an Elysian isle of peace and joy
> Never to be attained.--I must rebuke

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[222]David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence, p. 118.

> This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
> And dying, bring despair . . . ." (924-930)

"Hellas" develops some of the perfectibility arguments of "Queen Mab," but in an unconvincing, perfunctory way. Shelley implies the immutability of thought and its elements--will, passion, reason, and imagination. He permits his Semichorus I to start a feeble song concerned with the immutability of the elements of virtue: "Life may change, but it may fly not; / Hope may vanish; but can die not, / Truth be veil'd, but still it burneth, / Love repulsed,--but it returneth!" (33-36) However, both efforts are overshadowed by the Stoic attitude of Ahasuerus, who moves into the work from the pages of "Queen Mab." His lecture on the past, the present, and the "to come," gives a complete statement of Shelley's bleak, autumn philosophy of 1822. In it, he warns Mahmud that the entire universe, with all of its "tempestuous workings," is only a vision. He continues,

> . . . all that it inherits
> Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles, and dreams;
> Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
> The future and the past are idle shadows
> Of thought's eternal flight--they have no being;
> Nought is but that it feels itself to be (780-785)

Since Shelley had failed in his overt attempts to bring about reform; since he had been unable to teach reform in "Queen Mab," since few could, or would, perceive the essence of perfection

in his "Laon and Cythna," or "Prometheus Unbound," Shelley's hopeless conclusion in "Hellas" seems to be the following:

> Worlds on Worlds are rolling ever
> From creation to decay,
> Like the bubbles on a river
> Sparkling, bursting, borne away. (197-200)

In the "Triumph of Life," the mutability of all earthly things is complete and chaotic since Shelley adds speed to the blind, indifferent leadership of necessity. Here, in his "harsh" world, Shelley speaks of "signs of thought" and of "truth's eternal doors," but his main emphasis is on the "Proteus" shape of nature and on men who are flying from fear or seeking the "object of another's fear." In an analysis of this poem, Cherubine states that Shelley's "Native Noon" God is ". . . religiously a great advancement over the tyrant God of Prometheus Unbound, the Unknown God of Hellas and the diffuse beneficent one of Adonais."[223] Consequently, he contends that, although Shelley is a sceptic, he was moving toward a more personal god.[224] However, in spite of the evidence that Shelley's letters show a growing belief in a Platonic hereafter, and that, in "Hellas" he does admit "The Fathomless" has ". . . more care for meaner things / Than thou cans't

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[223] W. Cherubine, "Shelley's Own Symposium: The Triumph of Life," SP, XXXIX (July, 1942), 567.

[224] Loc. cit.

dream . . .," there is little tangible support for a belief that Shelley was moving toward an acceptance of existing systmes of religion in this poem or in his "Triumph of Life." On the contrary, an unyielding status quo seems to be his position when he wrote to Horace Smith, on June 29, 1822:

> Let us see the truth, whatever that may be. The destiny of man can scarcely be so degraded that he was born only to die--and if such should be the case, delusions, especially the gross and preposterous ones of the existing religion, can scarcely be supposed to exalt it.[225]

Probably, Cherubine is right in his evaluation of Rousseau, however; for he contends that Rousseau's love was wrong, "not in degree, but kind," and that the trap of the world "triumphed" over him because of his "essential mediocrity."[226] It is Baker's belief that Shelley had developed the "Triumph of Life" only to a point comparable to his concept of Jupiter's reign of hate in "Prometheus Unbound." He feels, also, that the fragment supports Shelley's earlier statement, "I go on until I am stopped, and I am never stopped."[227] If the purpose of the poem was to teach that all poets should remain true to their visions,[228] then, of course, Rousseau's

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[225] Shelley, Letters, X, 409.

[226] Cherubine, op. cit., p. 568.

[227] Baker, op. cit., p. 268.

[228] Ibid., p. 264.

mediocrity for Shelley was that of compromise, of abandoning his search for the "living flame," of giving in to the mad mutability of the world where ". . . love triumphs over men, chastity over love, death over immortality, fame over death, time over fame, and Divinity over time."[229]

Shelley's changed attitude toward mutability and the perfectibility of man on earth is also reflected in his letters of 1822. On January 25, he wrote to Hunt that it was his conviction that ". . . the mass of mankind, as things are arranged at present, are cruel, deceitful and selfish, and always on the watch to surprize those few who are not."[230] Earlier, he had written to Mary Shelley that "A certain kind of infamy" was the best of compliments in ". . . the filthy world of which it is hell to be a part."[231] On June 18, 1822, he wrote two letters, one to Trelawny requesting him to send some prussic acid,[232] the other to John Gisborne. In the latter communication, Shelley clearly voices his dilemma:

> I stand as it were, upon a precipice, which I have ascended with great, and cannot descent without greater, peril, and I am content if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment.[233]

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[229] A. C. Bradley, "Triumph of Life," MLR, IX (1914), 441.

[230] Shelley, Letters, X, 351.

[231] Ibid., p. 300.

[232] Ibid., p. 405.

[233] Ibid., p. 404.

Although much of the evidence in Shelley's numerous biographies suggests that he was austere, generous, and exemplary in his rigid, routine daily life, Maurois properly identifies the poet's transgression as follows:

> Faith in the perfectibility of man is naturally the most heinous of crimes, since, if believed in, it would force one to work for man's perfectibility. The mere smell of it makes society fly to arms for its destruction.[234]

Destruction came for Shelley in the Gulf of Spezzia, on July 8, 1822, when his boat, the Ariel, sank during a violent storm.[235] Shelley's unyielding belief in truth and virtue led him to search unrelentingly into his mind and heart for those precepts that would allow mutability to eliminate the errors of the past and insure equality, freedom, and love for the future of mankind. If his last years seem to indicate his pursuit of death, the pursuit[236] itself was "life entangled," and had Shelley lived, perhaps Hunt's epitaph would have been applicable to some bright, aery thought-child of "Prometheus Unbound": "Nothing of him that doth fade, / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange." Throughout his life, Shelley was intensely aware of change. Thus, a study of

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[234]Maurois, op. cit., p. 285.

[235]Edward Dowden, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, p. 576.

[236]Wilson, op. cit., p. 3.

mutability in its relationship to his writing becomes an interesting and complex task. If unqualified "change" is used as the definition, then, mutability is the prevailing characteristic of all things under the moon. If the term is associated with perfectibility, it becomes a moderate, imperceptible, and "aspiring" change that may bring regeneration through materialistic concepts which involve institutional reform; or it may work through immaterialistic perception and a Platonic belief in the perfectibility of ideas. On the other hand, if mutability is associated with scepticism, it may become a change that suggests the probability of an existing immutable force, or it may become the tool of the equivocal position of "not knowing." In addition, throughout each facet of the problem, Shelley's concept of mutability also illustrates his awareness of the change conceivable in a passing moment, i.e., in the clouds, a bright bubble, the shadow of a butterfly's wing, or of a dying flame.

Since Shelley was an advocate of the "thinking heart," his essays and letters reveal the conflicts he experienced in developing a philosophy which could make use of mutability to assure ultimate perfection for mankind. When the concepts of this philosophy are unified by Shelley's intense desire to free men's minds from tyranny, his poetry reveals a pattern which involves his opinions on necessity, free will, reason, and perception. However, only one of Shelley's socio-literary

poems, "Queen Mab," expresses a complete faith in an "aspiring" change that can bring about the perfectibility of man on earth. Shelley's other socio-literary poems, "Laon and Cythna," "Prometheus Unbound," and "Hellas," suggest that "aspiring" change must work toward a perfectibility which is achieved in the hereafter; or claim that perfectibility can exist only in a Platonic dream world.

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