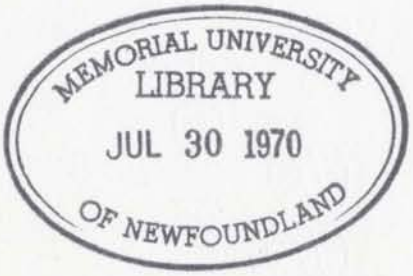
BLAKE AND SHELLEY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

KIRBY WALSH, B.A.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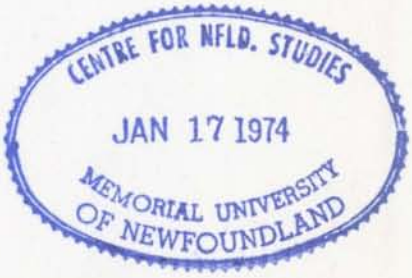
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BLAKE AND SHELLEY

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by

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

In this thesis comments upon the personalities of Blake and Shelley and the direction of their work as social, moral and political reformists laid the groundwork for a discussion of the importance of the imagination for both poets. The imagination shaped their lives as well as their art. It is the creative principle and is considered as essential in human life, for only the imagination raises man above the level of the beasts.

Within this life, Blake and Shelley saw two opposing states. The first, that of Innocence, is one of full imaginative existence where reality is subjective. The second state, Experience, sees the world in terms of the 'wasteland' - its reality is objective. In Blake 'mysticism' consists of the unity of God, man and nature; in Shelley it is given a touch of the Platonic transcendental state.

Blake uses complicated symbolism in his Prophetic Books, but elsewhere it is less intricate and often in line with Shelley's symbolism. Some individual images are used to the same purpose by both poets, such as the Cave and Snake; others, like the veiled woman, conflict.

Having dealt with some of their philosophy and their imagery and symbolism, the discussion proceeds to their mythology. Blake is unique here, in the strict sense of the

word, in his creation of new mythology. Shelley's importance lies in his reshaping of old myths. Their mythology is of great importance to their total world views. The natural affinities of certain of the main characters of Blake's and Shelley's mythology arise from their symbolism and function. Their tyrants, symbols of the fallen world, often show their similarities in their destruction of all forms of liberty.

Finally, the results of Blake's and Shelley's imaginative quests come with the perfection of the apocalypse. Good had vanquished evil and the triumph of imagination is complete.

PREFACE

This study of Blake and Shelley is meant as a comparison of the highlights of their poetry and ideas, not as a general comparison of all aspects of their art. It makes no attempt to integrate all the divergent critical writings on these two poets, nor will it always attempt to integrate and weave together Blake's and Shelley's views. Frequently integration is not possible, for the two poets did not always concur on all aspects of their poetic ideas. For example, Shelley's association of love with the creative imagination cannot be paralleled in Blake, but to dismiss it from a discussion of Shelley's ethic would be to leave out a very essential part of his thinking on the imagination. At times then, the apparently isolated incidents are intended for general comparison and the parts to fall into place in terms of their contribution to the total study. Only where a direct comparison of Blake and Shelley is intended will the comparative analysis be entirely sustained. This is a necessary procedure; otherwise, the temptation is always present to cloud the genuine affinities which exist between these two poets by an arbitrary grouping of their ideas so that the total picture appears to be 'yoked by violence together'.

Any merit which this paper may have was accomplished

with the help of Dr. D.G. Pitt of the English Department of Memorial University. My sincere thanks are due to him for his direct help in the work of this thesis, and for his two courses, on Romanticism and on Blake, without which this paper would have been impossible. I also acknowledge his kindness in reading this paper in a rather illegible manuscript. I am indebted also to all scholars of Romanticism, many of whose works I have quoted in the following paper.

K.W.

Channel,
Port aux Basques,
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INTRODUCTION

Blake and Shelley had many things in common but it is not suggested in this study that they are always alike in their thinking; that they are cast in the same mould. Indeed, to mention the word 'mould' in this context is to do both poets a grave injustice. They would have claimed more originality than that. Nevertheless, their general assessment of man's fallen state and their proposals for his redemption indicate attitudes by no means unalike. Their world views, although embodied in different mythical and symbolic systems, are very similar. Altogether, they warrant a full scale comparison, yet, except for some isolated similarities which are pointed out by scholars in their discussion of one or the other of these poets, this has not been done.

In a letter to John and Mary Gisborne, (July 19, 1821), Shelley says, "The poet and the man are two different natures; though they exist together, they may be conscious of each other, and incapable of deciding on each other's powers and efforts by any reflex act." (Quoted by Melvin Solve, in Shelley: His Theory of Poetry). This separation of the man and the poet is true in one sense for both Blake and Shelley. For example, both claimed the right and the necessity of the satisfaction of sensual desire. Harmony within man could exist only with the full exercise of all

his faculties. This sounded very well in theory but often in practice it proved a different matter, for what the poet wrote the man sometimes disclaimed. When it came to practical action both Blake and Shelley were stopped by some feeling of sympathy or human kindness. Blake commands more respect in this regard for, apparently, he did not carry his theory of unrestrained desire to the point where he ever took a woman, other than his wife, to live in his house, although one critic says that it was only his wife's tears which stopped him from doing so. Shelley, on the other hand, left his first wife, who committed suicide; an action which has generally turned sympathy against him in this regard. Both Blake and Shelley, in theory, condemned the institution of marriage but both were married, Shelley twice.

Blake and Shelley held exalted ideas of themselves as prophets of the world and of life. In justifying the desires and instincts within themselves, both claimed for the whole of mankind the high privileges which they claimed for themselves. This meant that potentially every individual had the same inclination toward perfection which they possessed. Blake, somewhat aloof, somewhat cynical and Shelley, perhaps more tolerant of human weakness, were too intensely preoccupied with their own respective visions to perceive that all men might not be so persuaded down the pathway of perfection. Their ethics are not exclusively personal but many people may have difficulty accepting them and their nature is such that they must be accepted by all people in order to

be effective. For example, Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there be no evil in the world and there would be none. This may be true but it is necessarily an act of will in which every individual must participate.

The conception of liberty is the core of both their ethics. Freedom of the mind and body is a necessary starting point for the whole of mankind, for man's redemption depends upon it. Only the free soul can perceive its own fallen nature and this must be achieved before it can rise above the natural 'Serpent bulk of nature's dross' described by Blake. The idea of liberty and the particular way in which it is to be applied in man's redemption is the base of Blake's and Shelley's systems of thought and is one of the main links between them. We will see that the climax of their Apocalyptic visions describes man in a state of perfection achieved in and through liberty.

Shelley continually revolted against the limitations of life. The poet is bound by nature to the natural order but his ideals and perceptions transcend it. Shelley's conception of the poetic role is that the poet must unite the natural and transcendent orders of being; that is, he must reconcile his aims and aspirations with the world of action. Even his use of imagery shows his attempt to achieve this end. The atmospheric images, very prolific in Shelley, such as clouds and reflections in water, belong to the order of nature but are not entirely bound to the earth, as it were.

They symbolize Shelley's attempt to draw together the natural and the transcendent. In the same way Blake attempted to bring together the separation of the human and the divine in the mind of man. Here we see both poets trying to bring the idea of the infinite into the realm of the finite, and subsequently to raise the status of man from the inferior position he held as a result of the idea of a transcendent god to the realm of divinity where he rightfully belonged. Natural man cannot redeem nature for man is subject to the processes of nature, but nature can be redeemed because man is partly divine. The divinity inherent in humanity is a conception of major importance for both Blake and Shelley.

Blake was a painter and engraver as well as a poet. His main concern, as Northrop Frye points out, is to revive public painting. The revival of all other aspects of civilization will then follow naturally, for Blake says: "The foundation of Empire is Art & Science. Remove them or Degrade them, & the Empire is No More. Empire follows Art & Not Vice Versa as Englishmen suppose." (Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynold's Discourses). In his drive to teach the world the use of imagination, Blake's immediate objective was to re-establish fresco in public buildings. He held a private exhibition of paintings in 1809, the subject of his Descriptive Catalogue. This exhibition, which was to be the start of his campaign, did not prove as successful as he had hoped and his dreams of the rebirth of the Renaissance in English art failed to materialize. Its ideals and results are not unlike

Shelley's Irish reform campaign which was gradually overcome by the pressure of hostility and the lack of sympathy on the part of a people who could not see how the help of a young idealist could be of any benefit to them.

The high aspirations and slightly presumptuous attitudes of Blake and Shelley mark them as promising candidates for comparison. This comparison is meant to be pursued not only in their general affinities but also in their whole life orientation. We can expect, then, in this thesis to find comparisons of individual poems, of general outlooks on art, of the uses of symbolism, and of philosophical outlooks, in short, of anything of interest which these two poets have in common, provided, of course, that it contributes to the pattern of the arguments which have been outlined. No other two poets of the Romantic period admit such a genuine comparison, for although many agree on individual points, they do not continue a basic orientation with any degree of consistency. Blake and Shelley do this. They have a platform based on individual liberty and upon this they stand with firm conviction; radical idealists striving toward a common goal.

I

"ART IS THE TREE OF LIFE"

The title of this chapter is an aphorism taken from Blake's writing, The Laocoon group. The implications of the aphorism are not inappropriate when applied to either of the two Romantics, Blake and Shelley, for art is the tree of life for both. The ability of art to regenerate and rejuvenate mankind was an aspect of its design with which both heartily concurred. Indeed, their approaches to art, poetry in particular, were linked to its value and function in society. Their attitudes were not utilitarian, however, for neither of these poets confused usefulness with rightness. Rather they see usefulness in the sense toward which the modern theologian, Harvey Cox, inclines in his book, The Secular City. This is the Utopian situation in which the state pays every person for any occupation he chooses to follow. Blake and Shelley, like Cox, favored the greatest happiness for each individual rather than for the greatest number of individuals. They saw in art the ideal occupation for it involved not only the artist but also every person who came into contact with his work. Art drew them all together in the unity of a common concern.

Aspects of art about which Blake and Shelley had very

definite ideas were poetic functions and poetic theories. Poetry, of course, was their most important medium of expression. Shelley's own aim in writing poetry was a somewhat modest one. He says that he wants to produce "something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful".[1] This is 'modest' because he does not mention, here, the function of the poet which is a very important aspect, as he points out at the end of A Defence of Poetry, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."[2] Shelley means by this that poets have the most acute insight into the nature of reality, perhaps because of their sensitive temperments which are more harmoniously in tune with the universe than most. Since the poet has this advantage, his conceptions will be more valid than the ordinary, and when given to the public, will be accepted almost unconsciously as general standards or guidelines. In this way the poet determines the path of society without necessary recognition. It follows from this that the poets' role as a reformer is an important one, and this is true for both Blake and Shelley.

Shelley saw himself as a teacher of life. As Melvin Solve points out in speaking of Queen Mab, his (Shelley's) aim was to "teach and to uplift, rather than to delight."[3] The extent to which he attempted to do this in poetry, however, might be debated, for he says, in the Preface to Prometheus Unbound, "Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and super-

erogatory in verse."[4] But Shelley avails himself of other opportunities of becoming didactic. His poem, Queen Mab, for example, is supplemented by long notes explaining some of the views contained in the poem. In a letter to Thomas Hookham, he writes, "The notes to Queen Mab will be long and philosophical. I shall take that opportunity which I judge to be a safe one of propagating my principles, which I decline to do syllogistically in a poem. A poem very didactic is I think very stupid."[5]

There is sometimes a discrepancy between a poet's theory of poetry and his actual practice; in the words of some wise person, 'it is unsafe to infer what a man will do by asking him what he intends to do.' This inconsistency does not exist to any significant degree in either Blake or Shelley. Shelley, however, sometimes wrote conflicting statements. For example, in his Preface to the Revolt of Islam, he said, "It is the business of the poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward."[6] Also, in the same article, "How far I shall be found to possess that most essential attribute of poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom...I know not."[7] Later, perhaps because of his failure to win the public to a warm reception of his poetry, he wrote to Peacock, "My business is to relate my own

sensations, and not to attempt to inspire others with them."[8] What Shelley now discarded had earlier been for him 'that most essential attribute of poetry'.

Shelley must always have had an eye for his audience, for again in 1821 he wrote to C. J. Ollier, "I write what I write chiefly to enquire, by the reception which my writing meet with, how far I am fit for so great a task, or not." This 'great task' of public enlightenment was never abandoned by Shelley. Nevertheless, Shelley was never completely in tune with the public mind and could never anticipate public reaction. He admits this in a letter to Horace Smith, concerning Adonais, in the words, "I wrote, as usual, with a total ignorance of the effect that I should produce."

Blake never considered public reaction to his work to the extent that Shelley did. This may have been part of the reason for his very limited reading public, as well as the fact that he published little during his lifetime. He began with the premise, "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's," and carried on from there. He knew that every serious artist must follow a system and that the extent of his divergence from his predecessors depended upon his originality. In keeping with the Romantic tendency to discourage imitation, Blake, both in his personal life as well as his public writing, shows a total disregard of any of his friends or predecessors ---- if they stand in the way of art. "You must leave Fathers and Mothers and

Houses and Lands if they stand in the way of Art."[9]

The temperments of these two poets are reflected generally in their art. Shelley was sensitive by nature and addressed himself to the quality of beauty. His great veneration for beauty, as Melvin Solve notes, was of a religious character. Despite his preoccupation with mutability, Shelley saw beauty in all aspects of nature, including ruins. Blake's poetry, however, reflects the characteristics of a different personality. Being more blunt and to the point, he emphasized and played upon man's intelligence. While Blake employed the mind, Shelley employed the sight, but both poets used their talents to the same ends —— the education of humanity.

In a letter to Thomas Butts, Blake wrote, "Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding, is my definition of the Most Sublime Poetry,"[10] Blake always addressed himself to the intellectual powers, and to such an extent in his Prophetic Books that he has often been accused of obscurity. Men obtain perfection because they cultivate their understanding. Since, for Blake, mental things alone are real, man must be careful to create his own world from the correct use of his creative imagination. He must act from internal impulse not from a second-hand moral code. The cry of Los in Jerusalem is, "I care not whether a man is Good or Evil; all that I care is whether he is a Wise man or a Fool."[11] This form of educating each man's understanding of the true human

situation is very important for both Shelley and Blake. The essential function of poetry then, as already has been quoted from Shelley,[12] is to cultivate the reader's understanding through communication of the poets' own feelings and sensations. In Shelley's words, "A great poem is a fountain for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforseen and an unconceived delight."[13]

Blake and Shelley regarded the poem as an entity in its own right. As Northrop Frye wrote, "A poem is like a child, an independently living being not fully born until the navel-string has been cut."[14] Blake felt that in its finished form the poem, "must necessarily be a perfect Unity ... But when a Work has Unity, it is as much in a Part as in the Whole."[15] For Blake, "Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant." While allowing the poem to be a separate entity, however, both poets ensured that their poems should be known to be those of their own creation. Blake has already been quoted to this effect in, "I must create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's." From this point he was entirely original. Shelley, too, in his Preface to the Revolt of Islam, writes, "I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds

of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own."[16] Of course, originality was an objective of all the Romantics and not peculiar to Shelley and Blake, but in these two it appears almost to have been an obsession.

Both poets assumed the role of social critics in some of their poetry. In a letter of January 25, 1822, Shelley wrote, "My firm persuasion is that the mass of mankind, as things are arranged at present, are cruel, deceitful and selfish, and always on the watch to surprise those few who are not." Such a persuasion, with which Blake would have agreed, makes criticism of society necessary. A very desolate picture of England emerges, for example, in Blake's poem London, one of the Songs of Experience. Society has created the 'mind-forg'd manacles' which put the 'Marks of weakness, marks of woe' in every face. The final stanza of this poem is a culmination of woe expressed in the words, 'midnight', 'curse', 'Blasts', 'tear', 'blights', 'plagues', and 'Marriage hearse'. Shelley's Sonnet: England in 1819, expresses a similar point of view with the words, 'A people starved', 'Religion Christless', 'dying king', and 'fainting country'. Also, Shelley's Song: To the Men of England and, Fragment: To the People of England, are concerned with the oppression of the common people and consequently, the poor economic state of England. In all these instances society is the oppressor and the individual is caught up in circum-

stances over which he has very little control. Joseph Wicksteed's observation, in Blake's Innocence and Experience, aptly surveys the situation when he writes, "Men become the hedged-in victims of system...It is startling to reflect how far Blake was in advance of his age in attributing these tragedies (poverty, prostitution) not to the individual's own fault but to the Society which tolerated them."[17] The same thing could have been said of Shelley in this regard.

Speaking about external influences upon the individual but pushing the logic to its extreme limit, William Godwin, in Political Justice, says that man is totally the product of circumstances. "In the life of every human being there is a chain of causes, generated in the lap of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence of which it was impossible for him to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted."[18] This Doctrine of Necessity which Shelley accepts in his Revolt of Islam, and Queen Mab, would never have been acceptable to Blake who felt that man's creative imagination could enable him to break free from any such situation. Shelley, himself, later severely modified or entirely abandoned the doctrine in his epic Prometheus Unbound, where he gives his conception of the New Jerusalem and the possibility of its attainment.

Of the two poets only Blake supplemented the role of social critic with that of moral critic. The voice of the

Bard which introduces the Songs of Experience, like an Old Testament prophet, hopes to instruct a wayward humanity. "Calling the lapsed soul / And weeping in the evening dew," is not unlike Blake's own role. Again, in Holy Thursday, in the Songs of Experience, humanity is criticized for its moral laxity.

> Is that trembling cry a song?
> Can it be a song of joy?
> And so many children poor?
> It is a land of poverty!

Even man's good works are but a vain attempt to cover up his own shortcomings. The babes are "Fed with cold and usurous hand". The social institutions erected for carrying out this work would not, in Blake's opinion, be necessary if all men worked in a Christian manner doing their duty to their neighbours. He implies that there is something fundamentally wrong in a society where such practices exist. He portrays the situation of the poor, for whom the rich are doing basically nothing, in one of the most desolate and heart-wringing descriptions ever written:

> And their sun does never shine,
> And their fields are bleak & bare,
> And their ways are filled with thorns:
> It is eternal winter there.

Shelley's theory of poetry does not exclude Blake's Songs of Experience and the role of the poet as expressed there. In his Defence of Poetry, Shelley wrote, "A poem is the image of life expressed in its eternal truth," and, "Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted."[19] The "eternal truth" of Blake's Holy Thursday,

for example, is the direct confrontation of reality which the poem forces upon the reader. Only by such a confrontation can poetry rectify the distortion of economic, political, social, or any other aspect of life. Neither Blake nor Shelley attempted to whitewash the human predicament. They were not always concerned with the ideal state of art or of society. They perceived the 'eternal winter' and felt compelled to make others aware of it in order that the individual and finally the whole of society might be redeemed.

Its redeeming quality or possibilities gave both Blake and Shelley a religious veneration for art, and in Shelley's case for poetry in particular. In A Defence of Poetry, Shelley writes, "Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge." Also, "Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb." And, "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." Other examples may also be found, as "Poetry ... in this respect differs from logic, that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence has no necessary connection with consciousness or will."[20] Shelley used the word 'poetry' because of his particular ethical inclination, but the word 'religion' can be substituted without any conflict with traditional Christian doctrine. Perhaps his poetic theory

is closer to Orthodox Christianity than he would have cared to admit.

Compare the above statements with some of those in Blake's The Laocoon group. "A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect: the Man or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian." Also, "Prayer is the Study of Art. Praise is the Practice of Art. Fasting & C., all relate to Art." And, "Art is the Tree of Life."[21] These statements can be supplemented by others from the work All Religions are One. "Principle Ist. That the Poetic Genius is the true Man, and that the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius." And, "Principle 5th. The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy."[22] Blake is showing here the relation between art and religion, that is, pure religion as he saw it, but unlike Shelley he is doing so consciously and deliberately. For this reason, his statements are less likely than Shelley's to be accepted by the Orthodox Christian. However, neither of these poets would have wanted to be accepted by Orthodox Christianity, for they both made it explicit that they were against it. In the matter of degree, Blake and Shelley possibly had more respect for their art than the Orthodox Christian had for his religion. Both played the role of prophets to the spirit which they felt within themselves.

In the conception of their poetic roles and the

function of poetry, Blake and Shelley agreed about the vast importance of art in society. Social reform, moral advancement and individual liberty were some of the goals toward which each directed the eternal truth of his poetic imagination. All these, together with the unconceived delight of poetry, were steps in the direction of Golgonooza, the city of Blake's imagination created by the totality of all works of art which, when completed, will be the symbol of man's total liberation.[23] Shelley's conception of the role of the poet, which is to unite the natural and transcendent orders of being, is comparable to Blake's conception of Golgonooza, for when this city is completed, its foundation, which is nature, will no longer be needed. The natural and transcendent orders of being will have been united and imagination will develop and expand without the artificial stimulation of the natural world.

In the creation of art the imagination was considered to be of the utmost importance by all the Romantics. Blake claimed that art was created by the imagination imposing itself upon nature. Since imagination is the agent as it were or art, its importance in the consideration of the poetry of Blake and Shelley should not be minimized. Imagination is the creative principle and it is that faculty, as conceived by Blake and Shelley, which we shall explore in the following chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1] Quoted by Melvin T. Solve, in Shelley, p.192.

[2] Shelley's Complete Works, VII, p.140.

[3] Solve, p.11.

[4] Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Carlos Baker, p.446.

[5] Shelley, IX, p.42. (Jan. 26, 1813).

[6] Baker, p.436.

[7] Ibid., p. 439.

[8] Letter of November 7th., 1818.

[9] Blake's Complete Writings, The Laocoon, p.776.

[10] Ibid., p.825. (July 6th, 1803).

[11] The Poems of William Blake, ed. John Sampson, p.408.

[12] See above, p.13.

[13] Baker, p.513.

[14] Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p.113.

[15] Blake, On Homer's Poetry, p.778.

[16] Baker, p.438.

[17] Quoted by D.G. Gillham, in Blake's Contrary States, p.14.

[18] Quoted ibid., p.15.

[19] Shelley, VII, p.115.

[20] Ibid., VII, pp.105-140.

[21] Blake, pp.775-777.

[22] Ibid., p.98.

[23] See below, Chapter IX.

II

THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLE

The imagination as a faculty essentially related to reality and truth is an indispensable conception in a study of Blake and Shelley. These two poets were not unique, however, in stressing the importance of the imagination. The literary credo of Romanticism considered poetry to be a gift of nature rather than an acquired art. Therefore, a poet is born, not made as the eighteenth century stipulated. Inspiration, the progenitor of poetry, is an inner compulsion. It is an innate, inbred, extra-rational, divinely inspired genius. The emphasis is upon the expression of a new experience felt within the poet. It naturally follows that the creative faculty in poetry must be the imagination, and this came to be regarded as the organ of truth which sense experience lacks. Such were some of the basic ideas with which Blake and Shelley approached the theory of the imagination in their poetic writings.

Imagination for Blake is most important; it is the essential man. Only by his use of the creative imagination can man "rise from Generation, free." The essence of Blake's conception of imagination and art is shown in the following statement:

> I assert for My Self that I do not behold the outward Creation & that to me it is hindrance & not Action; it is as the Dirt upon my feet, No part of Me. "What," it will be Question'd, "When the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea?" O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.' I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more that I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it.[1]

Here, Blake condemns the neo-classical, purely rational way of looking at creation. Man must bring to bear his own innate faculties upon the outward creation. He will then see what he wishes to see rather than what he is expected and told to see. His vegetative eye should never be dictator to his inner conscience. The eye is an instrument to be used, but man's imagination shapes his final vision. Art springs directly from the imagination imposed upon nature. The senses apprehend nature but imagination interprets it.

In the creation of art, then, inspiration is a major factor, since the origin of art is so essentially innate. Poetry itself, which, in A Defence of Poetry, Shelley defines as "the expression of the imagination,"[2] stems from the supernatural. Very similarly to the Platonic doctrine of the inspiration of the Muses, Shelley thinks that poetry is divine and not mortal, for in his Defence, he wrote, "Poetry is indeed something divine."[3] Not even the greatest poet can compose poetry deliberately; he must wait for divine inspiration. Much study and labour can do nothing to bring on inspiration or to intensify it. It arises spontaneously and departs suddenly, beyond the control of the poet, and, "when compos-

ition begins, inspiration is already on the decline."[4]

Blake carried consideration of the super-natural to even greater lengths. In Jerusalem, he wrote, "We who dwell on Earth can do nothing of ourselves; everything is conducted by Spirits, no less than Digestion or Sleep."[5] Again, in speaking of the composition of Jerusalem, Blake writes, "When this verse was first dictated to me ...," thereby giving the impression that he, himself, has assumed the role of an amanuensis. This idea of divine inspiration, however, does not cast the poet into an entirely passive role. The poet is still a free agent. He is free to accept or to reject his divine vision. He is compelled to express his vision only by the intensity of that vision. The poet's role is rather one of creative expression than abstract reasoning. In the words of Los in Blake's Jerusalem, "I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create."[6] Like Blake, Shelley, as he shows specifically in his Ode to Liberty, believed that man's only hope lay in the free expression of his creative faculty. In the Preface to the Revolt of Islam, he condemns the literary critics who tried to impede that faculty.

The goal of both Blake and Shelley was to cultivate and express the imagination freely. This is of the utmost importance as Shelley shows in his words, "The Imagination is a faculty not less imperial and essential to the happiness and dignity of the human being, that the reason."[7] Shelley learned the importance of the imagination, among other things, from

William Godwin's Political Justice.[8] Understanding Godwin is necessary to understanding Shelley's ideas, for from him Shelley learned, as well as the importance of the imagination, the doctrine of Necessity, optimism about the perfectibility of man, the cyclic view of history, and other conceptions. Another strong influence on Shelley's concept of the imagination was Plato. He translated some of Plato's Dialogues and these taught him the creative power of the imagination. It was Platonism which led him to the belief that the imagination created the order of reality; without it, we live in the illusory world of the cave.

The one notable difference between Blake's and Shelley's thinking about the imagination is suggested by Ross Woodman. He says that, for Shelley, reality exists beyond the reach of the imagination, while, for Blake, reality is the imagination.[9] This is a fair suggestion in view of Shelley's predicament concerning the poetic quest which, as he shows in Alastor, is bound to end in disappointment. Shelley suggests that as long as man remains on earth he cannot complete the release of his divine imagination. He will always be bound to nature. In Prometheus Unbound, man is seen in this same situation. "Prometheus is what man becomes through death, and death itself is the awakening from the dream of life. In this sense, Prometheus is the psychic potential of the dreaming divinity in man. Ultimately, to awaken is to die."[10] For Blake, however, imagination is the Word which acts upon nature.

The creation of the world is an act of divine imagination, and every person that is born creates the world anew in that his word gives the world reality. Reality, then, is verbal or imaginative; as the mind confers reality upon objects so the world we live in is the world we make. Man can, by the creative use of his imagination, rise above the world of nature, or Generation, into Eden, the world of redemption. Man must do this in this life, in this existence, or he never can accomplish it. In other words, Heaven and Hell are states of mind. Shelley considered these states to have an objective existence, in some sense, apart from mind, although he would not have agreed with that terminology, for he hints at this in a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, when he says, "reason tells me that death is the boundary of the life of man, yet I feel, I believe the direct contrary."[11]

In Blake's scheme of existence the imagination, which in Generation appears as a human body, is analogous to the caterpillar-butterfly phenomenon. The imagination, like the caterpillar, must, in a sense, ingest its environment in order to emerge in the Edenic state, where caterpillars have become butterflies. The imagination must cast itself around the external world and pass from a centre to a circumference before it becomes fully developed. The natural man is fully evil before he comes into imaginative existence, when his imagination will be both within and around nature. There are Blakean overtones in Shelley's writing on this subject, for in his

Speculations on Morals, Shelley says, "The only distinction between the selfish man, and the virtuous man, is that the imagination of the former is confined within a narrow limit, whilst that of the latter embraces a comprehensive circumference."[12] Also, in a Defence of Poetry, he says, "Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight."[13] In Shelley's view, poetry helps bring about the imaginative generation required by Blake, for again, Shelley says that poetry, "compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe."[14] But this is to anticipate a later chapter.

Imagination is all the more to be cultivated, for it creates benevolence in society. "Selfishness is the offspring of ignorance and mistake; it is the portion of unreflecting infancy and savage solitude; or of those whom toil and evil occupations have blunted or rendered torpid; disinterested benevolence is the product of a cultivated imagination."[15] The imagination for Shelley is 'the great instrument of moral good'.

There is an interesting analogy between Blake's conception of the Fall of man and Shelley's idea about what happens when reason gains control of imagination. As Blake shows in The Book of Urizen, The Book of Los, and The Four Zoas, for example, the total form of God is made up of four giant forms. These are all united in One, not separate entities, in the same

way as Christians understand the Trinity to be united in One. Before the Fall, there was no distinction between the Creator, creature and creativity. All that is necessary to bring about the Fall is for God to recognize a distinction between the four-fold state of which He is made up. The inevitable happens when God, the giant form Albion, pauses to reflect on his creation and suddenly the ideas exist separately from his reflecting mind. These ideas now exist as Albion's emanation, which Blake equated with the female principle. As his emanation gets further away Albion turns inward to reflect upon her and thereby sinks further into Ulro, the state of imaginative death. The limit of Opacity was finally set in Adam, which is man's present physical existence beyond which the Fall cannot go.

Shelley says that within each man there exists in potential another self, a "soul within our soul" which may be equated with the creative faculty: while outside man, there exists a mass of sensations which impress themselves upon the mind. It is the function of the ideal self to shape the mass of sensations to an imaginative order which displays the divinity in man. As long as imagination carries on as a creative power transforming the potential in man and nature into a realized form, all will be well. If reason usurps control, however, Shelley sees a danger in the realization of an imaginative vision. This danger is analogous to Blake's conception of the Fall and is explained in that way by Woodman:

> When the prototype emerges in the creation of its object, that object tends with time to break loose from its source and take on an autonomous existence. When this happens the universe of created objects is conceived as something separate from the mind of the perceiver and therefore; in some sense, is set over against man as object to subject, thing to thought. Shelley identifies this mode of perception with reason, which, he says, stands in relation to the imagination "as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance. (VII, p.137)."[16]

The function of the creative faculty, therefore, is a continuous one in order that man may live in harmony. If and when the separation does occur, it is up to the poets to arise and unite again the human and the divine within man; to continue the action of Prometheus in stealing the creative fire from the gods and returning it to men. "The imagination, says Shelley, is that faculty in man whereby, out of the ruins of his fallen self, he reshapes and recreates his own inherent divinity."[17]

Shelley was strongly influenced by Godwin's thesis that reason alone brings about the perfectibility of man. Shelley wrote to Elizabeth Hitchener, "Thinking, and thinking without letting anything but reason influence your mind, is the great thing."[18] Again, to Thomas Hogg, "Now, do not tell me that Reason is a cold and insensible arbiter. Reason is only an assemblage of our better feelings —— passion considered under a peculiar mode of its operation."[19] This particular adherence to reason belongs to Shelley's early years and The Necessity of Atheism. By the time of Queen Mab, the earliest of his long poems, Shelley is beginning to doubt the

validity of his former ideas about reason. Woodman points out that many of the contradictions that exist in the poem stem from a conflict within Shelley between the rational and the imaginative modes of mental action.

Blake openly rebelled against Locke and his ideas about abstractions which dominated the eighteenth century, for this stifled and crippled the imagination. He was against Deism which denied the necessity of revelation and placed emphasis on reason in religion. There is no doubt that Shelley is anti-Blakean when he writes to Miss Hitchener on June 11, 1811:

> Locke proves that there are no innate ideas, that in consequence, there can be no innate speculative or practical principles, thus overturning all appeals of feeling in favour of Deity, since that feeling must be referable to some origin ... Since all ideas are derived from the senses, this feeling must have originated from some sensual excitation ... Locke proves this by induction too clear to admit of rational objection.[20]

Blake writes this on the subject: "Innate Ideas are in Every Man, Born with him; they are truly Himself. The Man who says that we have no Innate Ideas must be a Fool & Knave, Having No Con-Science or Innate Science."[21]

Shelley was not dogmatic about his ideas, even in his early years. He was open to persuasion, as he suggests in another letter to Miss Hitchener, "Those who really feel the being of a God have the best right to believe it. ... but until I feel it I must be content with the substitute reason."[22] By the time of Shelley's clash with Thomas Love Peacock, in 1821,

over Peacock's work The Four Ages of Poetry, as a result of which Shelley produced A Defence of Poetry, he (Shelley) had advanced to a stage in his thinking about reason and imagination which even Blake would have applauded. Peacock had published his Four Ages of Poetry in Ollier's, Literary Miscellany and as a result Shelley wrote to Charles Ollier:

> Mr. Editor, The ingenious author of a paper which appeared in your Miscellany, entitled The Four Ages of Poetry, has directed the light of a mind replete with taste and learning to the illustration of a paradox so dark as of itself to absorb whatever rays of truth might fall upon it ... 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 an owl, rather than an eagle, stare with dazzled eyes on the watery orb which is the Queen of his pale Heaven.[23]

Imagination had a very important function for Blake and Shelley in their poetic conceptions of language. In A Defence of Poetry, Shelley says, "For language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has relation to thoughts alone."[24] We have already mentioned how, in Blake's ethic, the word creates the world. Modern scholars of language and symbolism suggest that the form and order which this world takes is determined by the language which we inherit. Different languages lead to different personalities and to different interpretations of the world. Blake and Shelley seem to have anticipated modern scholarship in this respect.

The Revolt of Islam is an epic of the word. The Revolution is to be brought about by words and ideas which are Shelley's weapons. In Prometheus Unbound language is made the

measure of the universe:

> Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
> Which rules the Daedal harmony a throng
> Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.[25]

Also, a voice speaking to Demogorgon says, "thy words waken oblivion," and, "thy strong words may never pass away." Shelley speaks about the same thing in his celebrated, Ode to the West Wind:

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
> And, by the incantation of this verse,
> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

In his Defence of Poetry Shelley shows how the poet creates words by the spontaneous eruption of his imagination.

Shelley's concern with language exemplifies the theme of imaginative strife found in Blake. This is shown in one of Blake's lyrics which found its way into the Anglican Hymn Book,[26] where he says, "I will not cease from mental fight, ..." This mental fight, like Shelley's 'wing'd seeds', is the poet's thoughts whose incarnate form in the real world is language. Blake's and Shelley's exalted view of the role of language led them both to be very precise in their use of language in poetry. Blake says, "Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant", and in Jerusalem, "Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place; the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild & gentle for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic for the inferior parts; all are necessary to each other". Shelley says in A Defence of Poetry, "a single

word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought." Shelley, like Wordsworth, saw the importance of using the 'real language of men' in order to 'move men to true sympathy', as he shows in his Preface to the Cenci.

Like Blake, then, Shelley understands the imagination to be a faculty related essentially to reality and truth. Shelley saw too that reason must be related to imagination in some way and he determined that its function was to act as an instrument for the imagination in analysing the given data of sense experience. The imagination then uses the conclusions of reason to create a synthetic and harmonious whole.

Shelley associated love with the imagination. It is Woodman's view that at first he identified love with the creative imagination. A connection is seen between these in Epipsychidion:

> Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
> Gazing on many truths; 'tis like thy light,
> Imagination! ...[27]

In his Defence of Poetry Shelley states more generally, but more explicitly, his reason for his association of the two. In the words of Carlos Baker:

> Shelley compares love also to the liberating agencies of the mind. It resembles understanding, which grows bright by "gazing on many truths" instead of confining itself to one. Chiefly it resembles the imagination, which is at once the strongest instrument for the apprehension of love, and the best weapon for the extirpation of human error....with love the human spirit can burst free from the charnel, the chain, the agony, the dust, and the chaos of this life.[28]

In his essay On Love, Shelley states, "This is Love. This is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists."[29] The essence of love, then, is a turning of the self outward, it is Blake's imagination striving to make itself the circumference. Its true end lies in sympathy and understanding and fellowship with nature as well as man. In the words of K. N. Cameron, "By Love, Shelley meant a spirit of generous comradeship and brotherhood; its opposite is selfishness."[30] This seems to imply that Shelley's conception of love is the same as the Orthodox Christian conception. This is not so, and Shelley is probably being facetious, from the Christian point of view, when he writes to Mary Godwin on November 2, 1814 about a 'last night' escapade; "There is eternity in these moments; they contain the true elixir of immortal life". Woodman says that the difference between the Ortnodox Christian love and Shelley's idea of it lies in the difference between Eros and Agape, between sensual love and impartial love. This is not to say that Shelley's conception of love is a sensual conception, but, whereas the Christian conception of Agape is based on the idea of original sin and the Fall, the pagan conception of Eros sees the divinity within man as man's own archetypal form. Essentially, then, we are discussing the difference between divinity as it exists within man or outside him, of subjective or objective reality.

The power of love as a creative principle is seen to

its fullest extent in Shelley's poem The Witch of Atlas. The witch, after her trance-like immersion in the well of love, creates an Hermaphrodite out of a combination of fire and snow. She works on the 'repugnant mass' with 'liquid love'; so, as well as blending opposite sexes in the hermaphrodite, she creates it by a magical, harmonious blending of contrary elements. As Shelley says, "All things together grow / Through which the harmony of love can pass." Love can become a unifying factor in any conceivable situation. It's relation to the imagination in Shelley's ethic is certainly a very close one, although to what degree they ought to be considered as one is difficult to determine.

The use of the creative imagination for Blake and Shelley was the only way of bringing about the regeneration of mankind. The imagination thrived under the influence of the Muses so that the imaginative regeneration brought about by poetry depended ultimately upon divine inspiration rather than upon the work of the artist alone. Through the imagination man creates the world in which he lives.

Through the imagination, too, Blake created his four states of existence which is of supreme importance in his world view. In the same way as Blake did, Shelley had the capacity of putting himself outside his own immediate situation and assessing the position of humanity at large. So it was that their vivid imaginations enabled them to comprehend more fully the nature of reality, to establish clearly the stages of

existence in the Circle of Destiny, and to determine the position and importance of each individual in life. We will explore more fully in the following chapter how their imaginations contributed to the total world views of both poets.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]Blake's Complete Writings, A Vision of The Last Judgment, p. 617.

[2]Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Carlos Baker, p. 494.

[3]Ibid., p. 517.

[4]Ibid., p. 517.

[5]Blake, p. 621.

[6]Ibid., p. 629.

[7]Shelley's Complete Works, VII, (Fragments), p. 107.

[8]Godwin influenced Shelley very much and according to Harriet, Shelley's first wife, it was not always to the good. In a letter to Catherine Nugent, November 20, 1814, she wrote, "Mr. Shelley has become profligate and sensual, owing entirely to Godwin's Political Justice." (Shelley, X, p. 420).

[9]Ross G. Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p. 129.

[10]Ibid., p. 149.

[11]Shelley, VIII, p. 158, (Oct. 15, 1811).

[12]Ibid., VII, p. 75.

[13]Ibid., VII, p. 118.

[14]Ibid., VII, p. 137.

[15]Ibid., VI, p. 76.

[16]Woodman, p. 61.

[17]Ibid., p. 41.

[18]Shelley, VIII, p. 221 (Nov. 26, 1811).

[19]Ibid., IX, p. 45 (Feb. 7, 1813).

[20]Ibid., VIII, p. 101.

[21]Blake, Annotations to Reynolds, p. 459.

[22]Shelley, VIII, p. 170 (Oct. 27th., 1811).

[23]Ibid., X, pp. 245-246.

[24]Ibid., VII, p. 113.

[25]Baker, p. 125.

[26]Number 655.

[27]Baker, p. 278.

[28]Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry, p. 227.

[29]Selected Poetry and Prose, p. 455.

[30]K.N. Cameron, The Political Symbolism of Prometheus Unbound, p.112.

III

CONTRARY-STATES OF EXISTENCE

The Four States or Stages of existence in the Four-Quarter Circle of Destiny is important in both poets and will be fully considered. These four states of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Apocalypse, as applied to Blake, have their counterparts in nature in the four seasons. The cyclic pattern of the four phases of vegetation correspond to the four phases of existence in human nature. They are not worked out completely in Blake's cosmology until the Creation-Fall phase of The First Book of Urizen. His epic The Four Zoas, continues the theme of man's fall into chaos and his salvation by resurrection. In connection with these four states Blake uses the terms Beulah, Generation, Eden and Ulro. The first two of these states will be explored in this chapter, but the second two, Eden and Ulro, being perhaps more applicable to both poets, will be considered as specific topics of later chapters.

In Blake's hierarchy of the four states of existence all life begins in Beulah which has its eternal existence in Eden, a timeless, unfallen world. In order to achieve Perfection, that is Eden, all life must pass through Beulah and also Generation. To remain passively in either of these states

means that the creative imagination will become stagnant and stifled and life will pass into Ulro, Blake's term for hell. From Generation it is possible to enter Eden through what we might term the expanded characteristics of Beulah. There is impending a cycle of progression toward perfection with the inevitable peril of Ulro awaiting any who discontinue the progression toward Eden. Essentially, the same situation is expressed in John Donne's poem Lecture Upon A Shadow, in the lines, "Love is a growing or full constant light, / And its first minute after noon is night." Blake's cycle of progression must be continual and constant, for to hesitate and look back is to fall immediately into Ulro or Selfhood.

Two of Blake's four states of existence are shown in his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. These correspond respectively to the stages of childhood and adult life; the innocent and fallen states. The state of innocence excludes the anarchy and evil in the world. Innocence is engaged in the imaginative life rather than in critical or fanciful self-examination. Innocence is not necessarily peculiar to childhood or automatically acquired upon the time of birth; rather, it is a quality which a child may, and usually does, display and which may exist in an equilibrium in which his creative imagination has full expression. The imagination cannot work on the world 'out there' to reduce it to its original state. All that the infant mind knows is itself which, of course, is very limited. In childhood the imagination is not

hindered by the outward creation and in this sense has full expression. Blake calls this state Beulah, the triple world of lover, beloved and child. It is the creation stage in Blake's myth characterised by the simple universal symbols of the moon, the lamb, the green grass and happy children. All life begins in Beulah where man and nature live in complete harmony. The creation stage, however, is not something which was finished at the creation of the world, for, although it can be explained in chronological terms, it can also be explained in terms of each individual creating his own world.

In the last stage of innocence, that of Eden, the mind and imagination which knows itself is broader but is still characterised by the same free expression of creativity as was found in the innocence of Beulah. Christ's words, "Except ye receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall not enter therein", are taken to refer to the free expression of the imagination. Adult imagination, like that of the child, must be given free expression. Outward creation must contribute to it and help build it up.

In contrast with Innocence, the state of Experience corresponds to the fallen state of human life and is opposed to the happy state in the garden. It is the result of the loss of the state of felicity, and is where most of human history is exacted. It may come as a result of tyranny at the head of the home. The parents degenerate into oppressiveness with the inevitable result of the struggle between youth and

old age which Blake shows in the poem Tiriel and in America which rebels against England. A new society will spring up from the revolution of America just as a new state of existence, Redemption, must come from the state of Experience if there is to remain a 'growing or full constant light'.

The difference between the states of Innocence and Experience can be seen clearly by contrasting Blake's Songs of Innocence and his Songs of Experience. For example, in the Nurse's Song of Innocence the nurse is tolerant and understanding, for when the children want to stay out of doors and play longer she allows them to do so. In the Nurse's Song of Experience, however, the nurse is severe and cynical. Her creative imagination has been stifled and she thinks that the children's "spring & your day are wasted in play, / And your winter and night in disguise." The nurse here is a fallen being who sees the world as a double one of subject and object. She is bound to Blake's state of Generation.

The same contrast is found in Blake's A Cradle Song, in Innocence and again in the Notebook[1] which apparently was considered for the Songs of Experience. The difference which lies in the approaches of two mothers to love is explored by D. G. Gillham in Blake's Contrary States. In the Innocence song the love of the mother is described and is related to sexual love, but there is no indication of self-gratification. The "Heavenly face that smiles of thee, / Smiles on thee, on me, on all." This shows imaginative, generous concern and is

something beyond shared pleasure. But, in the Poems from the Notebook version of the same poem, the emphasis is upon the self-concern of sensuous love. The secret, petty nature of the greed for pleasure dominates the mother's thinking.

> O, the cunning wiles that creep,
> In thy little heart asleep.
> .....
> Infant wiles & infant smiles
> Heaven & earth of peace beguiles.[2]

The mother, here, shows a mistaken view of reality in projecting herself upon her child. She is dangerously approaching a state of existence in which there is no redemption. She is heading straight for Ulro, Blake's single world of reflected abstractions.

Blake's and Shelley's ideas about innocence and experience are basically the same. Blake felt that all life must pass from the garden into the wasteland, as it were, and there encounter evil and seek to overcome it. In one of his letters Shelley, perhaps cynically, sees the results of that experience already of the face of a child he met in Nerni, Switzerland. "One little boy had such exquisite grace in his mien and motions, as I never before saw equalled in a child. His countenance was beautiful for the expression with which it overflowed. There was a mixture of pride and gentleness in his eyes and lips, the indications of sensibility, which his education will probably pervert to misery or seduce to crime."[3] Here, then, we see in Shelley the contrast between Innocence and Blake's fallen humanity.

In his essay On Life, Shelley describes a state which is very similar to Blake's Beulah. He says:

> There are some persons who, in this respect, are always children. Those who are subject to the state called reverie, feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction. And these are states which precede, or accompany, or follow an unusually intense and vivid apprehension of life. As men grow up this power commonly decays and they become mechanical and habitual agents.[4]

These mechanical and habitual men are characteristic of Blake's men in Generation. They have fallen from a state of active participation in all life into an unimaginative and uncreative acceptance of themselves and their environment.

In Blake's view it is possible to continue living in the Beulah state by refusing to enter Generation; that is, refusing to face reality. This is shown by the virgin Thel in The Book of Thel. Stanley Gardner, in his book Infinity on the Anvil, thinks that the conflict lies in bringing together the state of seeming innocence in which Thel now lives in her chastity to the actual innocence of the Songs of Innocence where the children are not conscious of nature because they are not distinct from nature. Thel, "is seeking precisely that participation which we noticed as so complete and unassailable in the Songs of Innocence."[5] This is not exactly correct, for, as we have said, to remain in Beulah is to pass ultimately into Ulro. One must pass through the state of Generation before one can pass into Eden. Gardner implies that Thel is seeking participation in the life of Beulah, whereas she is attempting

to enter the state of Generation. She refuses to enter Generation when she sees what will be expected of her and what she will encounter there. Thel cannot help the worm and this shows that she is unable to act for others. She is unable to recognize her part in nature and is shown the eternal separation of death that follows upon a life of separation. She closed the windows of her soul and "Fled back unhinder'd till she came into the vales of Har." In doing this she damned herself to Ulro, a life of purity and negative perfection.

Shelley also writes a similar theme of a girl who was unable to face the consequence of what was revealed to her. The girl, Ginevra, in a poem by that name, has agreed to marry Antonio.[6] On her wedding day she discovered that she did not love her future husband, nor did he love her. In despair, or rather resignation, she calmly lay down and died while the assembled guests were waiting for the wedding feast. Ginevra feared to enter life in partnership with someone she did not love, even though that situation could have changed, in the same way that Thel feared to enter a state of experience. She took refuge in physical death as Thel took refuge in imaginative death.

Woodman, in The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley,[7] describes the age of Saturn, in Prometheus Unbound, as similar to Blake's lower paradise, Beulah. This can be seen in the speech of Asia who questions Demogorgon:

> Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
> And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
> Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
> Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
> As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
> Before the wind or sun has withered them
> And simivital worms; but he refused
> The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
> The skill which wields the elements, the thought
> Which pierces this dim universe like light,
> Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
> For thirst of which they fainted.[8]

This is a state of being similar to that which Thel experienced after she refused to enter Generation: the difference is that in Shelley's poem the state, which is no better than that of vegetation, is inflicted by the tyrant. In the age of Saturn man's creative potential lies dormant because he is unable to perceive that he is, in fact, living in Paradise. The situation is the same as that of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when God attempted to withhold from them the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This knowledge, for Shelley, as for Blake, is "the birthright of their being." Therefore, both these poets see the "Fall" of man as a fortunate one.

Harold Bloom,[9] and D. H. Hughes,[10] suggest the obvious parallel between Shelley's description of the paradise to which Asia's boat takes her and Blake's Beulah land. Here, in the second act of Prometheus Unbound, Asia, who is now transformed by love and about to rejoin the transformed Prometheus, is carried "Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day". She encounters the peace and happy contentment of man and nature which Blake portrays in his Songs of Innocence.

A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see.[11]

In Shelley's imagery love is usually associated with light and warmth; so, the same happy situation is in evidence as is seen in Blake's poem The Ecchoing Green where, "The Sun does arise, / And make happy the skies ..."

In Prometheus Unbound[12] Shelley describes a 'winged infant', which Carl Grabo, in A Newton Among Poets, says is the infant spirit of the earth. The imagery used to picture the child suggests a symbol of innocence.

white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; ...

Shelley also uses here a particular Blakean Beulah symbol, the moonbeam.

in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariots' prow.

The chariot is guided by a moonbeam in the hands of an infant. This suggests the easy, natural, creative power of the imagination associated with the state of innocence.

Symbols of innocence and sketches of experience abound alike in both Blake and Shelley. These two states of existence are basic to the thought of each poet, for each state is essent-

ially present in the world of the 'Fortunate Fall'. Both states are portrayed vividly and with a clarity which mistakes no distinction between them. It was Blake's mystical tendencies which enabled him to portray the state of Innocence so vividly. Paul Berger, in William Blake: Poet and Mystic, makes the point that it was the spiritual power which Blake's mysticism naturally gave him, that enabled him to carry himself back into the days of childhood when the soul felt nothing but the joy of living. Shelley's conception of innocence, too, is conditioned by his Platonic 'mysticism'; that is, he conceives of Innocence almost in Platonic terms of a transcendental, eternal state similar to Plato's notion of pre-natal existence; a world or state of pre-rational thought and pre-sensational experience. It may be profitable, then, to look briefly at the idea of mysticism and what it involves for both poets.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]Blake's Complete Writings, p. 164.

[2]Ibid., p. 165, 14-15 & 25-26.

[3]Shelley's Complete Works, VI, p. 125.

[4]Ibid., VI, pp. 195-196.

[5]Stanley Gardner, Infinity on the Anvil, p. 37.

[6]Shelley, IV, pp. 104-111.

[7]pp. 143-144.

[8]Prometheus Unbound, II, iv, 32-43.

[9]Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking, p. 130.

[10]D. H. Hughes, Potentiality in Prometheus Unbound, from Shelley Modern Judgments, ed. R.B. Woodings, pp. 155-156.

[11]Prometheus Unbound, II, v, 104-108.

[12]Act IV, 206-235.

IV

MYSTICAL ELEMENTS

Mystical tendencies or imaginative fantasies? This must be a question uppermost in the minds of readers of Blake's and Shelley's visions of God, of angels and of devils. Both Blake and Shelley had some 'mystical' tendencies but, on the whole, they, especially Shelley, were more practical men than mystics. The term 'mysticism' needs careful defining for both poets, for we will see that there is some differention between the two kinds they represent. Blake emphasizes the unity of man and nature: Shelley, the Platonic conception of the transcendental, eternal state.

Various attempts have been made to define mysticism. Paul Berger in William Blake: Poet and Mystic says that it is "in its essence, a concentration of all the soul's energies upon some supernatural object, conceived of and loved as a living personality."[1] If this is accepted, then Shelley was showing himself as something of a mystic in his Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, both in tone, which is awe inspiring and reverent, and in the words themselves.

> Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
> I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!
> I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
> To thee and thine —— have I not kept the vow?

However, Berger's definition of mysticism is inadequate in

itself, for many Christians and pagans could meet his qualifications without being what is generally accepted as mystics — fanatics perhaps, but that is not the point. Helen White in The Mysticism of William Blake attempts a broader definition of mysticism which is, "a field of human experience that involves all the elements of man's nature, physiological and psychological, intellectual and emotional, and aesthetic, as well as what is vaguely called spiritual."[2] Helen White's definition is as broad as Berger's is narrow, and perhaps as inadequate. Basically, mysticism is that supernatural apprehension which allowed Blake to create a whole new universe which was totally different from the ordinary individual's perception of reality. It is in this that Blake is a mystic, while Shelley is not, although Shelley's work does contain mystical elements. Blake and Shelley both envisioned an ideal world, but for Shelley that world had yet to come, while, for Blake, it existed already for those who could perceive it. Blake saw the world which Shelley anticipated.

Blake began his mystical visions at the age of four when he saw the face of God peering through a window. At twice that age he saw a tree full of angels. After his brother's death he conversed with him in heaven. At the beginning of Jerusalem, Blake says that every day he conversed with the 'Friend of Sinners' who dictated the poem to him. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake describes how Isaiah

and Ezekiel had dinner with him. Shelley was not so fortunate in this respect, for he tells us in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty that as a boy he sought for ghosts and "hopes of high talk with the departed dead," but did not perceive any. His attempts literally to raise the devil through chemistry when he was at Oxford succeeded only metaphorically. Shelley had not the same mystical constitution as had Blake.

Although Shelley was not a mystic, his poetry contains some mystical elements, as I.A. Richards points out.[3] At times, too, Shelley's transcendental vision comes close to the language of modern psychology, especially Carl Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious. Jung wrote:

> The unconscious is anything but a capsulated personal system; it is the wide world, and objectively as open as the world... a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently, no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is the world of water, where everything living floats in suspension; where the kingdom of the sympathetic system, of the soul of every thing living begins, where I am inseparably this and that, and this and that are I; where I experience the other person in myself, and the other, as myself experiences me.[4]

As Neville Rogers points out, in Shelley at Work, this comes very close to the old, mystical world-view of the soul. It comes close also to what Blake and Shelley understood to be the apocalyptic assumption of the spiritual body. Redeemed humanity will exist in a state of perceptiveness similar to that in Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious as described above. Even in common, everyday life each individ-

ual participates in the One. As Shelley writes in his essay On Life:

> The words, I, you, they, are not signs of any actual difference subsisting between the assemblage of thoughts thus indicated, but are merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of the one mind. Let it not be supposed that this doctrine conducts to the monstrous presumption that I, the person who now write and think, am that one mind. I am but a portion of it.[5]

We see here the results of Platonic and oriental religious influence upon Shelley's thinking.

For Blake, the mystical stimulation came from nearer home. Blake was influenced and encouraged in his mysticism by the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, which he studied thoroughly. Swedenborg, as William Gaunt suggests in Arrows of Desire, allowed the mystic to take over in his later life to answer questions which he earlier, as a student of material phenomena, had been unable to answer. "Like other influences on Blake, that of Swedenborg was cumulative in effect: his ideas were altered, magnified, exaggerated, destroyed and renewed in the vortex of Blake's mental energy. In his later years he was almost Swedenborg over again —— though much else besides."[6] Three of Swedenborg's conceptions which, according to Paul Berger, probably impressed Blake most were, "the likeness of man to God; the perception that the Invisible had a real existence, outside of time and space; and the correspondence between the material and spiritual worlds."[7] In Swedenborg's scheme of things Heaven was a perfect state

of goodness which meant complete selflessness: hell, on the other hand, was complete egotism. Blake did not change this conception.

In the Anatomy of the Animal Kingdom, 1738, Swedenborg tried to see the soul and body in an ordered structure and to determine the way in which the soul worked. The soul was the governing factor of the body which had its seat of operation in the mind which by its thoughts and will controlled the " animus " which in turn operated the bodily senses. This attempt to show the connection between soul and body was carried further by Blake who said that the body was the soul as perceived by the senses in this existence. As it was, Blake had a fertile bed of influence and stimulus for his mystical adherence in Swedenborg.

Blake describes his mystical 'journeys' in a letter to Thomas Butts, "This I endeavor to prevent; I, with my whole might, chain my feet to the world of duty and reality. But in vain! the faster I bind, the better is the ballast; for I, so far from being bound down, take the world with me in my flights, and often it seems lighter than a ball of wool rolled by the wind."[8] In Blake's 'flights' the least thing can afford to him a revelation of importance.

> What to others a trifle appears
> Fills me full of smiles or tears;
> For double the vision my eyes do see,
> And a double vision is always with me.
> With my inward eye, 'tis an old Man grey;
> With my outward, a Thistle across my way.[9]

As the children in the Songs of Innocence, Blake sees no distinction between man and nature, all are part of the body of fallen Albion. In some more verses in a letter to Thomas Butts, Blake said:

> Each grain of Sand,
> Every Stone on the land,
> Each rock & each hill,
> Each fountain & rill,
> Each herb & each tree,
> Mountain, hill, earth & sea,
> Cloud, Meteor & Star,
> Are Men Seen Afar.[10]

Besides the affinity of man to nature, Blake also perceived the unity of mankind as a whole. In Jerusalem, he wrote:

> Mutual in one another's love and wrath all renewing
> We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
> We behold multitude, or expanding, we behold as one,
> As One Man all the Universal Family, and that One Man
> We call Jesus the Christ; and he in us, and we in him
> Live in perfect harmony in Eden, the land of life,
> Giving, receiving, and forgiving each other's trespasses.[11]

Blake is not describing a situation in some remote paradise, and he is saying something more than that all men are essentially one when viewed spiritually. The mystic in Blake is speaking and describing the situation of mankind as he sees it here and now. Spirituality and Secularity are all one.

Shelley has one particular mystical conception which he uses several times in his poetry. That is that an object will grow to become like whatever it looks at intensely or thinks deeply upon. In a Song of the Moon, he writes:

As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky,
Until its hue grows like what it beholds.[12]

Also in Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus says:

Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.[13]

Again in the poem Marengh:

He ...
Communed with the immeasurable world;
And felt his life beyond his limbs dilated,
Till his mind grew like that it contemplated.[14]

Shelley means this transformation to be taken more literally than the general, self-induced, hypnotic state of the mystic or yogi practicer. We see Platonic influence here again in the conception of the One and the world-soul.

Enough has been said to suggest the mystical tendencies of Blake and Shelley, and that Shelley was more of a practical man than a mystic. Blake, too, was a practical man, but I think it fair to say that Shelley was practical even in his mysticism. Blake was more of the traditional mystic, and has been included in anthologies of mystics and visionaries, including The Protestant Mystics, edited by Anne Fremantle. He treated life as a spiritual experience with a strong conviction that all things with which he came into contact had great significance and importance. The existence of everything is Holy, as The Book of Thel implies. The basic emotion is one of innocent joy preserved even in the realm of Experience. Life itself, for Shelley, had not

such a potentially joyful significance. All human minds are part of the one great mind and the redemption of humanity lies, partly, in the acknowledgement of that participation. Blake's and Shelley's basic convictions and world views are further developed and systematised by their uses of imagery and symbolism. Let us next turn to that consideration.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]p. 68.

[2]p. 46.

[3]I.A. Richards, "The Mystical Element in Shelley's Poetry", Aryan Path, pp. 250-256.

[4]Carl G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality, p. 70.

[5]Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Carlos Baker, p. 460.

[6]William Gaunt, Arrows of Desire, p. 44.

[7]Quoted by Helen C. White, The Mysticism of William Blake, p. 144.

[8]Blake's Complete Writings, p. 809. (11 Sept. 1801).

[9]Ibid., Letter to Thomas Butts, 22 Nov. 1802, p. 817.

[10]Ibid., pp. 804-805. (2 Oct. 1800).

[11]Ibid., pp. 664-665. (Jerusalem II, Plate38, 16-22).

[12]Shelley's Complete Works, III, p. 300. (Stanza 1).

[13]Ibid., II, 449-451, p. 193.

[14]Ibid., III, 132-135, p. 215.

V

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

Stanley Gardner's treatment of symbolism in Blake's poetry in Infinity on the Anvil may be taken as presenting some of the more significant aspects of this much-explored topic. Gardner points out that the symbolism enables the reader to identify the mythological figures, and that the symbolic action is always related to the conflict and theme. It is this connection between symbol and conflict which makes the symbols important in Blake, for the nature of his poetry is the conflict of symbol with symbol. Some of Blake's symbols continue unvaried in meaning throughout his work: the lamb, for instance, is always the symbol of innocence. Others may develop from book to book as Blake's work progresses; such as the dawn symbol which is first used to symbolize truth whereas later it comes to mean the rise of false religion or 'false truth'.

Shelley's use of imagery and symbolism is not as perplexing to the reader as is Blake's. Many symbols of Blake's early writing are expanded almost beyond recognition in his later work, while Shelley wrote "his Prophetic Books in the same general way as his Songs of Innocence".[1] Shelley's images are quite commonplace and enable him to convey a great deal by fairly simple means. In the words of Peter Butter,

"they form a good bridge for the reader from his own experience to the sometimes rather exotic ideas and emotions which Shelley would convey".[2] Blake's early imagery, of tigers, flowers, and lambs, have the same function: the reader can associate his own ideas with the symbolism. This is not possible in Blake's Prophetic Books, for here the reader has to find out precisely what Blake means by each symbol and so has to use Blake's ideas instead of his own. For this reason Blake has been accused of obscurity, while Shelley has sometimes been dismissed as meaningless because it is relatively easy to slide over his imagery.

Shelley's use of imagery is sometimes purely descriptive and sometimes wholly symbolic. Peter Butter contends that it is possible to list the images in a graduated scale to the extent to which they are symbolic. First, there is the purely descriptive imagery where only a picture is conveyed with no underlying significance. These are found in such poems as Evening, Pisa, and The Boat on the Serchio. The 'highest' use of imagery, that which is purely symbolic and purely intellectual, is seen in the fight between the eagle and the snake at the beginning of The Revolt of Islam. Between these two extreme uses of imagery lies those where there is some fusion of description and symbolism.

Certain themes predominate in Shelley's most characteristic work and certain images and patterns of images recur frequently. Peter Butter believes that Shelley's images are

often shots at the same target rather than hits on different targets. He feels that the 'targets' are sufficiently remote to justify a number of shots and that the effect of the recurring images is cumulative, so that Shelley is not as it were using self-expression at the expense of communication. Shelley continues in his later work to employ the same images but in a more consciously symbolic way, while Blake continues to employ the same images disguised in an unfamiliar terminology. Despite the number of recurring images, however, Shelley constantly used new images or used old ones in fresh ways. His total effects are produced by the flow of whole passages rather than by the brilliance of single words or images.

Blake's symbolism begins in his very first works the Poetical Sketches, and the Songs of Innocence. He continually expanded his poetic associations but never entirely broke off and re-established them. The French Revolution, for example, as the Marriage of Heven and Hell, uses images which have already been well established and shows very little extension in the symbolism. The most important symbol is the cloud which is associated with repressive forces. The other main symbols are associated with death and tyranny. The book is not altogether successful, for Blake, in his attempt to present the phenomenon of material force, has made the action too diffuse. The symbolism is too one-sided: for, since the same symbolism is used for both sides of the material struggle,

there is no inherent conflict. A Song of Liberty, which initiated the revolt against spiritual repression, is more successful in this regard. The conflict of ideas here is essentially poetic and illustrates the dual nature of Blake's symbolism.

In Blake's Europe the fundamental conflict is between the 'stony law' which restricts men's actions and the fact that men are overwhelmed in a deluge of sensual delight. Gardner thinks that it is wrong to read philosophy into this poem because to do so it is necessary to neglect the poetry. The theme can only be experienced nor formulated, and, when Middleton Murry asserted that the theme is life struggling toward eternity, he was wrong because "the 'stuff' of poetry is conflict, not doctrine",[3] and Europe should be read only as poetry. One important image in the conflict is stones. They represent the limit of opacity which is as near as possible to existence without life. For Blake, this is both death and satan. Northrop Frye, therefore, attributes to stones the symbolism of the death impulse.[4] He feels that Blake's prophetic books, especially America and The French Revolution, will remind the reader of Shelley because "they describe the triumph of man's freedom, symbolised by a sky-god, in revolutionary and apocalyptic language."[5] This is one of the many similarities mentioned by Frye and others whose incidental references indicate the extent of resemblance between Blake's and Shelley's ideas.

The success of Blake's poem The Book of Urizen, is founded on the strength and range of the symbolism and the inherent dramatic conflict between the act of creation and the tyranny of Urizen. The forging of mankind by Los consists of some of the most important symbols in the book. Los is associated with the blacksmith imagery: the furnace is a "symbol of the natural body...the hammer is the heartbeat, the bellows the lungs and the furnace the whole metabolism of a warm-blooded animal."[6] Los also symbolises the power of regeneration. He is, like Shelley's Prometheus, bound to nature but is finally to break free. His job consists of "the building of the ruins of time into mansions of eternity."[7] This is symbolised by the subduing of the spectre of Urthona by Los. Frye suggests that Los is what Shelley is hinting at when he speaks of time as a redeemer and mediator in his Defence of Poetry. This is one more observation on the natural affinities which exist between the two poets.

In The Sensitive Plant, Shelley, using symbols drawn from nature, creates a metaphor of seasonal growth and death for certain limitations of the human mind. With the coming of autumn all the beautiful plants of summer are killed and with the advent of spring all that remained of the sensitive plant is "a leafless wreck," while the tougher mandrakes and toadstools, the crudest forms of plant life, still flourish as before. The sensitive plant had felt very receptive to

love; it aspired to possess the beautiful. Its thirst for the unattainable and its aspiration toward perfection ends with its death. The reader is reminded of Blake's Sunflower, which seeks "after that sweet golden clime,/ Where the traveller's journey is done." Its very nature, however, requires that it remain rooted in the earth. The only steps it can take toward its own perfection is the turning of its head to count the steps of the sun.

In Shelley's work the images are usually the symbols of mental states and events. "The imagery which I have employed," he wrote, "will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed."[8] "The operations of the human mind" was Blake's concern as well. This can be seen from the theme of The Four Zoas, which is a drama that takes place in the human mind, "a Dream of Nine Nights."

In The Four Zoas the symbolism is controlled and relevant. Its greatest passage, according to Gardner, is that which deals with the action of the Book of Urizen, for here the mythology is forgotten and poetic imagery given force. Each action is specific and relevant and fixed in concrete imagery. In Milton the mythology takes precedence over the action. For this reason, actions are left without any dramatic meaning: their significance has to be explained or described. It is Gardner's contention that "The further

one goes in the pursuit of abstract philosophy in Blake, the further one gets away from the poetic experience, and when Blake himself pursued the metaphysics too far, his poetry disintegrated."[9] Blake's greatest poetry is that which shows an indivisible identity of the theme with the symbolism.

Gardner suggests that in The Visions of the Daughters of Albion any commentary on the mythology must be closely supported by reference to the poetic symbolism. Oothoon is the 'soft soul of America ' symbolizing freedom and revolt against the repressive law of either religion or society. Theotormon is desire under the restraint of external compulsion, and of its own limitations. Bromion is a personification of the false righteousness which fetters the soul. This poem shows the completeness of the link between Blake's symbolism and his philosophy. The strength of the symbolism is in its direct relation to the thought of the poem.

America begins with symbols of tyranny and revolt, such as iron, clouds and darkness. Orc, who implies generation and regeneration, is the central figure of the poem. His creation is shown in the symbol of the forge which is conceived in close relationship with the sea, a symbol of repression. The symbolism established the nature of Orc who represents material and spiritual revolt.

Gardner says that Blake's final books, The Song of Los, The Book of Los, The Book of Ahania, The Four Zoas,

Milton, and Jerusalem, may be important to philosophers and psychologists but there is little of poetic relevance in them. The thought and image were fused together in the early works. In The Songs of Innocence there is no sense of sin because there is no conflict in symbolism, and the mind does not turn inward upon itself but turns from its own joy to universal joy. In the later books this integration has fallen apart and the symmetry is broken down into an argument. In The Songs of Experience the philosophy was fused into the symbolism and inseparable from the poetry. There the separation and repression of individuals is related by poetic fusion of meaning and image to the genesis of the universe. In The Song of Los, however, Blake is concerned with social complaint and the work is really prose in the form of verse. In The Book of Los the formal personifications are set alongside the symbolism but they never fuse because the personifications are immaterial and the symbolism merely recollected from earlier works and not familiar enough in this context to be handled uniquely.

There are several symbols which are common to Blake and Shelley and which are very important to the work of each of them; among these is the cave or cavern symbol. It is employed by Blake in Europe, where the first words, "Five windows light the cavern'd man," sets the direction of the prophecy. The five windows apply to the senses and the 'cavern'd man' is bound, suppressed and enclosed from full

participation in life. Blake associates the cave symbol with the 'sealed furnace' of the mind which is burnt out inside with pent up passions and desires until finally the whole thing smoulders out. This awful picture of man in Ulro is suggested by Blake's poem A Divine Image:

> The Human dress is forged Iron,
> The Human Form a fiery Forge,
> The Human Face a Furnace seal'd,
> The Human Heart its hungry Gorge.[10]

This picture of the Self-Hood, man confined within the circumference of his own skull, shows the imaginative death of the individual. The irony of the analogy between the human body and the blacksmith imagery is Blake's comment on the results of the mechanistic philosophy of Locke upon the eighteenth century. The 'hungry gorge' in this context, the cave symbol, indicates the death and destruction which comes as a result of man's denying his own humanity or inherent divinity.

Shelley, who knew Plato very well, was influenced in his use of the cave image by Plato's cave in The Republic. For example, in The Revolt of Islam Cythna describes how she was taken from the Tyrant's palace and placed in a cave whichwas completely shut in, except for the roof which was "pierced with one round cleft through which the sunbeams fell."[11] The cave here may be symbolic of life, which can be regarded as a prison and shut in from eternity, except for the advent of the sunbeams which symbolize inspiration,

or wisdom which springs up inside the mind. It is the opinion of Peter Butter in Shelley's Idols of the Cave that the image of the cave is often used to symbolize the mind turning in upon itself in a form of introspection. This, as we have seen in the furnace symbolism, is in keeping with Blake's use of the cave image. The poet in Shelley's Alastor takes his "secret steps" through "secret caves". This recalls Blake's The First Book of Urizen when Urizen explored his dens, the caverns of his mind. The image of the Tent, as Blake uses it in this book, has the same function as Shelley's cave image in separating man from eternity. The Eternals, who "shuddered at the sight" of Enitharmon separated from Los, spread a tent "that Eternals may no more behold them." When the tent was finished, whose woof was called Science, Los beheld eternity no more. The cave, the sealed furnace, and the tent, then, are common symbols of confinement and suppression in Blake and Shelley.

Snake or serpent imagery also is common to Blake and Shelley. The traditional Christian symbolism of the snake is, of course, evil, but in the conception of the 'fortunate fall' the serpent must be a symbol of good; and he is so for all the Romantic writers. In common Greek belief the serpent was "an auspicious and favourable being," and in Egypt, "an hieroglyphic of eternity."[12] Carlos Baker quotes the Iliad, the Aeneid, Metamorphoses, and The Faerie

Queene, as four possible sources of the snake and eagle combat, which shows that Shelley was working from fairly common imagery in The Revolt of Islam. Baker says that one of Shelley's many nicknames was "the snake," so it is natural that he should feel an affection for the animal! In The Assassins, Maimuna and Abdallah, children of Albedir and Khaled, have a pet snake with which they play. The snake gets into a boat and later swims ashore and "The girl sang to it, and it leaped into her bosom, and she crossed her fair hands over it, as if to cherish it there."[13] The serpent, in Shelley's symbolism, is sometimes connected with eternity. In The Revolt of Islam and elsewhere eternity is said to be a snake or to be girt by a snake. The idea of eternity as a goddess surrounded by a snake is found in the conclusion of Prometheus Unbound, (565-569). "The serpent that would clasp her with his length" recalls Blake's use of the same image in The Book of Urizen where a snake coils around Enitharmon. She had brought forth this snake out of her womb before the birth of Orc.

As Frye points out, "the serpent with its tail in its mouth is the perfect emblem of the Selfhood: an earth-bound cold-blooded and often venomous form of life imprisoned in its own cycle of death and rebirth."[14] The "serpent body," or "the serpent bulk of nature's dross," is the body of the natural man. The serpent's ability to shed its skin makes it a symbol of death, but more important for Blake, a symbol

of rebirth. Opposed to the snake in Shelley's Revolt of Islam is the eagle, the symbol of evil. The eagle is victorious over the snake there, but the beautiful woman, upon whose bosom the snake reclines, says that good is only temporarily vanquished, and it does triumph over evil later in the poem.

Shelley, like Blake, had the distinctive capacity to see the eternal in the earthly and temporal. His concrete material images, therefore, are often important because they symbolize or point to something beyond themselves. In this context such images as the robe, lute, lamp, nest, boat, and veil, symbolize something living and spiritual contained in something material and dead. The forms of nature reveal, as well as conceal, the spirit of which they are the veil dividing eternity from time.

The veil is a very important image in Shelley. It is used in Alastor where the maiden, who appears to the poet, is veiled. In his pursuit of ideal love Shelley had been granted a vision of what lay beyond the veil. In A Defence of Poetry Shelley says, "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world."[15] He also tells us that the veil is lifted by rising above our own natures and identifying ourselves with the Beautiful which exists in other things or persons, as Blake would say, 'it is lifted by the imagination's expansion from a centre to a circumference.'

In ancient myths the heavens are often spoken of as

the veil of the gods. Mortal eyes cannot look directly upon the divine; so, in this sense the veil is a necessary protection. The Witch of Atlas wore "a subtle veil" to be "a shadow for the splendor of her love." In the sonnet "Lift not the painted veil", life is seen as a veil; what "those who live call life" is not reality but a painted veil of their own making to be seen in the same sense that Blake understood that each man creates his own world. An illusory world of impermanence, as in Mutability, hides the world of reality. In Prometheus Unbound Earth says to Asia, "Death is the veil which those who live call life: / They sleep and it is lifted."[16] In life our knowledge of eternity is limited but in dying we pass through the veil. The pursuit of death is not applicable to Blake as it is to Shelley, but Blake also uses nature as the net, or trap, or veil of life. In The Golden Net, as in the tent image in The Book of Urizen, the veil is eventually spread over the whole sky. Blake sees the death of Jesus as rending the veil of the temple, symbolizing the escape of the imagination, in the same way that Shelley thinks that each man's death rends the veil.

In Blake the veiled woman is the seducer, the Whore of Babylon, but in Shelley she is the object of his imaginative quest. The beloved in Shelley is regarded as an epipsyche, a perfect second self. In Blake, Vala, the emanation of Albion, is symbolic of nature, the object world.

Shelley speaks of the epipsyche, in Epipsychidion, as "that idol of my thought:" it is the "soul within our soul" which each man must be continually seeking. In Prometheus Unbound, Asia is the epipsyche of Prometheus. Their separation and later reunion is symbolic of Prometheus' inner or hidden emotional condition. While he remained chained to the rock his heart was full of pride and hatred against Jupiter so that it was impossible for him to be united with his epipsyche. As soon as he says that he wishes no living thing to suffer hurt his imagination begins to assume a circumference and he prepares himself by making himself worthy of being united with Asia. Symbolically, the two become one. In the same way, in Blake's state of perfection there are no emanations or spectres but all are united in one happy man.

Despite the similarities of much of their symbolism, there is a difference between Blake's and Shelley's uses of allegory. Shelley shows by the symbolism which is attached to Cythna's child in Laon and Cythna, that he was using allegory. Cythna bears the child while she is secluded in a cave but it is taken away from her. The child is next seen as companion of the tyrant Othman, who represents political oppression and who treats the child scornfully. When her parents, Laon and Cythna, are executed the child also dies of the plague and later appears as pilot of the magic boat which carries her parents to the temple of the spirit. From the line "Justice and Truth their winged child

have found,"[17] Carlos Baker suggests that Cythna represents justice, Laon truth and the child freedom.

The three-fold unity of Cythna's child is similar to Blake's three-fold imagination, Beulah, the world of lover, beloved and child. Blake would not have agreed with the particular way in which Shelley presented his allegory, however, for Shelley is writing the kind of allegory which existed in England from the time of the Renaissance. In this type of allegory one thing must equal some other specific thing and this, for Blake, was considered as a form of preaching too common to command the respect of good poets. Blake believed in the sublime allegory as he presented it in Jerusalem, for example, which is addressed to the intellectual powers, the imagination, and in which the whole may be grasped by a kind of intuition. Traditional allegory, as Shelley's was, is formed and retained through the memory, but Blake's sublime allegory comes from the dictates of the Holy Spirit.

We can see that there are several accounts upon which Blake and Shelley agree, having viewed some of the problems and results of their uses of Imagery and Symbolism. Certainly, Blake's symbolism is much 'heavier' and more difficult in places than is Shelley's. In the examples, however, which have been quoted by way of illustration, such as the Cave, Veil, and Serpent imagery, we have seen that the two poets, using different language,

used these symbols in the same way and to the same ends. The revolutionary and apocalyptic language used by Shelley and Blake points toward the same freedom from convention. Shelley's reference to Time as a mediator and redeemer in his Defence of Poetry, then, is not just arbitrarily connected with Blake's prophet, Los. The basic orientation of both poets is similar, so that their symbolism often points toward the same conclusion; namely, the necessity of imaginative freedom and dignity in any tolerable human society.

The identity of theme and symbolism in Blake, such as the clouds and darkness in America, which symbolize tyranny and revolt, suggests that a pursuit of Blake's mythology should be preceded by a look at his symbolism. Then, bearing in mind Northrop Frye's remark that the symbolism must support any commentary on the mythology of The Vision of the Daughters of Albion, it seems that the connection between symbolism and mythology is a strong one, in Blake at least. Let us see, in the following chapter, how Blake and Shelley shaped their mythology, and its importance in the thought of each poet.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]Peter Butter, Shelley's Idols of the Cave, p. 211.

[2]Ibid., p. 211.

[3]Stanley Gardner, Infinity of the Anvil, p. 68,

[4]Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 224.

[5]Ibid., p. 219.

[6]Ibid., p. 253.

[7]Ibid., p. 318.

[8]Quoted by Ross Woodman, in The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p. 106.

[9]Gardner, p. 92.

[10]Blake's Complete Writings, p. 221.

[11]Canto vii, 2902-3180.

[12]Shelley's Complete Works, VII, p. 103.

[13]Ibid., VI, p. 171.

[14]Frye, p. 135.

[15]Shelley, VII, p. 117.

[16]Prometheus Unbound, III, iii, pp. 113-114.

[17]Quoted by Carlos Baker, in Shelley's Major Poetry, pp. 82-83.

VI

MYTH AND MYTHOLOGY

The Romantic age revived interest in classical and Scandanivian mythology. The general trend of the time was toward either remoulding and reshaping myths for a new purpose, as did Shelley, or creating a new mythology, as did Blake. Earl Wasserman suggests, in Myth in Shelley's Poetry, that Shelley refrained from forging new links to regroup and interrelate diverse myths because he assumed that potentially wholeness already existed in these given materials only waiting to be properly drawn out. "Consequently, he rather strictly confines himself to the inherent syntactical potentials, however minor or neglected they may be in the conventional myths, and his mythopoeic art lies especially in eliciting and exploring these potentials to form new combinations."[1]

Shelley is best known, then, not for inventing new myths, but for his work in drawing out the best in those that already exist. Shelley, with his mystical belief that all human minds are part of the one mind, believed that, because of the interconnection of all poems, each is part of "that great poem which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world."[2] This was his reason for resorting to traditional

material. It suggests that the reader should not see his myths as copies of earlier myths but as another suggestion of the potential archetypal form. We might note that Shelley's belief about the organic unity of poetry is similar to Blake's belief about the way in which all art combined to build up Golgonooza. But this is to anticipate.

An example of the way in which Shelley makes use of earlier mythology is pointed out by Wasserman in his commentary on Prometheus Unbound. This occurs in Earth's description of the cave to which Prometheus and Asia are to retire after their reunion. A temple stands beside this cave where:

> the emulous youths
> Bore to thy honour thro' the divine gloom
> The lamp which was thine emblem."[3]

This reference is to the lampadephoria, the torch race in which youths ran from the altar of Prometheus in the Academy to the Acropolis in Athens with lighted torches. The object was to arrive first with an unextinguished torch. Shelley applied the symbolism of this race to Prometheus who has borne "the untransmitted torch of hope / Into the grave, across the night of life."

The extent to which Shelley deviated from any given myth can be seen from a comparison of Prometheus Unbound with the myth of Aeschylus from which it is derived. Peter Butter gives a brief analysis of the action of the Aeschylus myth,[4] and from this we see that Shelley employed all the

essential elements as given there.

Zeus, with the help of Prometheus, overthrew the older gods and set himself up as their ruler in the same way that Jupiter overthrew the older regime in Shelley's poem. Zeus in turn, is to be overthrown by his own son from the marriage with Thetis. Likewise, Demogorgon, child of Jupiter, overthrew his father. In the Aeschylus myth Prometheus abandons his resentment against Zeus and thereby gains his liberty. In Shelley Prometheus must no longer hate, but sympathize with Jupiter before he can be released. In Aeschylus Herakles, son of Zeus and Io, a mortal girl, represents a reconciliation between the mortal and the divine and a prophecy about his deification implies the possibility of mankind's being raised to the level of divinity. Shelley describes in some detail the level of perfection which mankind attains when love triumphs and Prometheus liberates humanity from the tyranny of Jupiter. It appears, then, that Shelley found in Aeschylus a great seed bed for his thoughts about the cyclic pattern of history and all its implications which we shall soon explore further.

While Shelley resorted to ancient mythology, giving it his own particular coloring, Blake adopted the Bible as the primary basis of his archetypal myth and continued to build from there. Blake's poetry is all related to his central myth which appears to have been in his mind from a very early age. The Poetical Sketches, 1783, shows summer

as Innocence, with his "ruddy limbs and flourishing hair," and winter as Experience, "the direful monster." These appear with much the same symbolism in The Prophetic Books as the two great figures Orc and Urizen.

Blake's central myth is inextricably bound up with Christianity and the Bible, the difference being that, "thou read'st black where I read white."[5] Blake turned the whole Christian scheme of things upside down and put the devil in God's place in the same way that he planted Albion, head in the earth and legs in the sky. The boundaries of his central myth, as outlined by Northrop Frye, are Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Apocalypse, embracing the four imaginative levels of existence, Eden, Beulah, Generation and Ulro. As Frye explains Blake's central myth; "It revolves around the four antitheses that we have been tracing ... of imagination and memory in thought, innocence and experience in religion, liberty and tyranny in society, outline and imitation in art. These four antitheses are all aspects of one, the antithesis of life and death, and Blake assumes that we have this unity in our heads."[6]

Blake did not always use ideas and episodes which were completely original in building up his central myth. In many cases, then, he is similar to Shelley in this. As Helen White points out, Blake's Four Zoas, for example, may have originated from the description of the four living creatures which Ezekiel saw by the river Chebar. She

explains it in this way:

> The term "Zoa" comes from the Greek which is the word for what the Authorized Version of the Apocalypse calls beasts. But the mythology is original with Blake in the sense that in the form of his system it laid hold upon his imagination, and was there developed and complicated and set in action in a series of episodes quite his own."[7]

The Four Zoas, as Helen White and Northrop Frye, among others, show, are not given a particular personality but are always recognized by their symbolic meanings. Blake sometimes calls them 'universes', but they could be called psychological qualities in modern terminology. Each of the four Zoas represents some aspect of human life: Urizen, the reason; Luvah, the emotion; Tharmas, the instinct; and Urthona, the energy or passion. Frye drew up a table of twenty-eight different associations, such as Season, element, body part or color, for examples, with each of the four Zoas.[8]

Having seen some of the similarities and differences of Blake's and Shelley's approach to traditional mythology, let us compare the way in which specific myths contributed to the thought pattern of each poet.

Shelley was strongly influenced by the Orphic myth in which the god Dionysus undergoes three incarnations; the third constituting the central, most important myth. Woodman gives a summary of this myth in The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, (pp. 30-31). In his second incarnation, Dionysus is killed and eaten by the Titans. When Zeus, ruler of the Titans, sees what they have done, he hurls

a thunderbolt at them and burns them. Out of their scattered remains rises a new race of men. The Titans, who are now men as we know them, have eaten part of the god Dionysus, so that they (humans) are now both mortal and divine. Man's chief task on earth is to free himself from his evil mortal nature and assume his full divinity once more. The goddess Athene saved the heart of Dionysus from the Titans and carried it to Zeus who planted it within his thigh. Dionysus then grew once more to become 'the thrice-born'. Dionysus is, in his third incarnation, a vision of a united humanity which had been scattered into many parts. In the words ascribed to Orpheus, "Everything comes to be out of the One and is resolved to the One." It is Woodman's contention that, "Orphism was to Shelley what the Bible was to Blake: the great code of art."[9]

This 'Humpty-Dumpty' aspect of Creation is common to both Blake and Shelley. In Shelley, as we have seen, it is derived from the Dionysian myth. Similarly, in Blake all the different forms of nature are part of the great body of Albion. Basically, then, there is some connection between Blake's Albion and the third incarnation of Dionysus, the united humanity, which was Shelley's source of inspiration. Man's primary task is to expand his creative imagination until he can perceive that the unity suggested by the Albion and Dionysian myths does exist. Until he does this he sees everything by an illusion of multiplicity.

As Blake wrote:

> So man looks out in tree, and herb, and fish, and bird, beast,
> Collecting up the scattered portions of his immortal body and
> Into the elemental forms of everything that grows.[10]

This is not an easy task for, as the creation of the physical world occurred, which to Blake was the same event as the Fall of man, the creative imagination was gradually weakened and contracted into its present state which is a practically helpless one.

It is clear to both Blake and Shelley that man is living in a fallen world with fallen human nature. As Shelley understood it, man must utilize two forces in his effort to redeem his divine humanity. The forces of evil which inhibit his self-realization must be destroyed, and the forces of good which build up his ideal world must be conserved and preserved. Destruction and preservation, therefore, go hand in hand in Shelley's search for his epipsyche. Shelley wields these forces in four great poems which are of epic magnitude Prometheus Unbound, Epipsychidion, Adonais, and The Triumph of Life. Shelley, himself, utilizes the forces of preservation in his adoption and restructuring of primitive myths. Any form of revolution applies the force of destruction in its efforts to eradicate evil. A good example of this is found in the poem Laon and Cythna which is based on the idea of revolution.

In Blake's myth the Creation and the Fall are the

same event. Man's effort to redeem his divine humanity lies in his realization of his fallen state. Originally, Albion, one of the Eternals, had fallen and Creation was necessary in order to set a limit to his fall that he might not lapse into non-entity. The history of the world from its creation to the last judgment is symbolized by the sleep of Albion. The unfallen part of god made seven attempts to awake him which Blake called the "seven eyes of God." None were successful until Jesus appeared in the seventh eye and Albion began to show signs of awaking. This Fall was the fall of the whole spiritual man into division and bondage to reason and the utilitarian, materialistic view of life. Albion's sleep symbolizes the relapse from active and creative energy to passivity. The fall was not a single event but covered many generations and included the first three "eyes of God", the silver, bronze and iron ages. This myth of the primeval giant whose fall was the creation of the universe has been preserved by the Kabbalah.[11]

Shelley, in speaking about time, sometimes used imagery which suggests Blake's representation of his 'universes' and their function. In the poem To Ireland, Shelley says:

> and every wave might seem
> An instrument in Time the giant's grasp,
> To burst the barriers of Eternity.[12]

This suggests the work of Blake's Los, the blacksmith, whose mythological counterparts are Hephaistos, one of the binders

of Prometheus in Aeschylus, and Thor.[13] Blake says that without the swiftness of time "all were eternal torment." It is the task of Los to bring time and eternity together, and thereby release man from his confinement to the moving belt of time. Also, in Queen Mab, Shelley speaks about time in particularly Blakean language:

> Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
> That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,
> So long had ruled the world, that nations fell
> Beneath his silent footstep...[14]

The imagery here, however, could more appropriately be applied to Blake's Urizen than to his Los. The words, 'hoary giant', 'lonely pride', 'ruled', and 'nations fell', suggest the tyranny of Urizen.

Shelley's use of the Narcissus myth is similar to Blake's thinking on the subject of unrequited love. There is evidence that Shelley is conscious of the Narcissus myth in his poem Alastor. In the traditional myth, Narcissus, a handsome young lad and a scorner of love, wounded one girl too many and offended the goddess Nemesis who caused him to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Narcissus then understood how the girls had felt about him. He was compelled to spend all his time looking at his own reflection. At last he pined away and died for lack of love since his own could not be fulfilled. Where his body had lain there grew up a beautiful flower which was called Narcissus.

In the Preface to Alastor, Shelley speaks about a youth "of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius", who:

> drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate ... His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. ... He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.[15]

Shelley's final comment in the Preface is, "Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave." As Carlos Baker points out, there is some discrepancy between the poem and the Preface, for in the poem the youth is glorified not condemned. This does not invalidate the connection with the Narcissus myth, however. Both the myth and the poem of Shelley suggest that the pursuit of phantoms is necessary in this life but inevitably leads to despair.

Blake, in keeping with Shelley's attitude in the Preface, would have described the poets' plight as an 'Ulroish' situation. The poets' passion, finding no outlet, becomes a raging fiend, a fierce furnace, which eats him out inside and destroys him. The tragedy is that the desire in itself is good, but being unattainable, it finally kills him. "Better to murder the infant in its cradle," writes Blake, "than to nurse unacted desires."

Both Blake and Shelley believed that history followed a cyclic pattern. Shelley wrote in a poem Life Rounded With Sleep:

> The babe is at peace within the womb,
> The corpse is at rest within the tomb,
> We begin in what we end.[16]

Shelley's conception of history was an optimistic one which was influenced by Godwin's thinking. Basically, the idea was that history is cyclic but spiral; each complete circuit is another step in the progression toward perfection. History repeats itself but does so on a higher level of perfectibility.

This belief, of Shelley and Blake, in the progressive cycle of history is symbolized in the conflict between youth and old age. In Generation this usually takes the form of the son's revolt against the father for, until the son breaks with the parent and leaves the home, he cannot find fulfilment. This is implied in the Aeschylus myth from which Shelley derived his Prometheus Unbound. There, the great secret which Prometheus at first refused to reveal was that the offspring of Thetis would be greater than his father, and this was destined to lead to the downfall of Zeus.

Blake uses this theme in The Mental Traveller in the struggle between the youth and the old woman. The youthful imagination is created and given to an old woman who represents Tirzah of the Songs of Experience that is, mother nature. Nature binds the imagination, "She lives upon his

shrieks & cries./ And she grows young as he grows old." The principle of this cycle of growing older or younger lies in the idea that rebellion follows tyranny and as the youth grows older he overcomes the old woman, nature, and "binds her down for his delight." As age comes on the male is once more overcome by nature and this cycle continues and includes all human life.[17]

Blake continues this theme in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem. In these two poems we see the opposition of the youth, Orc, to the aged Urizen. Orc, the dying and rising god of Blake's mythology, as Frye suggests, is similar to Shelley's Prometheus and his Adonais. Orc is the revolutionary principle in man and represents the continuous arrival of new life, such as spring, dawn, and renewed sexual power. Having the same function as Laon and Cythna in Shelley, Orc represents the periodic overthrow of social tyranny. In the final analysis he represents the victory over death. Orc is associated with the serpent, the symbol of good, in Blake. Opposed to the Orc principle is Urizen, the thundergod of tyranny and moral law. He represents the tendency to chaos within the human mind. He is an abstraction, old and cruel and associated with the state of Experience as Orc is associated with Innocence. Since Orc represents a new cycle he grows old and dies at the end of that cycle. As Orc grows old Urizen gains power over him so that they are really both parts of the same principle. Urizen is Orc

grown old. We have seen the same principle at work in Shelley earlier in this chapter, in the poem Prometheus Unbound, when Jupiter overthrew the older gods and was himself later overthrown.

The seven major historical cycles in Blake's mythology, the "seven eyes of God," each covers the Orc to Urizen cycle.[18] Each cycle begins with the birth and binding of Orc, (note the connection with the bound Prometheus of Shelley's myth), continues through the Urizen stage as Urizen explores his dens, and finally ends in tyranny. Blake uses the symbol of the mill for the final stage of the cycle. This represents machinery and the utilitarian view of life. The symbol of the wheel is implicit in this which, in itself, connotes the cyclic pattern of history. Blake uses the symbol of the "wheel of religion" in Jerusalem to put the conflict between Jesus and the forces of repression. The crucifixion of Orc at the end of the cycle represents the crucifixion of Jesus.

The conception of the progressive, cyclic pattern of history in Blake and Shelley is perhaps best illustrated by Blake's idea of Redemption. Man does not go backward or remain steady but either goes forward or falls into Ulro. The story of the human imagination, then, begins in Beulah and continues through Generation toward Eden in a steady progression. Even the Four Quarter Cycle of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Apocalypse, as we have seen in an earlier

chapter, has its counterpart in nature in the four seasons, therefore following a cyclic pattern. Blake and the Romantic movement, then, did not destroy the traditional world view which employed a vertical spacial metaphor to the conception of history but, after Blake, the cyclic, universal myth returned with the vertical scheme turned bottom up. Man, not God, now occupies the top position and must work out his own redemption: it is no longer imposed from without.

We have seen that Shelley worked primarily with ancient mythology in his mythmaking while Blake was familiar with ancient mythology and often quoted these myths but without directly naming them. He preferred to create his own myths even to the unique names of his characters. Both Blake and Shelley employed their mythology to the means of man's redemption, as we shall see in a later chapter, Shelley to describing the possibilities of a redeemed society, Blake to the building up of his Golgonooza, that great, apocalyptic Citadel of Art. There are certain similarities between the myths as found in both poets, such as the similarities between Blake's Albion and the third incarnation of Dionysus; Shelley's imagery in connection with Time resembled Blake's Los and Urizen, and Shelley's use of the Narcissus myth conformed to Blake's thinking on unacted desires. On the whole, a genuine affinity exists between the mythopoeic poetry of Blake and that of Shelley, not always in detail but most often in intention.

All myths have characters and Blake's and Shelley's are not exceptions. There can be no myths without heroes and heroines of some sort. Of course, there are extremes in the varieties of characters presentable in myths. They range from the general to the particular and from the provincial to the universal. Blake and Shelley both needed strong characters for their respective myths and how traditional or how unique these were we shall shortly see.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

[1]Earl Wasserman, Myth in Shelley's Poetry, p. 133.

[2]Ibid., p. 133. (The Defence of Poetry).

[3]Prometheus Unbound, III, iii, pp. 168-170.

[4]Peter Butter, Shelley's Idols of the Cave, pp. 165-167.

[5]Blake's Complete Writings, The Everlasting Gospel, p. 748.

[6]Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, pp. 124-125.

[7]Helen White, The Mysticism of William Blake, pp. 169-170.

[8]Frye, pp. 277-278.

[9]Ross Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p. 31.

[10]Vala, VIII, ii, pp. 553-555.

[11]"Kabbalah" originally applied to Jewish Oral Law, but after the thirteenth Century it was used to denote a school of heretical Jewish writing which interpreted the Old Testament, especially the Book of Genesis, in a mystical and metaphysical way.

[12]Shelley's Complete Works, III, p. 104, 12-14.

[13]See Frye, pp. 252-253.

[14]Shelley, I, p. 128, 23-26.

[15]Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Carlos Baker, p. 18.

[16]Shelley, IV, p. 119.

[17]See Hazard Adams, William Blake, pp. 77-100.

[18]See Frye, pp. 128-134 & 210-214.

VII

HEROES AND HEROINES

Blake was not a hero worshipper and his myths show a lack of the traditional heroes and heroines. I say this because his characters are not connected with history in the sense of being conditioned or inhibited by it. They seem to transcend history. This impression may be the result of Blake's imagery and the diagrammatic symbolism of all his characters. As Frye points out, "The heroism of Orc or the ululation of Ololon do not impress us as human realities, like Achilles or Cassandra, but as intellectual ideographs."[1] Generally, Blake's characters have not the appealing personalities which most of Shelley's have, although sometimes their functions are much alike. Shelley devoted as much care to the development of his heroines, for example, as he did to his heroes, but Blake's heroines have little personalities or no personalities and each may be described, in Blake's own words, as "a solitary shadow wailing upon the margin of non-entity."

Blake did have respect for certain individuals, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who was Shelley's mother-in-law by his second marriage. Mary Wollstonecraft, who married William Godwin a short time before her death, was the symbol of the free woman. Her ideas, as they are presented in

Vindication of the Rights of Women, show her as the "woman of feeling" whose intellect, energy, and defiance attempted to raise the social status of women. The idea of the passive, timid and helpless female seemed ridiculous to her. Her great influence upon Shelley and Blake was due to the fact that she was part of the spirit of liberty which was abroad at the time. Middleton Murry believed that Blake's Visions of the Daughters of Albion had its origin in Blake's having fallen under the spell of Mary Wollstonecraft.[2] The character Oothoon who, like Mary Wollstonecraft, symbolizes the soul liberated from the law, attempts unsuccessfully to communicate her freedom to others.

Of greater impact upon Shelley and Blake was the personality of Christ. He is the only real hero of all Blake's writing whether he appear in the guise of Orc, the revolutionary principle, or of Los, the redemptive faculty which takes over the process started by Orc. Christ was both human and divine which even orthodox Christianity admits. Blake believed that the same thing applies to all men and that Christ lived to pursuade men to accept the truth of their own inherent divinity. In Christ, God and man became one. He was a perfect man who "was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules."[3]

In Jerusalem Christ is identified with the creative imagination which is the redeemer in Blake's system. "Jesus breaking thro' the Central Zones of Death & Hell/ Opens

Eternity in Time and Space: triumphant in Mercy."[4] His every action was imaginative, bringing more abundant life to himself and any who cared to follow him. He entered society as the Orc figure, that of the revolutionary, which is the main characteristic of Christ which Blake emphasizes. He was the virtuous law breaker who could not be bound by any law and who was strongly in opposition to the defenders of the conventional law. Very few people could see this aspect of Christ's character, as Blake said in The Everlasting Gospel:

> The vision of Christ that thou dost see
> Is my visions greatest enemy
> .....
> Both read the Bible day & night,
> But thou read'st black where I read white.[5]

Christ was more interested in sinners than the righteous. Sinners are redeemed by the mercy of God through Christ. The forgiveness of sins, the only unique principle of Christianity, is simply the overflowing of the humanity of the person of Christ. Forgiveness carries no condition of repentance or amendment; it exists; and all that is necessary is to accept it. Christ is the complete, harmonized man. He is man come of age. Through him we see that the only law of God which we should and must obey is the law of our own spiritual growth. He suggested seemingly impractical things such as that we should live the imaginative lives of children and that we could live better lives by not planning for the future. The characteristic of Christ's

teaching which, no doubt, gripped Blake's imagination most of all, was his ideas about the immanent destruction of this world order and the breaking in of the new order as a new state of mind more powerful than the old. Blake, like Christ, believed that before this new state of mind could break into history the old world order had to be overthrown. Christ attempted this overthrow in his attitude which was "Humble to God, haughty to man," and by his disregard of the old order when he, "Scorn'd Earth's parents, Scorn'd Earth's God."[6] His valiant efforts were not appreciated or understood by his later followers for, as Blake says in A Vision of the Last Judgment, "The modern Church Crucifies Christ with the head downwards."

The attempts of Christ to overthrow tyranny were much appreciated by Shelley also. Like Blake, Shelley associated Christ with the creative imagination, for Christ, like the imagination, shaped and created his own inherent divinity. In his early writings Shelley, apparently, had difficulty deciding about Christ. In a letter to Hogg, he says, "I once could tolerate Christ; he then merely injured me once; he merely deprived me of all that I cared for, touching myself, on earth; but now he has done more, and I cannot forgive."[7] Shelley is referring here, rather childishly perhaps, to his first love for Harriet Grove which was nipped in the bud because of his unorthodox ideas about Christ and Christianity and his expulsion from Oxford for the same reason.

In Queen Mab Shelley still has not assigned any specific place to Christ. In a note to that poem he sees Christ as divided between the "hypocritical Daemon, who announces Himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst he stretched forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord," and, "the other who stands in the foremost list of those true heroes who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty."[8] Shelley was later to make up his mind on the matter for, as Woodman suggests, "By 1812 Shelley had dissociated Christ from the Christian apocalypse ... by 1815 he had placed him firmly in the Promethean camp by interpreting his teachings as an effort to persuade men to the condition of divinity."[9]

Shelley, like Blake, admired the New Testament portrayal of Christ but, again like Blake, Shelley could not tolerate the Old Testament conception of God or Jehovah with whom Christ was associated. The logical step for Shelley then was to show Christ fighting against this tyrant. Christ could do this in the form of Prometheus who stole the creative fire from the gods and restored it again to men in order that they might be masters of their own fate. Christ restored divinity to what Shelley considered to be its proper place.

As Woodman suggests, the vision of Christ in Shelley's poetry is that of a Dionysian hero. In Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus is identified with Christ, also with the Satan

of Milton's Paradise Lost, for he represents the apocalyptic struggle between Satan and God. Shelley portrays Prometheus as the Christ figure released from the bonds of Christian orthodoxy, but he does this to fit his own conception of the Promethean hero rather than from the genuine historical evidence by which Blake builds up his conception of Christ. Douglas Bush suggests that Christ, for Shelley, did not exist as a hero in his own right but was a hero because Shelley made him so. "...he saw in Christ only a Judaean Shelley."[10]

However that may be, Shelley set up the Promethean hero as the most important figure in his mythology. The figure of Prometheus chained to the rock can be said to represent the image of the crucified Christ. In Blake this represents the imagination bound to Ulro which is symbolized by the 'tree of mystery', the main symbol for the fallen world. Opposed to the tree of mystery is the tree of eternal life in Paradise which represents the unity of God and man. A tree then, is not always an adverse symbol in Blake. The image of the hero chained to a rock is used elsewhere in Blake and Shelley, as at the beginning of Shelley's Zastrozzi,[11] for example, so that in both poets it is a fairly important symbol.

Prometheus, at the end of the first act of Prometheus Unbound, is in the same position as Blake's imagination in the state of Generation. Prometheus says:

> I would fain
> Be what it is my destiny to be,
> The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
> Or sink into the original gulf of things:[12]

According to Blake, Prometheus must of necessity do one or the other, for if he does not realize his destiny or act according to his potential he will automatically sink into Ulro. It is impossible for him to continue in a passive state. Prometheus does free himself to be 'the saviour and the strength of suffering man' and by doing so shows man freeing himself from the evil in his own soul or mind.

Prometheus, as the representative of all that is best in man, necessarily for Shelley includes the principle of love. Eventually, he is united with Asia, the symbol of love, and his great act of repentance, by which he brings into play forces which set up his own liberation, is one of love. Prometheus wishes to revoke the curse upon Jupiter for he says:

> It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
> Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
> I wish no living thing to suffer pain.[13]

Here, Prometheus casts evil from his mind and makes himself worthy of uniting with Love. In Shelley's own words, Prometheus is "the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest ends."[14]

Prometheus, like Blake's characters, is a typical figure rather than a realistic one. He is mythological too,

like Blake's characters, in the sense that he is uninhibited by history and the need of acting like a human. Douglas Bush feels that he falls short of the Prometheus of Aeschylus as a god because some of the imagery associated with him, such as "pale wound-worn limbs", and "passion-parted lips", cause the great Prometheus of mythology to dwindle into another Laon. Shelley's approach, according to Bush, was too sentimental. "His heroes and martyrs are all alike, all physically weak and spiritually lonely, pale youths who perish, or are ready to perish, unupbraiding".[15] This is worth consideration in view of the quest of the poet as Shelley saw it and the pursuit of death which is also an important principle in Shelley.

The figure of Prometheus chained to the rock is paralleled in Blake by the Orc figure, the revolutionary principle or the imprisoned Titanic power in man. Although Orc is regarded as an evil figure by conventional morality, he represents the imagination striving to break free from this world and enter a better one. For Blake, the coming of Jesus is one of the reappearances of Orc. Orc, however, is completely bound to the cycle of history and cannot break into a new order but can only renew the old. His work is carried on by Los, organizer of human life and "worker for the people".[16]

In Blake's poem The Mental Traveller the new born youth is nailed down upon a rock. This is another version

of the chained Prometheus theme showing man tied to nature, Again, in The Book of Urizen, Orc is taken by Los and Enitharmon to the top of a mountain and chained to a rock with the chain of jealousy. Blake may have had in mind the Old Testament story of Abraham attempting to sacrifice his son but there are also obvious associations with the Promethean myth.

Blake's Orc in his messianic role is also associated with Shelley's Laon in The Revolt of Islam. Despite Shelley's abhorrence of didactic poetry, this poem is openly didactic. Shelley used the story as a device to propagate his social and political theories. The furtherance of good must be man's aim and this must start with self-reform. The opening allegory is a dramatic enactment of the theme and is a version of the good-evil antithesis in Zoroastrian mythology coloured by the unfinished Ahrimanes of Peacock's which provides much of the mythological background. As the serpent is temporarily vanquished in the allegory so Laon and Cythna are martyred and their cause temporarily put down. These two characters represent reason and love and are later combined by Shelley under the concept of Intellectual Beauty.

Blake's theme of 'imaginative strife' is found in The Revolt of Islam which can be read as something which is happening in individual lives. Laon is the typical revolutionary figure with a love for mankind and hatred of all tyranny. Like Orc, he is tied to the moving belt of time.

He can only act on the surface of things. The poem shows, as well as human beings, supernatural forces which influence the lives of human beings and which can be brought into play to help or hinder them. Laon, then, has not the potential within himself to create a better world but he can induce other forces to do so with the help of his partner, Cythna, whose counterpart in Blake is Enitharmon.

A rather vague character who falls on the side of the heroes in Shelley's mythology is Demogorgon. He is the child of Jupiter and lives at the bottom of a volcano. He erupts in order to overthrow Jupiter. He, like most of Blake's characters, is more important as a function than a character. Since he is the child of Jupiter, he suggests that the tyrant brings on his own destruction. He is described in terms of shapeless molten lava which Panthea sees as a living spirit, but has "neither limb nor form, nor outline". When asked his name Demogorgon replies, "Eternity". In Shelley, only love is eternal and Demogorgon is the instrument of love. He overthrows Jupiter but at the same time causes his own downfall and they both sink into the abyss.

The Shelleyan hero seems always to require the assistance of the heroine in attaining imaginative existence. As in the poem Alastor, the hero is unable to cope with life and his environment without establishing contact with his epipsyche which directs his energy into the right channels. Prolonged separation from the epipsyche produces death. In

Epipsychidion, the Theme is much like this. The poet, after his vision of the "veiled divinity", gropes his way through the forest of life until he comes to a well where sits "One whose voice was venomed melody" who as an ideal sums up all the veiledbeauty of Shelley's former poems. The poet is consumed by a burning inward passion for her which makes him prematurely old. The epipsyche, then, 'the soul within his soul', is very important for the Shelleyan hero or lover for it can grant satisfaction or death according to the degree of its attainability. In its latter aspect Shelley's epipsyche is not unlike Blake's "female will" which is capricious and altogether destructive.

In Blake, the Fall began with the subjection of man to the Female Will. One of the Eternals, Albion, reflected upon and worshipped the nature he had created so that he began to regard it as an objective existence independent of him. This existence he saw in eternity as a female and he became so involved with his illusion that he was unable to recover his imaginative power. Albion is still a Titan but he is imprisoned by the power of the Female Will. Like the unattainable love of Shelley's Epipsychidion, for example, the Female Will in Blake always points toward death, destruction and the impoverished imaginative existence.

The Female Will, as explained by Frye, is a "belief in an ultimate externality, which blocks our final vision".[17] It exists in the refusal of the beloved object to surrender

its independence. The material world of nature is female to the beholder. We often speak affectionately of "Mother Nature" but in Blake's perfect imaginative state there is no mother. The nourishing forces of nature which sustains human life in the early helpless dependence of its ideas is the Female Will. For this reason, the two greatest symbols of the Female Will in Blake are the Madonna and Child. Mother worship or nature worship is a negative attitude for it is a desire to continue the helpless state of human life.

In Blake's symbolism nature is given the name Vala. The great female, Vala, in The Four Zoas, has all the connotations of the adverse Female Will. The ultimate fallen form of Vala is Rahab, the great Whore of Babylon. Another of the various manifestations of the female will is Tirzah. She is the protective womb of the physical universe from which the imagination must break free. Tirzah is the symbol of woman and of the passive dependence upon sense experience. We should remember, however, that the Female Will is a refusal of the beloved to surrender its independence but that the expression of sex is the pathway to imaginative existence. A woman then, in Blake, can be either a symbol of destruction or of creativity according to her relation to the lover or potential lover. We have seen in Shelley that the epipsyche has the same double aspect. The difference is that, in Shelley, death comes from prolonged separation from the epipsyche.

The constant devotion of the Shelleyan lover is to intellectual beauty. His vision is always a reproduction of all that is best within himself and a shadow of the transcendent in the form of a woman. The lover is unable to satisfy his vision among mortals and is destroyed by his own thoughts. This is described in Alastor in the words, "Thine own soul still is true to thee. / But changed to a foul fiend through misery."[18] Only through the union of the psyche and the epipsyche will a state of unity be experienced, both of the individual with himself and with the transcendent God. Similarly in Blake, only in a state of perfection will Albion become united with his emanation, Jerusalem, the City of God.

The greatest of all Shelleyan heroines is the goddess Asia, who symbolizes love in Prometheus Unbound. Asia, 'shadow of beauty unbeheld', "gathers to herself, with ease and grace, the whole tradition of Venus Genetrix and Venus Urania".[19] Asia's significance is completely symbolic as she is the depersonalized ideal of the spiritual power of love. Her sisters, Panthea and Ione, who have been interpreted as faith and hope respectively, as Peter Butter sees them, may also be lesser degrees of love. These two stay with Prometheus while he is chained to the rock so that although he is still incapable of perfect love (Asia) because he desires revenge, he is capable of lesser degrees of love. Also, Panthea is the go-between for Prometheus and

Asia.

Ranking below Asia but still very important as a Shelleyan heroine is the Witch of Atlas whom Carlos Baker describes as Eve before the Fall. The witch is "a composite portrait of all the womanly grace, wisdom, beauty, and sympathy that Shelley could conceive of, and she would resemble the visionary maiden of Alastor in this and other respects if she were not as chaste and sexless as "holy Dian" before "she stooped to kiss Endymion."[20] Another variation of the Shelleyan heroine is Queen Mab, who by her revelation of the secrets of past, present and future to Ianthe, contrasts the world as it is against the world as it should be.

In the tragedy The Cenci the character, Beatrice, represents the Shelleyan heroine who falls. She is really another Blakean Thel figure who lives for a long time in a state of saintly innocence but in a crisis fails to make the transition from that state into Experience. Her early life as a Christian has led her to believe that her altruism is genuine, but repeated blows to her ideals by her tyrannical father causes her to abandon the cloak of saintly innocence and adopt the role of a murderess. Her potential is similar to that of Prometheus but, unlike him, she adopts hatred instead of love. Instead of holding fast to her christian convictions she allows hatred to destroy her. Like Thel, she tries to eliminate experience rather than rise

above it. She fails to become what it was her destiny to be and 'sinks into the original gulf of things'.

Still, Beatrice shines through the tragedy as a character to a greater degree than does Thel who is more of the 'solitary shadow'. The same ethereal quality can be applied to all of Blake's characters. Their symbolism and function takes precedence over their mythological characteristics. Most of Shelley's characters have that touch of humanity which makes them more appealing to the reader. Nevertheless, Blake and Shelley often employ their characters to the same ends. The similarity of their philosophy on tyranny and freedom gave them a base for the compatability of certain of their characters, such as Christ, Prometheus, Orc and Laon. The importance of the heroine in Shelley has been stressed, but in Blake there is no heroine, only the destructive Female Will. Altogether, certain important affinities between the important characters in Blake and Shelley cannot be denied.

As myths require heroes so heroes must have tyrants, for heroes exist only in comparison with tyrants. Tyrants, however, were never popular with either Blake or Shelley. They saw tyranny as anything or anyone which impeded freedom or restricted the imagination. All tyranny must be overthrown before a state of harmony can exist in society. How they treated tyrants and tyranny in their poetry and prose is the subject of the following chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

[1] Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 143.

[2] The Visions of the Daughters of Albion, ed. John Middleton Murry, p. 20.

[3] Quoted by Frye, p. 79.

[4] Jerusalem, II, 21-22.

[5] Blake's Complete Writings, p. 748.

[6] This is the whole theme of The Everlasting Gospel.

[7] Shelley's Complete Works, VIII, p. 75. (Apr. 26, 1811).

[8] Ibid., pp. 135-136.

[9] Ross Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p. 70.

[10] Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition, p. 159.

[11] Shelley, V, pp. 5-103.

[12] Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 815-818.

[13] Ibid., 303-305.

[14] Preface to Prometheus Unbound, Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Carlos Baker, p. 443.

[15] Bush, p. 158.

[16] Frye, p. 259.

[17] Ibid., p. 263.

[18] Quoted by Peter Butter, in Shelley's Idols of the Cave, p. 15.

[19] Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry, p. 93.

[20] Ibid., p. 214.

VIII

TYRANTS AND TYRANNY

Both Shelley and Blake abhorred tyranny in any form. In a letter to Hogg Shelley states:

> Here I swear that never will I forgive intolerance! ... every moment shall be devoted to my object, which I can spare, ...I am convinced, too, that it (intolerance) is the greatest disservice to society - that it encourages prejudices which strike at the root of the dearest and tenderest of its ties. Oh! how I wish I were the avenger! -that it were mine to crush the demon: to hurl him to his native hell, never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration. I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in poetry.[1]

He did gratify this feeling by striking out at all forms of tyranny, including the offices of kings, priests, religion and marriage.

Blake too, vociferously defended all forms of liberty. He even condemns revenge and what might be called justice by the modern world. Denis Saurat points out that at the time of the French Revolution Blake "walked out into the streets of London with a cap of Liberty on his head."[2] He called himself a "Liberty boy," and consorted with Tom Paine and his circle, warning Paine in time to save him from prison. Blake felt that, "If men were wise, Princes, the most arbitrary, could not hurt them. If they are not wise, the freest government is compelled to be a tyranny."[3]

The great tyrant of Blake's mythology is Urizen whose rise to power is described in The First Book of Urizen. Urizen, the "primeval priest", belongs to the region of the illuminated intellect in the South. He declined to remain there and assumed power in the North, the region of energy which belonged to Urthona. In attempting to gain control in a region to which he did not belong, Urizen had to establish a set of laws to act as a yardstick whereby he could determine his own power as king of the region of energy. The idea of one law, one king and one god, had to be established. A vast globe then formed around Urizen and he became completely separated from Los, who here represents inspiration, and from whose side Urizen had been born; Urizen then acquired a new set of sense powers, related to reason, through a series of changes which left him dead to spiritual perception. He now lived completely in the dark and cold void of reason. Urizen is now devoid of inspiration and can only act by laws as his reason dictates. His imaginative powers grow weaker and his passions have all burned out. He is in the same position as those who restrain desires, who "do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or Reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling."[4] This is one of the worse situations imaginable because reason is now a tyrant, and "a tyrant is the worst disease and the cause of all others."[5]

Northrop Frye suggests the image of the parasite and

host as the best to describe the tyrant and his victim. "No tyrant maintains himself by force, but by trading on his victims fears."[6] In this sense tyranny is never imposed from without, but is the result of each man's faintheartedness. The tyrant is always lonely, isolated and brooding, for in the state of memory and reflection he has withdrawn into himself. The victim is necessarily in the same position for he is unable to think except in terms of laws and hindrances. Both are in the state of self-tyranny which Blake calls the Selfhood.

The Selfhood in Blake is the state of abstraction associated with the Spectre which is characterized by despair and the loss of hope. As Blake says in Jerusalem:

> The Spectre is the Reasoning power in Man; & when Separated
> From Imagination, and closing itself as in steel, in a Ratio
> Of the things of Memory, It thence frames Laws & Moralities
> To destroy Imagination, the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms & Wars.[7]

The tyranny of the spectre drives away the emanation, the total form of all that a man loves and creates. Since "Man cannot unite with Man but by their emanations,"[8] the individual man is left by himself in a state of fatal isolation which Blake calls Ulro.

Ulro, the purely subjective state, must be annihilated before the true state of perfection can appear. Man must be united with his emanation and the Selfhood must be annihilated. This is the final step which Asia must take in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound upon her approach with Panthea

to the cave of Demogorgon. Bound by the Spirits, Asia and Panthea are guided down, "Through the cloudy strife/ Of Death and of Life," and are thereby, as D. J. Hughes points out, freed from the tragic vision of Blake's Mental Traveller. They are no longer bound to the wheel of nature. The Spirits urge Asia to:

> Resist not the weakness,
> Such strength is in meekness
> That the Eternal, the Immortal,
> Must unloose through life's portal.
> The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
> By that alone.[9]

Hughes explains that "the 'meekness' in which she will find strength is in the putting off of Blakean-Shelleyan Selfhood, the abandonment of the narrowly ordering ego that finds forms completed, static, mechanical."[10] Only when the Selfhood is surrendered will Demogorgon release the doom of Jupiter. Since Asia is the vehicle for the power of love she must become perfect before Demogorgon can act as her instrument.

Shelley's Jupiter, like Blake's Urizen, is the symbol of the fallen world. The latent energy of Saturn's reign had not been carried into the terrestrial world by man, and as a result he is ruled by tyranny in the form of Jupiter. Jupiter had been given power by Prometheus three-thousand years before the drama opens. The only law in evidence then was, "Let man be free."[11] Jupiter, however, abandoned love so that man became no longer free and his condition became very bleak, as Asia observed:

> And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
> First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
> Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
> Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
> With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
> Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
> And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
> And mad disquietude, and shadows idle
> Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
> So ruining the lair wherein they raged.[12]

Prometheus gave speech, thought, the arts, and knowledge of science to man, and he is bound because he did this. Evil, then, "the immedicable plague", still has power on earth.

This evil power, Jupiter, will continue to reign until man learns to turn the other cheek and so dispel hatred and strife. For, like Blake, Shelley believed that tyranny existed only because man sanctioned it. Jupiter is not an external force but is the creation of man's own fear and hate, as the Spirit of the Hour points out in describing the fall of tyranny:

> And those foul shapes abhorred by God and man, ——
> Which, under many a name and many a form
> Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
> Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the World;
> And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
> With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love,
> Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
> And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
> Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate, ——
> Frown, mouldering fast, O'er their abandoned shrines.[13]

Tyranny will eventually fall, Shelley contended, because of the inevitable laws of necessity, cause and effect. The tyrant commits suicide in the sense that he sets into operation forces which eventually turn against him, as is symbolized by Jupiter's being overthrown by his son Demogorgon.

Blake's Tiriel is another arch-tyrant whom Woodman has seen fit to compare with Shelley's Jupiter:

> Like Blake's Tiriel, Jupiter embodies "those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man," "Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable" (III, IV, 180, 182). And, again like Blake's Tiriel, Jupiter realizes too late that the laws which he upholds and his own perverted wisdom "end together in a curse." (Poetry & Prose of Wm Blake, ed. Keynes p. 165, 150, 152) Tiriel dies, like Jupiter, the victim of his own law."[14]

The poem Tiriel is a continuation of Thel in that it recounts the consequences of Thel's failure to enter the world of Experience. Tiriel's world is full of the spectral forms of the Selfhood. He has spent his whole life domineering over others in establishing a reign of terror built on moral virtue. His absorption with himself is symbolized by his blindness. Tiriel, as a king, symbolizes a society in its period of decline. His life is like that described by Shelley in the poem To Edward Williams:

> Of hatred I am proud, — with scorn content;
> Indifference, which once hurt me, is now grown
> Itself indifferent.
> But not to speak of love, Pity alone
> Can break a spirit already more than bent.
> The miserable one
> Turns the mind's poison into food:
> Its medicine is tears, — its evil, good.[15]

Tiriel, Jupiter, and all the other Blakean and Shelleyan tyrants, are in an Ulro situation adequately summed up by the words which are the title of one of Shelley's poems "To Thirst and Find no Fill".

All forms of tyrants, then, from the monarch of Queen Mab and Othman in Laon and Cythna to the old man who met

Laon at the mountain cave and who, Like Blake's Urizen, represents reason without love, have consorted together until "the great community of mankind had been subdivided into ten thousand communities each organized for the ruin of the other. Wheel within wheel the vast machine was instinct with the restless spirit of desolation. Pain has been inflicted, therefore pain should be inflicted in return".[16]

Tyranny has spread throughout all social institutions. This includes marriage against which Shelley was particularly vehement. He says, "A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other, ... any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny."[17] In a letter to Hogg, he becomes even more vehement on the subject. "Yet marriage Godwin says is hateful, detestable. A kind of ineffable, sickening disgust seizes my mind when I think of this most despotic, most unrequired fetter which prejudice has forged to confine its energies. Yes! This is the fruit of superstition, and superstition must perish before this can fall."[18] Shelley goes on to link marriage with religion, as he does elsewhere in his correspondence with Leigh Hunt.[19] Blake expressed the same views on the subject, for, since sexual love is one of the doors of the imaginative world, nothing should be done to hamper its total fulfilment. Priests are especially connected with such

restrictions, as Blake shows in The Garden of Love. "And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds, / And binding with briars my joys & desires."

Blake felt that priests were the central symbol of tyranny for they perpetuated the belief in mystery from which tyranny springs. A priesthood and a God make tyranny permanent. Blake wrote in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,"... a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood; Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast."[20] As Shelley often did, Blake links together God, Priest and King in a chain of tyranny in The Chimney Sweeper. The adults "are gone to praise God & his Priest & King," while the children starve and freeze at home. Blake often uses bleak and dark imagery in speaking about priests, such as, "the Priest of the Raven of dawn, in deadly black." He shows his ultimate disgust in Vala when he mentions "the priests' overgorged abdomen."

Shelley, too, puts the parson in a very unfavourable light in A Ballad, Young Parson Richards. Richards feeds a dog well but refuses food to a woman and her child who then die because of their deprivation. Again, in A Philosophical

View of Reform Shelley writes; "A writer of the present day (a priest of course, for his doctrines are those of a eunuch and of a tyrant) has stated that the evils of the poor arise from an excess of population."[21] In Ode to Liberty, Shelley hopes:

> that the pale name of priest might shrink and dwindle
> Into the hell from which it first was hurled,
> A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure.[22]

Queen Mab says that, "Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower / Even in its tender bud." She goes on to say that religion has peopled "earth with demons, Hell with men, and Heaven with slaves!"

Shelley saw only the negative side of religion, for example, "Religion fetters a reasoning mind with the very bonds which restrain the unthinking one from mischief. This is my great objection to it."[23] Numerous objections may be quoted from Shelley against religion. In the notes to Queen Mab he wrote: "In fact, religion and morality as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude."[24] He also expressed the same views in poetry, as in the poem Love and Tyranny:

> For religion, more keen than the blasts of the North,
> Darts its frost through the self-palsied soul;
> Its slaves on the work of destruction go forth, —
> The divinest emotions that roll
> Submit to the rod of its impious control;
> At the venomous blast of its breath
> Love, concord, lies gasping in death,
> Philanthropy cries 'victory'.[25]

Shelley's attitude to religion is similar to Blake's;

that is, that Christianity has become perverted. Strict adherence to its doctrines leads to the idea of a "creeping Jesus" who will do anything to please anyone. The theme of Shelley's Essay on Christianity, 1816, is the discrepancy between Christ's teachings and the practice of the Christian religion. Shelley, like Blake, was willing to accept of faith only as much of Christian teaching as was free from moral objections. He said that it was inconsistent to believe in a God of Love and still believe in the punishment of the wicked in Hell. He rejected the Orthodox idea of Heaven, but held a doctrine of immortal bliss as an expression of poetic imagination. Christianity, as a system, is a miserable failure.

In a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, whom he went to considerable trouble to befriend, Shelley said, "You seem much to doubt Christianity; I do not; I cannot conceive in my mind even the possibility of its genuineness. What is now to be thougnt of Jesus Christ's Divinity? To me it appears clear as day that it is the falsehood of human kind."[26] And, again in a letter to Hogg, "O! I burn with impatience for the moment of Christianity's dissolution."[27]

Blake's main objection to Christianity is stated in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "One law for the lion and ox is oppression." Blake says in Jerusalem, "I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine arts of Imagi-

nation." Religion is oppression and it petrifies the imagination. In Jerusalem, Blake equates religion with satan:

> ....The Satanic Holiness Triumph'd in Vala,
> In a Religion of Chastity & Uncircumcised Selfishness
> Both of the Head & Heart & Loins, clos'd up in Moral Pride.

Religion preaches submission, acceptance and obedience and is always only an effort to preserve the status quo. It is, as Blake says in his Annotations to Watson, "State Religion, which is the source of all cruelty."[28]

Blake and Shelley despised institutionalized and conventionalized religions because they tend to perpetuate the worship of mediocrity. Christians worship an abstract, external God whereas they should worship the God within themselves. True worship consists in the fullest possible participation in life. Blake conceives of God in terms of man. "Man is All Imagination. God is Man & exists in us & we in him... The Eternal Body of Man is The Imagination, that is, God himself."[29] The centre of Blake's universe is man rather than God. He says very little, then, about the God of Christianity except to call him a Nobodaddy, (nobody's Daddy). In the Auguries of Innocence, Blake says:

> God appears, and God is light,
> To those poor souls who swell in Night;
> But does a Human Form display
> To those who dwell in realms of Day.

In Blake's view God consists of the whole of humanity plus that part of God in Eternity which did not fall. As Northrop Frye points out, "The identity of God and man is

qualified by the presence in man of the tendency to deny God by self-restriction. Thus, though God is the perfection of man, man is not wholly God."[30] Man, not understanding that he, himself, was part of God, created a God in his own image. Blake always depicted this god as a Nobodaddy with a set of compasses in his hand with which to enclose man in a circle of morality. His sarcastic comment to this god was, "If you have formed a circle to go into,/Go into it yourself, and see how you would do."[31] To Blake, this god is only "an Allegory of Kings & nothing else."

Shelley was more ardently concerned with refuting the doctrines concerned with the God of Christianity than was Blake. In 1811, Shelley and Hogg were expelled from Oxford for having produced a pamphlet entitled The Necessity Of Atheism. This work was signed, "Thro deficiency of proof, An Atheist." This signature shows the influence of Locke in the idea that all knowledge is derived from sense experience. The pamphlet, which was included in the notes to Queen Mab, is not as unorthodox as the name implies. The assertion "There is no God!" which appears in it, must be qualified for in Shelley's own words, it "must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading spirit coeternal with the universe remains unshaken."[32]

Despite Shelley's abhorrence of priests and his regard of God as an arbitrary, capricious, vengeful monarch, he acknowledged the existence of something beyond man, some

power which keeps the universe going. In The Necessity of Atheism he says, "Does not the word "God" imply the soul of the universe, the intelligent and necessary beneficent actuating principle? This it is impossible not to believe in ... The leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample are in themselves arguments that some vast intellect animates infinity."[33]

Shelley shows in Mont Blanc, that he is a worshipper of "the still and solemn power of many sights." This power has no human concerns but, like Mont Blanc, stands indifferent as a force beyond man's control to which he must yield. This power, together with his growing conception of Love, Shelley set up in place of the tyrant God of Orthodox Christianity and worshipped as poetic inspiration. Blake, too, had felt compelled to displace Nobodaddy and had put in his place the creative imagination of man. These two poets felt compelled to displace all forms of tyranny and in this there was no partiality.

We have seen that Blake and Shelley were revolutionary in their attack upon tyranny but they were not arbitrary iconoclasts. They condemned the cold, abstract power of Urizen and the parasitic tyranny of Jupiter. Any form of oppression, moral or physical, contributed to the sad state of society for it restricted man's imagination. The state of the Selfhood which resulted from tyranny is severe enough

to warrant a full scale attack, as Blake's and Shelley's poetry shows. The names Priest, King, Religion, Christianity and God, appear very often on the black list of both poets. Their attitude toward tyranny is one of the stronger links between both poets for both defended liberty at all costs.

Their attack on tyranny points the way toward a just and ideal society for, as we have suggested, they attacked tyranny, not for the sake of attack, but because both saw that life could be much more tolerable if tyranny were obliterated. Each pointed the way toward something better. Blake threw out Nobodaddy, the negative morality, but set up man's free creative imagination. Shelley also threw out the idea of an arbitrary, abstract god but set up the power of 'some vast intellect' which 'animates infinity' and which was connected with poetic inspiration. The just and ideal society toward which Blake and Shelley worked existed as a state of Apocalyptic and Edenic Perfection. Let us assume that tyranny has been obliterated and go on to see what then exists and how Blake and Shelley think it will come about.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

[1]Letter to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Jan. 3, 1811.

[2]Denis Saurat, Blake and Milton, p. 78.

[3]Ibid., p. 77.

[4]Blake's Complete Writings, Marriage of Heaven and Hell, p. 149.

[5]Ibid., Annotations to Bacon, p. 402.

[6]Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 60.

[7]Quoted by Helen White, in The Mysticism of William Blake, p. 189.

[8]Ibid., p. 189.

[9]Prometheus Unbound, II, iii, 93-98.

[10]D.H. Hughes, Potentiality in Prometheus Unbound, from Shelley Modern Judgments, ed. R.B. Woodings, pp. 154-155.

[11]Prometheus Unbound, II, iv, 45.

[12]Ibid., II, iv, 49-58.

[13]Ibid., III, iv, 180-189.

[14]Ross Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p. 145.

[15]Shelley's Complete Works, IV, pp. 98-100.

[16]Shelley, Essay on Christianity, VI, pp. 236-237.

[17]Shelley, Notes to Queen Mab, I, p. 141.

[18]Ibid., pp. 93-94. (May 18, 1811).

[19]See Shelley, X, p. 417.

[20]Blake, p. 153.

[21]Shelley, VII, p. 32.

[22]Ibid., II, p. 313.

[23] Ibid., VIII, p. 52. (Letter to Timothy Shelley).

[24] Ibid., I, p. 142.

[25] The Esdaile Poems, ed. Neville Rogers, p. 76.

[26] A. Thomas Strong, Three Studies in Shelley, p. 15.

[27] Shelley, VIII, p. 24.

[28] Blake, p. 393.

[29] Ibid., pp. 775-776.

[30] Frye, p. 31.

[31] Gnomic Verses, II.

[32] Quoted by J.R. Ullman, Mad Shelley, p. 66.

[33] A.M. Hughes, The Nascent Mind of Shelley, p. 64.

IX

PERFECTION

Neither Blake nor Shelley was content with the state of things as they were. Each worked out his own scheme of redemption for mankind. They thought it possible for man to break out of the vicious circle of history, of life and death, and enter a state of more intense spiritual perception. For Blake, each individual worked out his own scheme of redemption but Shelley saw the state of perfection, at least in The Revolt of Islam, as another age in which all men would partake together.

Blake did not think that man could be 'saved' by his own righteousness. Man is saved by vision and that vision is bound up more closely with the redeeming work of Christ than is at first apparent. The scheme of redemption has to be built into the world not imposed upon it. As mentioned earlier, the imagination must grow from a centre to a circumference so that it is both in and around nature. The loss of identity of the human and the divine must be restored.

The Fall shattered unity into multiplicity and Los began immediately to restore that unity. Los marks the beginning of redemption as he starts to build the city of Golgonooza. Vala spreads the web of religion as a counter-

defence but that is only a temporary halt or hindrance to the progress toward the New Jerusalem. There are two activities pursued on earth to repair the damage of the Fall. These, Northrop Frye understands to be love, which is "the transformation of the objective into the beloved, and art, or the transformation of the objective into the created."[1] Love raises the individual to the state of Beulah but art takes him into Eden, a fourfold state of imagination, love, wisdom and power.

Art can accomplish this powerful redemptive work because all imaginative and creative acts are eternal. These combine 'above' time to build up a permanent city, palace or citadel which Blake called Golgonooza. This city is the totality of all works of art. It is an imaginative structure in which the public can and must partake, as Blake points out in the first book of Jerusalem. Through Golgonooza, the city of art, man may be able to escape to Eden. Nature is the foundation, or rather the crutch, upon which Golgonooza is built. After the city has been completed nature will no longer be required for imagination will then develop under its own power. The 'art' with which Golgonooza is built is not confined to the fine arts such as music, poetry, or painting, but includes all imaginative acts from the foundation of the world whether it is rescuing a drowning dog or quieting an unruly mob with an unloaded shotgun. The completed Golgonooza contains the highest hopes to which any man has ever aspired.

Meanwhile, Albion must be awakened for his sleep is the symbol of man's underdeveloped imagination. Seven attempts have already been made to awaken Albion and Blake names them "The Seven Eyes of God" which is mentioned in Zechariah. The eight and final 'eye' is the awakening of Albion.[2] Each of these 'Eyes' represents a period in history characterized by a certain religion. Blake names them, Lucifer, Moloch, Elohim, Shaddai, Pachad, Jehovah and Jesus. The 'Jesus' period is the final era of history.

The apocalypse begins during this final era of history. Blake links the apocalypse with Milton, for Milton "represents an imaginative penetration of the spiritual world unequalled in Christian poetry."[3] Blake felt that he was carrying on from where Milton left off and must have been conscious of Swedenborg's dating of the beginning of the apocalypse in the same year that he (Blake) was born.

Blake's description of the advent of the apocalypse, the great age or state of unity and perfection, is found in Jerusalem. His main concern with the apocalypse itself appears in the ninth night of The Four Zoas. The Christians must ultimately bring in the apocalypse by the very simple measure which Blake outlines in Jerusalem:

> I give you the end of a golden string,
> Only wind it into a ball,
> It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
> Built in Jerusalem's wall.[4]

Potentially, Christianity is the liberty of mind and body to

exercise the divine arts of imagination and the Jerusalem to which it leads is the subjective, imaginative counterpart of nature. To labour in knowledge is to build up Jerusalem. Religion, too, has its part to play and when it is perpetuated as Jesus taught it then Jerusalem will be built in England's green and pleasant land. Then "Heaven, Earth & Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony."

The apocalypse begins with certain imaginative acts of Los at the beginning of Book Nine of The Four Zoas. Albion must be awakened for in the preceding book his state had been close to "Single Vision and Newton's sleep." When, in book nine, unity and peace begin to suggest that all men are One, Albion begins to wake up. Full of wonder and questioning Albion calls upon his intellect, Urizen, to come forth from the slumbers of his cold abstraction. With the awakening of Albion comes the consummation of the Marriage of Heaven and Hell which Blake had written about earlier.

The Apocalypse begins at the under-world or un-conscious level which Blake called Ulro. This seems all the more probable since Christ "descended into Hell." It then passes upward to generation and the Beulah state toward the final four-fold Eden. Near the end of The Four Zoas, Humpty-Dumpty is being put back together again and all is being renewed. The Four Zoas are being reunited with their emanations. Blake uses imagery that is especially eschatological here with his harvest symbols leading to the great, triumphant wedding feast.

At the apocalypse the tree of life is restored to man, as Prometheus returned the fire. This tree replaces the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which had grown in the human brain as a symbol of the Selfhood. The human mind is now filled with the reality of the vast creative power of the apocalyptic vision. Man has returned to his primeval state which was "Wisdom, Art, and Science." This is described in the last lines of The Four Zoas:

> The sun arises from his dewy bed, & the fresh airs
> Play in his smiling beams giving the seeds of life to grow, of life
> And the fresh Earth beams forth ten thousand thousand springs
> Urthona is arisen in his strength, no longer now
> Divided from Enitharmon, no longer the Spectre Los.
> Where is the Spectre of Prophecy? where the delusive Phantom?
> Departed: & Urthona rises from the ruinous Walls
> In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science
> For intellectual War. The war of swords departed now,
> The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns."[5]

Blake has been criticized for the abruptness of the apocalypse.[6] The Last Judgment appears to be merely another Orc cycle, a revolution against tyranny. At the close of Night Eight there is no indication of an apocalypse, then suddenly Los opens the action which is its beginning. When Rahab and Tirzah give themselves up for consummation in the fire mystery is finally killed. Blake has indicated his belief in the destruction of the world by fire in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. As man's perception is perfected the world vanishes in flames but, as with Moses, the burning bush is not consumed so the imagination survives for its character is akin to fire. The imagination works in such a way that there must be a sudden great explosion to bring in the apocalypse. Golgonooza

has been completed through the preceding imaginative acts and the time is ripe for the spontaneous growth of the apocalypse from within man.

Shelley, too, has been criticized for the abrupt and relatively easy downfall of Jupiter: the swift and inevitable triumph of good over evil. The apocalypse for Shelley, as for Blake, is a revelation of .the "divinity in man". Adonais, as Woodman points out, is the release of this divinity from the cyclic pattern of nature.[7] The annihilation of the flesh is necessary for the release of the spirit. Here Blake and Shelley differ in their ideas of progression toward the perfect spiritual state, for with Blake annihilation of the flesh is not necessary.

Shelley's own ideas about the potentially perfect state changed during his lifetime. In his earlier days especially, his passion for reforming the world influenced his view of perfection. In The Revolt of Islam and Queen Mab, the perfect state lay in the near future and would be reached by the abolition of tyranny. When mankind ceased to will evil there would be none. Shelley seemed to develop a greater sense of realism about the state of the world and the limitations of human nature for in Prometheus Unbound, the perfect state is reached by the inner moral and spiritual change of men only after thousands of years of hardship. Man becomes "king over himself" when his mind is freed from the tyranny which he formerly allowed to exist.

In his very early poetry, found in a letter to Edward Fergus Graham on 22nd, April, 1810, Shelley wrote:

> Ah why do darkning shades conceal
> The hour when Man must cease to be?
> Why may not human minds unveil
> The dark shade of futurity?[8]

His later poetry, especially that which deals with the golden age, attempts to unveil this 'dark shade of futurity'. The history of Man, as Shelley considered it, is divided into three ages. The first is the Saturnian age, filled with potential but incomplete in itself, not unlike Blake's Beulah state. The second is the age of Jupiter which exists as we know it today. This we have already discussed in talking about Jupiter and tyranny. The third age is the Promethean golden age of the rebirth of mankind when the "far-off divine event", mentioned in Epipsychidion, takes place. Blake was more precise in his divisions of history as we have seen in the discussion of the "Seven Eyes", than was Shelley. But both believed in the division of history into a certain number of periods at the end of which would come the age of perfection.

As Blake believed that the imagination must expand from a centre to a circumference, so the love of Prometheus must expand. Before he can be unbound to usher in his golden age his love must embrace the whole universe. By the end of the fourth act this has been accomplished and the love in the "wise heart" of Prometheus "folds over the world its healing

wings."[9] Shelley was influenced in this by Plato's idea of the "Ladder of Love" where the gradual expansion of the capacity to love is the "true vision of the ascending man."[10]

In his essay On Love, Shelley describes the core as it were of universal love, or the first step of the Ladder of Love:

> We dimly see within our intellectual nature... Not only the portrait of our external being, but an assemblage of the minutest particles of which our nature is composed; a mirror whose surface reflects only the forms of purity and brightness; a soul within our soul that describes a circle around its proper paradise, which pain, and sorrow, and evil dare not overleap.[11]

This secluded little inner core of man must expand to connect man with man and with everything which exists. Only then will the perfect life exist where "every impulse conspired to one end, and tended to a single object. Each devoted his powers to the happiness of the other. Their republic was the scene of the perpetual contentions of benevolence."[12]

It appears that Shelley viewed perfection from two angles; the perfection of life in this world and the perfection of the apocalypse which comes with death. The perfection of the life of nature is seen in the Garden in which the Sensitive Plant grows. Before winter sets in this garden is a visionary landscape of perfection. Unfortunately, winter must cover this formerly "undefiled Paradise" for nature, like man, is not yet perfect. The Revolt of Islam also refers to 'this worldly perfection' of social and political issues; even Shelley's much admired account of the state in Prometheus

Unbound will be seen to be earth oriented.

In Adonais the vision of perfection is projected into the future. Adonais, or Keats, (although critics say that Shelley is really writing about himself here), is dead and beckons from the realms of eternity. Life separates the temporal and the eternal but death restores unity. Only death will accomplish the final, deep truth and Shelley says, "Die, If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!" The world view of this poem, as explained by Carlos Baker, is essentially Platonic.[13] The "white radiance of eternity" exists above this cold, bleak world which transmits inspiration into this world. This inspiration is received more strongly by sensitive persons, notably poets, whose duty is to transmit it to others because it is essential to all men in that it impels them to aspire toward immortality. This shaping spirit of imagination which allows the poet to reveal his vision of eternity is personified by Urania in Adonais. The apocalyptic vision takes its shape within the womb of Urania which Woodman understands to symbolize the womb of time. "Urania creates the vision of the apocalypse itself. She is the myth-making power in the poet... To pursue Urania is to be half in love with death."[14] The spreading of the visions of eternity is one of the ways in which poets help to build up Blake's Golgonooza.

The final Act of Prometheus Unbound describes the paradise in which Shelley's liberated man will live. Pro-

metheus, Asia and the others will dwell in a cave, the cave of the mind, and will dedicate all their time in pursuit of the arts, "Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,/ And Arts, though unimagined, yet to be." Life will be lived in the contemplation of beauty and communication of men's intuitions of the divine.

The Paradise includes animals as well as men. The animals have been regenerated also and have put off their evil natures and become vegetarians. They live and die without pain so that mutability cannot be totally obliterated even in an earthly paradise. However, all things have changed to the benefit of peace and tranquility. Under Jupiter the cave of Prometheus gave forth a vapour which affected those who inhaled it in such a way that they gave forth messages concerning war. In the golden age this vapour is changed to a life giving one. The tyrannical king has disappeared, the temples of active religious superstition no longer exist, women are free from old inhibitions and all life is characterized by liberty and equality.

> The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
> Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
> All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
> The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
> Passionless? --no, yet free from guilt or pain,
> Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
> Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
> From chance, and death, and mutability,

> The clogs of that which else might oversoar
> The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
> Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.[15]

These words make a fitting conclusion to a chapter on the growth of the state of perfection among mankind. We have seen the poets reveal their visions by their shaping imaginations as the imagination expanded from a centre to a circumference to expose the great Golgonooza of free and unlimited imagination. The three ages of history and the Seven Eyes of God have finally reached a consummation. Albion is awakened and the tree of life is restored to man. Hereafter, 'the painted veil' will remain torn aside and 'the loathsome mask' will never again be interposed between man and reality. Imagination has prevailed and man is forever free.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX

[1] Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 126.

[2] Frye discusses this at length, pp. 128-134.

[3] Ibid., p. 134.

[4] Blake's Complete Writings, Jerusalem, p. 716.

[5] Blake, The Four Zoas, p. 379.

[6] See Frye, pp. 308-309.

[7] Ross Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, pp. 160-164.

[8] Shelley's Complete Works, VIII, p. 7.

[9] Prometheus Unbound, IV, 557-561.

[10] Woodman, pp. 113-115.

[11] Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Carlos Baker, p. 456.

[12] Shelley, VI, p. 162.

[13] See Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry, p. 251.

[14] Woodman, p. 167.

[15] Prometheus Unbound, III, iv, 190-204.

CONCLUSION

We have traced some of the affinities between Blake and Shelley ranging from their personalities and their theory and practice of art in the first chapter of this work to the consummation of both their personalities and their theory and practice of art in the apocalyptic events described in the final chapter on perfection.

These are some of the conclusions which we have reached.

Blake and Shelley used their poetic imaginations for social reform, moral advancement and individual liberty in their search for total liberation for mankind. The imagination is of the utmost importance for both because it is through the imagination that man creates the world in which he lives. It enabled them to comprehend more fully the nature of reality.

The states of Innocence and Experience are present in the worlds of both Blake and Shelley. These states, which give totally different outlooks on reality, and more especially that of Innocence, have very similar meanings for both Blake and Shelley. Besides the affinities of individual poems and pieces of prose the total orientation of both poets in this field is similar.

The term "mysticism" is often spoken of or alluded to in connection with both poets. In this case we distinguished between the two somewhat different kinds of mysticism which Blake and Shelley represented. Blake concentrated upon the unity of man and nature, Shelley emphasized the Platonic conception of a transcendental state.

In imagery and symbolism we looked at the overall effect of Blake's and Shelley's symbolism and concluded that Blake's use of imagery and symbolism in his Prophetic Books is unique in that only Blake's ideas can be used in its interpretation. Elsewhere in Blake, however, as in Shelley, the reader can associate his own ideas with the symbolism. Some individual images are used to the same purpose by both poets, such as the Cave, and the Snake or Serpent. Others conflict, for example, the veiled woman in Blake is the Whore of Babylon; in Shelley, she is the object of his imaginative quest.

In dealing with mythology we noted the difference between Blake's work in creating a new mythology and Shelley's in reshaping old myths to new uses. Blake's and Shelley's mythology includes the Four-Quarter Cycle of Destiny and the cyclic-progressive view of history. In dealing with this they often are alike in certain individual parts of any myth; using different language they treat certain things in the same way. For example, Shelley's use of the Narcissus myth conformed with Blake's thinking upon unacted desires. Their total world

views have been built up in relation to specific myths which have been integrated into their thinking.

The heroes and heroines of Blake's and Shelley's mythology have many things in common. We noticed the natural affinities of certain of the most important characters such as Christ, Prometheus and Orc. The similarities often arise in connection with the symbolism and function of these characters. Others, such as Thel and Beatrice, and Thel and Ginevra are individual characters who show the frequent incidental affinities between Blake and Shelley.

Blake and Shelley defended all forms of liberty so the tyrants of their myths are never popular figures for they always strive for the destruction of liberty. Blake's Urizen and Tiriel and Shelley's Jupiter are the arch-tyrants who are symbols of the fallen world. They attacked kings, priests, religion, the traditional idea of God and marriage, in short, anything which confined man's liberty in any way.

In the final chapter on perfection, we find the culmination of mythology in both poets. The redemptive work of art has been accomplished, imagination has gained complete control, the unity of man and God has been established and a state of perfection prevails. Good has vanquished evil and the Golden Age is come at last. The triumph of imagination is complete.

This thesis has been occupied with the development

to its culmination of the idea of the triumph of the imagination. Blake and Shelley trace this pattern in their art: beginning with their theories of art, through their philosophy to the states of Innocence and Experience: through their mysticism to their uses of imagery and symbolism in poetry. Mythology, the results of their imaginative creations, provides an opportunity for discussion on their good and bad characters, their heroes and heroines. Finally, the logical conclusion of their imaginative quest comes in the perfection of the apocalypse.

In the widely ranging topics of this investigation we have covered differences between Blake and Shelley as well as similarities. The results have shown, however, that the similarities are remarkable and outweigh the differences in importance. This, it is hoped, has made the study useful, valid and significant. The strength of the evidence presented is not in itself the major reason for making such a claim. Rather it is believed that this evidence, suggesting as it does the existence of genuine affinities between the two poets, will indicate that there is a promising field for exploration. If that field has been validly located, I make no apologies for digging around.

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