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SHELLEY'S INFLUENCE ON THE CHARTIST POETS  
WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON  
ERNEST CHARLES JONES AND THOMAS COOPER

by

BOUTHAINA SHAABAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Chartists' interest in Shelley's poetry and accounts for it, but it takes the second point first. Three factors are discerned to be of prime importance in giving rise to Shelley's reputation amongst radical Chartists. First, the Chartists' estimation of Shelley's political philosophy as more intrinsically radical than the mainstream of British radicalism, as exemplified by Godwin. Second, Shelley's stands on the questions of religion, inheritance and political reform proved to be appealing to the Chartists. Third, and most important of all, to the Chartists Shelley was a political poet - and poetry they saw as a principal means of moving the people. The political arguments that permeated Shelley's poetry and the mingling he managed between poetry and politics corresponded to the Chartists' political thought and their advocacy of poetry as the most apposite literary medium to serve and enhance political change.

Accordingly, Shelley was awarded a unique position in the Owenites' and Chartists' publications. He was chiefly acknowledged as a political poet whose compositions foster the peoples' radical inclinations and lend force to their efforts to initiate political reform. The Chartist poet and leader, Ernest Charles Jones, read, published and quoted Shelley on many occasions. His published and unpublished works testify that Shelley made a strong impact on his political arguments and exerted direct influence on much of his poetry. The other Chartist poet whom Shelley seems to have influenced is Thomas Cooper. As a great admirer of Shelley, Cooper also read Shelley's works, published extracts from them in his journals and delivered many lectures on Shelley's poetry and thought. The affinities between Cooper's and Shelley's political arguments suggest that Shelley might well have exercised a considerable influence on Cooper's political reasoning. Moreover, the comparison between Cooper's epic poem, The Purgatory of Suicides and Shelley's Queen Mab leaves little room for doubt that Shelley has influenced Cooper in this particular poem.

The main contribution to Shelley studies lies in the evidence provided of Shelley's popularity amongst radical Chartists and the charting of his political and literary influence on two Chartist poets: Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper. This study should serve as an important part of a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of Shelley's influence on the Chartist Movement as a whole.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ELH</u>	<u>English Language History</u>
<u>Enquiry</u>	William Godwin's <u>Enquiry Concerning Political Justice</u> , 3rd edition, ed. with variant readings of the first and second editions by F.E.L.Priestly, 3 vols (Toronto, 1798) [photographic facsimile, Toronto, 1946].
<u>FM</u>	<u>Frazer's Magazine</u>
<u>HJ</u>	<u>Historical Journal</u> (continuation of <u>Cambridge Historical Journal</u> )
<u>K-SJ</u>	<u>Keats-Shelley Journal</u>
<u>Letters</u>	<u>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley</u> , ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964).
<u>Life</u>	<u>The Life of Thomas Cooper</u> , written by himself (London, 1872).
<u>NMW</u>	<u>The New Moral World</u>
<u>NS</u>	<u>The Northern Star</u>
<u>PJ</u>	<u>The People's Journal</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
<u>TEM</u>	<u>Tait's Edinburgh Magazine</u>
<u>TLS</u>	<u>The Times Literary Supplement</u>
<u>Works</u>	<u>The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley</u> , ed. by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols (London, 1926).

INTRODUCTION

In The Vicissitudes of Shelley's Queen Mab: A Chapter in the History of Reform, H.Buxton Forman stresses that: 'The poem and its notes have played a considerable part in the growth of free thought in England and America, especially among the working classes.'<sup>1</sup> His judgement is supported by that of George Bernard Shaw who, leaning on the authority of H.S.Salt and Mrs Marx Aveling explains:

Some time ago Mr. H.S.Salt, in the course of a lecture on Shelley, mentioned on the authority of Mrs. Marx Aveling, who had it from her father, Karl Marx, that Shelley had inspired a good deal of that huge but badly managed popular effort called the Chartist Movement. An old Chartist who was present, and who seemed at first much surprised by this statement, rose to confess that, 'now he came to think of it' (apparently for the first time), it was through reading Shelley that he got the ideas that led him to join the Chartists. A little further inquiry elicited that Queen Mab was known as the Chartists' bible; and Mr. Buxton Forman's collection of small, cheap copies, blackened with the finger-marks of many heavy-handed trades, are the proofs that Shelley became a power - a power that is still growing. He made and still is making men and women join political societies, secular societies, ... and Humanitarian societies of all sorts. There is at every election a Shelleyan vote, though there is no means of counting it.

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Henry S.Salt himself records what Eleanor Marx wrote to him in a letter of 1892 concerning Shelley's influence on the Chartist Movement:

I have heard my father and Engels again and again speak of this; and I have heard the same from the many Chartists it has been my good fortune to know as a child and young girl - Ernest Jones, Richard Moore, the Watsons, George Julian Harney, and others. Only a very few months ago, I heard Harney and Engels talking of the Chartist times, and of the Byron and especially Shelley-worship of

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1. (London, 1887), p.21.
2. 'Shaming the Devil about Shelley', The Works of Bernard Shaw, 32 vols (London, 1931), vol.29, pp.257-8.

the Chartists; and on Sunday last Engels said:  
'Oh, we all knew Shelley by heart then.' Surely  
to have been one of the inspirers of such a movement  
isn't bad for an 'ineffectual angel' and 'dreamer'.

3

It is almost a hundred years since the first of these judgements was uttered, yet although they are accepted as fact, we are still awaiting a study which provides specific evidence to support their truth. This thesis goes at least some way to remedying that lack.

The question involved is no doubt an intricate one, for how could Shelley, a very 'literary' poet, have influenced a mass political movement such as Chartism? Part of the answer lies in the nature of the Chartist Movement itself which besides being political was also literary and educational. Indeed, correlative to the Chartists' struggle for Parliamentary Reform, Universal Suffrage and so on, were their serious attempts to provide better education and improve literary standards. What is more, literature, especially poetry, became the chief medium not just to convey political issues but also to enhance their value and magnify their effect, so much so that the Chartist Movement came to be known as 'the Minor Poets' Movement'.<sup>4</sup> In this wave of heightening the political role of poetry the Chartists did not confine themselves to the poetry they wrote but drew upon 'old poets' whose thoughts and arguments happened to coincide with theirs. Of these 'old poets' Shelley was awarded a special position in the literary as well as political life of Chartism. One possible way of illuminating Shelley's position in the Movement is by relating his political thought to that of some of the Chartist poets who besides being poets and writers were prominent political leaders and played a major role in the life and direction of Chartism. This is the approach this study adopts. It tries to relate Shelley's political arguments to those of two Chartist poets and leaders, Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper. But first it is useful to ask the more general question of Shelley's influence on Chartism: why Shelley?

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3. Company I Have Kept (London, 1930), pp.50-1.

4. Kenneth Muir, 'Shelley's Heirs', The Penguin New Writing, XXVI (1945), pp.117-32 (p.127).

The attempt to answer it in Chapters 1 and 2 covers: first, the factors which made Shelley's political philosophy sound more essentially radical than the main stream of British radicalism as voiced by Godwin in his Political Justice; second, Shelley's stands on various social and political issues which might have proved appealing to the Chartists; third, the political elements in certain poems of Shelley which were most often read and published by the Chartists. In this study of Shelley's politics I concentrate on his poetry rather than prose chiefly because it was Shelley's poetry that the Chartists read and published while his prose was hardly, if ever, mentioned. As for Shelley's insistence that his poetry is not didactic, not many of his critics would disagree that this insistence springs from the particular and narrow sense he assigned to the word 'didactic'; in a wider sense of the word, his poetry is certainly didactic.

To the Chartists Shelley was the most didactic and the most vigorously political of poets principally because he considered his compositions as a necessary ground for the political reform which he trusted would, sooner or later, take place. Thus, unlike Godwin, for example, whose theory on moral and intellectual reform undermined the possibility of any political action and made his philosophical anarchism, in a sense, apolitical, Shelley's advocacy of moral and intellectual reform as the first step to political action, rather than as a substitute for it, enriched his theory on reform and made it more comprehensively and more fundamentally political. The balance Shelley struck between preparing the way for future reform and inciting more immediate action - and the political significance of this balance for radical Chartists will be the focal point of our study of Shelley's poetry and politics in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 opens the second part of this study in which we see how the political poet we encountered in the first part was received in the Chartist Papers and Journals and what effect his writings had on some of the Chartist poets. The chapter begins with a brief historical account of the Chartist Movement in which we highlight the particular political strands which are to be of some consequence in our study of Shelley and Jones in Chapter 4 and Shelley and Cooper in Chapter 5. This is followed

by another brief account of Shelley's presence in the pre-Chartist press; mainly the Owenite press. Here, the chapter looks into the Owenites' chief organ The New Moral World to see how often Shelley's poetry was published there and to what effect his arguments were put. It also tries to find out their reasons for reading and publishing Shelley and their overall judgement of his political philosophy. This brings us to the central section of this chapter in which a number of the Chartist and contemporary radical papers are examined in order to give a general account of Shelley items in these papers. Here again we find out the reasons which prompted these publications of Shelley and what kind of use was made of his poetry and thought.

Chapter 4 examines the published and unpublished works of Ernest Jones and relates some of his political arguments and poetic compositions to those of Shelley. As a political leader and poet Jones laid particular emphasis on the political role of poetry; together with other Chartist poets he fervently argued that poetry - not least his own, of course - should serve the social and political changes aspired to by the people. As a prose writer Jones was intent in his books, articles and papers, on educating the people and informing them about the principles of reform, for he saw in education and moral improvement the most indispensable bases of political reform. On these issues an attempt is made to detail some parallels between Jones's and Shelley's views with the aim of establishing direct influence. Shelley's direct influence on Jones is the central theme of the second section of this chapter where some of Jones's poems are read in relation to their counterparts by Shelley.

Similarly, the last chapter relates the poetry and politics of the Chartist poet Thomas Cooper to the poetry and politics of Shelley. Cooper was a Chartist educationalist who strongly believed in the role of education in reform, but unlike Jones he fulfilled this role mostly through itinerant lecturing all over the country rather than through his poetry. Cooper's views on the political function of education and his estimation of the poet's role in bringing about political reform are related to those of Shelley. The second section of this chapter is a lengthy comparison between Shelley's Queen Mab and Cooper's Purgatory of

Suicides where the possibility of Shelley's direct influence on Cooper in this particular poem is investigated. I am aware, of course, that it is difficult to define 'influence' and that some of what seems to me to be Shelleyan ideas in the Chartist literature might have a different source in the rich cultural heritage with which the Chartists were familiar, but it is equally possible that such ideas have reached the Chartists through Shelley texts. However, I will try to draw up some specific parallels between Shelley and the Chartists which demonstrate insofar as is possible his direct influence on them.

The aim of this study is to unravel the factors which made Shelley popular reading for the Chartists, to give a general account of what was read of Shelley's writings in the Owenites', Chartists' and contemporary radical circles and finally to explore the quality of Shelley's political and literary influence on two of the Chartist poets: Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper. Through charting Shelley's influence on Jones's and Cooper's writings, which constituted a central part of the political and literary life of Chartism, his influence on the Chartist Movement, as a whole, may be partly surmised. Because I see this study as only one link in a more comprehensive study (or studies) of Shelley's position in the Chartist Movement I am just as much concerned with the sheer amount of Shelley items and echoes in the writings of Jones and Cooper as with dwelling at length on each particular item and exploring its various literary and political dimensions.

The two chronologies of Jones's and Cooper's works in appendix one and two respectively provide the reader with a general idea of the works of these two poets while appendix 3 is an account of a full collation between the first and 'fourth' edition of Cooper's epic poem The Purgatory of Suicides.

Poets who mingle in politics must from the very nature of things be more liberal than the Liberals who think in prose. They reach by intuition what uninspired mortals only attain after laborious reasoning and anxious thought. Milton, Shelley, and Byron were all ardently, almost transcendently liberal in their belief as to the possibilities open to humanity, and it would be easy to multiply examples of smaller men whose convictions have led them into constant opposition to the received authorities of the world, and whose development of poetical feeling has been genuine and marked. Thomas Cooper, the author of the Purgatory of Suicides, and Chartist lecturer, was one of these, and Ernest Jones, whose death we recorded yesterday is another.

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\* Newspaper Cuttings in Letters to A.B.Wakefield Rememorial to Jones, Manchester Public Library, MS BR. 923,2J 14. Taken from Daily News, 28 January 1869. (Part of this passage can be found in a Scrapbook of Newspapers and Press Cuttings on Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 923. 2. J8. There, it is attributed to The Times of Thursday, 28 January 1869 'abridged from The Express'.)

PART I

Chapter 1

THE NATURE OF SHELLEY'S RADICALISM:

EARLY INFLUENCES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

'He [Shelley] was essentially a revolutionist and he would always have been one of the advanced guard of socialism.'

(Karl Marx, cited by Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, Shelley's Socialism, London, 1975, p.4)

In stark contrast to the hostile reception of Shelley's poetry during his lifetime the Owenites and the Chartists in the 1830s to 1860s acclaimed Shelley the most important poet of his age and the most radical voice in poetry since Lucretius. Of all poetry Shelley's was chosen to support Owen's advocacy of socialism, spread the Chartists' faith in a better social order and sharpen their will in the struggle for reform. The evidence of their doing so and the way in which they did it will be fully demonstrated in part 2 of this thesis where we examine Shelley's place in the Owenite, Chartist, and contemporary radical journals and look more closely into Shelley's relation to some of the Chartist poets. But the question that needs to be asked now is: why Shelley?, why not Byron, Blake, or, indeed, Godwin? This question becomes all the more pressing when we remember that although Godwin was (and still is) considered the father of nineteenth-century radicalism in general and the principal source of Shelley's political philosophy in particular, none the less, his name was hardly awarded any prominence in a fervently political era in which Shelley's political arguments were a daily diet for Owenites' and Chartists' Papers.

In my attempt to answer this question (an attempt that covers the whole of the first part of this thesis) I discern three main factors which seem to me to have been crucial in giving rise to Shelley's political reputation amongst the radicals of the mid-nineteenth century. First, the Chartists believed that Shelley was more fundamentally radical than any of

his compeers and than those who were known to have moulded his views. Second, Shelley's stance on the inheritance of his father's seat in Parliament and of the family estate and his views on Ireland, religion and various other social and political issues were greatly appreciated and admired by the Chartists. Third, Shelley was a poet whose theories on reform, on the one hand, and the fusion he managed between poetry and politics, on the other, corresponded to the relation they envisaged between poetry and politics.

In chapter 2 I examine a representative selection of Shelley's poems and look into the factors which made them popular reading for the Chartists, while here, in chapter 1, I deal with the first two points I have just raised under two separate headings: Early Influences, and Personal Development and Social and Political Circumstances. Under the first heading I do not try so much to prove any influence on Shelley, as to draw distinctions between Shelley and those known to have influenced him most, in particular Godwin. In doing so, I hope to disentangle some of Shelley's arguments from the influence that has overshadowed them and somehow obscured their real identity and thus throw some light on the basis that made Shelley an apposite choice for the Chartists. As an introduction to this comparative account I briefly reflect on certain strands of the thought of Holbach, Condorcet, Helvetius and Rousseau - strands that are believed to be the source of some elements I discuss either in Shelley or Godwin or both. The aim of the second part of this chapter is to trace the development of Shelley's career as a political poet (which will be the subject of our study in chapter 2) and to highlight the social and political circumstances related to this development. These circumstances, as we shall later see, played a significant role in making Shelley an appealing figure for the Chartists and in securing his position amongst them as politician and poet.

### 1. Early Influences

In 1792, the year in which Shelley was born, 'The movement for Parliamentary reform had vigorously revived, and for the first time the "lower orders" in

many parts of the kingdom began to join radical societies in comparatively large numbers.'<sup>1</sup> Paine's Rights of Man (1791), which was later to become the gospel of radical thought, had already been published, as had David Hume's Essays and Treatises (1784) and Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Men (1790). In a year's time William Godwin's Political Justice and Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman were to follow. Moreover, Major John Cartwright - who, in a letter addressed to the volunteers of Ireland (1783), describes himself as 'an anxious friend to the cause of a Parliamentary Reform'<sup>2</sup> since Parliamentary Reform is a necessary means 'to restore freedom to the people, as well as purity to Parliament'<sup>3</sup> - had also issued in 1780 his programme for reform which though 'little considered at the time ... became an article of faith with Democrats ten years later, and its six points formed the Charter of Radical reformers in the early Victorian period.'<sup>4</sup> On the whole, the revolutionary atmosphere in France seems to have found its way to Britain and the government's fear of a similar revolution in England engendered a rising spiral of oppression on the part of the government, and increasing radical activity on the part of its opponents.

The most fundamental principle of Utilitarianism (the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the measure of right and wrong), had, as Hilda G.Lundin remarks, been foreshadowed in Priestley's Essay on Government (1768) in which he argues that 'the good happiness of the members, that is the majority of the members, of any state, is the great standard by which everything relating to that state must finally be determined.'<sup>5</sup> In the same letter Priestley introduces his theory that 'knowledge is power': 'all knowledge will be subdivided and extended; and knowledge, as Lord Bacon observes, being power, the human powers will,

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1. Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', The Historical Journal, IV, No.1 (1961), pp.56-77 (p.56) (henceforth cited as HJ).
  2. [Two Letters], A Collection of Letters (London, 1783), p.98.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Philip Anthony Brown, French Revolution in English History (London, 1918), p.25.
  5. Hilda G.Lundin, 'The Influence of Jeremy Bentham on English Democratic Development', University of Iowa Studies in the Social Sciences, VII, No.3 (1918-1921), pp.7-82 (p.10).

in fact, be increased; nature, including both its materials, and its laws, will be more at our command.'<sup>6</sup> It is this theory that was later to become a fundamental principle (indeed, a political principle) in the thought of Shelley and of the Chartists. What is more, the Jacobin novelists, Thomas Day, Henry Brooke, Godwin, Holcroft, Bage, Mrs Smith and Mrs Inchbald had, according to Brinton, embarked on spreading 'a sort of emotional revolutionary contagion',<sup>7</sup> and a considerable amount of Jacobin literature in other forms too<sup>8</sup> was 'filled with expressions of contempt for the old unprogressive, aristocratic society'.<sup>9</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, science was replacing speculation as a main source of knowledge; Locke and Newton had greatly shifted the emphasis from 'a pure rationalism to rational empiricism'.<sup>10</sup>

On the other side of the channel, however, the French Enlightenment (of which the French Revolution in 1789 was the most militant expression) had passed its peak, and the main currents of its thoughts were now clear. A main trait which is perhaps present in all writers of the Enlightenment is a stress on the rights of the individual, and a faith in his innate goodness. This was balanced by the attacks launched on institutions, both political and religious, and on the iniquitous effects these had on the lives of individuals. Voltaire (1694-1778), for instance, is famous for his anti-clerical views which he deemed to be an indispensable concomitant of human progress. This Voltairian aspect of the Enlightenment, coupling 'a strong anti-Christianism with the prospect of worldly improvement', R.R.Palmer suggests, was most damaging to the cause of democratic revolutions.<sup>11</sup> But the argument was not strictly Voltairian: its traces are unmistakable in almost all the major works of the Enlightenment.

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6. Joseph Priestley, An Essay on the First Principles of Government; and on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty (London, 1768), p.7.
  7. Crane Brinton, The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists (Oxford, 1926), p.35.
  8. See ibid., pp.23-47.
  9. Ibid., p.45.
  10. Joseph Barrell, Shelley and the Thought of His Time (London, 1947), p.27.
  11. See The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800 (Princeton, 1959).

Holbach, in his Systeme de la Nature, for example, which Shelley quotes on two occasions in his Notes to Queen Mab, argues lucidly against the idea of a deity and the evils it imposes on our lives. Yet, Holbach is more known for his materialist and determinist arguments than for his anti-religious views. There is nothing in the universe, he reasons, but matter, and the movement of matter is determined only by the laws of its existence; it moves because it exists and it exists to move.' This law of matter, which he called either Nature or Necessity, is true of every thing in existence, even of its creator, if it has one:

Nature is an active, living whole, to which all its parts necessarily concur; of which, without their own knowledge, they maintain the activity, the life, and the existence. Nature acts and exists necessarily: all that she contains, necessarily, conspires to perpetuate her active existence. This was the decided opinion of Plato, who says, 'matter and necessity, are the same thing; the necessity, is the mother of the world ...' In supposing it [matter] to be created or produced, by a being distinguished from it, or less known than itself, which it may be, for anything we know to the contrary, we must still admit, that this being is necessary, and includes a sufficient reason for his own existence.

12

Man is no exception to this law: 'all the actions of man, that feeble plaything in the hands of necessity, are indispensable; ... they depend on causes which move him in despite of himself; that without his knowledge, make him accomplish, at each moment of his existence, some of its decrees.'<sup>13</sup>

Although Holbach is, perhaps, the first thinker to explain how this idea of the law of Necessity functions, it had been touched upon, though vaguely, by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713). In his Characteristics, Shaftesbury conceives a 'uniform consistent fabric',

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12. Paul Heinrich Dietrich d'Holbach, Baron, The System of Nature, trans. by M. de Mirabaud, 2 vols (London, 1817), I, pp.96-7. (There might be some connection between Plato's line above and Shelley's line on Necessity in Queen Mab: 'Necessity! thou mother of the world!' (VI, 198).)

13. Ibid., p.511.

'a universal system'<sup>14</sup> which connects all parts of the universe, but is beyond our powers of understanding. Accordingly, he argues that the use and end of things are 'no more indeed than what must happen of necessity; nor could supreme wisdom have otherwise ordered it.'<sup>15</sup> A significant difference, however, can be discerned, even at this stage, between Shaftesbury's seminal idea of Necessity and Holbach's more developed one; while Holbach considers man 'a feeble plaything in the hands of necessity', Shaftesbury raises man above its power as 'a consummation of all advantages and privileges which Nature can afford';<sup>16</sup> this distinction will recur between Godwin's and Shelley's understanding of Necessity and will be of some significance in our evaluation of their political views.

Another tenet of Holbach's thought which is of some relevance to our argument is his stress on the role of education as the best means to improve man's conditions and circumstances: 'above all it is EDUCATION, that will best furnish the true means of rectifying the errors, of recalling the wanderings of mankind.'<sup>17</sup> But the most outstanding advocates of the role of education among French Enlightenment writers are Condorcet (1743-1794) and especially Helvétius (1715-1771), whose theory of education is believed to have had a significant effect on the French Revolution. For Condorcet, the primary function of education is to explain the movement of history and unravel its secrets. History, he believes, is 'the story of man's progress from superstition and barbarism to an age of reason and enlightenment',<sup>18</sup> and its understanding, therefore, is the first step towards controlling the present and anticipating the future. This view of history was to become - as we shall see in the second chapter - a basic characteristic of Shelley's thought. In his introduction to Condorcet's Sketch, Stuart Hampshire remarks that this idea of history

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14. Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed. by J.M. Robertson, 2 vols (London, 1900), II, p.66.

15. Ibid., p.65.

16. Ibid., p.73.

17. Holbach, The System of Nature, I, p.489.

18. Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet, Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind, trans. by June Barraclough (London, 1955), introduction, p.x.

was not invented by Condorcet: 'the same idea is to be found in Voltaire and even more explicitly in Turgot's Tableau Philosophique Successif de l'esprit humain. Condorcet's originality was to extend the doctrine of progress to every department of human activity; he saw history as the story of intellectual, political, economic, social and artistic progress, all necessarily interconnected.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, leaning on his comprehensive theory of history, Condorcet foresaw the rise of the reform movements' which were to materialise in nineteenth-century Europe. His hopes for the future were subsumed under three important headings: 'the abolition of inequality between nations, the progress of equality within each nation, and the true perfection of mankind.'<sup>20</sup> What he means by the perfection of mankind is the infinite improvement of man, for 'nature has set no limits to the realization of our hopes.'<sup>21</sup> A faith in a better future and a belief in the perfection of man were, as we shall see in the second chapter, of central importance to Shelley's political philosophy. In fact, Condorcet's speculations on a free and happy future have a Shelleyan ring to them. Here is one example: 'The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason.'<sup>22</sup> This could easily have been written by Shelley; the last paragraph in his Letter to Lord Ellenborough opens thus: 'The time is rapidly approaching, I hope, that you, my Lord, may live to behold its arrival, when the Mahometan, the Jew, the Christian, the Deist, and the Atheist, will live together in one community, equally sharing the benefits which arise from its association, and united in the bonds of charity and brotherly love.'<sup>23</sup>

The function of education, however, was seen from a slightly different angle by Helvétius. He was less concerned with the prospect of education

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19. Condorcet, Sketch, etc., p.x.

20. Ibid., p.173.

21. Ibid., p.175.

22. Ibid., p.179.

23. Shelley, The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols (London and New York, 1926), V, p.294 (henceforth cited as Works).

than with its immediate effects on people's lives: 'if I can demonstrate that man is, in fact, nothing more than the product of his education, I shall doubtless reveal an important truth to mankind. They will learn, that they have in their own hands the instrument of their greatness and their felicity, and that to be happy and powerful nothing more is requisite than to perfect the science of education.'<sup>24</sup> The French Revolutionists took note of this theory; so too did Shelley, whose political career - as later chapters will show - centred chiefly on the task of educating the people, revealing for them the nature of their circumstance and the necessity of its reform.

With this obviously radical theory of education, Helvétius came into open conflict with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Yet Rousseau's theory was not without its radical implications. Contrary to Holbach's theory of determinism he stressed and defended man's free will as the essence of his moral existence: 'To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties ... such renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts.'<sup>25</sup> But Rousseau's 'free man' is a creature of the past; his only free man, like Hobbes's natural man, like 'Robinson Crusoe or Adam Smith's economic man',<sup>26</sup> is the natural, 'uncivilized', individualist man whose will is governed by its own law. As a staunch friend of man's individual freedom, Rousseau vehemently attacked governments and institutions for inflicting further encroachments on the freedom of the individual. In this context, 'the most precious gift he [Rousseau] left the world was the "inextinguishable hatred of oppression" ... A free citizen in a free State - that, on the sum of the whole matter, is the ideal of Rousseau.'<sup>27</sup> Unlike Rousseau,

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24. Claude Adrien Helvétius, A Treatise on Man; his Intellectual Faculties and his Education, trans. by W.Hooper, 2 vols (London, 1810), I, p.3.
  25. Philosophy and Theology, Rousseau's Social Contract etc. trans. by G.D.H.Cole (London, 1913), p.10.
  26. Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution (London, 1958), p.278.
  27. C.E.Vaughan (ed.), The Political Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1915), I, p.113.

however, Shelley looked to a bright future rather than to the past for his free state; he 'subscribed to the glowing picture which Condorcet drew of the happy future of humanity.'<sup>28</sup>

Although Shelley's writings did not fail to reflect this amazingly rich tradition of radical thought, for writers, as he himself remarks in his Preface to The Revolt of Islam 'cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live', it remains true to say that such influences blended and changed in Shelley's mind and that the result is markedly his own.

However, the influence that is often supposed to have formed Shelley's thought, especially political thought, is that of Godwin. Leslie Stephen, for instance, argued that Shelley's 'whole course of thought was guided to a great degree by this living representative of his favourite theories',<sup>29</sup> and H.N.Brailsford found it apposite to suggest that 'Godwin formed Shelley's mind, and that Prometheus Unbound and Hellas were the greatest of Godwin's works.'<sup>30</sup> My belief is that (to reverse Don Locke's judgement that 'To know Godwin only through Shelley, is not to know him at all.'<sup>31</sup>) to understand Shelley's politics through Godwin is not to understand them at all; Shelley made subtle, yet significant, departures from Godwin, at points which are so crucial for the understanding of Shelley's politics that it is impossible to overlook them without doing Shelley a gross injustice and without confusing his systematic and consistent efforts to achieve reform with the more purely philosophical radicalism of Godwin.

This important distinction between reformer and radical can be focussed in Joseph Barrell's definition of a radical as 'simply a man

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28. Pelham Edgar, 'Shelley's Debt to Eighteenth Century Thought', Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, 2nd Series, X (1904), pp.187-99 (p.194).
  29. Leslie Stephen, 'Hours in the Library, Godwin and Shelley', The Cornhill Magazine, XXXIX (Jan.-June 1879), pp.281-302 (p.285).
  30. H.N.Brailsford, Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle (London, 1945), p.174.
  31. A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin (London, 1980), p.251.

who has gone, or tried to go, to the roots, or radices, of things for his view of a new and truer world. He may be a jurist like Bentham, or a psychologist like Condillac. Occasionally he is a reformer like Tom Paine, but not necessarily. No man, for instance, could have been less of a reformer than Baron d'Holbach, perhaps the most radical thinker of the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Alternatively, G.J.Holyoake suggests that a radical is a man "who has heroic unrest under injustice" even if he did not always have a coherent policy for ending oppression.<sup>33</sup> Thus a reformer is a radical with a coherent plan for ameliorating social or political conditions. The politics of a reformer are less speculative, more practicable and more systematic than those of a radical; they subsume a plan for ameliorating social and political conditions and aim at putting an end to injustice, whereas the politics of a radical need not be more than an objection to or a resentment of injustice.

With this distinction in mind the unprecedented impact of Godwin's Political Justice on Shelley's mind may be readily acknowledged; after reading it Shelley sincerely wished to echo its thoughts: 'from the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles I have ardently desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.'<sup>34</sup> The first time he did so was in his argument on the law of Necessity. Godwin, rather like Holbach, believes that the inexorable law of Necessity controls both the material universe and the intellectual world of man where liberty is absolutely non-existent:

He who affirms that all actions are necessary, means that the man, who is acquainted with all the circumstances under which a living or intelligent being is placed upon any given occasion, is qualified to predict the conduct he will hold, with as much certainty, as he can predict any of the phenomena of inanimate nature. Upon this

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32. Shelley and the Thought of His Time, p.61.

33. Harold Silver, English Education and the Radicals 1780-1850 (London, 1975), p.2.

34. Shelley to Godwin (3 January 1812), The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, edited by Frederick L.Jones, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), I, p.220 (henceforth cited as Letters).

question the advocate of liberty in the philosophical sense, must join issue ... Where all is constant and invariable, and the events that arise, uniformly correspond to the circumstances in which they originate, there can be no liberty.

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According to Godwin we should never imagine that we are free 'to feel or not to feel an impression made upon our organs, and to believe or not to believe a proposition demonstrated to our understanding.'<sup>36</sup> This conception of Necessity no doubt implies that man's will has no freedom whatever. On this important issue we need make no conjecture; Godwin himself insists that the freedom of the will is incompatible with man's morality and reason:

Freedom of the will is absurdly represented as necessary to render the mind susceptible of moral principles; but in reality, so far as we act with liberty, so far as we are independent of motives, our conduct is as independent of morality as it is of reason, nor is it possible that we should deserve either praise or blame for a proceeding thus capricious and indisciplinable.

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This 'moral Necessity'<sup>38</sup> might seem to be salutary to man's intellect or morality, but in real terms it undermines his most fundamental human characteristic; that of an active being, and leaves him in a state of utter helplessness;

It appears, that, in the emphatical and refined sense in which the word has sometimes been used, there is no such thing as action. Man is in no case, strictly speaking, the beginner of any event or series of events that takes place in the universe, but only the vehicle through which certain antecedents operate, which antecedents, if he were supposed not to exist, would cease to have that operation.

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35. William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness, photographic facsimile of the 3rd edition, edited with variant readings of the 1st and 2nd editions by F.E.L. Priestley, 3 vols (Toronto, 1946), I, pp.363-4. (Henceforth cited as Enquiry.)

36. Ibid., p.382.

37. Ibid., p.383.

38. The term is Don Locke's, A Fantasy of Reason, p.325.  
(footnotes continued)

On this view 'it will be absurd for a man to say, "I will exert myself", "I will take care to remember", or even "I will do this". All these expressions imply as if man were, or could be, something else than what motives make him. Man is in reality a passive, and not an active being.'<sup>40</sup> Godwin's understanding of Necessity as being, on the one hand, an intrinsic characteristic of man's morality and reason, and on the other incompatible with freedom of will and with man's potential as an active being, is; as we shall see, intimately linked to his political arguments on reform.

Like Godwin, in his Notes to Queen Mab Shelley asserts that Necessity controls both the inanimate world of nature and the intellectual world of man. His definition of Necessity seems substantially to repeat Godwin's:<sup>41</sup> 'He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy or act in any other place than it does act.'<sup>42</sup> Again like Godwin, Shelley dismisses liberty in the world of intellect and considers it equivalent to chance in the world of matter; both of which 'spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents.'<sup>43</sup> Man, he argues, is impelled to act the way he does, for 'in the eternity which preceded his birth a chain of causes was generated, which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is.'<sup>44</sup> This simply re-echoes Godwin's: 'In the life of every human being there is a chain of events, generated in the lapse of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence

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(footnotes continued from previous page)

39. Enquiry, I, p.385.

40. Ibid., p.389.

41. See pp.10-11 above.

42. Works, I, p.144.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

of which it was impossible for him to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted.'<sup>45</sup> Even a brief comparison of these quotations unmistakably suggests that in theme, tone and context, Shelley's view echoes that of Godwin. Instead of Godwin's 'in the lapse of ages which preceded his birth', Shelley writes 'in the eternity which preceded his birth', Godwin's phrase 'a chain of events' becomes 'a chain of causes', while the word 'generated' is left as it stands. In the same way, Shelley's suggestion that this reasoning 'make it impossible that any thought of his [man's] mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is', echoes Godwin's inference that 'it was impossible for him to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted'. Even the example used by Godwin to establish that Necessity is the basis of morality and reason is reproduced by Shelley to sustain this same point. Godwin remarks: 'it appears that the most uninstructed peasant or artisan is practically a necessarian. The farmer calculates as securely upon the inclination of mankind to buy his corn when it is brought into the market, as upon the tendency of the seasons to ripen it.'<sup>46</sup> Likewise, contending that 'History, politics, morals, criticism, all grounds of reasoning, all principles of science, alike assume the truth of the doctrine of Necessity', Shelley supports his argument with the same example: 'No farmer carrying his corn to market doubts the sale of it at the market price.'<sup>47</sup> Hence, it could possibly be right to suggest that Shelley's conception of Necessity in his Notes to Queen Mab is in perfect accord with Godwin's.

However, Shelley's conception of Necessity in his Notes to Queen Mab is not typical of the views he in fact expresses in many of his other works including Queen Mab itself.<sup>48</sup> In Queen Mab his definition of Necessity seems to be substantially different from that in the Notes. He addresses Necessity thus:

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45. Enquiry, I, p.384.

46. Ibid., p.375.

47. Works, I, p.144.

48. For a more fully elaborated distinction between the Notes and the poem, see p.80 above.

'Spirit of Nature! all sufficing Power,  
Necessity! thou mother of the world!  
Unlike the God of human error, thou  
Requirest no prayers or praises; the caprice  
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee  
Than do the changeful passions of his breast  
To thy unvarying harmony

(VI, 197-203)

What the law of Necessity controls, here, is strictly the material world with no power over man's will or passion. Moreover, the poem suggests that through knowledge and strong will man can understand this cycle of the physical universe and, in effect, control it. Indeed, when Mab explains to Ianthe that through comprehending the past and understanding the present, one can predict and direct the future and, by so doing, liberate oneself from the blind movement of history, she was indicating a means of subjecting 'Necessity' to man's will - that point is again touched upon in the following address to Ianthe:

Nature, impartial in munificence,  
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.  
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,  
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,  
That weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.

(V, 132-6)

To many philosophers, certainly to Godwin, Necessity signifies a system of predeterminism which operates on everything relating to man as well as to nature. According to this notion of Necessity, our actions, thoughts and even feelings are to follow a certain route which none of us can change however hard we try. The case is not so with Shelley; he uses the term 'Necessity' to describe the way the natural system works, i.e. the necessity of having summer after spring. To this cycle of nature, Shelley argues, man's body duly conforms while his will remains at absolute liberty to mould his life, thoughts and actions the way he reasons and sees fit.

Indeed, a quick look at Shelley's poetical works would almost certainly suggest that his belief in man's free will is a cardinal tenet upon which many of his arguments depend. In Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound man's free will is seen as his only emancipator and

regenerator. In The Revolt of Islam, for instance, Cythna, the heroine, remarks:

"... to my will my fancies were as slaves  
To do their sweet and subtile ministries;

(VII, XXXIV, 1-2)

Again, she stresses that 'Man alone / Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone' (VIII, XVI, 8-9). In Prometheus Unbound, it is a self-evident axiom that the whole argument totally depends on the assumption that despite all his ordeal Prometheus never lost control over his own will; early in the poem he addresses Jupiter:

O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,  
And my own will.

(I, 273-4)

In fact, it is Prometheus' will and not Hercules' (as we shall see in the second chapter) which emancipates Prometheus; and without the emancipator being himself free the poem would not make any sense at all. In Julian and Maddalo, Shelley strenuously asserts that:

'- it is our will  
That thus enchains us to permitted ill -  
We might be otherwise - we might be all  
We dream of happy, high, majestic.  
Where is the love, beauty and truth we seek,  
But in our mind? and if we were not weak,  
Should we be less in deed than in desire?'

(170-6)

Together with the evidence cited above Shelley's fictionalized conversation with Lord Byron (in 1818) and the stance he took in defence of free will supports our argument that his consistent views on the subject are quite different from those his Notes to Queen Mab suggest. Another and final example, from a sonnet 'To the Republic of Benevento', written as late as 1821, attests that Shelley's belief in man's free will was unflinching:

Man who man would be,  
Must rule the empire of himself; in it  
Must be supreme, establishing his throne  
On vanquished will, - quelling the anarchy  
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

(10-14)

It would seem indeed that Shelley firmly believed in man's free will. It is on this maxim that his theory of political reform largely depends; and it is in this maxim, too, that Shelley parts company with Godwin.

Shelley's doctrine of Necessity and free will, seems in fact to bear more resemblance to that of David Hume (1711-1776) before him and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) after him than it does to Godwin. It is quite possible that Shelley, as Frank B. Evans remarks, 'drew as much from Godwin's source as from Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. This source is sections IV-VIII of David Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.'<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Shelley's and Godwin's definitions of the term 'Necessity'<sup>50</sup> both seem to substantially depend on the one offered by Hume: 'It is universally allowed,' Hume maintains, 'that matter, in all its operations, is actuated by a necessary force, and that every natural effect is so precisely determined by the energy of its cause, that no other effect, in such particular circumstances, could possibly have resulted from it.'<sup>51</sup> Unlike Godwin, however, Hume was at sufficient pains to distinguish between 'material' and 'moral' Necessity: 'We may here be mistaken in asserting, that there is no idea of any other necessity or connexion in the actions of body: But surely we ascribe nothing to the actions of the mind, but what every one does, and must readily allow of. We change no circumstance in the received orthodox system with regard to the will, but only in that with regard to material objects and causes.'<sup>52</sup> Here, Hume goes beyond Godwin and very closely approaches Shelley's views of Necessity and free will as explained above.

Without referring to either Shelley or Godwin, John Stuart Mill supports the distinction I am trying to make between their concepts of Necessity and lends plausibility to my suggestion that such a distinction might well have significant bearings on their political arguments:

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49. 'Shelley, Godwin and Hume, and the Doctrine of Necessity', Studies in Philology, XXXVII, No.4 (October 1940), pp.632-40 (p.632).

50. See pp.10-12 above.

51. David Hume, Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1793), II, p.96.

52. Ibid., pp.112-13.

... the word Necessity, as a name for the doctrine of Cause and Effect applied to human action, carried with it a misleading association; and ... this association was the operative force in the depressing and paralysing influence which I had experienced. I saw that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and that what is really inspiriting and ennobling in the doctrine of freewill, is the conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character; that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing ... The theory, which I now for the first time rightly apprehended, ceased altogether to be discouraging, and besides the relief to my spirits, I no longer suffered under the burthen, so heavy to one who aims at being a reformer in opinions.

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In this solution to the problem of Necessity and free will (chiefly imparted in the sentence: 'though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances') Mill joins hands with radical Paine: 'Man, cannot, properly speaking, make circumstances for his purpose, but he always has it in his power to improve them when they occur,'<sup>54</sup> (Rights of Man). Shelley, by implication, would be more at home with Mill and Paine than with Godwin. The subtle, yet significant difference between Godwin's and Shelley's notions of Necessity has distinct relevance to their theories on reform; indeed, it locates them on two diametrically opposed political platforms. According to Mill's argument just adduced above Godwin's theory on reform is negative and ineffective whereas Shelley's is optimistic and essentially revolutionist.

Although, it is certainly true that Godwin and Shelley perfectly agree on the objectives of reform, they differ significantly on the means and methods of achieving these objectives. While, on the one hand Godwin's view of man as an essentially passive being whose will is wholly subjected to material conditions results in his stark negation of man's right to

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53. John Stuart Mill, Autobiography, ed. by Jack Stillinger (London, 1971), p.102.

54. The Political Writings of Thomas Paine, 2 vols (New York, 1830), II, p.99.

activism, in a disapprobation of, or even antipathy to political action, Shelley, on the other hand, argues that man has not only the right, but even the duty to rebel against injustice. Moreover, Godwin's long reflections on the evils and perils of action left him clinging tenaciously to an ideal theory which is far removed from any practical kind of reform. Indeed, having refused to stop at any thing short of perfect and ideal reform, he divorced his theory from immediate political reality: 'Finite things must be perpetually capable of increase and advancement; it would argue therefore extreme folly to rest in any given state of improvement, and imagine we had attained our summit. The true politician confines neither his expectations nor desires within any specific limits; he has undertaken a labour without end.'<sup>55</sup> Therefore, any effort to achieve a limited goal must become insubstantial and unnecessary. This is, perhaps, the main peculiarity of Godwin's political theory, that it 'should at once recommend the most extensive plan of freedom and innovation ever discussed by any writer in the English language, and reprobate every measure from which even the most moderate reform can rationally be expected.'<sup>56</sup> Thus, despite his passion for an unblemished world, Godwin's failure to reconcile the ideal with the real and the tendencies of the radical theorist with the scepticism of the practitioner made his view of reform incompatible with any actual effort to effect reform, and left him on the same footing as Burke and others who argued passionately against reform and rendered their ultimate services to the status quo.<sup>57</sup>

Where Godwin failed, Shelley seems to have succeeded. Although like Godwin Shelley was concerned about an ultimate reform, unlike Godwin, he was equally concerned with what is practical and possible. Although on his journey to Ireland Shelley was seriously trying to apply his theory of reform to real issues, the vision of a universal reform was persistently in his mind. Catholic emancipation and the freedom of Ireland were significant only as the premiss for political action on a much larger scale,

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55. Enquiry, I, pp.266-7.

56. J.Thelwall, The Tribune (London, 1796), II, preface, p.vii.

57. Don Locke holds a similar view of Godwin's politics, see A Fantasy of Reason, pp.48-9.

only as 'the road to a greater reform - that reform after which virtue and wisdom shall have conquered pain and vice',<sup>58</sup> only as 'the foreground of a picture, in the dimness of whose distance, I behold the lion lay down with the lamb, and the infant play with the basilisk',<sup>59</sup> and finally - as he himself said in his preface to Hellas regarding the Greek revolution - as 'a portion of the cause of civilization and social improvement'.

Nevertheless, Shelley's concern about immediate political issues and their peculiar ambience remained invincible; it was due to such genuine concern that he went to Ireland in 1812 and advocated Catholic Emancipation. His unchangeable advice to contemporary reformers was to 'be contented with a limited beginning, with any whatsoever opening;' for, 'nothing is more idle than to reject a limited benefit because we cannot without great sacrifices obtain an unlimited one.'<sup>60</sup> In a similar passage which serves as the best criticism of Godwin's position, Shelley explains why he believes that sheer moral improvement and individual indoctrination will never achieve reform: 'It is in vain to exhort us to wait until all men shall desire Freedom whose real interest will consist in its establishment. It is in vain to hope to enlighten them whilst their tyrants employ the utmost artifices of all their complicated engine to perpetuate the infection of every species of fanaticism and error from generation to generation.' Therefore, if reformers decided to wait till every one could see the necessity and the possibility of effecting reform 'the occasion will have passed or will never arrive, and the people will have exhausted their strength in ineffectual expectation and will have sunk into incurable supineness.'<sup>61</sup>

On the whole, it is safe to suggest that Shelley firmly believed that the trenchant reformer is the one who effectively deals with immediate

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58. Address to the Irish People, Works, V, p.233.

59. Proposal for an Association of Philanthropists, ibid., V, p.254.

60. Works, VII, p.46.

61. Ibid., p.50.

circumstances without losing sight of his final goal. One passage in particular in his Philosophical View of Reform seems to me to lucidly express the gist of this theory and therefore is worth reproducing here in full:

Equality in possessions must be the last result of the utmost refinements of civilization; it is one of the conditions of that system of society, towards which with whatever hope of ultimate success, it is our duty to tend. We may and ought to advert to it as to the elementary principle, as to the goal, unattainable, perhaps, by us, but which, as it were, we revive in our posterity to pursue. We derive tranquility and courage and grandeur of soul from contemplating an object which is, because we will it, and may be, because we hope and desire it, and must be if succeeding generations of the enlightened sincerely and earnestly seek it ...

But our present business is with the difficult and unbending realities of actual life, and when we have drawn inspiration from the great object of our hopes it becomes us with patience and resolution to apply ourselves to accommodating our theories to immediate practice.

62

Thus, by shrewdly holding the balance between short-term and long-term political action Shelley secured his vision from both anarchism and futile idealism. In the next chapter we shall see how does Shelley's poetry convey this subtly balanced fluctuation between the real and the ideal.

This distinction between Godwin's speculative theory and Shelley's more balanced and more radical one may be highlighted and perhaps better understood by drawing a brief comparison between Godwin's Caleb Williams or Things as They Are and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus.<sup>63</sup> In the final analysis, Caleb Williams fails to reconcile the real and the ideal, leaving Godwin with no choice but to support things as they are. Caleb's inability throughout the novel

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62. Works, VII, p.43.

63. This comparison is a summation of a private conversation with Mrs Susan Mandarini.

to establish any relationship with anyone could only be ascribed to a real lack of confidence in man as represented by those who refused to establish any relationship with Caleb, or to Caleb's obsessive desire for total knowledge and a perfect world: 'I could not rest,' he declares 'till I had acquainted myself with the solutions that had been invented for the phenomena of the universe',<sup>64</sup> or to these two factors in combination. In fact, Caleb's resolution to accept nothing less than perfect knowledge of the universe engenders his rejection of objective reality and human society; he resolves, 'and this resolution has never been entirely forgotten by me, to hold myself disengaged from this odious scene, and never fill the part either of the oppressor or the sufferer.'<sup>65</sup> Speculating on the real world and meditating on his species in which he could only see: 'every man is fated to be more or less the tyrant or the slave',<sup>66</sup> Caleb is by no means aware that the seduction of the ideal world has divorced him from the real one. He is under the illusion that the only way to deal with dire reality is to reject it, to dissociate himself from it; the conclusion must be the impossibility of any social or individual progress. This constitutes the essence of Godwin's political theory; for his failure (as we have seen) to uphold the balance between the finite and the infinite, the unblemished world and the partial improvement of this real one, has ironically reduced his resistance to oppression to an ineffectual tolerance, and unwittingly subverted his own principles of freedom and the perfect state.

However, Mary Shelley, Godwin's daughter, in her novel Frankenstein deals more persuasively with the interaction between the ideal and the real; the interaction that could be best seen in a contrast between Frankenstein and the Monster. Frankenstein, in his infinite ambition to discover the secrets of nature, to know the kind of knowledge which no human being has ever yet known, finds himself creating something which

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64. William Godwin, The Adventures of Caleb Williams, or Things As They Are (London, 1970), p.4.

65. Ibid., p.156.

66. Ibid.

completely alienates him from human society and from objective reality as a whole. He allowed his dreams to dominate his reality, and, in effect, to negate it; when he tries to re-establish relations with the girl he loves he discovers that as he imprinted the first kiss on her lips 'they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother.'<sup>67</sup> Thus, his high dreams of the unknown, of the unattainable, made any relationship with reality virtually impossible. The Monster, at the other end of the spectrum, has no belief in the ideal; the most sacred thing in life is the reality in which he can take part and which he can materially sense:

If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an hundred and an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake, I would make peace with the whole kind! But I now indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be realised. What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me.

68

Frankenstein and the Monster display two irreconcilable worlds: the ideal but ineffectual and impossible world, and the monstrous, ugly but vigorously active one - however limited this activity might be in the cause of man. The contrast between these two attitudes reflects Mary Shelley's examination of the intimacy of the ideal with the real in contrary perspectives, not - as in the case in Caleb Williams - to make the choice for one or the other, but to provide a full image of each case with all its possible implications; the uncertainty of preference is conveyed so well that one cannot help concluding that both Frankenstein and the Monster are partly right and partly wrong. Thus unlike Godwin in his Caleb Williams, who detached the vision of a perfect world thoroughly from human society and, therefore, ended in distorting both and in

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67. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus (London, 1969), p.58.

68. Ibid., p.145.

supporting things as they are, Mary Shelley skilfully imparts the necessity of a compound vision of both the ideal and the real and confirms that the absence of either reveals the other as seriously lacking in validity and consequence.

Whether or not Shelley had any influence on Mary Shelley on this particular issue, there is no doubt that his views approximate to hers. Shelley, as we have seen, believes that to have vision is of necessity to be more committed to reality and to push it as far as possible in the direction of the vision. Unlike most of the writers of the Enlightenment, and certainly unlike Godwin, Shelley never saw the real and the ideal as divorced from each other, rather he considered both of them as wholly intrinsic to the full and perfect humanity of man. It is important to stress this point here before trying to understand Shelley's political thought in the second chapter, for an understanding of this reconciliation might well reveal an unsuspected consistency in the political theory of his poetry.

Another point of divergence between Godwin and Shelley on reform concerns their views on political associations. Whereas Godwin depended in his reform on individual moral indoctrination and on the chosen elite, despising political organization, Shelley considered political associations an effective means for achieving reform. Godwin's stance can be partly surmised from his attitude to the London Corresponding Society - the only active political society at the time. When he suspected the Society of a 'leaning to republican principles'<sup>69</sup> - he even warned the government against its activities: 'The London Corresponding Society is a formidable machine; the system of political lecturing is a hot-bed, perhaps too well adapted to ripen men for purposes, more or less similar to those of the Jacobin Society of Paris. Both branches of the situation are well deserving the attention of the members of the government of Great Britain.'<sup>70</sup>

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69. Godwin, Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills, Concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices and Unlawful Assemblies, by a lover of order [William Godwin] (London, 1795), pp.12-13.

70. Ibid., p.22.

Further, J.Thelwall informs us that 'I knew from this singular work - [Political Justice] - I knew, also, from the frequent friendly conversations I have enjoyed with the author, that he was hostile to every species of popular association.'<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Godwin himself writes to Shelley on 4 March 1812 that: 'Discussion, reading, inquiry, perpetual communication, these are my favourite methods for the improvement of mankind: but associations organized societies, I firmly condemn.'<sup>72</sup> He goes on to stress two important points: first, this view is a fundamental principle of Political Justice, and second, his realization that Shelley was at issue with him: 'If I may be allowed to understand my book on Political Justice, its pervading principle is, that association is a most ill-chosen and ill-qualified mode of endeavouring to promote the political happiness of mankind ... Does it not follow that you have read my writings very slightly? I wish, at least, you had known whether our views were in harmony or opposition.'<sup>73</sup> Shelley, it seems likely, as Godwin suggests, did not know (or did not want to know) whether their views were in opposition; he was more interested in the facade of parallels between his views and those of the great philosopher and, perhaps, wished to repress - or at least ignore - the tangle of differences which make their views, as Godwin put it in the same letter, 'decisively at issue'. For in the letter to which Godwin's above, was an answer, Shelley enclosed his Address to the Irish People, and implied that Godwin is one of those who 'have had some share in making me what I am'.<sup>74</sup> Hence, Shelley's accounts of Godwin's influence on him must be taken with caution.

One reason Godwin gives for his open rejection of political association is his unequivocal belief that 'the only legitimate object of political institution is the advantage of individuals. All that cannot be brought home to them, national wealth, prosperity and glory, can be advantageous only to those self-interested impostors, who, from the earliest accounts

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71. The Tribune, Preface, pp.vii-viii.

72. Letters, I, p.261.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., p.260.

of time, have confounded the understandings of mankind, the more securely to sink them in debasement and misery.'<sup>75</sup> The only way, he believes, to achieve an egalitarian and free society is through individual moral reformation. According to Godwin every one including aristocrats, governments, and businessmen are potentially capable of becoming the votaries of equality and justice, and in this sense it is conceivable that individual virtue could achieve political justice. Political organizations, therefore, which comprise 'self-interested impostors' have to be shunned in order not to disrupt a state of society which is being organized along these moral lines.

Godwin was frightened of any grouping of ordinary people especially if there were no persons of importance or distinction amongst them: 'The collecting of immense multitudes of men into one assembly, particularly when there have been no persons of eminence, distinction, and importance in the country, that have mixed with them, and been ready to temper their efforts, is always sufficiently alarming.'<sup>76</sup> How different this is from Shelley's attitude to ordinary people as recorded by Mary Shelley in her 'Notes to Poems written 1819': 'Shelley loved the people; and respected them as often more virtuous, as always more suffering, and therefore more deserving of sympathy, than the great.' Although Shelley was acutely aware that some of his poetic productions (Prometheus Unbound, in particular) could only be understood by the educated elite, he still addressed himself to the general populace and grounded his political views on the general mass of people. In Essay on Christianity, for example, he argues that the followers of Christ failed to effect his moral theory through individual virtue; they failed to achieve equality on earth by distributing their personal wealth to those who needed it most. Instead of equality, their efforts engendered resentment and envy amongst their fellow human beings: 'The system of equality which they established, necessarily fell to the ground, because it is a system that must result from, rather than precede the moral improvement of human kind.'<sup>77</sup> It is

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75. Enquiry, II, p.191.

76. Considerations on Lord Grenville's etc., p.14.

77. Works, VI, pp.251-2.

precisely here that Shelley parted from Jesus, Godwin and the French Enlightenment writers. Of course, like them, he saw in individual virtue and moral elevation a necessary prerequisite for reform, yet he still stressed that moral improvement alone will never achieve the free and egalitarian society aspired to. This has to be followed by political action, an action for which the chosen few constitute no sufficient basis. Hence, the organization of these people becomes essential in order to channel their efforts and harness them in the best way possible for achieving reform: 'I propose to these to form an association for the purposes, first, of debating on the propriety of whatever measures may be agitated, and secondly, for carrying, by united or individual exertion, such measures into effect when determined on.'<sup>78</sup> Thus, political association is, in Shelley's estimate, a principal means 'whose instrumentality I would employ to attain this reform.'<sup>79</sup> To such association Shelley reveals a touch of personal commitment: 'The organisation of a society, whose institution shall serve as a bond to its members, for the purposes of virtue, happiness, liberty, and wisdom, by the means of intellectual opposition to grievances, would probably be useful. For the formation of such society I avow myself anxious.'<sup>80</sup> Shelley's politics, then, are more radical than the radical tradition he imbibed, for together with the moral improvement of man he perceived and stressed the necessity of organized political action to effect reform. This enduring characteristic of Shelley's political thought may well have significant bearings on the Chartists' judgement of his radicalism.

Just as significant, however, in Shelley's theory of reform, is the stress he lays on the congruity and homogeneity of reformers. Almost all his political tracts insist that unity among members of an association should be one of their most cardinal principles: 'A certain degree of coalition among the sincere Friends of Reform, in whatever shape, is indispensable to the success of this proposal.'<sup>81</sup> Again, in his most

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78. Works, V, pp.256-7.

79. Ibid., p.267.

80. Ibid., p.245.

81. Ibid., VI, p.67.

important political work, his Philosophical View of Reform, the same message is stressed: 'The true patriot will endeavour to enlighten and to unite the nation and animate it with enthusiasm and confidence ... He will endeavour to rally round one standard the divided friends of liberty, and make them forget the subordinate objects with regard to which they differ by appealing to that respecting which they are all agreed.'<sup>82</sup> Byron adeptly detected the import of the same measure when he attributed the failure of the Italian reformers in 1821 to their lack of unity: 'Thus the world goes; and thus the Italians are always lost for lack of union among themselves.'<sup>83</sup>

A final distinction to be made here between Shelley and Godwin on reform concerns their different conceptions of the political role of education. Although they both stress that education has a vital role to play in any successful reform, none the less their views on placing this role vis-à-vis political action are quite different, and the difference is not the less important. His Irish mission, on the one hand, and the French Revolution, on the other, left Shelley in no doubt that any change which is not prompted by enlightened people is certainly doomed to fail. The French Revolution, he implied, ended in tyranny because the enslaved people of France were not given either enough knowledge or enough time to carry out a revolution.<sup>84</sup> In his Philosophical View of Reform, he argues that the failure of both the French and the English Revolutions is due to a deficiency of knowledge on the part of the people, for 'The authors of both Revolutions proposed a greater and more glorious object than the degraded passions of their countrymen permitted them to attain.'<sup>85</sup> As a practical reformer, he decided in 1817 that England was not ready either for Republican government or for Universal Suffrage because to adopt such measures would be 'to place power in the hands of men who

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82. Works, VII, p.48.

83. Leslie A. Marchand, Byron: A Biography, 3 vols (London, 1957), II, p.903.

84. See Shelley's Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

85. Works, VII, p.15.

have been rendered brutal and torpid and ferocious by ages of slavery'.<sup>86</sup>

Here Godwin is in full agreement with Shelley: 'Individuals, freed from the terrors by which they had been accustomed to be restrained and not yet placed under the happier and more rational restraint of public inspection, or convinced of the wisdom of reciprocal forbearance, would break out into acts of injustice.'<sup>87</sup> As we have seen earlier, the only means Godwin envisages for ending oppression, abolishing governments and rendering all people happy and free is through education and enlightenment, through an intellectual revolution 'conducted by means of argument and persuasion'.<sup>88</sup> He trusts that when the people's minds are cultivated, all tyranny, oppression, inequality and injustice will fade away by themselves. In this context, both Shelley and Godwin acknowledge the prominent role of education in ensuring the prevalence of freedom and justice.

Yet, while Godwin considers education by itself sufficient to abolish tyranny and emancipate man - that is to say when all people including tyrants and oppressors are enlightened enough, oppression will abate of itself and man will be just and free - Shelley sees in education the groundwork for the political action which should follow in order to end tyranny and free man. In other words, according to Godwin, education is the final measure to dethrone tyranny and bring about reform; it replaces political action and becomes its substitute, whereas, in Shelley's view, education remains the spearhead of political action, but never its alternative. On this particular point what Cameron says of Shelley and Hunt seems to apply very well to Shelley and Godwin: 'What was to Hunt the ultimate objective ... was to Shelley only a stepping stone along the way.'<sup>89</sup>

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86. Works, VI, p.68.

87. Enquiry, II, pp.366-7.

88. Edward Dowden, The French Revolution and English Literature (London, 1897), p.60.

89. K.N.Cameron, Shelley: The Golden Years (Harvard, Cambridge, 1974), p.121.

In the light of the last few pages, one might conclude that the measures adopted by Godwin and Shelley to liberate man from political tyranny and achieve social equality and justice were by no means identical; their conception of Necessity, their views on the freedom of man's will, on man's right to political organization and political action, on the role of the general people in reform, on the relation between what is immediate and can be and what is ultimate and might be, and on the political role of education are essentially different. On all these issues Shelley's stance is more flexible, more practical and consequently more essentially radical. On balance, Godwin's views might have been more at home with those of his traditional political opponent, Burke, than they were with Shelley's.

Burke, like Godwin, condemns political action and stands firmly against any attempt to change government; his view is based on, first, identifying any political action with its excesses and horrors and, second, his image of government as 'a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants'.<sup>90</sup> The need for government, he argues, is always paramount, not just because of its divine right to govern, but also because of the peoples' substantial need for control:

Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by a power out of themselves; ... In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.

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Man, Burke believes, has no right, not even the primary right to life 'till he has received it at the hands of Law';<sup>92</sup> his only right is that which is bestowed on him by a law-giving body:

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90. Edmund Burke, The Works of Edmund Burke, 6 vols (London, 1907), IV, p.65.

91. Ibid.

92. John Maccunn, Six Radical Thinkers (London, 1907), p.13.

... all men have equal rights; but not to equal things. He that has but five shillings in the partnership, has as good a right to it as he that has five hundred pounds has to his larger proportion. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock; and as to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society; for I have in my contemplation the civil social man, and no other.

93

Shelley's argument in his Philosophical View of Reform that 'The broad principle of political reform is the natural equality of men, not with relation to their property but to their rights,'<sup>94</sup> might be an answer to Burke. The well-known answers to Burke's Reflections, however, Paine's Rights of Man and Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Men comprise a formidable plea for man's natural right to happiness, liberty, equality and property. Arguing from a position diametrically opposed to Burke's, Thomas Paine suggests that man's civil right is supplementary to his natural right, a right that he has by birth before becoming a member of any civil society; his civil rights are there to protect, not to pervert his natural rights: 'Man did not enter into society to become worse than he was before, nor to have less rights than he had before, but to have those rights better secured. His natural rights are the foundation of all his civil rights.'<sup>95</sup> To the question what are the natural rights of man, Paine answers: 'Natural rights are those which always appertain to man in right of his existence. Of this kind are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind, and also all those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness, which are not injurious to the rights of others.'<sup>96</sup> Such reasoning is imbued with a concentration of radical implications; it might well be deployed to invalidate the government's authority over the people, to 'open the eyes of the people to a proper

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93. Burke, The Works of Edmund Burke, IV, p.64.

94. Works, VII, p.42.

95. Thomas Paine, The Political Writings of Thomas Paine, II, p.72.

96. Ibid., II, p.73.

sense of their rights. To prove to them that it was lawful to remove any and every one from office when they ceased to act for the good of the community. To show them that a king, if tolerable at all, was the servant of the people.'<sup>97</sup> Intrinsic to the supremacy of man's natural right over his civil one, is his right to revolt against any oppressive or unjust authority, for the people owe no rights to their government; rather, their right to reform it, is in the original character of its constitution: 'a government is only the creature of a constitution. The constitution of a country is not the act of its government, but of the people constituting a government.'<sup>98</sup> Government, Paine fervently argues, is not a 'distributor of justice', but a means of injustice, which, if oppressive, should be resisted and reformed. Paine's famous maxim 'Society is produced by our wants and government by our wickedness', is, as Paul Dawson remarks,<sup>99</sup> happily accepted and echoed by Shelley in his Address to the Irish People: 'Government is an evil, it is only the thoughtlessness and vices of men that make it a necessary evil ... Society is produced by the wants, Governments by the wickedness.'<sup>100</sup> These principles of Paine, his conception of the rights of man, his attitude to government and revolution are very much in line with Shelley's political doctrines discussed earlier in this chapter.

In her Vindication of the Rights of Men, Mary Wollstonecraft makes similar distinctions to those made by Paine between man's natural and civil rights. 'The birthright of man ... is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of the other individuals whom he is united with in a social compact.'<sup>101</sup> Gerald McNiece's account of Mary Wollstonecraft's and Thomas Paine's influence on Shelley<sup>102</sup> and Dawson's detailed comparison between the political thought of Paine and Shelley<sup>103</sup> strongly suggest that, in essence, Shelley's politics were more attuned to Paine and Wollstonecraft than they were to

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97. Paine, The Political Writings of Thomas Paine, I, p.viii.

98. Ibid., II, p.76.

99. See The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics (Oxford, 1980), p.62.

100. Works, V, p.232.

101. (London, 1790), p.7.

(footnotes continued)

Godwin. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that while the names of Paine and Shelley won a high acclaim in the Chartist era, Godwin's, in comparison, was barely mentioned. Indeed, while Shelley's poetry was frequently published in the Chartist Papers and Journals, his views on reform just as often explained and highlighted, and while Tom Paine's birthday was often celebrated and his political arguments became common knowledge in radical circles, Godwin has to be satisfied with the occasional advertisements for his Political Justice which was hardly considered a principal voice of British radicalism.

From this brief account one might infer that the implications of Shelley's arguments were more radical for the theory of reform than those bestowed on us by Godwin and by many of the French Enlightenment writers. Unlike Rousseau, for example, Shelley looked to the future rather than to the past for a happy and just state of society and unlike both Godwin and Holbach he reasoned that man's will is free to master the system of the material universe and direct it to man's best benefit. Again unlike Godwin, Shelley did not confine his political vision to the enlightenment and moral reformation of man, rather he saw these as a necessary prerequisite for organized collective political action which would overthrow tyranny and bring about the desired changes. What is more, Shelley trusted that such an action is to take place and went on to indicate and stress some of its necessary foundations: strong will, unity and homogeneity amongst reformers, the aversion to bloodshed, a belief in the justice of the cause defended and a lasting hope in its triumph. In the second part of this thesis we shall see that it was chiefly due to these very issues (Shelley's faith in the future of man and his unequivocal belief in man's ability to make such a future) that Shelley was granted an advantageous position amongst radical Chartists: these very factors which distinguished Shelley's political philosophy from the radical tradition he imbibed were responsible for the acclaim he won in the Chartist era.

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102. See, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 14-17, 95-6, 131-2, 182, 198-9.

103. See, The Unacknowledged Legislator, pp. 54-68.

2. Personal Development and the Effects of Social and Political Circumstances

'Shelley was not born a radical thinker, he developed into one.'  
(K.N.Cameron, The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical, London, 1951, Introduction, p.[xi])

The effects of social circumstances on the growth of Shelley's thought have been examined by some of the finest Shelley scholars. Carl Grabo, for instance, in The Magic Plant,<sup>104</sup> K.N.Cameron in The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical,<sup>105</sup> Gerald McNiece in Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea<sup>106</sup> and most recently Paul Dawson in The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics<sup>107</sup> examine the social and political circumstances which lent force to Shelley's questioning mind and rendered him one of the most progressive thinkers of his time. Such a study, therefore, need not - indeed, will not - be tried here. I shall try to examine first, the particular circumstances which seem to have added a sharper edge to Shelley's reputation not only as a radical thinker but also as a martyr, a hero and a prophet amongst the Chartists. These circumstances are Shelley's 'atheism', his rejection of his father's seat in Parliament and of the family estate. The Chartists saw in Shelley's 'atheism' the rudiments of his radicalism; they argued against all the attacks on Shelley's morality and religion and followed his example in drawing a separation between the Church and the ethics of Christ and in connecting the Church and the State. In the same way, his rejection of his father's seat in Parliament and of the family estate were renowned examples of how true socialists should live up to their ideals and principles. It is because these modes of Shelley's thought and behaviour were of central importance to the Chartists' understanding and evaluation of Shelley's politics that we shall try in this chapter to focus on their origin and development in Shelley's life. I shall also try to examine how intellectual reasoning and political experience contrived to bring about Shelley's transition

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104. (Chapel Hill, 1936), pp.1-55.

105. (London, 1951), pp.1-61.

106. (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp.42-8.

107. (Oxford, 1980), pp.1-40.

from a revolutionary empiricist to a political poet who mostly addressed himself to future reform movements. Shelley's experience in Ireland (1812), I shall argue, was of considerable importance in bringing about such a transition; it made him realize that his earnestness to reform the world could be best fulfilled through his potential as a poet.

The first signs of Shelley's dissatisfaction with what he had encountered in his early childhood both at home and at school may be glimpsed in his first prose work Zastrozzi (1810) (written while he was still at Eton). Shelley himself bears evidence to the fact that Zastrozzi is expressive of his state of mind at the time; on 10 January 1812 he informs Godwin that 'From a reader I became I [a] writer of Romances; before the age of seventeen I had published two 'St. Irvyne' and 'Zastrozzi' each of which tho quite uncharacteristic of me as now I am, yet serve to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition.'<sup>108</sup>

Zastrozzi is important, not just because it reveals Shelley's deeply embedded dissatisfaction with almost every thing around him: 'Torn from the society of all he held dear on earth, the victim of secret enemies, and exiled from happiness, was the wretched Verezzi',<sup>109</sup> but, more to the point, because it gives us an inkling of Shelley's solution to the questions that had been haunting him. As the Romance starts, Shelley, in the figure of Verezzi, is just vaguely beginning to identify his persecutors: 'Every thing had till now been obscured by total darkness; and Verezzi, for the first time, saw the masked faces of his persecutors.'<sup>110</sup> At first, though, he has neither confidence nor ability to resist: 'he struggled with his persecutors, but his enfeebled frame was insufficient to support a conflict with the strong-nerved Ugo, and, subdued, he sank fainting into his arms.'<sup>111</sup> But as the Romance proceeds, Shelley seems to acquire more confidence both in the power of his resistance and in the aim he is striving towards: '"I fear nothing," interrupted Verezzi, ..."from your

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108. Letters, I, p.227.

109. Works, V, p.5.

110. Ibid., p.6.

111. Ibid.

vain threats and empty denunciations of vengeance: justice, Heaven! is on my side, and I must eventually triumph."<sup>112</sup>

Shelley's defiance of his enemy, here, seems to be largely based on his attainment of a new vision, a vision that seems to lend him strength to resist the unhappy present. Julia (whom we hardly meet in the Romance except for the very end when Matilda catches sight of her, presumably, as a way of introducing her to her destiny) is remembered by Verezzi as 'an uncertain vision, which floated before his fancy more as an ideal being of another world, whom he might hereafter adore there, than as an enchanting and congenial female to whom his oaths of eternal fidelity had been given.'<sup>113</sup> Against this happy and harmonious vision lies the real world of conformity and convention of which Shelley is, evidently, contemptuous: "'Oh!", exclaimed Matilda,<sup>114</sup> "how shall I touch the obdurate Verezzi's soul? He still despises me - he declares himself to be devoted to the memory of his Julia; and that although she be dead, he is not the less devotedly hers. What can be done?"<sup>115</sup> Nothing can be done. For Shelley had already decided, as he stressed again in St. Irvyne that: 'I must either dive into the recesses of futurity, or I must not, I cannot die.'<sup>116</sup>

This idea of futurity which permeates Shelley's early poetry as much as it does his prose was not, as might be assumed, an escape from the gruesome present; rather it was a sign of understanding it and a promise of the coming challenge. However, it could be justly argued that in 1810 Shelley was suffering from an emotional crisis; his first love (Harriet Grove) was no more and his poetry (especially poems like 'Despair', June 1810, 'Sorrow', August 1810, and 'Melody to a Scene of Former Times') reveals a deep sense of despondency and despair. It is reasonable to assume that these flights of imagination into the unknown future were

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112. Works, V, pp.12-13.

113. Ibid., p.86 (my emphasis).

114. It is clear from my argument that I see the three characters mentioned above as three facets of Shelley's mind. For a different reading of these characters, see Eustace Chesser (Shelley and Zastrozzi, London, 1965), who considers these three characters as well as that of Zastrozzi as different projections of Shelley's bisexuality; he argues that this is confirmed by Shelley's relationship with women.

115. Works, V, p.66.

116. Ibid., p.180.

his only comfort. Carl Grabo's acute remark may usefully be recalled here: 'An overstress of emotion has been the curse of Shelleyan criticism. Shelley the thinker is distorted and obscured in the haze of emotional speculation,'<sup>117</sup> for correlative to the feelings of resentment and emotional despair which coloured Shelley's life in 1810 are the feelings of intellectual maturity, in which Shelley seems to have for the first time fathomed the source of his own suffering and bewilderment:

I ponder'd on the woes of lost mankind,  
I pondered on the ceaseless rage of Kings;  
My rapt soul dwelt upon the ties that bind  
The Mazy volume of commingling things,  
When fell and wild misrule to man stern sorrow brings.

(Supposed to be an Epithalamium of Francis Ravallag  
and Charlotte Cordé 5-9 composed 1810.)

'Wild misrule' is what engendered all these anomalies and miseries of which he, and a good many others, perhaps, are victims. For the first time, Shelley discovered how the individual (any individual) could be bereft of his personal rights and happiness by a political system. Again in another poem written 1810 called 'War' (later published with Posthumous Fragments) he indignantly writes:

Oppressors of mankind to you we owe  
The baleful streams from whence these miseries flow;  
For you how many a mother weeps her son,  
Snatched from life's course ere half his race was run!  
For you how many a widow drops a tear,  
In silent anguish, on her husband's bier! ...  
"Is this the system which thy powerful sway,  
"Which else in shapeless chaos sleeping lay,  
"Form'd and approv'd?

(23-33)

And again:

Monarchs of earth! thine is the baleful deed,  
Thine are the crimes for which thy subjects bleed  
Ah! when will come the sacred fated time,  
When man unsullied by his leaders' crime,  
Despising wealth, ambition, pomp and pride,  
Will stretch him fearless by his foemen's side?

(37-42)

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117. The Magic Plant, Introduction, p.vii.

The 'sacred time' is 'fated' to come, and its coming will make the world a happier and better place. It is to such 'sacred time' and to such a happy future that Shelley was addressing himself in 1810. Moreover, this vision of a better future which Shelley perceived at such an early age was to become the focal point of his literary production and political reasoning. Indeed, eight years later in his dedication to Laon and Cythna, Shelley, recalling how his intellectual energy was burgeoning in 1810, remembers the resolution he took which was to colour his most important political utterances. Talking of his sufferings at school among the 'harsh and grating strife of tyrants and foes', he resolved to be wise:

And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power, for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise  
Without reproach or check.

(32-5)

All the evidence suggests that the uncongenial family atmosphere in Field Place and the unhappy circumstances at both Syon House Academy and Eton had fomented Shelley's aptitude for doubting and questioning and had animated him with a desire to resist what was wrong and unjust. Carl Grabo reads another significance to these circumstances; he believes that they served to teach Shelley very early in life how to do without the moral support of others, 'to become independent in mind and spirit. For a rebel such self-sufficiency is indispensable.'<sup>118</sup>

Shelley's inclinations as a rebel, however, were to be first expressed in his attitude towards religion - in what came to be known as Shelley's 'atheism'. All the theories on Shelley's atheism seem to agree that when the name was first given to him, at Eton, it had little to do with the existence or non-existence of a deity. Hogg, for instance, argues that the word 'atheist' was used at Eton to mean 'Antitheist, rather than an Atheist; for an opposer and contemner of the gods, not one who denies their existence'.<sup>119</sup> At Eton, he adds, 'but at no other school, that I ever heard of, they had the name and office of Atheist; but this usually

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118. The Magic Plant, p.3.

119. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 2 vols (London, 1858), I, pp.137-8.

was not full, it demanded extraordinary daring to attain to it; it was commonly in commission, as it were, and the youths of the greatest hardihood might be considered as boys commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Atheist.'<sup>120</sup> Commenting on this account of Hogg, White informs us that 'Medwin and others were unable to find that the word had any such special meaning at Eton. Perhaps Hogg was softening the actual facts, as he did in quoting Shelley's letters later.' 'Nevertheless,' White significantly adds, 'Shelley's letters bear evidence that if he ever became a genuine atheist it was not until after he left Eton. Mr.C.H.K.Masten, vice-Provost of Eton, comments on this passage: "My impression is that boys are inclined to call any one an 'atheist' whose views are unorthodox, and not too much importance need be attached to the name."<sup>121</sup> Dowden, on the other hand, makes a completely different conjecture: 'Possibly it was his devotion to such writers as Pliny and Lucretius that earned for Shelley the title of "Atheist" from his school fellows.'<sup>122</sup>

There is ample evidence to suggest that even at Oxford Shelley's views on religion had by no means reached their final position, though it is fair to say that his doubts were gaining more ground. What is most characteristic of Shelley at this stage, as his letters to his father just before his expulsion reveal, is an obsessive restlessness to reach the 'truth' of the Christian religion. One letter in particular provides us with a striking insight into Shelley's mind and is, therefore, worth quoting at length:

I do reason on the subject, I do take interest in that reasoning, & from that reasoning I have adduced to my own, I think I cd. to your private satisfaction, that the testimony of the twelve Apostles is insuffic(i)ent to establish the truth of their doctrine, not to mention how much weaker the evidence must become, when filtered thro' so many gradations of history, so many ages ... it is clearly therefore proved that we cannot ... believe facts inconsistent with the general laws of Nature, that

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120. Hogg, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, p.137.

121. N.I.White, Shelley, 2 vols (London, 1947)I, p.570n.

122. Edward Dowden, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 2 vols (London, 1886), I, p.29.

there is no evidence suffic[i]ent, or rather that  
evidence is insufficient to prove such facts.

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Shelley's reasoning was, perhaps, excited and substantiated by his readings of Locke, Voltaire, Lord Kames, Hume, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Franklin and Gibbon whom he mentions in the same letter and whose arguments he recalls. The conclusion he reached by the end of the letter was that 'Religion fetters a reasoning mind with the very bonds which restrain the unthinking one from mischief - This is my great objection to it.'<sup>124</sup>

The first occasion on which Shelley sensed the far-reaching effects of religion on the individual's life was the event when his first love Harriet Grove abandoned him. He had every reason to believe that his cousin left him chiefly, if not solely, because of his reputation as an atheist. He was not far wrong. Charles Henry Grove (Harriet's brother) writes in 1857:

... a continual correspondence was going on, as, I believe, there had been before, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet. But she became uneasy at the tone of his letters on speculative subjects, at first consulting my mother, and subsequently my father also on the subject. This led at last, though I cannot exactly tell how, to the dissolution of an engagement between Bysshe and my sister, which had previously been permitted, both by his father and mine.

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In a poem called 'Dares and Lama' (1810), Shelley views himself as the victim of religion rather than of Harriet:

For in vain from the grasp of Religion I flee.  
The most tenderly loved of my soul  
Are slaves to its chilling control ...  
It pursues me. It blasts me. Oh! where shall I fly?  
What remains but to curse it, to curse it and die

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123. Letters, I, p.50 (To Timothy Shelley, 17 February 1811).

124. Ibid., p.51.

125. Hogg, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, p.551.

126. The Esdaile Notebook, ed. by K.N.Cameron (London, 1964), p.124.

Shelley's letters in this period leave us in no doubt that he held Christianity culpable for his personal loss and despair: 'Oh! Christianity when I pardon this last this severest of thy persecutions.'<sup>127</sup>

If this persecution was the 'severest', it certainly was not the last: the expulsion from Oxford was to follow in just over a year's time and it is here that Shelley's real challenge and defiance to religion started. Just over a month after his expulsion he wrote to Hogg: 'Religion is the child of cold Prejudice & selfish fear; Love of God Xt or the H[oly] G[host] (all the same) certainly springs from the latter motive, is this Love ... I once could tolerate Christ - he then merely injured me - he merely depr[i]ved me of all that I cared for, touching myself, on Earth, but now he has done more and I cannot forgive.'<sup>128</sup> What Christ has 'done' this time is cause not just an emotional chaos which could be tolerated, however hard it may be, but an intellectual one, and, here, there is no room for compromise. The most unbearable effect of the expulsion on Shelley was that it brought his ardent search for truth as he saw it to a frustrating end. This experience strongly impressed upon him that Christianity is not merely a matter of belief and disbelief, a matter of theological debate, but a powerful reality that controls our lives, a strong ally of tyrannical educational and political systems. It was this new insight into the tacit, yet intimate, relation between the Church and the State that allowed Shelley to launch his 'war' against institutional Christianity as part and parcel of the authoritarian political system. In this context, Shelley's challenge to the church is the first form of his challenge to establishments in general. It was only in this sense that he came later to describe himself in a visitors' book at Chamonix, Switzerland, as 'democrat, lover of mankind and atheist',<sup>129</sup> and only in this sense, too, that he took up the word 'atheist', as 'a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice'.<sup>130</sup> It was also precisely in this

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127. Letters, I, p.35 (To T.J.Hogg, 3 December [for January] 1811).

128. Ibid., p.70 (To Hogg, 26 April 1811).

129. Timothy Webb, Shelley: A Voice Not Understood (Manchester, 1977), p.140.

130. E.J.Trelawny, Trelawny's Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron, with introduction by Edward Dowden (London, 1906), p.40.

sense that the bill filed against his publication of Queen Mab stressed that Shelley avowed himself to be 'an atheist & a republican'.<sup>131</sup>

Indeed, Shelley's letters after his expulsion provide us with an array of evidence that his defiance of institutional Christianity was aimed at subverting the whole system, especially the political.<sup>132</sup> For example, in a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener dated 25 July 1811 he argues: 'You are willing to dismiss for the present the subject of Religion. As to its influence on individuals we will - but it is so intimately connected with politics, & augments in so vivid a degree the evils resulting from the system before us.'<sup>133</sup> In the same letter, he goes on to say: 'It is this empire of terror which is established by Religion, Monarchy is it's prototype, Aristocracy may be regarded as symbolising with [sic] its very essence. They are mixed - one can now scarce be distinguished from the other.'<sup>134</sup> The way in which Shelley here manages to discern the interrelation between Religion, Monarchy and Aristocracy might well have played a significant role in his decision to reject both his father's seat in Parliament and the conditions for inheriting the family estate.

The first reference Shelley makes to his being a potential heir of his father's seat in Parliament comes in his first letter to Leigh Hunt addressed from University College Oxford and dated 2 March 1811:

My father is in parliament, and on attaining 21 I shall, in all probability, fill his vacant seat. On account of the responsibility to which my residence at this University subjects me, I of course, dare not publicly to avow all that I think, but the time will come when I hope that my every endeavour, insufficient as this may be, will be directed to the advancement of liberty.  
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131. Letters, I, p.527 (To Mary Shelley, 11 January 1816 [for 1817]).

132. For the kind of reaction Shelley's views on religion received at the time see T.Webb, Shelley: A Voice Not Understood, pp.127-36.

133. Letters, I, p.125.

134. Ibid., p.126.

135. Ibid., p.55 (my emphasis).

Cameron quotes this letter as far as the phrase 'vacant seat', and suggests that Shelley 'was seriously thinking of a political career.'<sup>136</sup> If he was, what sense would the rest of the letter make? Shelley's intention, here, to reject his father's seat, when he dares to avow all that he thinks and pursue his own course of politics is unmistakable. As Cameron suggests, though, Shelley might well have been thinking of a political career, but certainly not as a member of parliament; he was too well aware of his own misgivings about the establishments to want to be part of them. The knowledge he obtained through his visits to the House of Commons (visits that were designed by his father and the Duke of Norfolk to prepare him for taking his seat there) served only to add a sharper edge to his contempt for the political establishment: 'I went with my father several times to the House of Commons, and what creatures did I see there! What faces! what an expression of countenance! what wretched beings!'<sup>137</sup> In the main, Shelley considered the counsel of his father and the Duke of Norfolk to take his seat in parliament when he is twenty-one 'an effort made to shackle his mind, and introduce him into life as a mere follower of the Duke'<sup>138</sup> which, in effect, would stand between him and his own personal politics.

In this context, Hogg's claim that Shelley's rejection of his father's seat in parliament stems chiefly from his abhorrence of political science as a whole is certainly groundless: 'With how unconquerable an aversion do I shrink from political articles in newspapers and reviews!? I have heard people talk politics by the hour, and how I hated it and them!'<sup>139</sup> In fact, Shelley's own account answers Hogg's claim best; on 25 June 1811 he writes to E.Hitchener:

... in politics, here I am enthusiastic. I have reasoned, & my reason has brought me on this subject to the end of my enquir[i]es. I am no aristocrat, or any crat at all but vehemently long for the time when man may dare to live in accordance with Nature & Reason,

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136. The Young Shelley, p.41.

137. Hogg, Shelley at Oxford (London, 1904), pp.125-6.

138. Dowden, Life of Shelley, I, p.134.

139. Hogg, Shelley at Oxford, p.125 and Life, I, p.206.

in consequence with Virtue - to which I firmly believe that Religion, it's establishment, Polity & it's establishments, are the formidable tho' destructible barriers.

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This not only shows Hogg's claim to be palpably false, but it also supports our view that Shelley's rejection of his father's seat in parliament was a rejection of the establishment and a deliberate effort to keep himself free to pursue his own politics - the fact that was viewed with great admiration and respect by the Chartists. Shelley's resignation of the Field Place estate may be understood in the same light. He realized that by inheriting the estate and entailing it to his son (a condition that lies at the centre of the inheritance) he would be serving and perpetuating the aristocratic system, the fact that was incompatible with his moral and political persuasions. In principle, he was at war with a system of hereditary rights which begets social injustice and from which people's suffering and unhappiness ensue. In his first letter to Godwin on 10 January 1812, he writes: 'I am heir by entail to an estate of 6000£ per an.- My principles have induced me to regard the law of primogeniture an evil of primary magnitude. My father's notions of family honour are incoincident with my knowledge of public good. I will never sacrifice the latter to any consideration.'<sup>141</sup> Carl Woodring, whose understanding of Shelley's rejection of his father's seat in Parliament and of Field Place estate is very much in line with our argument, insists that: 'his rejection of most that his father accepted - the calm of their Field Place estate, the comfort of a baronetcy and a Whig seat, the repose of the Church of England - includes in its seeming insolence the excitement of discovering the idea of freedom as well as the psychic rewards of rebellion.'<sup>142</sup> In chapter 4 I shall relate Ernest Jones's similar dilemma between family and fortune on the one hand and political principles, on the other, and his similar decision to Shelley's.

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140. Letters, I, pp.116-17.

141. Ibid., p.228.

142. Politics in English Romantic Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p.232.

However, having scrupulously escaped every effort to 'shackle his mind', Shelley was now free to pursue his own political doctrines and to apply them, wherever and whenever possible to real circumstance. His first experience (and, in a sense his last) as a radical empiricist was to take place on Irish soil. On the 21 April 1812 Byron was speaking in the House of Commons for Catholic Emancipation, describing the union with Ireland as that of 'the shark with his prey; the spoiler swallows up his victim, and thus they become one and indivisible', and warning that 'Napoleon himself would be most grateful for the ministerial defeat of Catholic Emancipation: "it is on the basis of your tyranny Napoleon hopes to build his own"'.<sup>143</sup> The Irish Catholics themselves were presenting a petition on the 14 April 1812 to the Prince Regent describing the dire circumstances of the Roman Catholics in Ireland who are 'subject to severe and humiliating laws, rigidly enforced universally felt, and inflicting upon them divers injurious and vexatious disabilities, incapacities, privations, and penalties, by reason of their conscientious adherence to the religious doctrines of their forefathers', and demanding the right 'to the full enjoyment of religious freedom', to 'all the blessings of a free Constitution' and to a relief of the 'Penal Laws'.<sup>144</sup> At this time Shelley had just returned from Ireland (on the 4 April 1812), where he tried to heal all these grievances and achieve Catholic Emancipation through his own political method rather than through the House of Commons.

Shelley's interest in Ireland, Gerald McNiece suggests, might well have started at Field Place where he would 'doubtless have heard much of the problems of Ireland, for Catholic emancipation stood first in the Whig political program from 1807 to 1812, and was consistently championed by them to Parliament.'<sup>145</sup> Newman Ivey White, on the other hand, traces its first signs to 'Shelley's interest while at Oxford in the case of Peter Finnerty', and his earlier 'acquaintance with the works of George

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143. Marchand, Byron: A Biography, I, p.345.

144. 'Irish Catholics', Cobbett's Political Register, XXI (Jan.-June 1812), p.543.

145. Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, p.47.

Ensor, an Irishman whose books on reform show an interest in Ireland's woes even when the general subject is English.'<sup>146</sup> It seems likely that Shelley had been familiar with the political situation in Ireland long before he ever thought of going there; his 'Irishman's Song' written in October 1809<sup>147</sup> shows that even then he knew about the state of war in Ireland. But whatever the origin of his interest in the state of Ireland might have been (and the above sources suggest, perhaps, its most likely beginnings), his journey to Ireland in 1812 seems to have been chiefly determined by two main factors: first, the heated political situation in Ireland which seemed then to be the ripest in Europe for reform, and second, Shelley's mounting and almost uncontrollable enthusiasm to test his political principles against reality.

By late 1811 and early 1812, Shelley's reasoning was setting him on a new footing, his radicalism was entering a new phase. As his letters to both Elizabeth Hitchener and William Godwin reveal, he no longer believed that contemplation and intellectual discovery of the 'truth' were enough; what was needed (and urgently so) was to implement the 'truth' at whatever cost. To have full knowledge of our right to freedom and happiness is not enough, we have to act and achieve this right; for the oppressors 'may feed & may riot & may sin to the last moment. - The groans of the wretched may pass unheeded till the last moment,'<sup>148</sup> if the people did not act to end oppression and bring the rights they conceived to fruition. It is here that a departure from Godwin became imperative, for contrary to what Political Justice taught him, neither the cycle of history nor the influence of books can be trusted to end tyranny and effect reform:

Political Justice was first published in 1793; nearly twenty years have elapsed since the general diffusion of its doctrines. What has followed? have men ceased to fight, has vice and misery vanished from the earth. - have the fireside communications which it recommends

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146. Shelley, I, p.198. White believes that Shelley 'might have been acquainted with Ensor's earlier books through Dr Lind or through reviews that appeared in the Monthly Review (May 1802), the Eclectic Review (April and May 1807), the Quarterly Review (December 1811) (ibid., I, p.626n).

147. See Works, I, pp.15-16.

148. Letters, I, p.213 (To E.Hitchener, 26 December 1811).

taken place? - Out of the many who have read that inestimable book how many have been blinded by prejudice, how many in short have taken it up to gratify an ephemeral vanity and when the hour of its novelty had passed threw it aside and yielded with fashion to the arguments of Mr. Malthus.  
149

Without action, philosophical radicalism is of no avail; here the philosopher has become a reformer and the political theorist has adopted the role of a political activist. Indeed, a few days before his departure to Ireland Shelley knew himself to be so swayed by his passion for action that he asked Elizabeth Hitchener to come and balance it by her 'just speculation': 'I shall excite you to action, you will excite me to just speculation. - We should mutually correct each others weaknesses, and confirm our powers.'<sup>150</sup>

Ireland,<sup>151</sup> where Shelley arrived in the first week of February 1812, was for the young activist 'a theatre, the widest and fairest for the operations of the determined friend of religious and political freedom';<sup>152</sup> it was for Shelley the most convenient place where he could test his political doctrines against an actual political reality. These doctrines were succinctly expressed in his first political tract: An Address to the Irish People.

In The Address Shelley argues that self-reform is the most pertinent foundation for political reform: 'Before Government is done away with,' he time and again impressed upon the Irish people, 'we must reform ourselves. It is this work which I would earnestly recommend to you, O Irishmen, REFORM YOURSELVES.'<sup>153</sup> According to Shelley, reform can and must be realised not through violence (which he fervidly warned against),

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149. Letters, I, p.267. Although this letter was addressed to Godwin from Ireland (12 March 1812), there is no doubt that Shelley was in the same state of mind before he left.

150. Ibid., p.245 (29 January 1812).

151. For a full account of Shelley in Ireland, see Dawson, The Unacknowledged Legislator, pp.134-65.

152. Works, V, p.246.

153. Ibid., p.232.

but through 'sobriety', 'regularity', and 'thought', for 'Temperance, sobriety, charity and independence will give you virtue; and reading, talking, thinking and searching, will give you wisdom; when you have those things you may defy the tyrant.'<sup>154</sup> Moreover, knowledge and education, he stressed, were indispensable prerequisites of the political reform he longed to see taking place. Therefore he reduced his moral and political principles in The Address 'into the simplest language'<sup>155</sup> and concentrated his efforts on familiarising 'to uneducated apprehensions ideas of liberty, benevolence, peace and toleration'.<sup>156</sup> The mission of enlightening the people was to be followed by setting up public organizations for 'associations conducted in the spirit of sobriety, regularity, and thought, are one of the best and most efficient of those means which I would recommend for the production of happiness, liberty and virtue'.<sup>157</sup> Such associations, he hoped, when he actually proposed 'an Association of Philanthropists' would not be confined to Ireland 'or to any other country, but for the time being'.<sup>158</sup> To his great disappointment all the issues he passionately raised received very little response from the public. His sense of mission palled, his hopes of any real success faded away, and he grew sick of Dublin and sailed back to England in the first week of April 1812.

A principal reason, perhaps, for Shelley's failure in his Irish campaign was singled out by him in a letter to Godwin, sent from Ireland on 18 March 1812: 'My schemes of organizing the ignorant I confess to be ill-timed.'<sup>159</sup> It was organizing the ignorant that proved to be an impossible task. If Shelley had some ideas about the political situation in Ireland before he went there, he certainly had no inkling of the yoke of ignorance and poverty to which the Irish people (especially the Catholics) were subjected: 'I had no conception of the depth of human misery until now.'<sup>160</sup> Many of these poverty-stricken people could not

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154. Works, V, p.229.

155. Letters, I, p.243 (To Godwin, 26 January 1812).

156. Ibid., p.239.

157. Works, V, p.238.

158. Ibid., p.257.

159. Letters, I, p.276.

160. Ibid., p.268.

understand the questions he was fervently trying to explain and a greater number still could not read the pamphlets that were intended to impart to them the principles of reform: 'Catholic Ireland,' says W.O.Morris, of Ireland at the time, 'lay, it may be said, in darkness, ... Three-fourths of the Catholics probably could not read or write.'<sup>161</sup> What is more, Shelley was no less unfamiliar with the Irish polity; he apparently underestimated the power the Irish Aristocracy held over the country.<sup>162</sup> In consequence, his efforts to achieve reform failed to square with his plans, and his ambitions to emancipate Ireland came to a premature and disappointing end.

Nevertheless, Shelley's Irish mission has always claimed an overriding importance in the study of his politics;<sup>163</sup> it certainly does so here, for two main reasons: first, Shelley's Irish tracts contain the most cardinal traits of his political philosophy which pervade his later prose and poetry, and second, Shelley's journey to Ireland was a significant turning point in his political career.

As has been indicated, Shelley went to Ireland as an earnest political activist, but he came back with a different conception of his own forte. In Ireland, Shelley saw, as never before, the actual impossibility of immediate reform; before the people could reform either themselves or the world, the daunting job of educating and enlightening them had to be tackled, a task that would perhaps take generations to achieve. He at once became more aware of the necessity of reform and of the difficulty of achieving one in the foreseeable future. His own words best explain the cause and nature of the change he was still undergoing when he wrote to Godwin on 8 March 1812:

The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest & most miserable of all. - In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together - one mass of animated filth! With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me, how self-confident too, do I feel in my assumption to

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161. William O'Connor Morris, Ireland 1798-1898 (London, 1898), p.15.

162. See his letter to E.Hitchener, 14 March 1812, Letters, I, p.275.

163. K.N.Cameron's, Gerald McNiece's and Paul Dawson's studies are prominent examples.

teach the lessons of virtue to those who grind their fellow beings into worse than annihilation. These were the persons to whom in my fancy I had addressed myself; how quickly were my views on this subject changed! yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither.  
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In other words, while his hopes of achieving reform in Ireland abated, his 'perceptions of its necessity'<sup>165</sup> gained more strength. The insight Shelley had in Ireland into the bitterness of poverty and ignorance made him a more devoted and more ardent votary of reform, but it was a different kind of reform from the one he envisaged before his Irish experience: it was a reform which 'will take place ages after I shall have mouldered into dust'.<sup>166</sup>

What we have thenceforth is a political poet who through his writings is preparing the foundation for distant reform, with the occasional bursts - such as the one in 1819 - of fostering, and perhaps raising, hopes of a more immediate one. Mary Shelley, in her 'Notes on the Early Poems' (1802-1815) bears witness to this statement; she informs us that in the summer of 1815 Shelley 'had chiefly aimed at extending his political doctrines; and attempted so to do by appeals, in prose essays, to the people, exhorting them to claim their rights; but he had now begun to feel that the time for action was not ripe in England, and that the pen was the only instrument wherewith to prepare the way for better things.'<sup>167</sup> Chapter 2 will examine how Shelley did 'prepare the way for better things'.

Between 1812 and 1816, however, Shelley, as Gerald McNiece<sup>168</sup> and Paul Dawson<sup>169</sup> observe, absented himself from the course of political events. The reasons, as Paul Dawson suggests, are partly personal - the break up of his first marriage, elopement with Mary, visit to the continent,

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164. Letters, I, p.268 (my emphasis).

165. Ibid., p.275 (To E.Hitchener, 14 March 1812).

166. Ibid., p.277 (To Godwin, 18 March 1812).

167. Works, III, p.120 (my emphasis).

168. See Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, p.52.

169. See The Unacknowledged Legislator, p.166.

an uneasy financial situation - but mostly political. The movement for political reform was at a low ebb, and the political scene was quiet: it is to be remembered that 'the periods in which Shelley was most actively involved with political issues (1810-12, 1816-17, 1819-20) were also the periods when the movement for Parliamentary Reform was most active.'<sup>170</sup> But what has to be stressed is that Shelley's response to political events in 1816-17 and 1819-20 was essentially different from the one we have just discussed in 1812.

In 1817, the movement for Parliamentary Reform was burgeoning again; Major John Cartwright presented his Bill of Rights and Liberties in which he urged, among other things, 'Universal Male Suffrage', 'Annual Parliaments', 'Equal Representation in Parliament for Scotland, Ireland and England', and 'Equal Electoral Districts' (the demands that were to constitute the main points of the Charter in the 1840s); 'local riots and hunger marches of colliers and iron-workers increased, Hampden Clubs and clubs of Spencean Philanthropists had sprung up all over England and Scotland',<sup>171</sup> so much so that a 'secret committee of the House of Commons reported in 1817 that "nothing short of a revolution" was the real object of the Hampden Clubs',<sup>172</sup> and Mary Shelley used to 'shudder' on reading Cobbett's Register.<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, Shelley's life was quite happy at Marlow where he enjoyed the occasional association with Hunt and his circle and followed with great interest the political situation through the pages of Hunt's Examiner. There is nothing to suggest that he contemplated joining Major John Cartwright or Francis Burdett in their movements to achieve Parliamentary Reform.

Shelley was alarmed by the rapidly escalating course of events and the menacing political situation: 'you have received intimations of the tumultuous state of England', he wrote to Byron on 20 November 1816, 'The whole fabric of society presents a most threatening aspect. What is most

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170. The Unacknowledged Legislator, p.166.

171. White, Shelley, I, p.513.

172. Ibid., p.514.

173. See ibid., p.515.

ominous of an approaching change is the strength which the popular party have suddenly acquired, and the importance which the violence of demagogues has assumed.'<sup>174</sup> Hence, he might well have thought that it was incumbent on him to put his mind towards defusing the situation. This might provide a partial explanation for his writing and publishing in 1817 his most moderate political tract A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote Throughout the Kingdom, in which he stressed that the country was not ready for either Male Universal Suffrage or the abolition of Aristocracy and Monarchy. Not that he was a less devoted adherent of these policies than Major John Cartwright or William Cobbett, but he argued that the 'securest method of arriving at such beneficial innovations, is to proceed gradually and with caution', for 'the consequences of the immediate extension of the elective franchise to every male adult, would be to place power in the hands of men who have been rendered brutal and torpid and ferocious by ages of slavery.'<sup>175</sup> the judgement that, as his Preface to The Revolt of Islam (written in the same year at Marlow) shows, the French Revolution had deeply impressed upon his mind.

The other significant fact to be stressed here, is that Shelley's literary production in 1817 mounted to 'a total of about six thousand lines'<sup>176</sup> of poetry in less than a year. He wrote Laon and Cythna, Prince Athanase, 'a good part of Rosalind and Helen, and twenty-six shorter poems and fragments ... In addition he wrote the prefaces to Frankenstein and History of a Six Weeks' Tour, and his pamphlet on the death of the Princess Charlotte.'<sup>177</sup> This grand total of literary production coupled with his cautious views on any immediate political change support our argument that Shelley was now convinced that the powers he has 'to interest, or substantially to improve mankind'<sup>178</sup> are those of a poet rather than of a political activist. Writing, he came to believe, is the only valuable

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174. Letters, I, p.513.

175. Works, VI, p.68.

176. White, Shelley, I, p.527.

177. Ibid.

178. Letters, I, p.517 (To Leigh Hunt, 8 December 1816).

asset with which he can effectively contribute to reforming and regenerating mankind. Shelley's life in 1817, Mary Shelley notes, 'was spent more in thought than action - he had lost the eager spirit which believed it could achieve what it projected for the benefit of mankind.'<sup>179</sup> That is why the tumult of political events in 1817 elicited an impressive literary production from Shelley - this was to be his role in influencing and directing political events, and was to be by no means a meagre one.

The year 1817 is particularly important in the study of Shelley's politics because it was the year which directly preceded Shelley's departure to Italy. His subsequent absence from the political arena in Britain has inevitably allowed more room for speculation on what his political career might have been, had he remained in England. K.N.Cameron suggests that had Shelley remained in England he would almost certainly have joined 'the Anti-Manchester Massacre demonstrations of 1819, and he would certainly have been active in the cause of Greek Independence.'<sup>180</sup> On the other hand, Paul Dawson suggests that Shelley's political career came to an end in 1817 because of his travel to the continent - indeed one might conjecture that the latter was, at least in part, the result of the former: 'Shelley's clock stopped in 1817, politically speaking. His move to Italy in 1818 cut him off from many sources of information, and from all possibility of an intimate knowledge of the state of opinion in England.'<sup>181</sup> What I have tried to suggest is that Shelley's political career as an activist stopped well before he left England; it stopped in 1812 after he left Ireland; it was certainly at a halt in 1817 when the country was in a revolutionary mood which he found rather menacing. Hence, the judgement that had Shelley been in England in 1819, he would have joined the political activists is very much open to question. He would only have done so had he been certain that the time was ripe for some success, and this was not seen by him to be the case. It could be justly argued, though, that his poems of 1819 strongly urge an immediate reform

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179. 'Notes to the Poems of 1817'.

180. Shelley: The Golden Years, p.147.

181. The Unacknowledged Legislator, p.178.

and convey a formidable faith in its success, but what has to be remembered is that these poems were written in response to the news reaching him on the pages of The Examiner or other sources which gave him an exaggerated impression of the political situation in England. Indeed, after he wrote 'The Masque of Anarchy' and got a better insight into the course of political events, his tone became almost as guarded as it was in 1817; on 14-18 November 1819 he writes to Leigh Hunt: 'I fear that in England things will be carried violently by the rulers, and that they will not have learned to yield in time to the spirit of the age. The great thing to do is to hold the balance between popular impatience and tyrannical obstinacy; to inculcate with fervour both the right of resistance and the duty of forbearance.'<sup>182</sup>

While in Italy (1818-22), however, Shelley, although maintaining an unyielding interest in the political situation in England (as his letters, especially of 1819-20 amply demonstrate), and writing his most important political tract, A Philosophical View of Reform (1819-20), there is no sign of him considering taking any part in any political event. Whereas Byron became 'increasingly absorbed in Italian affairs'<sup>183</sup> and 'had spoken a number of times of coming over to take a leading role in a revolution', for 'To take part with Kinnaird and Hobhouse and others in a reform movement by peaceful means was hardly enough,'<sup>184</sup> there is no suggestion that Shelley ever contemplated such an engagement.

Admittedly, the reason for that is not as straightforward as one would like to imagine; Byron felt more at ease with foreigners, lived with Italian people, knew, as Marchand remarks, through Italian artisans and also through Teresa's father, Count Ruggero Gamba, a good deal about Italian political movements and organizations,<sup>185</sup> whereas Shelley remained very much an Englishman, making contacts with English people abroad, reading English journals and discussing English politics. Another reason might be

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182. Letters, II, p.153.

183. Marchand, Byron: A Biography, II, p.848.

184. Ibid., p.818.

185. See ibid., p.848.

that being a political activist meant different things to Byron and Shelley. In this particular respect, one might agree with Marchesa Origo who suggests that if Byron 'had played for so many years the rebel's part, it was because society, to his mind, had not been kind to him. But he never questioned - as Shelley did - the essential validity of the social laws.'<sup>186</sup> Alternatively, Shelley might have believed that the spark of revolution, once kindled on the continent, was bound to spread and triumph; it was in such a state of mind that in 1821 he wrote Hellas in anticipation of the triumph of the Greek revolution. Yet there might still be room for one more conjecture: in Italy, as was the case in England of 1817, Shelley was vigorously pursuing his chosen role of influencing political events through the use of his pen. Even in his political poems of 1819 which are rightly considered the most fervently political of his compositions, Shelley, it could be argued, was still performing his enduring role of a political poet.

Although starting as a revolutionary who wanted to reform the world, Shelley began after 1812 to accommodate himself to the role of political poet with the necessary corollary that reform would take many generations. This conclusion is vitally important in any comparison of the Chartist poets and Shelley: their efforts to affect political events through their poetic compositions were, it will be argued, in more than one respect, congenial.

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186. Marchand, Byron: A Biography, II, p.854.

Chapter 2

POLITICS AND POETRY: IDEAL  
AND PRACTICAL REFORM

'Shelley's politics are woven into the texture of his poetry; and his poetry springs out of the same attitude to life as his politics.'  
(G.D.H.Cole, Politics and Literature, London, 1929, p.113.)

Although most studies of Shelley's politics tend to assume that his prose contains the essence of his political philosophy, it was chiefly his poetry that fired the imagination of British radicals between 1830s-1860s and established Shelley's reputation as a radical political thinker at a time when his prose was hardly known. Despite the fact that poetry remained for Shelley 'very subordinate to moral and political science, & if I were well, certainly I should aspire to the latter',<sup>1</sup> it none the less offered him his only chance to operate as a politician and, perhaps, to influence the course of actual political events. Indeed, Shelley's desire to participate in political happenings - 'I wish that I had health or spirits that would enable me to enter into public affairs, or that I could find words to express all that I feel & know'<sup>2</sup> - found marked expression in his poetic compositions. Through the indirect teaching of poetry Shelley hoped to move 'mankind to imagine, and so eventually to create, a better social order'.<sup>3</sup> Poetry, in this context, became an activity: in a sense, a political activity which is not a shadow of the real world, but an intrinsic part of it, an activity that could influence, even reshape the real world of events.

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1. Letters, II, p.71 (To Peacock, 23-4 January 1819).
  2. Letters, II, p.22 (To Godwin, 25 July 1818).
  3. Laura Johnson Wylie, Social Studies in English Literature (New York, 1916), p.209.

Yet the emphasis on Shelley's poetic theory as being partly Platonic and partly Expressive<sup>4</sup> seems to have overshadowed Shelley's stress on the moral effect of poetry. Although it seems obvious that 'If the business of poetry is somehow to express ideal perfection, it may seem to follow that the poet should embody in his poems his beliefs about this perfection and the way to approach it, and should thus have a moral purpose and aim to be a teacher',<sup>5</sup> the fact remains that an over stress on Shelley's Platonic and Expressive theory of poetry often results in underestimating the other side to his poetic theory which stipulates that 'poetry does benefit men, and benefits them morally'.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that in his discussion of the Romantic poets Abrams recognizes fine distinctions amongst them, none the less the gist of his argument is that the Expressive theory was the most prevalent in the Romantic era. What he fails to stress, however, is that the Pragmatic theory was still of considerable significance to the old generation of the Romantics (Wordsworth and Coleridge) and that it witnessed a partial revival amongst the younger generation of the Romantics - particularly in Shelley.

Indeed, the poet as creator, whose creations include not only poetry but the new social order, has never been held in such esteem as he was in the Romantic era, nor the manifold aspects of this role been so deeply and comprehensively explored. Wordsworth's Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads 1800, Coleridge's Biographia Literaria (1817) and Shelley's Defence of Poetry (1821) are the major critical essays which deal with the poet's role. To create what he finds lacking both in man and the universe is at the centre of Wordsworth's definition of a poet; a poet, he believes:

has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be

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4. See M.H.Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (London, 1977), p.126.

5. A.C.Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London, 1909), pp.167-8.

6. Ibid., p.168.

common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.

7

Again, in a passage to be later echoed by Shelley in his 'Ode to the West Wind' and Defence of Poetry, Wordsworth, in terms which could be taken to refer to nature, describes the poet as:

... the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, -in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed,-the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.

8

The associations of his terminology 'rock, nature, preserver, soil, climate, destroyed, and earth' suggest an implicit comparison between Nature and the poet in terms both of comprehensiveness and creativity; 'destroyed' and 'preserver' in this context are particularly Shelleyan.

Poetry's objective was to be nothing less than the 'truth', 'not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony,'<sup>9</sup> a decree again to be echoed by Shelley in his Defence of Poetry: 'Poetry strengthens that faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. A poet therefore would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place

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7. William Wordsworth, Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads, 1800, The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, 4 vols (Boston, 1824), I, p.lxxxiv.

8. Ibid., p.lxxxix.

9. Ibid., p.lxxxvi.

and time, in his poetical creations which participate in neither'.<sup>10</sup>  
In Chapter XIV of his Biographia Literaria, where he discusses  
Wordsworth's Preface, Coleridge stresses that 'the immediate purpose'  
of poetry is 'the communication of truths',<sup>11</sup> and the main function of  
the poet is to bring 'the whole soul of man into activity, with the  
subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their  
relative worth and dignity.'<sup>12</sup>

The role of the poet as creator of 'volitions and passions' and  
discoverer of 'philosophical truth' was extended by Shelley to con-  
siderably more material and practical concerns. Although, on the one  
hand, Shelley still employed abstract terms to describe poets as those  
who 'measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature  
with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit',<sup>13</sup> on the other, he  
emphasized the role of the poet as 'legislator'. It is quite clear  
that he did not employ the term in its legal sense only, but in its  
social and political ones too. Shelley's definition of poetry as 'the  
most unfailing herald, or companion, or follower, of an universal  
employment of the sentiments of a nation to the production of beneficial  
change',<sup>14</sup> occurring both in his Philosophical View of Reform and in  
Defence of Poetry stresses the last two significations of the term  
'legislator'. Shelley's views on the social role of poetry are made  
explicit in his Philosophical View of Reform where he stresses that  
poets are 'not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance  
and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors  
of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the  
arts of life.'<sup>15</sup>

But the question of Shelley's didacticism has always been a  
controversial one, not least because of Shelley's own declarations on

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10. Works, VII, p.118.

11. S.T.Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. by J.Shawcross, 2 vols  
(Oxford, 1907), II, p.9.

12. Ibid., p.12.

13. Works, VII, p.140.

14. Ibid., p.19 (and with slight variation, p.140).

15. Ibid., p.112.

the subject which if taken out of context could be quite misleading. Shelley did, of course, stress that 'it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse'.<sup>16</sup> Yet, this is immediately followed by: 'My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence'.<sup>17</sup> Both sides of this argument had been produced by Shelley before in his Preface to The Revolt of Islam where he also insisted that: 'I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind by methodical and systematic argument'. Again this is qualified by: 'I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed'. In both instances (which are representative of Shelley's long-life stance on this point) Shelley is anxious to reject the word 'didactic' in its narrow and limited sense ('solely to direct enforcement of reform' and 'methodical and systematic argument') only inasmuch as he is anxious to accept it in its broader and more refined sense ('to familiarise the highly refined imaginations', 'to awaken the feelings' and incite 'to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed'). (My emphasis.) A.C. Bradley who, in his 'Shelley's View of Poetry',<sup>18</sup> shows a shrewd insight into these two bents of Shelley's mind seems fortunately to have set the tone for later critics. Not many Shelley scholars would disagree now that Shelley's rejection of the word 'didactic' stems from the narrow meaning he attributed to the term and that in wider and more general terms Shelley is essentially a didactic poet.

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16. Preface to Prometheus Unbound.

17. Ibid.

18. See Oxford Lectures on Poetry, pp.167-74.

The history of Shelley criticism points to the significance of didacticism in its judgements - a significance that does not suffer from the disparity, sometimes the contradictions, among these judgements. Shelley's contemporaries, poets and otherwise, touched upon this strand in his poetry and, generally speaking, were not very impressed. In a rather uncharacteristically favourable note, Byron ascribed Shelley's lack of success as a poet to the principles of reform he was intent on imparting: 'There's Shelley has more poetry in him than any man living; and if he were not so mystical, and would not write Utopias and set himself up as a Reformer, his right to rank as a poet, and very highly too, could not fail of being acknowledged.'<sup>19</sup> To Wordsworth, however, both Shelley and Byron were 'moral suspects' and teachers of 'dangerous doctrines, made all the more seductively dangerous by the fineness of the art by which they were conveyed'.<sup>20</sup> But it was chiefly on Shelley's poetry - or rather on the principles conveyed in the poetry - that contemporary journals vented their attacks. For instance, in a review of Rosalind and Helen, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine argues that while the poem

breathes throughout strong feeling, and strong passion, and strong imagination, it exhibits at the same time a strange perversion of moral principle - a wilful misrepresentation of the influence of the laws of human society on human virtue and happiness - and a fierce and contemptuous scorn of those sacred institutions which nature protects and guards for the sake of her own worth and dignity.

21

Again, the Blackwood's review of Prometheus Unbound reads in part:

'... it is quite impossible that there should exist a more pestiferous mixture of blasphemy, sedition, and sensuality, than is visible in the whole structure and strain of this poem'.<sup>22</sup> On the whole, the magazine insisted

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19. Thomas Medwin, Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron, 2 vols (Paris, 1824), II, p.44.

20. David Watson Rannie, Wordsworth and His Circle (London, 1907), p.262.

21. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, V (June 1819), pp.268-74 (p.268).

22. Ibid., VII (Sept. 1820), pp.679-87 (p.680).

that 'there are many wicked and foolish things in Mr. Shelley's creed',<sup>23</sup> nor was it the only journal to express such views of Shelley's poetry; the same article testifies that 'By our periodical critics he [Shelley] has either been entirely overlooked, or slightly noticed, or grossly abused'.<sup>23a</sup>

In complete contrast to this vein of criticism, the Journals of the Owenites and the Chartists in the 1830s-50s extolled Shelley's creeds and viewed with great admiration his use of poetry as a vehicle for his political principles. No secret was made of the fact that the doctrines conveyed in the poetry were of central importance to the current evaluations of Shelley's utterances. He was acknowledged as a great artist who could through his art stir the 'slumbering multitudes', and involve his readers with the issues he was raising. Hence, the question was not whether they liked his poetry but what his poetry was and what it did. Yet unless they were conscious of how his poetry worked they could not have penetrated into the essence of what it was about. To have comprehended the gist of his poems they must have apprehended the nature of the medium used. In other words, although the Owenite and the Chartist criticism of Shelley's poems is primarily concerned with the political themes of these poems, this criticism necessarily implies an apprehension of Shelley's aesthetics. Shelley's poetry made an impact on later radicals not only because of what it says but because of what it is. Had Shelley said the same thing in a different literary genre or in a different poetic form, it might have made a completely different impact on the same groups of radicals. One cannot separate what poetry says from what it is: Shelley's popularity with the Owenites and the Chartists comes not from the political themes alone, but from the appreciation of his poetical forms, however little these were actually discussed or pointed out.

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23. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, VI (Nov. 1819), pp.148-54 (p.154).

23a. Ibid., p.153. For a full account of contemporary reviews of Shelley's poetry see F.C.Mason, A Study in Shelley Criticism (Pennsylvania, 1937), pp.19-67.

To the Owenites and the Chartists, Shelley was a political poet because poetry in his hands offered an ideal medium for expressing the social and political principles of the new social order towards which they, themselves, were striving. He was a particular favourite because he held his experience of the social fabric and his views on changing that fabric in a beautiful balance between what is possible and can be, and what is probable and might be.

This balance, they believed, is one which eschews on the one hand, the quick but violent way of the anarchist and, on the other, the comprehensive but too contemplative way of the philosophical radical. They saw no hiatus between Shelley's ideal compositions and his more practical ones. The political themes of his poetry were understood to convey a consistent political philosophy, adapted in different historical circumstances towards different political ends. Shelley's idealistic politics were seen to be interconnected with his more practical politics and his vision of an ultimate reform complemented his incitement to a more immediate one. According to the Chartists, Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound were aimed at enhancing their sense of moral and social issues while the political poems of 1819 were understood to be dedicated to effecting political change.

The poems I read in this chapter are those which were most often read by both the Owenites and the Chartists and my primary aim in reading them is to account for the Owenites' and the Chartists' interest. Thus my task here is not to offer a full appraisal of these poems but to look into the factors which made these poems popular for later radicals, and established Shelley's reputation as a political poet of the first order. The chapter will be divided into two inter-related parts: first, Ideal Reform under which heading come Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, and second, Immediate Reform under which we study a selection of Shelley's political poems of 1819. Our study of these poems here will, I hope, throw some light on the grounds of Shelley's popularity amongst the Owenites and the Chartists and prepare the necessary framework within which his relation to these radicals may be examined in the chapters to follow.

I. IDEAL REFORM.

A. Queen Mab

The first step for the sinner on the road to conversion is to try to realize the sinful state of his soul. The same is true of a nation in need of reform. Unless its shortcomings are vividly brought home to it, reformation will never take place. To do this was and still is the work of Queen Mab. It laid bare the weaknesses of State and Church; it engendered the spirit of compassion and thus paved the way for reform.

(Daniel J. MacDonald, The Radicalism of Shelley and its Sources, Washington, 1912, p.38.)

In contrast to its inflammatory tone, heated enthusiasm, 'seemingly recalcitrant material',<sup>24</sup> and militant reputation, Queen Mab enacts, though in rudimentary form, the cautious politics of The Revolt of Islam and the sober and more complex politics of Prometheus Unbound. 'The grand & comprehensive topics' of Queen Mab, as Shelley points out, are 'The Past, the Present, & the Future';<sup>25</sup> its vision (like that of Condorcet's Sketch of a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind)<sup>26</sup> is that of history as 'the story of liberty'.<sup>27</sup>

The central concern of Shelley in Queen Mab is that of the historian poet who, as described by Shelley himself in his Defence of Poetry, 'not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but ... beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germ of the flower and the fruit of latest time'.<sup>28</sup> According to Harvey Gross, the historian poet 'who constructs a vision

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24. Grabo, The Magic Plant, p.118.

25. Letters, I, p.324.

26. See pp.6 and 7 above.

27. Pratap Singh, 'Philosophical Interpretation of History in the Poetry of Shelley', Calcutta Review, New series, I, No.4 (April-June 1970), pp.601-12 (p.601).

28. Works, VII, p.112.

of history or attempts to fathom the meaning of the past must ask questions of political import',<sup>29</sup> is necessarily a politician:

If we may say that Eliot and Pound, Yeats and Joyce, Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse, reveal in their work a philosophy of history, then they make at least a literary commitment to political ideas. I do not, of course, assume that The Waste Land and The Magic Mountain sound trumpet calls to political action. But as works assessing the worth of a culture from either the stability of a believed tradition or from a continually shifting perspective of contrary values, they inevitably imply politics.  
30

K.N.Cameron maintains that the pivotal point of Shelley's theory of history 'as given in the first chapter of A Philosophical View of Reform and other works, is that history is essentially a struggle between two sets of forces, the forces of liberty and the forces of despotism'.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, weaving his knowledge of history into a permanent struggle between 'the unextinguishable spirit of Liberty, and the ever watchful spirit of fraud and tyranny',<sup>32</sup> Shelley in Queen Mab presents man's engagement with the movement of history and his efforts to comprehend its essence as a principal form of his search for freedom; Mab, who is, in many ways, the poet's own voice,<sup>33</sup> is essentially free because she has:

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29. Harvey Gross, 'History as Metaphysical Pathos: Modern Literature and the Idea of History', The University of Denver Quarterly, I, No.3 (Autumn 1966), pp.1-22 (p.19).

30. Ibid.

31. 'The Social Philosophy of Shelley', Sewanee Review, I (Oct. 1942), pp.457-66 (p.458).

32. Works, VII, p.7.

33. There is a consensus view amongst Shelley critics (with which I agree) that Shelley projected himself into the main characters of his poetic compositions. Wilfred S.Dowden, for example, suggests that Shelley's characters are 'in most cases, projections of his own mind - we can see Shelley in the Faery of Queen Mab and in each of the characters fighting on the side of right in The Revolt of Islam ... It was the poet's constant task to scatter (his) words among mankind, and Laon, Cythna and other characters in this and other poems are media chosen for that purpose'. ('Shelley's Use of Metempsychosis in The Revolt of Islam', The Rice Institute Pamphlet, XXXVIII (April, 1951), pp.55-72 (p.58).

The secrets of the immeasurable past,  
In the unfailing consciences of men,  
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find:  
The future, from the causes which arise

34

(I. 167-72)

Precisely because of this knowledge, the lack of which leaves man a slave to his circumstances, Mab perceives the harmonious system of the universe and penetrates its mode of operation:

Above, below, around  
The circling systems formed  
A wilderness of harmony;  
Each with undeviating aim,  
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space  
Pursued its wonderous way.

(II. 77-82)

Both this knowledge and the subsequent insight it generates are the formidable bases of Mab's free and happy world, a world to which only man's soul could be admitted.

The distinction Shelley makes between man's soul and body in Queen Mab has significant bearings on his argument. Despite the appearance of Ianthe's ostensibly dead body, the poet has no doubt that she will wake again:

Yes! she will wake again,  
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,  
And silent those sweet lips,  
Once breathing eloquence,

(I. 31-4)

This visual image of Ianthe's slumbering body on the one hand, and the poet's unshaken faith in her coming revival on the other, symbolises the inevitable regeneration of the universe despite the semblance of tyranny and injustice which indicates the contrary. Furthermore, this

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34. The edition I used for this study of Queen Mab is the 1840 edition published by James Watson; Queen Mab with Notes, to which is added a brief memoir of the author (London, 1840).

image of Ianthe prefigures two other images of the cycle of death and rebirth both in man and in nature. Of the generations of men Shelley says:

They rise, they fall; one generation comes  
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.  
It fades, another blossoms ...

(IV. 227-9)

Correlative to this regeneration in man is the regeneration in nature which is equally certain and inevitable:

THUS do the generations of the earth  
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,  
Surviving still the imperishable change  
That renovates the world; even as the leaves  
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year  
Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped  
For many seasons there ...  
They fertilize the land they long deformed,  
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs  
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,  
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.

(V. 1-15)

The parallel between these two images entails the view that man's sufferings and servitude are by no means a permanent condition, rather they are unmistakable signs of the coming 'spring' when justice, equality and freedom will prevail.

Shelley is not, of course, the first Romantic poet to talk of man's body and soul as two entities. Coleridge, for instance, stressed that body and spirit may be supposed to be 'different modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum'.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, in his Religious Musings which, according to D.J.MacDonald, has been called Coleridge's Queen Mab, Coleridge argues for the immortality of the soul against the vanity of the body:

Believe thou, O my soul,  
Life is a vision shadowy of Truth,  
And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,

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35. S.T.Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, I, p.88

Shapes of a dream! The veiling clouds retire,  
And lo! Throne of the redeeming God  
Forth flashing unimagined day  
Wraps in one blaze earth, heaven and deepest hell.

(413-19)

Yet Shelley's distinction between body and soul in Queen Mab is significant not just because, as Ross Greig Woodman explains, it presents a doctrine held by Taylor and Newton according to which man is 'a divinity imprisoned in flesh, gradually releasing himself from the restless wheel of life, and finally, when purified, returning to his original state',<sup>36</sup> but also because it highlights, as we shall see, another distinction between the intellectual world of man where man's soul and reason are supreme and the material universe which is subject to the law of Nature or Necessity. It is an issue of some consequence, as we shall find in our discussion of Necessity and free will, that the soul of man:

Pants for its sempiternal heritage,  
And ever changing, ever-rising still,  
Wantons in endless being

(I. 149-51)

whereas the body:

Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;  
Then like an useless and worn-out machine,  
Rots, perishes and passes.

(I. 154-6)

Hence, it is only the soul of Ianthe, and not her body which is summoned by Mab to commence her mission of knowledge and emancipation (I. 130-8).

But not every soul can purge itself from its earthly chains as the soul of Ianthe did, and embark on the same enlightening mission, for the 'envied boon' to the immortally free world is worthy only of the 'good and sincere', only of:

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36. The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley (Toronto, 1964), p.77.

Those who have struggled, and with resolute will  
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains  
The icy chains of custom, and have shone  
The day-stars of their age; ...

(I. 125-8)

It is worth bearing in mind what the above lines patently stress - man's 'resolute will' is a principal means of challenging tyranny and breaking the chains of slavery.

Man's quest for freedom in Queen Mab is, in many respects, a quest for knowledge; its aim is to fathom the past and apprehend the present. Shelley insists that a perceptive insight into past history would see no glory in what we call great civilizations, rather it would reveal them as shameful signs of tyranny and servitude, as the unwanted tellers who stand to tell 'A melancholy tale, to give / An awful warning' - the tale being that of man's suffering. On seeing the Pyramids, Mab explains to Ianthe that:

... many a widow, many an orphan cursed  
The building of that fane; and many a father,  
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored  
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,  
And spare his children the detested task  
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning  
The choicest days of life  
To soothe a dotard's vanity.

(II, 141-8)

Here Shelley palpably echoes Volney's views of great ruins as symbols of tyranny and slavery.<sup>37</sup> Constantin François Chasseboeuf Volney (1757-1825) who actually visited Palmyra in Syria and the Pyramids in Egypt in the years 1783-5 (and whose account of both places is reproduced by Shelley in Queen Mab, II, 110-61), explains in his Les Ruines (1791)<sup>38</sup> (which

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37. See Cameron, The Young Shelley, pp.243-4.

38. Volney's other principal works are: Travels Through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784 and 1785 (London, 1787) and The Law of Nature, or Principles of Morality, deduced from the physical constitution of mankind and the universe (Philadelphia, 1796).

Shelley read before 1813) why the sight of the Pyramids invoked his attack on kings and priests. His reasons are identical to Shelley's in the passage quoted above:

kings, fatigued with gratification, abandoned themselves to all the extravagancies of factitious and depraved taste ... Under the cloak of religion, their pride founded temples, endowed indolent priests, built, for vain skeletons, extravagant tombs, mausoleums, and Pyramids; millions of hands were employed in sterile labors; and the luxury of princes, imitated by their parasites, and transmitted from grade to grade to the lowest ranks, became a general source of corruption and impoverishment.  
39

Such civilizations, therefore, are incompatible with man's freedom; what they demonstrate is slavery and subjugation rather than immortality or glory. Amongst these ruins, the shadow of freedom is 'Remembered now in sadness' (II, 173), and

Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,  
Fled, to return not, until man shall know  
That they alone can give the bliss  
    Worthy a soul that claims  
Its kindred with eternity.

(II, 206-10)

Kings and tyrants, however, are equally subjected to their abject passions and selfish ambitions: 'the dweller there / Cannot be free and happy' (III, 26-7):

The King, the wearer of a gilded chain  
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool  
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave  
Even to the basest appetites-

(III, 30-3)

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39. C.F.C.Volney, The Ruins of Empires, French Belles-Letters From 1640 to 1870, ed. with an introduction by Joel Benton (London, 1901), pp.113-14.

Thus in a world where man, any man, is a slave, no one, least of all the tyrant himself, can be free. Time and again, Shelley stipulates that it is man's virtue and wisdom and not 'iron and gold' that are the formidable foundation of his freedom; a virtuous man is:

More free and fearless than the trembling judge,  
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove  
To bind the impassive spirit; ...

(III, 155-7)

'Having reviewed the deeds of the ages past', The Theological Inquirer (March and April 1815) remarks in its strikingly acute review of Queen Mab, 'the fairy then expatiates on the systems of present existence; and here the author's opinions, conveyed through the lips of his visionary instrument, are bold to the highest pitch of daring',<sup>40</sup> and here, also, the poet decides with Godwin in Political Justice and Volney in The Ruins that ignorance is 'the cause and effect of tyranny' (V, 31). This point was elaborated in Address to the Irish People: 'Ignorance and vice commonly go together: he that would do good must be wise - a man cannot be truly wise who is not truly virtuous.'<sup>41</sup>

The idea that ignorance is the source of all evil and that education is its only remedy was the product of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century radical tradition and was, perhaps, most comprehensively discussed in Godwin's Political Justice.<sup>42</sup> Arthur O'Connor, for instance, like the poet in Queen Mab discerns in ignorance the source of religious and political tyranny: '... the dark ages of Ignorance and Superstition have ever proved congenial to the Tyranny of Priests and Despots.'<sup>43</sup> Leigh Hunt explains that: 'So invariably does knowledge, and not superstition, bring about any change for the better in

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40. F., 'Queen Mab', The Theological Inquirer or Polemical Magazine (March to Sept. 1815), pp.34-9 (p.35), and in The Romantics Reviewed, ed. by Donald H.Reiman, part C, 2 vols (London, 1972), II, p.850.

41. Works, V, p.232.

42. See pp.27-8 above.

43. Speech Upon the Question of Catholic Emancipation (London, 1795), p.11.

a nation, that the only places where Missionaries ever succeed are those in which they have every sort of intellectual advantage over the natives.'<sup>44</sup> In fact, most of the Romantic poets thought and argued along these lines, but what makes Shelley's views on education of more consequence here is the nature of the relationship he sees between education and political reform.<sup>45</sup> As we have noted in the first chapter, Shelley, unlike Godwin and many of the Romantic poets (excepting Byron, of course) never considered education enough by itself to emancipate man or effect reform, rather he saw education as the necessary foundation for political action and political reform. While for instance Godwin would say educate the people, enlighten them and all oppression will fade away, Shelley would say: '... educate the people. Open their eyes, show them their oppressors and all the oppressions done under the sun, and the people will rise up in their majesty to crush their oppressors'.<sup>46</sup>

Commerce is another source of inequality and misery:

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,  
The signet of its all-enslaving power  
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold;  
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,  
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,  
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,  
And with blind feelings reverence the power,  
That grinds them to the dust of misery.

(V, 53-60)

The unjust effects of commerce had been pointed out by Shelley before Queen Mab was first published in 1813: on May 7th, 1812, he writes to Catherine Nugent: 'How unequally has the detestable system by which human beings govern their affairs distributed poverty & wealth! How much do you suffer from the distribution?'.<sup>47</sup>

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44. 'Superstition - Its Civil and Political Consequences', The Examiner, No.566 (Sunday, 1 Nov. 1818), p.689.

45. See pp.28-9 above.

46. Ernest J.B.Kirtlan, 'The Political and Religious Creed of Shelley', The London Quarterly Review, CXLI, (Jan.-April 1924), pp.225-34 (p.228).

47. Letters, I, p.296.

Neither commerce, nor ignorance, however, affect man's life in the same way or to the same degree as religion does. Shelley's views on religion in Queen Mab are better known for the objections levelled against them than for what they really are. They constitute the single feature by which not only the poem but even the poet were to be known for quite a time. The first reviews of Queen Mab seem to have been mainly, if not solely, concerned with its anticlerical views; the poem was described as a work of 'the most outrageous blasphemy, and the most loathsome indecency',<sup>48</sup> which summarises its author's 'Anti-matrimonial Hypothesis and Atheistic views'.<sup>49</sup> What is more is that in 1816, Queen Mab 'was accepted as evidence that Shelley's moral and religious principles were unsound ... He was accordingly declared to be unfit for the charge of his children, and debarred from intermeddling in their education.'<sup>50</sup> It is true that while writing Queen Mab, Shelley was in a state of uncertainty about the nature of God; but this was hardly what his critics were worried about; they were more concerned about the social and political implications of his argument than about his conception of a deity.

The only religion Shelley believed in was equivalent to what Mrs Browning called 'A Religion of the Heart which is all pity and charity'.<sup>51</sup> The essence of Christianity, he argued, is charity<sup>52</sup> and virtue: 'virtue is self-evident', he writes to Elizabeth Hitchener on the 20th June, 1811, 'consequently I act in unison with it's dictates, where the doctrines of Christ do not differ from virtue, there I follow them.'<sup>53</sup>

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48. 'A review of Queen Mab', Beacon (6 Jan.-22 Sept. 1821), The Romantics Reviewed, Part C, I, p.39.

49. See W.Clark, Reply to the Anti-Matrimonial Hypothesis and Supposed Atheism of Percy Bysshe Shelley as Laid Down in Queen Mab (London, 1821).

50. H.Buxton Forman, The Vicissitudes of Shelley's Queen Mab (London, 1887), p.16.

51. W.Kinton Parkes, Shelley's Faith: Its Development and Relativity (London, 1888), p.7.

52. See Letters, II, p.230.

53. Ibid., I, p.109.

Nine days before this letter he wrote to the same correspondent that he believed that God is:

a name which expresses the unknown cause, the suppositious origin of all existence. When we speak of the soul of man, we mean that unknown cause which produces the observable effect evinced by his intelligence & bodily animation which are in their nature conjoined, and as we suppose, as we observe, inseperable ... In this sense I acknowledge a God, but merely as a synonyme for the existing power of existence ... it is another word for the essence of the universe.

54

Of the religion of the heart and its radical connotation, Christopher Hill has an extremely interesting account; he suggests that for seveneenth-century English radicals the religion of the heart was the answer to the pretensions of the religious as well as political authorities. It seems likely from Hill's account<sup>55</sup> that the Ranters' and the Quakers' traditions were of great significance in forming Shelley's idea of religion, but a more direct influence on Queen Mab, especially in its persistent undercurrent equating anticlericalism with human progress, might well be Voltaire.

What Shelley strikes at in Queen Mab is certainly not Christian theology but the social and political consequences of this theology. The God attacked is 'the God of human error' (VI, 199); it is the God whose name 'Has fenced about all crime with holiness' (VII, 28), it is the God of whom priests 'babble' whilst:

... their hands are red with guiltless blood,  
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ  
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,  
Making the earth a slaughter-house!

(VII, 45-8)

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54. Letters, I, pp.100-1.

55. See The World Turned Upside Down (London, 1975), pp.165-90.

It is the God, whose image on earth had been denounced before by Thomas Paine in an account of a sermon which, because of its relevance to our argument, is worth quoting in full:

... I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the Church, upon the subject of what is called Redemption by the death of the Son of God. After the sermon was ended I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man that killed his son when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of those kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under the necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner to this moment; and I moreover believe that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system.

56

Shelley had, of course, read Paine's The Age of Reason, from which this extract is taken, and had a high opinion of it. On 3 November 1819 he writes to Leigh Hunt a distinctive letter - occasioned by the imprisonment of R. Carlyle - in which he discusses the political situation in England and acknowledges The Age of Reason as:

a production of the celebrated Paine, which the prosecutors were so far unfortunate in selecting, whatever may be its defects as a piece of argument, in as much as it was written by that great & good man under circumstances in which only great & good men are ever found; at the bottom of a dungeon under momentary expectation of death for having opposed a tyrant. It has the solemn sincerity - and that is something in an age of hypocrites - of a voice from the bed of death.

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56. The Age of Reason, with a biographical introduction by J.M. Robertson (London, 1910), p.22.

57. Letters, II, p.143.

Shelley's attacks on religion in Queen Mab are like Paine's and Bentham's,<sup>58</sup> levelled against mysteries, superstition and the institution of the church, like the infidels of whom 'V.C.L.' writes in 1838: 'No doubt but such men were "sceptics" and "Infidels"; but to what were they sceptical and unfaithful? - to vulgar superstition'.<sup>59</sup> These attacks on religion stemmed from the belief that 'religion had not only been appropriated by the rulers for their own purposes, it had been . . . invented by, or for, them.'<sup>60</sup> The religion Shelley strikes at in Queen Mab is that which became a tyrant under whose 'iron age, Earth groans' (VII, 43); which

... peopled earth with demons, hell with men,  
And heaven with slaves!

(VI, 71-2)

Jesus Christ, on the other hand 'stands in the foremost list of those true heroes, who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty, in the cause of suffering humanity.'<sup>61</sup> Although Shelley's judgement of Christ, here, was modified by his annotation: 'Since writing this note I have seen reason to suspect, that Jesus was an ambitious man, who aspired to the throne of Judea',<sup>62</sup> it remains true that Shelley distinguished between institutional Christianity as means of oppression and the ethics of Jesus Christ as those of a moral reformer and martyr for man's freedom.<sup>63</sup> For example in his essay 'On the Moral Teaching of Jesus Christ' he contends that

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58. For Bentham's views of religion and that of the infidels, see Ursula Henriques, Religious Toleration in England 1787-1833 (London, 1961), pp.236-7.

59. The New Moral World, IV, No.202 (8 Sept. 1838), p.367 (henceforth cited as NMW).

60. Ursula Henriques, Religious Toleration in England 1787-1833, p.237.

61. Notes to Queen Mab, Queen Mab (London, 1840), p.94.

62. Ibid.

63. For Shelley's early reactions to religion, see pp.37-41 above.

Christianity is 'the strongest ally and bulwark of that system of successful force and fraud',<sup>64</sup> while insisting that the doctrines of Christ 'are excellent and strike at the root of moral evil. If acted upon, no political or religious institution could subsist a moment ... Doctrines of reform were never carried to so great a length as by Jesus Christ. The republic of Plato and the Political Justice of Godwin are probable and practical systems in the comparison.'<sup>65</sup>

Hence Shelley's attack on Christianity in Queen Mab is intimately connected with his challenge to the State. It is only in this sense that Ahasuerus' decision to prefer 'Hell's freedom to the servitude of Heaven'<sup>66</sup> (VII, 195) presages Prometheus' defiance of 'who reigns'. Like Prometheus, Ahasuerus stood:

Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,  
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,  
Mocking my powerless Tyrant's horrible curse  
With stubborn and unalterable will,

(VII, 255-8)

These lines foreshadow Prometheus' address to Mercury:

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,  
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,  
As light in the sun, throned ...

(I, 429-31)

In both quotations the second line is the central one and in both lines the emphasis lies on 'peaceful and serene' and 'peace serene'. Although the tone of Prometheus is more sombre and composed than Ahasuerus', it is amply clear that both of them are in a very similar

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64. Works, VI, p.255.

65. Ibid.

66. It is abundantly clear that Ahasuerus, here, echoes Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost: 'Better to reign in hell than serve in heav'n' (I, 263). Carlos Baker remarks: 'It would probably be fair to say that whatever grandeur Shelley's Ahasuerus shows is derived from Milton's Satan.' (Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision, Princeton, 1973, p.278.)

state of mind imparting a very similar message to their antagonists. Ahasuerus, therefore, becomes 'the prototype of Prometheus'<sup>67</sup> and Queen Mab foreshadows the theme of Prometheus Unbound. The consequence of Shelley's criticism of religion in Queen Mab and of Prometheus' triumph over Jupiter is a challenge to the State. A.M.Gannett reads a similar significance in Shelley's treatment of the theme of religion: 'Certainly it was congenial to Shelley to let Zeus stand for evil, because of his belief that so many of the sufferings of men have sprung from their false notions of a God ... It is not "Anarchy" to which his thought leads, ... but true freedom'.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the very fact of examining and questioning long-believed creeds as Shelley did in Queen Mab, is a foremost prerequisite of true freedom, according to both Bentham and Hunt. In The Examiner No.566, Sunday, 1 November 1818, Bentham is reported to have said:

- a mind in which the understanding and the will are prostrate - no matter before what - is a mind in the lowest state of debility, ... If to 'question' anything that is set before it is regarded a sin, - if to 'learn' without questioning, anything that is set before it is regarded as a duty, - set before it, with the customary threats in the back-ground, the Catholic Catechism, it is a Catholic mind; - set before it the Koran, it is a Mohametan mind,  
69

to this account, Hunt significantly adds, 'Yes; and set before it a Mahometan despot, it is a Mahometan slave; - set before it Holy-Alliance despots, it is an Allied European slave.'<sup>70</sup>

Yet Shelley in Queen Mab did more than question. His denunciation of political, religious and moral creeds corresponded to his advocacy of a view of morality which will emancipate man and achieve equality and justice. As Carlos Baker rightly remarks: 'In casting down the

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67. Grabo relates the same idea to Shelley's Wandering Jew, see The Magic Plant, p.114.

68. 'Shelley's Morality', The North American Review, CXLVI, No.374 (January 1888), pp.104-5 (p.105).

69. 'Church of Englandism - The Church of England Catechism Examined', cited in 'Superstition - Its Civil, and Political Consequences', The Examiner, No.566 (1 November 1818), p.690.

70. Ibid.

old idols, Shelley wished only to substitute for them a morality of his own devising.'<sup>71</sup> Shelley's attacks on the Christian religion in Queen Mab are designed to purge Christianity from all mysteries and superstitions and replace it with the true ethics of Christ as a liberator and reformer; on 27 February 1812 Shelley writes to Elizabeth Hitchener thus:

I have met with some waverers between Xtianity and Deism.- I shall attempt to make them reject all the bad, and take all the good of the Jewish books- I have often thought that the moral sayings of Jesus Christ might be very useful if selected from the mystery and immorality which surrounds them- it is a little work I have in contemplation.

72

The work took the shape of a little volume called Biblical Extracts, and Shelley is supposed to have 'attempted unsuccessfully to get Thomas Hookham to publish it', but the MS. 'is not known to exist'.<sup>73</sup> 'Parts of his Essay on Christianity,' Wasserman suggests, 'are exercises in that kind of purification by reinterpretation.'<sup>74</sup>

It is of great importance that we should take full note of this underpinning of Shelley's works for his maxims lie just as much in what he denounces as in what he advocates. His attacks on the old morality and his presentation of the new one are two aspects of the same effort to enhance and precipitate the new social order. In Queen Mab, for instance, intrinsic to Shelley's efforts to prepare the intellectual ground for the oncoming reform are the arguments designed to subvert religious and political moralities which endow their respective systems with the means of oppression. Thus, if we fail to discover the common ground between the objects he repudiates and the antidotes he presents we lose a significant dimension of his poetry, a dimension which in the

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71. 'Spenser, the Eighteenth Century, and Shelley's Queen Mab', Modern Language Quarterly, II, No.1 (March 1941), pp.81-98 (p.83).
72. Letters, I, p.265.
73. Ibid., n.
74. Earl R.Wasserman, Shelley: A Critical Reading (London, 1977), p.193.

case of Queen Mab links and synthesizes the different parts of the poem and makes it a complete whole rather than a series of inconsistencies and contradictions.

Critics often refer to Shelley's conception of Necessity and free will in Queen Mab as being contradictory, inconsistent or at least confusing.<sup>75</sup> Part of the confusion, one suspects, arises from paying too much heed to the source of Shelley's idea of Necessity and too little to the actual idea as expressed in the text. The sources are various and many. Albert Elmer Hancock<sup>76</sup> and K.N.Cameron<sup>77</sup> decide that the main influence on Shelley's idea of Necessity in Queen Mab comes from Holbach's Le Système de la Nature and Volney's Les Ruine (the latter, according to Hancock, is simply an attempt to put in concrete and dramatic form The System of Nature<sup>78</sup>). To these Ross Greig Woodman adds Pope's Essay on Man,<sup>79</sup> while Carlos Baker<sup>80</sup> suggests that Shelley derived his ideas on Necessity from Godwin's Political Justice, Hume's An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Holbach's Le Système de la Nature. To the first two works, Frank B.Evans<sup>81</sup> traces Shelley's idea of Necessity in Queen Mab ignoring Holbach altogether. As Volney's, Hume's and Godwin's works manifest in various degrees Holbach's influence and as it is certain that, on the one hand, they were amongst Shelley's favourite books and that, on the other, Shelley read Holbach's work while he was composing Queen Mab and quoted it at length in the Notes, it is very difficult to tell who influenced him most. It is, however, much easier to conclude that

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75. See for instance McNiece's Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, p.144, and Grabo's The Magic Plant, pp.116-17.

76. See The French Revolution and English Poets (New York, 1899), pp.55-62.

77. See The Young Shelley, p.254.

78. The French Revolution and English Poets, p.56.

79. The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p.79.

80. Shelley's Major Poetry, p.33.

81. 'Shelley, Godwin and Hume, and the Doctrine of Necessity', Studies in Philology, XXXVII, No.4, pp.632-40.

Shelley's idea of Necessity in Queen Mab is not identical either with Holbach's determinism or with Godwin's fatalism.

Before discussing Necessity in Queen Mab, a distinction has to be made between the poem and the Notes, for Shelley's stance varies considerably between the two. The first, though oblique, hint to this distinction is made by Trelawny who suggests that 'in his first work, "Queen Mab", or rather in the notes appended to that poem, the old philosopher's influence on the beardless boy is strongly marked'.<sup>82</sup> We know that it is in the question of Necessity rather than in any other theme that Godwin is supposed to have influenced Queen Mab. Neville Rogers, however, carries the distinction between notes and text a great deal further by suggesting that 'About freedom of will Shelley does not seem to have been able to make up his mind when writing Queen Mab in 1812: though it is asserted in the text it is practically denied in the note on VI. 197-8.'<sup>83</sup> Indeed, while in the Notes (as we have seen on pages 12-13), Necessity seems to control the animate and inanimate worlds, in the text it strictly controls the material universe leaving man's will at least potentially free. Hence, we do Queen Mab gross injustice to understand Necessity and free will through the Notes and gloss over the poetry.

Necessity in Queen Mab itself seems to be almost identical with 'Eternal Nature's law' (II, 76) which directs everything on earth except man's will. Addressing Necessity Shelley maintains that:

No atom of this turbulence fulfils  
A vague and unnecessitated task,  
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.

(VI, 171-3)

In the same way the world systems formed:

A wilderness of harmony;  
Each with undeviating aim,  
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space  
Pursued its wondrous way.

(II, 79-82)

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82. Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron, p.58.

83. Shelley at Work (Oxford, 1956), p.30.

What Shelley is getting at in these lines is a conception of the universe as perceived by the writers of the enlightenment. 'For the enlightenment', H.M.Jones remarks, 'the universe was made up of physical atoms attracting each other according to a uniform principle that could be mathematically expressed'.<sup>84</sup> Thus Necessity in Queen Mab is not only analogous to the world system, but identical with it. Nor does Necessity, in this context, undermine or even affect man's 'all-subduing will' (V, 133):

Matter, with all its transitory shapes,  
Lies subjected and plastic at his [man's] feet  
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.

(V, 134-6)

Rather, the universe with all its concatenation of material systems 'Yielded to every movement of the will'. (II,50)

Here, again, Shelley's preponderant emphasis on the role of man's will in his emancipation and reform seems to prefigure his treatment of the same theme in Prometheus Unbound. Indeed, Ahasuerus' decision to mock his

... powerless Tyrant's horrible curse  
With stubborn and unalterable will

(VII, 257-8)

literally foreshadows Prometheus' judgement that tyranny may rule everything 'But him of resolute and unchanging will' (V, 171). In Queen Mab, as in Prometheus Unbound, nothing but death ('who even would linger long in awe', V, 156), may subdue man's 'elevated will' (V, 155). In both poems it is man's 'resolute will' (I, 125), 'resolute and unchanging will' (V, 171), 'stubborn and unalterable will' (VII, 258) that must, in the last resort, dethrone tyranny and reform man's condition. Thus, to be free, all man has to do is to will his own freedom:

For, when the power of imparting joy  
Is equal to the will, the human soul  
Requires no other heaven.

(III, 11-3)

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84. Revolution and Romanticism (Cambridge, 1974), p.64.

Here, Shelley's conception of Necessity and man's place in the universe is more in sympathy with Shaftesbury's than with Holbach's.<sup>85</sup> According to Shaftesbury, Nature's law controls all matter, including, perhaps, man's body, but man's will remains potentially free to control the material order of the universe.

The one passage which might ostensibly sound inconsistent with this line of argument is Mab's address to Ianthe:

Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will  
Is destined an eternal war to wage  
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot  
The germs of misery from the human heart.

(IX, 189-92)

'Destined' might suggest that man's will can only act in the way it has to act and it is Necessity rather than man's will that holds the reins. What must be seen here, however, is that 'destined' is associated with the theory of history 'as the story of freedom' and not with Necessity; man is bound to rebel and revolt because this is the lesson the past and the present impart. The study of history enables us to predict with almost absolute certainty 'the future destiny of man on the basis of his history',<sup>86</sup> but this is something absolutely different from Necessity. Without a clear understanding of these two strands of thought, one can hardly avoid either misinterpretation or confusion.

Carl Woodring acutely remarks that 'By 1812 Shelley saw that hope for reform would require a congenial theory of history, which in turn would involve a theory of man's place in the universe.'<sup>87</sup> This is the matrix of Queen Mab's argument: a study of the past and the present, which is a principal requirement of reform, necessitates the explication of Nature's law or Necessity and results in the inference that man (whose

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85. See pp.5-6 above.

86. Antoine Nicolas de Condorcet, Sketch For a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind, p.173.

87. Politics in English Romantic Poetry, p.246.

will is free from the movement of matter) is to rise against tyranny and oppression and build the free and happy future that is depicted in Cantos VIII and IX. Hence, just as the study of history is essential because it reveals to us that it is not 'Nature', but 'kings, priests and statesmen' who 'blast the human flower / Even in its tender bud' (IV, 104-5) (here, I believe Shelley is echoing Condorcet: 'Is there on the face of the earth a nation whose inhabitants have been debarred by nature herself from the enjoyment of freedom and the exercise of reason?'<sup>88</sup>), so too is the understanding of the law of Necessity essential because it testifies that Nature 'Has gifted man with all-subduing will', and that Matter 'Lies subjected and plastic at his feet' (V, 133-4). In this sense, both history and Necessity confirm the role man's will has to play in his emancipation and reform.

Without this harmony and cohesion between history, Necessity and free will, the theme of Queen Mab would hardly make any sense at all. To think of Necessity as pre-determinism or fatalism makes any complaint about injustice, any hope in a better future, and a fortiori any effort to bring about such a future totally absurd. If every action were enforced one would certainly wonder, as S.F.Gingerich quite rightly did,

why ... should kings and priests and Christians be held responsible for their terrible deeds when, according to the theory of Necessity, they were irresistibly impelled to act precisely as they did act?

89

There is no doubt that without his infallible belief in the freedom of man's will Shelley's crusade for man's emancipation and reform has no meaning.

Having fathomed the past, unravelled the present and demonstrated that man's will is immortally free to ameliorate his conditions, the poet's mission is almost complete:

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88. Condorcet, Sketch ..., p.174.

89. 'Shelley's Doctrine of Necessity Versus Christianity', PMLA, XXXIII (1918), pp.444-73 (pp.450-1).

'THE present and the past thou hast beheld:  
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn  
The secrets of the future.

(VIII, 1-3)

Commenting on these lines which open Shelley's description of the new world in Canto VIII, Cameron contends that 'This change has come about as a result of the workings of Necessity in the social realm',<sup>90</sup> and that the main influence here is Godwinian. To say this is to ignore what Shelley has been doing in the previous seven Cantos. The change to a better future came as a result of understanding the past and the present (of which Necessity, as we have just pointed out, is only a part) - and thus the influence is mainly that of Condorcet. The past, the present and the future in Queen Mab are intimately related and must therefore be grasped in a single sweep. To fail to relate them is to miss the point of their being there in the first place. A knowledge of the past and an understanding of the present will make it possible for man to anticipate and, eventually, create a free and happy future. This is how, at this stage, Shelley thought to reform the world.

The future anticipated in Cantos VIII and IX, however, is one in which:

Woman and man, in confidence and love,  
Equal and free and pure together trod  
The mountain-paths of virtue ...

(IX, 89-91)

The metaphor in the last line 'The mountain-paths of virtue' implicitly stresses that the road to virtue, equality and freedom is neither smooth nor easy; it is charged with difficulties but for those who have confidence and love it is not insurmountable. In this future state 'freedom's self' is the only 'sweet bondage' (IX, 76-9) which colours man and nature with its permanent hue; once man is free he would see:

Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,  
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,  
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.

(IX, 177-9)

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90. The Young Shelley, p.259.

The image of love's roses mingling with freedom's laurels and foreshadowing the 'truth of visioned bliss' is characteristic of Shelley's mingling of the attributes of nature and man. The remarkable connection of the three metaphors: 'Love's brightest roses', 'Freedom's fadeless laurels' and 'visioned bliss' fashions them into one image in which the beauty of nature and the moral attributes of man are inextricably fused. What is more, the first two visual metaphors are made even more visual by being linked with 'visioned' which is shrewdly placed to underline the significance of 'bliss' and to emphasize the most important characteristic of the two metaphors alluded to. The choice of verbs is no less pertinent; 'mingling' and 'presaging' are suggestive verbs which can be aptly associated with both nature and man. Finally, the patterned syntax of 'Love's brightest roses' and 'Freedom's fadeless laurels' contributes to the impact these lines make upon us and no doubt enhances our reception of the message imparted. With these lines the cycle of history is completed; man has reached his paradise; nature is adorned with a permanent spring and freedom, like 'Love' in The Revolt of Islam, is 'celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world'.<sup>91</sup> Here, the poet's mission has reached its end; the lesson is learnt, 'history is the story of freedom'.<sup>91\*</sup>

This view of Queen Mab implies, of course, that Shelley was preparing the way for a future reform rather than advocating an immediate one. The assumption that in Queen Mab Shelley is calling for immediate action largely depends, as Cameron observes,<sup>92</sup> on passages such as the following one:

Man, like these passive things,  
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth:  
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,  
Which time is fast maturing,  
Will swiftly, surely come;  
And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,  
Will be without a flaw  
Marring its perfect symmetry.

(III, 233-40)

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91. Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

91\*. See p.63 above.

92. See The Young Shelley, p.399n.

Cameron's response is that 'The transformation envisioned ... is rapid only in the perspectives of Necessity and the universe, and is expressive of an emotional hope legitimate enough in such a passage.'<sup>93</sup> There is something to be added to this. The change is swift and rapid in the perspective of history, in the chain of which many generations of mankind might be regarded as one day in our life-span. But from a more normal perspective the change is 'slow and gradual':

Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;  
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,  
Till from its native heaven they rolled away:

(IX, 38-40)

And again:

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,  
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue  
The gradual paths of an aspiring change:

(IX, 146-8)

Having been written immediately after his return from Ireland where he decided never to address himself again to the ignorant and illiterate but to make himself 'the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I shall have mouldered into dust',<sup>94</sup> Queen Mab was not intended to launch immediate reform or be the anthem for instant political action, but rather to be the first serious attempt, in what was to become a trilogy of poems in which Shelley tried to fulfil his task of outlining a political philosophy which would prepare the way for coming generations. Queen Mab attempts to reinterpret history so that man is seen as supreme over all types of power. Its presentation of knowledge and enlightenment as the principal means of reform at once encapsulates Shelley's achievement as a reforming poet and his limitation as a political activist. Part of his achievement no doubt lies in the effect he exercised upon future radicals; in terms of this achievement Queen Mab features as one of his most prominent compositions.

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93. The Young Shelley, p.399n.

94. Letters, I, p.277; see pp.48-51 above.

B. The Revolt of Islam

... add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance and love,  
By name to come called charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loth  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A paradise within thee, happier far.  
(John Milton, Paradise Lost, XII, 582-7)

In a Sonnet 'TO THE AUTHOR OF "THE REVOLT OF ISLAM"',<sup>95</sup> Horace  
Smith writes in 1818:

O thou bold Herald of aspiring high,  
No prostituted Muse inspired thy story,  
But human Love lent thee his wings to fly  
Forward into a coming age of glory,  
When Tyrannies and Superstitions hoary  
Beneath the foot of Liberty shall lie,  
And men shall turn from those oppressor's gory  
To worship Peace, and Love, and Charity  
The heart that could conceive so bright a day,  
Is proof that it may come;- therefore shall they  
Who live on tears and darkness, steep each tooth  
In poison'd gall to make that heart their prey;  
But thou shalt smile and pity, giving thy youth  
To glorious hopes, and all-defying Truth.

96

Smith's admiration of The Revolt of Islam was later echoed by the Owenites and the Chartists; to them The Revolt was an expression of hope and faith in the free future of man - an expression which did not fail to lend force to the plausibility of that future's realization. Owenite and Chartist journals published many extracts from The Revolt of Islam, arguing that in this poem Shelley portrayed the social and political changes with their underlying moral and political doctrines which they were striving to achieve. The questions then are: first, what kind of changes does Shelley portray in The Revolt of Islam;

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95. The edition I used for this study of The Revolt of Islam is the 1818 edition entitled: Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A vision of the nineteenth century. In the stanza of Spencer (London, 1818).

96. The Examiner, No.528 (8 Feb. 1818), p.88.

what are the moral and political doctrines and do they really amount to a faith in the free and just future of man; how does Shelley succeed in imparting all these themes in poetry?

In 1817 Shelley was struggling against a phase of despair amongst English reformers which had persisted since the failure of the French Revolution. He was also acutely aware of the fact that this state of desperation might culminate in an outbreak of violence which would serve no purpose and be beneficial to no one, certainly not to the reformers. His prime concern, therefore, was to urge all reformers not to take measures which the people of England could neither understand nor support. In this state of mind Shelley wrote The Revolt of Islam in which he stipulates with all the tact he could muster that forbearance and love rather than violence and bloodshed are the indispensable prerequisites of reform, while stressing at the same time that the future is that of free and equal people however much the semblance of tyranny might indicate otherwise. These views of Shelley are not only defined and explained in The Revolt of Islam but also enacted through the process of Laon's reformation and the political course he takes afterwards, Cythna's animation with revolutionary principles and the kind of revolution she inspires and their equal triumph over tyranny and violence.

Despite the fact that Laon is the first character to err against Shelley's belief in passive resistance - or, perhaps, because of it - he is the first one fully to understand this doctrine, to experience it, and, in effect, commit himself to its service. At the beginning of canto III (and despite Cythna's counsel, III, IX), Laon slays three of the men who raided their house, captured Cythna and were just about to take her away. As a result Laon is chained to a rock and Cythna in fact carried away. The attempt to achieve freedom through bloodshed necessarily fails. Through his own suffering and the memory of Cythna, Laon understands the wrongful nature of his own actions and knows for certain that violence is incompatible with freedom. Thus he 'wakes and weeps' (III, XVII), and repents. His repentance is immediately followed by his physical liberation by the Hermit (III, XXIX). The liberation of Laon, strikingly like Prometheus's, is preceded and effected by his own

moral and intellectual reformation. The Hermit, it is tacitly suggested, performs an act which had already been achieved in Laon's mind. This is confirmed by the Hermit's address to Laon:

"For I have been thy passive instrument"-  
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance  
Gleamed on me like a spirit's) - "thou has lent  
To me, to all, the power to advance  
Towards this unforeseen deliverance  
From our ancestral chains -

(IV, XVI, 1-6)

The emancipation of Cythna follows exactly the same process; the transformation from slavery to freedom was first mental before it becomes physical:

... I became fearless-hearted  
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind

(VII, XXX, 5-6)

Then she was imbued with love and hope; her fancies were subjected to her will (VII, XXXIV-XXXV); her mind was full of 'hymns to truth and freedom' (VII, XXXVI), and 'I felt that I was free' (VII, XXXIX). It was immediately after this that she discovered 'through the fading light' 'A ship approaching'. On seeing Cythna, the mariners stopped and carried her away with them ending by that her confinement on the slaves' ship. Thus, the physical emancipation of Laon and Cythna is a way of making visible what had already been realized in their minds. This view is endorsed by Laon's and Cythna's superiority to those who physically unchain them. We have just seen the Hermit describing himself as Laon's instrument and a similar judgement is latent in Cythna's account of the sailors who released her:

They came and questioned me, but when they heard  
My voice, they became silent, and they stood  
And moved as men in whom new love had stirred  
Deep thoughts: so to the ship we past without a word.

(VII, XLI, 6-9)

Two points may be stated here: first, the process of Laon's and Cythna's liberation marks out the way to freedom as essentially moral and second, Laon's experience presages the reformation of many others - perhaps, of all others.

Laon finally recognizes that the way to freedom is to 'dethrone hate and enthrone love':

"Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length  
Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare  
Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength  
Of words -

(IV, XVIII, 1-4)

Cythna reaches the same conclusion:

"If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice  
Of bonds, - from slavery to cowardice  
A wretched fall! -

(IV, XXVIII, 1-3)

She defeats the power of arms by the force of her argument and inspires womankind with the laws of equality, freedom and justice (IV, XXI). What is more, even the slaves of tyrants who were sent to fight her fell under the spell of her eloquence and rebelled against their masters (IV, XX). But what is particularly interesting about Laon's experience in this respect is that no sooner does he perceive the vanity of violence and the beauty of passive resistance than he starts imparting to others what he has learnt. For example, when violence arises again in canto V in his presence and one man directs a spear against his foe, Laon raises his arm before the spear; it transfixes his arm and he bleeds. He afterwards points the moral of his intervention:

Ah, ye are pale, -ye weep,- your passions pause,-  
'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws'.

(V, IX, 8-9)

Once again when he goes to the Golden City to witness the appearance of Cythna who has already led a triumphant revolution there, Laon is the only one to stand up for the life of the fallen despot against the crowds' cry for his blood:

For all, let him go free; until the worth  
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

(V, XXXIII, 8-9)

The second birth awaited in 'human nature' is analogous to that which

has already taken place in Laon's own heart; it is the birth of love where love is 'freedom's equal law', 'the supreme spirit and sole productive source of good in the life of the world',<sup>97</sup> the 'great secret of morals', and the liberator of nations:

And I among them, went in joy - a nation  
Made free by love; - a mighty brotherhood  
Linked by a jealous interchange of good;

(V, XIV, 3-5)

The importance of Laon's reformation lies both in its process and in the effect it has on others: his triumph over evil in him lighted 'The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot' (IV, VII); his story aroused others from their despondency and trance and inspired them with a 'warmer zeal' (IV, XIII) and an inextinguishable hope:

... aye, thou didst rear  
That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance,  
Nor change may not extinguish, ...

(IV, XVI, 6-8)

Laon himself bears evidence to the fact that:

... they, and all, in one loud symphony  
My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,  
"The friend and the preserver of the free!  
The parent of this joy!

(V, XVIII, 1-4)

The question of whether Laon's undertaking to provoke a peaceful revolution is viable is answered in positive terms in the poem itself. Cythna is the first person to be inspired by Laon's teachings to the point of leading a revolution amongst womankind; she addresses Laon thus:

Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest,  
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,  
So to become most good and great and free,  
Yet far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar

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97. Floyd Stovall, 'Shelley's Doctrine of Love', PMLA, XLV, No.1 (1930), pp.283-303 (p.283).

In towers and huts are many like to me,  
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore  
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more

(II, XL, 3-9)

Having been rendered a revolutionary under Laon's influence, Cythna asserts that the change she has undergone is representative of the way Laon would change others, as the last three lines quoted above show. Laon, in this sense, becomes 'more than a man engaged in a struggle for truth, justice, and liberty against great odds', and more than 'a symbol of these things';<sup>98</sup> he becomes (what Shelley himself wanted to be<sup>99</sup>) a benefactor of man's regeneration, a declaration of hope, 'a trumpet of a prophecy' and, moreover, the igniting spirit of a future revolution - a revolution, unlike its French counterpart, engendered by the slow and gradual process of equality and love rather than by the ensnaring suddenness of violence:

"Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds  
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law  
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds  
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,  
Bloody and false, and cold

(IV, XV, 1-5)

It is a fact of some significance that Cythna who represents the animated public sets on foot an active revolution and brings down the tyrant of the Golden City (Othman) without ever violating the principles of passive resistance and non-violence. Rather like Laon's (after his reformation), her revolution is inspired and sustained by slowly but steadily transmitting the principles of 'fearless love' and 'mild equality' to the hearts and minds of others.

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98. Wilfred S. Dowden, 'Shelley's Use of Metempsychosis in The Revolt of Islam', The Rice Institute Pamphlet, XXXVIII, No.1, p.62.

99. Laon, as a few critics have pointed out is a 'Shelleyesque hero'; (Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry, p.81); Kineton Parkes sees Laon as exceedingly similar to Shelley ('Shelley's Faith: Its Prophecy', Poet-Lore, IV (1892), pp.397-408 (p.400)); and Alicia Martinez and Robert R. Pelletier draw lengthy and interesting comparisons between Laon and Shelley. See A. Martinez, The Hero and Heroine of Shelley's The Revolt of Islam (Salzburg, 1976), pp.22-3 and R.R. Pelletier, 'The Revolt of Islam and Paradise Lost', K-SJ, XIV (1965), pp.7-13.

Yet the influence Laon has upon Cythna is only one aspect of the mutual effect they have upon each other, for Cythna weaves Laon's teachings into hymns of freedom (II, XXVIII) 'with music and with light' (II, XXXI) which when reflected back on Laon fill him with greater zeal and, reciprocally, he is inspired with more knowledge, power and wisdom:

In me, communion with this purest being  
Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise  
In knowledge, which in hers mine own mind seeing,  
Left in the human world few mysteries:  
How without fear of evil or disguise  
Was Cythna!

(II, XXXII, 1-6)

Through this mutually enriching relationship between Laon and Cythna, Shelley as an admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft endorses her argument that the emancipation of women will adorn the revolutionary process with further merits and provide new insights for both men and women.

Indeed, writing The Revolt of Islam with Mary Wollstonecraft in mind (see dedication 102-8), Shelley insists that equality between men and women is intrinsically related to their emancipation and reform. When Laon and Cythna pledge to devote their lives to the service of mankind, Laon embarks on liberating men, and Cythna equally undertakes the responsibility of emancipating women (II, XXXVII-XXXVIII). 'Inequalities', therefore, 'between male and female, creating an endless cycle of oppressed and oppressor ... are, at least symbolically, abolished.'<sup>100</sup> Shelley realizes (as Mary Wollstonecraft did before him) that as long as half mankind are 'victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves' (II, XXXVI), neither men nor women can be truly free:

Never will peace and human nature meet  
Till free and equal man and woman greet  
Domestic peace; ...

(II, XXXVII, 4-6)

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100. Alicia Martinez, The Hero and Heroine ..., p.103.

Mary Wollstonecraft's view, in fact, in The Vindication of the Rights of Woman - that the liberation of women is necessary not just for women but for the emancipation of mankind as a whole - is epitomized by Shelley in one memorable line: 'Can man be free if woman be a slave' (II, XLIII).

Further, the equality between Laon and Cythna is such as to make possible a oneness in vision, an identity of thought and a unity in moral and political principles, so that each seems to become a necessary reflection of the other; Laon says of Cythna:

As mine own shadow was this child to me,  
A second self, far dearer and more fair;

(II, XXIV, 1-2)

Similarly, for Cythna Laon is:

The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace  
Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace

(IV, XXX, 8-9)

Further still, this oneness of Laon and Cythna is eloquently stressed when Shelley renames 'Cythna', 'Laone' during one stage of her struggle.<sup>101</sup> This reflects Shelley's notion that Laon and Cythna or Laon and Laone are merely the equivocal terms for the masculine and the feminine facets of the same individual mind.

When 'divine Equality' prevails

O'er the wide land which is thine own  
Like the spring whose breath is blending  
All blasts of fragrance into one,  
Comest upon the paths of men!-

(V, LI, 3, 9-12)

freedom immediately follows:

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101. E.B.Murray, in his illuminating essay "'Elective Affinity" in The Revolt of Islam', Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LXVII (Oct. 1968), pp.570-85, discusses the significance of renaming Cythna Laone (pp.580-1).

"My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,  
The gray sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,  
Are haunts of happiest dwellers;- ...

(V, LI, 4, 1-3)

The explicit comparison between equality and spring in the first four lines above suggests that just as spring infuses nature with fragrance, colour and beauty so does equality imbue man's life with moral virtues. In the same way, the implication of the nature image in the second quotation (V, LI, 4) is that once man regains his freedom he will be the master of the universe. Together with developing the central argument concerning the relation between equality and freedom, these two images signify that free man will command both the social and the natural order.

K.N.Cameron traces the source of Shelley's idea of equality in The Revolt of Islam to Volney:

Shelley, however, does follow Volney in one basic respect, namely the priority of equality to the other attributes (Liberty and Justice) of a democratic society. Volney takes up this question at some length. The first characteristic of the new order, the Law-giver declares, must be equality, and from equality liberty follows.

102

What I would like to add here is that although equality is an indispensable basis for freedom in The Revolt, both it and therefore liberty are the necessary consequences of the prevalence of love.

Of 'love' in The Revolt of Islam, Earl J.Schulze writes: '... love is primarily a cultural rather than hedonistic principle in Shelley, arising as much from the intellect as from the senses.'<sup>103</sup> In Shelley's own words, love is 'the great secret of morals ... a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which

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102. 'A Major Source of The Revolt of Islam', PMLA, LVI, No.1 (March 1941), pp.175-206 (p.180).

103. Shelley's Theory of Poetry: A Reappraisal (The Hague, 1966), p.53.

exists in thought, action, or person, not our own.'<sup>104</sup> Love in The Revolt of Islam is, in fact, a cultural as well as a moral principle, in which the humanly engaging, the socially good, and the politically right naturally blend. During his ordeal, Laon found in his love for Cythna his only comfort which enabled him to bear his burden and persist in his struggle for freedom (IV, V). Similarly, the memory of Laon was during Cythna's confinement her only light of hope and the only promise of her liberation:

... there seemed a being  
Within me - a strange load my heart did bear,  
As if some living thing had made its lair  
Even in the fountains of my life:- a long  
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,  
Then grew, like sweet reality among  
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

(VII, XVI, 3-9)

The 'wondrous vision' is that of Laon and the reality (the physical reality) it grew to is that of the child who turned out to be an image of Laon rather than of the tyrant who raped Cythna (VII, XVIII).

Cythna's child is taken by E.B.Murray and Carlos Baker to signify freedom, though through different approaches. Murray believes that Cythna is the symbol of equality, and Laon the symbol of Fraternity, while the child, although a product of the tyrant's rape of Cythna, is nevertheless a symbolic product of Cythna's and Laon's spiritual union and an embodiment of freedom.<sup>105</sup> Baker suggests that 'Cythna represents Justice, Laon Truth, and their winged child Freedom'.<sup>106</sup> E.B.Murray argues that 'Cythna's dream-child had been at once the fruit of her spiritual communion (in the one mind) with Laon and her physical rape by the Tyrant.'<sup>107</sup> The child is also the product of hate (the rape)

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104. Works, VII, p.118.

105. See "'Elective Affinity" in The Revolt of Islam', pp.580-1.

106. Shelley's Major Poetry, pp.82-3.

107. "'Elective Affinity" in The Revolt of Islam', p.578.

transformed by the power of love (Laon's) into an image of love. Love is the principle which unites the personal and the political, and is the sine qua non of real change. The fact that the features of the child resemble those of Laon rather than of the tyrant suggests that Laon's and Cythna's love, though consummated only in their own minds, did transform an actual physical reality (the tyrant's rape of Cythna). This images Shelley's belief that our moral and intellectual attitude can overcome what seems to be most rigorously and irreversibly real. It is worth pointing out that in reading the poem we are not startled by Cythna's description of her child as an image of Laon. Only when we recall that Cythna was actually raped by the tyrant and that she saw nothing of Laon before her pregnancy do we start to realize the full significance of what is being said. Shelley deliberately minimizes the effect the tyrant has on Cythna. He swiftly leads us through the stanzas which describe the tyrant's rape of Cythna directing our attention towards Cythna's sad but calm and resolute expression, on the one hand, and towards the tyrant's 'evil thought' and polluted breast' (VII, IV), on the other, making sure that these two separate and incompatible realities are congealed in our minds as such and at no point harmonize or even sympathize with each other. Although he wants us to believe that the act did actually take place, he is none the less intent on convincing us that his victim, despite her agony emerges unblemished, if not morally triumphant. The occurrence of the word 'dream' twice in a single stanza (VII, VI) helps to dissociate what is happening from reality; the adjective 'fleshly' reminds us that Cythna's chains are strictly physical leaving enough room for Shelley to assert in the same stanza her moral superiority over what she had been physically subjected to: her fortitude and moral strength made 'All torture, fear or horror ... seem light' (VII, VI). On the other hand, Cythna's and Laon's love for each other and their ever-pressing memory in each other's mind creates a definite atmosphere of their unpunctuated togetherness. During the long years of their imprisonment and solitude they imbue each other's heart with love and joy till:

... love made free,- a hope which we have nurst  
Even with our blood and tears,- until its glory burst.

(VII, XXXV, 8-9)

So, when we discover that they had a child we are hardly (at first) taken by surprise. The fact that the child is a physical embodiment of love and hope and a symbol of freedom stresses in unequivocal terms that love and hope are the indispensable bases of man's freedom. Love in The Revolt of Islam is not however only a political instrument. On their reunion (VI), Laon and Cythna enjoy ecstatic love in its own right. Shelley through his imagery, in particular that of the child, fuses the personal, social and political attributes of love. In all these attributes, love is not a mere feeling or sentiment; rather, it is the consequence of 'resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue.'<sup>108</sup>

With their moral triumph over tyranny and their emotional reunion, Laon and Cythna seem almost to have concluded their mission. The knowledge they have learned cannot be unlearned and the work they have done can never be undone:

We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,  
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep  
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow  
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

(IX, XIX, 6-9)

The revolution they effected will drive 'violence and wrong' to a point of no return (IX, XX) and the doctrines they emphasized will be of intrinsic relevance to future reformers. As so often happens in Shelley's poetry, this complete regeneration of man is simultaneously reflected in a regeneration of nature where 'black winter' moves away leaving everything on earth enveloped with a permanent spring (IX, XXI).

Here, the poem appears to have reached its natural conclusion, but it in fact does not. Reactionary forces manage a resurgence, the tyrant issues orders for Laon's and Cythna's arrest and murder and the poem ends by their execution. How does this relate to the overall meaning and purpose of the poem as we have been reading it?

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108. Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

It has been suggested that the execution of Laon and Cythna may be seen as a means to send their word abroad,<sup>109</sup> to drive their principles of Hope, Love and Freedom to 'thought's remotest caves' (IX, XXIII), and, in effect, to precipitate the 'New Birth'. In this sense, like Christ's crucifixion, their martyrdom is taken to be the starting point of the realization of their principles, the starting point of the emancipation of mankind. In my estimation, however, the martyrdom of Laon and Cythna should be differently related to the message of The Revolt of Islam. If Shelley's purpose in writing The Revolt was, as we suggested at the beginning of this study and as he himself stresses in the Preface, to kindle in the bosom of his readers 'that faith and hope in something good', the execution of Laon and Cythna could then be an ambitious attempt aimed at making this 'hope and faith' more realistic. For it is relatively easy to keep hope and faith if one has witnessed a triumphant revolution, but it is not so easy to be hopeful once the process is inverted and the revolutionary elements are, at least momentarily, crushed. What Shelley wanted to instil in his readers is the sense that the moral and political doctrines he expounded in The Revolt will survive the particular experience of Laon and Cythna and the particular political experiment through which they were conveyed. He wanted radicals to base their views not on one political event but on moral and political principles; he wanted them to believe in the free future of man even if Laon and Cythna are executed and the French Revolution fails. Thus, the resurgence of tyranny and the death of revolutionaries does not require lamentation, rather it demands a renewal of the struggle to restore what had been lost or to achieve what had not been achieved:

... ye who must lament  
The death of those that made this world so fair,  
Cannot recall them now; but there is lent  
To man the wisdom of a high despair,  
When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

(XII, XXVIII, 5-9)

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109. See G.H.L., 'Percy Bysshe Shelley', Westminster Review, XXXV (Jan.-April 1841), pp.303-44 (pp.334-5).

It is only if we accept this attitude that the revolution launched by Laon and Cythna becomes, despite their death, a promise of 'All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty' (IX, XXVIII), the seed of spring and 'The promise of its birth' (IX, XXV). In so far as the doctrines they imparted are of lasting vitality, the deaths of Laon and Cythna become of little consequence, for their achievement

"Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,  
Our happiness, and all that we have been,  
Immortally must live, and burn and move,  
When we shall be no more;- the world has seen  
A type of peace.

(IX, XXX, 1-5)

What Laon and Cythna achieve in The Revolt of Islam is precisely what the poem sets out to do for future radicals: to animate them with revolutionary spirit through the example of love and sacrifice, and to inspire them with such a faith which 'time nor chance / Nor change may not extinguish' (IV, XVI). Indeed, the impact of Laon upon the minds of others, notably Cythna, reflects the influence Shelley hoped his poem would exert upon the minds of future reformers. Moreover, the revolutionary path trodden by Laon and Cythna is the very one which Shelley would commend for all radicals to follow. After his first experience with violence, Laon becomes, strikingly like Shelley, a poet-reformer who by the force of argument directs the spirit of the people towards a peaceful, yet morally triumphant revolution (II, XX). Laon's description of his mission could be taken to express Shelley's view of his own forte:

Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore  
Doctrines of human power my words have told,  
They have been heard, and men aspire to more  
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

(IV, XII, 6-9)

The implicit comparison we have been detecting between Shelley and Laon is made explicit by Shelley himself:

Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,  
Who leave the vesture of their majesty  
To adorn and clothe this naked world;- and we

Are like to them - such perish, but they leave  
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,  
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive  
To be a rule and law to ages that survive

(IX, XXVIII, 3-9)

Thus, what the heroes of The Revolt of Islam have propounded as 'a rule and law to ages that survive' is exactly what the poet in The Revolt had discerned as the principal foundation of future reform movements.

A reading of The Revolt of Islam in this light might well suggest - contrary to Shelley's emphasis in the Preface that it 'is narrative, not didactic' - that The Revolt is in essence a didactic poem. Didactic Shelley certainly was in the sense that writing for him had always had an object and an aim: 'I therefore write, and I publish because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications so far as they do influence shall influence to good.'<sup>110</sup> The fact is that Shelley is at once a didactic and non-didactic poet;<sup>111</sup> didactic because he always regarded poetry 'as an instrument of moral and spiritual uplift'<sup>112</sup> and non-didactic because to him poetry never was 'a medium for the conveyance of practical remedial plans and instructions'<sup>113</sup> where 'practical' is interpreted in a strictly physical sense. Nowhere in Shelley's poetry does this maxim apply more fully than in The Revolt of Islam.

Neither the advocates of reform nor its opponents failed to point out the centrality of the politics in The Revolt of Islam. Leigh Hunt, for example, in a review of the poem decides that Shelley's views are:

at war with injustice, violence, and selfishness of every species, however disguised; ... they represent, in a very striking light, the folly and misery of systems, either practical or theoretical.

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110. Letters, I, p.259 (To W.Godwin, 21 February 1812).

111. See pp.58-60 above.

112. F.C.Mason, A Study in Shelley's Criticism (Pennsylvania, 1937), p.7; see also A.C.Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry, p.169.

113. Ibid.

114. The Examiner, No.531 (Sunday, March 1, 1818), p.140.

On the other hand, in a review of The Revolt of Islam, John Gibson Lockhart subscribes to the theory that many critics refrained from objectively assessing Shelley's poetical powers for fear that they might lend force to the doctrines with which the poetry is unmistakably impregnated:

... the poem before us bears unfortunately the clearest marks of its author's execrable system, but it is impressed every where with the more noble and majestic footsteps of his genius. It is to the operation of the painful feeling above alluded to, which attends the contemplation of perverted power - that we chiefly ascribe the silence observed by our professional critics, in regard to The Revolt of Islam. Some have held back in the fear that, by giving to his genius its due praise, they might only be lending the means of currency to the opinions in whose service he has unwisely enlisted its energies.

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Most modern critics agree that Shelley's poetry was originally 'criticised only secondarily as literature',<sup>116</sup> that 'during the particularly nervous seven years in which Shelley's acknowledged volumes appeared, this heritage of the eighteenth-century status of reviewing temporarily yielded place to party spirit and fear for the state of the country',<sup>117</sup> and thus the views his poems expressed were largely responsible for the hostile reviews they received. By saying that critics could not have praised the poetry of The Revolt without propagating the doctrines conveyed, the writer in Blackwood's Magazine paradoxically pays tribute to the fusion Shelley manages between poetry and politics.

Yet it has to be said that this poem was not as popular with the Chartists as, for example, Queen Mab, and the reason might lie in the structure and narrative of the poem. It is generally assumed that

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115. 'Observations on The Revolt of Islam', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, IV (Jan. 1819), pp.475-82 (p.476). And in D.H.Reiman, The Romantics Reviewed, Part C, vol.I, pp.96-103 (p.97) (My emphasis).

116. N.I.White, The Unextinguished Hearth: Shelley and his Contemporary Critics (North Carolina, 1938), pp.10-11.

117. Ibid., p.12.

Shelley is indebted for the narrative of The Revolt of Islam to the plan of Peacock's unfinished poem Ahrimanes,<sup>118</sup> and that Shelley 'follows Peacock in recounting the adventures of two lovers, culminating (as in Peacock's version) with their spiritual victory over the forces of evil. He also sets his narrative within the mythological framework of Peacock's second version so that the conflict is reduced to a struggle between the spirit of good and the spirit of evil'.<sup>119</sup> Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866),<sup>120</sup> is supposed to have begun Ahrimanes, which he planned to be an epic poem in twelve cantos, in 1814. By 1815, having written only the first and part of the second canto, both of which (together with the full plan of the poem) are published in the Halliford edition of the works of Thomas Love Peacock,<sup>121</sup> he is believed to have passed what he wrote of Ahrimanes to Shelley and asked him 'to make any use of it he might wish'.<sup>122</sup> It seems likely that Shelley used the plan quite extensively and reproduced Peacock's seminal ideas in his Revolt of Islam. The story of the two lovers in The Revolt, however, is too mythological to be interesting as a human story and the narrative could be criticised for being too obviously

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118. See Woodman's The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, pp.94-8; Cameron, 'Shelley and Ahrimanes', Modern Language Quarterly, III (1942), pp.287-95, and Felix Felton, Thomas Love Peacock (London, 1973), p.112.
119. Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p.95.
120. Amongst Peacock's other works are his critical essay, The Four Ages of Poetry (1820) to which Shelley's Defence of Poetry was an answer; and amongst his novels are Headlong Hall (1816), Melincourt (1817) and Nightmare Abbey (1818) which is taken to be his best. As for poetry, his poem Rhododaphne is his longest and most ambitious poem which was published anonymously in 1818 at the same time as The Revolt of Islam.
121. Ed. by H.F.B.Brett-Smith and C.E.Jones, 10 vols, VII (1931).
122. Felix Felton, Thomas Love Peacock, p.112.

adapted to convey the poet's doctrines and principles. But the work still had enough merits to become popular with the radicals of the 1830s-50s who refuted Leigh Hunt's prediction that the poem 'cannot possibly become popular',<sup>123</sup> and Byron's judgement that its 'few readers could not understand it'.<sup>124</sup>

Nevertheless, there remains a good deal of truth in the consensus view that 'the principal weakness of the poem is structural',<sup>125</sup> and that the characters are 'not real or complex enough to be especially interesting'.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, the characters of The Revolt are either expressions of the poet's enthusiasm for certain creeds and beliefs as in the case of Laon and Cythna, or they are too abstract to be convincing as real human beings. This might well be explained by the fact that 'neither the main interest nor the main merit of the poet at all consists in the conception of his plot or in the arrangement of his incidents'.<sup>127</sup> The problem in The Revolt of Islam, as F.C.Mason recognized, is that though there were 'definite principles of action behind the deeds of Laon and Cythna; what was lacking was the portrayal of a realistically convincing method by which their reforms were to be accomplished'.<sup>128</sup>

But the poem was not unacknowledged by later reformers, and moreover it claims an extra significance for a study of Shelley's political role because of the way it mirrors Shelley's image of himself as revolutionary

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123. The Examiner, No.531 (1 March 1818), p.140.

124. White, Shelley, I, p.530.

125. Ibid. For a similar view see Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, p.215; Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley, p.102 and F.B.Murray, "Elective Affinity" in The Revolt of Islam, p.57. But for an argument against all these views see Richard H.Haswell, 'Shelley's The Revolt of Islam: "the connexion of its parts"', K-SJ, XXV (1976), pp.81-102 (pp.81-3).

126. McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, p.215.

127. John Gibson Lockhart, 'Observations on The Revolt of Islam', p.482.

128. A Study in Shelley Criticism, p.23.

poet. From Marlow, Shelley writes to Godwin in 1817: 'I felt the precariousness of my life, & I engaged in this task resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling, as real, though not so prophetic, as the communications of a dying man.'<sup>129</sup> Hence, The Revolt reflects and enacts, as none of Shelley's other works does, Shelley's view of his own mission as the redeemer of hopes in the hearts of people, and the planter of love and virtue. He is the creator of a vision which is in itself 'a prophecy and a cause', a Promethean poet dedicated to the reformation of the world through moral resistance and non-violence.

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129. Letters, I, p.577 (11 December 1817).

C. Prometheus Unbound<sup>130</sup>

Part of the meaning of Prometheus Unbound depends on the reader's awareness of what Aeschylean concepts are being repudiated by the adaptation. (Wasserman, Shelley: A Critical Reading, p.193)

Shelley says in his Preface to Prometheus Unbound that:

The Prometheus Unbound of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis ... Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind.

In fact Shelley reverses the theme of Aeschylus' Prometheus Unbound from man's submission to tyranny as an unconquerable power to the inevitability of man's liberation.<sup>131</sup>

Shelley's play reverses both Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound and the assumed concept of his lost play Prometheus Unbound, in two interrelated respects: the overthrow of Jupiter and the liberation of Prometheus. Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound deals mainly with the original binding of Prometheus, and his lost play Prometheus Unbound is assumed to be mostly concerned with Prometheus' final release. It is generally known that in it Aeschylus sets Prometheus free after his submission to and reconciliation with the omnipotent power. In Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound,

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130. The edition I used for this study of Prometheus Unbound is: Prometheus Unbound. A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts, With Other Poems (London, 1820).

131. For a comparison between the Prometheus of Aeschylus and that of Shelley, see William A.O'Connor, 'The Prometheus of Aeschylus and of Shelley', The Manchester Quarterly, I, No.1 (Jan.1882), pp.29-45; Nitish Kumar Basu, 'Aeschylus and Shelley', The Calcutta Review, CXLVI (Jan. 1958), pp.1-10; and Bennett Weaver, 'Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound', PMLA, LXIV, No.1 (March 1949), pp.115-33.

only the omnipotent, the powerful can be free: 'Only Zeus is free' (90); in Shelley's poem, on the other hand, liberty is identical with love and goodness. Power, in as far as it serves evil, is a sign of slavery:

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

(II, iv, 110-1)

Power, which is identical with liberty in Aeschylus, is associated with slavery in the Shelley: 'Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power' (II,iv,69).

In other words, Shelley has a 'negative' concept of liberty, in which 'the self ... is no longer the individual with his actual wishes and needs as they are normally conceived, but the "real" man within, identified with the pursuit of some ideal purpose not dreamed of by his empirical self'.<sup>132</sup> This is the liberty of man who is originally good and whose liberation, therefore, is a purgation of the self from its own wishes and evils. Aeschylus, on the other hand, has the 'positive' conception of liberty; the liberty of power, of the tyrant and the omnipotent. This liberty is a 'total self-identification with a specific principle or ideal in order to attain the self same end.'<sup>133</sup>

Shelley's Prometheus is to be freed. When he is asked: 'Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?', he answers: 'I know but this, that it must come.' (I, 412-3) However, his freedom is not achieved because of any reconciliation or compromise, but because of the inherent superiority of good over evil; it is achieved when man's weak will is controlled by his strong will. On the contrary, Aeschylus' Prometheus will be set free only when the tyrant wills it so. When the chorus asks him:

But is n't there a fixed point at which  
Your agony must end?

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132. Isaiah Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (London, 1969), p.134.

133. Ibid.

he answers:

... It will end  
Only when HE sees fit.

(385-6)

It is assumed that in the second play of Aeschylus' Trilogy Prometheus discloses to Zeus that if he were to marry Thetis, they would produce a son who would overthrow his father. By preventing Zeus' marriage Prometheus obtained and ensured his release. Here the attainment of liberty involves submission and of necessity signifies an eternal enslavement to tyranny.

As he states in his Preface and often reveals in his letters,<sup>134</sup> Shelley did not attempt to restore Aeschylus' Prometheus Unbound in his adaptation of the myth. Instead, as some critics have remarked,<sup>135</sup> he is the first poet to dethrone Jupiter, defy tyranny and liberate Prometheus, and by so doing he reverses the theme of Aeschylus' play from that of the voluntary enslavement of man to that of man's eternal liberation using the myth as a skeleton for his new production. The conception of liberty, therefore, is not only being reconstructed to come into line with Shelley's philosophy, but is also being parodied.

Shelley's main concern, however, is not simply whether or not to set Prometheus free, but how to set him free, for his poem is more about the process of liberation than about liberty itself. In Prometheus Unbound Shelley bases his argument on the view that Prometheus' liberation takes place through a long process of self-realization and self-control, through his growing understanding of the nature of tyranny and of the role of his own will in overcoming it and in achieving his eternal freedom. In the three poems, Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and

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134. See his letter to Charles Ollier, 6 Sept. 1819, Letters, II, p.116 and to Thomas Medwin, 20 July 1820, Letters, II, p.219.

135. See Helen A. Clarke, 'A Sketch of the Prometheus Myth in Poetry', Poet-Lore, IV, No.3 (1892), pp.135-44(pp.143-4); Bennett Weaver, 'Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound' (p.132); and Melvin J.Lasky, 'The Prometheans: On the Imagery of Fire & Revolution' Encounter, XXXI, No.4 (Oct. 1968), pp.22-32 (p.29).

Prometheus Unbound, Shelley demonstrates three varieties of human emancipation. In an important sense these poems with all their moral undercurrents thus constitute a significant part of Shelley's political theory.

Liberty in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is neither achieved through a struggle between two physically separate and diametrically opposed powers, nor is it accomplished through any physical action, but through the development of ideas in the human mind. The action in the poem takes the form of thought. Tyranny, therefore, is not a power outside the human mind, but is part of it.

For Shelley this is a partial, but not an absolute truth. Besides being inclusive of the whole universe, the human mind is seen by him as a part of it, and besides being a part of the human mind, tyranny is an aggregate of all human evils. Shelley's belief in the interrelation between man's intellect and the physical world is Platonic. This Platonic view involves a duality of conception which pervades every element of the poem. Prometheus, Asia, Demogorgon and even nature exemplify this duality.

Shelley presents Prometheus with all his mythical attributes as the fire-bearer, the deliverer of knowledge to mankind and the regenerator of humanity; 'Shelley's Titan would be not only the foe of Zeus but the saviour of man':<sup>136</sup>

Such, the alleviations of his state,  
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs  
Withering in destined pain ...

(II, iv, 98-100)

He also presents him both as a symbol of humanity and as an individual who has been tortured physically and who is personally defiant against Jupiter. Prometheus addresses Jupiter thus:

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136. Weaver, 'Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound', p.123.

Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,  
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,  
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.

(I, 9-11)

By strongly inverting 'whilst me ... / Hast thou', and the placing of 'O'er mine own misery' at the beginning of the line (by means of the inserted adverbial phrase 'to thy scorn' which effectively delays the completion of the verbs), Shelley in this way emphasizes that what we have in view is two individuals involved in a direct conflict. Milton Wilson supports this view of Prometheus; 'Prometheus,' he observes, 'in so far as he is himself a representative of the human will and its capacity for regeneration, belongs to time and is himself involved in the ebb and flow.'<sup>137</sup> Moreover, according to W.M.Rossetti and Carlos Baker, Prometheus is the mind of mankind,<sup>138</sup> while more extremely, according to Carl Grabo, 'Prometheus is the liberator of humanity from the tyranny of Jupiter; yet Prometheus is also humanity itself.'<sup>139</sup> But to Earl R.Wasserman 'each of these views falls short of the mark insofar as it assumes that the central subject of the drama is a mankind having autonomous reality and that Prometheus is a fictional abstraction of earthly man or of his faculties or ideals.'<sup>140</sup> Although there is no doubt that the most commonly acknowledged function of Prometheus is his being a symbol of humanity and part of it, yet it should be borne in mind, as Wasserman rightly stresses, that Prometheus is the one who animates both nature and the universe with the new spirit of freedom, and thus he becomes identical with existence and with eternity. It is of course best if we bear all these attributes of Prometheus in mind while reading the poem, for these conceptions of Prometheus as a symbol of man, as a man, as humanity, and as existence

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137. Shelley's Later Poetry (New York, 1959), p.172.

138. See W.M.Rossetti, Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Study of its Meaning and Personages (London, 1886), pp.16-17; and Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry, p.92.

139. Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation (Chapel Hill, 1935), p.15.

140. Shelley: A Critical Reading, p.256.

are very significant for the theme of liberty because they involve a parallel between his liberation as an individual and the regeneration, not only of mankind, but of the whole universe. The freedom he achieves is that of man as an individual on earth; and simultaneously of humanity, nature, time and space. Prometheus' opening speech anticipates this fact as well as referring to the torture and suffering which he has endured:

Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,  
And moments aye divided by keen pangs  
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,  
Scorn and despair,- these are mine empire:-

(I, 12-15)

The alternative 'time-scales' suggested in the contrast between millennia and 'moments' correspond to the two functions fulfilled by Prometheus in his roles as both an individual and as a representative of the human race.

Prometheus' feelings of suffering, fortitude and defiance, however, end with his expression of repentance and pity for his enemy; he cries to Jupiter:

Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin  
Will hunt thee undefended thro' wide Heaven!  
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,  
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,  
Not exultation, for I hate no more.

(I, 53-7)

This is the first, and, in a sense, the final step in Prometheus' liberation. His repentance is a product of his realization that his 'Mind has enslaved itself with a vengeance',<sup>141</sup> that his hatred and disdain are also to blame for his enslavement. He repents only after he recognizes that his self-tyranny and the tyranny of Jupiter 'are thesis and antithesis, obverse and reverse of the one coin.'<sup>142</sup>

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141. Carl Woodring, Politics in English Romantic Poetry, p.287.

142. F.A.Lea, Shelley and the Romantic Revolution (London, 1945), p.117.

In this context, Prometheus' self-realization is inseparable from his forgiveness of his enemy and the transcendence of his struggle. This single act of the will is vital to the whole process of Prometheus' liberation.<sup>143</sup> All the succeeding action is dependent on his moral choice to hate no more, forgive his enemy, and thus to control his evil emotions. On the importance of the first moral choice Shelley seems to be in complete agreement with Godwin. 'All the acts, except the first,' Godwin says, 'were necessary, and followed each other, as inevitably as the links of a chain do, when the first link is drawn forward.'<sup>144</sup>

By forgiving his enemy, and repenting his own misdeeds, Prometheus resists tyranny rather than submits to it. After his repentance he says:

Submission, thou dost know I cannot try:  
For what submission but that fatal word,  
The death-seal of mankind's captivity ...

Or could I yield? ... would he accept,

(I, 395-400)

In ceasing to hate evil Prometheus overcomes evil, and in resisting his self-tyranny he defeats it and attains his eternal freedom. Thus the germ of man's freedom here, as in The Revolt of Islam, is love. What Shelley teaches here is that 'only when Man- in- the heighest, Man Promethean, is governed solely and completely by Love can he safely be set free.'<sup>145</sup> Thus love in both Prometheus Unbound and The Revolt of Islam is the only invincible premise of man's freedom; for:

Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these  
All things are subject but eternal love

(II, iv, 119-20)

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143. For a similar point of view see Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry, p.109.

144. Godwin, Enquiry, I, p.378.

145. James H.Cousins, 'The Message of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound', The Calcutta Review, 3rd series, XLVI, No.2 (1933), pp.155-70 (p.165); for a similar view see W.A.O'Connor, 'The Prometheus of Aeschylus and of Shelley', p.41; and Carl Grabo, The Magic Plant, p.280.

The philosophy of Shelley here is in perfect accordance with the ethics of Christ. Shelley, as we have pointed out earlier, always admired the doctrines of Christ and believed that if acted upon they provide the most formidable basis for man's emancipation. The Titan himself is seen as a symbol of Christ; Panthea saw him as

A woeful sight: a youth  
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

(I, 584-5)

Like Christ, Prometheus is crucified for the sake of humanity and, like Christ's resurrection, his liberation signifies the liberation of mankind. William H. Marshall remarks that 'The parallel between Prometheus and Christ is made explicit when Mercury and the Furies try to wrest the secret from Prometheus by demonstrating the futility of this or any attempt through self-sacrifice to save Man; and for this purpose they call forth the vision of the dying Christ and of his nominal followers who have rejected his essential teaching.'<sup>146</sup> This parallel between him and Christ is developed in his resistance to temptation by 'serene self-control'.

Both in the sense that he includes a universal catalogue of human history and stands as an exemplary figure in his individual capacity, the Titan's mind becomes representative of all hopes and fears, of all thoughts and actions. He becomes, as Baker observes<sup>147</sup> 'a typical rather than a realistic figure ... uninhabited by history or by the need of being human'.<sup>148</sup> This understanding of Prometheus is in harmony with Shelley's view of the mind as 'A catalogue of all the thoughts of the mind, and of all their possible modifications', as a 'cyclopedic history of the Universe'.<sup>149</sup> In fact, as early as Mont Blanc (1816)

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- 146. 'The Father-Child Symbolism in Prometheus Unbound', Modern Language Quarterly, XXII (March 1961), pp.41-5 (pp.43-4).
- 147. Cf. Carlos Baker: 'Among earlier commentators, W.M.Rossetti, J.A.Symonds, and H.S.Salt are in substantial agreement that Prometheus represents the human mind.' (Shelley's Major Poetry, p. 112n).
- 148. Ibid., p.92.
- 149. Works, VII, p.59.

Shelley thinks that:

The everlasting universe of things  
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves ...

(Mont Blanc, 1-2)

In her 'Notes on Prometheus Unbound', Mary Shelley comments on Shelley's conception of the mind: 'I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in Oedipus Tyrannus, ... A line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry, yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed, "Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought" ... What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol, a world within a world.'

In harmony with Shelley's view of the mind, the Titan is the universal mind of which Jupiter is only a weak shadow limited in time and space. In Prometheus' words, Jupiter is only his own self-antagonist:

I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear  
Thy works within my woe-illumined mind,  
Thou subtle tyrant! ...

(I, 636-8)

Prometheus is a Titan and the Titans are an earlier race to Jupiter which signifies that liberty precedes tyranny. Therefore tyranny which enslaves the Titan's mind is permitted to exist by the mind itself. In fact, it is a creation of the mind; the Titan says of Jupiter:

... I gave all  
He has; and in return he chains me here.

(I, 381-2)

Jupiter, as Wasserman suggests, is only an actuality of tyranny whose perpetual viability is man's weakness and evil; he cannot be 'omnipotent', and his saying, 'Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent' (III, i, 3) 'should be understood as irony'. Although he reigns he is only a slave to evil: 'All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil...' (II, iv, 110). The struggle for liberty, in this sense, is only a struggle between good and evil in man; between man's strong

will and ill will. Tyranny has no real existence; it is only a shadow in the endless history of freedom. Freedom existed before tyranny and lives on after it.

Besides being an inclusive intellect of which every thing is only a part, Prometheus is also a physical individual being; he says:

Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips  
His beak in poison not his own, tears up  
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,  
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,  
Mocking me ...

(I, 34-8)

Prometheus' opening monologue indicates that Shelley is dealing with, or projecting himself into,<sup>150</sup> an individual hero in whose soul the striving for liberty is for ever alive. Shelley himself confirms in the Preface that Prometheus is 'the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.'

Thus, on the one hand, the liberty of the Prometheus excels that achieved in Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam in being inclusive of everything in existence for which the human mind serves as an unfailing catalogue and, on the other, it is their equal in being the effect of man's ethical purgation and his determination to expel evil and enthrone goodness. If the conceptions of freedom, as Isaiah Berlin says, 'directly derive from views of what constitutes a self, a person, a man',<sup>151</sup> Shelley's conception of liberty, then, is of necessity founded on his

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150. Of Shelley and Prometheus Daniel Hughes says: 'Prometheus, like Shelley, is a poet of the first order by what his poem imagines and becomes', ('Prometheus Made Capable Poet in Act One of Prometheus Unbound', Studies in Romanticism, XVII, No.1 (Winter 1978), pp.3-11 (p.11)). A similar judgement is expressed by E.J. Schulze who stresses that 'the hero's action and the poet's thought are identical, the hero becoming the substance of the poet's apprehension of life' (Shelley's Theory of Poetry: A Reappraisal, p.216). Moreover, Neville Rogers stresses another, perhaps more significant, aspect of the suggested parallel between Shelley and Prometheus: 'Shelley defying the forces of despotism and institutional religion, is identified with the tortured Titan, like him suffering liberator and pioneer of scientific enlightenment' (Shelley at Work, p.19).

151. Four Essays on Liberty, p.134.

belief in man's original goodness. His optimism about man's eternal liberation in the three poems is based on his views of good and evil. His belief in man's inner perfection is in harmony with his view of evil as accidental rather than inherent; something that can be expelled by the act of the will. 'Shelley believed,' Mary Shelley informs us in her 'Notes on Prometheus Unbound' that:

mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none ... That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system.

In his comment on Mary Shelley's account, W.M. Rossetti supports our account of this principle as being central to Shelley's argument in three of his major poems; he remarks:

No doubt Mrs. Shelley speaks correctly here. The idea which thus symbolizes in Prometheus Unbound is the very same which animates Queen Mab, and which is formulated in Julian and Maddalo, -not to speak of other poems especially The Revolt of Islam.  
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Tyranny, then, is to be demolished if faced by man's strong will. Jupiter is bound to fall 'not, ... simply because he produced an offspring mightier than himself, but because Prometheus refuses that final abandonment of power over his own will.'<sup>153</sup> This fact is established in the poem by both Prometheus and Jupiter. On Prometheus' request, the Phantasm of Jupiter addresses Jupiter thus:

O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,  
And my own will.

(I, 274-5)

Jupiter too states that:

All else had been subdued to me; alone  
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,  
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt ...

(III, i, 4-6)

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152. Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, pp.15-16.

153. Wasserman, Shelley: A Critical Reading, p.288.

Demogorgon, furthermore, overthrows Jupiter, not simply because of some determinism, but because Prometheus chooses to forgive his enemy and resist his evil emotions of hate and vengeance:

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.

(I, 303-5)

Having repented, cast out hatred and vice, while remaining firm, calm and resistant to evil, Prometheus predicts his coming liberation. After his repentance he says:

Yet am I king over myself, and rule  
The torturing and conflicting throngs within ...

(I, 492-3)

The fact that Prometheus has a moral choice to resist evil presupposes that his will is originally, at least partly free. Indeed, Shelley, as we argued before<sup>154</sup> and as his works attest, always believed that man possesses that spark of freedom which can be realized in eternal freedom if he so chooses and wills. This lies as the nucleus of nearly every thing he says; it is the pivot of three of his major poems and the foundation on which his political theory rests. Carl Grabo stresses the dominance of this tenet in Shelley's thought: 'This insistence upon the deliberate exercise of the will and his realization that custom, tradition, superstition, and belief, though made by man, can enslave him if he is not wary is, from Shelley's insistence upon it, the cardinal point of his matured philosophy.'<sup>155</sup> Stuart Curran, moreover, insists that free will is of central importance to Shelley's political philosophy:

The core of political and personal liberty in this new Godwinian vision is free will. It is the essential characteristic of being human, the fundamental right of man, the fundamental basis for a just society. The logical implications of this philosophical premise are, for Shelley, far-

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154. See pp.12-17 above.

155. The Magic Plant, p.290.

reaching. A meaningful reform cannot be effected without a total commitment to the dignity of the individual will.

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On this question of will and freedom, however, Shelley seems to be in agreement with Rousseau. 'True human freedom,' Rousseau believes, 'can emerge only at a higher stage of human existence when man has acquired the capacity for deliberate choice ... by a deliberate act of will.'<sup>157</sup> In this context it is unnecessary 'to read Necessarianism into Prometheus Unbound, ... Prometheus' will is the force that dominates the whole play, that motivates the action, that gives the story moral significance.'<sup>158</sup> The law of Necessity which is exemplified in Demogorgon rules the material universe, but man should be the master of this law; in his self-knowledge, his ethical choice and his will to resist, Prometheus turns this law to his own ends.

Demogorgon, however, is not simply a material realization of Prometheus' thought. Unlike most of the figures he should not be interpreted as a part of Prometheus' mind. Like the whole poem, though, he can be understood on two levels: the spiritual and the physical. On the one hand he has no identity; for he is the shapeless power of Necessity which can be imagined without being materialized. Thus Panthea describes him as:

... a mighty darkness  
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom  
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,  
Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,  
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is  
A living Spirit.

(II, iv, 3-7)

On the other hand, he is in some sense a physical and individual being; for he is the child of Jupiter. Demogorgon's own words might provide

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156. Shelley's Annus Mirabilis: The Maturing of an Epic Vision (California, 1975), p.194.

157. Ronald Grimsley, The Philosophy of Rousseau (London, 1973), pp.90-1.

158. Ellsworth Barnard, Shelley's Religion (Minneapolis, 1937), p.139.

us with a clue to his dualism. When he is asked by Jupiter: 'What art thou Speak' (III, i, 51), he answers

Eternity. Demand no direr name ...  
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child; ...

(III, i, 52-4)

This dual conception of Demogorgon as the law of Necessity and as the child of Jupiter signifies that tyranny begets the necessity of its own reform. Demogorgon's stress on the word 'child' here evokes an interesting parallel with the child in The Revolt of Islam. Both Demogorgon and the child in The Revolt are the children of tyranny; Demogorgon is the child of Jupiter and the child in The Revolt is the product of the tyrant's rape of Cythna. Again both of them are their fathers' only hope to perpetuate the rule of tyranny; Jupiter hoped till the last moment of his rule that Demogorgon will take his place and the tyrant believed that by raping Cythna he will crush her revolutionary spirit and ensure his permanent rule. Instead, Demogorgon is the very power to dethrone his father and fulfil the will of Prometheus and usher in the triumph of freedom and the child is an image of Laon not of the tyrant, an embodiment of Laon's and Cythna's love and his birth signifies the birth of the new order. Thus what tyranny produced in both poems is not its own perpetuation as the tyrants hoped, but its own antithesis and destruction which portends the triumph of love and liberty. Until minutes before his fall Jupiter still encroaches on the might of Demogorgon in order to sustain his despotism; he still sees in him an ally and a probable successor:

Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third  
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,  
Between us floats ...

(III, i, 43-5)

till he is told by him:

... Lift thy lightnings not.  
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,  
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee ...

(III, i, 56-8)

Thus if directed by love and forgiveness, Necessity (Demogorgon) will overthrow the oppressive order and render its service to man and play an important role in his emancipation. The fact that Prometheus' mastery over his own will lends force to his control of Necessity suggests that it is not Necessity but man's will that reigns supreme.

The Titan is tempted, tortured, given the agony of watching Christ crucified (I, 553-5), nations butchered and revolutions ending in the installment of tyranny (I, 650-5), but he never submits. By keeping control over his will and exercising his ethical freedom, Prometheus becomes the master of Necessity, which governs everything in the universe but eternal love (II, iv, 119-20), and commands it (Demogorgon) to 'transmit the revolution of mind to the revolution of matter'.<sup>159</sup> Hence, he identifies himself 'with the ruling power of the universe which is Love',<sup>160</sup> and becomes a master, not only of his spiritual and moral world but also of the physical world in which only Necessity used to pre-dominate. Thus, although 'the struggle is in the individual mind, ... the regeneration, when achieved, is not one's own alone. Its impact is universal and for Shelley even cosmic.'<sup>161</sup>

The ultimate kinship between love and freedom in the poem is delineated in the song of the spirits to Asia:

In the world unknown  
Sleeps a voice unspoken;  
By thy step alone  
Can its rest be broken;  
Child of Ocean!

(II, i, 190-4)

The 'voice unspoken' is that of freedom which could be made heard only by the power of Asia (Child of Ocean). Asia's power to realize freedom springs from her function as a symbol of Love; Prometheus addresses her thus:

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159. B.Rajan, 'The Motivation of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound', The Review of English Studies, XIX, No.75 (July 1943), pp.297-301 (p.299).

160. Grabo, The Magic Plant, p.280.

161. M.M.Bhalla, Studies in Shelley (New Delhi, 1973), p.61.

How fair these air-born shapes! and yet I feel  
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,  
Asia!

(I, 807-9)

In keeping with Shelley's dualism in Prometheus Unbound, Asia can be understood on more than one level. Besides being the wife of Prometheus from whom she is separated, and a symbol of perfect love, Asia is a symbol of nature. Her function as a symbol of nature is emphasized by Mary Shelley in her 'Notes on Prometheus Unbound': 'Asia, one of the Oceanides is the wife of Prometheus - she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the Benefactor of Mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union.' In Shelley's poem, Asia retains all her mythological attributes. Panthea describes her as identified with the sea-born Venus on the one hand:

... thou didst stand  
Within a veined shell, which floated on  
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,  
Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores  
Which bear thy name ...

(II, v, 22-6)

and with nature and the physical universe on the other:

... love, like the atmosphere  
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,  
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven  
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves  
And all that dwells within them ...

(II, v, 26-30)

Her reunion with Prometheus after his liberation therefore implies the internal unity of man, the reunion of man with his fellow men, with nature and with the whole universe. According to B.Rajan the function of Asia is 'To universalize the mental re-organization of Prometheus',<sup>162</sup> while Grabo suggests that 'From her evident function in the drama, as

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162. 'The Motivation of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound', p.299.

from Mrs. Shelley's definition, we know Asia to be passionate creative love';<sup>163</sup> what is more, Asia becomes the prophet of the coming liberation when she dreams that a change is going to take place, and that she and Panthea are about to go on an unknown journey. The connexion between love and the attainment of freedom is best seen in the movement of the spirits who arrive at the cave of Demogorgon. The first spirit sings:

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

(II, iv, 146-9)

Besides describing her mission as the first spirit did, the second spirit calls on Asia to accompany her:

Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle  
We encircle the earth and the moon:  
We shall rest from long labours at noon:  
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

(II, iv, 171-4)

The fact that the first spirit which announces the end of the old system does not call on Asia to accompany her while the second one who presages the new system does, does not signify as Cameron suggests (without referring to these examples) that love is not needed in the overthrow of the old system; it is only needed to build the new one. He contends that 'Demogorgon can overthrow the old order without the aid of Asia, but he cannot build a new one unless she assists him.'<sup>164</sup> But the whole argument in the poem leaves no room for doubt that the old order cannot be overthrown without the power of love. It is only when Prometheus realizes that it is through love rather than hatred and revenge one can dethrone tyranny that his freedom is effected and Demogorgon complies by overthrowing Jupiter. Here the role of love is

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163. Prometheus Unbound, p.52.

164. 'The Political Symbolism of Prometheus Unbound', PMLA, LVIII (Sept.-Dec. 1943), pp.728-53 (p.744); and in Shelley: Modern Judgements, ed. by R.B.Woodings (London, 1968), p.117.

crucial both in ending the oppressive order and in assisting Necessity to function. The point is that one cannot separate this role of love, whose workings in Prometheus' heart undermined the power of Jupiter and harnessed the power of Necessity to serve man's freedom, from the role of Asia as the symbol of love. In fact, Asia, whose memory was always present in Prometheus' mind, was herself the driving power of love which enabled Prometheus to overcome tyranny, control Necessity and attain freedom; she was the one 'who made long years of pain / Sweet to remember, thro' your love and care:' (III, iii, 8-9). It was the presence of love in Prometheus' mind that was a hope and a prophecy in his coming liberation:

One sound beneath, around, above,  
Was moving; 'twas the soul of love;  
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,  
Which begins and ends in thee.

(I, 704-7)

The significance of the presence of love in Prometheus' mind is confirmed by Mary Shelley in her 'Notes on Prometheus Unbound': 'Through the whole poem, there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.' Love, therefore, is instrumental to the end of the old order. Necessity can do this only in the presence of love. In this context, the fact that the second spirit and not the first one calls on Asia to join her is related to Asia's dual function as love and nature. The first spirit does not need Asia, not because 'Demogorgon can overthrow the old order' without her help, but because the work is already done; tyranny is surmounted and love and liberty are triumphant. The second spirit, on the other hand, calls on Asia (nature) to transmit this change, which has already taken place in man's heart, to nature and the universe, to 'encircle the earth and the moon': it is to make love and liberty permeate the physical world of nature as they have pervaded the world of man.

Love, however, should always be present in man's mind before and after his liberation. After his liberation Prometheus stresses, in

addressing Asia, that 'Henceforth we will not part' (III, iii, 10). Love is 'the soul of liberty'; it is the atmosphere without which liberty can neither be born nor exist. In the liberated world freedom and love reach complete oneness:

There was a change: the impalpable thin air  
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,  
As if the sense of love dissolved in them  
Had folded itself round the sphered world.

(III, iv, 111-14)

Love, here, as in The Revolt of Islam, is a central foundation of man's freedom. Both poems illustrate through profuse arguments and examples that it is only when man discovers the fecundity of love at work and renounces violence, hatred and revenge that he will ever become free; it is only through the gradual progress of love in the human heart, with liberty and equality as its necessary consequences, that man's hopes for a lasting reform will ever come to fruition. Besides being fully demonstrated in the poem, this view is recapitulated in Demogorgon's concluding soliloquy:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

(IV, 570-8)

The moral regeneration achieved, however, has significant reflexes in a physical regeneration both in man and in nature. Although, as we have remarked, Prometheus' freedom was realized when he was transmuted into the type described by Shelley in the Preface as 'exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and desire for personal aggrandisement', he was not physically unchained until Hercules transformed what had already taken place in the mind into a visible action. The nature of Hercules' mission is implicit in his address to Prometheus:

Most glorious among spirits, thus doth strength  
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,

And thee, who art the form they animate,  
Minister like a slave.

(III, iii, 1-4)

Hercules' address to Prometheus as 'Most glorious', and as a form animated with 'strength', 'wisdom', 'courage' and 'love' leaves no room for doubt that Prometheus' physical release is a natural reflection of the moral and intellectual freedom already achieved in his mind. His address to Mercury much earlier on might be taken as a tacit reference to this achievement:

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,  
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene ...

(I, 429-30)

Despite the fact that Shelley in Prometheus Unbound is not the revolutionary trying to achieve freedom with a specific vision of a perfect state, or with the hope of effecting reform, none the less, the point he is making is a fully political one with recognizable social and political consequences.

It is noticeable that Prometheus' ethical liberation is in the fullest sense realized in society where man becomes:

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,- but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King  
Over himself ...

(III, iv, 194-7)

Besides being a manifestation of social equality, Prometheus' emancipation brings forth the most worthy attributes of man; in such a society man is:

... just, gentle, wise: but man  
Passionless; no, yet free from guilt or pain,  
Which were, for his will made or suffered them, ...

(III, iv, 197-9)

Women, too, are freed from all bondage, social, mental and emotional; they can now be seen:

Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,  
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,  
And changed to all which once they dared not be, ...

(III, iv, 155-63)

In effect, Shelley's liberated society is not abstractedly Utopian nor is it impossible to achieve. It is not the kind of society which can never possibly exist except in the imagination of its creator; rather it is an ideal society envisaged concretely on earth (II, ii, 94-7). Together with these individual social repercussions, Prometheus' liberation is also an issue of some political consequence for the social order as a whole. After his liberation, Prometheus reflected on the political system and:

... first was disappointed not to see  
Such mighty change as I had felt within  
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,  
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked  
One with the other even as spirits do ...

(III, iv, 128-32)

Shelley does not in fact discuss either social or political liberty in detail, partly because he does not discuss the term 'freedom' itself. His main concern in Prometheus Unbound was the process of achieving freedom rather than freedom itself. This is true of Shelley's treatment of the theme of liberty, not only in his Prometheus Unbound but in Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam; what is important in these three major poems is the regeneration of liberty in man's life - but once it is generated there will be nothing left to do. In fact, this is almost always true of Shelley's outlook in general. At least this is how he looks at nature where he tends to conclude the cycle of seasons with spring; but the significance of this spring, or the question of the winter to follow has nothing to do with Shelley's philosophy. His treatment of the seasons in his 'Ode to the West Wind' thus ends with:

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

(69-70)

This could be read in terms of Shelley's awareness of his role as a prophet calling for a new order, yet no less aware of the fact that when this order is established he will be no more. Therefore it is up to the generations concerned to deal with the particular nature of that order. What is more, freedom in Prometheus Unbound might be particularly ambiguous or differently interpreted because it is defined by metonymy

rather than by metaphor. Shelley defines freedom by associating it with virtue, love and goodness and by dissociating it from evil, hatred and tyranny. Yet it remains safe to suggest that although the process of man's freedom in Prometheus Unbound is essentially moral, the freedom achieved is not only ethical; it is no less social and political.

Nature in Prometheus Unbound is, in a way, a reflection of man's perception of it, the fact that epitomizes Shelley's belief in the inter-relation between man's intellect and the physical world: 'Shelley was not indeed inclined to separate natural and spiritual forces ... He does not see a dualism between material and spiritual life; each is one aspect of the same reality.'<sup>165</sup> Indeed, when Prometheus was enslaved and full of hatred of his foe, nature was:

Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,  
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life ...

(I, 21-2)

And alternatively, when Asia dreams of Prometheus' coming liberation, Panthea sees the same prophecy in nature:

I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;  
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells  
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,  
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

(II, i, 138-41)

Interestingly, a contrast could be drawn between Prometheus Unbound and 'Ode to the West Wind' concerning the correlation between man's liberation and nature's regeneration. While in Prometheus Unbound moral reformation first takes place in man's mind and then it is transmitted both to man's body and the physical universe, in the 'Ode' we find that the regeneration of nature is supposed to be the emblem of man's moral reform and emancipation. However, both nature and the mind of man in the two poems represent a synthesis and a coalescence of the timelessness and spacelessness of freedom achieved.

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165. Graham Hough, The Romantic Poets (London, 1953), p.138.

To grasp Shelley's view of liberty in Prometheus Unbound, one has to distinguish between two main points in the poem: the process of obtaining freedom and freedom itself. This process, which covers the major and most important part of the poem (up to the third scene of the third Act) is mainly ethical. It is the way of 'Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance' (IV, 562), but the liberty to which this process leads is not only moral. Shelley's account of the way to liberty is this: to be free, be pure in heart, resist evil, love your enemies and keep control over your will. Upon this process the countless changes of the universe depend. In other words, physical, social, and political liberties are necessary consequences of man's purgation. For after achieving a return to man's original goodness, a faith in liberty can be procured. In a way, the reader would like to find in the poem much more discussion of physical, social, religious and political liberty, but in another way its greatness lies precisely in the fact that Shelley does not offer such specific considerations;<sup>166</sup> to deal mainly with the process of reformation is to put forward for all men in all ages a clear ideal of reform which is not limited by a particular historical context. This significant function of Prometheus Unbound is stressed by Herbert Read who argues that this poem is 'the greatest expression ever given to humanity's desire for intellectual light and spiritual liberty ... the day may yet come when this poem will take its commanding place in a literature of freedom of which we have yet no conception.'<sup>167</sup> There is no doubt that the dramatic form and the dramatic monologues work efficiently and straightforwardly to exhort such an effect. Prometheus

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166. James H. Cousins in his essay 'The Message of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound' supports this view, commenting that 'the utterances of the highest poetry, like that of Prometheus Unbound, come charged with the high potential of wisdom from the immortal spirit of humanity, and are capable of application in all times and lands ... Great poetry like Shelley's utters uncompromising ideals, and demands the adaptation of human desire and conduct to them.' (p.170); for a similar viewpoint see M.M. Bhalla, Studies in Shelley, p.61.
167. The True Voice of Feeling (London, 1953), p.271. For a similar judgement see Vida D. Scudder, 'The Prometheus Unbound of Shelley: The Drama and the Time', The Atlantic Monthly, LXX, No.417 (July 1892), pp.106-15 (pp.109-12); and Bennett Weaver, 'Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound', pp.132-3.

Unbound is a deeply political poem and in it Shelley exercises a masterly literary and political skill in making the doctrines conveyed entirely natural to the poetry: so there is perhaps a prima facie case for saying that our judgement and indeed response to the poem is greatly affected by our general attitude towards the ideas contained in it. It is difficult to imagine any one saying Prometheus Unbound is a good poem and simultaneously disagreeing with its doctrine. Its aesthetic virtues and moral arguments are incorporated so well that neither of them can operate in isolation of the other. The moral sense, already so deep in the poem, is further deepened by a perennial faith which the poetry unmistakably imparts. As W.B.Yeats remarks 'this mysterious song utters a faith as simple and ancient as the faith of those country people, in a form suited to a new age.'<sup>168</sup> Indeed, to animate us with an example of reform of which Prometheus' is a perfect example, to impart a faith in a new age and to make us hope 'till hope creates / From its own wreck the things it contemplates' (IV, 573-4) is the central core of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, and still remains its challenge.

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168. 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry', Essays (London, 1924), p.95.

2. IMMEDIATE REFORM

'Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age.'

(Preface to Prometheus Unbound)

Amongst Shelley's poems, those of 1819 claim a distinct significance chiefly due to the fact that they postulate an exchange of roles between the poet and the public; the poet, the creator of a new reality and the originator of new modes of thought, is now being directed - at least partly, and perhaps even unconsciously - by social reality. In part, these poems (notably, the Masque of Anarchy) are untypical of Shelley's (and for that matter, of the Romantics') theory of poetry for which the arts are 'the creators of consciousness, (which) determine social reality';\* instead, they are more in harmony with a Marxist theory where it 'is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their existence determines their consciousness.'<sup>169</sup> One must be quick to add here, however, that the first proposition does not of necessity preclude the second and, as the following pages will show, these poems remarkably combine the two attitudes and become like language in West's words, 'the creation and the creator'<sup>170</sup> of social reality.

The poems we examine in this section are those which were most often read and published by the Chartists: 'The Masque of Anarchy', 'Song to the Men of England' and 'An Ode (written October 1819, before the Spaniards had recovered their liberty)'. 'Ode to the West Wind' will also be examined here, not because it was as often published in Chartist Journals but because, I suspect, it made a lasting impact on

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\* Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (London, 1977), p.266.

169. Ibid. For an illuminating discussion of the Romantic and the Marxist concept of the reciprocal relation between art and social reality see the same pp.262-75.

170. Ibid., p.267.

Ernest Jones and influenced one of his poems, in particular. (This point will be raised and discussed in chapter 4.) However, before we begin discussing these poems, two points should be made clear: first, neither Shelley's mission 'to awaken & direct the imagination of the reformers',<sup>171</sup> nor his political message as expressed in three of his poems discussed above had changed in 1819, rather they were recast in terms suggested by the political happenings of that eventful year. . Second, the ensuing innovations opened up a new vista to the poet as reformer and necessitated the use of a different poetic mode from the one used in either Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam or Prometheus Unbound.

Designed and directed to raise the public's consciousness, 'The Masque of Anarchy'<sup>172</sup> is in the first place an expression of the public response to and judgement of a political event known as Peterloo or the Manchester Massacre:

The Manchester Massacre or Peterloo Affair (Jones comments on Shelley's letter to Charles Ollier, Sep. 6. 1819) occurred on 16 Aug. 1819, when sixty or more thousands of working people gathered in St. Peter's Field, Manchester, to hear Henry Hunt on their deplorable situation. The Government declared the meeting illegal and broke it up by force. Six people were killed, twenty-odd wounded by sabres, and fifty or more injured. The affair created great public indignation. With very little delay Shelley wrote The Masque of Anarchy, which on 23 Sept. he sent off to Hunt (Mary's Journal 124) who regarded it as too inflammatory for the time; he published it with a preface in 1832.

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On reaching Italy (three weeks after the actual event), the news inflamed Shelley with anger not only against the political system in England but also against his own lethargy and idleness; while the chances of political reform at home are waiting to be addressed, he lies 'asleep in Italy':

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171. Letters, II, p.191 (To Leigh Hunt, 1 May 1820).

172. For this study of 'The Masque of Anarchy' I used the first edition published by Leigh Hunt (London, 1832).

173. Letters, II, p.117n.

As I lay asleep in Italy,  
There came a voice from over the Sea  
And with great power it forth led me  
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

(I, 1-4)

'The lines,' as G.M. Matthews remarks in his illuminating article 'Shelley's "Mask of Anarchy"', 'carry some self-reproach. For Keats sleep was a luxurious fulfilment; but with Shelley it generally implies spiritless inaction, insensitivity to the needs of others, and is equivalent to death.'<sup>174</sup> The news, however, was of 'the triumph of Anarchy' which was spawning murder and chaos all over England and could be stopped only by Hope which:

... lay down in the street,  
Right before the horses' feet,  
Expecting, with a patient eye,  
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

(XXV, 1-4)

Between Anarchy and Hope, 'A mist, a light, an image' - which Cameron identifies 'by the symbol of the star Venus on its helmet, as Love'<sup>175</sup> - rose (XXVI, 103) - an image that defeats Anarchy and starts awakening people to shake their chains and pursue their freedom. Hence, love, here as in Prometheus Unbound and The Revolt of Islam emerges as a prime liberating force; its activity described in the central section of the poem (147-372) opens and concludes with the following address to the people:

"Rise, like lions after slumber,  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew,  
Which in sleep had fall'n on you:  
YE ARE MANY - THEY ARE FEW.

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(XCI, 1-5)

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174. Meddeleser fra Gymnasieskolernes Engelsklaererforening, LXVI (June 1973), pp.29-38 (p.30). I would like to express my gratitude to Mr Matthews for kindly sending me a copy of this article.

175. Shelley: Modern Judgements, p.114.

176. This last line does not appear in stanza XXXVIII which but for this omission is the same as the above.

This activity subsumes a revelation of the economic and political facts of our lives, a definition of freedom, and advice on the best means for its realization.

Political tyranny which victimized Laon and Cythna and enchained Prometheus for three thousand years has now reduced the people of England to a state of total subjugation, moral, social and political, and exposed them to hunger, destitution and death (XL-XLVII, 160-192). While in Prometheus Unbound, for instance, slavery manifests itself in the state of Prometheus:

Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,  
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,  
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.  
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

(I, 20-3)

in 'The Masque of Anarchy' it is

... to work, and have such pay  
As just keeps life from day to day  
In your limbs, as in a cell  
For the tyrants' use to dwell:

(XL, 1-4)

The discrepancy between these two poetic images could hardly have been greater. Instead of dealing with a hero whose state of mind may be surmised from the state of the 'black, wintry, dead, unmeasured mountain', we are confronted in 'The Masque' with pressing material issues: 'work and pay' and 'life from day to day'. Moreover, the image of life kept in our limbs as in a cell for the tyrant's use touches a sensitive chord in us and gives way to feelings of indignation which cannot be matched by anything the resignative image in Prometheus might produce. Furthermore, the unmistakably popular tone of the second quotation and the words 'work, pay, life, day, limbs, dwell' which are inherent in the working man's terminology support the tendency for the reader to become personally involved with the issue raised. By contrast, the tone of the first quotation and its diction: 'black, wintry, shape, sound of life, pain, for ever' stimulate us to think about the victim, to sympathize with his sufferings but not to feel the necessity, much less

the ability to do something about his condition. It is important that we stress these differences between the above examples of poetry because they are representative of further and much greater distinctions between Shelley's political poems of 1819 and some of his grander compositions such as the three poems discussed earlier in this chapter. In 'The Masque of Anarchy', for example, Shelley was addressing himself to a completely different audience from the one he envisioned for Prometheus Unbound and, naturally, he was seeking a different response. On hearing the news of the Manchester Massacre Shelley was led to believe that the time when people have to choose 'reform or civil war' ('Swellfoot the Tyrant! I, i, 114) was already at hand, that 'Mighty events are hastening to their doom' (ibid., II, ii, 66), that the 'clash between the two classes of society',<sup>177</sup> which he always deemed inevitable, was approaching, that 'These ... are awful times', and that:

The tremendous question is now agitating, whether a military & judicial despotism is to be established by our present rulers, or some form of government less unfavourable to the real & permanent interests of all men is to arise from the conflict of passions now gathering to overturn them: We cannot hesitate which party to embrace; and whatever revolutions are to occur, though oppression should change names & names cease to be oppressions, our party will be that of liberty & of the oppressed.

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The poet's chief concern, both here and in 'The Masque of Anarchy', is not only to enhance our sense of the interrelatedness of our social reality and the political system, but consciously to convert us to a certain mood in which we can contribute to a specific political attitude or action.

The difficulty of taking any positive action, though, stems from the precarious situation to which the people of England had been subjected. In spite of the fact that their right to pursue their freedom and do away

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177. Mary Shelley, 'Note on the Poems of 1819'.

178. Letters, II, p.148 (To Leigh Hunt, 3 November 1819).

with tyranny is indisputable, they could be held in the process to exchange 'Blood for blood - and wrong for wrong' (XLVIII, 195) and by so doing they will be entangled again but this time in their own anarchy. In this context, it is certain that Shelley 'saw tyranny and anarchy as closely related, for one holding temporal rule who did not submit his will to the law of love is a slave to the anarchy of his own unchecked desires, and human achievements become subject to the historical anarchy of fluctuation between the despot's rage and the slave's revenge.'<sup>179</sup> It was because of his insight into the interrelation between tyranny and anarchy that Shelley insisted even in 'The Masque of Anarchy' on the importance of love and self-restraint in effecting the political change suggested, or even urged, in the poem.

Indeed, as in The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, the poet's first obligation, here, is to passive resistance and non-violence:

"Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms, and looks which are  
Weapons of unvanquished war, ...

(LXXIX, 1-4)

"With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay  
Till their rage has died away:

(LXXXV, 1-4)

Here, Shelley commends in unequivocal terms moral resistance and fervidly warns against violence; even if the tyrants should 'Slash, and stab, and maim' (LXXXIV, 3), their violent measures, he insists, should not be answered in kind. Rather, they should be met with 'folded arms and steady eyes' and a calm resolution which will reduce them to shame (LXXXVI-LXXXVII). Yet, despite this palpable repudiation of violence, 'The Masque of Anarchy' is still understood by many to insinuate violence and call for armed resistance. This might be ascribed to the poem's ringing lines, masculine rhyme, and extremely militant tone

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179. D.H.Reiman, Percy Bysshe Shelley, (London, 1976), pp.95-6.

which make it sound rather like a battle-cry. The disparity, however, between the message of the poem, on the one hand, and its tone and rhyme, on the other, is part of what Timothy Webb describes as a permanent problem in Shelley:

His problem was that he had not yet discovered how to channel his anger productively, so that the naive violence of the poetry usually belies the authenticity of the involvement and the genuine political intelligence behind it. Shelley never completely solved this problem. But ... he learnt from experience that the worst response to anger was anger and that he must discover how to ride victoriously over his own instinct to lash back vindictively ... the most important lesson which Shelley taught himself was how to canalise his anger into the controlled artistic aggression of passages such as the opening of the *Masque of Anarchy*.  
180

And this is the lesson which he found hard to recall by the end of the same poem. It was Hunt's insight into this particular problem in 'The *Masque of Anarchy*' that made him refrain from publishing it in The Examiner in 1819<sup>181</sup>; at the time he wisely predicted that:

... even the suffering part of the people, judging, not unnaturally, from their own feelings, and from the exasperation which suffering produces before it produces knowledge, would believe a hundred-fold in his anger, to what they would in his good intention; and this made me fear that the common enemy would take advantage of the mistake to do them both a disservice.  
182

Hunt's reluctance to publish the poem in 1819 stems from his recognition that poetry affects us not just by what it says but also by how it says it. He rightly realized that the tone and rhyme of 'The *Masque of Anarchy*' verge on imparting a different message from what the poet intended to convey and what the poetry actually says. Indeed, although Shelley's stance on the principle of non-violence is not different in 'The *Masque*

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180. Shelley: A Voice not Understood, p.96.

181. The poem was first posted to Hunt on 23 Sept. 1819, to be published in The Examiner, but because of the above reasons Hunt laid it aside till 1832 when he saw fit to publish it.

182. Hunt's Preface to the edition of 1832.

of Anarchy' from what it had been in either The Revolt of Islam or Prometheus Unbound, our response concerning this particular issue varies considerably between 'The Masque of Anarchy' and these other two poems. What we are dealing with, here, really is an extremely interesting case where the tone and rhyme of a poem communicate to us just as much as the words that appear on the page, if not more. Whether, in political terms, this meant enhancing or undermining the political effect the poet is after, it undoubtedly pays tribute to poetry as a powerful literary medium capable of fomenting a remarkable political response.

It was mostly in response to its lucid definition of freedom, however, that 'The Masque of Anarchy' acquired a truly impressive reputation amongst later radicals. 'The Masque of Anarchy', in fact, is the first of Shelley's poems to propose a comprehensive and material definition of freedom:

"For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread,  
From his daily labour come,  
In a neat and happy home.

(LIV, 1-4)

"Thou art clothes, and fire, and food  
For the trampled *multitude*:

(LV, 1-2)

To this vigorous definition of freedom no one could fail to respond. For who could fail to understand the meaning and sense the necessity of being free if freedom is 'clothes', 'fire', 'food', if it is a loaf of bread and a warm house? It is precisely here that the politics of poetry become most effective; the nearer politics get to the practical needs of the people the more powerful its effects are likely to be. The choice of diction, here, contributes significantly towards such effects. Labourer, bread, table spread, daily labour, home, clothes, fire, and food, as we have already suggested, are familiar elements of working man's everyday experience of the material world; while there may be a subliminal association between the 'table spread' in this stanza and the 'table prepared' in Psalm 23, Verse 5 - such an association would strikingly replace the divine Shepherd with the principle of freedom.

Indeed, unlike Prometheus Unbound (the fourth act of which was written at the same time as 'The Masque of Anarchy'), for instance, where freedom is defined by association with beautiful imagery of spring, virtue and love, freedom in 'The Masque of Anarchy' is a daily need or even a necessity of life. The implication of this argument is that the acquisition of freedom is a duty we owe to the maintenance of our human prosperity and welfare.

Together with this definition of freedom which proved to be extremely appealing for later radicals, the poem, as G.M. Matthews explains, contains other allusions which are historically and politically accurate. One of the examples he points out is that in which Shelley refers to seven blood-hounds following Castlereagh:

... in 1815 the Foreign Secretary, Europe's most influential statesman, had signed a declaration at the Congress of Vienna allowing the other seven signatories, Austria, France, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Spain, and Sweden, to postpone the abolition of the slave trade, contrary to English public opinion. Perhaps Castlereagh had done his best; but Shelley saw him as a hypocrite, callously appeasing the Slave Powers with human flesh and feelings.

183

Correlative to these empirical arguments which predominate in 'The Masque of Anarchy' there runs a tenor of idealism which had been prevalent in Prometheus Unbound. The spark of freedom in 'these awful times' is reminiscent of that which never parted from Prometheus' heart through the long years of enslavement; in both cases it was eclipsed for a while but never wholly extinguished (LX, 1 - 4). Moreover, 'Hope', 'Love' and the principle of non-violence are just as quintessentially important for achieving freedom in 'The Masque of Anarchy' as they were in Prometheus Unbound. The way, then, in which Shelley was capable of creating so different an atmosphere in 'The Masque of Anarchy' from that which permeated the other poems we have discussed is by effectively using the lyric form, a ballad-like meter, a militant tone and a simple and

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183. 'Shelley's "Masque of Anarchy"', pp. 55-6.

very familiar diction. In other words, although, on balance, Shelley's political argument in 'The Masque of Anarchy' remains unchanged from what he had demonstrated in Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam or Prometheus Unbound, he none the less succeeds - chiefly through manipulating certain literary devices - in replacing idealism with a clear sense of urgency and a fervent call for immediate political action which are absent from his earlier compositions.

However, 'Song to the Men of England' written three months after 'The Masque of Anarchy' and belatedly published by Mrs Shelley in the first edition of Poetical Works (1839), also combines the qualities of practicability and immediacy, and like 'The Masque', it 'sounded menacing enough for secret distribution by militant Chartists'.<sup>184</sup> For the first time Shelley in this poem explains and tries to redress long-standing grievances by sheer economic logic. Moral and philosophical arguments receded into the background to give way to a vigorous economic case. Yet (whether Ingpen's and Peck's remark that the philosophy of the poem and even certain lines are derived from Robert Southey's Wat Tyler<sup>185</sup> is true or not), the poem is not uncharacteristic of its author. In his Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte, for example, Shelley strikes at the social and political influence of the economic system on our lives. He argues that the national debt is not national after all; it is what the aristocracy of this country owes to another country for its 'lavish expenditure',<sup>186</sup> and the effects of which were to create another aristocracy by giving 'twice as many people the liberty of living in luxury and idleness, on the produce of the industrious and the poor'.<sup>187</sup> Because the system is set up in such an unjust way as to channel the output of labour to the aristocrat rather than to the labourer, the labourer 'gains no more now by working sixteen hours a day than he gained before by working eight'.<sup>188</sup> Shelley explains:

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184. Carl Woodring, Politics in English Romantic Poetry, p.263.

185. See Works, III, p.348n.

186. Ibid., VI, p.78. (For Shelley's other statements on The National Debt see his letter to John Gisborne, Leghorn, 16 November 1819, Letters, II, pp.156-7.)

187. Ibid.

188. Ibid.

I put the thing in its simplest and most intelligible shape. The labourer, he that tills the ground and manufactures cloth, is the man who has to provide, out of what he would bring home to his wife and children, for the luxuries and comforts of those whose claims are represented by an annuity of forty-four millions a year levied upon the English nation ... one man is forced to labour for another in a degree not only not necessary to the support of the subsisting distinctions among mankind, but so as by the excess of the injustice to endanger the very foundations of all that is valuable in social order, and to provoke that anarchy which is at once the enemy of freedom, and the child and the chastiser of misrule.

189

This insight into the nature of the economic system which, in Shelley's view, begets social injustice and political anarchism, is strikingly advanced for pre-Marxist thought. Both here and in the 'Song', Shelley approaches so closely Marx's theory of labour-value and surplus value. He insists that the people are the real producers of wealth which their masters enjoy, that those who work are one group of people but those who reap the products are another:

The seed ye sow, another reaps;  
The wealth ye find, another keeps;  
The robes ye weave, another wears;  
The arms ye forge, another bears

(17-20)

The repeated stress on 'ye' and 'another' and the tension built between the two words in each line magnifies the angry tone and serves to make the stanza an indissoluble whole. Moreover, the simple contrasts between 'sow' and 'reap', 'find' and 'keep', extended to the artisan contrast of 'weave' and 'wear', and 'forge' and 'bear' which replace the natural identity of the subject of the verbs to produce a social tension, lend lustre to the poetry and force to the much larger contrast, between the state of the people and that of their masters, which prevails over the whole poem. In order to redeem this unjust situation, however, the people have to make sure that it is they and not their masters who reap the fruits of their work:

Sow seed,- but let no tyrant reap;  
Find wealth- let no imposter heap;  
Weave robes,- let not the idle wear;  
Forge arms,- in your defence to bear

(21-4)

The commands Shelley makes, here, 'Sow ... let no ', 'Find ... let no', 'Weave ... let not' confer a sense of moral imperative in the message imparted and a quasi-assumption that the people are at the poet's behest and share his view. Further, by replacing 'another' in the previous stanza with 'tyrant', 'imposter' and 'idle', Shelley at once develops his political argument and provides a subtle link between the two stanzas - which is also maintained by the deliberate repetition of most of the vocabulary. In these ways the poem unmistakably reveals Shelley's strong objection to the economic exploitation of the workers by their masters. By emphatically stressing certain economic issues and repeating certain key words and verbs, he is relentlessly trying to transmit his anger to those at the centre of the problem exposed, in the hope of inciting them to do something about it; the simple and emphatic diction, the rapid tone and clear political reasoning are effective means which forcefully drive this point home to the reader.

Shelley's political reasoning in 1819 was so swayed by the idea of 'tyrant and slave', 'oppressor and oppressed', that it became characteristic of almost everything he wrote in that year. The more he believed that 'the slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes' (An Ode written October 1819, 9), that 'a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable',<sup>190</sup> the more the wedge between the people and their oppressors became apparent in his writings. However, Mary Shelley informs us that the people Shelley was intent on serving are 'as often more virtuous, as always more suffering, and, therefore, more deserving of sympathy, than the great',<sup>191</sup> they are:

A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,-  
An army, which liberticide and prey

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190. Mary Shelley, 'Note on the Poems of 1819'.

191. Ibid.

Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,-  
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay,

(An Ode Written October,  
1819, 7-10)

Against the overwhelming power of the oppressors which, in Shelley's estimation, is 'the parent of starvation, nakedness, and ignorance',<sup>192</sup> stands the party (to which he declared his allegiance) 'of liberty & of the oppr(esse)d'.<sup>193</sup> In his 'Lines Written During the Castlereagh Administration' (1819) Shelley draws an interesting parallel between the state of the people and that of liberty:

Corpses are cold in the tomb;  
Stones on the pavement are dumb;  
Abortions are dead in the womb,  
And their mothers look pale-like the death-white shore  
Of Albion, free no more.

Her sons are as stones in the way-  
They are masses of senseless clay-  
They are trodden, and move not away,-  
The abortion with which she travaileth  
Is Liberty, smitten to death.

(1-10)

Further, in 'Ode to Liberty', all the world's evil is imputed to the absence of freedom:

But this divinest universe  
Was yet a chaos and a curse,  
For thou wert not

(II, 21-3)

When freedom is realized, at the end of the poem, the best moral, social and political values prevail:

Blind Love, and equal justice, and the Fame  
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?  
O Liberty! if such could be thy name  
Wert thou disjoined from these or they from thee.

(XVIII, 264-7)

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192. Mary Shelley, 'Note on the Poems of 1819'.

193. Letters, II, p.148 (To Leigh Hunt, 3 November 1819).

Furthermore, liberty, in Shelley's prayer-like version of 'A New National Anthem',<sup>194</sup> is the embodiment of man's reform and regeneration:

God prosper, speed, and save  
God raise from England's grave  
Her murdered Queen!  
Pave with swift victory  
The steps of Liberty,  
Whom Britons own to be  
Immortal Queen.

Although Shelley's view of liberty as the ultimate object of reform was articulated more forcibly in his political poems of 1819, it had always been, as the canon of criticism confirms, central to his political arguments: 'Shelley's radical ethics and his Greek metaphysics cooperate vigorously in the service of Liberty.'<sup>195</sup> Liberty, as the end of moral and political reform, certainly was a prominent theme in three of his major poems examined above, but the length of these poems and the difficulty of following their complicated courses might have made its impact less tangible than that of his political poems of 1819. As we have seen, the emancipation of man in these three poems signified an absolute eradication of evil, the completion of a full cycle of man's regeneration and the achievement of social, political and cosmic reform. What is new in the poems of 1819 is that this achievement is dressed with a sense of immediacy and urgency: the poet advocates an immediate reform instead of an ulterior one.

Shelley's most impassioned plea for reform, however, comes in his 'Ode to the Assertors of Liberty', as Mary Shelley calls it, or 'Ode Written October 1819, Before the Spaniards had Recovered Their Liberty', as it is known in most editions of Shelley. In their edition of Shelley's works, Ingpen and Peck remark that this poem 'was really written on the Peterloo Massacre and not on the Spanish insurrection'.<sup>196</sup> This might

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194. Like 'Song to the Men of England', 'A New National Anthem' was first published by Mary Shelley in 1839.

195. Milton Wilson, Shelley's Later Poetry, p.198.

196. Works, II, p.425n.

provide a better clue to its fervent radicalism. Its reference, in fact, to the events of the Manchester Massacre is unmistakable:

ARISE, arise, arise!  
There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread;  
Be your wounds like eyes  
To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead.  
What other grief were it just to pay?  
Your sons, your wives, your brethren, were they;  
Who said they were slain on the battle day?

(1-7)

Like 'The Masque of Anarchy' which was inspired by the same occasion, the poem is intense, impetuous and fervently political; without violating his principle of passive resistance, Shelley in the 'Ode' makes a passionate plea for an immediate reform, a plea that is best expressed by the repetition in the first line of each of its five stanzas: 'Arise, arise, arise', 'Awaken, awaken, awaken', 'Wave wave high the banner', 'Glory, glory, glory', 'Bind, bind every brow', and its cancelled stanza opens with 'Gather, O gather'. Although the poem was published with Prometheus Unbound in 1820, and although its political philosophy aligns with that of Prometheus, its impatient political tone is too far removed from the speculative idealism of Prometheus and from everything ulterior or universal. Shelley's course in this poem, as well as in 'The Masque of Anarchy', into the heart of practical politics might well have been motivated by 'this sense of the need to seize the moments of crisis which arouse hope and energy',<sup>197</sup> by his belief that the long-awaited chance for reform was already at hand; his poems would thus be designed to reinforce and highlight the possibilities suggested by historical circumstances.

Hope, for Shelley, as indeed for all the Romantics, was a duty rather than a virtue: 'Hope, as Coleridge says is a solemn duty which we owe alike to ourselves & to the world- a worship to the spirit of good within, which requires before it sends that inspiration forth, which impresses its likeness upon all that it creates, devoted & dis-

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197. Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, p.40.

interested homage.'<sup>198</sup> Jones suggests that while writing this letter Shelley 'may also have had in mind the opening lines of Wordsworth's sonnet' (publ. 1815):

Here pause: the poet claims at least this praise,  
That virtuous Liberty hath been the scope  
Of his pure song, which did not shrink from hope  
In the worst moment of these evil days;  
From hope, the paramount duty that Heaven lays,  
For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.  
199

But the difference between Shelley and his compeers on this particular issue is that for Shelley Hope was not only a moral or a philosophical duty but a political one as well. In his political philosophy (as Prometheus Unbound and 'The Masque of Anarchy' fully demonstrate) he penetrated the centrality of Hope as 'the root source of the creative energy which enables us to resist the sterility of Power'<sup>200</sup> and gave it its due place as a principal theme of his political works. The political events of 1819-20, however, both in England and in Europe gave Shelley more ground for hope, and in return he highlighted this hope with beautiful poetic imagery and adorned it 'with loftier poetry of glory and triumph':<sup>201</sup>

Bind, bind, every brow  
With crownals of violet, ivy, and pine:  
Hide the blood-stains now  
With hues which sweet nature has made divine:  
Green strength, azure hope, and eternity:

(29-35)

This colourful image of the brow being bound to crownals of violet while blood-stains are hidden under green strength and azure hope engages all our senses and might well entice us to pursue the beautiful ideal heralded. In furnishing a movement which is still in progress with

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198. Letters, II, p.125 (To Maria Gisborne, 13 or 14 October 1819).

199. Ibid., n.

200. Norman Thurston, 'Shelley and the Duty of Hope', K-SJ, XXVI (1977), pp.22-8 (p.27).

201. Mary Shelley, 'Note on the Poems of 1819'.

beautiful images, Shelley hoped to arouse his readers to fulfil his prophecy and give what had been predicted in poetry a practical political dimension. A full understanding of this tenor of Shelley's thought might reveal an added political dimension to his celebratory Odes like 'Ode to Liberty' (1820) and 'Ode to Naples' (1820) which were written respectively to celebrate the revolution in Spain and the Neapolitan revolutions which had just begun. It might also explain why, while still awakening people to seize the chance for reform, Shelley was already celebrating its achievement.

Yet, even then, Shelley was never unmindful of stressing the fundamental doctrines of passive resistance and self-control. In the 'Ode', for example, his warning against any kind of violence is emphatic:

Wave, wave high the banner!  
When freedom is riding to conquest by:  
Though the slaves that fan her  
Be famine and toil, giving sigh for sigh.  
And ye who attend her imperial car,  
Lift not your hands in the banded war,  
But in her defence whose children ye are.

(15-21)

Equally emphatic is his insistence that anarchy is the other side of tyranny:

Conquerors have conquered their foes alone,  
Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown:  
Ride ye, more victorious, over your own.

(26-8)

In view of the persistent equation Shelley often makes between anarchy and tyranny (in 'The Masque of Anarchy', for instance, in his Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte, and, of course, in the above example), it is surprising, as Neville Rogers remarks, 'that both friends and enemies of anarchy and revolution should have called Shelley an anarchist or a revolutionary'.<sup>202</sup> Rogers' answer to these

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202. 'Shelley and the West Wind', Shelley: Modern Judgements, p.61.

claims in relation to 'The Masque of Anarchy' applies to Shelley's poetry in general:

the inapplicability of the first description, if not plain from the whole tenor of the poem, should appear from its specific linking of 'Murder, Fraud and Anarchy', and as regards the second the poem is a plea, precisely, not for the violence of revolution, but for the averting of it through 'Spirit, Patience, Gentleness' - for the employment, in a word, politically, of the 'passive resistance' and abjuring of revenge which he had preached philosophically in three acts of Prometheus Unbound.

203

Shelley in 1819 was still as he had always been after 1812 a poet-reformer who hoped to precipitate and sustain an actual political movement by the use of his pen. The radicalism of his writings, therefore, is a necessary basis of the reform he predicted and tried to precipitate. Swinburne acknowledged this role of Shelley's poetry and stressed its significance: 'When Shelley threw himself upon poetry as his organ, his topics were not Hours of Idleness, and Hints from Horace, and The Waltz, they were the redemption of the world by the martyrdom of righteousness, and the regeneration of mankind through 'Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance'.'<sup>204</sup>

Shelley's own view, however, of the role of his poetry in reforming and regenerating mankind is best expressed in his 'Ode to the West Wind', which remains one of Shelley's most beautiful and most interesting poems. Our main interest in 'the Ode' here, however, lies in the poet's ability to represent symbolically his notion of his own mission through describing the manifold role of the wind in nature, and so to lead us in the last two stanzas to understand his use of metaphor: what he had been depicting is not the role of the wind but that of his own words.

Like its rhyme scheme (which is a combination of terza rima and a concluding couplet)<sup>205</sup> the ideas of 'the Ode' are conspicuously arranged.

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203. 'Shelley and the West Wind', Shelley: Modern Judgements, p.61.

204. Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Wordsworth and Byron', The Nineteenth Century, XV, No.86 (April, 1884), pp.583-609 (p.609).

205. See Lyle H. Kendall's interesting article: 'The Stanzaic Pattern of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"', K-SJ, XIX (1970), pp.7-9.

The first three stanzas dramatize the three functions of the wind in nature, sky and sea. In nature, the wind is the destroyer of the dead leaves and the preserver of the seeds which it keeps until spring blows:

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

(10-12)

In sky, the wind brings together the dispersed clouds and creates the storm from which 'Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst'; in sea, too, the wind awakens the dreaming sea to new fears, and new reality. This powerful and effective movement of the wind incites the poet's desire to share 'The impulse of thy strength' (46), to be 'The comrade of thy wanderings' (49), to be lifted as

... a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

(53-4)

The fifth stanza opens with the poet rather than the wind in the foreground: 'Make me thy lyre', 'What if my leaves are falling'. Although the plea continues here, the stress is clearly on 'me' and 'my leaves', and quickly culminates in a final shift of emphasis in the poet's favour:

... Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

(61-2)

Henceforth, the poet exchanges status with the wind and asks her to be his lyre:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

(63-4)

Here, the metaphor which has prevailed throughout the poem is understood, and the essential point to which we have been driven is reached; with all its multiple functions illustrated in the first three stanzas and its earnestly sought 'comradeship' stressed in the fourth, the wind is the poet's instrument which scatters:

... as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! ...

(66-9)

Thus, it is the poet and not the wind that is 'the trumpet of a prophecy': 'trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves';<sup>206</sup> it is his words and thoughts that are to 'quicken a new birth', that are 'The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution'.<sup>207</sup> In effect, 'the Ode' is no longer a poem about nature; rather it is about the poet's significant, though 'unseen presence' in regenerating mankind. The winter and spring, therefore ('If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?') are those of man. Hence, the use of the wind is metaphorical; it is to explain through a beautiful poetic device how the poet's words could be regenerative, how if disseminated amongst mankind they could reform and recreate; it is to explain through metaphoric images how radical poetry functions. Wasserman supports this argument:

... 'the Ode' is the cry of a poet who conceives of poetry as the agent of mankind's moral reformation ... Shelley's prayer is not that the circle of mutability will stop but that the thoughts of men will be compelled in that path as inexorably as nature and that he himself may be the agent of the power that drives this 'autumn' of the mind into the following 'spring'.  
208

It is in this context that 'the Ode' represents Shelley's view of his own personal mission and of the effect his poetry could have on mankind. If this sounds presumptuous, Neville Rogers suggests,<sup>209</sup> it should sound less so if we recall that while writing 'the Ode' Shelley was in the meantime arranging his political ideas in a major work on reform which

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206. Works, VII, p.140.

207. Ibid.

208. Shelley: A Critical Reading, p.249.

209. See 'Shelley and the West Wind', Shelley: Modern Judgements, p.70.

was intended 'to be an instructive and readable book, appealing from the passions to the reason of men.'<sup>210</sup> The fact that 'MS notes for the Ode and for the new Act [of Prometheus Unbound] actually overflow into the notebook in which he drafted'<sup>211</sup> A Philosophical View of Reform highlights the political significance of 'the Ode'. Balanced, intense and vigorous, 'the Ode' conveys Shelley's perennial faith in his mission as a reforming poet, as if he finds (both here and in Prometheus Unbound) 'in the revolution of the seasons a semi-mystical assurance of social regeneration',<sup>212</sup> and in the wind an analogy of his words which although they might be unseen, their effect is certain and inevitable. This, in fact, is confirmed in the last line which is more of a final and positive statement than of a question; Wasserman's reading of the MS reveals that 'Shelley's first intent was to make a positive declaration: "When winter comes spring lags not far behind"'.<sup>213</sup> In this context, the poet in 'the Ode' stresses the role of poetry in reforming the world and by so doing he tacitly acknowledges the 'Unacknowledged legislators of the world'.

Such an attempt by Shelley to stress and acknowledge his own role might have been actuated by a need to reaffirm his own faith in his efforts to raise a consciousness for reform. For the driving force of Shelley's hope was not without its occasional undercurrents of despair. One reason for this might have been the unpopularity of his works at the time and his fear that all his efforts for reform might pass unheeded; a passage in Julian and Maddalo describing the mad man who partly stands for Shelley gives vent to such fears:

... soon he raised  
His sad meek face and eyes lustrous and glazed  
And spoke -sometimes as one who wrote, and thought  
His words might move some heart that heeded not,  
If sent to distant lands: and then as one

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210. Letters, II, p.164 (To Charles Ollier, 15 December 1819).

211. Neville Rogers, 'Shelley and the West Wind', Shelley: Modern Judgements, p.70.

212. White, Shelley, II, p.193.

213. Shelley: A Critical Reading, p.251n.

Reproaching deeds never to be undone  
With wondering self-compassion; then his speech  
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each  
Unmodulated, cold, expressionless.-

(285-92)

Another reason for Shelley's fears might be related to the nature of reform movements in 1819-20 and the menacing use of violence which would undermine his preferred political course. In an almost helpless tone he writes to Peacock on 23-24th Jan., 1819: 'I shall be content by exercising my fancy to amuse myself & perhaps some others, & cast what weight I can into the right scale of that balance which the Giant (of Arthegall) holds.'<sup>214</sup> Peacock's note to the letter provides a further insight into Shelley's state of mind and is therefore worth adducing here in full:

The Giant has scales, in which he professes to weigh right and wrong, and rectify the physical and moral evils which result from inequality of condition. Shelley once pointed out this passage to me, observing: 'Artegall argues with the Giant; the Giant has the best of the argument; Artegall's iron man knocks him over into the sea and drowns him. This is the usual way in which power deals with opinion.' I said: 'That was not the lesson which Spenser intended to convey.' 'Perhaps not!' he said; 'it is the lesson which he conveys to me. I am of the Giant's faction.'

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Again in Julian and Maddalo, Shelley writes in a similar vein:

'How vain  
Are words! I thought never to speak again,  
Not even in secret,- not to my own heart-

(472-4)

But Shelley always spoke, of course, not only to his own heart but to the hearts and minds of others; he continued to exert all the efforts he could in the cause of reform knowing only too well 'what reinforcement we may gain from hope'.

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214. Letters, II, p.71.

215. Ibid.

His anxiety, however, to remain convinced that his poetry would influence actual political movements serves as an index of the importance he assigned to his own role in reform - a role exercised by him in 1819 almost precisely as he envisioned it as early as 1812. On 7 January 1812 he writes to E.Hitchener: 'I desire to establish on a lasting basis the happiness of human-kind. Popular insurrections and revolutions I look upon with discountenance; if such things must be I will take the side of the People, but my reasonings shall endeavor to ward it from the hearts of the Rulers of the Earth, deeply as I detest them.'<sup>216</sup> This is what Shelley's political poems of 1819 assert; they at once usher in the spirit of immediate reform and guard it against the danger of violence which is seen by him as a prelude to either tyranny or anarchy.

The political philosophy of Shelley's poems of 1819, in fact, is in no way different from that demonstrated in Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam or Prometheus Unbound. As in these three major poems, love, strong will and serene self-control were still considered by Shelley the indispensable foundation of any successful political act. Grabo supports the view that Shelley's poems of 1819-20 'similar in imagery and philosophy, represent a synthesis and reconciliation of those ideas which have been traced in Shelley's letters and earlier writings in verse and prose.'<sup>217</sup> While distinctions may exist between the prose and verse writings, there is no doubt that the more one reads of Shelley's poetry the more one becomes convinced that all his poems share essentially the same moral and political matrix and express the same philosophy on reform. Thomas Medwin makes a similar point:

All the poems indeed of Shelley, numerous as they are, resolve themselves into one of which they may be regarded as so many separate Cantos. They present to the mind in their different episodes, their accidental details, or sites or costumes, but one type, always equally sublime, that of a man who devotes himself, suffers and dies for his fellow beings, a Christ deprived of his divine attributes, a philosophic Martyr, a Confessor of Liberty.

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216. Letters, I, p.221.

217. The Magic Plant, p.277.

218. The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. by H.Buxton Forman (London, 1913), pp.419-20.

If we can agree with the Italian writer and political commentator Alberto Moravia who argues that 'A writer writes always the same book. We re-write and re-write with a different point of view',<sup>219</sup> then we may well conclude that the only poem Shelley actually wrote is his poem on man's emancipation and reform.

Yet, it remains true that the impression made upon us by 'The Masque of Anarchy' or 'Song to the Men of England' is very different from that which The Revolt of Islam or Prometheus Unbound, for example, might engender. The reason, I suspect, lies almost exclusively in the medium used. For example, the lyric form, the ballad-like meter, the impetuous tone of 'The Masque of Anarchy', the simple diction, the practical imagery and lucid political reasoning of 'Song to the Men of England' create a heated atmosphere of immediacy and urgency which neither the parable of The Revolt of Islam nor the dramatic form of Prometheus Unbound are meant to convey. Hence, Shelley's fluctuation between ideal and immediate reform is reflected in the skilful handling of his poetry, while his political philosophy and theory on reform remained consistent and intact. But the change in literary form and poetic devices is in itself a consequence of another change in the poet's outlook concerning his own role. In 1819, Shelley not only wanted to explain the moral and political bases of reform, but he wanted to see one taking place; his lyrics, therefore, were designed to serve this particular purpose. However, whether furnishing the ground for a future reform or fostering current tendencies to launch a more immediate one, Shelley's poems studied above unmistakably reveal the poet's unswerving commitment to serve man's emancipation and regeneration, and to a development of adequate poetic forms for their expression.

Both the friends of reform as well as its enemies appreciated (or deprecated) the political bearings of Shelley's poetry. On the one hand, John Alfred Langford in 'A Sonnet to Shelley' (1850) summarizes a generation's appraisal of Shelley's politics:

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219. The Guardian (London, Wednesday, 23 May 1979), p.12.

... it is well

For us, and for the world, that such have been,  
Who dared to raise their voice above the swell  
Of tyrant shouts,- despising scorn and shame.  
How in thy bosom burned Truth's holy flame,  
When mock religion in the church was seen!  
Then came thy song resounding full and free,  
In praise of justice, right and liberty-  
Which yet shall win its meed - a deathless fame!  
220

On the other hand, the opponents of reform were not slow to realize that the appreciation of Shelley's poetry could only serve the progress of social or political reform movements: 'You are a funny people, you Shelleyites,' Henry M. Stanley warned an officer of the Shelley Society, 'you are playing, - at a safe distance yourselves, maybe - with fire. In spreading Shelley you are indirectly helping to stir up the great socialist question ... the one question which bids fair to swamp you all.'<sup>221</sup> Henry M. Stanley might be accused of being a Shelley opponent but it is hardly possible to accuse him of misunderstanding Shelley. My account of Shelley and Chartism in the second part of this thesis will seek to show that Shelley was to spread and indirectly help 'to stir up the great socialist question' - the question that found its first mass expression in the Chartist Movement.

In this chapter, I have been primarily concerned to develop a tentative conclusion reached in the first chapter, namely, that Shelley fulfilled his political role largely through writing poetry and that for the greater part of his career he addressed himself to future reform movements rather than to contemporary ones. This view has been traced in a representative selection of Shelley's political poems as well as in the three major narratives. The emphasis has been first, on the consistency of Shelley's political philosophy despite the changes in his views on the timing of reform which were always in line with prevailing political conditions; and second, on how despite the unity of the political message conveyed,

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220. Cooper's Journal, I, No.21 (25 May 1850), p.328.

221. Henry S. Salt, Shelley's Principles: Has Time Refuted or Confirmed Them? (London, 1892), p.25.

the poetic mode and language did vary according to more particular details like the kind of audience addressed and the timing of the action urged. It has been further suggested that the balance Shelley held between a fusion of politics and art in long and complex poetic compositions, and the assertion of directly political claims in his 'Odes' and 'Songs' of 1819, is of some literary significance - to the extent that poetry and political concern exert a reciprocal influence in Shelley's work.

Considered in conjunction with the first chapter in which I examined the factors which made Shelley 'essentially a revolutionist' who 'would always have been one of the advanced guard of socialism',<sup>222</sup> chapter 2 provides the necessary framework within which the relation of Shelley's politics and poetry to the politics and poetry of the Chartists may be examined.

The following chapters concentrate on a study of Shelley and the Chartist Press, Shelley and Ernest Jones, and Shelley and Thomas Cooper. Each of these studies will examine Shelley's reception by the Chartists in the light of the view of Shelley as a political poet which has emerged thus far. It was, I suggest, Shelley's essentially revolutionary philosophy that gave rise to his reputation in the Chartist era. I shall argue that the various facets of that philosophy - Shelley's antipathy to oppressive authority, his faith in and dedication to radical movements and his ability to grasp the moment of crisis and to find a poetic and political language in which to address ordinary people - did, indeed, come to fruition in the poets of the Chartist Movement.

'Chartism, the Chartist Press and Shelley' gives a brief account of Chartism as a political movement, traces Shelley's reputation in pre-Chartist publications, mainly in the Owenite press, and then gives a general account of Shelley's reputation in the Chartist press. The very reasons indicated in our study of Shelley's poetry in chapter 2 which made it virtually unreadable in his life-time, in the event made it the Bible of socialism for the Owenites; and the very circumstances which

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222. Karl Marx in Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, Shelley's Socialism, p.1. See p.1 above.

made Shelley an atheist and an outcast for his own generation, as we saw in chapter 1, made him a hero and a prophet for both the Owenites and the Chartists.

Ernest Jones's poetry and aesthetic politics are studied in the context of our view of Shelley's politics. Jones's understanding of the political function of the poet is related to Shelley's and his effort to avert any infringement of personal freedom which might prevent him from serving his political doctrines is compared to Shelley's similar undertaking. Further, Jones's views of the means of achieving freedom and his views on religion are compared to Shelley's; and finally, certain poems by Jones are compared to poems by Shelley for verbal and literary similarities with the view to establishing the possibility of direct influence.

Finally, Thomas Cooper's career as a Chartist and poet is examined in the light of our study of Shelley in chapters 1 and 2. Cooper's insistence on the role of education in political reform, for example, is related to Shelley's as manifested mainly in his Queen Mab and Irish pamphlets; Cooper's advocacy of moral resistance and non-violence is studied in the context of Shelley's views on the same theme as expressed in his Revolt of Islam and Address to the Irish People. Lastly, a literary as well as thematic comparison is drawn between Cooper's Purgatory of Suicides and Shelley's Queen Mab.

PART II

Chapter 3

CHARTISM, THE CHARTIST PRESS  
AND SHELLEY

Let me again proclaim the debt we owe those Song  
Spirits, as they walked in melody from loom to loom,  
ministering to the low-hearted; and when the breast  
was filled with everything but hope and happiness,  
and all but seared, let only break forth the healthy and  
vigorous chorus "A man's a man for a' that", the  
fagged weaver brightens up ... Who dare measure in  
doubt the restraining influences of these very Songs?  
To us they were all instead of sermons ... Church  
bells rang not for us. Poets were indeed our  
Priests.

(William Thom, of Inverury, Rhymes and Recollections  
of A Hand-Loom Weaver, 2nd edn, London, 1845, pp.14-15)

Before a discussion of the significance of Shelley's work in the Chartist papers and journals, two points should be briefly dealt with: Chartism as a movement, and Press reaction to Shelley's radicalism before the Chartist Movement.

1. Chartism

'Chartism, my friends, is no political movement, where the main point is your getting the ballot, Chartism is a knife and fork question: the Charter means a good house, good food and drink, prosperity, and short working-hours.'<sup>1</sup> This is an over-simplification of a complex and

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1. From an address by one Stephens, a Methodist (person), delivered to a meeting of 200,000 on Kersall Moor, the Mons Sacer of Manchester in 1838; Frederick Engels, The Conditions of the Working Class in England (London, 1969), p.256. For other definitions of Chartism see: the same, pp.254-6; Dorothy Thompson (ed.), The Early Chartists (London, 1971), pp.12, 89-93; Asa Briggs (ed.), Chartist Studies (London, 1959), p.2; J.L. and Barbara Hammond, The Bleak Age (London, 1947), pp.176, 187; R.H.Tawney, The Radical Tradition (London, 1966), p.18; and Eugene C.Black (ed.), British Politics in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1970), pp.119-21.

many-sided movement. Despite the fact that economic discontent might well have been crucial to the birth of Chartism, the movement later developed (although not fully) a political, as well as a social and economic programme. Chartism, in fact, which started in agitation for the ballot, good food, good houses and good services, soon became a political movement that swayed the country with its revolutionary fervour, a movement that was the first of its kind in the history of the working classes. Politically, Chartism was:

the entry in politics, not merely of a new party, but of a new class. The English counterpart of the continental revolutions of 1848, it was at once the last movement which in this country drew its conceptions and phraseology from the inexhaustible armoury of the French Revolution, and the first English political attack upon the social order born of the growth of capitalist industry.

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The most direct origin of Chartism was, perhaps, the growth of capitalist industry which brought in its wake economic discontent. Since the introduction of machinery in the mid-eighteenth century, the industrial system kept improving its technology, until, between the 1820s and the 1840s, high technology largely replaced the old ways of production and, as an almost inevitable consequence, made redundant a large number of workers; 'the number of hand-loom weavers,' for instance, 'still rising to a maximum of about a quarter of a million in the 1820s, fell to just over 100,000 by the early 1840s, to little more than 50,000 starving wretches by the middle 1850s', while 'the number of power-looms in England rose from 2,400 in 1813 to 55,000 in 1829, 85,000 in 1833 and 224,000 in 1850.'<sup>3</sup> This triumph of mechanisation over human labour had devastating effects on the working masses; more machines meant a higher rate of unemployment, which in its turn resulted in sharper competition amongst the workers and the fall of their wages to less than the bare

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2. R.H.Tawney, The Radical Tradition, p.18. (This is Marx's verdict on Chartism; R.H.Tawney paraphrases Marx here without giving the exact reference.
3. E.J.Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (London, 1979), p.64. For more examples see ibid., 56-78.

level of subsistence.<sup>4</sup> The people's first reaction to this dire reality manifested itself most vigorously in the destruction of frames and machines which broke out in Nottingham between 1811-12 and then spread to Lancashire and Yorkshire and which was and still is 'the best known form of Luddism'.<sup>5</sup> E.P.Thompson, who argues that the Hammonds' account of Luddism in their Skilled Labourer<sup>6</sup> reads 'at times like a brief prepared on behalf of the Whig opposition and intended to discredit the exaggerated claims made by the authorities as to the conspiratorial and revolutionary aspects of the movement',<sup>7</sup> develops, in The Making of the English Working Class, a novel view of Luddism as an organised political movement with revolutionary design, a movement whose underground tradition provides an important link between the Jacobins of the 1790s and the upsurge of reform movements between 1817-20, whose revolutionary aftermath could still be felt up until the days of Chartism.<sup>8</sup> A Luddite song cited by both Thompson and the Hammonds supports Thompson's argument that the destruction of frames was neither an arbitrary nor an irresponsible exercise, but rather a strong manifestation of the workers' objection to a specific economic reality, aimed at achieving specific goals:

'He may censure great Ludd's disrespect for the Laws  
Who ne'er for a moment reflects,  
That foul Imposition alone was the cause

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4. For a statistical account of the fall of wages see Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, pp.223-4; but for a detailed account of the Industrial Revolution and its effects on lives of the labourers see Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, pp.56-96; Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (London, 1968), especially his account of Manchester, pp.88-138; and Mark Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester, 1918), pp.1-60.
  5. Lionel M.Munby (ed.), The Luddites and Other Essays (London, 1971), p.33.
  6. J.L.Hammond and Barbara Hammond, The Skilled Labourer (London, 1919, 1979), pp.210-74.
  7. The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1977), p.629.
  8. See ibid., pp.211, 629-31.

Which produced these unhappy effects.  
Let the haughty no longer the humble oppress  
Then shall Ludd sheath his conquering sword,  
High grievances instantly meet with redress  
Then peace will be quickly restored.  
9

The first movement in Britain, however, to clearly discern that the source of the evil which reduced the working multitudes to an abyss of starvation was not actually the machine but the capitalist who uses both the machine and the workers to accumulate more wealth and profit, was the Owenite movement led by Robert Owen. This political group was, according to Hobsbawm, the first to separate 'industrialism from capitalism. It accepted the Industrial Revolution and technical progress as the bringers of potential knowledge and plenty for all. It rejected its capitalist form as the bringer of actual exploitation and pauperism.'<sup>10</sup> This distinction between industrialism and capitalism added a sharper edge to the workers' radical tendencies which had been awakened by the ideals of the French Revolution and - more directly - by their disappointment over the Reform Bill of 1832.

Although the years between 1829 and 1832 witnessed the rise of various political movements such as 'The First London Co-operative Trading Association', the 'National Union of the Working Classes' and 'The British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge', it remains true that the revolt of the working classes for this period was mainly channeled into their support for the middle-class agitation for Parliamentary Reform. But when the Reform Bill of 1832 proved to serve the interests of the middle class only, the working men ended their coalition with the middle class and started their own agitation for Parliamentary Reform under the aegis of the London Working Men's Association, the association that was to draw up and publish the six points of the Charter.

The object of the London Working Men's Association, which was founded in the summer of 1836 by William Lovett, Francis Place, Henry Hetherington

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9. The Skilled Labourer, p.212 and The Making of the English Working Class, p.584.

10. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p.67.

and other radical artisans, was to 'agitate for parliamentary reform, for the freedom of the Press, and for the creation of a national system of education, and to collect and publish information upon social and industrial questions. Its method was education and propaganda.'<sup>11</sup> Under the auspices of this association, Lovett (who was appointed a secretary), Place and other radicals drew the six points of the Charter (Universal Suffrage for every sane adult male with no criminal convictions, annual parliaments, payment of members of parliament to enable poor men to stand for election, voting by ballot, equal electoral districts to secure equal representation, and abolition of property qualification) and published it in June 1837.<sup>12</sup> These points of the Charter, Julius West suggests in his interesting History of the Chartist Movement, can be traced to 1832 when an anonymous pamphleteer published a booklet called The People's Charter in which the six points of the Charter were anticipated. In the same year, the pamphleteer wrote a book called The Rights of Nations and a question-and-answer adaptation of the same book called The Reformer's Catechism aimed at making the principles easier for the young people to understand. In these publications, West maintains, we find 'partial anticipations of the Chartist programme, and occasional bursts of humour'; what is more, 'Quotations from Byron are a characteristic feature of these publications'.<sup>13</sup>

However, after the publication of the Charter, the Association started sending 'missionaries' to all parts of the country, till the Charter became a symbol of salvation around which most of the impoverished and discontented people rallied. What happened, in fact, was that most of the poor and the dissatisfied who suffered from different social, economic and political oppressions - a difference which was disadvantageous to the unity of the movement - looked to the Charter for salvation, and the term 'Chartism' was, therefore, employed to express different responses to different economic, social and political causes of discontent. This is how we still, as the Hammonds point out, apply the name Chartist:

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11. Tawney, The Radical Tradition, p.20.

12. According to the Hammonds the Charter was published in May 1838.

13. (London, 1920), p.84.

to the London artisan who shared Lovett's enthusiasm for education and a cheap press; to the Birmingham politician who supported Attwood's campaign for a reform of the currency; to the Lancashire handloom weaver or the Yorkshire Collier who listened to Oastler denouncing the new Poor Law; to Feargus O'Connor, self-styled descendent of Irish Kings, ... to the South Wales miner who followed Frost, with a pike, to Newport and to prison.

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and this is how the movement embraced 'not merely divergent but mutually hostile schools of reform.'<sup>15</sup> Thus, by birth, the Chartist Movement was a heterogeneous body consisting of very diverse elements and depending on principles different from, and sometimes inconsistent with, each other. Hovell rightly remarks that the various sections which constituted Chartism 'had been brought together upon the common but negative basis of protest against things as they were, but the positive fundamentals of unity were lacking.'<sup>16</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that at no point in the history of the movement were its leaders ready to agree on one policy; on the objectives of the movement or the method of achieving these objectives. Unity and policy are the two ingredients which the Chartist Movement never had, and the lack of them proved to be fatal to its success and even its survival.

The first convention of the Chartist Movement (at which neither Thomas Cooper nor Ernest Jones was present, for Cooper did not join the movement till 1841 and Jones first became a Chartist in 1846), which held its first meeting in 1839 and for which William Lovett was a secretary, failed to agree on one political strategy or to issue to its members any clear political plan. It was, none the less, able to draw up a petition to be handed to Parliament in support of the Charter. The petition was signed by 2,283,000 people and was handed to Attwood who was then to present it to Parliament. When Parliament failed, for several months, to consider

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14. J.L. and Barbara Hammond, The Bleak Age, p.176.

15. Ibid.

16. The Chartist Movement, p.188.

the petition, the convention moved to Birmingham to discuss the possibility of using 'ulterior measures' to achieve the goals outlined in the Charter. The convention did not reach a final decision on whether to insist on using parliamentary methods to achieve the points of the Charter or whether to advise its members to arm themselves, yet a new violence of language and rhetoric suddenly broke out and became prominent amongst the Chartists. As a result, many of the Chartist leaders, including Lovett, were arrested, and in Parliament the petition was finally defeated. The defeat of the petition gave the advocates of violence within the movement a pertinent chance to stress that the use of arms was the only alternative left to ensure the realization of the Charter. The convention, on the other hand, dissolved itself; the lack of leadership and the bitter sense of disappointment gave rise to more riots, violence and chaos. The government reacted by taking extra measures to impose law and order; many arrests were made and Chartism suffered its first serious setback.

By 1840, however, efforts were resumed under 'The National Charter Association' to give a new impulse to the movement. William Lovett who had just been released from prison refused to join the new campaign and agitated instead for '"National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People" whereby the working classes were to educate themselves so successfully that their claim to the Charter would prove irresistible.'<sup>17</sup> His theory was that only when people are educated and enlightened can they exert real pressure on the authorities to grant them the liberties and rights to which they are entitled. Thus he and his followers embarked on educational reform as a necessary prerequisite for political reform. At this stage Thomas Cooper, who had already become a prominent Chartist leader in Leicester, joined O'Connor in denouncing the moral force as 'Moral Humbug'<sup>18</sup> and began putting 'into force new ambitious schemes for the reorganisation of the local

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17. The Bleak Age, p.181.

18. See G.D.H.Cole, Chartist Portraits (London, 1941), p.198.

Chartist movement'.<sup>19</sup> Moreover the National Charter Association under the leadership of O'Connor made considerable progress and was by 1842 strong enough to present another petition to the House of Commons.

The National Petition which was presented by the National Charter Association under the leadership of O'Connor on 2 May 1842 to the House of Commons spoke of the prevalent anomalies, inequalities and gross injustice from which the people of this country suffered. It complained of the corruption, perjury and riot which prevailed at the parliamentary election, of the enormous taxation, of the 'great disparity existing between the wages of the producing millions and the salary of those whose comparative usefulness ought to be questioned like Prince Albert, King of Hanover, and the Archbishop of Canterbury', of the lack of freedom for public meeting, of the long hours of labour particularly of the factory workers, of the inequality of representation. It also 'deplored the existence of any kind of monopoly in this nation', 'the qualification to sit in parliament', it also demanded voting by ballot and annual parliaments; and that 'to remedy the many gross and manifest evils of which your petitioners complain, do immediately, without alteration, deduction, or addition, pass into a law the document entitled "The People's Charter"'.<sup>20</sup> According to the Northern Star, the petition, which was over six miles long, was signed by 3,317,702 people, but due to many reasons, not least among which were Macaulay's speech against Universal Suffrage and Roebuck's denunciation of O'Connor, it faced the same fate as its forerunner in 1839; defeat.

Here again - as in 1839 - the petition's defeat was considered by a vast number of Chartists as a defeat for moral force, and a frenzy of violent rhetoric immediately spread; 'Leicester acquired a reputation as a stronghold of "physical force" Chartism; and Cooper and his supporter J.R.Bairstow were chosen as delegates to the Chartist Conference which was summoned to meet in Manchester on August 16, 1842.'<sup>21</sup> At this

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19. Chartist Portraits, p.197.

20. The Northern Star (16 October 1841), p.4 (henceforth cited as NS).

21. Chartist Portraits, p.198.

conference the Executive Council of N.C.A (of which O'Connor was not a member) issued a call for a general strike 'to stop all labour until the people's Charter became the law of the land'. On his way to Manchester Cooper was arrested but soon freed to continue his journey and it was not until he returned back to Leicester that he was arrested on the ground of inciting violence and riots which broke out in the northern cities as he was making his journey to Manchester. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. O'Connor, however (who is paradoxically known as the leader of Physical Force Chartism) first denounced the idea of the General Strike<sup>22</sup> and urged his followers to use peaceable methods to achieve the six points of the Charter: 'let us set an example to the world of what moral power is capable of effecting'.<sup>23</sup> The strike was ineptly aborted and the workers had, yet again, to suffer the adverse consequences of the lack of a political programme.

Between 1843 and 1847, however, O'Connor was busy advocating his land-scheme which, in brief, urged all workers to abandon industrious and smoky cities and return to the country where their work would provide abundant supplies for all. The only remedy he could commend to all social and economic oppressions was to bring all people back to the land. He argued that if his system was carried out 'the prosperous and active cottier can not only earn a good living but pay a high rent, provided that this rent is yielded in corn actually grown, and not in fixed money payments.'<sup>24</sup> Ernest Jones, who joined the movement in 1846, and who was by 1847 honoured as a Chartist leader, became a co-editor of the Northern Star and the staunchest supporter of O'Connor's Land Scheme. Once more, in 1848, the Chartist Convention in which Ernest Jones was a prominent and active member presented a third petition to the House of Commons. The petition, according to Ernest Jones and Feargus O'Connor, was signed by six million people, but the House of Commons was not to be impressed by this large increase in the number of signatories and the petition was

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22. See NS (20 and 27 August 1842).

23. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, p.262.

24. Ibid., p.271.

to share the fate of its predecessors. As in 1839 and 1842, the defeat of the petition was followed by an outbreak of violence and riots and an increasing use of violent rhetoric. It was in these riots that Ernest Jones was arrested in Clerkenwell Green and Bonner's Fields and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The defeat of the petition and the recurrence of chaos this time was the last blow from which Chartism never fully recovered.

Despite the fact that some historians used to speak of Chartism in terms of being either a physical or a moral force movement, most Chartist specialists will agree now that this division is fallacious. For there was no Physical Force Chartism as such: there were threats of violence, a rhetoric of violence, but, in fact, none of the Chartist leaders, not even O'Connor himself, had ever seriously considered the use of arms in order to achieve the Charter. What has to be made clear, here, however, is that it is very difficult to tell whether the Chartist leaders were consciously using violent language to alarm the government to the point of conceding their demands without actually having to resort to violent action or whether they imagined that they meant what they said. So much is certain, though, that in the course of the Chartist Movement no policy to carry out armed struggle was adopted or even seriously contemplated. The government was not slow to recognize this tenor in the movement and to respond accordingly to threats of violence which some Chartist leaders continued to make. However, instead of describing the Chartist leaders as advocates of either moral or physical force, Mark Hovell prefers to speak of them as either reactionary or progressive. Leaders like Stephens and O'Connor, he argues, were reactionary because they were looking mostly to the past and trying to restore it, whereas leaders like Lovett and Cooper were progressive because they concentrated on redeeming the past by creating a better future. From this later group 'came the most idealistic school of Chartism which recognised that the first step in all improvement was the moral and intellectual regeneration of the workers.'<sup>25</sup>

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25. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, p.306.

R.G.Gammage, a Chartist historian, is the first historian to present Chartism as comprising two different political schools, each with its set plan to achieve the Charter; the school of moral force and that of physical force:

The cause of the Charter was ... espoused by advocates of two different schools. The first consisted of those who contended that the people's rights must be secured by moral means alone. The other was composed of the more determined, who could not conceive that the ruling class would bow to anything short of physical force.

26

Gammage's hostile attitude to O'Connor added an extra incentive to exaggerate the latter's violent intentions. But even Gammage's own account endorses the view that violence in Chartism lay in vocabulary, in speech and in rhetoric rather than policy; he describes the advocates of physical force as those 'who generally made use of threats in the course of their various speeches' and rests the case of O'Connor's violent intentions on the evidence that 'his language was generally of so physical a tendency'.<sup>27</sup>

Hence it appears that the Chartists' use of violent rhetoric did not denote a 'physical force' policy but was in itself an ultimate political measure designed to achieve the Charter through exerting a verbal pressure on the governing authorities. This is hardly surprising in a movement that succeeded the Romantic movement and was deeply steeped in Romantic thought. Like the Romantic poets who embarked on changing the world through the power of their poetry, the Chartist leaders, many of whom were either poets like Cooper and Jones or distinguished journalists and thinkers like Harney and O'Brien, greatly appreciated the role of 'words' to achieve political goals. Indeed, the maxim that 'If a man were permitted to make all the Ballads, he need not care who should make the Laws of a Nation',<sup>28</sup> was very much in vogue in the Chartist journals

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26. R.G.Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854 (London, 1969), p.83.

27. Ibid.

28. The Northern Tribune; a Periodical for the People, I (1854), p.[5].

and literature. Although the political maxim of Chartism was 'peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must' and although the leaders 'often spoke as though they must,'<sup>29</sup> the threat did not exceed the limits of the language used. Thus, the Chartists' use of violent rhetoric as a political weapon in its own right was only another step along the road from the Romantics' - notably Shelley's - use of 'words and thoughts' to reform the world. Moreover, the vital role of leaders in the Chartist movement, as again most historians would agree (Leadership was central to the development of Chartism, if not to its failure, for its leaders determined the tone, policies and direction of the movement)<sup>30</sup> is an extension - a markedly political one - of the role of the creative artist which reached its pinnacle in the Romantic era. It was the Chartist leaders, all of whom were intellectuals, who incited the people to rise against social and economic oppressions; the people responded and the movement became a mass movement. In this context, the Chartist movement is more in line with the Romantic tradition, in which enlightened individuals play a crucial role in awakening the people to rebel against unjust circumstances and meliorate their conditions, than with the Marxist theory, according to which political movements are immediate consequences of the people's spontaneous uprisings which produce their own leaders through the development of their struggle. Dorothy Thompson supports our argument by discerning in Chartism a public response to radical philosophers and raisers of consciousness: 'It is the response of a labour force faced not with the timeless custom of traditional work patterns and social structures, or with the vagaries of weather or harvest, but with a set of articulate postulations, the arguments of the philosophical radicals and political economists.'<sup>31</sup> In this vein of analysis, our study of Shelley, Cooper and Jones becomes a study in one continuous tradition, in which the relation between poetry and politics passed through different but intimately related stages, and varied in degree and strength according to historical, political and literary circumstances.

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29. Edward Royle, Chartism (London, 1980), p.53.

30. Ibid., p.56.

31. The Early Chartists, p.13.

2. Press Reactions to Shelley's Radicalism before the Chartist Movement

GENIUS, though it may be for a time unhonoured, must eventually have its triumph. It may be scorned, spurned, trampled on - it may live friendless, and lay down a wearied spirit in a welcome grave; - but the hour of its glory must come, when all living men shall acknowledge it, and all succeeding generations join in one loud song of exultation and praise.

32

So runs The Athenaeum's review of Shelley's 'The Masque of Anarchy'. Leaving out of account Leigh Hunt's writings on Shelley (which have been rightly acknowledged as the most significant efforts to introduce Shelley to later radical movements), this was one of the most significant pioneering reviews in the new era of Shelley criticism. As we remarked earlier, the initial hostile reaction to Shelley's poetry was succeeded by a more sympathetic treatment in several journals in the early 1830s. In 1832 Tait's Edinburgh Magazine commences its re-evaluation of Shelley by stressing the necessity of separating the poet from his poetry: 'A poem, to be rightly estimated, must be judged without reference to its author as much as a painting or statue. It is a separate and independent existence, and must stand or fall by its own merits.'<sup>33</sup> After pointing out the merits of the poetry of Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Hunt and Keats, the author of the same article decides that 'By far the sweetest and most purely poetical of these sweet singers, was poor Shelley; although a variety of circumstances combined to divert attention from his notes.'<sup>34</sup>

The circumstances, one suspects, were mostly political which gave way to 'stern and sarcastic reviews of his works' which 'shut the heart of his country against him; and certain differences in opinion between him and the main body of the people, sealed his volumes for a time.'<sup>35</sup> Such reviews, the writer argues, were cheap means for making profits

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32. The Athenaeum, No.262 (3 November 1832), p.[705].

33. Anonymous, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley', Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, II, No.7 (Oct. 1832), pp.92-103 (p.97). (Henceforth cited as TEM)

34. Ibid., p.93.

35. The Athenaeum, No.262, p.[705].

rather than honest literary evaluations of the works under consideration.

By the early 1830s, however, Shelley's name was celebrated in many literary journals;<sup>36</sup> while Byron was seen to be 'full of that romance of monarchy and lordly chivalry which glosses over blood and the tears of human affections', Shelley was described as the one who has the 'majestic spirit of antiquity, to which the world of debased Christianity and feudalism bears no reference', and is filled with a philosophy of liberty and equality'.<sup>37</sup> On reading Shelley's poems a contemporary described them as 'moods of my own mind'.<sup>38</sup> From the very beginning Shelley was acknowledged not only as 'one of the very noblest of our latter poets', whose mind 'was deeply and thoroughly imbued with song',<sup>39</sup> but also as a political prophet, whose love for freedom and faith in the possibility of achieving it, permeate everything he wrote. In a poem dedicated 'To the Memory of Percy Bysshe Shelley', and subtitled 'Where is Alastor gone?', an anonymous poet stresses that Shelley's persistent efforts to inspire later generations with better creeds and higher principles were not meanly rewarded:

But Poesy, to whom thou vowedst thyself  
Before the shrine of Truth, pleads 'Not in vain  
Is a new star upon the breast of heaven;  
And he hath lit a flame to blaze for ever,  
                  A flame to pierce and roll  
Through and through the human soul.  
40

Before concluding the poem, the poet emphasizes that Shelley's influence is everlasting and that his name will always be acknowledged as that of man's benefactor in his search for freedom:

                                  ... Alastor, thou  
Shalt be aurora to the unknown time;  
And we will bind upon thy name beloved,  
The laurel, the soft olive, and the rose,

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36. See The Athenaeum (1832), Frazer's Magazine (1831-3) and TEM (Oct. 1832-Oct. 1833).

37. Frazer's Magazine, III, No.17 (June 1831), p.532. (Henceforth cited as FM)

38. TEM, II, No.7, p.101.

39. The Athenaeum, No.262, p.[705].

40. TEM, IV, No.19 (Oct. 1833), pp.21-4 (p.23).

And poppy, and the graceful ivy plant;  
Glow-worms shall gather with their tiny lamps,  
And thou shalt nourish them who wast so rich,  
And, when our chains are burst,  
We'll say, 'Alastor, thou wast first.'

41

The assumption that the poet is addressing Shelley in the name of Alastor is underlined by the poet's own note to his poem: 'Alastor, the Spirit of Solitude. A poem by Shelley, in which it may be affirmed, that he describes his own mind.'<sup>42</sup>

Even in advertising his works, the significance of Shelley's social and political philosophy is often stressed: 'In the latter part of the month will appear a volume of the Beauties of Percy Bysshe Shelley; whose Poems abound in the most glowing descriptions of social perfection, and in the most persuasive appeals to the finest feelings of the heart in favour of social equality, and a just division of the rights, duties and enjoyments of life.'<sup>43</sup> But for all these glowing judgements it remains true to say that the first thorough examination of his poetry - especially of three of his major poems: Prometheus Unbound, The Revolt of Islam and Queen Mab - and the first comprehensive analysis of his social and political philosophy were first offered to his readership by the Owenites, mostly - though not exclusively - through their main literary organ The New Moral World.

Indeed, the lofty articles on Shelley in the Owenites' journal The New Moral World seem to have opened a completely new phase in Shelley's criticism, a phase in which Shelley was deemed to be a principal exponent of socialism and a prophet of social reform and human regeneration. The first few articles cast a new light upon the controversial incidents of Shelley's personal life and set his motives in a remarkably novel perspective. In the first article, for example, called 'A Review of Modern

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41. TEM, IV, No.19 (Oct. 1833), p.24.

42. Ibid., p.23.

43. The London Cooperative Magazine, New series IV, No.2 (1 February 1830), p.32.

Poets, and Illustrations of the Philosophy of Modern Poetry', devoted to Shelley, the author gives an interesting account of Shelley's life, and stresses that Shelley broke 'the aristocratic fetters which enslaved him', and applied 'the resources of his powerful mind to emancipate society from the manifold social and superstitious evils under which it groaned'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the writer, rather significantly, marks the fact that, despite Shelley's ordeals and the sufferings inflicted on him by both his family and society in general, his writings convey neither hatred nor dismay:

we trace in his writings no anger or contempt for those who were his most unfeeling persecutors - no dissatisfaction with the living world. Every line he wrote, breathes a spirit of love and affection for the whole human race, and the noblest faith in their ultimate freedom and happiness; and his actions did not belie his words.

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But the Owenites' main concern was with Shelley's doctrines and teachings; their examination of his poetry focused on his social, moral and political philosophy. When The New Moral World decided to offer its readers articles on modern poets and poetry and found it most expedient to start with the poet Shelley, the editor made no secret of the fact that the choice was not made on literary grounds only but on social and political ones as well:

The first of the illustrious throng which I shall bring under review, is Percy Bysshe Shelley, because I consider him to be one of the greatest poets of this or any other age - a poet in the most broad and comprehensive meaning of the terms - the most intellectual and ideal of any of Apollo's modern tuneful train. But not as a poet only is he entitled to precedence and esteem, but as a great moral, political, and social Reformer. As one who made the graces of poetry an instrument only for conveying the most important and profound truths to the ear of an ignorant and priest-ridden world; as the nearest approximation in his views, of all our poets to the social system.

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44. NMW, V, No.6 (1 Dec. 1838), p.84.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p.83 (my emphasis).

The Owenites, as their literature demonstrates, firmly believed that Shelley's political philosophy, especially his faith in the inevitability of future reform, would accentuate - and perhaps enhance - their own efforts to initiate social and political reform. Hence, his dedication to the cause of reform was compared quite favourably with Owen's:

In Shelley, of all modern men, we witness the greatest approach in benevolence and disinterestedness of purpose, to the venerable father of the social system. Like Mr. Owen, he seemed to live, not for himself, but that the world might receive the full benefit of his wisdom, working with the most undivided energy of purpose, to realise a healthier and purer public opinion, as the necessary prelude to a better state of society.

47

Thus, it is to be expected that the Journal should chiefly deal with Shelley's political and philosophical poetry and should emphatically stress its 'vigorous exposure of superstition and priestcraft, and their attendant vices, and all the "evils done under the sun" in their name.'<sup>48</sup>

On Prometheus Unbound, alone, five articles were published in The New Moral World<sup>49</sup> - articles that brought the poem admirably alive. According to the author of these articles, Prometheus, the victim of Jupiter and of his own misconception of the nature of tyranny, is a prominent example of how the acquisition of knowledge could result in understanding the nature of tyranny, and, in effect, in the emancipation of man. Prometheus, a moralist as well as a politician, a philanthropist as well as a revolutionary, a pioneer of man's freedom who 'speaks in grief not exultation; for he hates no more',<sup>50</sup> whose self-purgation was intrinsic to his liberation, was extremely appealing to the Owenites, for his philosophy seemed to cohere almost completely with theirs. In the

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47. NMW, V, No.6 (1 December 1838), p.83.

48. Ibid., p.84.

49. See ibid., pp.83-5; No.7 (8 December 1838), pp.103-4; No.9 (22 December 1838), pp.134-6; No.11 (5 January 1839), pp.166-8; and No.17 (16 February 1839), pp.262-4.

50. See ibid., V, No.7 (8 December 1838), p.103.

unbending resolution of Prometheus, they argued, 'we have the picture of those great and good men, which have arisen as beacons of light to a benighted world; and despite of neglect, contumely, and punishment - nay, death itself - have nobly asserted the supremacy of truth, and kept that sacred flame alive, which is fast increasing to a blaze, that will scorch to death the miserable system of falsehood, misery, and oppression, under which mankind groans'.<sup>51</sup>

Another article on Prometheus Unbound focuses on the fall of Jupiter, the emancipation of Prometheus and the state of the free and happy earth. It opens with Jupiter's first glimpse of the changing reality when he asks Demogorgon: 'Awful shape, what art thou? speak' (III, i, 51) and concludes with the spirit's description of the earth and of man who:

remains  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,- but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself; just, gentle, wise

(III, iv, 193-7)<sup>52</sup>

Shelley's description of the new society here, the writer believes, is a perfect image of the socialist society which the Owenites envisage and try to realize; it adumbrates many of the goals they are striving towards and portrays the 'new state of society in its most perfect form; and, judging from this passage, I am warranted in saying, Shelley's views were not only a near approximation of the Social system, but the Social system in its most perfect conceivable form.'<sup>53</sup> To the author's mind Prometheus Unbound is an epic of man's freedom and reform and its author is not only a poet but a socialist poet, indeed a favourite one. It is worth remarking here that this understanding of Prometheus Unbound is in line with recent critical accounts of the poem offered by the most outstanding Shelley scholars, notably by Herbert Read,<sup>54</sup> K.N.Cameron and E.R.Wasserman.

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51. NMW, V, No.7 (8 December 1838), p.103. Also see the third article on Shelley and the second on Prometheus Unbound in ibid., No.9 (22 December 1838), pp.134-6.

52. See ibid., No.11 (5 January 1839), pp.166-8.

53. Ibid., p.168.

54. See p.128 above.

Not only in relation to the character of the desired social system, however, but also to the measures for realizing this system was Shelley an inspiration and a prophet. Shelley's moral ethos, informing as it did his political beliefs, was jubilantly received by the Owenites. It was of no little significance to them that the Titan who was the most celebrated reformer upheld the highest moral values. With his creeds and principles they could only agree; perseverance, forgiveness and love, the means by which Prometheus sets himself free, comprised, they argued, the essential basis of reform:

The poet, in the character of the Titan, tells us to forgive wrongs darker than death or night, to defy power which seems omnipotent; to love, and bear, and hope, and persevere; neither to change nor falter in our resolutions, nor flatter power, nor repent; these are the means to become good, joyous, beautiful, and free. This is the road, by the pursuing of which we shall trample over the many-headed monster, error and shower down peace and plenty on a regenerated world. And every Socialist will say, Amen! ... The struggles of Socialism with the old world is the war between Prometheus and Jupiter, and just in proportion as we imitate the uncompromising Titan, both in firmness as well as love, shall we extinguish this evil system, and usher in the New Moral World.

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This account of the mythical and political attributes of Prometheus Unbound conspicuously justifies Shelley's faith in the power of his poetry to be read, understood and effectively used by later radicals. Here, Prometheus Unbound plays precisely the role designated for it by its author in advancing the cause of man's freedom by teaching reformers the effectiveness of love, perseverance and hope.

In his last article on Prometheus Unbound, the writer yet again asserts that the principal motive for engaging himself in such a difficult enterprise as the analysis of Shelley's poetry is twofold: first, 'to show the moral bearing of his muse, and explain him to a world where he is but little understood, except to a few enthusiastic and cultivated admirers', and second - and one suspects, more significantly - :

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55. NMW, V, No.17 (16 February 1839), p.264 (my emphasis).

to strengthen hope and increase love among those who have entered the field of combat against the evils of present society, knowing, as I do know, that we must give a beneficial direction to the imaginative faculty, possessed in a less greater degree, by every person, before we can accomplish any great good by dry and abstract reasonings on moral conduct. The greater the number who can be brought to understand and appreciate the poetry of Shelley, the higher expectations may we entertain of human regeneration.

56

In consequence, Shelley's 'faith and hope in something good',<sup>57</sup> his firm belief in the inevitable triumph of man over tyranny and the eventual extinction of all evil and his inexhaustible efforts to transmit these feelings to his readers through poetry animated later radicals with a promise in a better future, and lent force to their arguments for reform. The Owenites' publication of his poetry and the preponderant emphasis they put on his political philosophy were chiefly designed to foment the readers' interest in socialist ideas and to invigorate their pursuit of freedom, equality, and justice.

Shelley's poetry was also quoted to support the advocates of socialism and answer its enemies. For example, in an article called 'INFERIORITY OF FOURIER'S CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIETY', in which the author passionately attacks Fourier's creeds of inequality and injustice, he both opens his article with a quotation from Shelley's Revolt of Islam on equality:

Eldest of things, divine Equality!  
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,  
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee  
Treasures from all the cells of human thought,  
And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought, ...  
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet

(V, LI, 3, 1-15)

and supports his argument by another quotation from Shelley's Epipsychidion:

'Are we not formed, as notes of music are,  
For one another, though dissimilar;  
Such difference without discord, as can make

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56. NMW, V, No.17 (16 February 1839), p.263 (my emphasis).

57. Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake,  
As trembling leaves in continuous air?

(142-6),<sup>58</sup>

Read in context, these lines not only support the writer's argument, but reinforce it and supply an apposite answer to the Fourierites.

The importance assigned by the Owenites to the function of poetry in general and to Shelley's in particular is startling. For them the role of poetry was by no means confined to political matters, but had unprecedented social and moral significations as well. In an article entitled 'Man and the Criminal, Prison Lessons', the writer, rather unexpectedly suggests that:

If the writings of the poets were carefully searched, we verily believe that there is hardly one of the grand truths that we find requisite for the attainment of man's mental, moral, or physical well-being, that would not be found foreshadowed in their pages. They are, emphatically, the prophets of humanity - the high-priests of Nature - to whom, beyond all others, her secrets are revealed.

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Of all poets, however, Shelley was given a very distinguished place; he was considered a socialist theoretician and philosopher, and his views were admired and re-echoed by many Owenites, not least of whom was Owen himself.

Two of the most conservative journals at the time, The Quarterly Review and The General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer, accused Owen of adding nothing new to the world of radical politics; in that most of his doctrines had been presaged by Shelley. In a hostile review of 'Owenism, public discussion between Mr. Alexander Campbell, Socialist Missionary, and the Rev. J.T.Bannister etc. ...', the reviewer attacks Owen and warns him that Shelley 'perished' pursuing the very ideas advocated by him:

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58. NMW, I, No.23, 3rd enlarged series (5 December 1840), pp.355-6.

59. Ibid., VI, No.51, 3rd series (14 June 1845), p.413.

Mr. Owen is proclaimed by his followers as 'Redeemer', a 'Father', 'the true Messiah', as though the perversion of those terms would convey to ears accustomed to scripture phrase, more definite ideas of his importance and glory; and, we presume, with a view to set him forth as the wonderful inventor of this new system. We doubt, however, whether the distinction of invention (for Robert Owen has discovered nothing) belongs to him. Percy Bysshe Shelley had the same atheistical and immoral notions; and, actually perished, with a small company, by shipwreck, when going forth to form a settlement on these very principles.  
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While the enemies of Owenism delineated Shelley's influence as being 'atheistical' and 'immoral', its friends and adherents extolled such an influence and applauded its effects. Robert Buchanan concludes his beautiful eulogy of Shelley's memory in a poem called 'On Shelley' thus:

... he did live  
Not for himself, but that man might receive  
The richness of his wisdom. But no more  
Will he illumine the world! the blaze is o'er!  
Yet, wide the seeds are spread, and taking root,  
Which soon shall fill the world with choicest fruit;  
And ages yet to come will fondly bless  
His name - a boon denied in this  
61

Furthermore, Shelley's views on women, love and marriage were not to go unheeded. To his article 'Woman as she is and as she ought to be',<sup>62</sup> Owen prefixes Shelley's description of women's position in The Revolt of Islam:

'Woman, as the bond-slave dwells  
Of man a slave! and life is poisoned in its wells  
Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may wear  
A lasting chain for his own slavery; ...  
'Let all be free and equal.'

(VIII, XIII, 8-11 and XVII, 1)

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60. The General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer etc., I, No.5 (May 1839), p.146.
61. NMW, IV, No.170 (27 January 1838), p.112.
62. Ibid., V, No.12 (12 January 1839), p.177.

Shelley's last line opens the discussion: "Let all be free and equal", and then, of necessity, virtue and happiness will be triumphant, and the New Moral World will have commenced; but neither happiness nor virtue, freedom nor equality, can be securely obtained, unless a correct knowledge of the nature of men and women is given without exception, to the whole of a community.'<sup>63</sup> The reason is again unravelled in Shelley's own words: "Can man be free, if woman be a slave" (II, XLIII, 1) No! and a slave she undoubtedly is, while man excludes her from equal education, rights and privileges, with himself - from equal political power and importance in society, from equal command over property, and from all independence of thought and action.'<sup>64</sup> It is amply clear here that Shelley's lines provided the basis for the argument. Shelley's message - that unless equality between men and women is achieved neither of them can be truly free, unless they are equal neither virtue, happiness nor freedom could prevail - was rightly understood to have significant political bearings and to be of consequence in any serious plan for reform. Again, in another article called 'Woman', the author opens his discussion with Shelley's description of the situation of woman after Prometheus' emancipation in Prometheus Unbound:

"And women, too; frank, beautiful, and kind  
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew  
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,  
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;  
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think -  
Looking emotions once they feared to feel -  
And changed to all which once they dared not be,  
Yet being now, made earth like heaven.

(III, iv, 153-60)"<sup>65</sup>

On the question of love, too, Shelley's teachings were popular. In 1839, for instance, The New Moral World published the whole of his essay 'On Love',<sup>66</sup> and before then, in 1838, an extract from his prose was

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63. NMW, V, No.12 (12 January 1839), p.177.

64. Ibid.

65. The Crisis, II, No.20 (25 May 1833), p.159. (The Crisis was edited by Robert Owen and his son Robert Dale Owen.)

66. NMW, V, No.27 (27 April 1839), pp.423-4.

published under the title 'Love ...' by Percy Bysshe Shelley.<sup>67</sup> More particularly, Owen's views on marriage are in line with those held by Shelley. Like Shelley, he argued that marriage is valid so long as the two partners love each other and that any law which requires their association after their love has died away is an evil law which should be resisted. While denouncing Owen's views on marriage The Quarterly Review relates them to Shelley's: 'The following recommendation, qubted with the highest applause from Mr. Shelley's Queen Mab, and placed as an appendix to Mr. Robert Owen's lectures on marriage, may also deserve attention.'<sup>68</sup>

From this representative but by no means comprehensive account of Shelley's presence in the Owenites' journals (which is much greater than these few pages can suggest,<sup>69</sup> for example, after Prometheus Unbound, The New Moral World published two other fine articles analysing and interpreting The Revolt of Islam),<sup>70</sup> it seems likely that Shelley exerted considerable influence on Owenite political thought and on their interest in reform; he might have been the godfather, not just of modern socialism as Newman Ivey White suggests, but even of Owenism itself.

But to assess with any degree of accuracy either the literary or the political influence of Shelley's poetry and philosophy on the Owenites is a task which lies beyond the scope of this study. M.S.Kalim, who tried this formidable undertaking in his unpublished MA thesis,<sup>71</sup> maintains that

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67. NMW, IV, No.188 (2 June 1838), p.256.

68. The Quarterly Review, LXV, No.130 (March 1840), p.516.

69. For an undated purely numerical account of Shelley items in the Owenites' and contemporary journals, see White, Shelley, II, p.409.

70. For other Shelley items in the Owenite journals see NMW, VII, No.72, New series (7 March 1840); V, No.36 (29 June 1839); VI, No.46 (7 September 1839); (14 and 21 September; 5 and 19 October 1839); (27 February, 27 March, 13 April, and 22 May 1841); (22 February and 13 September 1845). See The Crisis (25 May and 6 July 1833).

71. M.S.Kalim, 'The Use of Shelley in the Writings of the Owenites during the 1830s and 1840s' (University of London, 1960, an unpublished thesis). Although the subject of this thesis seems to be the same as the subject of my section, the approach of M.S.Kalim is quite different from mine. He devotes more time to Shelley and Owen and to the analogies between Shelley's poetry and that of the Owenites,

the Owenite poetry 'follows many poems of Shelley as models, in style and technique, as well as in attitude and contents'.<sup>72</sup> He also asserts that 'The Owenite view of literature was in complete accord with Shelley's poetics.'<sup>73</sup> Like Shelley - and the Chartists for that matter - the Owenites attached great importance to the politics of poetry. This does not, of course, mean that they overlooked the literary values of poetry; it only signifies that the poetry's message was emphatically stressed. Poetry, it was believed, is an effective political weapon; great political poetry, therefore, became of prime importance and that is why Shelley's poetry enjoyed a distinct place on their political platform. As they loved the man, admired the poetry and were fascinated by the philosophy, it is likely that Shelleyan ideas are ingrained in the Owenites' literature and politics.

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(footnote 71 continued )

whereas I am more concerned with the reasons (mostly the political reasons) behind these publications of Shelley's poetry in the Owenite journals and the effect the poetry was expected to have on the political thought and course of Owenism.

72. Ibid., p.266. For Shelley's literary influence on the Owenites see ibid., pp.266-325.

73. Ibid., p.321.

3. Shelley and the Chartist Press<sup>74</sup>

Two main factors led to Shelley's growing popularity amongst the Chartists and contemporary radicals between the 1840s and the 1860s; first, the growing interest in radicalism which stressed the political rôle of poetry; second, Shelley's by now recognizable reputation as a great political poet. Indeed, not unlike the Owenites, the Chartists argued that:

Many facts could be drawn from history to prove the great influence of poetry in moulding the popular mind to its will. Take, for instance, Dante, in the 13th century, exposing the errors, and laughing at the claims of an arrogant state church, and declaiming against its abuse in its own territories ... Poets and their poetry have, and will continue to exert an extensive influence on the destinies of mankind.

75

It did look like a truism in the Chartist era - as Charles Mackay remarks in his article: 'A Discourse on Poetry and on the Duties of the Poet', published in The People's Journal, 1847 - to say that poetry 'has been the preacher of virtue, the inciter of heroism, the refiner of society',<sup>76</sup> and in effect, a principal founder of the social system. Poetry was no longer an expression of mere sentiment or a means of amusement; instead it became a means of resisting tyranny and despotism on the one hand, and of enhancing the search for freedom and happiness on the other, till 'All genuine poets' were taken to be 'fervid politicians'.<sup>77</sup> The poets of the present century were acknowledged as those who have richly paved the way 'for establishing the self-governing principle', and who have made the contemplation of a socialist system 'a theme of intense and hallowed interest'.<sup>78</sup>

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74. Some of the principal Chartist Journals - Notes to the People, The Labourer (ed. by Ernest Jones), The Plain Speaker and Cooper's Journal (ed. by Thomas Cooper) are not considered here; they are to be included in the following chapters dealing with their successive editors.

75. The Chartist Circular, No.42 (11 July 1840), p.170.

76. The People's Journal, III (7 March 1847), p.108 (henceforth cited as PJ).

77. Ebenezer Elliott, The Chartist Circular, No.42, p.170.

78. Ibid., No.58 (31 October 1840), p.235.

Objections were, of course, raised against these strenuous efforts to overtly stress the politics of poetry. The Gentlemen Critics, for example, complained that 'the union of poetry with politics is always hurtful to the politics, and fatal to the poetry.'<sup>79</sup> To this statement, The Chartist Circular retorted: 'these great connoisseurs must be wrong, if Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, and Burns were poets.'<sup>80</sup> And to the same statement Charles Mackay gives another answer in six years' time: 'These persons confound politics with party, which is one mistake: and they think poetry destined for mere amusement, which is another.'<sup>81</sup>

In another article, an anonymous writer argues that 'If we could assign to the poet any definite aim or object, we should say that it is to proclaim the existence and to produce the acknowledgement of Truth and Beauty in the most perfect forms in which they make themselves clear to his own mind'<sup>82</sup> and supports his statement with two examples in which the name of Shelley stands next to that of Shakespeare: 'It needs not that I multiply examples. Study Shakespeare, and find them there in rich abundance: read Shelley, and learn to love nature, and appreciate truth and beauty the better for the reading.'<sup>83</sup> Another contemporary notes that 'with its weaknesses as well as its power', Shelley's poetry remains 'the most Perfect monument of the age'.<sup>84</sup>

Most of the contemporary journals under discussion, even those which disapproved of Shelley's opinions, could not afford to ignore Shelley the poet. Studying poetry, it was understood, without the poetry of Shelley would be like studying drama without Shakespeare's plays; the importance

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79. The Chartist Circular, No.42, p.170.

80. Ibid.

81. 'A Discourse on Poetry and on the Duties of the Poet', PJ, III (1847), p.109.

82. Ibid., II (1847), p.94.

83. Ibid., p.95.

84. Anonymous, 'Chapter on English Poetry. Shelley', TEM, VIII (Nov. 1841), p.681. (Italics in the original.)

of his poetic voice was equally, yet differently, recognized by both his friends and enemies. Disclosing that from Shelley 'for obvious reasons, we had somewhat shrunk', Frazer's Magazine significantly adds:

any retrospect of literature must be imperfect which fails to record and to decide the character of such a poet. In him the cycle of modern poetry was completed, and with his works it is announced, as clearly as the nature of the subject admits, that it has closed; and that henceforth the world is to await the genesis of a new spirit, and the evolution of a new era.

85

In this new era young poets were encouraged to read Shelley, who might well inspire them with better literary creations; The Northern Star, in a review of Firstlings by William Whitmore, remarks that 'the author has derived more inspiration from 'the Purgatory of Suicides' than from Burns, ... But he must get out of 'PURGATORY' into the HEAVEN of Shelley's Lyrics, and the poems of Tennyson and Mrs. Browning.'<sup>86</sup>

On both literary as well as political grounds, Shelley won a wide acclaim in the Chartist and contemporary journals. Despite The Examiner's judgement -

Shelley's great error, we think, lay, for the most part in the didactic nature of his poetry. He taught ethics in verse. Although full of power, and a genuine son of the Muse, he made his poetry too much a vehicle for his opinions. He did not allow the poetic furor to have its way. Instead of submitting to it, he endeavoured to control and force it into the service of his peculiar theories

87

- or, indeed, because of it - Shelley was regarded by most radicals as the 'poet of progress', 'the poet of freedom', 'the god-like Shelley', and above all 'the poet of the future'. By the 1840s he was no longer read only by the chosen few or the leading radicals, but - as all the

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85. Anonymous, 'The Poetry of Shelley', FM, XVII, No.102 (June 1838), pp.653-76 (p.653).

86. NS (7 August 1852), p.3.

87. The Examiner, No.1634 (26 May 1839), p.324.

journals of this period confirm - by the general mass of the people. While introducing passages from Queen Mab to the readers of The Reasoner, Robert Beith points out that 'The Poem opens with a description of Ianthe, with which we suppose all our readers are familiar.'<sup>88</sup> The National, moreover, A Library for the People (a journal edited by W.J. Linton, in which the name of Shelley appears more than that of any other English poet including Milton's and Shakespeare's) insists that not only the poet's worshippers, but even 'the prejudiced world itself petition for a biography of Shelley; - "The friends whom he loved may now bid his brave and gentle spirit repose; for the human beings whom he laboured for begin to know him".'<sup>89</sup> Although it was conceded that some of Shelley's writings are difficult to understand, what was really emphasized was that he had written much 'which all hearts and minds can appreciate'.<sup>90</sup> Shelley was read and defended by two groups of readers; political radicals who praised him explicitly because of his political and moral views and others who read him chiefly on aesthetic grounds. On both counts - the aesthetic and the political - Shelley was widely read and published in the nineteenth century.

Shelley's writings, particularly his descriptions of the evils of tyranny and the 'direful effects of despotism in destroying the comfort and happiness of mankind', were used to 'startle the still slumbering multitude from their sleep of indifference to, at least, a full knowledge of the terrible incubus that weighs them to the dust'.<sup>91</sup> In their task of explaining to the masses why monarchy should be held responsible for the misfortunes of the people, the rich for the misery of the poor, many radicals found that Shelley's poetry excellently expressed what they wanted to impress upon the people's minds.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, Shelley's description of 'The Monarch' in Queen Mab, was used by many Chartist and radical

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88. 'Shelley', The Reasoner, I (London, 1846), pp.22-5 (p.24).

89. The National (London, 1839), p.78.

90. The Chartist Circular, No.44 (25 July 1840), p.178.

91. Ibid.

92. See ibid.

journals as an authentic portrayal of the monarch's life, guilt, folly and vanity.<sup>93</sup> Thus in this period of intense radical activity, Shelley reached the mass audience he had failed to reach in his lifetime, helping to mould the principles and beliefs of the readers of the Chartist Press.

Robert Beith, a writer in The Reasoner, estimated that Shelley's efforts to undermine superstition, tyranny and despotism, on the one hand, and to encourage virtue, love and understanding, on the other, though perhaps falling short of his aspirations, were 'of far more consequence to the cause of freedom, than the united efforts of many moderate reformers'.<sup>94</sup> Thinking, perhaps, in very similar terms, George Julian Harney, in his address 'To the Enslaved, Oppressed, and Suffering Classes of Great Britain and Ireland', entitled 'The Friend of the People', informs his readers that

under the head of 'Popular Poetry', and 'Songs for the People', I propose to give certain portions of the works of those 'Who live in the verse that immortally saves', particularly Byron, Burns, Shelley, and Moore, who have:

'The Oppressor lashed  
And raised the head of poverty.'

The 'Songs for the People' will be those best calculated to excite the enthusiasm of the young, and promote the determination of the brave.

95

Significantly, the same number published Shelley's two poems 'Liberty',<sup>96</sup> and 'To the Republic of Benevento' which appears here under the title 'Political Greatness'.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the following number (20 April 1839) published two extracts from Shelley's Queen Mab.<sup>98</sup> Because Shelley's poetry 'immortally saves', The Northern Star (the main Chartist organ) had good enough reason to extol a body of 'Social Reformers who seem to

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93. The Chartist Circular, No.44 (25 July 1840), p.178; NS (19 October 1844), p.3 and The London Democrat, No.2 (20 April 1839), p.16.

94. 'Shelley', The Reasoner, I (London, 1846), pp.5-7 (p.6.).

95. The London Democrat, I (13 April 1839), p.[5].

96. See ibid., p.4.

97. See ibid., p.8.

98. (III, 106-38) and (III, 22-62); see pp.13, 16.

realize practically (so far as possible) what god-like Shelley only dreamed of in his "Queen Mab".<sup>99</sup> From the poetry that saves to the poetry of progress: 'An epitome of the Poetry of Progress,' The Reasoner announces to its readers, 'would be a magnificent work, embracing a wide circle of different productions. Campbell, Elliott, Nicoll, Hood, Shelley, Tennyson, and W.J.Fox, in England.'<sup>100</sup> For The Chartist Circular, however, Shelley was first and foremost a poet of the people: 'among the few who have been called "Poets of the People", assuredly the first and noblest name is that of Shelley.'<sup>101</sup> On the whole, the reading of Shelley's poetry was so much a vogue that even a well-known poet at the time, Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer, writes to John Watkins on 9 December 1844 'I am told it is disgraceful not to have read Shelley',<sup>102</sup> and meanwhile asks for a cheap edition of Shelley to be forwarded to him.

Shelley was frequently acclaimed in the Chartist journals as 'a poet of the people' and 'a poet of the future'. The Chartists acclaimed his breaking of the fetters of 'birth and education',<sup>103</sup> and spoke of him as 'the foremost advocate of liberty to the despised people'.<sup>104</sup> His 'Song to the Men of England' which was published in this number of The Chartist Circular was celebrated as 'a specimen of the many "fervent appeals" he so often, and with such effect, made to the oppressed sons of labour'.<sup>105</sup> What is more, Howitt's Journal explains that Shelley's feelings for the poor kindled his fervent passion for 'reforming the world':

His sympathies were so acute that the sufferings of the poor and oppressed all over the world were anguish to him. His fine imagination brought them before his eyes, clothed in all their pitiful forms, and thus fed his ardour for a reformation.

106

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99. NS (11 November 1843), p.3.
100. 'Selections from the Poetry of Progress', The Reasoner, II (London, 1847), pp.43-4 (p.44).
101. The Chartist Circular, No.4 (19 October 1839), p.16.
102. John Watkins, Life, Poetry, and Letters of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer (London, 1850), p.240.
103. The Chartist Circular, No.4, p.16.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Howitt's Journal, II, No.48 (27 November 1847), p.348.

Here, Shelley's feelings for the poor and the oppressed are given, not without good reason, a significant political dimension.

It was chiefly these potential political connotations of Shelley's poetry that gave it pride of place over the work of his equally loved and admired Romantic compeer, Lord Byron. Indeed, although numerically speaking, Byron was just as often quoted as Shelley in The Northern Star, nonetheless the unmistakable impression the paper confers is that Shelley is the more political and the more popular on that account. The fact that Shelley's poetry was almost always given political headings: 'Songs for the People', 'The Poetry of Progress', 'Liberty', 'The Poetry of Freedom', etc., whereas most of Byron's poetry was adduced under the heading 'The Beauties of Byron', symbolizes the paper's attitude to both poets. There is no doubt that to the Chartists both Byron and Shelley were the poets of freedom and progress, but it remains true that Shelley was the more appealing, partly, perhaps, because of his delineation of a better future and his faith in man's perennial regeneration. For them, Byron saw things as they were while Shelley saw things as they might be, thus instilling in his readers a better hope and a faith in the future. T.Frost, who draws a comparison between Byron and Shelley in an article called 'Scott, Byron and Shelley' seems to have summed up the age's attitude to these two poets:

As Byron was the impersonation of the present  
transitional state of the public mind, so was  
Shelley the representative and exponent of the  
future, not the futurity-idea ... but the moral  
summer of the world, the realisation of Arcadian  
fable and Hebraic myth. Shelley was the most  
highly gifted harbinger of the coming brightness,  
his whole aspirations were towards the future, as  
evinced in the Queen Mab and the equally beautiful  
Revolt of Islam.

107

Again, in another article entitled 'Beauties of Byron', The Northern Star stresses the significance of Shelley as a prophet and asserts that his faith in a better future is an essential reason for his undisputed reputation in radical circles:

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107. T.Frost, 'Scott, Byron and Shelley', NS (2 January 1847), p.3. (This quotation is immediately followed by an extract from The Revolt of Islam.)

Byron's works vindicate 'free thought', and that is the all-important consideration. He is not that hopeful of the future that SHELLEY is, but time only can decide whether he or his noble brother bard is right. For ourselves, although we regard the past much in the light that BYRON regarded it, yet, as respects the future, we cling to the belief in man's progress, and trust and believe with SHELLEY, that 'A brighter morn awaits the human day'.

108

In consequence, Shelley, the 'most perfect monument of the age', was not only the master-poet of the age, the friend of the people and the pioneer of their freedom, but most significantly, he was the uncontested prophet of the envisaged new system. From another viewpoint he was the martyr of the old system, and like Christ's, his martyrdom gave rise to his reputation.

(a) Shelley, Christ and Christianity in the Chartist and Contemporary Press

To many radicals of the 1840s and 1850s, Shelley was the victim of an oppressive political as well as religious system which he uncompromisingly defied. Labels of 'atheism' and 'immorality', therefore, were dismissed as the product of prejudice and religious bias. By 1850, in fact, it was widely argued that Shelley's views on religion were in perfect cohesion with the true ethics of Christ; the analogy between Shelley and Christ was one of faith, prophecy and martyrdom. Hence, Alfred Sourd's drawing of the 'Head of Shelley' from Leonardo da Vinci's 'Head of Christ'<sup>109</sup> is not a unique or isolated case; it is in perfect accord with the then popular trend of comparing Shelley to Christ. Like Christ, Shelley was seen as a hero and a martyr preaching the true ethics of Christianity which are central to a free and happy state.

It is not surprising, therefore, that judgements like that expressed in The Courier in the same year of Shelley's death - 'Shelley, the writer of some infidel poetry, has been drowned, now he knows whether there is

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108. 'Scott, Byron and Shelley', NS (10 January 1846), p.3 (my emphasis).

109. Copies of the two drawings can be seen in White, Shelley, II, opposite p.422.

a God or no,<sup>110</sup> - were refuted by Chartist writers as anachronistic and absurd; to Gilfillan's similar comment on Shelley's death - 'Wert thou, oh religious sea, only avenging on his head the cause of thy denied and insulted Deity',<sup>111</sup> The Northern Star replies: 'the later portion of Mr GILFILLAN's account cannot fail to strike our readers as something most presumptuous and absurd'<sup>112</sup> and concludes by acutely remarking that 'SHELLEY perished because he was in a "small skiff", a vessel not capable of encountering the storm ... as the case really was, Mr GILFILLAN's pretended "judgement" must appear ridiculous to the most obtuse.'<sup>113</sup>

The more Shelley was published in Chartist and contemporary journals the more the mass readers (Chartists and otherwise) accepted his views on religion and the more the opinion of the church on his 'atheism' was questioned. The Reasoner, in a discussion of 'The Question of Shelley's Atheism' indicates the inevitable interrelation of these two conclusions:

If Christian authorities assert a man to be an Atheist or Infidel, the great and overwhelming probability is that he is nothing of the kind. He very likely is not orthodox, but is something else than what they represent. What Theological views Paine held, we are quite sure few, if any, Christian ministers have any true idea. Of the anxiety he expressed for the Positivism of Freethought, many Freethinkers do not appear to understand ... The reputations of the great Freethinkers were buried long ago under a cairn of prejudices. The time has come to disinter them.

114

On the whole, the Chartists and contemporary radicals understood Shelley's atheism very much in the way Howitt's Journal explains:

... he [Shelley] wrongly styled himself 'atheist', he fixed a brand on his name which gave his enemies a handle through which to persecute him throughout his mortal course; and because they persecuted him in the name of Christianity, and he saw that all the like

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110. White, Shelley, II, p.391.

111. NS (17 January 1846), p.3.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. The Reasoner, XXV, No.744 (4th series, No.35), (26 August 1860), p.273.

persecutions of centuries had been conducted in that name, he was an enemy to it, while his own spirit was moulded in its very essence.

115

Shelley was certainly keen on calling himself an 'atheist' and he did so for the very reason singled out by Howitt's Journal,<sup>116</sup> Trelawny did not ask Shelley 'why are you called an atheist' rather he asked him 'Why ... do you call yourself an atheist?' and Shelley's answer was in the spirit of Howitt's Journal's judgement: 'It is a word of abuse to stop discussion, a painted devil to frighten the foolish, a threat to intimidate the wise and good. I used it to express my abhorrence of superstition; I took up the word, as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice.'<sup>117</sup> In this sense, these journals approached very closely Shelley's own estimation of his 'atheism'; his reasons for accepting (indeed publicizing) the label and his use of it to repudiate prejudice and superstition.

Many contemporary journals, even those which used to refrain from printing Shelley's name on their pages (like the Westminster Review and Frazer's Magazine), conceded that Shelley's principles of virtue and love are a true image of the ethics of Christ: 'above all men, too, is Shelley religious, strange as it will seem to many readers. Love for all that is good and beautiful and truthful, reverence for all that is great and noble a spirit of humility, had their roots deep in the depths of his soul.'<sup>118</sup> As early as 1838 Frazer's Magazine suggests that, in view of the fact that the church was 'the fountain of corruption under which the people groaned',<sup>119</sup> one must confess that Ahasuerus in Shelley's Queen Mab draws 'a true though melancholy picture';<sup>120</sup> what is more, the author concludes his argument by asserting that Shelley (and Plato) 'practically and really ... were (the one confessedly, and the other unconsciously) the purest of theists (a conclusion corroborated by the

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115. Howitt's Journal, II, No.48, p.348.

116. See pp.40-1 and 73-6 above.

117. Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron, p.40.

118. 'Shelley', Westminster Review, New series XIII, No.1 (Jan.-April 1858), pp.97-131 (p.131).

119. Anonymous, 'The Poetry of Shelley', FM, XVII, No.102 (June 1838),

indispensable fact, that both of them were not only in their several ways the most sublime of poets, but among the best of virtuous men).'<sup>121</sup>

It was by the standards of virtue, love and human sympathy that Shelley's religiosity was now estimated, and the results were sometimes startling: 'as to Christianity,' The Northern Star notes in a review of 'The Masque of Anarchy', by P.B.Shelley, 'The Right of Free Discussion' by Thomas Cooper M.D, and 'Modern Slavery' by the Abbé de Lamennais, '-if that is to be measured by "brotherly love", then would it be well if the intolerant priest of the Tabernacle could lay his hand on his heart, and declare "I am as good a Christian as Shelley, Cooper, and Lamennais!"'<sup>122</sup> Yet the most comprehensive discussion of Shelley's religion is to be found in an article by W.J.Fox, headed 'On Living Poets; and Their Services to the Cause of Political Freedom and Human Progress No.10 Miss Barrett and Mrs. Adams'. In the course of his argument which attests that being religious does not of necessity imply either adherence or obedience to the established church, the author illustrates his statement by taking the case of Shelley as an outstanding example:

I would take Shelley, and take him, not in his more matured state, but in his poetic boyhood, when he was inditing the fierce and ponderous commentaries of Queen Mab; take him in his hostility to our received forms of faith and received authorities; take him when in the first fervour of youth, he was throwing down the gauntlet to every species of superstition, and waging against theology an interminable warfare; and I say, that even at that moment, Shelley was a religious poet. Whatever is just, true, and beautiful in human feelings, as it flows out towards the vast universe of which we are a portion - whatever is most ennobling and divine in the principle of love towards all beings - whatever tends to show the advance in human nature, and even in unconscious being - we have

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(footnote 119 continued)

pp.653-76 (p.674).

120. Ibid., p.663.

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121. Ibid., p.666.

122. NS (19 February 1848), p.3.

in that persecuted and condemned 'Queen Mab' a demonstration that if Shelley were an atheist, he was an atheist whom a God might love, and in whom we may perceive a brother, who, by the fraternal affection that binds the race together, would point the aspirations of that race upwards, towards whatever is most true, beautiful, sublime, and enduring; and if that be not religion, there is no religion on the face of the earth.

123

In consequence, we can conclude that Shelley's idea of religion as love, sympathy and virtue, and his distinction between the ethics of Christ and institutional Christianity, were rightly understood and zealously received by later generations of radicals.

However, one should not assume that this dramatic change in attitude to Shelley's morals and religion is simply the result of the difference in time, for the two groups of reviewers - the one that accused Shelley of being the worst of atheists, and the other that equated him with Christ - themselves had two diametrically opposed views of the essence and function of religion. The radicals' view of the function of religion, in fact, was in perfect accord with Shelley's. Like Shelley, they firmly believed that: 'The religion of the gospel does not support despotism - does not advocate priestcraft - does not recognize invidious distinctions, or admit of privileged orders.'<sup>124</sup> Like Shelley, too, they argued that contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, religion was used by the governing classes to further their interests by exploiting the poor and the working people; they denounced priestcraft and the Church as efficient means to enforce the State's measures of coercion and injustice:

The reverse, state patronage, irresponsible station, sectarian ambition have induced, and still propagate, tyrannical oppression, priestly intolerance, Jesuitical imposition, and worldly aggrandisement, alike abhorrent to the divine nature, and heart-sickening to the simple Christian. The prevailing systems are a fearful perversion of revealed truth, the sorrow of heaven, if that be possible, and the gloomy triumph of the powers of darkness.

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123. PJ, I, No.10 (7 March 1846), pp.130-6 (p.130).

124. 'Philosophy of Religion', The Chartist Circular, No.64 (12 December 1840), p.261.

125. Mr Davies, Christian Chartist preacher, in ibid.

On the other hand they emphatically stressed that the Bible and the words of Christ are the true measures of morality, thus re-echoing Shelley's abiding viewpoint on religion; the following poem, for instance, written by a Chartist, voices both the Chartists' and Shelley's theory of religion:

"We love the Bible - Jesus Christ, the best  
Of heavenly beings - venerate, adore;  
In love he came, to make the many blessed,  
And back to pristine glory men restore -  
With peace, benevolence, and heavenly lore.  
Mild Christianity, the priests have blent  
Thee with their craft, and men deluded more  
Than taught, to gain their selfish end and aim -  
And curse and blight the man who dares their craft disclaim."  
126

It is a fact of some significance that this new wave in Shelley criticism reflects not just the editors' view but also that of general readers. Indeed, in most journals the readers' contribution to items on Shelley is considerable. In this context I shall adduce three 'Shelleyan' sonnets derived from three different journals which will serve as samples of the public's understanding of Shelley's poetry and philosophy. In a poem called 'Shelley', published in The National (1839), the poet Wade<sup>127</sup> addresses Shelley thus:

Holy and mighty Poet of the Spirit  
That broods and breathes along the Universe!  
In the least portion of whose starry verse  
Is the great breath the sphered heavens inherit -  
No human song is eloquent as thine;  
For, by a reasoning instinct all divine,  
Thou feel'st the soul of things; and thereof singing,  
With all the madness of a skylark, springing  
From earth to heaven, the intenseness of thy strain,  
Like the lark's music all around us ringing,  
Laps us in God's own heart, and we regain  
Our primal life etherial! Men profane

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126. 'The Christian Chartist Church', The Chartist Circular, No.49 (29 August 1840), p.197. For more examples see ibid., (10 October 1840), p.222.
127. Thomas Wade (1805-75), 'the radical, romantic poetic dramatist', is described by F.B.Smith as a scion of gentry family and a devotee of Shelley (Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-97, Manchester, 1973, p.9).

Blaspheme thee: I have heard thee Dreamer styled -  
I've mused upon their wakefulness - and smiled.  
128

The references to Shelley, here, are those of hero-worship, even of prophet-worship; 'holy and mighty', 'poet of the spirit', 'whose starry verse / heaven inherit', 'by a reasoning instinct all divine', 'thou feelst the soul of things', 'Laps us in God's own heart, and we regain / Our primal life ethereal', and 'Men profane / Blaspheme thee'. Like the words of Christ, Shelley's verse will save man and render him all happy and free; his voice like Christ's will remould the earth into a better place for man. In the same way, after recalling the trying times Shelley had to endure, E.T., in a poem called 'SHELLEY', written for 'The Feast of the Poets for September, 1840', consoles himself with the fact that Shelley's reputation is regaining ground and that his name will always be cherished in the hearts of men:

And thou wast hated and accursed of men,  
Thou, gentle spirit, and yet them did bless,  
Thy love extended to each denizen  
Of earth; nor on them smiled'st thou the less,  
Though they blasphemed thy name, made thy distress  
Their sport, and mocked when thy wan face  
Did look on them. But soon shalt thou possess  
A fame coeval with the human race;  
For hearts of men shall be thy memory's dwelling place.  
129

And finally, George Tweddell in a poem called 'PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY' published in The Northern Star (5 January 1850), acknowledges Shelley as a prophet of man's freedom and stresses that Shelley's name had finally won the acclaim that had always been its due. The poem is an integral whole and therefore should be cited in full:

The poet's poet SHELLEY, great's thy fame;  
And while the English language shall endure,  
And men have love for ought that's great and pure,  
Immortal glory will enwreath thy name,  
Friend of all kindness, wisdom, peace, and love,

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128. The National: A Library for the People (London, 1839), p.76.

129. TEM, VII (Sept. 1840), p.594.

Sighing to see the nation's great and free,  
Aspiring high for holy Liberty,  
Thou seem'd an envoy from the gods above,  
Sent for the solace of mankind below,  
Thy nervous verse can make the heart to glow  
With that warm fervour only patriots feel;  
A flame divine, which no base tyrant's steel  
Nor terror of his dungeons dark and cold,  
Can e'er destroy, or in abeyance hold.  
130

The last three lines echo the Hermit's address to Laon which conveys the nucleus of Laon's mission in The Revolt of Islam:

... thou didst rear  
That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance  
Nor change may not extinguish ...

(IV, XVI, 3-5)

Instead of Shelley's 'thou didst rear' we have 'Thy nervous verse can make the heart to glow'; instead of Shelley's 'That lamp of hope on high' we have Tweddell's 'A flame divine' and finally, Shelley's 'which time nor chance / Nor change may not extinguish' are replaced by Tweddell's lines:

... which no base tyrant's steel  
Nor terror of his dungeons dark and cold  
Can e'er destroy ...

lines that vibrate the sound and meaning of Shelley's lines. In fact, Tweddell's last five lines are resonant of Shelley's own estimation of the role his poetry will play in exciting an enthusiasm for 'those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind.'<sup>131</sup> In this vein, the Chartists fathomed Shelley's poetry and struck its most characteristic chord.

In these three sonnets, and indeed in the bulk of the criticism of Shelley in this era, the portrayal of his sufferings as vicarious served

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130. NS (5 January 1850), p.3.

131. Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

as a preamble to an elated view of his mission as the liberator of the oppressed, and to the prayer-like hope that his influence would prove irresistible. The intensive efforts to absolve Shelley from charges of irreligion and immorality prefigured his magnified political significance. This explains why in this age of fervent radicalism everyone 'was anxious to make Shelley a saint'.<sup>132</sup> Even The Western Messenger, 'a professedly religious work' which remarks in 1837 that 'Shelley's opinions in regard to God and Christ were formed and declared in reference and indignant opposition to the prevalent ideas of bigots on these subjects',<sup>133</sup> uses this religious judgement as a prelude to a more political one:

He denies God but it is rather the God, whom bigotry has created, than the God of Nature and Father of Christ ... he often exhibits much more true Christian feeling, and even Christian faith, than many, who scoff at him, as an atheist and outlaw. Where shall we find a purer love of liberty, than in his *Revolt of Islam* - where a purer friendship, than in *Adonais* - where a more glowing love for man, than in his *Prometheus*, and *Queen Mab* - where a stronger faith in man's capacity for progress and the goodness of the Supreme Power, than in his *Hellas*?

134

By casting a new light on Shelley's religion and by equating his doctrines with those of Christ, the current journals were paving the way for a new evaluation of Shelley's politics which were to be soon acknowledged as invaluable for man's progress and reform.

(b) Items on Shelley in the Radical Press

Shelley's poetry was frequently quoted in most radical journals and papers; lectures on him were constantly delivered; cheap and newly-published editions of his works were advertised; and many sonnets appeared celebrating his memory and his philosophy. In The Northern Star,<sup>135</sup> Shelley's

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132. George Bernard Shaw, 'Shaming the Devil about Shelley', The Works of Bernard Shaw, 32 vols, vol.29 (London, 1931), p.253.

133. Perry Miller (ed.), The Transcendentalists: An Anthology (London, 1977), p.340.

134.. Ibid., pp.340-1.

135. See (27 April 1839, 31 July 1847, 15 July 1848, 24 July 1846, and 23 March 1844).

'Song to the Men of England', for example, appeared five times, extracts from Queen Mab three times, extracts from The Revolt of Islam twice; also a fragment called 'Liberty' and a long quotation (20 stanzas) from his 'Masque of Anarchy'. In The London Democrat, The National, The Chartist Circular, The English Chartist Circular, The Yorkshire Tribune, The Morning Star and The Reasoner I have counted twenty-two extracts from Shelley's poetry. Although the most popular poems were Queen Mab (seven items) and 'The Masque of Anarchy' (three items), there was a great variety from a large number of his poems. The National alone, for instance (London, 1839), published extracts from Shelley's Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, 'The Masque of Anarchy', 'Song to the Men of England', 'Lines Written During the Execrable Castlereagh Administration' (sic), 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', 'Political Greatness' (known in the Julian edition as 'Sonnet to the Republic of Benevento'), 'Prince Athanase', and 'The Sensitive Plant'. It is of great significance that a journal which vehemently stressed that its avowed purpose was to educate and enlighten the people should quote so profusely from Shelley's poetry. Despite the fact that Shelley's poetry often appeared in the 'poetry corner', it can hardly be doubted that the choice is primarily a political one. As a poet Shelley was not paid the homage paid to a Shakespeare or a Milton, but as a political poet he was almost unequalled by any other English author.

As for the advertisements of Shelley's works in the Chartists' and other contemporary journals, it is neither desirable nor possible to reproduce them here, but one has only to open a volume of The Northern Star to see 'Shelley's Queen Mab with all the Notes, 1 vol, cloth lettered, published by J.Watson' advertised. Equally, one may open almost any volume of The Reasoner to find under the title 'Political and Theological Works' an advertisement for Shelley's Queen Mab and 'The Masque of Anarchy'.

In the light of these discussions, publications and advertisements of Shelley's works in the journals of the 1840s and 1850s one might suggest that Shelley, the political poet, enjoyed an indisputable reputation in the Chartist and contemporary radical circles, and moreover was beginning to exert a recognizable influence.

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A principal motive behind the wide range of publications and discussions of Shelley's poetry in radical journals was the belief that Shelley made an impact on the minds of his readers, an impact very much in line with what radical leaders were trying to achieve. For example, in a review of Queen Mab published by T.Watson, the reviewer stressed the political impact of Shelley's poetry and its relevance to the struggle for reform: 'regarding the poem as a whole, we have no hesitation in asserting that no youth can rise from its perusal without feeling more than ever wedded to virtue, and bound by that tie to struggle for the happiness of mankind, and the triumph of Truth and Justice.'<sup>136</sup> Robert Beith believed that to influence the people's minds was one of Shelley's chief objectives and that his hopes did not go unfulfilled:

Mr. Shelley spoke out, and the consequences to the cause of free thought have been most salutary. Were a proportionate amount of influence to be exerted by every gentleman entertaining liberal opinions, the vulgar superstition would cease to be respectable, and not long be profitable, ... No poet, perhaps, ever formed a higher idea of his vocation than Shelley - and, as Byron remarks, he filled up his own personal ideal to the letter.  
137

A few years previously The Examiner argued that the secret of Shelley's greatness lies not only in what he wrote, but also in the influence he exerted on the whole generation of writers:

He [Shelley] was an important writer, not only for what he himself contributed to the stock of literature, but also by reason of the influence that he exercised upon others. He set his mark upon the age, and gave an impulse to many fine minds, which might have slumbered in idleness, had it not been for the inspiration which they derived from the perusal of his works. An attentive observer of the writings of the present day will probably

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136. NS (28 October 1848), p.3.

137. Robert Beith, 'Shelley', The Reasoner, I (London, 1846), pp.5-7 (p.5).

detect more followers of Shelley (some of them unconscious ones) than of any other poet of the age.  
138

One of the 'unconscious' followers of Shelley is Benjamin Stott (1813-1850) whose poems were very frequently published in the Chartist papers and finally collected into the one volume of his works Songs for the Millions and Other Poems (Middleton, 1843). The poems in this volume, as Edmund and Ruth Frow remark, are 'Shelleyesque (but Christian) political poems in a high rhetorical strain, on such subjects as famine, liberty, the dungeoned patriot'.<sup>139</sup> It is very difficult to draw a comparison between any of these poems and any poem of Shelley, yet while reading them one is subtly but definitely reminded of Shelley's poetry and philosophy. The first poem in the volume, for instance, 'Millions Arouse' echoes the spirit of Shelley's 'Masque of Anarchy' without being over-literally modelled on Shelley's poem; the first stanza:

Millions, arouse! the voice of freedom cries,  
And liberty re-echoes back the call;  
Ye sons of toil, from slavery arise!  
Unloose your fetters, and shake off your thrall,  
Tyrants are slackening their mad career,  
Their guilty souls are paralyzed with fear.  
140

recalls the following lines from Shelley's 'Masque':

Rise, like lions after slumber,  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew,  
Which in sleep had fall'n on you -

(XXXVIII, 1-4)

In the same way the second stanza:

With firm resolve your sacred rights demand,  
In manly rectitude put forth your claim;  
Show all your love for home and fatherland;

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138. The Examiner, No.1634 (26 May 1839), p.324.

139. Dictionary of Labour Biography, edited by Joyce M.Bellamy and John Saville (London, 1977), IV, p.164.

140. Benjamin Stott, Songs for the Millions, and Other Poems (Middleton, 1843), p.[3].

Restore from infamy your country's name.  
Be wise, be just, your holy cause is good,  
Ye will obtain it without shedding blood.  
141

impresses upon our mind the very moral that Shelley emphatically stresses using a similar rhetoric, if a different verse form:

Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms, and looks which are  
Weapons of unvanquished war, ...

(LXXIX, 1-4)

Apart from the two pages of the Memoir which accompany his volume of poetry and the Frow's brief account in the Dictionary of Labour Biography quoted above, very little is known about Stott, and therefore it is very difficult to tell for certain whether he read Shelley or not, but as he was a regular contributor to the Chartist papers, as Shelley's poetry was often published in these papers, and in view of the Shelleyan tone which his poetry unmistakably conveys, it seems likely that Stott had read Shelley and became one of his - conscious or unconscious - followers.

More conscious of Shelley's influence was William S. Villiers Sankey whose 'Ode' (Northern Star, 29 February 1840) palpably echoes Shelley's 'Song to the Men of England'. Written in the same balladlike meter as Shelley's 'Song' and imbued with the same puissant sense of its target, Sankey's 'Ode', generally speaking, seems to re-echo Shelley's. To support this statement, let us look closely at one example. The first stanza in Shelley's 'Song':

Men of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay ye low?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

comes closest to Sankey's second stanza:

Men of England, ye are slaves,  
Bought by tyrants, sold by knaves  
Your's the toil, the sweat, the pain,  
Their's the profit, ease and gain

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141. Stott, Songs for the Millions, etc. ..., p.[3].

Sankey takes up the shape of Shelley's stanza (each of the above stanzas consists of two units with only one necessary break after the second line) but replaces Shelley's rhetorical questions with provocative statements. His phrase 'ye are slaves', which scales down the personal concern with the addressed, contrasts sharply with Shelley's acute adaptation of the rhetorical question form. Yet, the parallels between the message imparted in the two stanzas and the diction used (Men of England, toil, and tyrant) are unmistakable. But despite its derivatory nature, Sankey's stanza transforms Shelley's concrete imagery 'wherefore plough', 'Wherefore weave', 'robes your tyrants wear' into the economic reality 'profit'. Although Shelley's 'Song' (as we have seen) was ahead of its time for the economic arguments it raises, yet its economics were not advanced or practical enough for the 1840s. This is one example of how poetry reflects the ethos of the time in which it is written.

#### Conclusion

Thus, with their frequent publications of Shelley's poetry and their discussions of his moral and political philosophy, the Owenites, the Chartists and other contemporary radicals inaugurated a novel understanding of Shelley the poet and the politician - an understanding which was true to the poet's words and intentions and which was to pave the way for later studies of Shelley's poetry and politics. While the Owenites' and the Chartists' reading of Shelley's poetry had been substantiated by later critics (Cameron), their contribution lies primarily in the image of his work which they handed on: but for their efforts, it is possible that neither the Victorians nor the late nineteenth-century English Socialists, neither Marx, Engels, nor Gandhi would have read the Shelley they did read. Indeed, in view of the Owenites' and the Chartists' remarkable understanding of the politics of Shelley's poetry, one could only consider the subsequent interest in the politics of Shelley's poetry (best seen in the works of K.N.Cameron, P.M.S.Dawson and most recently Paul Foot) as a revival of Shelley's once well-established reputation as the most radical of poets. For the Owenites and the Chartists were the first to see Shelley

exactly as he saw himself 'labouring for distant ages',<sup>142</sup> and paving the way for future reform movements. They were the first to unfold the political message of his poetry and to acknowledge his persistent efforts to enlighten the people, to foment their radical inclinations and, above all, to animate them with hope and faith in a better future. By so doing, it was strenuously believed, Shelley participated indirectly, yet significantly, in making that future. One aspect of such participation might be seen in the role Shelley played in Chartist thought and the influence he exerted on the achievements of some of the Chartist poets. In the two following chapters I shall study the main works of the two Chartist poets, Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper, and see what effect Shelley had on their political arguments and literary works.

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142. Letters, I, p.277.

Chapter 4

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

AND

ERNEST CHARLES JONES

Jones had a magnificent feeling for, and mastery of, language. He succeeded in developing a style which conveyed a feeling of the epic grandeur of events, the titanic power of a people in revolt. No other Chartist poet attained such a wealth of rhythm, such variety and perfection in rhyme, so exact and acute a use of words. The literary significance of Jones's work far transcends the limitations of Chartist poetry. He was an outstanding English poet of the nineteenth century, worthy of a place among the most talented pupils and heirs of Byron, Shelley and Keats.

(Yuri V.Kovalev, Preface to An Anthology of Chartist Literature)

On 25 January 1819, Ernest Charles Jones, the poet, barrister and Chartist to be was born in Berlin. His father, Major Charles Jones, was a veteran soldier who fought at Waterloo under the Duke of Wellington. His mother was a daughter of a large Kent landowner, Alexander Annesly. The poet was named after his godfather, the Duke of Cumberland, uncle of Queen Victoria, who later became King Ernest the 1st of Hanover and to whom Major Jones was Equerry.

Ernest, who was an only child, was educated at St Michael's College, Lüneburg, where 'he was introduced by "letter patent" from the King. Here he worked with distinction, became Orator of the College, and on graduating delivered an address in German, which was published at the instance of the professors, who accorded him the highest academic honours.'<sup>1</sup> Jones's literary ability, which was manifested at an exceptionally early age, was anything but ordinary. Frederick Leary writes that when Jones

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1. A.H.Miles (ed.), The Poets and the Poetry of the Century, vol.IV entitled The Tennysons to Arthur Hough Clough (London, 1898), p.547.

was only ten years of age, he had translated the first Canto of Voltaire's Henriade and composed a number of poems which were published by Nester, of Hamburg, in the year 1830. When nine years of age he wrote a prize tale which was published in Ackerman's Forget-Me-Not, in the same year.<sup>2</sup> Again in the same year, the poet's father wrote to the editor of The Gleaner that he had made use of every means in his power to repress his son's genius in writing poetry, without effect, and that at last 'I have suffered myself to be prevailed upon to publish (out of a mass of others) these little poems ... it flows from his pen as fast as hands can write on paper, without the least apparent labour of the mind.'<sup>3</sup> 'These little poems', in fact, together with Jones's translation of the first Canto of Voltaire's Henriade were published by J.H.Nester, Hamburg, 1830 in one volume called Infantine Effusions. The only copy of this volume known to have been in this country is the one obtained by A.B.Wakefield from Jones's widow (second wife) in 1891. In that year, Wakefield transcribed the 68-page volume. The transcription, together with a description of the original booklet (which perhaps was in bad condition, or Wakefield would not have transcribed it; it was not among the papers presented to Manchester's Public Library by Mrs Wakefield), a lecture on Ernest Jones by A.B.Wakefield, a picture of Jones, one manuscript poem in Jones's handwriting called 'Prison Fancies', and press cuttings (all of them poems by Jones) are bound in one volume and preserved in Manchester Public Library (Ms. F. 821 89 J7).<sup>4</sup>

Although the Jones family moved to England in 1838 - before then they had been living in Holstein, Germany, on a small estate of their own - the poet's social and literary interests seem hardly to have undergone any change at all. As had been the case in Germany, the Jones family maintained their royal contacts and in 1841, Ernest Jones was

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2. See Frederick Leary, The Life of Ernest Jones (London, 1887), p.2.
  3. Letter to Dr Y.Weeren, editor of The Gleaner (Hamburg, 2 April 1830), cited in Diary of Ernest Jones, 1839-1847, published by the Communist Party of Great Britain (Pamphlet, No.21, Spring 1961), pp.4-5.
  4. The transcribed copy comprises 68 pages (the lecture and the press-cuttings are not paginated) of poetry, 11.8" deep and 7.8" wide. On the cover we simply read Infantine Effusions, Jones, followed by the volume's press mark. The poetry is written in black ink and the writing is very legible. The volume contains an index (a table of contents).

presented to the Queen by the Duke of Beaufort. These contacts culminated in his marriage to Jane, the daughter of Gibson Atherley, of Cumberland, on 15 June 1841. Between 1839 and 1845, as his two volumes of unpublished diary (1839-1847)<sup>5</sup> amply demonstrate, Jones intently pursued his literary career, despite the fact that at the same time he was attending the Middle Temple with the aim of becoming a barrister. One can deduce that writing was the activity on which his greatest efforts were concentrated. In these years he wrote 'The Cloud', 'Life', 'Joon Binde?', 'Libertin', Corayda and My Life<sup>6</sup> which also appeared under the title Percy Vere, The Peer's Story.<sup>7</sup> The importance he attaches in his diary to his literary productions clearly shows that he envisaged a literary career to be his main vocation in life: 'I find time never passes so quickly or so pleasantly,' he writes to his father, 'as when I am composing a story or a few verses. Whatever my future may be, facility in the use of words will be a great help.'<sup>8</sup> Up to 1844, in fact, Jones hardly seems to have had any political associates or any political interests, nor does his diary reveal any sign of dissatisfaction with the social milieu in which he was living.

By the summer of 1845, however, a new area of activity seems to have introduced itself into Jones's life, an area which gained more importance with every passing day till it became the centre of his life. The first significant entry on this theme - which was soon to become the mainspring of Jones's activities - is that of 10 June 1845: 'I posted a letter to the committee of the Anti-Cornlaw League, and copies thereof to Baigtt and to Coblen, and to George Wilson proposing to start a paper.' By 28 January 1846, he even visited the Chartist Hall; his diary's entry

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5. The diary is still in the poet's handwriting in Manchester Public Library (Ms. 923 2 J 18). It consists of two volumes; the first volume, almost twice the size of the second, covers the years 1839-1843; the second opens on 1 January 1844 and closes on Sunday 9 May 1847. The two volumes are bound in dark brown covers. The size of paper used in both volumes is of about 7.6" deep and 6.3" wide. Although some papers are loose the work is well kept in a red box which carries the diary's press mark.

6. Ibid. (All further references are to the MS.)

7. Percy Vere is Jones's pseudonym.

8. Percy Vere, The Confessions of a Literary Free-Lance (Edinburgh, 1913), pp.12-13.

for that day reads thus: 'I went to City Chartist Hall. Saw Shadrelton, the Owner. Went to Soman & Co., Sisters of Northern Star, 16, first ... and the Chartist organisation. Saw a copy of "My Life".' This host of new contacts culminated in a letter to the Chartist Body, in which Jones revealed his desire to join the movement. The letter, written on 5 May 1846, is so revealing of the dramatic change that had befallen Jones's life, and of the direction it was to take in the future, that it is worth citing here in full:

TO THE CHARTIST BODY

BROTHER CHARTISTS,

Feeling that the time is at hand in which it behoves every honest Chartist to be up and stirring, I venture to solicit the honour of being returned as one of your delegates to the National Convention about to assemble.

In this convention I trace the hope of better times, the guarantee of strength, unity, and liberty, and the germ of a popular parliament. I perceive in it a rallying point for universal Chartism, - a body of men who will look the class-parliament of the oligarch in the face, and say - 'We are for the people, you are but for yourselves! - We are for thirty millions, you are but for one! - Give way!' [*Italics in the original*]

It is because I wish to see a government that governs for the general good, instead of individual interest, - a House of Commons that shall represent a people instead of a party, - a church that shall be something more than a portion for the younger sons of titled houses, - in fine, a liberal democracy instead of a tyrannical oligarchy, and it is because I believe the people's charter alone calculated to ensure these results, that I am desirous of becoming one of your delegates, and thus giving one more example to those classes, with whom early associations have connected me, of how unworthy one of their own order thinks them of the privileges they enjoy, and of the powers they arrogate; feeling, as I do, that, as an honest man, I cannot support a system by which the poor are robbed of their labour for the benefit of the rich, and slaves are still further insulted by being told that they are free.

It is my earnest hope, that many may follow my example, and that such examples may be frequent, and carry weight with those who are still our enemies, and their own no less, - and that I shall often be able to hail from the heart of your ranks signs of sympathy and brotherhood, or else confusion in the camp of our opponents.

After what I have already said, I need hardly add,<sup>9</sup>  
that I am an unconditional advocate of all the points  
of the Charter. It is on the above grounds that I  
solicit the honour of becoming one of your Delegates,  
and with these feelings that I subscribe myself,  
Brother Chartists,

The uncompromising enemy of a Class-  
legislation an effeminate Despotism  
and a corrupt Church  
But ever your sincere friend and  
servant

Ernest Jones.<sup>10</sup>

Two points are abundantly clear from this letter: first, Jones held the political system responsible for all the sufferings of the poor with whom his sympathies manifestly lie, and second, he believed that the Charter provided the best cure for these ills that he could find. Whether these political maxims of Jones were already in embryo when he started attending Chartist meetings and reading the Chartist papers or whether they were wholly brought about by such activities is very much open to question. What is no less questionable is the argument that Jones's advocacy of the Charter should come as no surprise since he always showed love for the people and embraced their revolutionary cause. Such arguments are usually based on the story that as early as 1830, when he was only eleven years of age, Jones "set out to help the Poles", then in insurrection, and was with difficulty traced in the Black Forest and brought back.<sup>11</sup> He did not, of course, reach the Poles, nor is there any proof that he really intended to do so. The argument becomes all the more shaky when we recall that Jones's advocacy of the Charter came fifteen years later and that in the interval he hardly expressed any interest of the kind or gave a mention to any political happening.

However, the exclusion of the extreme form of this argument need not imply that Jones was converted to Chartism only after he established

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9. For the six points of the Charter, see p. 162 above.

10. NS (9 May 1846), p.[1] (my emphasis).

11. A.H.Miles, The Tennysons to Arthur Hough Clough, p.547.

contacts with the Chartists and started reading the Chartist papers. On the contrary, by 1845, both his diary and his poetry began to reveal his dissatisfaction with the scale of values which had previously governed his life. In his poem, My Life (1845), his first considerable literary achievement, which was most enthusiastically reviewed, we already find the concerns that led him to join the Chartist movement - a feeling of the hollowness of the life he was hitherto living, a deep sympathy with the poor and a binding duty to resist the political tyranny which generates social injustice. He contends that his life is void of any true sense of freedom:

Oh! How I mourned that such should be!  
Oh! Fetters-fetters for the free!  
There is prison-life in open plain,  
Without a dungeon or a chain;  
Men may be slaves without a brand,  
Nor dare to move a chainless hand; ...  
12

The immediately suggested sources of these fetters are Custom and Convention:

Who says the mind is never bound,  
That freedom still in thought is found?  
Oh! Custom and Convention sure,  
And artful lurer's artful lure  
Will draw it to abjection's brink  
And teach the thinker what to think.  
13

Significantly, these feelings are mingled with a notable admiration for those who try to break the chains and live according to their own code of thought and feeling:

For few the men who dare to speak  
The strong Thought to the strongest weak,  
And many those who pass their life,  
In danger brave and bold in strife,  
Yet dare not even bear a thought  
Against the rules they have been taught.  
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12. Percy Vere (E.C.Jones), My Life (London, 1846), p.5.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., pp.5-6.

Although, while writing the second part of My Life early in 1846, Jones was already familiar with Chartist thought, it remains most likely that the ideas expressed above are - as the title and the introduction to the poem confirm - the summation of personal experience and reasoning. What seems to have been the case, therefore, is that when he was first introduced to Chartism, Jones had no political creed of his own but that, as he found the issues raised agreed with what he had already thought, he began seriously considering its principles and doctrines. After more reading of the Chartist literature and more contacts with Chartist circles, and while, also, experiencing (perhaps for different reasons) an increased sense of alienation from his own class, Jones found in the Chartist world a vision of harmony and a cluster of ideas that could not fail to appeal to a daring thinker.

Jones's fast-growing reputation within the Chartist Movement seems to have been connected with his being a poet. The Northern Star in its first few articles about him confirms that he was first and foremost admired as a man of intellect, as a man of a creative literary mind rather than as a politician. By the time he joined the Chartist Movement in 1846 Jones was already established in his career as a poet; as we have seen, from 1830 Jones's poems were in print, and from his arrival in England in 1838 he was constantly composing and publishing poetry. But it was his latest literary production, My Life, that won him high esteem in literary circles. As a poet and prose writer Jones has to his credit an impressive literary production.<sup>15</sup> Apart from his novels, tales, and considerable long poems: My Life (65 pages), The Battle Day; or, The Lost Army (63 pages), The Emperor's Vigil (18 pages), and The Revolt of Hindostan (34 pages), Jones wrote Chartist Poems (a volume of 16 pages of short poems) and published numerous poems in most of the Chartist papers and journals, not least in his own papers; The Labourer (1847-8), Notes to the People (1851-2) and The People's Paper (1852-7). The Labourer, for example, contains more poems by Jones than by all other poets combined.

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15. For a chronology of Jones's works see appendix 1.

Indeed, in his pleas for writers to contribute to these papers, Jones often complained that he had to write most of the papers himself. But the importance of Jones's writings lies not so much in their bulk as in the readership they acquired and the influence they exerted upon those readers. Jones's papers, which contained many of his poems and lectures enjoyed a wide circulation. His poems, especially his 'Chartist Poems' were read, repeatedly published and even sung as political hymns in Chartist meetings. Of Jones's early Chartist days, G.D.H.Cole says: 'For his own part, he set, at this stage, more store by his poems than by his oratory ... His Chartist songs began to appear in many forms - in O'Connor's Northern Star, in book form, in broadsides and little booklets. They were sung and read at many Chartist gatherings.'<sup>16</sup> Within the Chartist Movement itself Jones was upheld as a leading political poet; indeed, even during his imprisonment, the Chartists' boast was that he made a pen from a feather he found in the prison yard and wrote poetry with his own blood. Hence, his status as a poet and author was a significant factor in maintaining the role he played in the Movement as a political leader. He was an excellent orator too, and, like his poetry, his speeches, according to James Heaton, made a remarkable political impact on the minds of his audience:

It is impossible to overrate the power for good which Mr. Jones exercised upon the men for whom he laboured, and the age in which he lived. In this case the language of Job is singularly appropriate - 'Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Unto me men gave ear and waited and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again, and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the latter rain.'

17

During all the ups and downs of his political career (which was very much conditioned by the fact that he joined the movement when it was already

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16. Chartist Portraits, pp.341-2.

17. James Heaton, The Late Ernest Jones: His Life and Times, repr. from The Preston Guardian (20 February 1869), p.14.

in decline) Jones remained a gigantic literary phenomenon. Kovalev describes him as 'the most important Chartist poet'<sup>18</sup> and Martha Vicinus argues that Jones 'was particularly successful in embodying Chartist ideals and actions in his poetry'.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, both the theme and the form of Jones's poetry mirrored his political experience in which, as a leader of the movement, he had a first-hand knowledge of the people's conditions and aspirations. At first all Chartist poetry (and Jones's was no exception) was imitative of Romantic poetry - especially of Byron and Shelley - but later it made some daring journeys into the fields of new poetical experiment, in which literary form became more closely related to political experience. In his early Chartist days, when the public mood was still revolutionary, Jones wrote his inspirational poems and songs, but as the fifties drew to a close and the movement lost its mass support, there was no more need 'for the previous "topical" poetry, but for examination of the road that had been travelled, for an artistic generalisation of the experience',<sup>20</sup> when short poems and hymns gave place to lengthy and monumental poems, Jones wrote his Revolt of Hindostan.

Yet, the use of words, whether in poetry or speech, was not simply a literary activity but also a political one which sometimes resulted in severe political punishment. On hearing Jones's first speech to the Movement, Benjamin Rushton, who had to endure three government prosecutions told James Heaton: 'if he continues steadfast, if he remains true to the cause of the people, he will not always have the chance of speaking on Blackstone Edge; nay, the government will strike him down with the strong arm of the law, and a constitution like his is liable to be cut down in its prime.'<sup>21</sup>

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18. Yuri V.Kovalev, 'Chartist Literature' (Preface to An Anthology of Chartist Literature), trans. by Joan Simon in The Luddites and Other Essays, p.68 (henceforth cited as 'Chartist Literature'). There are considerable differences between this translation and the one that appeared in Victorian Studies, II (1958), pp.117-38.
19. The Industrial Muse (London, 1974), p.100.
20. Kovalev, 'Chartist Literature', p.63.
21. Heaton, The Late Ernest Jones, p.15.

He was right. After a speech which Jones gave in Bishop Bourner's Fields, Bethnal Green, London, on 5 June 1848 to a vast assemblage of Chartists, the government issued a warrant for his arrest on the charge of sedition and he was arrested the following day after he gave a lecture in the Hall of Science (Manchester Library); he was immediately sent off to London and even his wife was not allowed to accompany him on the train. In London, he was convicted and sentenced to two years' imprisonment during which he suffered most brutal treatment. Kept on bread and water, he was denied paper and ink, visits or even news of his family - though he was allowed to write a letter every four months. The stories about his making a pen out of a feather which he found in his solitary walk in the prison yard, keeping some ink in a piece of soap when offered some to write a letter and writing The Revolt of Hindostan with his own blood were cherished amongst the Chartists. Thus when he was eventually released from prison on 9 July 1850, he emerged as a Chartist hero. Soon afterwards he started a paper Notes to the People, which was later superseded by The People's Paper (8 May 1852-28 March 1857), designed to educate the masses and teach them the principles of reform. Despite all the ebbs and flows of the Chartist Movement and of Jones's own attitude to reform and to the means of reform, he remained a sincere adherent to the movement until his death on 26 January 1869.

The central issue with which we will be concerned here, however, is Jones's poetry. After he joined the movement it reflected his political experience and was designed to serve his political ends, so much so that the organic link between experience - mostly political experience - and poetic production became the most characteristic of Jones's Chartist activities. It is this real union of poet and politician which furnishes the premise for one of the links between Jones and Shelley.

As a political poet, Jones, like Shelley, abhorred bloodshed and stressed the importance of knowledge as the only ground for reform. He attacked institutional Christianity which was in his estimation - as, of course, in Shelley's - the most serious impediment in the way of man's progress; and read into the ethics of Christ remarkable social as well as political connotations. Although, generally speaking, it is along

these broad lines that we shall compare - and wherever possible relate - Jones's ideas as a political poet to those of Shelley, the comparison will be divided into two distinct - though not wholly separate - parts: first, General 'Affinity' or Consistency of View, and, second, Direct Influence. The first part of the comparison which covers the most substantial part of the argument, will be studied under the following heads: the Political Function of the Poet, the Theme of Freedom, and Religion.

1. The Political Function of the Poet

The first reference made by Jones to the political function of his poetry came only a few months after he joined the Movement; on 8 October 1846, a strongly-worded entry in his diary reads as follows: 'I am pouring the tide of my songs over England, forming the tone of the mighty mind of the people ... I am prepared to rush, fresh and strong, into the strife or struggle of a nation, to ride the torrent or to guide the ill if God permits.' A few days later, he again writes in his diary that his Chartist Poems - which were palpably written with this aim in mind - have started to sell. The age of Chartism was, in fact, an age of political poetry; revolutions were spreading all over Europe and poetry was taken to be the best literary form for the revolutionary cause. Since 1840, The Chartist Circular had predicted that: 'The destinies of mankind, the rise and fall of empires, the uprooting of prejudice, the overthrow of despotism, and man himself standing in the presence of Nature and of God, with all his passions, his doubts, his rare properties, and inconceivable wretchedness, will become the chief, if not the sole theme of poetry amongst democratic nations.'<sup>22</sup> By 1847 Jones is maintaining that the poetry of Chartism is 'the freshest and most stirring of the age; as in England, thus in France, America, Ireland, and Germany, the poetic spirit has struck the chords of liberty; and the fresh vigour of its productions contrasts proudly with the emasculated verses of a

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22. 'Politics of Poets', The Chartist Circular, No.58 (31 October 1840), p.235.

fashionable school.'<sup>23</sup> In such a revolutionary era, the political function of poetry was unprecedented:

Ever since the French Revolution mere sentiment in poetry has been giving way to that of principle - high, unbending principle. The times in which we live demand the exercise of the sterner faculties. Around, despotism deepens its gloom; the lights of fancy alone are inadequate to struggle with its darkness. Poetry needed, and received, a higher and a firmer tone; if it has lost in feeling, it has gained in power.

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Seven years later, the same judgement is emphasized by Jones in his preface to The Labourer (of which he was a co-editor; the other editor being Feargus O'Connor): 'convinced that all which elevates the feelings or heightens the aspirations, can but strengthen the political power of a people, we have placed poetry and romance side by side with politics and history.'<sup>25</sup> In launching The Labourer, Jones had declared: 'We, however, had one great goal before our eyes - the redemption of the Working Classes from their thralldom - and to this object we have made the purpose of each article subservient ...'<sup>26</sup>

These judgements, however, were not absolutely original; the Romantics, as we argued earlier,<sup>27</sup> believed that their poetry was destined to change the face of history and make the earth an Eden of love, peace and freedom. In the Chartist era, however, the poet's function became more directly and more overtly political. To be warmly received (or to be received at all) in literary journals, a poem is seen as having to express a moral or a value which serves the 'progressive spirit of the age'.<sup>28</sup> This was by no means seen as incompatible with objective literary evaluations. On the contrary, it was often argued that the more poetry is imbued with the spirit of democracy the more it rises 'in feeling and

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23. The Labourer, II (1847), p.95.

24. 'Politics of Poets', The Chartist Circular, No.57 (24 October 1840), p.231.

25. The Labourer, I (1847), the Preface.

26. Ibid.

27. See pp.56-8 above.

28. 'Literary Review', The Labourer, II, pp.94-6 (p.94).

power - and it is a significant fact', Ebenezer Jones adds, 'that not one modern poet has written a work poetically good, upon a slavish theme. Is not this a proof how poesy and truth are one - how poesy is the exponent of the living spirit of the age?'<sup>29</sup> With this statement, Ernest Jones heartily agrees: 'Literature is the exponent of the spirit of the age: it is this, or it is nothing.'<sup>30</sup>

Like Ebenezer Jones, many Chartists believed that poetry is 'the first language of civilization - a nation's history, a nation's literature, begins with it; and it puts the seal upon its records and its glory. "Let me write the ballads of a country, and who will may make its laws", was, indeed, a true sentiment - attesting alike the antiquity, the power, and the perpetuity of poetry in the moral government of man.'<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, Ernest Jones bears witness to another similar saying: '"Give me a nation's songs, and I will give you the character of a nation's people", is an old and valuable maxim; the people mould a poet, but a poet directs a people'.<sup>32</sup> Writing political poetry, therefore, in such a fervently political era became a holy mission to be duly fulfilled by the sincere sons of labour: '... the true poet is a high priest of God', Jones stresses in a review of Gerald Massey's Graigcrook Castle, 'the noblest of the human race - he has a solemn duty to perform - not poverty, misery or want must make him veil the glory of the spirit for the sake of patronage or literary favour.'<sup>33</sup> In reviewing any literary work, the first question to be asked was 'what is the moral of the work? and what purpose does it serve?'. Of some works that were forwarded to him to be published in The Labourer, Ernest Jones writes: 'we have received works replete with genius, but without moral - either political, social, or religious. We would earnestly advise those talented men, who are capable of thus much, to do something more, - more in the matter they treat of -

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29. 'Literary Review', The Labourer, II, pp.235-40 (pp.235-6).

30. Ibid., p.96.

31. Ibid., pp.239-40.

32. Ibid., p.96.

33. The People's Paper (1 November 1856), p.4.

more in the moral they deduce.'<sup>34</sup> His address to Robert Browning and Tennyson in this respect is quite revealing of the priority he gave to the message of poetry:

What is Robert Browning doing? He, who could fire the soul of a Luria, and develop the characters of a Victor and a Charles, - he who could depict nature's nobility in a Colombe, - has he nothing to say for popular rights? Let him eschew his kings, and queens, - let him quit the pageantry of courts - and ascend into the cottage of the poor.

Can Tennyson [sic] do no more than troll a courtly lay? His oat could tell other tales besides a love story.

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Ascending to the cottage of the poor, it was argued, has its rewards; the instincts of the people give life and truth to poetry, furnish it with knowledge and power and ensure its posterity<sup>36</sup> but it also lays some claims on the poet's muse. Writing for the people is not held to be an easy task; poets or writers have to strive to write in a language which is easily intelligible; they have to amuse and instruct the unlearned - their works have to be 'tuned to the popular key'.<sup>37</sup> Thus the moral of a literary work not only gained precedence over its literary attributes but it affected, sometimes moulded, these attributes in order to ensure that the message conveyed would reach the greatest number of the people.

Of all the Romantic poets Shelley came closest to the Chartists in the emphasis he put on the political function of poetry. Indeed, by transcending the poet's function and expanding it into the political sphere, Shelley presaged the Chartist habit; his dedication of much of his poetic production to the cause of future reform was greatly admired by the Chartists. Further, Shelley prophesied the emancipation of man

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34. 'Literary Review', The Labourer, II, p.94.

35. Ibid., p.95.

36. See ibid., p.96.

37. Ebenezer Jones, 'Literary Review', The Labourer, II, p.239.

and 'glimpsed the rising new sun, the sun of the proletarian revolution',<sup>38</sup> and this provided an obvious link between him and the Chartists. The difference, though, is that apart from the political poems of 1819 Shelley tended to write epic poems which dealt with the broad and eternal fundamentals of reform, while the Chartists, though basing their arguments on the same political doctrines as Shelley, designed their compositions to precipitate and, if possible, effect an immediate political change. Hence, in form, rhyme and tone the Chartist poetry is resonant of Shelley's poems of 1819 but at a doctrinal level it is in full accord with Shelley's political philosophy in general which, as we have seen, was invariable in all his poetical utterances. In other words, what we have said of the two groups of Shelley's poems in chapter 2 is true of Shelley's poetry vis-à-vis the poetry of Chartism. In chapter 2 we reached the conclusion that the literary devices of the poems of 1819 gave a militant political impression while their philosophy is completely in accord with the grander compositions such as The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound. Similarly, despite the fact that the poetry of Chartism often (but not always) adopted different poetic modes from Shelley's, its philosophy remained in perfect accord with that of Shelley. Whether or not this contributes to the general view that Chartism was politically backward because it was too deeply imbedded in an idealistic tradition to be able to generate any practical political solution is beside the point; what I would like to stress, here, is that the homogeneity between the political philosophy of Shelley and that of the Chartist poets fostered a forceful link between them which might not have otherwise existed.

Ernest Charles Jones is not the only Chartist poet to have admired Shelley but perhaps he is the poet who admired him most. Despite the fact that Shelley wrote poetry for a future revolution whereas Jones wrote poetry for a revolution which was in progress and in which he played a prominent part, they seem to have attributed a very similar significance to the political role of poetry. Like Jones, Shelley wrote and published

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38. George Lukacs, Goethe and his Age, translated by Robert Anchor (London, 1979), p.153.

principally because he wanted his writings to influence and 'influence to good',<sup>39</sup> because he believed that he had 'some work to do'<sup>40</sup> and that he had 'powers deeply to interest, or substantially to improve, mankind'.<sup>41</sup> Jones argues along the same lines as Shelley that all democratic literature would interest and 'substantially improve mankind', for 'Can the French be slaves, while the accents of Voltaire and Mirabeau, yet vibrate on the ear of time? Can the Germans be serfs, while the songs of Heine and Rückert, of Freiligrath and Herwegh, are ringing from the Rhine and the Vistula? Can the English be tame and servile, while an echo lives for the words of a Paine, and a Howitt is yet writing for the people? No! My friends.'<sup>42</sup> With a more particular reference to the role of his own writing, Jones exclaims: 'I tell them that I have the ear of England, and I will make it hear.'<sup>43</sup>

Shelley and Jones, moreover, substantially agree that the principal function of poetry is to imbue its readers with faith and hope in a better future. As we have seen in the second chapter, Shelley's efforts to animate his readers with hope of their emancipation was a central issue in his poetical works.<sup>44</sup> It is precisely this inspiration which Jones sees as the poet's mission:

WHO is it rivets broken hands  
And stranger-hearts together,  
And builds with fast-decaying hands  
A home to last for ever?  
  
From thunder-clouds compels the light,  
And casts the bolt away,  
Upluring from the soulless night  
The soul's returning day?

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39. Letters, I, p.259 (To Godwin, 24 February 1812).  
40. Ibid., p.265 (To E.Hitchener, 27 February 1812).  
41. Ibid., p.517 (To Leigh Hunt, 8 December 1816).  
42. NS (18 July 1846), p.8 (from a speech addressed to the French Democratic Society on 14 July 1846).  
43. Jones, 'The Working Man and his Work', part 1, Evenings with the People (London, 1856), No.1, p.7.  
44. See pp.144-6 above.  
45. 'The Poet's Mission', Poems by Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 821-89 J5, published in The Battle Day and Other Poems (London, 1855), pp. 121-2.

Jones's thought, like Shelley's, stresses the necessity for hope in the revolutionary struggle: his poems 'Onward and Upward', 'The Coming Day', 'Hope', 'A Song of Resurrection', 'Song of the Factory Town', The Battle Day and Chartist Songs, all pay tribute to this belief. His poem 'Hope' written in prison (1848-9) ends thus:

Still, life's fitful vigil keeping,  
Feed the flame and trim the light:  
Hope's the lamp I'll take for sleeping  
When I wish the world good-night.

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On Jones's 'Chartist Poems', Nottingham Review quite rightly notes: 'The poetry will come home with power to many a careworn heart, produce an influence on the mind of millions, and do its part towards keeping alive the flame of hope in the souls of the toiling.'<sup>47</sup>

'Keeping alive the flame of hope in the souls of the toiling' - this was what the Chartists found most valuable in Shelley's poetry. The Chartist Circular stresses that Shelley is one of the poets who kept the torch of freedom alight: 'Homer and Demosthenes in Greece, Cicero in Rome, the poets and martyrs of the middle ages, and, in later times, the voices of Burns, of Campbell, of Shelley, Byron, and Elliot have echoed through the universe, Liberty! and that cry has been continued, and will not cease to be heard till tyranny is no more.'<sup>48</sup> Another article headed 'P.B.Shelley' to which Shelley's 'Song to the Men of England' is appended, pays Shelley's poetry and principles a very special tribute:

Among the few who have been called 'Poets of People', assuredly the first and noblest name is that of Shelley. Born and educated an aristocrat, his noble and benevolent soul scorned such a connection - broke the many fetters which birth and education had cast around it, and shone forth in its strength and beauty the foremost advocate of liberty to the despised people.

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46. Miles, The Tennysons to Arthur Hough Clough, p.552.
47. E.Jones, Chartist Poems (London, 1846), p.[17].
48. 'Politics of Poets', The Chartist Circular, No.42 (11 July 1840), p.170.
49. Ibid., No.4 (19 October 1839), p.16 (my emphasis). (Part of this quotation has been adduced on p.188 above.) For a similar evaluation (footnote continued)

Ernest Jones also believed in a future for reform which he himself would not see. In an 'Introductory Chapter' to his Romance which he serialised in The People's Paper, Jones quotes these lines from Shelley's Revolt of Islam:

'We part to meet again - but yon blue waste,  
Yon desert, wide and deep, holds no recess;  
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced,  
We might survive all ills in one caress:  
Nor doth the grave - I fear 'tis passion less,  
Nor yon cold vacant heaven - we meet again  
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless  
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain  
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain'

(II, XLVIII, 1-9)

Moreover, he seems to reproduce this idea in his own Romance: 'When this is delivered into your hands, I shall be in the cold silent grave where praise or blame will be equally indifferent to me ... Is it that I see my feelings revived again in you my children, or is it the electric influence of thy spirit of regeneration which pervades the universe ... I feel its influence peculiarly upon me, and rejoice, like the seers and philosophers of old in the prophetic vision of the glorious future.'<sup>50</sup> As Jones's words amount to virtually the same point that Shelley's lines make, there is no reason to refrain from thinking that he was directly influenced by Shelley, and that Shelley is one of the 'Philosophers of old' to whom he is referring. Furthermore, the same image of the poet is echoed in a four-line manuscript poem by Jones which is written in a rather Shelleyan manner. Speaking of the poet Jones says:

He lived some few years, and then glided away,  
Like a sunbeam, that fleets from a cold winter day,  
For the words he had writ were the seed that showed soon  
To a harvest of fame when the bard was no [more]  
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(footnote 49 continued from previous page)

of Shelley's poetry, see The Times, 28 January 1869.

50. The People's Paper (8 May 1852), p.7.

51. Poems by Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 821-89 J5. (As I mentioned elsewhere all Jones's manuscripts are kept in the Archives Department in Manchester Central Library.)

William Mitchell in his letter to A.B.Wakefield confirms that this was Jones's most abiding view of his role: 'More than once he said to me, "I know my destiny, I shall work for the diffusion of principles which after my time will grow into power. I shall not live to reach the fruit that may grow from the seed I sow, but others will."' <sup>52</sup> The analogy between this view and Shelley's often quoted words: 'I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I shall have mouldered into dust' <sup>53</sup> is evident enough and needs no further stress. During his struggle for political reform, Jones, like Shelley, suffered from intermittent periods of despair and thus had to look to a future in which the seeds he sowed might bear fruits and the efforts he made might come to fruition.

From another point of view, Shelley's poetry was understood by Jones as the cause of an effect which was already taking place; on 17 September 1853, for example, he writes in The People's Paper: 'We purpose opening to our readers a School of Poetry, and, for a while, withdrawing all original compositions, giving those masterpieces of sentiment and expression, which may tend to elevate and form the poetical mind of the country. We commence with SHELLEY.' <sup>54</sup> In the next number (24 September 1853) the poetry extract was again taken from 'the immortal Shelley'. In this context, Jones seems on the one hand, to have paralleled Shelley's political stance by considering himself a poet whose efforts will yield fruit to future generations, and, on the other, to have fulfilled Shelley's vision by making use of his poetry to instruct others and elevate their minds.

It should go without saying by now that both Shelley and Jones believed that true art should have a moral and a mission; it should serve an end, moral, social, or political: 'all true art,' Jones stresses, 'either literary or pictorial, suggests a moral - that is, it shows the bearing of the life and actions of the individual upon the great common human life of all. A story without a moral is a thing without truth or vitality, the function of true art being to show the higher essential

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52. Letters to A.B.Wakefield Relating to Ernest Jones, MS. Q 923 Z J04.

53. Shelley, Letters, I, p.277.

54. The People's Paper (17 September 1853), p.6 (my emphasis).

lying within common acts and things.'<sup>55</sup> Indeed, neither Shelley nor Jones is a sentimentalist versifier, rather, both of them display, as The Morning Advertiser observes in reviewing Jones's The Battle-Day and Other Poems (though only after stressing what incalculable mischief his politics have bequeathed and after trying very hard to forget 'the anarchist in the poet') 'originality of thought, earnestness, and depth of feeling; whilst, of all his poems, there is scarcely one which is not written with a purpose.'<sup>56</sup> In reviewing Jones's The Emperor's Vigil, however, The Athenaeum could not forget the character of the politician in that of the poet; it could only praise the poet by rebuking the politician: 'Let Mr. Jones remove his poetry further from the malaria of politics, and let him employ his poetical mind in a more sunny and purer region of fancy and imagination'.<sup>57</sup> This could hardly fail to remind us of the hostile reviews of Shelley's poetry which (as we have pointed out in the first part of this thesis) based their attacks on the political doctrines of the poetry rather than on its poetic and aesthetic values. The difference is that, unlike Shelley's, the politics of Jones's poetry were sometimes hailed and acknowledged; in a review of The Revolt of Hindostan, The Morning Post asserts that 'It is the poet's duty to deepen human sympathies and to enlarge their sphere - to cast a light upon the common heart of the whole race - to calm the anxieties and to sustain the highest and furthest purposes of our being. Of this great duty our author is not unmindful, and his pages bear evidence to his zealous desire to discharge it with efficiency.'<sup>58</sup> What all these reviews of Jones's poetry confirm, whether hostile or not, is that his politics, like Shelley's, were organically fused with his poetry.

## 2. The Theme of Freedom

'Freedom' was a principal theme of the Chartists' poetry and 'the people' were its only target. There is more poetry on 'freedom' in The Northern

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55. Percy Vere, The Confessions of a Literary Free-Lance, p.119.

56. The Morning Advertiser (17 August 1855), p.6.

57. The Athenaeum, No.1491 (24 May 1856), p.647.

58. The Morning Post (15 October 1857), p.3.

Star than there is on any other single item. What is more, the Chartists' concept of freedom seems to be in many ways akin to Shelley's. For example, an 'Ode to Liberty' by Crito, published in The Northern Star (6 May 1843) draws on the very idea of Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty'. Addressing liberty Shelley complains of the hollowness caused by its absence:

But this divinest universe  
Was yet a chaos and a curse  
For thou wert not

(Ode to Liberty, II, 6-8)

Similarly Crito writes:

Devoid of liberty what's life?  
A shadow and a name;  
An undivided scene of strife,  
Of misery, and shame

Shelley's description of the world as 'divinest' makes the prevalent 'chaos' and 'curse' all the more regrettable and his address to liberty as 'thou' establishes a sense of intimacy between 'thou' and a tacitly acknowledged 'I'. While, on the other hand, Crito's description of life as 'shadow' and 'name' attenuates the feeling of realism in these lines and, in consequence, the effect they might have engendered. Another element which might make these lines less impressive than Shelley's is that there is nothing to suggest the author's personal involvement with the issue raised. No claim is being made here, however, that Crito took the idea for his 'Ode' from Shelley's. Nevertheless, the frequent appearances of extracts from Shelley's works in The Northern Star provide a context in which Crito's sentiment can be seen to take its natural place.

Moreover, every number of The Chartist Circular has at its beginning the quotation: 'For a Nation to love liberty, it is sufficient that she knows it; and to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it.'<sup>59</sup> - the quotation with which Shelley concluded his postscript to the Address to

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59. The Chartist Circular, No.1 (28 September 1839).

the Irish People, his most fervent political tract. There he says: 'I conclude, with the words of Lafayette - a name endeared, by its peerless bearer, to every lover of the human race, "For a nation to love Liberty it is sufficient that she knows it, to be free it is sufficient that she will it."<sup>60</sup> Although the Chartists might well have derived this saying directly rather than from Shelley's Address, it remains true to say that this example demonstrates how close they were to him in their political reasoning.

On the theme of liberty, however, Ernest Jones is more akin to Shelley than any of his Chartist peers; their views on personal freedom, on the French Revolution, on the best ways and means to achieve liberty, on religion and its relation to man's freedom, and on what liberty after all really is, are - in all key respects - the same. It is to a detailed study of these themes in Jones's and Shelley's writings that we shall now turn.

(a) Personal Freedom

Jones, like Shelley, came from a fairly wealthy family, and, as we saw he had family contacts with royalty. Again like Shelley, his conversion to a defence of the rights of the working people was first signalled by his renunciation of all the social, political and financial prestige to which he was entitled. Despite all the pressures exerted on them, which amounted to economic constraint of a substantial kind both poets took a similar stance in attacking hereditary rights - including their own - as a kind of tyranny which had to be done away with. In one of his Chartist Poems 'The Better Hope', Jones recalls the apathy and supineness of life in his father's house which he rejected:

My father's house, in the lordly square,  
Was cold in its solemn state,  
And the sculptures rare - that the old walls bear,  
Looked down with a quiet hate ...  
And I thought: there beyond in the broad, laughing world,  
Men are happy in life's holiday!  
And I passed one and all - through each old-fashioned hall,  
And wandered away and away! ...

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60. Works, V, p.247.

Then I bound on my armour to face the rough world,  
And I'm going to march with the rest,  
Against tyrants to fight - for the sake of the right,  
And, if baffled, to fall with the best.

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In a more specific attack on the mischiefs of inheritance Jones again chooses a house to symbolize the whole system and the injustices engendered by its existence:

THERE's a mansion old 'mid the hills of the west,  
So old, that men know not by whom it was built;  
But its pinnacles grey thro' the forest hoar  
Have glimmered a thousand years and more;  
And many a tale of sorrow and guilt  
Would blanch the cheek,  
If its stones could speak  
The secrets locked in its silent breast.

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No less so in practice than in theory, Jones denounced his own rights for the sake of the cause he espoused. Soon after his release from prison, Jones was asked by his uncle, John Hutton Annesley (whose heir-at-law he was) to abandon the Charter or lose his right to the entire fortune of £2,000 a year; Jones refused and the money went to his uncle's gardener. Further, in his letter to Lord Truro (then Chief Justice Wild) from prison, Jones refers to other sacrifices he has made: 'I have sacrificed domestic comfort and pecuniary resources to the cause I have embraced.'<sup>63</sup> So did Shelley and for the same reason: 'The principles which pronounce on the injustice of my hereditary rights,' Shelley writes to Godwin on 24 November 1816, 'are such, as rightly limited & understood, are [f]ar dearer to me than life.'<sup>64</sup> Thus both men cleared their personal ground for the battle against the establishment.

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61. E.Jones, Chartist Poems, pp.1-2.

62. E.Jones, The Battle Day and Other Poems, p.[3].

63. E.Jones, Notes to the People, I (1851), p.204.

This argument is rejected by R.G.Gammage who contends that Jones 'reputed himself to be rich when he entered the movement; and although Thomas Clarke once declared that at that period he was "literally without a shirt", and although his own unintentional admissions go very far to confirm that declaration, a number of people are simple enough to believe that he had spent a fortune (footnote continued)

(b) Freedom of Thought and Expression

Jones's letter to his judge, Lord Truro, written between conviction and sentence calls to mind two letters of an equally radical nature, inspired by similar occasions and designed to serve similar ends. The two letters are by Shelley: to Lord Ellenborough (1812) and to the editor of The Examiner (November 1819). Shelley's letter to Lord Ellenborough was actuated by the prosecution of Isaac Eaton for publishing the third part of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason; Dowden tells the story:

In March, 1812, Daniel Isaac Eaton, a bookseller of Ave Maria Lane, was prosecuted in the court of King's Bench for publishing, at his 'Ratiocinatory, or Magazine for Truth and Good Sense', a blasphemous and profane libel on the Holy Scriptures, entitled 'The Age of Reason: Part the Third. By Thomas Paine'. The jury, guided by a vigorous charge from Lord Ellenborough, did not long delay in finding Eaton guilty, and he was sentenced on May 8 to eighteen months' imprisonment in Newgate.

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(footnote 63 continued from previous page)

in their cause' (History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854, p.282). But there is no reason why we should trust Gammage's account since inaccuracies had been pointed out by the subjects of his work; Jones is one of them: 'His "History" appears to have been written in obedience to a revengeful feeling ... If this production will be of any use whatever, it will only be so to the enemies of Chartism. By them it may be profitably used as a text book. They are using it already ... There are many inaccuracies in the work, the existence of which must necessarily justify doubts being entertained of its accuracy in general.' (The People's Paper, 23 June 1855, p.2). Thomas Cooper, of whom Gammage seems to have a favourable opinion avoids using Gammage's work in his Autobiography for the same reason: 'I would have mentioned Dr. Gammage's earlier and often, if there had not been so many little mistakes in it.' (The Life of Thomas Cooper: Written by himself, London, 1872, p.277). More recently, G.D.H.Cole argues against Gammage's judgement of Jones: 'As for Jones's cunning' (which Gammage alleged; see Gammage, loc.cit.) 'my reading of his speeches does not bear out Gammage's remarks. Ernest Jones was not cunning; he was not consciously flattering the people; he believed in them with all the faith of the converted aristocrat. His eloquence was not studied, but natural; but, whatever its source, it made him immediately a power in the movement.' (Chartist Portraits, p.341).

64. Letters, I, p.515. (For the will of Shelley's grandfather see Shelley's letter to Godwin, 26 February 1816, Letters, I, p.455).

65. Edward Dowden, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, p.289.

In the same way, Shelley's letter to the editor of The Examiner from Florence dated 3 November 1819 was written in indignation at the trial of Richard Carlyle (1790-1843) who was also tried for blasphemous libel for printing and publishing Paine's Age of Reason and Palmer's Principles of Nature and was effectively sentenced to a fine of £1,500 and to three years' imprisonment in Dorchester Jail. On his own conviction for sedition which resulted in the sentence of two years' imprisonment, Jones writes a similar letter to his judge in which he contends, as Shelley did, that the conviction is incompatible with the moral and political laws which are enshrined in the making of the constitution and should defend man's absolute freedom of thought, expression and action. Shelley opens his Letter to Lord Ellenborough by shrewdly assailing the judge's verdict and questioning its validity and by reminding him that his grave responsibility requires both comprehensiveness and depth:

My Lord,

As the station to which you have been called by your country is important, so much the more awful is your responsibility, so much the more does it become you to watch lest you inadvertently punish the virtuous and reward the vicious.

66

So does Jones:

My Lord,

In passing sentence on a prisoner, it is the province of the judge to consider the circumstances under which a verdict is obtained, the motives of the supposed offender, and the consequences of his actions.

67

Although the two letters concentrate on slightly different issues - Shelley discusses man's right to freedom of belief whereas Jones stresses the right of public meeting - they equally reveal the poets' estimations of the verdicts as being essentially political. In Shelley's time this has to be very carefully worded; of the charge against Eaton, Shelley

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66. Works, V, p.283.

67. Jones, Notes to the People, I, p.203.

argues as follows: 'It is asserted that Mr. Eaton's opinions are calculated to subvert Morality - How? What moral truth is spoken of with irreverence or ridicule in the book which he published.'<sup>68</sup> In a similar vein Jones contests that: 'To have made what I said sedition, it must have been calculated to subvert the throne and endanger the public peace. Where is the evidence of this? I spoke of a great national demonstration on the 12th of June. What is there illegal in this?'<sup>69</sup> Shelley, of course, had no illusion about the fact that Eaton's opinions, like those of Jones, were taken to be a threat to the throne rather than to morality and that morality and religion are used to justify a political verdict; his own words in his letter to the editor of The Examiner bear testimony to this judgement: 'the prosecutors care little for religion or care for it only as it is the mask & the garment by which they are invested with the symbols of worldly power. In prosecuting Carlisle they have used the superstition of the jury as their instrument for crushing a political enemy, or rather they strike in his person at all their political enemies.'<sup>70</sup> Although what Shelley and Jones say in their address to the judges amounts to virtually the same thing (that the prosecutors are politically motivated), it is interesting to note the change in the mediums used to express the same idea; while Shelley talks about morality knowing that it is used as a mask for politics, Jones dispenses with the mask and directly names what he believes the prosecutors have in mind: 'the throne', and, by implication, the political system.

Moreover, both Jones and Shelley (in his letter to the editor of The Examiner) maintain that the respective verdicts are flagrant violations of man's social rights and of the most basic principles of the constitution. Here are Shelley's words first: 'The great purpose of social life, for the sake of which we submit to so many sacrifices, is that each man be defended in doing that which he thinks fit for his own interest, provided

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68. Works, V, p.287 (my emphasis).

69. Notes to the People, I, p.207 (my emphasis).

70. Letters, II, p.143.

that he injure no one.'<sup>71</sup> Defending the right of speech and public assembly Jones picks up precisely the point mooted by Shelley: 'The verdicts on the recent cases (my own included), would seem to interfere altogether with the right of public meeting and of free discussion, and make them wholly dependent on the caprice of government ... The speech for which I am indicted is a vindication of our constitutional rights; the indictment framed by government is an attack upon our constitution.'<sup>72</sup>

Equally interesting are Jones's and Shelley's unequivocal judgements that the convicted are morally superior to their prosecutors. With an unmistakable sense of self-esteem, Jones addresses his judge:

What am I? a humble apostle of truth. I am your prisoner; but the truth is here - without - free - omnipotent - you have not caged it in the walls of your prison: you cannot send your police to arrest it; it blunts their cutlasses; it breaks their batons; the work is done - the seed is scattered - the crop is grown - and hear! even now the labourers are sharpening their scythes for the harvest.

73

Less directly but no less firmly, Shelley stresses Eaton's superiority as the adherent of the invincible truth:

Unrestrained philosophy has in every age opposed itself to the reveries of credulity and fanaticism. - The truths of astronomy demonstrated by Newton have superseded astrology; since the modern discoveries in Chemistry the philosopher's stone has no longer been deemed attainable ... That which is false will ultimately be controverted by its own falsehood. That which is true needs but publicity to be acknowledged.

74

Here again, Shelley defines his point by metonymy; by pointing out that just as science defeated superstition, truth will inevitably defeat falsehood. The implication of this analogy is that the herald of truth (Eaton)

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71. Letters, II, p.147.

72. Notes to the People, I, pp.205-6.

73. Ibid., p.208.

74. Works, V, p.284.

is far superior to the representatives of falsehood (his prosecutors). Jones, on the other hand, gets straight to the point by stressing that though he is jailed, the truth he represents is out, well and free and that its triumph is not far off. Such differences in handling practically the same idea are not just stylistic, rather they are expressive of more substantial issues. The warfare between the political system and its opponents became more open and more mature in Jones's time, and the need, therefore, more urgent for such a case to be simply, directly and forcibly made.

In effect, Shelley and Jones equally cling in their letters to a common belief in man's right to freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. Their views that all social and political laws are originally found to protect rather than to violate this freedom are consistent. Hence, their belief that any authority, whether religious or political, that profanes such rights should be, indeed must be, resisted; its resistance, to put it in Jones's words, becomes 'not only a right but a duty'.<sup>75</sup>

(c) Means of Achieving Freedom

Our first impression of Jones's and Shelley's methods for achieving man's freedom is derived from their reactions to the events of the French Revolution. Jones's views of the French Revolution, in fact, seem to echo those of Shelley. On the one hand, he shares with Shelley the belief that the revolution was the first expression of the people's search for their freedom. Jones opens the Romance, in which he discusses the French Revolution, with a passage from Shelley's Revolt of Islam in which Shelley describes the fall of the Golden City into the hands of the liberating forces led by Cythna and records the elation that the multitudes - although only for a moment - enjoyed; the passage reproduces an initial reaction to the French Revolution:

"Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,  
Toward the city, then the multitude,  
And I among them, went in joy - a nation  
Made free by love; ...

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75. Notes to the People, I, p.209.

As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung  
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast  
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among,  
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,  
When from before its face some general wreck had passed."

(V, XIV-XV, 1-4, 5-9)

While discussing the same idea in his Romance, Jones seems to echo the point made by Shelley in these lines: 'I revelled only in the present - wherever I cast my eye all was enthusiasm, and the smile and the kiss greeted the young Englishman who had abjured the tyranny of his own government, and came to welcome the "Day-spring of liberty" in France. And as we left the Assembly the shouts of a whole population rent the air, and the hymn of the Marseillaise rolled forth in solemn majesty.'<sup>76</sup>

On the other hand, his disappointment with the French Revolution when it failed to meet the people's expectations and initiate freedom, is also comparable to that of Shelley. Here, again, Jones cites lines from Shelley's Revolt of Islam as an epigraph to his Romance:

"When first the living blood thro' all these veins  
Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,  
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains  
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.  
I saw, and started from my cottage hearth;  
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness,  
Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth -  
And laughed in light and music; soon, sweet madness  
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness  
Deep slumber fell on me: - my dreams were fire:  
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover  
Like shadows o'er my brain; and strange desire,  
The tempest of a passion, raging over  
My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,  
Which past; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far,  
Came - then I loved; but not a human lover!

(I, XXXIX-XL, 1-9,1-7)

On reading Jones's Romance one immediately feels the vibration of Shelley's lines: '... I saw, alas! too clearly, the mercenary schemes and selfish speculations that influenced some who professed in loudest tones a love

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76. Jones, The People's Paper (24 July 1852), p.3.

for freedom and a desire for equality; then I debated within myself whether, under such guidance, liberty might not degenerate in licentiousness, and the destruction of old landmarks be succeeded by a weightier though newer oppression.'<sup>77</sup> As though Shelley's 'deep slumber' had fallen on Jones and made him shrink; 'I shrunk into the darkness of my own heart, and had no voice within to console me, no hidden spell to disarm the phantom of doubt.'<sup>78</sup> Further, Jones seems to have understood Shelley's words 'I loved; but not a human lover', to mean that he would still support human movements but not this particular one - which is, of course, the French Revolution -; hence, Jones's words: 'Disappointed in love, I lived only in politics.'<sup>79</sup> Thus, Shelley's views on the French Revolution were made available to Chartist readers through Jones's Romance. Does this make Jones's Romance less original or less interesting? No; because Shelley's lines are cited as epigraphs and the reader is, therefore, introduced to Shelley at first hand and is in a position to distinguish between Shelley's and Jones's views. Moreover, the views Shelley's lines express are not uncongenial with Jones's judgement of the French Revolution as expressed in his Autograph Manuscript Poems on the French Revolution, nor are they the only arguments the Romance puts forward to the reader. Indeed, on reading the Romance one feels that these ideas of Shelley are pertinently used to serve an argument which is distinctly Jones's.

In principle, neither Shelley nor Jones had, of course, any objection to the French Revolution or to the objectives it set out to achieve, but it was to the methods of achieving these objectives that their criticism was directed. Shelley, as we saw in our study of The Revolt of Islam, deprecated the violent course of the French Revolution and stressed that violence and revenge will only replace one tyranny with another. Jones

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77. Jones, The People's Paper (3 July 1852), p.8.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

likewise: in his Autograph Manuscript Poems on the French Revolution<sup>80</sup>  
in which he deploras the violence in France, argues that the brutal  
actions of the revolution intensified rather than reduced the people's  
grievances:

A scene of blood and courage, now appear,  
Defeated armies leave their own frontiere  
The gloom and ruin wider seems to spread  
As Revolution, raised its [ ? ] head ...  
The suffering people bend beneath the weight  
Of woes inflicted by the avenging state.

Again, like Shelley, Jones insists that the course of reform should be  
firm but non-violent, for by overthrowing one tyrant, bloodshed begets  
many:

O! find some lawful means to crush the ill  
If such your country - or its councils fill,  
Some firm decided yet a lawful course  
Ere you resort to wild ungoverned force  
For then starts up a mad ambitious clan,  
An hundred tyrants take the place of one  
And multiply the ills you meant to cure  
Which venal force compels you to endure.  
81

But neither Shelley nor Jones reacted to the excesses and horrors of the  
French Revolution in the manner of Burke and Wordsworth. They considered  
different tactics but not a different strategy. Monarchy has to be done  
away with and the people's woes healed even if through a different route  
from that followed by the French.

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80. Ms. F. 821. 89 J6. The forty-five pages (13" deep and 8.2" wide)  
of poetry are held together by a white thread which seems to have  
been sewn by hand. Another twenty-five smaller size pages of poetry  
are laid unbound with the rest and the poetry on all of them is  
crossed by the poet's pen, but the single crossing does not make  
reading the poetry any more difficult. The Poems on the French  
Revolution include: 'Elizabeth', 'Hanover Victory', 'Still',  
'Still 1794', 'Death of Robespirus and Party' and 'Marscilleis  
Hymn'.
81. Autograph Manuscript Poems on the French Revolution, *ibid.*

In his Emperor's Vigil, Jones probes at length the evils of monarchy and concludes on a typically optimistic Shelleyan note:

Fear o'ercame the mighty monarch,  
For he felt that fatal breath,  
E'en through India's torrid noontide  
Chills the bounding blood with death ...

Then the Czar went forth at morning,  
Mustered calm his legioned pride,  
Heard Death whisper through his clarions  
Bowed his lofty head, and died.

82

There is no lack of attacks on kings and monarchs in Shelley's poetry; his attack on kings in Queen Mab is memorable, but let us look at a passage in The Revolt of Islam which Jones himself was interested in and which is no less contemptuous of the king's apathy:

A mighty crowd such as the wide land pours  
Once in a thousand years, now gathered round  
The fallen tyrant, like the rush of showers  
Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,  
Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound  
From the wide multitude: that lonely man  
Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,  
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,  
Refuge from the keen looks that through his bosom ran.

(V, XXIX, 1-9)

Accordingly, in his Romance, to which the above passage is an epigraph, Jones stresses the necessity of abolishing monarchy and supports his argument by Bishop Gregorie's judgement that "'The word king is still a kind of talisman, whose magic power may create many disorders: the abolition of royalty is, therefore, necessary. Kings are in the moral world that which monsters are in the natural.'"<sup>83</sup>

Yet, as we have remarked, neither Shelley nor Jones called for violent action against kings and tyrants, nor did they recommend that the public should be thrown from a state of complete despotism into a state of

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82. Jones, The Emperor's Vigil, and the Waves and the War (London, 1856), pp.39-40.

83. The People's Paper (31 July 1852), p.6.

absolute freedom. On the contrary, both of them seem broadly to agree that peaceful and gradual reform is the only way to freedom. For, in their estimation, the failure of the French Revolution was chiefly the effect of the sudden and violent course it took.

The most significant lesson Shelley deduced from the French Revolution was that 'A Republic, however just in its principle and glorious in its object, would through violence and sudden change which must attend it, incur a great risk of being as rapid in its decline as in its growth',<sup>84</sup> - a lesson that Shelley was intent on conveying and stressing in his Revolt of Islam. Jones raises no lesser objections to sudden and violent changes:

Ill fares the man who, flushed with sudden power,  
Would uproot centuries in a single hour  
Gaze on those crowds - is theirs the force that saves?  
What were they yesterday? A horde of slaves!  
What are they now but slaves without their chains;  
The badge is cancelled, but the man remains.  
85

Again, in a political speech Jones insists that: 'All violent convulsive changes of this kind too frequently miss their object, and often do more evil than the evil they seek to remedy has created or would create.'<sup>86</sup> What is interesting from a political point of view is that both Shelley and Jones had the insight to distinguish between the abolition of tyranny and the emancipation of man; a free society, Shelley argues, is not an immediate consequence of the removal of tyrants, but the product of 'resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue.'<sup>87</sup> Without dwelling at length on how the new society is to be established Jones accentuates Shelley's point that installing the new order involves many complex issues other than that of ending the old one:

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84. Works, VII, p.41.

85. Scrapbook of Newspaper Cuttings etc. on Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 923 2J8.

86. Jones, 'The Politics of the Day': A lecture, delivered in Edinburgh, September 1868, under the auspices of the Edinburgh Reform League.

87. Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

The people may not rise, though kings may fall  
And learns in history's school, not learns too late,  
'Tis easier to destroy than to create.

88

Moreover, both Shelley and Jones believed that the use of arms might well undermine the revolutionary process and subvert what the advocates of reform set out to do. Shelley's Revolt of Islam is a large-scale realization of this view:

'If blood be shed. 'tis but a change and choice  
Of bonds, - from slavery to cowardice  
A wretched fall.

(IV, XXVIII, 1-3)

In a similar vein Jones insists in one of his most mature compositions, The Revolt of Hindostan that if blood is shed:

The name is altered - lives the substance still, -  
And what escaped the mansion meets the mill  
Wondering, they wake to find, once more betrayed,  
'Tis but a change of tyrants they have made.

89

Jones's lines manifest an unmistakable affinity with those of Shelley not only in vocabulary, but also in tone. It is evident that the message in both is virtually the same and that the slow and steady tone of the poetry accentuates the emphatic warning against violence. Further, a closer look at Shelley's first line and Jones's last shows that the clause 'tis but a change' which occurs in both lines is a key phrase in both cases and serves exactly the same purpose. No suggestion of plagiarism need arise, particularly as Jones wrote this poem when he was in prison and was allowed no books at all, but as he read The Revolt of Islam as early as 1852, quoted it in his Romance and reproduced the gist of the lines quoted in his own argument,<sup>90</sup> the probability that Shelley's lines were in his mind becomes a strong one indeed. Jones's syntax is simpler

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88. Scrapbook of Newspaper Cuttings etc., Ms. F. 923. 2J8. Jones expresses the same opinion elsewhere, see F. Leary, The Life of Ernest Jones, p.74.

89. The Revolt of Hindostan; or, The New World (London, 1857), p.21.

90. See pp.232-6 above.

and easier to follow than Shelley's. For one thing, the familiar proverbial line 'what escaped the mansion meets the mill' provides a simple analogy to the idea conveyed. What follows is just as clear and straightforward: revolutionaries were betrayed - new tyranny replaced the old one. In Shelley's lines, however, the image of 'changed tyrants' is more complex because of the word 'choice'. Did revolutionaries choose to change bonds? - or did they choose a violent course which resulted in a change of bonds and, in consequence, in a wretched fall? Addressed to an audience which was in the process of making a political change (or was thought to be), Jones's lines were meant to be easy to grasp. His poetry (and that of other Chartist poets for that matter) was designed to be as available to the understanding of the general reader as possible.

Jones's view, here, represents that of Chartism as a whole. The Northern Star, for example, stresses that: 'Tyrants may be exterminated, but unless the masses themselves can be regenerated mentally and morally, they will be no better for the mere annihilation of their oppressors, as other oppressors will, by cajolery first, and force afterwards, assuredly take the places of those destroyed.'<sup>91</sup> Thus, Shelley's views regarding the ills of violence and the necessity of initiating a peaceful political change were in accord with those of Jones and the politics of Chartism, though Jones and other Chartist writers expressed their views in a language more appropriate to the circumstances they were living in and the audience they were addressing.

Historians, however, had misconstrued Jones's stance - as R.G.Gammage did - and saw him as an advocate of the use of violence. There are two simple reasons for this. First, his being a follower of Feargus O'Connor, apparently, the leader of the physical force wing within the Chartist Movement, and second, his speech which led to his arrest.<sup>92</sup> To say that Ernest Jones was a physical force Chartist solely because he was under O'Connor's leadership regardless of his own words and deeds is simplistic,

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91. 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers', NS (9 August 1845), p.3.

92. For details about the Address see p.214 above.

especially when in the final analysis O'Connor himself cannot be considered a physical force Chartist (and as we remarked earlier<sup>93</sup> 'physical force' cannot itself be understood at face value). Indeed, in an address 'To the Working Classes', Feargus O'Connor insists that 'Physical Revolution is humbug and nonsense; moral revolution is sound common sense.'<sup>94</sup> In a similar vein, Ernest Jones calls the theories of physical force and moral force 'dogmas' and explains that the existing strife within the movement is about personalities rather than about political issues.<sup>95</sup> To be sure though, the division between the so-called physical force and moral force Chartists was real enough and fatal enough to the movement. It split the movement into two irreconcilable wings which certainly weakened it and ultimately helped to bring about its demise. George Julian Harney denounced Feargus O'Connor's views on the use of violence and started his own school of moral reform. But the division, one suspects, was the result of a growing dissatisfaction with the leadership of O'Connor rather than of a substantial difference between the Chartists in the two parties; for (again as we argued in chapter 3) the general tendency of the movement was that of passive resistance and non-violence; the violence was one of rhetoric and speech rather than of policy. The fact that none of the Chartists in either party had made any use of arms substantiates this judgement.

As for Jones's speech at Bishop Bourner's Fields, Bethnal Green, which led to his imprisonment, it does not bear testimony to any violent inclinations. What Jones did in this speech was to assure his audience that although the government is mad, it is not mad enough to put down a peaceful public assembly. If they did, he added 'I for one thrust defiance in their teeth.' It is usually what follows that is taken as his call for the use of physical force:

I am a physical force Chartist; ... stand fast by  
your colours, do not shrink from the Charter - and

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93. See pp.167-9 above.

94. NS (26 October 1850), p.[1].

95. See 'An Address to the People', NS (10 August 1850), p.[1].

the whole Charter, if any bodies of police come here, marching on to this meeting, stand your ground shoulder to shoulder; ... there is danger for those who run, there is safety for those who keep together ... I shall not preach a miserable doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience: at the same time I shall preach the doctrine of manly firmness and no heated impetuosity.

96

The doctrine of non-obedience and manly firmness does not necessitate the use of violence. Here, as was the case in Shelley's 'Masque of Anarchy',<sup>97</sup> the tone of Jones's speech betrays its substance; indeed, Jones's message in his speech 'stand fast by your colours ... stand your ground shoulder to shoulder' is resonant of Shelley's image of calm resolution: 'Stand ye calm and resolute etc.' ('MA', 319-22). Dowden's well-founded interpretation of the 'Masque of Anarchy' is strikingly applicable to Jones's speech quoted above: 'To attain this happier life in the future, Shelley exhorts his countrymen to ways of peace. If violence be displayed against them, let their bearing be resolute and calm - the bearing, if need be, of the martyrs of public order.'<sup>98</sup> Such a message could hardly be intended to foment public fury or invite bloody action. Moreover, in another instance where the Attorney-General held Jones's words: 'the men of Bradford behaved gloriously and gallantly' to be tangible evidence of Jones's instigation of violence, Jones's answer revealed reverence for forbearance and self-control: 'What I said then I say again. They acted "gloriously" because in the midst of excitement and riot, they never broke a single pane of glass, committed no one act of plunder, or were guilty of a single outrage upon property.'<sup>99</sup> He goes on to confirm that: 'I am the advocate of peaceful reform. I would advise a people to bear much before they seek the dangerous alternative of force.'<sup>100</sup> The cluster of Jones's arguments, in fact, leave no room for doubt that his statement

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96. George Howell, Ernest Jones, the Chartist Poet and Orator, Patriot and Politician. From the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 1898.

97. See pp.135-6 above.

98. Dowden, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, p.287.

99. Notes to the People, I, p.205.

100. Ibid., p.209.

here voices the fundamental credo of his political philosophy: The Emperor's Vigil, The Battle Day and Other Poems, 'Christmas Carol', and the Autograph Manuscript Poems on the French Revolution are only a few of the ample examples that one could bring to sustain this judgement. Counter-examples of threats of the use of force such as '... tell them ... that here in England there will be no violence ... Tell them, we hate bloodshed, even where it is to strike a tyrant; but tell them, in those lands, where tyranny will not yield to Reason, that it shall yield to Force!'<sup>101</sup> belong rather to the violent rhetoric which was a characteristic of the Chartist Movement.

Although Jones was heading an actual political movement, his views on a number of issues were still in line with Shelley's arguments. For example, Shelley often contended that 'the most fatal error that ever happened in the world was the separation of political and ethical science, that the former ought to be entirely regulated by the latter.'<sup>102</sup> With a stronger political overtone, Jones similarly stresses that: 'Chartism must represent the best intelligence, and the best morals of the people; it must lead in moral as well as in politics. Chartism is in the dust, and she cannot rise without the energetic action, and the vigorous union of the best moral forces of the country.'<sup>103</sup> Further, while disapproving of violence, Jones, strikingly like Shelley, stresses the role of man's mind and will in creating a better future. His poem 'The March of Freedom' which is comparable to Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty', particularly in its historical perspective, describes a battle where arms succumb to the mind of man:

And: 'I will make ye battle,  
Ye conquerors of mankind:  
The tyranny of force  
With the tyranny of mind!' ...

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101. Speech on the 'Annual Banquet of the German Democratic Society for the Education of the Working Classes', NS (13 February 1847), p.6.

102. Letters, I, p.223.

103. Notes to the People, II (1852), p.890.

And who think ye won the battle?  
Thus the rapid changes sped -  
'Twas the man of mind who conquered,  
And the man of swords who fled!

Then Freedom rose immortal,  
As Freedom ever must,  
Though Caesar's tombs are ruins,  
And Mammon's temples dust.

104

Furthermore, in a four line manuscript poem, Jones attaches great importance to man's will in his effort to realize a better future:

'Those who wish to find (a heaven) an Eden  
Must themselves perform their part:  
In the brain a world is given  
A sun to light in the heart.

105

Time and again, in his political speeches, poems, and lectures Jones stipulates that 'It is only those who deserve to be free, that shall ever win their liberty. Freedom comes not of herself, - you must go and seek her, ... Expect nothing but from your own actions! - God aids those, who aid themselves!'<sup>106</sup> In a typically Shelleyan way Jones argues that the people are no less to blame than their oppressors for their grievances and that, ultimately, their emancipation depends on their own wills:

Blame the oppressors! - but yourselves no less,  
Whose servile fear invited to oppress!  
To his dark thought no prompting finger lend;  
No yokes are made, where none are found to bend.  
Success depends but on your own strong will.

107

Here, both the judgement that the people are equally responsible for the state they are in and that their reform depends on their will are very

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104. The Labourer, III (1848), pp.104-5.

105. Poems by Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 821. 89 J5.

106. Speech at a public meeting in St Pancras, London, 13 October 1846, NS (17 October 1846), p.5.

107. 'O'Connorville', Chartist Poems, p.14.

reminiscent of the moral of Prometheus Unbound. Thus, the role of the will, which perhaps sounded more philosophical in Shelley's time, becomes an issue of consequence for a political leader who is directing an active political movement.

What this amounts to - although this is nowhere actually stated by Jones - is that Jones is no believer in what was known in the Romantic era as Necessity. Such a doctrine would have undermined the whole point of his political and literary achievements. For if we can change nothing or achieve nothing, Jones rightly asks, why all these efforts to effect reform: 'It is folly to say "we can't help it", "we are the creatures of circumstances" - "we are what society makes us". We can help it - we can create circumstances - we can make society - or whence the efforts at redress and reform - moral, social, political, religious?'<sup>108</sup> The fact that Jones was actually leading a political battle and that his views on the role of man's will in reform were still identical to Shelley's is significant on two main counts: first, it signifies that this strand of Shelley's political theory (his emphasis on strong will), developed in Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam and finally dramatized at length in Prometheus Unbound, seemed actually practicable and no less valid for the politician than it was for the poet; second, it justifies the stress we laid in the first chapter on the distinction between Shelley's and Godwin's views regarding the freedom of man's will and the significance we have ascribed throughout this thesis to Shelley's belief in man's free will as being central to his political theory and to the validity of his politics.

Jones's 'The Silent Cell' which he composed 'during illness, on the sixth day of my incarceration, in a solitary cell, on bread and water, and without books, - August, 1849'<sup>109</sup> is, yet again, reminiscent not just of Prometheus' suffering, but - and this is more to the point here - of his response to this ferocious treatment. After describing his dire situation in prison, Jones recalls that he found his only relief in Hope and Memory:

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108. Jones, Woman's Wrongs; a series of tales (London, 1855), p.65 (italics in the original).

109. Jones, Poems by Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 821. 89 J5.

Denied the fruit of other thought,  
To write my own denied,  
Sweet sisters, Hope and Memory brought  
Bright volumes to my side.

110

As the sisters Hope and Memory are Jones's only companions in these trying times, so was Asia (and her shadowy sisters, Panthea and Ione who, according to Cameron,<sup>111</sup> represent Hope and Memory) in Prometheus Unbound a sister of Prometheus' mind who made his agony 'sweet' to remember. There is, indeed, a parallel between Jones's monologue above and Prometheus' address to Asia:

Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain  
Sweet to remember, through your love and care

(III, iii, 8-10)

In Jones's lines, the repetition of 'denied' raises the question 'by whom?', the question that Jones is tacitly but definitely stressing. Moreover, the popular rhyme and tone of these lines and the lyric form of the poem are pertinent poetic devices to transmit Jones's idea of the importance of 'hope' to his fellow Chartists - Shelley's dramatization of the same idea at greater length is of course in the very different form of Prometheus Unbound. There is no question of comparing 'The Silent Cell' with Prometheus Unbound; despite the affinity between some of their ideas the two poems, obviously, remain very different literary productions. Besides the fact that Jones was a humbler poet than Shelley, he was writing with a particular kind of audience in mind and intended his poetry to serve a particular political purpose.

The theme of Memory and Hope, however, has a long history in Romantic poetry and infuses the Romantics' philosophical as well as political thought. Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), for instance, meditated at length on the attributes of Memory in his poem The Pleasures of Memory (London, 1792).

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110. Jones, Poems by Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 821. 89 J5.

111. See Shelley: Modern Judgements, p.114.

Memory, he argues, preserves the past, sweetens the present and engenders hope in the future:

Lo! MEMORY bursts the twilight of the mind  
Her dear delusions sooth his sinking soul,  
When the rude scourge presumes its base control;  
And O'er Futurity's blank page diffuse  
The full reflection of their vivid hues.

(Part II, 57-61)

Similarly, Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) addresses Hope thus:

Hope! when I mourn, with sympathising mind,  
The wrongs of fate, the woes of human kind,  
The blissful omens bid my spirit see  
The boundless fields of rapture yet to be;  
I watch the wheels of Nature's mazy plan,  
And learn the future by the past of man.  
112

(315-20)

So here Shelley is endowing a common Romantic theme with a political dimension. Prometheus, the enemy of tyrants and the emancipator of man, still remembers the free age of man where only love and freedom prevailed, and despite his ordeal still entertains an irrevocable faith in its return. It is in this usage that Hope and Memory in Jones's poem are more akin to their counterparts in Prometheus Unbound than to any other Romantic poem on the same theme.

Jones's response to his suffering is indeed 'Promethean'. Like Prometheus, pity and perseverance rather than hate and revenge characterize his reaction to his persecutors. Bound to the Precipice, Prometheus addresses his Monarch:

Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin  
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven! ...  
I speak in grief,  
Not exultation, for I hate no more,

(I, 53-7)

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112. The Pleasures of Hope (Edinburgh, 1799), pp.25-6.

These elevated feelings render Prometheus confident and composed:

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,  
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,

(I, 429-30)

The same stance resulting in the same moral strength animates Jones's lines:

They'll find me still unchanged and strong,  
When breaks their puny thrall:  
With hate - for not one living soul -  
And pity - for them all.

113

Shelley's and Jones's almost identical reactions to tyranny suggest a close affinity between their moral convictions and political outlooks; their poetry, as quoted above, equally demonstrates that politics should never deviate from the sphere of morals.

Moreover, both Jones, and the Chartists in general, are in harmony with Shelley's deep belief that education and knowledge are fundamental to reform. Like most of the Chartist Papers and Journals, The Northern Star stipulates that ignorance is the source of all evil and that knowledge is the bedrock of moral and political reform - this of course is characteristic of Shelley's Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, especially of the first -: 'The evil genius of the earth is ignorance; it is the bane of human destiny, the fostering cause of tyranny, the generating agent of that deluge of wrongs with which mankind are overwhelmed',<sup>114</sup> whereas knowledge is all that is the reverse: 'What do we want my brothers in order that we may obtain our freedom? I reply knowledge, KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.'<sup>115</sup> The same number goes on to explain why knowledge is so important: 'We have to enlighten the minds of the people before we can hope for any permanent improvement in our condition, or reform in our institutions.'<sup>116</sup> Two things should be recalled at this

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113. 'The Silent Cell', Ms. F.821. 89 J5.

114. 'A review of The Political Works of Thomas Paine', NS (4 April 1846), p.3; see ibid. (23 February 1850), p.3.

115. From a work called The Progressionist, ibid. (23 February 1850), p.3.

116. Ibid.

point: first, the message of Queen Mab is that ignorance begets slavery whereas knowledge and enlightenment are the only way to freedom; the light which Mab kindles in Ianthe's mind is the light of knowledge. Second, Queen Mab was a very popular poem in the Chartist press. In an article called 'Scott, Byron and Shelley', (The Northern Star, 2 January 1847, p.3), T.Frost maintains that: 'Shelley was the most highly gifted harbinger of the coming brightness, his whole aspirations were towards the future, as evinced in the Queen Mab and the equally beautiful Revolt of Islam.' Again on 28 October 1848 The Northern Star published extracts from Queen Mab and a review of the edition published by T.Watson.<sup>117</sup> Once again The Northern Star advertises Shelley's Queen Mab on 15 December 1849, and a poem for Shelley as a hero of freedom, love and peace was also published in The Northern Star on 5 January 1850. This is not to suggest that the Chartists derived their views on the interrelatedness between knowledge and political reform from Shelley's Queen Mab, but since they admired Shelley, read, published and advertised his Queen Mab (the work in which his views on this theme are most compelling) it is not difficult to see him exerting some influence on their thought.

'... education is a necessary concomitant of freedom; unless you keep a people enlightened, they will fall back into slavery. Freedom conquers education, but education maintains freedom',<sup>118</sup> Jones confirms; the ideas voiced in his poem 'The Arrival', are in tune:

Do they dream of a day that in glory comes?  
Of a morn that is mounting higher,  
When Freedom speaks through the roll of drums;  
And walks in a shroud of fire?  
  
On Muscovy's plains the sun shall rise  
And herald a day more bright:  
They are but dark with a curse that dies,  
And shall wake to a deathless light.  
  
For knowledge sublime from the West shall come,  
As it came from the East of yore;  
A child that brought pearls of great price from home,  
Returning to render back more.

119

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117. For a quotation from the review, see p.200 above.

118. Notes to the People, I, pp.131-4.

119. Jones, The Emperor's Vigil, and the Waves and the War, p.15.

These associations of freedom with light - 'the sun shall rise', 'herald of a day more bright', and 'a deathless light' - echo very similar ones that ran concurrently with the same theme in Shelley's poetry. For example, when the lesson is learnt and freedom is achieved in Queen Mab, nature becomes all spring, sun and light:

Yet Spring's awakening breath will woo the earth, ...  
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile,

(IX, 167-70)

Light, in the following lines, is the unmistakable symbol of freedom:

Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy  
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch  
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

(IX, 209-11)

Similarly, in The Revolt of Islam, once liberty is achieved, the sun rises and light immediately breaks:

Sudden, the sun shon forth, its beams were lying  
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,  
And on the shattered vapours, which defying  
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly  
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

(XI, ii, 5-9)

Jones's and Shelley's images here are equally transparently political. In Jones's case the word 'herald' which was central to the political terminology at the time and to his own political speeches, in particular, stresses the political connotation of the image: 'the sun shall rise / And herald a day more bright'. Again the word 'deathless' infuses the image 'deathless light' with a sense of political militancy and political will. Shelley's choice of words is similarly revealing of what his metaphor really signifies; 'defy' and 'power' with their obvious political associations make the last light image: 'which defying / The power of light in vain' vigorously political.

Yet, the function of education had undergone a considerable change in the Chartist era; Shelley's - and to a great extent the Romantics' - concept of education was 'constructive' but not 'advanced' enough for the Chartists. While Shelley viewed his mission essentially as teacher,

preacher and consciousness-raiser, the Chartist poets wanted to be leaders and doers. As we remarked earlier, Shelley's 'Ode Written October, 1819, Before the Spaniards had Recovered Their Liberty', published with Prometheus Unbound (1820), symbolises his career as a political poet:

ARISE, arise, arise!  
There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread;  
Be your wounds like eyes  
To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead ...

Awaken, awaken, awaken!  
The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;  
Be the cold chains shaken  
To the dust where your kindred repose, repose

(1-11)

But besides awakening and inspiring the general populace, the Chartist poets felt the need to organize and unite the multitudes. Jones's speech on his release from prison perhaps expresses a growing public impatience for a practicable move: 'Two years ago, and more, I went to prison for speaking three words. Those words were: "organise - organise - organise -" And now, after two years, and more, of incarceration, I come forth again to raise that talismanic watchword of salvation - and this day again I say: "Organise! organise! organise!" You cheer: it is well! but that is not enough! will you act? We've had cheering enough - I want action now!'<sup>120</sup> If to understand, to awake and to arouse were the watch-words of salvation for Shelley, to organize, to unite and to act<sup>121</sup> certainly were the key words in Jones's revolutionary sermon. Jones's 'The People's Anthem' and The Emperor's Vigil plead for unity but his most strenuous appeal is for the translation of theory into practice; referring to tyrants he writes:

Morality has been preached to them for six thousand years, and they are not moral yet ... the duty of the moral and social reformer is obvious - TO GET POWER - and then use it! Be not merely preachers, and teachers,

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120. Speech to a 'Great Open Air Meeting in Manchester', 20 October 1850, NS (26 October 1850), p.8. The same point is again mooted in The People's Paper (16 February 1856), p.[1]; also see F.Leary, Life of Ernest Jones, pp.11-12.

121. Although the word 'act' in the above quotation sounds militant enough there is no evidence to suggest that Jones was asking his followers to adopt violent measures in order to achieve the Charter.

and writers - but Generals, and Ministers, and Rulers ...  
men of thought and truth! You've made a mistake by  
merely writing in your closets. Out of your studies,  
away from your seclusion - ... You must wield the  
force too, as well as the mind, if you wish to  
conquer. PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION, be the shibboleth of  
the reformer.  
122

Hence, to cultivate the people's minds and educate them about the principles of reform is no longer enough; intellectual leaders have to become political ones and philosophers have to put their philosophy into action. It is precisely here that the relation between poetry and politics entered a new phase and it is here, too, that a significant distinction can be made between Shelley and the Chartist poets. Indeed, although maintaining an unfailing interest in politics and dedicating many of his compositions to the cause of reform, Shelley never seriously considered, after 1812, taking part in any political event, partly perhaps because he believed that the time was not yet ripe for a political change and partly because of his acute awareness of his own limitations in this sphere. In this sense, while Shelley was a political poet 'or a poet whose principal concern was politics',<sup>123</sup> the Chartist poets were poets as well as active politicians; they were the spearhead of the Chartist Movement and, occasionally, its most prominent leaders.

Jones's poetry is no less concerned for action than the prose. In a poem known as 'Song of the Day-Labourers', but called in a Manuscript version 'Hymn for Lammasday', Jones emphatically urges the people to:

Sharpen the sickle, the fields are white;  
    'Tis the time of the harvest at last.  
Reapers, be up with the morning light,  
    Ere the blush of its youth be past.  
124

Again, in his best known poem 'Song of the Factory Slave', the call becomes even more urgent:

The camp, the pulpit, and the law  
    For rich men's sons are free;

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122. Jones, Woman's Wrongs, p.66.

123. Timothy Webb, 'The Mutiny Within', TLS (10 April 1981), p.417.

124. Jones, Poems by Ernest Jones, Ms. F. 821. 89 J5. This poem is published in Jones's Songs of Democracy (London, 1856-7), p.[1].

Theirs, theirs are learning, art, and arms;  
But what remains for me?  
The coming hope, the future day,  
When wrong to right shall bow,  
And hearts shall have the courage, man,  
To make that future now.

125

Two conclusions may be drawn from the above discussion of Shelley's and Jones's different concepts of education: first, the very meaning of 'education' changes according to the time in which it is being used; for Shelley the cardinal role of education was moral. Though indirectly political, it was not political in the same sense that prevailed in the Chartist days. For the Chartists 'education' became an issue of immediate political consequence; it was to teach the multitudes how to organise, to unite, to respond and to act. Second, the role of the poet was not seen as being confined to 'consciousness raising' but should go beyond that to become an intrinsic part of actual political activities. The force of knowledge and poetry, and, in effect, the bearing of that force, changes in keeping with the spirit and character of the age. Yet this difference between Shelley's and the Chartists' conception of the political role of education and poetry served to make Shelley even more appealing to them. The Chartists saw themselves acting out what Shelley had written as prophecy and this is chiefly why they became haunted by his faith in the future and his prophetic vision of a triumphant revolution.

(d) The Affinities of Freedom

Of no less interest is the fact that Jones conceived the same sort of interrelation between liberty and equality that Shelley had already suggested. A chapter in Jones's Romance is preceded by these lines from Shelley's Revolt of Islam:

Eldest of things, divine Equality!  
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,  
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee,  
Treasures from all the cells of human thought.

(V, LI, 3, 1-4)

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125. Songs of Democracy, p.[3] (italics in the original).

This stanza is immediately followed in Shelley's poem by 'My brethren we are Free'. Although Jones starts with 'liberty' rather than with 'equality', in effect he enunciates the same reciprocal relation that Shelley envisages between the two; he commences thus:

Liberty! oh, what melody there is in the word! ...  
But liberty is more than melody: it is the deepest,  
grandest harmony; it is the glad voices of assembled  
millions; it is the glorious pulse-beating of an  
enraptured and enfranchised universe! Equality! the  
feeling grows and gathers on me as I pronounce and  
ponder on the word; it is the first, the primeval  
music which gave a soul to the world! It widens and  
spreads until it includes the mighty whole ... it is  
absorbed into that which receives it; it is gathered  
into that which gave it birth.

126

Besides signifying equality, justice and happiness, 'liberty' in both Jones's and Shelley's works had, in part, a strictly material meaning; it represents bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked and home for the homeless. In a speech at a public meeting in St Pancras, London, 13 October 1846 Jones exclaims: 'Give us religious liberty, as well as every other, - but do not give us religious liberty alone. Will religious liberty give you a leg of mutton on your spits, or a coat on your backs? Will religious liberty give you a vote? Will religious liberty cut down the pension-list or the civil-list? ... Then let us have that thing first, which gives us these! ... we want social and political liberty as well.'<sup>127</sup> Again, in a similarly down-to-earth speech he stipulates that: '... there is little use in holding before them the Cap of Liberty, unless you hold THE BIG LOAF by the side of it.'<sup>128</sup> What could be more relevant to the point mooted by Jones in these two quotations than Shelley's definition of freedom in 'The Masque of Anarchy':

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126. The People's Paper (7 August 1852), p.7 (my emphasis).

127. NS (17 October 1846), p.5.

128. 'An Address to the People', by Ernest Jones, ibid., (10 August 1850), p.[1].

'For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread  
From his daily labour come  
In a neat and happy home  
  
'Thou art clothes, and fire, and food  
For the trampled multitude -

(LIV-LV)

Precisely because of their material and simplified politics, because they examined the political questions as they are posed for ordinary people, Shelley's poems of 1819 ('The Masque of Anarchy' and 'Song to the Men of England', in particular), reached the mass-audience they were designed to reach. Indeed, the closeness of politics to real life, the understanding of freedom as 'clothes, and fire, and food' (LV) and of the people's need of 'leisure, comfort, calm / Shelter, food' (Song to the Men of England, 13-14), was mainly responsible for making Shelley's 'The Masque' and 'Song to the Men of England' two of the most popular poems amongst the Chartists. But by finding political manifestations in the most basic needs and by voicing these needs in a simple language which ordinary people can grasp and feel, Shelley, contrary to what Stuart Curran maintains, did not reduce his political vision to 'the monotone of slogans'. 'Ye are many they are few' (XCI), he contends, 'is a battle cry, but it is scarcely responsible political analysis'.<sup>129</sup> Certainly this line is a battle cry, but it hardly stands for the political argument of 'The Masque'. Radical Chartists believed that like all effective politics of all ages, the politics of 'The Masque' and of 'Song to the Men of England' strike at the very foundation of our consciousness, morality, wants and needs; hence their popularity amongst them. Coupled with the balladlike meter and the simple diction, the politics of these two poems demonstrate how acutely aware Shelley was of the literary as well as political requirements of the role he decided to play in 1819, of directly addressing the masses and raising their consciousness to take immediate action - the role which he fulfilled without violating either the validity or the solemnity of his political arguments. Interestingly, Ernest Jones was one of the first to appreciate the balance Shelley struck between ideal philosophy and practical aims:

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129. Shelley's Annus Mirabilis, p.186.

Oh! for the fresh vigour and practical philosophy of a Byron, Scott, or Moore - Ay! and of a Shelley too, who had the happy power of never swerving from a practical aim in his most ideal productions. But it is just this, that requires a peculiar talent. A man can be practical enough - and common-place. A man can be ideal enough - and unintelligible. Few attain the height of combining the Beautiful with the Useful, and thus giving either a power which neither could attain alone.

130

However, Jones and Shelley equally perceive in the emancipation of man a resumption of man's original nature which is in itself good and free. Having celebrated the dawn of universal freedom, Jones describes man in his Revolt of Hindostan as:

Man own no nobler name than that of MAN -  
No holier law than Christ's great law of Love,  
His guide within him, and his judge above.

131

In both content and meter, these lines are particularly reminiscent of two lines in Act IV of Prometheus Unbound, the act that similarly celebrates the achievement of freedom:

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,  
Whose nature is its own divine control

(IV, 400-1)

The difference is that Jones says that Christ's law of love is man's 'guide within him' whereas for Shelley man's nature is 'its own divine control' - this is telling of another difference between Jones as once a believer and Shelley who was never an adherent of religion.

One final consequence of freedom is the realization of the brotherhood of man. The brotherhood of man is so quintessential to Shelley's and Jones's moral and political philosophies that it constitutes the focal

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130. 'Literary Review', The Labourer, I (1847), pp.284-5 (p.285) (italics in the original).

131. Jones, The Revolt of Hindostan, p.33.

point of their efforts and the ultimate object of their politics. Addressing Lord Ellenborough, Shelley confidently asserts that: 'The time is rapidly approaching, I hope, that you, my Lord, may live to behold its arrival, when the Mahometan, the Jew, the Christian, the Deist, and the Atheist, will live together in one community, equally sharing the benefits which arise from its association, and united in the bonds of charity and brotherly love.'<sup>132</sup> With a distinctly Shelleyan tone, Jones explores the same future prospect culminating with the same assertion: 'it may not be a mere dream of the visionary to contemplate the period in which these narrower limits will be widened into Caucasian, Malayan, African republics, spreading thus the circle of human sympathy, until indeed the words are realised: "All Men Are Brethren".'<sup>133</sup> Here, Jones might well have had Shelley's vision in mind while contemplating his own.

### 3. Religion

On the question of religion, both Jones and the Chartists seem to continue in the same tradition in which Shelley's writings constitute a significant phase, in the tradition that divides between the ethics of Christianity on the one hand, and its institutions on the other.<sup>134</sup> The Chartists' stance speaks for itself:

... some very immaculate Christians consider that Chartists have no Divine authority for their churches, and therefore, in their opinion, they ought to be abolished. In this matter we beg to differ, and to maintain that we have the Divine authority of Jesus Christ himself, which is quite sufficient for Christians ... Christian Chartists! examine the Bible well, and you will find it to be a good book, that inculcates political and ecclesiastical democracy, civil and religious liberty.

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132. Works, V, p.294.

133. 'The Brotherhood of Man', Notes to the People, II (1852), pp.666-7 (p.667).

134. See Shelley's Essay on Christianity and 'On the Moral Teachings of Jesus Christ', Works, VI, pp.227-56, and pp.72-8 above.

135. 'Divine Authority for the Christian Chartist Church', The Chartist Circular, No.55 (10 October 1840), p.222. For the same view see ibid., No.49 (29 August 1840), p.197.

A still more remarkable distinction between Christianity and the church is spelled out in Jones's words: 'THERE are two objects in this world often identified, but as often widely different: the one is religion, the other is the church. He who attacks the latter, is denounced as religion's enemy, by the very enemy of that religion; for he is religion's greatest foe, who throws the name of God around the dealings of a sordid craft.'<sup>136</sup> This is (as I argued in chapter 2, see pp.72-8 above) the nub of Shelley's 'On the Moral Teachings of Jesus Christ': 'the religion so called is the strongest ally and bulwark of that system of successful force and fraud and of the selfish passions from which it has received its origin and permanence, against which Jesus Christ declared the most uncompromising war, and the extinction of which appears to have been the great motive of his life.'<sup>137</sup> Further, Jones shares with Shelley his belief that the doctrines of Jesus Christ are the soundest basis for moral and political reform - to cite Shelley's judgement once more: 'The doctrines, indeed, in my judgement, are excellent and strike at the root of moral evil. If acted upon, no political or religious institution could subsist a moment.'<sup>138</sup> The same point is emphasised by Jones: 'I believe if real Christianity were practised on this earth, not a tyrant would be trampling on a slave, and not a slave be clinging to a tyrant.'<sup>139</sup>

Furthermore, Jones saw, as Shelley very clearly did, the interrelatedness between institutional Christianity and political tyranny. 'Priestcraft' and 'kingcraft', they maintained, blight man's spirit and abuse human values. In Queen Mab, Shelley contends that:

Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower  
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts  
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins  
Of desolate society.

(IV, 104-7)

Similarly, in his 'Labour's History', Jones writes:

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136. Jones, 'The State Church', part 1, Evenings with the People, No.3, p.3.

137. Works, VI, p.255.

138. Ibid.

139. Jones, 'The State Church', part 1, Evenings with the People, No.3, p.3. For a comprehensive discussion by Jones of the question of (footnote continued)

They bound the child, in slumber's hour,  
With chains of force, and fraud, and craft, -  
And, round the victim of their power,  
King, - Priest, - and Soldier stood and laughed.

140

Besides the apparent similarity of content between the two, Jones's phrase 'King, - Priest, - and Soldier' seems to replace Shelley's 'Kings, Priests, and statesmen', and his 'They bound the child, in slumber's hour', seems to echo Shelley's 'blast the human flower / Even in its tender bud'.

Ahasuerus' rebellion in Queen Mab against the church which is, in Shelley's estimation, a rebellion in the cause of freedom:

... my soul,  
From sight and sense of the polluting woe  
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer  
Hell's freedom to the servitude of Heaven.

(VII, 192-5)

exemplifies what Jones is agitating for:

Kings have cheated - Priests have lied -  
Break the sword on Slavery's knee,  
And become, in manhood's pride,  
That, which God intended, - FREE!

141

Moreover, by attacking institutional Christianity and commending the ethics of Christ as the only true religion, Jones, strikingly like Shelley, identifies the doctrines of Christ with his own political principles:

'I stand here to preach the gospel of the poor. Surrounded by the Temples of Mammon, I stand here to preach the democracy of Christ - for Christ was the first Chartist, and democracy is the gospel carried into practice.'<sup>142</sup>

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(footnote 139 continued from previous page)

religion, see *ibid.*, 'The State Church', Canterbury Versus Rome (London, 1851), and 'Beldagon Church'.

140. Chartist Poems, p.9 (italics in the original).

141. *Ibid.*, p.10. For Jones's other attacks on priests and churches see his Songs of Democracy (The Marriage Feast, in particular); 'The Walk Home from Beldagon', Notes to the People, I, pp.114-15; 'Christian Love', *ibid.*, p.337; 'The Factory Town', The Labourer, I, pp.50-2, 'The Charity Church', Canterbury Versus Rome; The Revolt of Hindostan, and 'The Beldagon Church'.

142. 'Speech to a 'Great Open Air Meeting in Manchester', NS (26 October 1850), p.8.

This view, in fact, is not only Jones's but that of the Chartist body. In an article called 'Philosophy of Religion', The Chartist Circular, for instance, stresses that: 'Chartism is not christianity, but christianity is Chartism and vastly more. The one may be an integral part of the other, but is not the whole; ... Claiming the right, then, to promulgate simple, uncorrupted christianity, I cannot, I dare not, neglect to promote the true politics of the Charter.'<sup>143</sup> The Northern Star, moreover, in a review of a work called Radicalism an Essential Doctrine of Christianity, by the Rev. B.Parsons of Elbey, notes that: 'The present tract is a racily written and well reasoned production, devoted to showing that the gospel is Radicalism, and real Radicalism is the gospel.'<sup>144</sup>

Yet Jones's views on religion ask for special attention since between 1839 and 1844, as his diary shows, he was a regular communicant of the church; his opinions, one might therefore assume, are based on close personal experience. One point Jones constantly stresses is the existing relation between the church and the state. His 'Beldagon Church' demonstrates that sermons are designed to mislead the masses so that they overlook the evils of the system of which the church is a most potent agent.<sup>145</sup> Referring to the tyrants in a speech at a supper organized by the French Democratic Society on 14 July 1846, Jones insists that: 'They have made State-religions, Act-of-Parliament religions, the more to estrange nations from each other ... rich men build Churches! Piles of stone, to cover the absence of God! Altars, on which there reigns no deity!'<sup>146</sup> Ten years later he still addresses the people thus: 'I think it was Pliny who said, if a religion had not existed, statesmen ought to have invented one, for it was the only thing that kept a people quiet in their misery.'<sup>147</sup> As we mentioned earlier, there is enough evidence in Shelley's works

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143. The Chartist Circular, No.64 (12 December 1840), p.361.

144. NS (29 January 1848), p.3.

145. Jones's account of a sermon in this poem is strikingly similar to Paine's account of a sermon cited on p. 74 above.

146. NS (18 July 1846), p.8.

147. 'The State Church', part 2, Evenings with the People, No.4, p.27.

to suggest that he too vividly perceived this interrelation between religion and the body politic. On this particular issue the Chartists' understanding not only resembled Shelley's but carried the issue a good deal further till their defiance of the church became part and parcel of their struggle against the oppressive political system.

#### Direct Influence

As a poet then Jones had fallen under the spell of Shelley. It is worth indicating here that he had read Shelley a long time before he joined the Chartist Movement. As early as 28 September 1839 (only one year after his arrival in England) the entry in his diary reads thus: 'Splendid day. I called on the Bells's. Wife Bells alone. Afterwards Mr. Bells came in. Then escorted them to Facet's library opposite the [ ? orrow] Road and back. I then sat in Kensington Gardens reading Shelley while they left me, and walked home over Nottinghill Square.'<sup>148</sup> Later, after he joined the Chartist Movement his writings and speeches were never short of references to Shelley. For example, speaking of Gerald Massey's Democratic poems, Jones concludes 'In the name of Burns and Shelley, of Milton and Byron, we claim his talents for the People's Cause.'<sup>149</sup> Again, in an introduction to his Notes to the People which he started immediately after his release from prison, Jones draws an implicit comparison between Shelley and himself: 'Free citizens of the republic! my country has been called the "Ark of freedom" - but, in yours I see its Ararat, and to you, at whose hands Shelley looked for vindication and immortality, a humbler bard now dedicates his work.'<sup>150</sup> Indeed, Jones can recall Shelley's poetry on less serious and evidently different types of occasions; his review of J. De Jean-Fraser, for instance, pays tribute to the memory of Shelley before it gets to Fraser's work: 'It was on Sunday, and in the Sabbath of the year, the joyous, rich summer time. The day was calm and beautiful, like the remembrance of a solemn hymn; and the glowing air, full of silent

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148. The Diary of Ernest Charles Jones 1839-1847, vol.1.

149. 'Literature and Reviews', The People's Paper (9 September 1854), p.5.

150. Notes to the People, I, p.4.

harmony, reminded me of Shelley's lines -

"Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrate on the memory".  
151

It is no wonder, therefore, that contemporary reviewers of Jones's works were also reminded of Shelley. The Observer (11 August 1855), in a review of Jones's My Life is reminded of Shelley's Rosalind and Helen: 'the poem is a production which reminds the critic in many places of Shelley's 'Rosalind and Helen', without reminding him at the same time of imitation, still less of plagiarism', and The Athenaeum (24 May 1856) in a review of Jones's The Emperor's Vigil observes: 'His conventionalisms are not of the "puling brook" school, but rather savour of Shelley's democracy. He pictures a world ruled by ferocious kings and cruel priests, talks much of knouts, chains, and dungeons, - and looks upon thrones as raised upon the grave of martyrs.' What is more, in a Scrapbook of Newspaper Cuttings etc. on Ernest Jones I found what seems to be the first two pages of a book on Ernest Jones (which as far as I know was never written) by Eliana Twynam which was to be called Ernest Jones. An Appreciation. There is a table of contents sketching the themes of its nine chapters, 'a list of poems quoted in full', and what seems to be the start of an introduction. Of particular interest are the epigraphs to this 'book', taken from Jones's and Shelley's poetry. Immediately below the heading of the book and the name of the author we read:

'No tears for him who ne'er gave rise to tears;  
His requiem be an Echo of his song'

Ernest Jones

followed by:

'Till the Future dares  
Forget the past, his Fate and Fame shall be  
An Echo and a Light unto Eternity.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Moreover, on the opposite side of the page she writes: 'After Shelley - the greatest poetical Genius this country or the world has ever known, -

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151. The People's Paper (28 March 1857), p.[4].

we socialists can truly claim Ernest Jones the poet who has accomplished most in the making of our movement. It is therefore our duty, as it is our delight to put before the public this sketch of his life with selections from his works.<sup>152</sup> As the above sources testify, on reading Jones's poetry one is often reminded of Shelley's poetry and philosophy. In this section I shall study some of Jones's poems which are particularly reminiscent of Shelley to try and establish more specifically than previously his direct debt to his predecessor.

In his poem 'The Poet's Prayer to the Evening Wind',<sup>153</sup> Jones seems to be imitating Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. Like Shelley, Jones's concern is the poet's function vis-à-vis that of the wind as a destroyer and a preserver. Shelley's poem begins by apostrophizing the wind as the power of life and death, seeks identification of the poetic spirit with this power, and finally seems to achieve some sort of union between speaker and subject. Jones, on the other hand, with less sense of dramatic development, uses the wind and the poet interchangeably from the first stanza and, one suspects, reproduces a variation of Shelley's poem.

However, the opening of Jones's poem is strikingly Shelleyan; Shelley starts his poem thus:

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

(1-3)

Similarly, Jones begins his poem with:

WILD rider of grey clouds, beneath whose breath  
The stars dissolve in mist, or rain, or sleet;

(1-2)

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152. MS. F. 923 2 J8 (italics in the original). These pages described above carry no date, but the epigraph suggests that the poet is dead. Both the fact that Jones died in 1869 and the use of the word 'socialists' indicate that this plan might have been written around the 1870s or 1880s.

153. The Battle Day and Other Poems (London, 1855), pp.125-7.

There is a sense of intensity in Shelley's sentence, lost in Jones's mainly because of his use of the indecisive 'or'. Moreover, Shelley's long sentence seems packed with energy as though nothing will ever stop it; while Jones's line is held up by the punctuation at the end of the second line, Shelley's enjambment at the end of line 2 permits no such inertness.

However, it is interesting to note how Jones spells out Shelley's metaphoric reference to the wind's 'unseen' presence. In the penultimate stanza Jones writes:

So let me cull each isolated truth,  
Where old bards left their thoughts' eternal youth -  
Till man, while listening to the harp unseen,  
Himself feels greater since the great has been.

(31-4)

The 'harp unseen' here is no longer that of the wind; rather it is of the 'old bards'. Amongst these 'old bards' Shelley might well have been in Jones's mind. Jones's description of 'truth' as 'isolated' makes this 'truth' especially worthy of our attention; his phrase 'isolated truth' serves to bestow an air of importance on what is about to follow. His metaphor 'thoughts' eternal youth' acknowledges the everlasting influence of poets and is very deftly handled; the paradox of 'eternal' skilfully describes something one thinks of as passing and temporary - 'youth'. Moreover, Shelley's image of the wind as the driver of the dead leaves is deployed by Jones in another, yet no less impressive image:

Dispeller of the mists! whose airy hand  
Winnows the dead leaves from the forest land!

(11-12)

But while Shelley traces in the structure of his poem the process which demonstrates that the wind is a 'Destroyer and Preserver', Jones seems to take the idea for granted:

Keeper of life, in ocean, earth and air,  
That else would stagnate in a dull despair!  
Dispeller of the mists! whose airy hand  
Winnows the dead leaves from forest-band!

(9-12)

The role of the wind as destroyer and preserver in ocean, earth and air, developed in three stanzas of Shelley's poem, is taken over by Jones and stated in one single line, and Shelley's plea to the wind to scatter his thoughts in the universe and bring about 'a new birth' is echoed by Jones in his last stanza:

... sing my death-song, thou unequalled bard!  
And tear my ashes from the clay-cold urn  
To whirl them where the suns and planets burn,  
And shout aloud, in brotherhood of glee:  
'Like me to sing and to be loved like me!'"

(36-40)

Yet, Shelley's implicit comparison between the poet and the wind is made explicit and granted new dimensions in Jones's poem. Indeed, just as the wind is a 'dispeller of mists' the poet is a dispeller of

... fears, and cares and doubting vain;  
Till hearts of men upon my impulse sail,  
And falsehood's wrecked in truth's victorious gale!

(22-4)

and as the wind culls 'scattered treasures of the land', the poet culls 'each isolated truth'. Jones, in fact, not only switches emphasis in his poem from the wind to the poet but also carries the idea further by stressing the political function of the poet:

And while I live, oh! teach me still to be  
A bard, as thou, brave, fetterless, and free.  
Past cot and palace, to the weak and strong,  
Singing the same great bold unfearing song!

(25-8)

Jones's description of the bard here as 'brave, fetterless, and free' and of his song as 'great bold unfearing' highlights the explicit political dimension he gave to an idea which though inspired by Shelley was shaped and developed in such a way in order to make an impression on a more politically aware audience and to produce a more direct political effect.

Again, Shelley's 'Song to the Men of England' seems to me to be the source and inspiration of Jones's 'The Song of the Lower Classes'.<sup>154</sup>

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154. Songs of Democracy, p. [1].

Like Shelley, Jones highlights the idea that the poor people are the real producers of wealth which their oppressors enjoy while they are left in want; implicit in both poems is an attempt to urge the people to rise and change their devastating conditions and claim their rights. Notably, the first question put by Shelley

MEN of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay ye low?

finds an echo in the opening line of Jones's poem: 'We plough and sow - we're so very, very low'. It is clear, here, that the key words in both quotations - plough and low - and the contents are the same. However, in the same question form, Shelley goes on:

Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Jones raises the same point but not with the same gusto:

We're low - we're low - we're very, very low,  
Yet from our fingers glide  
The silken flow - and the robes that glow  
Round the limbs of the sons of pride.  
And what we get - and what we give,  
We know, and we know our share:  
We're not too low the cloth to weave,  
But too low the cloth to wear!

The message conveyed in these lines is unmistakably one which Shelley's lines express; while the people make the clothes it is their tyrants who wear them. Moreover, the key words: 'robes', 'weave' and 'wear' are the same in both quotations. However, it remains true to say that Shelley's persistent questioning corresponds to a feeling of wonder and amazement which by underscoring the simple and obvious facts is meant to shock those whom it informs whereas Jones's statements entertain no such literary skill. Further, although both Jones and Shelley are on the side of the people, Jones's lines sound as though they hold the people culpable for their misfortunes, while Shelley strikes a very fine balance between disclosing to what extent their conditions are of their own making and attacking the oppressors who exploit and demean them. Indeed, the following lines from Shelley's poem illustrate this sense of balanced judgement:

Sow seed, - but let no tyrant reap;  
Find wealth, - let no imposter heap;  
Weave robes, - let not the idle wear;  
Forge arms, - in your defence to bear.

The verve, the brevity and the intensity of Shelley's poetry leave their marks on the political impression which seems more striking for its subtle simplicity than that given by Jones. This is not true of Jones's 'Onward' which is close to Shelley's 'The Masque of Anarchy'; Shelley's political message in 'The Masque' is:

Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you -  
Ye are many - they are few!

(XCI, 3-5)

In the same tone, the same rhyme scheme, and almost the same words, Jones expresses the same idea:

Oh! we have battled long and true;  
While you were many, we were few,  
And stronger chains we've broken through.  
155

To my mind, the only difference between the two quotations is that Shelley agitates for an action which is depicted by Jones as having taken place already, a difference that might well suggest that while on the one hand Shelley directly influenced the Chartist poets as is the case in the above quotation, their mission, in some political respects, completed his.

A reading of Jones's 'A Forest Among the Euganean Hills' (Scene III, Act IV, The Student of Padua) invites us, for a number of reasons, to think of Shelley's Julian and Maddalo; the scene is a soliloquy by Julian and the theme of the soliloquy is reminiscent of the mad man's soliloquy in Julian and Maddalo, and the texture of both poems is strikingly similar. The arguments of the mad man in Shelley's poem are unmistakably expressive of Shelley's views (rather than of Byron's). As Julian stands for Shelley, the mad man may well be taken to partly stand for Julian (or Shelley).

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155. The Labourer, II, p.[1].

Yet, the date of Jones's poem, 1836 (while he was still in Germany) might give rise to the question of whether Jones had read Shelley before writing this particular poem. Of Jones's life in Germany very little is known, but his Infantine Effusions (1830)<sup>156</sup> suggests that, while still in Germany, Jones knew a good deal about his 'native' England and was not wholly unfamiliar with its literature. In a number of these poems, 'England' is referred to as 'native ground', 'my native land' and 'native shore'; a prevalent nostalgic feeling for his home country coupled with detailed description of its nature, weather and people indicates how much Jones's parents told him about his country of origin of which he was undoubtedly proud as his poem Lines on England, an imitation, shows:

Know ye the land<sup>157</sup> - where the towering Oak -  
The monarch of forests - triumphantly dwells  
Where the spirit of Man, soars proudly unbroke - ...  
Her skies - it is true - are not always serene -  
The rays of the Sun are full often obscur'd  
Still the tints of her fields - are an emerald green -  
And Liberty's reign - has for ages endured.  
158

In another poem 'Pyrenean Adventure' in which he describes the weather and the people in his 'native land' where he has comrades and friends he makes a reference to its literature too:

Alas! why bring those happier times to mind -  
I awaken griefs! - of long past joys remind!  
Here once - a Hamlet stood - a blest retreat -!

As the Joneses seem to have told their son a great deal about his country it seems almost certain that they made some of its literature available to him. The fact that the poem under discussion was written in English<sup>159</sup> might partly support this hypothesis. Added to this the fact that only

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156. It was thanks to the efforts of Ms. L. Shepherd, M.A. (Central Library of Manchester) who gave up much of her time searching for this book that it was finally found, though it was believed that the book might have never entered this country.
157. This must be from Goethe's 'Kennst du das Land ...' (Know you the land?) about Italy.
158. Ms. F. 821 89 J7.
159. Amongst Letters to A.B. Wakefield Rememorial to Jones (MS BR.923,2J 14), I found a newspaper cutting entitled 'the Late Mr. Ernest Jones' (footnote continued)

one year after his arrival in England Jones was reading Shelley,<sup>160</sup> it seems very likely then that he was introduced to Shelley's poetry when he was still in Germany.

However, the themes of Julian's soliloquy, like that of the mad man's in Julian and Maddalo, are the wearisomeness of life and the pending menace of death. Here are the mad man's words first:

'Month after month,' he cried, 'to bear this load  
And as a jade urged by the whip and goad  
To drag life on, which like a heavy chain  
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain! -  
And not to speak my grief-O, not to dare  
To give a human voice to my despair,  
But live and move, and, wretched thing! smile on  
As if I never went aside to groan, ...

(300-7)

In the same melancholic spirit and in the same lyrical mood, Jones's Julian starts his soliloquy:

How wearily time lingers with the wretch!  
The hours that pass so swiftly o'er our joys,  
Yet eke their moments out to mock our woes.  
Where now are all those gorgeous images ...  
How years and disappointment's hand restore  
Them to their pristine elements, and leave  
The empty heart a miserable ruin!  
161

Shelley's image of this melancholic life is made even more saddening by the explicit comparison he draws between life and a 'heavy chain' which 'lengthens behind with many a link of pain'. Jones, on the other hand, throws some light on the slow progress of time by the contrast he draws

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(footnote 159 continued from previous page)

which reads thus: 'in 1829 a small volume of poems written by him was published! He had read those poems with surprise, and they were not unworthy heralds of the poetic genius he displayed in after years. They were translated from French and German into English, which showed that he possessed a knowledge of the three languages even at that early age.'

160. See p.260 above.

161. The Student of Padua: A domestic tragedy in five acts (London, 1836), (Act IV, Scene III), p.79.

between the sad time that lingers wearily and the pleasurable hours that pass so swiftly. While Jones's contrast indirectly reminds us of the happy times in life Shelley remains deeply plunged in his melancholy. Nevertheless, over both Julian and the mad man the shadow of death seems to be persistently looming; the mad man helplessly asks:

Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,  
Am I not wan like thee? at the grave's call  
I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball  
To greet the ghastly paramour, for whom  
Thou hast deserted me ... and made the tomb  
Thy bridal bed ... But I beside your feet  
Will lie and watch ye from my winding sheet -  
Thus ... wide awake tho' dead ...

(385-93)

The power of death is equally felt and equally resented by Julian:

... all things in nature hunger  
One for another! Autumn hungers after  
The dying glories of the spectral boughs -  
Beast prowls for beast - man laps the blood of man -  
While, death, triumphantly, with hideous jaws,  
Hungers to swallow all into the tomb!  
Accursed life! and thrice accursed death!

On the whole, the overall impression left by Julian's soliloquy is in keeping with that which the mad man's words engender. It is very likely, it seems to me, that Jones had read Shelley's Julian and Maddalo in Germany and imitated it, in part, in this particular scene. This plausibility is enhanced by the fact that even in the context of the play this scene stands as a distinct poem in its own right.

Jones's The Revolt of Hindostan; or, The New World, however, belongs to a different category of poetry from that which we have been discussing so far; it belongs to the long, epic poetry of Chartism which like its Romantic counterpart was written (mostly when the movement was already in decline) not to agitate but to contemplate the idea of reform and freedom, and in the case of the Chartist Poetry to delineate a political experience and transform it into an artistic poetic creation. The poetic form of this poem seems to be a reconstruction of Byron's Childe Harold; whichever example is taken, the parallel is almost always startling: these lines are Byron's:

Pass we the long, unvarying course, the track  
Oft trod, that never leaves a trace behind;  
Pass we the calm, the gale, the change, the tack,  
And each well-known caprice of wave and wind;  
Pass we the joys and sorrows sailors find,  
Coop'd in their winged sea-girt citadel;  
The foul, the fair, the contrary, the kind,  
As breezes rise and fall and billows swell,  
Till on some jocund morn - lo, land! and all is well.

(C.H., II, XXVIII)

Though we part with the poem and the argument we do not part with either the tone or the meter or the whole poetic form when we move to Jones's lines:

Nations have passed, and kingdoms flown away -  
But history bids thee hope a longer day,  
Wise witness of an ancient world's decay:  
No common guards before thy barriers stand -  
The elements themselves defend thy land:  
Eternal frost thy northern frontiers meet;  
Around thy south is rolled eternal heat;  
O'er east and west twin-oceans watch afar:  
To thee a pathway - to thy foes a bar;  
162

But the poem that resembles Jones's most in its characterization of the powers that hamper the progress of freedom, in its suggestion of how to do away with these powers and in its celebration of the historical tide of freedom is Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty'. Both poets agree that kings and priests, the ostensible guardians of freedom, are its most formidable enemies. According to Shelley man is bereft of the bliss of freedom because:

... o'er the populous solitude,  
Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves,  
Hung Tyranny; beneath, sate deified  
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves;  
Into the shadow of her pinions wide  
Anarchs and priests, who feed on gold and blood  
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,  
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

(III, 38-45)

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162. The Revolt of Hindostan; or, The New World, p.[5].

Jones, too, makes a similar point; he addresses freedom thus:

Not thine the trials that the Past has known:  
Blaspheming altar, crime cemented throne;  
Not thine to wash, when wincing at the strain,  
With thine own blood, the rust from off thy chain;  
Not thine to struggle painful stages through,  
Of old oppressions, and ambitions new;  
Of priestly bigotry, and feudal pride,  
That - even in ruin - still corruption hide:  
Young Nation-Hercules! whose infant-grasp  
Kingcraft and Churchcraft slew, the twinborn asp!  
163

Here Shelley and Jones stress, as they did in many of their compositions, that the Church and the State should be held responsible for slavery and murder on earth, yet both poets stipulate that in the attempt to dethrone tyranny, the people should never tread its violent path. As is often the case, strong will and moral resistance are Shelley's means to end oppression and emancipate man:

He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever  
Can be between the cradle and the grave  
Crowned him the King of Life. Oh, vain endeavour!  
If on his own high will, a willing slave,  
He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.

(XVII, 241-5)

Armed with the same political credo, Jones commends the same means:

Whene'r the People will - and will the Right.  
They marched unarmed - yet no one dared resist  
Camps, courts and councils melted like a mist;  
And when amid their multitudes were seen  
The saddening bands of Ceylon's island green,  
Then from those kings of gold the courage fled,  
Like murder's when it thinks it meets the dead!  
164

Moreover, in applauding the triumphant sweep of freedom all over the world, both Jones and Shelley display their manifest belief that freedom is the creative and regenerative source of man's goodness, happiness and

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163. The Revolt of Hindostan; etc., p.6.

164. Ibid., p.27 (my emphasis).

equality, thus suggesting that through the emancipation of man the world will be simultaneously reformed. Just before he concludes his poem Shelley gives powerful utterance to this conviction:

Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame  
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?  
O Liberty! if such could be thy name  
Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee:  
(XVIII, 264-7)

In eulogizing the martyr of liberty, Jones contemplates a similar thought:

He dares pursue, and dreams he sees the end;  
Evokes from ancient slavery's spectral night  
The slumbering people's yet unconscious might,  
Throughout the realm bids servile tenure cease,  
In hope bestowing happiness and peace,  
And as a rocket on a mine is hurled,  
Gives Liberty's great watchword to the world.  
165

The association Jones makes between hope and liberty palpably echoes the one made by Shelley above. Despite the fact that while writing this poem Jones was in prison (where he was allowed no reading material at all) the poem unmistakably shows Shelley's direct influence on Jones. What this signifies is that Jones knew Shelley's poetry (and, here, Byron's) by heart; he echoed its ideas and form so naturally till it becomes quite hard to tell whether Jones was really aware of any imitation or whether he believed that the ideas were really his own. This assumption becomes more credible if we recall that in the Chartist era reciting poetry and declaiming it at political gatherings were prominent phenomena in the intellectual life of the time.

In the light of the evidence established in this comparative account, it is clear that Jones read, published, explained Shelley and was spell-bound by his poetry and philosophy. Shelley's political doctrines which permeated many of Jones's utterances reached the Chartist audience through Jones's papers and writings. Despite the fact that Shelley's and Jones's political principles were in perfect tune, Jones expressed himself and

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165. The Revolt of Hindostan; etc., p.15.

fulfilled his role as a political poet through different literary forms which were deemed by him to be more pertinent for the role he was playing and the audience he was addressing. Through the popularity of Jones both as poet and politician, Shelley's prophecy that his poetry would be of some use for future generations of reformers was, at least in part, fulfilled.

Chapter 5

SHELLEY AND THOMAS COOPER

'Howitt's Journal', speaking of Mr. Thomas Cooper, says that 'he is one of those Poets of the People who have embodied their poetry in their lives and their lives in their poetry'.  
(Reynold's Political Instructor, I, No.4, 1850, p.[25])

The Chartist poet and lecturer Thomas Cooper represents a different facet of Chartism from Ernest Jones. He belonged not to the aristocracy who embraced the cause of the people, but to the poor classes whose experience in the movement served to elicit and invigorate their natural talents. His father was a descendant of Yorkshire Quakers and had been apprenticed as a dyer. After his death when Thomas was only four years old, his wife carried on her husband's trade. Thomas's mother came from a small-scale farming family in Lincolnshire and moved after the death of her husband to Gainsborough, her home-town, where she stayed with her son till he was twenty-nine years of age.

Thomas, the family's only child was born in Leicester on 20 January 1805. He learnt to read, we are told, 'almost without instruction',<sup>1</sup> and at the age of three he was set to teach his seniors. He first attended Free School and then a popular day-school for boys, but the school that seems to have left the most indelible influence on his mind was the Methodist Sunday School. In one of his Methodist visits to Lincoln at Christmas 1829 he met his future wife (who came from a Methodist family) and on 16 February 1834 they were married.

Since early childhood Cooper had been a voracious reader; he had a craving for knowledge of all kinds, till he was rightly acknowledged as

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1. The Life of Thomas Cooper: Written by himself (London, 1872), p.5 (henceforth cited as Life).

the most educated of the self-educated men in the country. Yet, because of his lack of academic education, Cooper was always anxious to impress other intellectuals by his knowledge and never felt quite confident that he was recognized by them as an equal. This amounted to a persistent desire to display his knowledge, a desire to which he gave rein in his epic-poem, The Purgatory of Suicides.

It was in journalism, however, that Cooper's literary as well as political career was to find its first serious beginnings. In 1836 he was employed as a correspondent on the 'Lincoln, Rutland, and Stamford Mercury' and on 23 November 1840 he moved to Leicester, again to be a journalist on The Leicester Mercury; it was here that Cooper joined the Chartist Movement of which he instantly became a distinguished member and leader and which, in turn, left its mark on his life and work. His first introduction to Chartism came about when he was sent by The Leicester Mercury to report on a Chartist lecture to be delivered at All Saints. Nothing in the lecture, he informs us, had struck him as new: 'The political doctrines advocated were not new to me. I had imbibed a belief in the justice of Universal Suffrage when a boy from the papers lent me by the Radical brushmakers. I heard from John Mason simply the recital of the old political programme of the Duke of Richmond, and his friends, at the close of the last century; of noble, honest Major John Cartwright; of Hunt and later Radicals',<sup>2</sup> but it was what took place after the lecture that moved Cooper so profoundly that it evoked the most important decision of his life.

After the lecture, Cooper was surprised to see the windows of the stocking weavers still lighted and to hear the creak of their frames:

'Do your stocking weavers often work so late as this?'  
I asked of some of the men who were leaving the meeting.

'No, not often: work's over scarce for that,' they answered; 'but we're glad to work any hour, when we can get work to do.'

'Then your hosiery trade is not good in Leicester?'  
I observed.

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2. Life, pp.135-6.

'Good! It's been good for nought this many a year,' said one of them; 'we've a bit of spurt now and then. But we soon go back again to starvation!'  
'And what may be the average earning of a stocking weaver?' I asked,- 'I mean when a man is fully employed.'  
'About four and sixpence,' was the reply ...  
'Four and sixpence,' I said; 'well, six fours are twenty-four, and six sixpences are three shillings: that's seven-and-twenty shillings a week. The wages are not so bad when you are in work.'  
'What are you talking about?' said they. 'You mean four and sixpence a day; but we mean four and sixpence a week.'  
'Four and sixpence a week!' I exclaimed. 'You don't mean that men have to work in those stocking frames that I hear going now, a whole week for four and sixpences. How can they maintain their wives and children?'  
'Ay, you may well ask that,' said one of them, sadly.  
3

About the effect of this conversation on Cooper's mind we need not speculate: 'What I heard now seemed incredible;' says Cooper, 'yet these spirit-stricken men seemed to mean what they said. I felt, therefore, that I must know something more about the real meaning of what they had told me. I began to learn more of the sorrowful truth from them; and I learned it day by day more fully, as I made inquiry.'<sup>4</sup>

Soon afterwards, Cooper was invited to become the editor of the Chartist Paper in Leicester, The Midland Counties Illuminator; he accepted the offer with alacrity. When warned that the Chartists would not be able to pay him the money promised, his answer revealed his reasons not just for accepting the editorship but also for joining Chartism: 'I think I can make the paper into something better, if they will give it into my hands; and I think I can do some good among those poor men, if I join them.'<sup>5</sup>

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3. Life, pp.138-9.
  4. Ibid., p.139.
  5. Ibid., p.146.

Between 1841-5 (two years of which, 1843-5 were spent in Stafford Gaol), Cooper was the leader of Chartism in Leicester and the staunch supporter of O'Connor. After his release from prison, though, he turned against O'Connor and joined the so-called 'Moral Force Chartists'. By 1848 he was working independently, lecturing on the doctrines of Chartism, editing his journals The Plain Speaker and Cooper's Journal and writing his novels, Alderman Ralph (1853) and The Family Feud (1855).<sup>6</sup> In 1856, however, while lecturing in the Hall of Science on 'Sweden and the Swedes', Cooper, to his audience's surprise, declared his Christian faith and his allegiance to the Church, denouncing secularism, though he was still to oscillate between belief and disbelief till 1858 when he resumed his vigorous campaign of lecturing - this time on Christianity. For many years to come he toured the country as an itinerant preacher of the Bible. He spent the rest of his life lecturing on Christianity and collecting his works till he died in July 1892, at the age of 88.

As Cooper declared, radical thought was inbred in his early life and learning. Describing his childhood activities between the years 1816-20, he says:

During these years I was still practising drawing, and playing my dulcimer, and gathering flowers, and trying to find out their names by Culpepper's Herbal, and reading anything and everything I could lay hold of; and in addition to all these, I was becoming thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of Radicalism. There was a shop of brush-makers very near to us, and they were most determined politicians. They read 'The News' - the most radical paper of that day; and they were partisans of Cobbett and Wooler and Hunt; and they used to lend me Hone's Caricatures, and 'The News', weekly, and talk to me of the 'villianous rascals', Lord Castlereagh, and Lord Sidmouth, and Lord Eldon, and the Prince Regent, until I hated the Liverpool Ministry, and its master, bitterly, and believed that the sufferings of the poor were chiefly attributed to them.

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6. For a chronology of Cooper's works, see appendix 2.

7. Life, pp.35-6.

Again when he started his job as a journalist in the 'Lincoln, Rutland, and Stamford Mercury', he found himself steeped in the world of politics:

My office on the newspaper brought me into the world of politics. It will have been seen, already, that I had been a Radical from boyhood; and, now, of course, I belonged in Lincoln to the Lytton-Bulwer Party. For the great novelist, dramatist, and so on, - the present Conservative Lord Lytton, was then the Liberal Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer. And when I asked him, one day, at the table of one of his principal supporters, what government he would prefer for England, if we could choose the kind of government, now? - he replied, without hesitation - 'A Republican Government'.

8

Yet, it was not to establish a Republican Government that Cooper joined the Chartist Movement; neither was he incited to join the movement by his radical political theories, but rather, as he said, he became a Chartist because he believed he could do some practical good for the poverty-stricken weavers who had filled him with feelings of pity and sorrow.

Cooper's main contribution to the Chartist Movement, however, was undoubtedly educational. As a Chartist, he developed a view of the political role of the intellectual to the point where the literary and the political became one and the same thing. G.D.H.Cole, in his fair and interesting account of Cooper's career argues that: 'his heart was never really in politics: it was in education and moral instruction. These cravings he was able to satisfy first as a Rationalist lecturer and later as an itinerant preacher.'<sup>9</sup> Even by his own contemporaries, Cooper was not acknowledged any differently; in an account of a soirée given in the Chartist Hall, Turnagian Lane, on 4 May 1846 (being the first anniversary of Cooper's release from Stafford Gaol), for example, G.J.Holyoake concludes his report of the soirée thus: 'This vigorous simplicity of expression The Reasoner will ever applaud. It is on this

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8. Life, pp.115-16.

9. Chartist Portraits, p.217.

account we hail Mr. Cooper as a valuable contributor to our national literature. The class from which he springs and which he represents, will, we have hope, restore the solid character of British diction.'<sup>10</sup>

Cooper, in fact, not only lectured on the political significance of knowledge, as Shelley and Jones had done, but he actually went out touring the country teaching people how to read and write, how to read poetry and how to write it, how to read books and how to judge them. By doing so he became a unique figure in the Chartist Movement at once enacting and magnifying the role of the intellect in reform. Here, I shall study the parallels and affinities between Shelley's and Cooper's views on the role of education in reform, and the means they advocated for achieving political reform. In the second section of this chapter I shall mainly deal with Cooper and Shelley as poets.

#### 1. The Political Importance of Education

Having become the leader of Chartism in Leicester, Cooper set up Sunday classes to teach the working people how to read and write, the work that he deemed to be at the core of his mission as an educated Chartist:

I HAD not joined the ranks of the poor and the oppressed with the expectation of having those rough election scenes to pass through. And now I had passed through them, I began to turn my thoughts to something far more worthy of a man's earnestness. As soon as the Shakespearean Room was secured, I formed an adult Sunday-school, for men and boys who were at work on the week days. All the more intelligent in our ranks gladly assisted as teachers; and we soon had the room filled on Sunday mornings and afternoons. The Old and New Testaments, Channing's 'Self-culture', and other tracts, of which I do not remember the names, formed our class-books. And we, fancifully, named our classes, not first, second, third, etc., but the 'Algernon Sydney Class', 'Andrew Marvel Class', 'John Hampden Class', 'John Milton Class' ... and so on.

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10. 'The Late Soirée in Honour of Thomas Cooper', The Reasoner, I, No.1 (3 June 1846), pp.3-5 (p.5).

11. Life, p.164.

What is evident from the first two sentences of this passage is that Cooper joined the movement as an earnest teacher rather than as a determined politician, and an earnest teacher he was always to be.

Amongst Cooper's incessant attempts to teach and educate the masses, his eight letters 'To the Young Men of the Working Classes',<sup>12</sup> constitute an outstanding achievement. In the first of these letters, he points out that the current stress on education in such years of starvation and depression is by no means an evasion of the real issues, but instead an effective way of facing and tackling them. He supports his statement by reminding his audience of the remarkable influence that poets of the past - not least among them Byron and Shelley, of course - exert on their lives:

Let no hard-minded scoffer persuade you that this would be the language of romance. True and worthy emotions, justified by reason, never deserve that censure. The realm of peerless Alfred, - the cradle-land of Shakespeare, - that earth made sacred by the ashes of Wickliffe and Latimer, by the blood of Hampden and Sydney, - the soil on which were reared Chaucer and Milton, Byron and Shelley, - where Bacon arose to remodel all human knowledge, Newton to span and gauge the circles and depths of the material universe, and Locke to form anew the science of the mind.

13

While Shelley's name is barely mentioned in this letter, it is paid a special tribute in another. Recommending a reading list to his audience, Cooper impresses upon their minds the importance of Shelley's philosophy and its relevance to their lives and needs. Starting with Shakespeare, he goes on to suggest that:

... next to Shakespeare, you cannot say that you are acquainted with the true standard of poetry unless you have companioned with the sublimity of Milton, the fervour of Byron, the feeling of Burns, the thought of Wordsworth, the beauty of Keats, the prescience of Shelley - for his hand awoke upon the

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12. All these letters are published in The Plain Speaker (London, 1849).

13. Ibid., I, No.2 (1849), p.[9].

lyre the first notes of the choral hymn of future ages: We understand but a part of his music: it remains for the world of enfranchised men to comprehend the whole.

14

Thus in Cooper's case too the Chartist sees himself, in part at least, as the fulfilment of Shelley's hopes - the 'future' object of his prescience. Almost immediately after eulogizing Shelley's philosophy, he goes on to reason that:

The key to the condition of society and of the individual man, now, is to be found in the record of the Past. History will shew you how events have necessitated succeeding events - till it brings you to a comprehension of the result, the Present. And he who most fully understands how the Past has produced the Present, is most likely to foresee what kind of Future will arise.

15

This is the pivot of Shelley's Queen Mab:

The present and the past thou hast beheld:  
It was a desolate sight. Now, spirit, learn  
The secrets of the Future.

(VIII, 1-3)

Moreover, Cooper's eight letters remind the reader, both in tone and content, of Shelley's Address to the Irish People. Like the Address, they reiterate again and again that ignorance begets slavery while knowledge is the mother of freedom. Addressing the Irish people, Shelley (as I argued in chapter 2, see pp.70-1 above) stresses that: 'Ignorance and vice commonly go together: he that would do good must be wise - a man cannot be truly wise who is not truly virtuous.'<sup>16</sup> In the same way, Cooper reminds his audience that: '-ignorance is often an intolerable and oppressive load; that knowledge once obtained, costs you nothing to keep, while ignorance may subject you to expense as long as you live.'<sup>17</sup>

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14. The Plain Speaker, I, No.8, pp.57-8.
15. Ibid., pp.58-9.
16. Works, V, p.232.
17. The Plain Speaker, I, No.4 (1849), p.26.

Again, in his Cooper's Journal which superseded The Plain Speaker, Cooper included an article by Gerald Massey which recapitulates the same point: '... it is in the dense ignorance which covers the people like a sea of darkness, that Tyranny lets drop its anchors. Remove this, and its mainstay is gone; and the King-craft, the Priest-craft, and the State-craft shall be swept away by the rushing waves of Progress.'<sup>18</sup> His anxiety that his words should have real power in the world and leave their mark on his readers and audience was explicit: 'If I could use words of fire, - syllables of lightning, - they should be employed, if by such means I could arouse you to the noblest of all aspirations - that of becoming truly intelligent men.'<sup>19</sup>

Implicit variously in Cooper's and Shelley's works is the theory that the attainment of knowledge would necessarily initiate the dawn of freedom, with the sole difference that what Cooper calls 'knowledge', Shelley, more often than not, calls 'wisdom': 'I wish to impress upon your minds, that without virtue or wisdom, there can be no liberty or happiness; and that temperance, sobriety, charity, and independence of soul, will give you virtue - as thinking, enquiring, reading, and talking, will give you wisdom.'<sup>20</sup> Of the interrelation between the acquisition of knowledge, the realisation of freedom and the achievement of an everlasting reform, Shelley offers this account:

To improve your own minds is to join these two views: conversation and reading are the principal and chief methods of awakening the mind to knowledge and goodness. Reading or thought, will principally bestow the former of these - the benevolent exercise of the powers of the mind in communicating useful knowledge, will bestow an habit, of the latter, both united, will contribute so far as lies in your individual power to that great reform, which will be perfect and finished the moment every one is virtuous and wise.

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18. Cooper's Journal, I, No.8 (1850), p.114.

19. The Plain Speaker, I, No.4 (1849), p.25.

20. Works, V, p.235.

21. Ibid., p.237.

In testimony to the same creed, Cooper explains:

... never let it be forgotten that it is the want of knowledge among the millions which keeps us out of the possession of Freedom. Even the intelligent are prevented from breaking their bonds, by the unintelligent. Ponder on this, while at labour; and you will see a depth of truth in it that will make your hearts burn to spread knowledge. All history will confirm it: you will, age after age, see the intelligent Few bursting their bonds - but in vain! - the unintelligent Many bring back slavery, more or less resembling the Past, 'Knowledge is Power' is the profoundest axiom of the profoundest English thinker: perhaps, it is the most profound saying ever uttered since mankind existed.

22

The unmistakable parallel between these two declarations, added to the fact that soon after uttering the words cited above, Cooper moves to praise Shelley's infallible influence on future ages,<sup>23</sup> lends force to the plausibility of Shelley's influence on Cooper in this particular aspect of his thought.

Moreover, both Cooper and Shelley demonstrate that by spreading education and knowledge, men of intellect make invaluable contributions to social and political changes. Even when he was trying in 1817 to scale down the role of the French intellectuals in the Revolution, Shelley still had to admit in his Proposals for an Association that:

... the Revolution in France was occasioned by the literary labours of the Encyclopedists. When we see two events together, in certain cases, we speak of one as the cause, the other the effect. We have no other idea of cause and effect, but that which arises from necessary connection; it is therefore, still doubtful whether D'Alembert, Boulanger, Condorcet and other celebrated characters, were the cause of the overthrow of ancient monarchy of France. Thus much is certain, that they contributed greatly to the extension and diffusion of knowledge, and that knowledge is incompatible with slavery.

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22. The Plain Speaker, I, No.8 (1849), p.[57].

23. What Cooper says of Shelley at this particular point has already been quoted; see quotation No.14 above.

24. Works, V, p.264 (my emphasis).

Referring to public speakers who spent their time teaching and educating the people, Cooper similarly stresses that 'Their history will make an important chapter, one day, in the political and social chronicle of Britain.'<sup>25</sup>

As a man of letters, Shelley's influence on Cooper has been discerned before. Alton - whose character is believed to have been modelled on Cooper's<sup>26</sup> - in Charles Kingsley's novel Alton Locke is spellbound by the philosophy of Shelley which therefore permeates most of his arguments; on reading the manuscript of one of Alton's works, Dean Winnstay remarks: 'Shelley has had so much influence on your writing. He is a guide as irregular in taste, as unorthodox in doctrine; though there are some pretty things in him now and then. And you have caught his melody tolerably here, now -'<sup>27</sup> Yet all the evidence suggests that Cooper was acutely aware of the limited use of Shelley's views on education for the more pressing and the more practical needs of Chartism. Although, in theory, his views on the political role of education coincided almost completely with Shelley's, in practice, he carried the maxim a good deal further in the sense that he acted on these views travelling up and down the country lecturing on people, informing and enlightening them, so much so that he became one of the most eminent Chartist educationalists, duly acknowledged as such.

The first article to discuss at any length Cooper's efforts in education is by Robert Peers: 'Thomas Cooper - The Leicester Chartist'.<sup>28</sup> Peer's evaluation of Cooper, the teacher and lecturer, is best conveyed in one question he asks:

Who can tell into what depths of apathy and degradation,  
but for them, the working class of this country might  
have been plunged during the blackest days of its history?  
These men - Place, Lovett, Cooper, and a host of others

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25. The Plain Speaker, I, No.11 (1849), p.82.

26. For a detailed discussion of this point, see Philip Collins, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist: Byron and the 'Poets of the Poor' (Nottingham Byron Lecture, 1969), pp.8-9.

27. Charles Kingsley, Alton Locke (London, 1850), 2 vols, I, p.220.

28. Journal of Adult Education, V, No.3 (October 1931), pp.239-52.

unremembered - made themselves into teachers at a cost which can scarcely be computed in these days when adult education has won for itself, largely because of their efforts, a sure place in the educational system of the country.

29

Earlier, in an obituary to Cooper, G.J.Harney maintains that Thomas Cooper was 'a born crusader, and valued journalism only as a means - one of the means - to enlighten the ignorant, impart hope to the despairing and to stimulate the unrepresented toilers to struggle for emancipation.'<sup>30</sup>

Earlier still, G.J.Holyoake, while reporting on Cooper's visit to Ireland and Scotland, stresses that: 'Incomparably the most attractive of all our metropolitan lecturers, critical Scotland will be curious to hear him who has lent lustre to Chartism, interest to Socialism, and power to freedom of opinion.'<sup>31</sup> But as well as being a teacher and lecturer who rendered great services to the educational system in Britain, Cooper was, of course, a political leader. In considering his politics we may find that historians have oversimplified a complex case in identifying Cooper with what they call Physical Force Chartists.

## 2. Moral Resistance or Physical Violence

John Saville, in his introduction to Thomas Cooper's Autobiography, maintains that: 'Looking back in 1872 upon his career, [Cooper] was clearly proud of the part which he had played in national politics at the same time as he found it less easy to confess his political record of physical-force militancy than to set forth his religious errors. But the political record in his case, is easy to reconstruct.'<sup>32</sup> What we said of Physical-Force Chartism also applies to Cooper, of course - his physical-force militancy was one of rhetoric and language. Perhaps, it would have

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29. Journal of Adult Education, V, No.3 (October 1931), p.251.

30. Newcastle Weekly Chronicle (23 July 1892).

31. The Reasoner, XI, No.5 (1851), p.65. For similar views on Cooper's efforts on education, see ibid., XXX, No.893 (1872), p.25.

32. Life (repr. London, 1971), p.28.

been for the best if the Chartists had had a policy for the use of arms as a last recourse if the government did not yield to their demands, but they did not. The effectiveness of their moral-force 'policy' was always dubious for they were trying to establish the Charter by Parliamentary means when the working class, which was most immediately involved, was not represented in Parliament at all. It may thus be true to say that the Chartist Movement was politically naive. However, our main concern here is to examine things as they were rather than to offer moral judgements.

The incidents in Cooper's life which are often taken to prove his violent inclinations are those which preceded his first trial, after which he was acquitted, and his second trial which ended in his imprisonment in 1843. These incidents are described by him in his preface to the first edition of The Purgatory of Suicides (1845):

The first six stanzas of the following poem may be considered as embodying a speech I delivered to the Colliers on strike, in the Staffordshire Potteries, on the 15th of August, 1842. Without either purposing, aiding and abetting, or even knowing of an outbreak till it had occurred, I regret to add that my address was followed by the demolition and burning of several houses, and by other acts of violence. I, and others, were apprehended and tried.

33

On this occasion, he was tried and acquitted, but his advice to the workers to "cease labour until the People's Charter became the law of the land," - for that I had so advised the Colliers in the Potteries, and would not deny it'<sup>34</sup> led to his being jailed for two years. To cease work is not exactly the same as to use violent measures or deploy arms. Indeed, in a speech which he gave on the same day as his Crown Bank speech, on 15 August 1842 (which was followed by acts of violence), Cooper asserts that:

... I went at seven o'clock to the place where I had stood in the morning. Before I began, some of the men who were drunk, and who, it seems, had been in

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33. Thomas Cooper, The Poetical Works (London, 1886), p.vi.

34. Ibid., p.viii.

the riot at Longton, came round me and wanted to shake hands with me. But I shook them off, and told them I was ashamed to see them. I began by telling the immense crowd - for its numbers were soon countless - that I had heard there had been destruction of property that day, and I warned all who had participated in that act, that they were not the friends, but the enemies of freedom.

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On the other hand, the theory that Cooper went to prison a physical-force Chartist and came out of it - like a good many others at the time - an advocate of moral force is not absolutely accurate either. Certainly, his life in prison and the execution of six people in front of his cell must have augmented his abhorrence of violence and fostered his inclinations towards peaceful measures, but these inclinations were already there before he was ever tried or sentenced. Robert Peers' balanced judgement is to the point: 'While in prison he had time to think things over. Never afterwards did he depart from his main purpose - the intellectual uplifting of his class - for experiments in physical force. He had never, in fact, belonged to the Physical Force Chartists; but he unconsciously allowed himself to be affected by the spirit of the moment.'<sup>36</sup>

Certainly it is a fact that after his release from prison, Cooper denounced all kinds of violence used for any reason and under any circumstance. His reasons are not too different from Shelley's; the lesson both of them derived from history is that violence is incompatible with freedom. Reflecting on the French Revolution, Shelley asks: 'Wherever has violence succeeded? The French Revolution, although undertaken with the best intentions, ended ill for the people; because violence was employed.'<sup>37</sup> From the history of Chartism, Cooper derives a similar lesson: 'I had on several occasions seen it right to speak strongly against the old Chartist error of physical force. For the more I reflected on the past, the more clearly I saw that the popular desire for

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35. Life, p.194.

36. Robert Peers, 'Thomas Cooper-- The Leicester Chartist', p.248.

37. Works, V, pp.225-6.

freedom had failed through those errors.'<sup>38</sup> Again, in his sixth letter 'To the Men of the Working Classes', he stipulates that: 'Violence will win nothing for our order: it has been tried, and has failed ... I wish I could use words to convince you, - syllables that would burn into the hearts of young men, - and fill you with as strong a conviction as I have, that you could free England, by your own intelligent and energetic exertion.'<sup>39</sup> Cooper's message, here, parallels Laon's in The Revolt of Islam for which he 'drew / Words which were weapons' (II, XX, 5-6). What makes the parallel all the more significant and enhances the plausibility of Shelley's influence on Cooper is that towards the conclusion of this same letter, Cooper goes on to say: 'O go forth as the advocates of human right, talking of it earnestly - and yet with suaveness and perfect temper - "meek and bold" to use the phrase of Shelley - pleading for it every where.'<sup>40</sup>

Cooper, in some unpublished letters, reveals to Tatlow his fears of an outbreak of violence: 'I expect nothing but anarchy, flames and bloodshed in England as soon as insurrection bursts forth in Ireland - unless a certain negotiation succeeds.'<sup>41</sup> A few days later, he again confides to Tatlow how he shudders at the idea of bloodshed:

... the only hope of a moral<sup>~</sup> and peaceable change remains now with the party forming under Hume, Cobden, Bright, etc. etc. ... If they be earnest - the suffrage will be won. If not - the earthquake of Revolution will surely come, in blood, and flames, and ruin - though not by preparation: it will be as spontaneous as the outbreak in France, in 1789; and bring with it equal horrors for England.

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38. Life, p.297.

39. The Plain Speaker, I, No.22 (1849), p.170.

40. Ibid., p.172.

41. 13 April 1848, Cooper-Tatlow Letters, April 1848-January 1860. MS, Bishop's Gate Institute. These Letters are unbound. They are written on small size yellow and blue paper and wrapped with a white sheet of paper and brown ribbon; the title is hand-written in blue ink.

42. Ibid.

Both Shelley and Cooper believed that the advocates of a just cause should trust the truth and justice of their cause rather than use violent measures for its enforcement. As both poets stressed, this is not to say that one need not resist tyranny or be at war with slavery, all it means is that the resistance should be a peaceful one: 'I agree with the Quakers,' Shelley asserts to the Irish people, 'so far as they disclaim violence, and trust their cause wholly and solely to its own truth.-. If you are convinced of the truth of your cause, trust wholly to its truth; if you are not convinced, give it up.'<sup>43</sup> Shelley was quick to point out, however, that this counsel implies no submissiveness or supineness: '... I have recommended moderation whilst yet I have earnestly insisted upon energy and perseverance; I have spoken of peace, yet declared that resistance is laudable; but the intellectual resistance which I recommend, I deem essential to the introduction of the millennium of virtue, whose period every one can, so far as he is concerned, forward by his own proper power.'<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Cooper explains that the principle of non-resistance, 'Although it forbids its disciples to shed blood even in self-defence, it does not inculcate a resignation of body and soul to the power of tyrants. It arrests the hand of violence in every man, because it teaches that a higher power than force exists: that Truth is omnipotent, and is sure to prevail if maintained.'<sup>45</sup> In this context, he argues, non-resistance should be really called 'Moral resistance', for reformers should never 'sit down, tongue-stricken and nerveless, and sinewless, and let the unenlightened and the mistaught be trepanned into the league for evil, and so let wrong wax strong. You are to cry out against wrong, until the wrongdoer be paralysed with the shout.'<sup>46</sup>

Embedded in Shelley's and Cooper's arguments against physical force is their implacable message that reform should start in the individual mind; let us cite again<sup>47</sup> Shelley's memorable call to the Irish people:

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43. Works, V, p.224.

44. Ibid., pp.243-4.

45. Thomas Cooper, Two Orations Against Taking Away Human Life, Under Any Circumstances; and in Explanation, and Defence, of the Misrepresented Doctrine of Non-Resistance (London, 1846), p.50.

46. Ibid., p.51.

47. This quotation was also produced in chapter 1, p.46 above.

'Before Government is done away with, we must reform ourselves. It is this work which I would earnestly recommend to you, O Irishmen, REFORM YOURSELVES.'<sup>48</sup> Cooper also believed, as Conklin points out, that 'mere legal amendments or intellectual agreements, would never be capable of ending offensive warfare. Nothing would do it except the quelling of that spirit in the individual which leads to war.'<sup>49</sup>

### 3. Cooper and Shelley as Poets: The Purgatory of Suicides and Queen Mab

Byron's Childe Harold was the first poem to excite Cooper's fascination for poetry, a fascination which, as he was soon to discover, contained the rudimentary powers of composition:

I do not remember that poetry really touched any chord in my nature, until, in my thirteenth year, by some accident there fell into my hands one of the cantos of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' and the drama of 'Manfred'. I had them in my hands for only a few hours, and I knew nothing of their noble author's life or reputation; but they seemed to create almost a new sense within me. I wanted more poetry to read from that time; but could get hold of none that thrilled through my nature like Byron's.

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Since then, Cooper sought poetry to read, and more importantly, attempted to write himself; the poetry he wrote was 'good enough to be admired by Dickens, Carlyle, Wordsworth, and other literary notables, and to enjoy a considerable vogue.'<sup>51</sup>

Cooper's poetry, especially his Chartist poetry, represents an extreme example of the inextricably mixed literary and political problem with which the Chartist poets were faced: what kind of poetry they were to write, long epic poems or lyrical balladlike poems? To what extent could the political role of poetry be carried out without overlooking

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48. Works, V, p.232.

49. Robert J. Conklin, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist (Manila, 1935), p.281.

50. Life, p.35.

51. Cole, Chartist Portraits, p.211.

its literary values?

As we noted earlier, when the ferment of Chartism began to pall many Chartist poets - Jones and Linton, for instance - wrote long, narrative poems in which they dwelt on and summarised a political experience. Earlier, though, they did write popular songs and lyrics which were first and foremost designed to move and direct the masses. But Cooper, though a Chartist when the political fervour of the movement was at a high pitch, devoted his full energy - apart from about five Chartist songs - to his long epic poem, in the difficult Spenserian stanza, The Purgatory of Suicides. By doing so he perhaps opted, as Martha Vicinus surmises, for impressing his betters<sup>52</sup> and, as he might have thought, for making a major contribution to Chartist literature. His expectations were not ill-founded; The Purgatory won him the respect and acclaim he was anxious to obtain amongst literary notables and ran into a fourth edition in his life-time. Yet, seen in its own times (1845), The Purgatory, both on literary and political grounds, is a peculiar achievement indeed.

For one thing, while lyrics, songs and ballads, written in such a way as to be understood by the general public, were the most popular forms of poetry in 1845, The Purgatory is a narrative poem in ten cantos which draws on multifarious sources of knowledge that makes it an almost impossible text for working-class men and not a very easy one for middle-class readers either. For another thing, its immense display of knowledge coupled with its lack of a strong theme to link its twelve cantos are bound to throw some doubt on its political effectiveness. What is more, at a time when practical issues were raised and discussed and when the struggle for the Charter was at a critical stage, the poem focuses on more general and more abstract political theories. It could have been engendered by Cooper's judgement that difficult and complicated poetry was of greater literary value, or was an extreme reaction to the much stressed need at the time to write simple and intelligible poetry for the working class; it may simply have been the most apposite project to engage himself in during the long and lonely hours of imprisonment,

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52. See The Industrial Muse, p.98.

or it may have been that in writing The Purgatory, Cooper was imitating poets of stature, like Byron and Shelley, by writing a grand work comparable to Childe Harold or Queen Mab. Two points, however, lend more weight to the final proposition; first, Cooper started The Purgatory before he entered prison,<sup>53</sup> so the idea was not a by-product of his imprisonment and second, the recollection of Byron's poetry, as he informs us, helped him to determine what mode of poetry he should choose for his prison-rhyme (if nothing more): 'The remembrance that Byron had shown the stanza of the "Faery Queene" to be capable of as much grandeur and force as the blank verse of "Paradise Lost", while he also demonstrated that it admits the utmost freedom that can be needed for the treatment of a grave theme, determined me to abide by the Spenserean stanza.'<sup>54</sup>

Yet, Cooper's departure - intentional or otherwise - from the norm makes him an interesting case-study as a Chartist poet. Living in an age when the political role of poetry was emphasized, and being a poet himself, Cooper chose to fulfil his role through an almost inexhaustible sequence of lectures, many of which were on the lives and works of other poets. The study of his Purgatory, on the other hand, and the comparison we are about to draw between it and Queen Mab might indicate that political principles such as the ones we noted in Queen Mab become of little political consequence, if applied to the wrong times in the wrong way. The comparison might also shed some light on Cooper's poem: it might highlight the points of importance and interest in such a long and complicated poem and clarify its structure. Before I undertake this task I shall briefly reflect on Cooper's lectures on the lives and poetry of other poets.

As we have just remarked, Cooper considered his lectures on the lives and works of poets as part and parcel of his political role as a Chartist educationalist. By encouraging his audience to read more poetry and be better acquainted with the noble authors of the past, Cooper was intent on animating them with the spirit of freedom and justice which he deemed

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53. See Life, p.251.

54. Ibid.

to be the essence of the poetry explained. Thus, 'Lives and Works of Poets' became one of his most engaging themes. In 1849, Cooper lectured on the lives of Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Byron and Burns, especially on the 'poets of freedom', Byron and Shelley,<sup>55</sup> and from 1846 to 1855, 'he was engaged almost continuously in lecturing on literary, historical, political and theological subjects in the various Socialist, Chartist, and Secularist halls of London.'<sup>56</sup> Cooper believed that to consider the lives of poets could be of great help in the study of their works. When treating poetry, he stressed in his 'Address to Men of the Future', 'it is better to treat the Life of the poet as the basis of the theme. All great poets of whose lives we know anything, have had deeply eventful lives. They were all great wrestlers with men and things.'<sup>57</sup> From another viewpoint, the lives of poets, he argued, are of particular historical significance; they are characteristic of their own times: '... even the greatest poets lose something of their individuality, and become the representatives of their time - even in their modes of writing, as well as in the sentiments they express.'<sup>58</sup> Hence, his insistence that the lives of poets should be more often considered or even studied, and his regret that the lives of the great English poets - not least Shelley's, of course - had not been properly written yet: the English language 'is deficient in earnestly-written lives of Howard, Bernard Gilpin ... Lord Bacon, Milton, Sir William Jones, Shelley, Paine and some others of the greatest men our country has produced.'<sup>59</sup>

In defending the memory of these great men and commending their works, the name of Shelley appears as one of his greatest favourites:

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55. See Robert J. Conklin, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist, p.329.

56. Ibid., p.302.

57. The Plain Speaker, I, No.14 (1849), p.106.

58. Cooper's Journal, I, No.14 (1850), p.210.

59. The Plain Speaker, I, No.28 (1849), p.218.

Milton escaped a bloody death; but it took one hundred years to free his memory from reproach. Shelley and Paine have been but a few years with the dead, as yet; and we must endure to behold their names loaded with the venom of calumny - assured that the time will come when they will be classed with the honoured departed, and receive the universal love and reverence which is their due.

But the time is not yet; and he who undertakes the humble task of justifying the memory of the fearless enemy of kings and priests must be content to share his reproach ... My brief task tonight I regard as a solemn duty; and if it were the last hour I had to live, I would cheerfully and earnestly discharge it, by defending the memory of the stay-maker.

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Here, there is an unmistakable sense of self-identification with the 'honoured departed', and the 'fearless enemy of kings and priests'; this sense of identification no doubt goes some way to explain Cooper's persistent advocacy of the lives and works of poets.

#### Cooper's Purgatory of Suicides and Shelley's Queen Mab

Some critics might argue that it is to Milton's Paradise Lost rather than to Shelley's Queen Mab that Cooper's Purgatory should be compared, partly because the poem and its notes contain more references to Milton than to any other English poet and partly because Cooper knew Paradise Lost by heart; the same was not true of Queen Mab. From a closer reading of the text, however, one might, without ruling out the possibility of a Miltonic influence, suggest that The Purgatory owes more to Shelley and especially to his Queen Mab than to any other English poem. The most apparent characteristic that links The Purgatory with Queen Mab rather than with Paradise Lost is its plan and vision: like Queen Mab, The Purgatory is a dream, or indeed, a series of dreams; it is a journey between earth and heaven rather than between Earth, Hell and Heaven as is the case in Paradise Lost; the pivotal point of the argument in both poems is the

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60. 'Life and Political Writings of Thomas Paine', The Reasoner, II, No.43 (1847), pp.147-50 (p.148).

social and political system on earth rather than the original sin and the fall of man, it is the state of man as it is and as it might be rather than as it had been before or immediately after the fall. Moreover, the introductory and concluding parts of The Purgatory's ten books bear, as we shall see, striking similarities to Shelley's Queen Mab.

The first six stanzas of The Purgatory, however (which are supposed to versify Cooper's Address to the Polters and Colliers on strike at Hanley, on 15 August 1842), are comparable not to Shelley's Queen Mab, but to his 'Song to the Men of England' (1819). In their opening lines, both poets urge the workers to stop their work which is turned by their employers into an effective measure against their very rights; Shelley's opening takes the form of a rhetorical question:

MEN of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay ye low?

(I, 1-2)

So too does Cooper's, but only after stating his counsel in the affirmative:

SLAVES, toil no more! Why delve, and moil, and pine,  
To glut the tyrant-forgers of your chain?

(I, I, 1-2)<sup>61</sup>

Although the message is exactly the same and the mode of poetry used is not too different either, Shelley's opening remains unmistakably the more forceful. Partly, perhaps, because Shelley addresses his audience as 'Men of England' which certainly makes a more appropriate impact than 'Slaves' used by Cooper, and partly because Shelley rapidly moves to his question - 'wherefore plough' - and this infuses his first line with a sense of urgency lost in Cooper's line because of his command 'toil no more'. Shelley's adroitness in avoiding direct advice becomes all the more important when we recall that the questions in both poems are really impassioned modes of conveying this advice - direct statement therefore might well enfeeble the rhetorical force of the question and attenuate its effect.

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61. The edition I used for this study of The Purgatory of Suicides is the first edition (London, 1845).

As we have seen elsewhere, Shelley questions the wisdom of continued submission and objects to the situation where the people have to work only to serve, feed, and clothe their oppressors (5-10). Cooper attempts the same:

"Away! - the howl of wolves in sheep's disguise  
Why suffer ye to fill your ears? - their pride  
Why suffer ye to stalk before your eyes?  
Behold, in pomp, the purple prelate ride,  
And, on the beggar by his chariot's side  
Frown sullenly, although in rags and shame  
His brother cries for food! Up, swell the tide  
Of retribution, till ye end the game  
Long practised by sleek priests in old Religion's name.

(I, V, 1-9)

Cooper's imagery is expressive of a more fiercely oppressive and difficult reality - 'the howl of wolves', 'in rags and shame' and 'his brother cries for food' - than we find in Shelley. On the other hand, in these very stanzas, Cooper, like Shelley in 'The Masque of Anarchy' warns people against the impetuosity of violence; while acknowledging the grounds that might well give rise to feelings of vengeance, Shelley emphatically stresses that such feelings should be withheld and controlled:

'Then it is to feel revenge  
Fiercely thirsting to exchange  
Blood for blood - and wrong for wrong -  
Do not thus when ye are strong.

(XLVIII, 1-4)

Once more, before he concludes his poem, the same message is reiterated:

'Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms and looks which are  
Weapons of unvanquished war,

(LXXIX, 1-4)

In the same way, in the sixth and last stanza of his versified speech, Cooper urges his audience to

Join but to fold your hands, and ye will foil  
To utter helplessness, - yea, to the core  
Strike both their craft with paler death! - Slaves, toil no more!

(I, VI, 7-9)

Whether or not Cooper had Shelley's 'folded arms' in mind while writing his 'fold your hands', it is amply evident that his lines convey the central thought with which Shelley's lines are filled. The return of 'Toil no more' gives point to the opening of the poem and of this particular stanza too.

On the whole, however, it is to Shelley's Queen Mab that The Purgatory of Suicides seems to be indebted; in vision, imagery, political and religious arguments, it seems to offer close parallels to Shelley's poem. It is to a detailed study of such parallels that we shall turn now.

(a) Vision and Imagery

'It is possible that the visions of The Purgatory of Suicides owe something to the greater visions of Shelley', Robert Conklin writes in a footnote in his biography of Thomas Cooper, 'Cooper was a great admirer of this poet, and early familiar with his work. The Purgatory resembles Queen Mab in being a vision, in its denunciation of priestcraft, and in its prophecy of a future age of brotherhood.'<sup>62</sup> Philip Collins, too, in his pamphlet Thomas Cooper, The Chartist etc. remarks that the vision of The Purgatory of Suicides 'derives from Shelley, not Dante (whom Cooper had not read)'.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, like Queen Mab, The Purgatory is a dream (in fact, a series of dreams) in which the soul parts from the mortal body and ascends to a heaven where it occupies a point of vantage to fathom the earth's secrets and probe its most intricate mysteries.

The journey that Cooper's soul ventures is very much reminiscent of that pioneered by Mab and Ianthe; the time is night, the road is along a sea engulfed in unbroken darkness where neither party can see what they are bypassing till the morning light breaks. When the morning light does gleam, however, it reveals at one flash the most perplexing secrets of that distant planet, earth. Shelley depicts the scene thus:

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62, Conklin, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist, p.248n.

63. Collins, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist: Byron and the 'Poets of the Poor', p.12.

There was a little light  
That twinkled in the misty distance:  
None but a spirit's eye  
Might ken that rolling orb;  
None but a spirit's eye,  
And in no other place  
But that celestial dwelling, might behold  
Each action of this earth's inhabitants

(II, 83-90)

More enthusiastically, but less eloquently, Cooper weaves a very similar image of the same scene:

But unimagined, unconceived, unknown,  
Unspeakable, by man, seemed all revealed  
To those awed travellers, as they journeyed on  
Through that vast aisle, - that rather glowed a field  
Of caverned wonders, where each shape did yield,  
For evermore, new changes, -

(I, XXXIII, 1-6)

The central situation in Shelley's last four lines and Cooper's first three lines is exactly the same. Only the soul of a poet, in a dream, could unravel the secrets of the earth by which its own inhabitants are puzzled and mystified. In saying so, both poets put themselves on a distinct footing which qualifies them to criticize what is taking place on earth, and tacitly suggests that their criticism should be accorded a special significance.

Further, when Cooper and Ianthe are invited to launch their journeys to heaven, only their souls wake up leaving their flesh in slumber. Ianthe's soul answers Mab's enchanting call whereas:

Upon the couch the body lay  
Wrapt in the depth of slumber:

(I, 139-40)

When under a similar effect of an unknown power Cooper's soul departs, his body appears much in the same state as that of Ianthe:

Nor did my minstrel guest upon me look  
Farewell - until the soul her mystic flight, -  
Leaving the flesh to slumber, - ...

(II, XX, 1-3)

Cooper's 'Leaving the flesh to slumber' seems literally to echo Shelley's 'the body lay / Wrapt in the depth of slumber'; what is more, in reiterating that this voyage is that of the soul rather than the body, Cooper seems to entertain no doubts about the superiority of the soul over the body:

I know not how these mariners I saw:  
No light made visible the grisly crew:  
It seemed a vision of the soul, - by law  
Of corp'ral sense unfettered, and more true  
Than living things revealed to mortal view

(I, XVIII, 1-5)

the thought that is more lucidly and effectively expressed by Shelley in the following lines:

... 't was a sight  
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.  
The self-same lineaments, the same  
Marks of identity were there:  
Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,  
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,  
And ever changing, ever rising still,  
Wantons in endless being.  
The other, for a time the unwilling sport  
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;  
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;  
Then, like an useless and worn-out machine,  
Rots, perishes, and passes.

(I, 144-56)

Shelley describes his travellers' first move:

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded; ...  
The magic car moved on.  
The night was fair, and countless stars  
Studded heaven's dark blue vault, -

(I, 199-209)

In a similar ambience, Cooper's soul senses its way:

When, o'er Death's sea, by supernatural might  
Upborne, we seemed to speed, - and then to alight  
Together on that 'boundless continent  
'Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night,

(II, XX, 4-7)

In short, the journey to heaven in Cooper's poem (II, XX-XXIV) parallels

in almost every respect that made by Mab and Ianthe (I, 199-II, 67).

In each case when the travellers reach their destination, they claim, as if by intuition, an immediate cognition of the most incomprehensible mysteries on earth. Inspired by Mab's power, Ianthe's intellectual eye could see:

The passions, prejudices, interests,  
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch  
That moves the finest nerve,  
And in one human brain  
Causes the faintest thought ...

(II, 103-7)

So too could Cooper's spirit:

I first perceived, - from law which did coerce  
The traveller - ghosts who reached these realms of woe ...  
No words revealed to me the end or cause  
For which those spirits hither came or went;  
Nor know I if I knew that region's laws  
By some strange influence incident  
Unto its clime; - or whether, now unblent  
With earth's gross mould, deep intuition filled  
The regal mind, - and thus, plenipotent,  
She saw and knew.

(I, XXXV, 3-4 and XXXVI, 1-8)

From their heavenly dwellings, both Shelley and Cooper discern in the ostensibly great civilizations a formidable source of enslavement and suffering. Shelley, on seeing the Pyramids laments that:

... many a widow, many an orphan cursed  
The building of that fane; and many a father,  
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored  
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,  
And spare his children the detested task  
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning  
The choicest days of life,  
To soothe a dotard's vanity

(II, 141-8)

It is the sight of the Pyramids, too, that gives rise to an exactly parallel passage of Cooper's:

... knowledge which, from sire to son bequeathed,  
Hath ever on the Few bounty smiled, -  
But, on the Many, wastingly hath breathed  
A pestilence, - from the scourged crowd that piled,

Of yore, the pyramids, to the dwarfed child  
Whose fragile bloom steam and starvation blast;  
Of specious arts, whereby the bees beguiled,  
Yield to the sable drones their sweet repast,  
And creep, themselves, the path to heaven by pious fast;

(I, XI, 1-9)

Instead of Shelley's 'piling stone on stone', Cooper writes 'piled the pyramids', but all the same, his last six lines recapitulate the idea of Shelley's last four lines. In the lines referred to, it is the suffering of ordinary people that both poets are most concerned about; they stipulate that while the names of tyrants and governors are the landmarks of our history, it is the unknown toiling multitudes that are its real makers and martyrs. Shelley supports his judgement by citing renowned examples, again from pages of history:

How gloomier is the contrast  
Of human nature there!  
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,  
A coward and a fool, spreads death around -  
Then, shuddering, meets his own.  
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,  
A cowed and hypocritical monk  
Prays, curses and deceives

(II, 174-81)

Without mentioning any names, Cooper projects an unmistakably similar picture of history:

... infamy for him who gives himself  
A sacrifice to stem the tyrants' rage;  
And, for the tyrants' pandar, - peerage, pelf,  
And honours blazed with lies on hist'ry's page;  
Of giant Wrong who, fed, from age to age,  
With man's best blood and woman's purest tears,  
Seems with poor humanity to wage  
Exterminating war ...

(I, XII, 1-8)

The first emphasis of this penetration into the essence of history is that man's misery and servitude are the creations of the governing system. Kings, in Shelley's estimation, are the unequivocal first sinners; their vanities are the direst curse the world has received and their presence is incompatible with that of virtue, love and freedom:

... mankind perceive that vice  
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue  
Is peace, and happiness and harmony;  
When man's maturer nature shall disdain  
The playthings of its childhood; - kingly glare  
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority  
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne  
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,

(III, 128-35)

Starting where Shelley ended - the regal hall -, Cooper concentrates on the focal point of Shelley's argument; monarchy generates discord and is the enemy of man's virtue and freedom:

... if Time doth not count with shame  
Its regal dolts and cowards, nor is curst  
With vice of monster kings, - I have their names aspersed ...  
Your race, in every clime, doth merit hate  
And vengeance from mankind - the trembling prey  
Ye ever tortured ere ye deigned to slay!  
But I renew not strife: spirits I glow  
With nobler aim-aside to see ye lay  
These vanities, scorning the gaudy show  
That emblems freedom's, virtue's, wisdom's direst foe:

(I, CXXXVIII, 7-9 and  
CXXXIV, 3-9)

It is noticeable that although in the above passages, both poets regard Monarchy as a source of misfortune and injustice, neither of them contemplates sudden or violent measures to do away with it (which supports in retrospect our argument, earlier in this chapter, concerning Cooper, Shelley and non-violence). Rather they stress that it is through the prevalence of 'virtue', 'peace' and 'harmony' that its authority should be undermined. According to Shelley, for example, when 'virtue' prevails 'kingly glare / Will loose its power', and its reign 'Will silently pass by'. Cooper, too, discards the option of strife and propounds a 'nobler aim-aside to see ye lay / These vanities'.

Another enemy of man detected by both Cooper and Shelley from their celestial vantage point, is gold; like kings it feuds with man's virtue and wisdom. Shelley's lines in this respect are memorable:

Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn  
All earthly things but virtue

(V, 62-3)

Likewise, Cooper sees the power of gold as the germ of man's downfall:

Earth but seems  
With floods of evil: 'tis one sordid mart  
Where consciences for gold, without a smart,  
Are sold; and holiest names are gravest cheats:

(I, XIII, 3-6)

Moreover, one of Shelley's most central maxims in Queen Mab, the view that a knowledge of the past and the present will enable us to understand and control the future (I, 167-72) is echoed by Cooper, though without the eloquence and simplicity commanded by Shelley:

Lords of the slime when earth, from chaos won,  
Grew big with primal life, until, aghast,  
She quaked at her strange children; not all past  
Or present, which from out the daedal earth,  
The human reptile, latest born, hath classed  
By guess, styling it 'Knowledge', for the mirth  
Of future worms, crawling, in pride to death-from birth;

(I, XIX, 3-9)

Although both poets engage themselves in unravelling the source of man's pain and dissatisfaction on earth, Shelley is notably the more sharply critical, and this fact is the index of a subtler vision and a maturer political understanding. For example, pointing to a striking heavenly sight, Mab addresses the spirit thus:

This is a wonderous sight  
And mocks all human grandeur;  
But, were it virtue's only meed, to dwell  
In a celestial palace, all resigned  
To pleasurable impulses, immured  
Within the prison of itself, the will  
Of changeless Nature would be unfulfilled.  
Learn to make others happy.

(II, 57-64)

In depicting the same scene, Cooper confines himself to citing the fact that:

... countless souls  
Hard toiling upwards being still revealed, -  
As if the discontented in huge shoals  
Had hither 'scaped from Earth's old hated prisonwalls!

(II, XXIII, 6-9)

The significant point that Shelley is making here is that true revolutionaries do not retreat from the world's problems and live in seclusion, however free they might there feel, but seek others' happiness as well as their own and 'Learn to make others happy'. At this particular point, it is Shelley rather than Cooper who is more akin to Milton and to the older tradition of English radicalism. Indeed, in his Areopagitica, Milton rejects the idea of a haven for great and noble spirits and astutely stresses that their nobility and greatness could only be discovered in their trial against adversities: 'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary.'<sup>64</sup> With the difference in political circumstance between 1812 and 1845, it is perhaps disappointing to see Shelley's political theory more advanced than Cooper's.

However, when Cooper's first dream is about to come to an end, he attaches to it a typically optimistic Shelleyan vision of the kind which characterizes the closing cantos of Shelley's three major poems. At the end of her dream, Ianthe is quite clearly transformed and with her all that has been lamented on earth:

Joy to the Spirit came.  
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,  
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear:  
Earth was no longer Hell;  
Love, freedom, health, had given  
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,

(VIII, 11-16)

Equally sanguine hopes lend force to Cooper's struggle against grim circumstance:

But all is doubt, and dark: we struggle on  
Like limed birds, - still captive, - but the strife  
Maintain, in trust that freedom shall be won:

(IV, LVI, 1-3)

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64. John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. by Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), p.728.

In this forthcoming change anticipated by both Shelley and Cooper, 'love' features prominently as a factor of great importance:

'All things are recreated, and the flame  
Of consentaneous love inspires all life:  
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck  
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,  
Rewarding her with pure perfectness:

(VIII, 107-11)

Although reflecting on the power of thought, Cooper still gives more weight to the role of love:

My heart doth swell with love tow'rds all who wrought  
Out liberty and peace and brotherhood,  
For poor Humanity, - by toilful thought, -  
Through scorn and suffering: as with a flood  
Of grateful love it swells for all the great and good! -

(X, LVI, 5-8)

In Queen Mab, Shelley exercises a literary skill through his felicitous use of the key-word 'inspire' which enjoys spiritual, mental and above all creative associations in contrast to Cooper's equally functional, but less resonant verb 'swells'.

Reason in this future state, Shelley and Cooper predict, will always act at the behest of love, and equality will reign supreme:

... man has lost  
His terrible prerogative, and stands  
An equal amidst equals ...  
Reason and passion cease to combat there;  
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend  
Their all-subduing energies, and wield  
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;  
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends  
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,  
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth  
To decorate its paradise of peace.

(VIII, 225-38)

According to Cooper, too, equality and love are necessary attributes of the new age:

... fair Equality shall one day hold  
Sole sceptre on the earth: that Man shall deem  
His brother man too sacred to be sold

Or slain, - to be by any power controlled,  
Save the soft force of love and wisdom ...

(I, CXLIV, 2-6)

Cooper's lines echo the mode of poetry, thought, vision and imagery of Shelley's lines. His usage of the word 'wisdom' to mean 'knowledge' (which as we noted earlier in this chapter) is typically Shelleyan, especially in Queen Mab and Address to the Irish People. Shelley's image of 'the omnipotence of mind' is echoed by Cooper elsewhere; in book X of his Purgatory:

The march of Thought was onward from of old, -  
Onwards, for aye, to Nature's eye, - though dense  
Film-sighted men no progress could behold:  
Thought sprung from thought by chain of consequence, -  
In old or newer clime, till violence,  
Fraud, ignorance, want, woe, and pain, and thrall  
Evanished at the new omnipotence  
Of Mind Nature brought forth: Mind that thro' all  
The universe now reigns by might immutable. -

(X, CX, 1-9)

The central corollary in Shelley's and Cooper's last four lines is the triumph of mind over all evil and mischief: this conclusion is recapitulated by the phrase 'omnipotence of mind'. One difference, though, is that in Cooper's lines the phrase is preceded by the adjective 'new' which does seem as a deliberate effort on Cooper's part to differentiate his line from Shelley's. Another difference is one of emphasis; while Shelley stresses the elements (every shape and mode of matter) that invigorate the mind, Cooper, on the other hand, lays equal emphasis on what is bestowed upon us by the triumph of the mind, i.e. the eradication of violence, fraud and pain.

In the wake of this free age, however, Shelley perceives the disappearance of:

All evil passions, and all vain belief,  
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,  
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.  
No longer now the winged inhabitants,  
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,  
Flee from the form of man; ...

(VIII, 216-21)

So does Cooper:

'Farewell for ever to the darksome reign  
'Of Fear and Hate, Revenge and Tyranny!  
'How blest that Hades shall be free from pain!  
'How blest, that children upon earth shall be  
'No more taught malice on their mothers' knee -  
'But love for foes - till foes are no more found!  
'Farewell to Earth's old evil revelry  
'Of war and bloodshed! Every brother's wound  
'Shall now be healed; and peace, and love and joy abound!' -

(IX, L, 1-9)

Shelley's image of happy earth is adopted by Cooper to a more practical effect; his metaphor of 'winged inhabitants' singing in the wood is translated by Cooper into a solid and strongly-felt reality: 'children upon earth'. Moreover, the recurrence of the word 'Earth' (capitalized this time) reinforces the more practical feel that Cooper's verse has here.

Once liberty is achieved, Shelley and Cooper stipulate, it is in no need of tyrannical laws to support its rule; Shelley stresses that:

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,  
And rivets with sensation's softest tie  
The kindred sympathies of human souls,  
Needed no fetters or tyrannic law:

(IX, 76-9)

Similarly, Cooper comments that it is not:

... by changeling, tyrant, tool, or knave,  
Thy march, blest Liberty! can now be stayed. -  
The wand of Guttemberg - behold it wave!  
The spell is burst! - the dark enchantments fade  
Of wrinkled Ignorance! -

(X, XV, 1-5)

'Knowledge' rather than 'kindred sympathy' is the key for Cooper to preserve and substantiate the prevalence of freedom. Yet, Cooper, here, follows a fine Shelleyan technique - a technique that is characteristic of Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound and, in fact, of Shelley's optimistic vision in general - which is to celebrate in the concluding canto(s) the achievement of what has been advocated throughout the poem.

Cantos eight and nine in Queen Mab, for instance, celebrate the emancipation of man and the countless changes it brings in its wake. The same is true of Cooper's Purgatory of Suicides where part of book nine and the whole of book ten focus on the same theme.

Finally, Cooper and Shelley bring their visions to a close in a similar way. When the light shone on Ianthe's face:

She looked around in wonder, and beheld  
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,  
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,  
And the bright beaming stars  
That through the casement shone

(IX, 236-40)

It was also a beam of light that broke Cooper's sleep and with it his dream:

Methought, a dying beam of radiance shed  
From each fast-fading visage did betoken  
Mute acquiescence in their judgement bred  
With fair proposal by the Spartan spoken -  
And, as that dying beam was shed - my dream was broken.

(I, CXLVI, 5-9)

Although the core of both poetic images is the use of light to end a dream the differences in weaving these images are of some bearing on the argument. While Shelley's last two lines above 'the bright beaming stars / That through the casement shone' create an imaginative and open-ended dimension to the new reality perceived, a reality that starts emerging as the poem draws to a close, Cooper, on the other hand, by twice stressing that the beam is 'dying' sets definite limits to any function 'the beam' might have apart from that of awakening Cooper and ending his dream. Thus the end of Ianthe's dream is not really an end, rather it is a prelude to a bright vision of the future, whereas once Cooper's dream has ceased all the poet's hopes and ambitions came to a halt. In other words, Shelley's dream is a vision of a future, Cooper's is that of a Utopia. Again, this is politically disappointing considering the fact that Shelley was writing without ever witnessing the uprising of the people which Cooper witnessed and shared in 1845.

However, it is obvious from this comparison that the vision and imagery of Cooper's Purgatory are indebted to those of Shelley's Queen Mab. But despite the fact that Cooper reproduces a precise version of the vision and plan of Queen Mab, he often fails to imbue his imagery with radical connotations more akin to the political situation in 1845. Whether, on the whole, Cooper tried to ensure that The Purgatory, in imagery, theme, and vocabulary was an easy and useful text for ordinary Chartist readers is very much open to question. Considering the difficulties any ordinary reader is bound to encounter in deciphering the difficult text of The Purgatory, one must assume that it was mostly read by the educated elite and its impact on the Chartist masses, therefore, was not comparable to that of Jones's Chartist Poems, for example.

(b) The Political Function of the Poet

It is equally suggested by both Shelley and Cooper, as we remarked earlier, that the knowledge they claim in their dreams may be acquired only by a poet's soul; it is not within reach of those confined to the body. When Ianthe and Mab reach their heavenly dwelling, Shelley makes a point of stressing that:

None but a spirit's eye,  
And in no other place  
But that celestial dwelling, might behold  
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.  
But matter, space and time  
In those aerial mansions cease to act;  
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps  
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds  
Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul  
Fears to attempt the conquest.

(II, 87-96)

Similarly in Cooper a new kind of perception becomes necessary and possible:

Perplex'd, I seemed awhile, to look around,  
And wistfully to think of mother Earth;  
But soon all thought and consciousness were bound  
Unto that mountain region: I felt dearth  
Of earthly sense, as heretofore, - but birth  
Of intellection; - for the spirits twain, -  
Of Hellas sprung, - seemed now, in words of worth, -

Though without mortal sound, - of their soul's stain,  
And essences of things to speak in fervid strain. -

(II, XXVI, 1-9)

With their own missions in mind, Shelley and Cooper argue here that only a poet's soul comprehends fully what is happening on earth and anticipates (perhaps precipitates) what is about to take place. By so doing the poet plays a significant role - however covert and indirect it may be - in directing or moulding future social and political events.

Like Shelley, Cooper firmly believed in the essential role of the poet in the emancipation of man. Addressing the poet - perhaps, Byron - in absentia, Cooper cites his own case as an example of how poetry ignites an unquenchable love for freedom:

I joy that my young heart a covenant made  
To take thee for its guide in patriot deed, -  
If Life's eventful roll should shew arrayed  
The brethren of my fatherland agreed  
To claim their ancient birthright, and be freed. -  
Oh how the lesson of thy deathless toil, -  
While my soul homaged thee, - in me did feed  
The flame of freedom! - shall the sacred oil  
Not keep it quenchless till the grave its foemen foil?

(II, XI, 1-9)

As if through his own experience Cooper illustrates the theory put forward by Shelley of how poetry can actually affect the lives of its readers. In his Defence of Poetry, Shelley maintains:

Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character; nor can we doubt that those who read his verses were awakened to an ambition of becoming like to Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses: the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism, and persevering devotion to an object, were unveiled to the depths in these immortal creations: the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations, until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the object of their admiration.

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Shelley's belief that from admiring, people imitate, and from imitation they identify themselves with the poets they read, could be substantiated by no better example than that of Cooper whose experience with the poetry of Byron put into practice what Shelley envisaged in thought. Acknowledging how poetry awakened his latent feelings and encouraged his potential, Cooper verifies Shelley's idea as autobiographical fact:

Honour - all honour to thee, patriot bard! -  
With whom I took sweet counsel in my youth:  
I joy, that though my lowly lot was hard,  
My spirit, raised by thine, forgot its ruth,  
And, smiling, dared the dint of Want's fell tooth:  
I joy, that all enamoured of thy song, -  
While simpletons esteemed my ways uncouth, -  
I wandered, by day's dawn, the woods among,  
Or did, with midnight lamp, my grateful task prolong,

(II, XIV, 1-9)

What Cooper admired most in Byron's poetry, not surprisingly (almost certainly the addressee here), was his defiance of tyranny and his love of freedom. While at another point, Cooper is also referring to Byron, however, it is interesting to see how the sway of Shelley's ideas soon takes over:

Or thou, immortal Child, with him that saw  
Islam's Revolt, in rapt prophetic trance, -  
Did fear of harsh reception overawe  
Your fervid souls from fervid utterance  
Of Freedom's fearless shout? - your scathing glance  
On priestly rottenness, did ye tame down  
To censure soft that might find sufferance?  
Knowing your cold award would be the frown  
Of custom, Priestcraft, - power, - ye made your stern thoughts known.

(II, VII, 1-9)

Thus Shelley's resistance to authority with all the adverse consequences this had on his personal life gave rise to Cooper's notion of poets as patriots or even martyrs of freedom. The effect Shelley's poetry had on Cooper's mind answers precisely Shelley's hopes that by defying Power the poet undermines its very existence, because the influence he exerts on the minds of his readers is infinite and immeasurable; lamenting Keats's death, Shelley solaces himself with the fact that:

... he went unterrified,  
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Spirit  
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light

(Adonais, IV)

(c) Free Will and Necessity

Despite the considerable difference in historical circumstances, Cooper, who was deeply entrenched in intellectual tradition still maintained a similar stance on Necessity and Free Will to that which we encountered and discussed in Shelley's works. Like Shelley, Cooper argues that man's struggle for freedom should be initiated in his own mind:

Here, as on earth, we feel our woe or joy  
Is of and from ourselves: the yearning mind  
Her own beautitude, and its alloy,  
Creates, though suffering ever intertwined,  
She proves with error.

(II, XXXIII, 1-5)

This bears a certain affinity to Shelley's lines in Julian and Maddallo:  
'... it is our will / That thus enchains us to permitted ill' (169-70).  
Moreover, Shelley's insistence on the role of man's will in reform, which as we have seen in chapters 1 and 2 is central to his political philosophy, is endorsed by Cooper in the following lines:

... for the Past  
Hath warned the Million that they must succeed  
By will - and not by war.

(X, XIX, 6-8)

The importance both poets attach to man's will in his struggle for freedom stems from their analogous views that the world contains the good and the evil, and all what man has to do, therefore, is to ensure - through knowledge and strong will - the supremacy of good over evil. Shelley believes that:

... earth in itself  
Contains at once the evil and the cure;

(QM, III, 80-1)

Cooper, too, recognizes that the

... feud  
Of Good with Evil hath by law of Fate ensued: -

(IV, XLVII, 8-9)

It is significant to note that while Shelley discerns the existence of

good and evil, the central issue for Cooper is the inevitable strife between the two. For someone who was writing from prison and who viewed himself as part and parcel of the struggle against evil, nothing can be more natural than to emphasize this struggle in his literary production. This is again another example of how literary achievements are closely related to historical circumstances and political conditions.

In our discussion of Queen Mab, we concluded that in Shelley's view the law of Necessity controls all material things, but man's will is free to wield this law and subject it to its own sway. From a very similar viewpoint, Cooper implies that the working of Necessity is confined to what is sensuous and mortal:

Who, then, shall spurse the dark eternal mists  
That veil all beings? - who break the irksome knot  
With which Necessity binds fast the lot  
Of every sensuous thing - exposed to death,  
And pain, and hate? - who cancel the huge blot  
Of suffering from life?

(IV, LIII, 3-8)

These earnest questions by Cooper (which are resonant of Ianthe's) find the most comforting answer in Mab's words:

Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts,  
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,  
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.

(VI, 26-8)

It is as if Mab's answer eases not only Ianthe's anxiety, but Cooper's too - her assertion that man's soul may preside supreme over Necessity chases Cooper's doubts away and restores his faith:

... What rapture glad  
Would fill the soul, - what blest delirium  
Of joy, - could she burst through the veil that hides her doom!

(IV, LV, 7-9)

Cooper's lines, especially the last, echo Shelley's in terms of theme, imagery and even vocabulary. His 'burst through the veil' has the same function as Shelley's 'see' and his 'hides her' replaces Shelley's 'bind it'. The reason, perhaps, why 'doom' remains unchanged is due to its

appealing resonance which is most fitting at the end of the line and which was probably too tempting for Cooper not to use.

Time and again, Shelley and Cooper stress what they apparently considered a significant distinction between the material and the spiritual worlds reiterating that whilst Necessity governs everything mortal, it has no power over man's soul; Shelley emphasizes that:

Throughout this varied and eternal world  
Soul is the only element, the block  
That for uncounted ages has remained.  
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight  
Is active, living spirit.

(Q.M., IV, 139-43)

Cooper, on his part, answers his own question:

... what, if blind  
Necessity grasps all! - Who shall her grasp unbind?

(II, LXXXVI, 8-9)

thus:

... Necessity  
O'er all prevailed: the flame, the flood, the wind,  
Were masters till the march of Thought set free  
The world of struggling men from that old tyranny:

(X, CIX, 6-9)

In consequence, Shelley decides that it is up to man either to follow the high call of his soul and become free and great, or to live in accordance with his most immediate needs, and toil, perhaps, in slavery:

Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds  
Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest wing  
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn  
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste  
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield  
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,

(Q.M., IV, 154-9)

Without making such a fine distinction, Cooper still reasons that man's soul is his saviour:

The soul attuned to harmony and love  
Longs from the chains of discord to unbind  
All thought and being.

(IV, LII, 2-4)

Hence, on the question of Necessity and free will and the political issues pertaining to it, Cooper, one might suggest, seems to have followed quite closely the vein of Shelley's arguments. Apart from being in line with our argument, it is doubtful whether this conclusion pays tribute to Cooper as a Chartist poet. Writing in 1845, Cooper, one suspects, could have rendered more service to Chartism by writing about more popular and more pressing issues of the day. This, of course, would have involved writing in a different literary form from the one under discussion. Thus together with The Purgatory's literary form and range of reference, Cooper's arguments on Necessity and free will support our evaluation of him as an educationalist whose heart lies more in knowledge than in politics, and who is less attuned to the concerns of his own time and more to literary and philosophical tradition than might at first appear.

(d) Religion

When Thomas Cooper became a Chartist in 1841, it was, perhaps, assumed that he had become an atheist, partly because in the nineteenth century 'Republicanism and infidelity were often considered two sides of the same coin.'<sup>66</sup> It is almost completely forgotten, as was observed in The Times, that throughout his long career of lecturing, Cooper 'had never lectured as an infidel'.<sup>67</sup> What he did was to attack the church as an institution unsympathetic to the cause he espoused and in this sense his conversion to the church in 1856 was, in fact, a political conversion rather than a religious one. Cooper, who, as we remarked earlier, joined the Chartist Movement not as a politician but as a dedicated friend of the people could see no reason for continuing his political work once he was convinced that what he had experienced and suffered was of no avail either for the working class or for himself. Due, perhaps, to lack of political insight and political experience, he believed that what he had endured on behalf of the workers should have instant bearing on their conditions; he was terribly disappointed when he came out of prison and found out that this

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66. Edward Royle, Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief (London, 1971), p.18.

67. 'Obituary to Thomas Cooper', The Times, 16 July 1892.

was not the case:

I regarded my imprisonment, with its harsh treatment, as a grievous wrong. My tender wife was enduring suffering that brought her near to death. And the poor were suffering still! I had not lessened their evils an atom by my struggles. It was a world of wrong, I now reasoned; and there could not be in it the almighty and beneficent Providence in which I had all my life devoutly believed. I must give it all up as a dream!

68

In the same context, he writes to Tatlow on 26 August 1852: 'I am wearied of wandering about the country, increasing my own difficulties, and seeing so little good result from my labours, and finding so few to appreciate my efforts.'<sup>69</sup> In view of Robert Ryder's judgement of Cooper's character in which he stresses that Cooper '... always wanted somebody (a prayer-hearing, and a prayer-answering God) to reward us for good and virtuous conduct, and punish us for vile and bad conduct; although in his own soul he needed no such props for virtuous conduct. He could see no motive for good acts, without a prospect of future reward',<sup>70</sup> we might guess that seeing so little good result from his labours may have been a significant factor in Cooper's apostasy from Chartism.<sup>71</sup> Another factor might lie in the fact that on his release from prison, Cooper found Feargus O'Connor, who was the uncontested leader of the Chartist Movement, deeply immersed in his Physical Force rhetoric and enthusiastically publicizing his Land Scheme with both of which Cooper most decidedly did not agree. Add to this the fact that Cooper depended on lecturing as his only source of living (on 17 July 1848 he wrote to Tatlow 'If I could not live by my tongue I should have to starve.'<sup>72</sup>), one might understand why he had to find an alternative platform to that of Chartism; and at

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68. Life, p.261.

69. Cooper-Tatlow Letters, MS.

70. The Reasoner, XXIV, No.702 (1859), p.357.

71. For a different explanation of Cooper's conversion to the church, see: 'Mr. Holyoake's reply to Mr. Cooper', The Daily Chronicle and Northern Counties Advertiser (Wednesday, 21 July 1858) and G.J.Holyoake, Thomas Cooper Delineated as Convert and Controversialist (London, 1861), pp.4-19.

72. Cooper-Tatlow Letters, MS.

this point, Christianity offered itself as a wonderful alternative. From this new stance, Cooper believed, he would still be, as in Chartism, the champion of the people. On 13 April 1859, just before he was baptised, he wrote to Thomas Chamber: 'I am about to be immersed - believing that to be the proper baptism; but my "Church" will still be universal, and my parish all England.'<sup>73</sup> However, it is because this study is of Cooper the Chartist poet that we shall be concerned with his views on religion within the Chartist era, that is before his allegiance to the church in 1856.

During his Chartist days, Cooper, rather like Shelley launched incessant attacks on priests and kings while forcefully arguing that love is the essence of religion and the words of Christ are its only basis. In an address to a priest written very much in the spirit of Shelley's thought, Cooper asks:

What says the priest while we take the survey? That he cannot explain why there is pain in the universe except by the fable of Man's fall from primeval innocence; and that the continuance of pain is now a part of God's government, and we must bow and adore, where we cannot understand. Nay, priest, but I will not. How can my heart worship Power, or even Wisdom, if it be not conjoined with Goodness? I tell thee, as in my humble prison-song, - 'I cannot worship what I cannot love'.

74

Christ's love for man, Cooper and Shelley contended, is intrinsic to his mission on earth and to his crucifixion. In the second of two Orations, 'The Real and Symbolic Character of Christ' and 'Superiority of Christ, as a Teacher, to All Other Moral Philosophers', which he gave in 1847, Cooper stresses that: 'The grand superiority of the moral teaching

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73. Thomas Cooper to Thomas Chambers Letters, 30/9/57-23/10/68, MS Bishop's Gate Institute. These letters are written on small size paper (4½" wide x 7½" deep). They are unbound, kept together by an ordinary yellow ribbon. The title is hand-written on a small white card slipped between the letters and the ribbon. The letters are written in black ink and the writing is quite legible.

74. 'Thomas Cooper's Orations', The Reasoner, III, No.69 (1847), pp. 522-4 (pp.523-4).

of Jesus, was contended to be his elevation of the principle of "Love to Men" to a sublimity of preference never claimed for it by other moralists.'<sup>75</sup> Speaking of Christ also, Shelley argues that 'such did he believe to be the tendency of his doctrines: the abolition of artificial distinctions among mankind so far as the love which it becomes all human beings to bear towards each other, and the knowledge of truth from which that love will never fail to be produced avail to their destruction.'<sup>76</sup>

Again in accordance with the doctrines of Jesus Christ as they saw them, Cooper and Shelley argued that it is on 'universal knowledge' that equality and justice may be founded: 'The experience of the ages which have intervened between the present period and that in which Jesus Christ taught tends to prove his doctrine ...,' Shelley maintains, 'There is more equality because there is more justice among mankind and there is more justice because there is more universal knowledge.'<sup>77</sup> Cooper, too, testifies that: 'Universal Knowledge' is of great importance in realising the just and equal state envisaged by Christ:

Dethrone Christ? Doest thou say, priest, that I am seeking to dethrone him? I tell thee my worship of him is as ardent as thine. I tell thee that thou hast crucified him afresh, thou and thy dark tribe, these seventeen hundred years; but that science will prepare his throne; that his 'Kingdom of Heaven' was no dream, save in the mode of its realisation; - but that Universal Knowledge will bring it.

78

What is more, besides viewing with great esteem the religion of Christ, Cooper, like Shelley,<sup>79</sup> had the ambition and the desire to see it 'divested

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75. 'Thomas Cooper's Orations', The Reasoner, III, No.68 (1847), pp. 504-7 (p.507).

76. Works, VI, p.250.

77. Ibid.

78. 'Thomas Cooper's Orations', The Reasoner, III, No.71 (1847), pp. 546-9 (p.548).

79. See Works, VI, p.255.

of all legendary incrustations that may prevent its reception with sincere and earnest thinkers'.<sup>80</sup> Thus, G.J.Holyoake's view that before his adherence to the church in 1856, Cooper was of the same religion 'as Shelley, as Byron, as Burns, and Thomas Paine',<sup>81</sup> was by no means ill-founded.

Yet the most outstanding parallels between Cooper's and Shelley's views on religion are represented in his Purgatory of Suicides which, in many respects, recalls Shelley's views on Christianity in Queen Mab. For example, Cooper's description of a scene in hell where an atheist is burnt in front of the crowd is reminiscent of another scene which the soul of Ianthe encounters in Queen Mab:

I was an infant when my mother went  
To see an atheist burned. She took me there:  
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;  
The multitude was gazing silently;  
And as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,  
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,  
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth;  
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;  
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;  
His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob  
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.

(Q.M., VII, 1-11)

In similar mood, tone and vision, Cooper describes a very similar incident:

Malevolence, and spite, and rancour burned  
Through their thin vehicles, with lurid flame;  
And, madly, that he were, once more, disurned  
From the dark tomb to play an aftergame  
Of blood, each yearned, and did with zeal proclaim  
His frantic wish! - So horrible it seemed  
To witness how they raged, that being became  
A torture; and, unconscious that I dreamed,  
Methought I mourned as one to baleful life condemned.

(V, LXIII, 1-9)

As is often the case, Shelley's prime concern, here, is to portray his victim morally triumphant, even in death, over those who lit fire to his

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80. Thomas Cooper, 'Critical Exercises of Gospel History', Cooper's Journal, I, No.1 (1850), p.8.

81. The Reasoner, XX, No.21 (1856), p.162.

'manly limbs'. The culprit faced the grossly unjust sentence with 'dauntless mien', 'Tempered disdain', 'unaltering eye' and 'quiet smile'. Cooper, on the other hand, is more concerned about the apathy of the multitude who met this horrid act with enthusiasm and applause. He was appalled to see 'Malevolence, and spite and rancour burned / Through their thin vehicles': 'so horrible it seemed / To witness how they raged'. This switch of emphasis from the state of the victim in Shelley to that of the public in Cooper signifies that what worries the Chartist poet is not only that his victim should pass unscathed to tyranny but that the people should understand tyranny's nature and the effects it has on their own lives; a dauntless and resolute public rather than hero, is needed to undermine tyranny and pre-empt its workings.

Further, both Shelley in cantos IV-VII of Queen Mab and Cooper in Books VI-VII of The Purgatory consider priests the originators of evil on earth and the slaves of the Christian dogma; addressing priests Shelley exclaims:

Look to thy wretched self!  
Aye, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er  
Crawled on the loathing earth?

(IV, 245-7)

To the same Cooper says:

Why should I curse thee, priest? Art thou not bound  
To obey thy patched creed's dogmas?

(VI, V, 1-2)

Furthermore, the link which Shelley discerned between kings and priests or Church and State (see QM, IV, 104-10) was for the Chartists an unquestionable fact. According to Cooper, for example, priests are involved

... in the guilty game  
Of human subjugation! - how to tame  
Man's spirit ye, and only ye, have skill:  
Kings need your help to hold their thrones, - while claim  
Of sanctity enables ye, at will,  
To wield o'er prostrate Reason subtler empire still!

(VI, VIII, 4-9)

In brief, a line in The Purgatory acutely sums up not only Cooper's, but also Shelley's most fundamental objection to religion: 'I cannot worship that I cannot love.' (VI, XXX, 1). (Italics in the original).

In essence, Shelley's and Cooper's arguments on religion in their respective poems are in perfect harmony, but Shelley's more subtle imagery is partly the result of superior literary skill and partly the consequence of different historical as well as political conditions. Reviewing The Purgatory, The Bizarre (1854) detects a relation between Shelley's and Cooper's poems but perceives the supremacy of Shelley's art:

Shelley has thrown around his atheism a fine halo of the really beautiful, which makes the reader forget the sentiment for the poetry. Cooper's atheism is something indefinite, very doubtful, and without holding out hope to his orthodox admirers, that it is not at all improbable that his ideas may change for the better.

Cooper has failed, in comparison to Shelley, in giving more prominence to the poetic, than the sentiment of the verse. In reading Cooper, we find strength of thought, originality of ideas, and vast descriptive powers, which startle by their compactness, and leave the most vivid effect on the mind, as to the real object of the author; but Shelley might utter the same ideas, and, while we would not regard the subject-matter, we should be enchanted with the really beautiful, the poetic and ideal, which his genius always imparted to what he wrote.

82

The plausibility of Shelley's influence on Cooper's poem is all the more enhanced by the fact that Cooper did have a copy of Shelley's works with him while writing The Purgatory in prison:

I could revel in Shakespeare and Milton as soon as I got possession of my books; and in Chambers' 'Cyclopaedia of English Literature' I had portions of almost every English poet of eminence. At an after-date, I had 'Childe Harold', and Shelley (the small pirated edition), with Jarvis's translation of 'Don Quixote', White's 'Selborne', and other books, sent into the gaol.

83

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82. 'The Purgatory of Suicides', The Bizarre, V, No.26 (1854), pp.353-6 (p.354).

83. Life, p.252.

Two points emerge from this comparison between Shelley's and Cooper's poems; first, the comparison throws some light on the structure of The Purgatory and makes the task of understanding it a relatively easier one. The influences of Shelley's Queen Mab on Cooper's poem are most clearly seen in the parts of the books we have discussed. These parts which happened to fall mostly in the introductory and concluding sections of each of The Purgatory's ten books are coincidentally the most philosophical, the most political and arguably the most interesting parts. In a poem of ten books and 278 pages of poetry which enjoys neither a great plan nor a great theme a discernment of crucial passages might be of some use for future readers. Cooper is most moving usually at the beginning and end of each canto; in between he indulges in lengthy descriptive passages and sometimes tiresome demonstration of his ample knowledge of history which dilutes the argument. Once he holds the threads of his argument again, however, Cooper rarely fails to apply his literary skill to drive the point home to us. The Eclectic Review, which shows a remarkable understanding of the merits and demerits of The Purgatory, perceives the same structural division we pointed out in the poem:

As a subject, we should say that it is rather curious than poetical; and although he has contrived to invest it with features and circumstances of grandeur, yet we must at the same time declare, that it is not legitimate matter of the subject, but the introductions to each book, which are the truly poetical portions of the volume ... We do not hesitate to affirm, that these introductions stamp Thomas Cooper as a genuine poet of a high order ... They are fraught with fire, power, tenderness, and a deep spirit of speculation on man and his prospects.

84

Second, the comparison shows that while we expected Cooper as a Chartist poet to be more practical he seems to have clung to the 'ideal' side of the balance. Two main factors might have led to this conclusion: first, Cooper was more of an intellectual poet than a practical politician, and second, Shelley's arguments which were in advance of his own time were

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84. Eclectic Review, New Series, XVIII (July-Dec. 1845), pp.672-3.

still occasionally proving to be more progressive and more politically sensible than what some Chartists had to offer.

We should add, here, however, that even after The Purgatory and after his release from prison Cooper continued lecturing on Shelley and publishing his works in his journals. In October 1850, for instance, the topics on which Cooper lectured were: 'Washington, Byron, Sir William Jones, Dr. Johnson, Robert Peel, Shelley [twice] and the poetry of Peter Pindar'.<sup>85</sup> Once again in 1850, Cooper records lecturing on Shelley in an itinerant tour: 'The subjects on which I lectured in these journeyings were - the Lives and Genius of Milton, Burns, Byron and Shelley'.<sup>86</sup> Cooper also read Mary Shelley's Frankenstein as soon as it came off the press: 'I also indulged myself occasionally by reading the new pages of Washington Irving, or such novels as Mrs. Shelley's thrilling creation of 'Frankenstein''.<sup>87</sup> The frequency of Cooper's lectures on Shelley reflects not only his own interest in Shelley but that of his audience, too; according to his own account of his lecturing tour in Ireland during which he lectured on Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Byron, Shelley, French Revolution, civilization and Cromwell, he stresses that: 'the last lecture I gave at Belfast was on the poet Shelley; and such commendation as I gave his beautiful poetry seemed to excite ten times the applause I received when I had eulogized our glorious Shakespeare, or Milton.'<sup>88</sup> A country person, also, attests that in 1850 'Cheap editions of Don Juan and Queen Mab, sold by every hawker of books throughout the country, were lying in the cottages of his flock.'<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, in Cooper's Journals, Shelley was more popular than any of his Romantic compeers. In The Plain Speaker, for example, Cooper answers James Garth Marshal in lines from Shelley's Queen Mab:

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85. Conklin, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist, p.372.

86. Life, p.322.

87. Ibid., p.65.

88. Ibid., p.324.

89. Collins, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist: Byron and the 'Poets of the Poor', p.19.

"The commerce of sincerest virtue needs  
 No mediative signs of selfishness,  
 No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,  
 No balancings of prudence, cold and long;  
 In just and equal measure all is weighed,  
 One scale contains the sum of human weal,  
 And one, the good man's heart."

90

(V, 231-7)

Again in his Cooper's Journal which superseded The Plain Speaker, Cooper quotes Shelley's 'The Masque of Anarchy' and The Revolt of Islam. Under the title 'The Only Help for Working Man' the following lines from 'The Masque' immediately follow:

"What art thou, Freedom? - \*\*  
 For the labourer thou art bread,  
 And a comely table spread,  
 From his daily labour come,  
 In a neat and happy home.  
 Thou art clothes, and fire, and food,  
 For the trampled multitude"

91

(LIV, 1-4 and LV, 1-2)

His quotation from The Revolt of Islam is aptly entitled 'The Working Man's Question':

"Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave  
 A lasting chain for his own slavery: -  
 In fear and restless care that he may live,  
 He toils for others, who must ever be  
 The joyless thralls of like captivity.

\* \* \* \* \*

"This need not be: ye might arise, and will  
 That gold should lose its power."

92

(VIII, XIV, 1-5 and XVI, 1-2)

In the same number of the Journal a lecture in London by Thomas Cooper (21 October 1850), (Temperance Hall, Broadway, Westminster) on 'Life and Genius of Shelley' is advertised. The titles that Cooper gives the two above quotations from Shelley's poetry indicate Cooper's estimation of

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90. The Plain Speaker, I, No.16 (1849), p.[121].

91. Cooper's Journal, I, No.20 (1850), p.[305].

92. Ibid., I, No.27 (1850), p.[417].

Shelley's radical philosophy and its use for the toiling masses. Equally perceptive is Cooper's understanding of Shelley's philosophy on Love, Life and Man. Under the title 'Prose Thinkings, from the Poet Shelley', he publishes extracts from Shelley's Defence of Poetry,<sup>93</sup> 'On the Punishment of Death',<sup>94</sup> 'On Life',<sup>95</sup> and 'On a Future State',<sup>96</sup> all of which testify to Shelley's unequivocal belief in the ultimate triumph of love and justice.

Even the sonnets which Cooper published in his Journals reveal not only their author's, but, yet again, Cooper's own profound understanding of Shelley's political philosophy and its importance for the working people. On reading Cooper's review of The Garland of Gratitude, a volume of poetry by Joseph Dare (John Chapman, 142, Strand), for instance, one finds no difficulty in locating where Cooper's personal predilection lies:

Mr. Dare is, at present, a schoolmaster in Leicester; but many of these poems were written when he was pursuing manual labour, and under the endurance of severe poverty. Indeed, it is evident, from the polish of his composition, that he did not acquire the art and mystery of verse-writing only yesterday; while the solid reflection which abounds in his volume, proves that he has been taught to think, and think deeply, by hard experience ... The following six sonnets are extracted from [sic: for] their inviting and correlative subjects, as well as for their poetic excellence.

97

Amongst the sonnets that attracted Cooper's attention both for their subject matter and poetic excellence is a sonnet to Shelley which I shall quote here in full:

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93. See Works, VII, p.118.

94. See ibid., VI, pp.189-90.

95. Ibid., pp.193-4.

96. Ibid., pp.205-6. These extracts are published in Cooper's Journal, I, No.14 (1850), p.215.

97. Cooper's Journal, I, No.5 (1850), p.78.

To SHELLEY

O, dove-like Eagle! bear me on thy wings,  
Far from the rage and scorn of passing things;  
And teach me what I long have sought to know -  
Deep hate of tyrants, and the eternal glow  
Of sympathetic love for all mankind,  
And ceaseless toil to aid them, till they find  
Truth, love, and glory, - and the all-seeing sun,  
From his heaven-girdling path, beholds no spot  
That owns a slave or tyrant, cell or throne,  
Or chain, or prison-house, except to rot:  
And by the lake, lone wood, and solemn sea,  
Pour out thy music-sow the solitude  
With thoughts, to spring in actions that shall free  
Earth from its sweat and gore - man made one brotherhood.

98

By looking to Shelley as a guide in his resistance to tyranny and his service for the freedom and the brotherhood of man, the poet Dare, who in Cooper's words 'endured severe poverty and learnt to think by hard experience', provides a prominent example of how the working man understood Shelley's poetry and philosophy at their best.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the same number of The Times which published an obituary of Thomas Cooper (by the time of his death in 1892, the tide of political movements in Britain had long been on the wane and the fear of any political act by the working masses had been forgotten) included a serious discussion of Shelley's reputation and influence. Of Cooper, The Times says: 'Mr. Thomas Cooper, the well-known Chartist leader and Christian lecturer, died at Lincoln yesterday afternoon, in the 88th year of his age ... The career of this well-known Chartist leader and religious and political controversialist furnishes another example of the triumphs which may be achieved by indomitable resolution and perseverance in the humblest sphere.'<sup>99</sup> In the same number, the writer of the leading article, while discussing the possibility of establishing in Shelley's birthplace, Horsham, a library and museum to store the relics and memorials of the poet, declares that:

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98. Cooper's Journal, I, No.5 (1850), p.78.

99. The Times (16 July 1892).

We have ceased to be afraid of SHELLEY, and Bishops and other dignitaries might be on the committee for the Horsham memorial without anyone being surprised ... We can look at the real SHELLEY and read him as an ancient and a classic, what is local and passing, due to unhappy circumstances and a morbid nature, is for the reader of to-day much as if it did not exist. What remains is the imperishable element which will draw pilgrims to Horsham and to all places where are memories of this rare ethereal spirit.

100

But to 'look at the real Shelley' should be to look precisely at the Shelley who was read, published and lectured on, in the revolutionary era of Chartism. Cooper and Jones understood Shelley's poetry chiefly because they recognized that the literary and the political are inextricably fused; in Shelley the poet, the politician and the moralist are forever present and in Shelley the politician, the poet's spirit is always presiding supreme. For them Shelley the poet is a political thinker and Shelley the politician is a poet; he cannot be one without the other. Through his influence on Jones's and Cooper's political arguments and poetic compositions, Shelley might well be seen to have exercised a considerable influence on the political thought and literary production of Chartism.

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### CONCLUSION

Two conclusions may be drawn at once from this study: first, the Chartists read Shelley as a political poet whose political philosophy was more essentially radical and more consistent than had before them been generally realized; to them this philosophy was chiefly demonstrated in his poetic compositions. Second, our study of Shelley and Jones, and Shelley and Cooper suggests that Shelley did indeed exert a considerable influence on these two poets.

The Chartists considered Shelley's Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound as his prime political utterances which contain his most outstanding efforts to furnish the moral and intellectual ground for future political action. His stress on the importance of knowledge and education and his insistence on the necessity to study the past and understand the present in Queen Mab, his stipulations on the political signification of love, virtue, equality and non-violence in The Revolt of Islam and his dramatization of the role of man's will and forbearance in undermining tyranny in Prometheus Unbound were understood to be part and parcel of his comprehensive scheme for influencing political events and effecting political reform. In the meantime Shelley was seen just as much concerned about immediate reform, but his response to political events was determined by his own estimation of the real chances of success. Thus in his political poems of 1819, during the writing of which Shelley was under the impression that the decisive moment was already at hand in Britain, Shelley, according to the Chartists, reasoned as the most practical of politicians and touched on the most basic needs of ordinary people. The issues raised in these poems which are everyone's concern, the clear reasoning, the popular rhyme and simple diction were extremely apt to the kind of audience addressed and the political objectives aimed at. Yet Shelley's estimation of the role of knowledge, education, love, strong will and forbearance in effecting political reform remained unchanged from that demonstrated in the three of his major poems mentioned above.

Shelley's political theory in the two groups of poems was deemed to be coherent and consistent: the different poetic modes he had employed and the two political languages he had used paid tribute to his literary adroitness and political acumen.

But the first group of radicals to understand the political themes of Shelley's poetry, discern their revolutionary doctrines and consistent theory was the Owenites. My reading of their main paper, The New Moral World, suggests that, first, to the Owenites Shelley was a socialist poet who not only propounded socialist principles, but uttered a faith in their achievement. Second, it was made quite clear that the choice of Shelley's poetry to be published and explained in their journals was made on political as well as literary grounds. Third, it is interesting to note that the politics of Shelley were understood through examining three of his major poems Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound rather than through either his prose or the political poems of 1819.

Nevertheless, it remains true to say that Shelley's stature as a radical poet was to be even more exalted in the Chartist era. My reading of The Chartist Circular, The Northern Star, The Labourer, The People's Paper, The People's Journal, Notes to the People, The National, Cooper's Journal and The Plain Speaker strongly suggests that the poetry of Shelley was more often published and explained in the Chartist Papers and Journals than the poetry of any other Romantic poet, Byron excepted. The difference between Byron and Shelley, though, is that while the poetry of Shelley (it was often stated) was published to foster the radical inclinations of the readers and provide them with inspiring political doctrines, the poetry of Byron was published to be enjoyed as beautiful literature which is no small literary honour, of course, but is hardly a political one. Three pivotal points seem to have made Shelley's politics appealing to the Chartists. First, his resistance to social and religious dogmas in defence of his radical principles. Second, his faith in future reform. Third, his love for the working multitudes and his understanding of their sufferings as well as their rights. Another, perhaps no less significant factor, is the fact that like the Chartist poets (most of whom were key figures in the movement), Shelley believed in the power of words and thoughts to effect real political change.

Indeed, the two Chartist poets whose works I examined, seem to be drawn to Shelley partly because of the political themes of his poetry and partly because of the interrelation of poetry and politics which seemed to correspond to their own experience. Although Ernest Jones was acquainted with Shelley's poetry before becoming a Chartist, none the less his appreciation of Shelley's poetry grew with the growth of his political role in the Chartist Movement. Like Shelley, who was firmly convinced that as a poet he had 'powers deeply to interest, or substantially to improve, mankind',<sup>1</sup> Jones argued that 'the true poet is a high priest of God ... he has a solemn duty to perform.'<sup>2</sup> The comparisons I drew between the thought and poetry of Shelley and Jones testify that Shelley left a marked influence on Jones's political thought and poetical compositions. Jones's 'The Poet's Prayer to the Evening Wind', seems to me to echo Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' and his 'The Song of the Lower Classes' is very much reminiscent of Shelley's 'Song to the Men of England'. Moreover, a close parallel can be detected between Jones's 'Onward' and Shelley's 'The Masque of Anarchy', between Jones's 'A Forest Among the Euganean Hills' (Scene III, Act 4, The Student of Padua) and Shelley's Julian and Maddalo, and finally, between Jones's The New World; or, The Revolt of Hindostan and Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty'. Furthermore, on the importance of knowledge, love, education, strong will and self-restraint in achieving political reform the ideas of Jones seem to echo, in many respects, those voiced by Shelley.

The second Chartist poet whose poetry picks up some of Shelley's political themes and literary devices is Thomas Cooper. Cooper read Shelley, published his poetry in his journals, cited his authority on sundry political occasions and echoed many of his ideas. If Kenneth Muir calls Cooper's speech (which was reproduced in the first few stanzas of his Purgatory of Suicides) 'Variations on a theme of Shelley',<sup>3</sup> I feel

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1. Letters, I, p.517.

2. The People's Paper (1 Nov. 1856), p.4.

3. 'Shelley's Heirs', The Penguin New Writing, XXVI (1945), pp.117-32 (p.127).

encouraged (depending, of course, on the evidence in the comparison I drew between Cooper's Purgatory and Shelley's Queen Mab) to call The Purgatory variations on Shelley's Queen Mab.

Yet, Shelley's influence on the Chartist poets might, I believe, be larger than that which this study has shown. My reading of the poetry of W.J.Linton, Gerald Massey, Ebenezer Jones and Benjamin Stott suggests that there is still more room for other studies of Shelley and the Chartist poets which might well yield rewarding results for the students of Shelley's politics.

This study of the poetry and politics of Shelley and the Chartist poets gave me a definite feeling regarding the theory that to mingle poetry with politics is 'always hurtful to the politics and fatal to the poetry'.<sup>4</sup> While unravelling the political themes of Shelley's poetry, the Chartists restored to Shelley's poetry one of its most significant dimensions without which the understanding of the poetry of Shelley can never be complete. Moreover, the fact that the poetry of Jones (who was, perhaps, the most progressive and the most consistent political thinker Chartism had ever had) combined political commitment with literary excellence suggests that the political themes in poetry need not be presented at the expense of literary merit. The argument that none of the Chartist poets became a major poet is no evidence that their political contemplations limited their literary aptitudes. On the contrary, besides awakening many talents which otherwise might have remained in embryo, 'The Chartist movement and its writings enriched English literature with new themes, extended its scope, drew the attention of writers to aspects of the life of the people which had hitherto remained relatively obscure.'<sup>5</sup>

This study, then, has shown the Chartists' attitude to Shelley's poetry, revealed his status in the Chartist press and provided some evidence of his influence on two of the Chartist poets, Ernest Jones and Thomas Cooper. While exploring some of the ground of Shelley's

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4. The Chartist Circular, No.42 (11 July 1840), p.170.

5. Kovalev, 'Chartist Literature', p.58.

relation to the Chartist Movement, it should serve to open the door for other much needed studies in this neglected area of Shelley criticism. Besides revealing Shelley's position in the Chartist journals and his relation to two Chartist poets, this study might also provide the reader with a new insight into the political themes of Shelley's poems and the consistent radical reasoning which permeated most of them.

## Appendix 1

CHRONOLOGY TO THE WORKS  
OF ERNEST JONES (1819-1868)

In compiling this index of Jones's works I have consulted the catalogue of the Central Library of Manchester, the Archives<sup>1</sup> in the same library, the British Library Catalogue, the National Union Catalogue, and the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature.

- 1830      Infantine Effusions, poems (Hamburg), Ms F 821 89 J7
- 1836      The Student of Padua: A Domestic Tragedy in Five Acts, a Play in Verse
- 1839-47   The Diary of Ernest Jones, 2 vols, Ms 923 2 J18
- 1841      The Wood Spirit: A Novel in Two Volumes (a tale of Jutland)
- 1846      My Life, a poem. The introduction is signed: Percy Vere.
- 1846      Chartist Songs and Fugitive Pieces
- 1847-8    The Labourer: A Monthly Magazine of Politics, Literature, Poetry, etc. Edited by Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones, vols 1-4.
- 1848      'The Right of Public Meeting': a Letter Addressed (before Jones's sentence) to Lord Chief Justice Sir Thomas Wild.
- 1848      The Chartist Trials: Central Criminal Court July 5 (pamphlet)
- 1851      Canterbury Versus Rome; and Christianity in Relation to Both (lectures)
- 1851-2    Notes to the People (a weekly paper)
- 1852      Rhymes on the Times
- 1852-7    The People's Paper (weekly)
- 1854      The Maid of Warsaw: Or the Tyrant Czar; a Tale of the Last Polish Revolution.
- 1855      The Battle Day and Other Poems
- 1855      Woman's Wrongs; a Series of Tales.
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1. All Jones's manuscript materials are preserved in the Archives of the Central Library of Manchester.

- 1855 The Lass and the Lady, or Love's Ladder: A Tale of Thrilling Interest, completed by T.Frost, published in parts.
- 1856 'The Song of the Lower Classes': A Song of Cromwell's Time.
- 1856 Songs of Democracy
- 1856 The Emperor's Vigil, and the Waves and the War
- 1856 Evenings with the People (lectures)
- 1857 The Revolt of Hindostan; or, The New World (a poem)
- 1859 'Libel Exposed': Being a Full Report of the Action For Libel, Ernest Jones v. G.W.M.Reynold. To which is appended a letter by Ernest Jones, and an article on the trial from the Saturday Review, 8 pages.
- 1860 Corayda; a Tale of Faith and Chivalry, and Other Poems
- 1860-7 Notebooks or Diaries of E.Jones Noting Verdicts at Trials or Law Cases in Which He Was Interested, 2 vols. Ms 340 9 J2
- 1863 'The Slave Holder's War', A Lecture Delivered in the Town Hall, Ashton-Under-Lyne, 16 November 1863, 44 pages.
- 1863 'The Trial for Murder Reg. v. Levi Taylor'. Speech in Defence of the Prisoner. Manchester. 15 pages.
- 1864 'Oration on the American Rebellion'. Delivered at the Public Hall, Rochdale.
- 1864 The Danish War: Non-Intervention Meeting at Manchester. 14 pages. Mainly Ernest Jones's Speech for Non-Intervention.
- 1867 'Labour and Capital': a lecture
- 1867 'Democracy Vindicated': A Lecture Delivered to the Edinburgh Working Men's Institute, 4th January in reply to Professor Blackie's lecture. 23 pages.
- 1868 'The Politics of the Day': A Lecture Delivered in Edinburgh, September, 15 pages.
- ? 'Lord Lindsay', a poem. 12 pages.
- ? 'Speeches and Lectures'. No.1. The Hereditary Landed Aristocracy. 16 pages.
- ? 'The Horrible Inquisition of Rome', published 1880.
- ? The Confessions of a Literary Free-Lance: with Hints on Writing Stories and Articles (Edinburgh, 1913).

- ? Autograph Manuscript Poems on the French Revolution,  
Ms F. 821 89 J6
- ? Poems by Ernest Jones, in the author's handwriting with some  
printed pieces, cuttings of press, criticisms of poems published  
1841-8, and 'The Song of the Day Labourer', Ms F. 821 89 J5
- ? Legal Notes of Ernest Charles Jones (1 vol.) mid 19th century  
Ms 340 9J1

Appendix 2

CHRONOLOGY TO THE WORKS  
OF THOMAS COOPER (1805-1892)

In filing this index of Cooper's works, I have consulted The British Library Catalogue, The National Union Catalogue, The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature and the Bishop's Gate Institute Catalogue.<sup>1</sup>

- 1833      The Wesleyan Chiefs; and Other Poems by Thomas Cooper (London).
- 1843      Address to the Jury, by Thomas Cooper, the Leicester Chartist, at the Stafford special assizes, on Wednesday, 11 October 1842, on a charge of arson, followed by an acquittal ... Leicester, T.Warwick, 1843. Bound with O'Connor, Arthur, State of Ireland, 1843.
- 1845      The Purgatory of Suicides: A Prison-Rhyme in Ten Books (London).
- 1845      Wise Sows and Modern Instances 2 vols (London).
- 1846      The Baron's Yule Feast: A Christmas-Rhyme (London).
- 1846      Two Orations Against Taking Away Human Life, Under Any Circumstances; and in Explanation, and Defence, of the Misrepresented Doctrine of Non-Resistance. Delivered at the National Hall, Holborn; 25 February and 4 March 1846 (London).
- 1849      The Life and Character of Henry Hetherington. Abridged from Cooper's éloge by G.J.Holyoake.
- 1849      The Plain Speaker, A Periodical (London).
- 1850      Cooper's Journal, A Periodical (London).
- 1850      Captain Cobler; or, the Lincolnshire Rebellion. An Historical Romance of the Reign of Henry VIII (London).
- 1851      Eight Letters to the Young Men of the Working-Classes (London).
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1. Thomas Cooper's unpublished letters and those related to him are kept in Bishop's Gate Institute, London.

- 1853 Alderman Ralph; or, the History of the Borough and Corporation of the Borough of Willowacre, etc. by A.H.(\*) 2 vols (London).
- 1854 The Triumphs of Perseverance and Enterprise Recorded as Examples For the Young
- 1855 The Family Feud, by A.H. (London). One of a Series Entitled: 'Routledge's Series of Original Novels'.
- 1860 'Discussion Between Thomas Cooper and Joseph Barker, held in ... Bradford, September 1860' (London).
- 1864 Two Nights' Public Discussion ... On the Being of a God as the Maker and Moral Governor of the Universe ... Hall of Science, London, 1 and 3 February 1864 (published London, 1874).
- 1867 'An Introduction' to The Christian Mother at Home by Joseph F. Winks (London).
- 1871 The Bridge of History Over the Gulf of Time: A Popular View of the Historical Evidence For the Truth of Christianity (London).
- 1872 The Life of Thomas Cooper: Written by himself (London).
- 1872 Plain Pulpit Talk (London).
- 1873 The Paradise of Martyrs: A Faith-Rhyme. Part first in five books (London).
- 1873 God, the Soul, and a Future State: A Twofold Popular Treatise ... Second thousand (London).
- 1874 Old-Fashioned Stories (London).
- 1875 The Verity of Christ's Resurrection From the Dead, etc. (London).
- 1876 'The Verity and Value of the Miracles of Christ' (London).
- 1877 The Poetical Works of Thomas Cooper: Purgatory of Suicides, 'Smaller Prison Rhymes', Paradise of Martyrs and Early Pieces
- 1878 Evolution, the Stone Book, and the Mosaic Record of Creation, Three Lectures (London).
- 1880 The Atonement, and Other Discourses; Being a Second Series of 'Plain Pulpit Talk' (London).
- 1885 Thoughts at Fourscore, and Earlier: A Medley ... With portrait. (London)

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 (\*) Hornbook (Adam) is a pseudonym for Thomas Cooper.

MS Cooper-Tatlow Letters, April 1848-January 1860

MS Thomas Cooper to Thomas Chambers Letters, 30/9/57-23/10/68

Appendix 3  
The First and Last Editions of  
The Purgatory of Suicides

Cooper's Purgatory of Suicides was first published in 1845; by 1847 it ran into the second edition and into the third by 1853. As I found no record of any other edition between the third edition (1853) and the edition published in The Poetical Works (1877) I am inclined to call this last edition the 'fourth edition', though it has to be stressed that this is a personal conjecture rather than an established fact. The first edition of The Purgatory varies slightly from the third edition (I found no trace of the second edition, 1847) and considerably from the fourth. How important these variations are and what effect they have on reading the poem has already become a point of controversy amongst Cooper's critics. Cooper, himself, in his 'Address to the Reader' which accompanies the fourth edition stresses that: 'Without hesitation I have expunged lines and stanzas which, I found, contained mis-statements of fact, -or which, I thought, violated right feeling.'<sup>1</sup> Leaning, perhaps, on Cooper's judgement as much as on his knowledge of the editions, George Jacob Holyoake remarks: 'Cooper changed the tenor of his poem, put in his creed, and destroyed its life.'<sup>2</sup> To this charge, Robert J. Conklin retorts: 'While there are hundreds of slight changes in diction and pointing between the first and last editions of The Purgatory of Suicides ... Certainly they do not justify George Jacob Holyoake's charge.'<sup>3</sup>

Besides providing a factual answer to this controversy through a line by line collation of differences between the first and fourth editions, this appendix gives the reader an inkling of how the first edition of The Purgatory of Suicides (which is quite rare) reads against the 'fourth edition' published in The Poetical Works (1877) and stresses the significance of using the first edition rather than the fourth in our study of the poem in chapter 5. This comparison shows that Cooper made significant alterations in the fourth edition and that the changes

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1. The Poetical Works of Thomas Cooper (London, 1877), p.[vii].
  2. Cited in Robert J. Conklin, Thomas Cooper, The Chartist, p.250.
  3. Ibid.

are of some bearing on the meaning of the poem. For example, his attack on priests in stanzas 46, 49 and 50 in Book 2 of the first edition is omitted from the fourth. The same is true of the last nine stanzas in Book 3 in the first edition and stanzas 13-18 and stanza 58 in Book 5 of the same edition. Apart from these omissions of whole stanzas which were made to lessen the radical tone of the poem, Cooper made other countless changes which in effect make the two editions read significantly differently. Although he often kept the rhyme scheme unchanged, Cooper managed to change the sense by changing words, sentences, or simply the syntax of his sentences. From the profuse examples contained in this appendix we shall cite only two here:

Ye can die  
Humanely slow; and they can nullify  
Your race peacefully

in the first edition is skilfully twisted in the fourth into:

Ye shall die  
Humanely slow; and they will meekly try  
In peace to end ye!

Instead of the change of emphasis in the above example, we have a complete change of meaning in the following one:

Ye might derive  
Light from your punishment,- but that each finds,

These lines in the first edition are substituted by the following ones in the fourth:

Nor will ye strive  
To burst your dimning veil, for that each finds

Moreover, there are considerable changes in punctuation too: in the fourth edition Cooper removes almost all the dashes which were indiscriminately used in the first edition. Even if the changes were the printers' (the first edition was printed by M'Gowan while the fourth was printed by Hazell, Watson, and Viney, Ltd) rather than Cooper's, the effect on the poem is considerable.

However, a close look at the differences between the first and fourth editions which this appendix takes full account of, strongly suggests that Cooper's political thought had undergone significant changes between the two editions. Thus, if we are to understand Cooper, the Chartist poet, as he was in 1845 (which was the subject of our study

in chapter 5) rather than as he became in 1877 when the political scene in Britain, on the one hand, and Cooper's political creed, on the other, had changed beyond recognition, we have to study the first rather than the fourth edition of his major work, The Purgatory of Suicides. This is why I have used the first edition in my discussion of the poem in chapter 5. Thus, being in a position where I had to use the first edition, and being fully aware of the fact that the number of copies that still exist of the first edition is very limited indeed, I believe it necessary to provide the reader with this collation of first and more easily accessible fourth edition of The Purgatory.

In my comparison between the first books of the two editions, I took note of every difference, however small and insignificant it might seem, but for the rest of the collation I dropped the more regular and systematic changes that Cooper made. As a general rule, Cooper did not use in the first edition the quotation marks with which almost every stanza in the fourth edition opens. Therefore, I did not take account of them unless they appear in a line which includes some other variations and has to be cited anyway. I did not take full account of the spelling variations (though a few examples are given) because they make little difference, if any, to a reading of the poem. Typical examples are 'shewed' in the first edition which becomes 'showed' in the fourth, or 'emblem'd' in the first which becomes 'emblemmed' in the fourth. The innovations in text as well as in punctuation are closely examined and carefully listed. The lines that immediately follow the stanza number are from the first edition separated by a space from their parallels from the fourth edition. The words or punctuation marks underlined are those which read differently in the two editions.

Book the First

Stanza 1

1st edn            Slaves, toil no more!- Why delve, and moil, and pine, ...  
                  Summon your swarthy thousands to the plain;- ...  
                  Of Liberty;- and, while the lordlings view  
                  Your banded hosts, with stricken heart and brain,- ...  
'Until the Many cease their slavery to the Few!'

4th edn            "Slaves, toil no more! Why delve, and moil, and pine, ...  
                  Summon your swarthy thousands to the plain; ...  
                  Of liberty; and, while the lordlings view  
                  Your banded hosts, with stricken heart and brain, ...  
Until the Many cease their slavery to the Few!'

Stanza 2

1st edn            'We'll crouch, and toil, and weave, no more-to weep!  
                  Exclaim your brothers from the weary loom:-  
                  Yea, now, they swear, with one resolve dread deep,  
                  'We'll toil no more- to win a pauper's doom!- ...  
                  Big with the fear and darkness of the tomb:-  
                  How, 'neath its terrors, are the tyrants bowed!-

4th edn            "'We'll crouch, and toil, and weave, no more-to weep!'  
                  Exclaim your brothers from the weary loom:  
                  Yea, now, they swear, with one resolve, dread, deep,  
                  We'll toil no more-to win a pauper's doom!' ...  
                  Big with the fear and darkness of the tomb.  
                  How, 'neath its terrors, are the tyrants bowed!

Stanza 3

1st edn            Illustrious boast they?- or, that reason's ray

4th edn            Illustrious boast they? or, that reason's ray

Stanza 4

1st edn            What say ye,- that the priests proclaim content?  
                  So taught their Master,- who the hungry fed  
                  As well as taught,- who wept with men,- and bent, ...  
                  Where wretchedness was found, until it fled? ...  
                  Drew down their hellish rage upon his head?-

4th edn            "What say ye,- that the priests proclaim content?  
                  So taught their Master, who the hungry fed  
                  As well as taught; who wept with men, and bent, ...  
                  Where wretchedness was found, until it fled! ...  
                  Drew down their hellish rage upon his head?

5

1st edn           Behold, in pomp, the purple prelate ride,- ...  
                  Frown sullenly,- although in rags and shame ...  
                  Long practised by sleek priests in old Religion's name.

4th edn           Behold, in pomp, the purple prelate ride,  
                  Frown sullenly, although in rags and shame ...  
                  Long practised by proud priests in meek Religion's name.

6

1st edn           Slaves, toil no more!- Despite their boast, ev'n kings ...  
                  Spite of their sanctity,- the surpliced things ...  
                  Strike their pale craft with paler death!- Slaves, toil  
                  no more!

4th edn           "Slaves, toil no more! Despite their boast, ev'n kings ...  
                  Spite of their potency,- the sceptred things ...  
                  Strike both their power and craft with death! Slaves, toil  
                  no more!"-

7

1st edn           For that these words of truth I boldly spake ...  
                  Of want and insult,- and, like men awake ...  
                  The cellar of a Christian Priest they found, ...  
                  To mad revenge,- swift hurling to the ground  
                  And flames- bed, cassock, wine-cups of the tipler gowned:

4th edn           For that these words of fire I boldly spake ...  
                  Of want and insult; and, like men awake ...  
                  A store of maddening alcohol they found, ...  
                  To fierce revenge,- swift hurling to the ground  
                  And flames- dwelling, and lifeless things that stood around;-

8

1st edn           For that I boldly spake these words of truth  
                  And the starved multitude,- to fury wrought  
                  By sense of injury, and void of ruth,-  
                  Rushed forth to deeds of recklessness,- but nought  
                  Achieved of freedom,- since, nor plan, nor thought  
                  Their might directed: for this treason foul

4th edn           For that I boldly spake these words of fire;  
                  And the starved multitude,- their minds full fraught  
                  With sense of injury, and wild with ire,-  
                  Rushed forth to deeds of recklessness, but nought  
                  Achieved of freedom, since, nor plan, nor thought  
                  Their might directed;- for this treason foul

9

1st edn            Let them howl on!- their note, perchance, may change: ...  
                  Kings may, to-morrow, feel its heavings strange!- ...  
                  I mourn in tenderness,- but, to this breast ...  
                  With fervid trustfulness!- and, for the rest,- ...  
                  What may,- within these bars in patience I can 'bide.

4th edn            Let them howl on! Their note, perchance, may change ...  
                  Kings may, to-morrow, feel its heavings strange! ...  
                  I mourn, in tenderness; but, to this breast ...  
                  With fervid trustfulness! Still self-possess, ...  
                  What may, within these bars in patience I can 'bide.

10

1st edn            Which took its tinct from the mind's waking throes:

4th edn            Which took its tinct from the mind's waking throes.

11

1st edn            Hath ever on the Few with bounty smiled,- ...  
                  A pestilence,- from the scourged crowd that piled,

4th edn            Hath ever on the Few with bounty smiled; ...  
                  A pestilence, from the scourged crowd that piled,

14

1st edn            Is life worth having?- Or, is he most wise  
                  Who, self-administered, the med'cine takes  
                  That puts an end to mortal miseries?- ...  
                  Early or late, all who with wrong contend?-

4th edn            Is life worth having? Or, is he most wise  
                  Who, with death-potion its fierce fever slakes,  
                  And ends, self-drugged, his mortal miseries? ...  
                  Early or late, all who with wrong contend?

15

1st edn            Thus feebly pondering, with troubled brain, ...  
                  Unsummoned, his high trust,- my heart grew fain ...  
                  Breeding, of life disgust and jaundiced hate.- ...  
                  When over land and sea hath rung Oppression's knell:

4th edn            Thus feebly pondering, with sore-troubled brain, ...  
                  Unsummoned, his high trust, my heart grew fain ...  
                  Breeding disgust of life and jaundiced hate. ...  
                  When over land and sea hath rung Oppression's knell.

16

1st edn            But sadness checked the theme. Enfever'd Sleep, ...  
                  These aching thoughts, yea, into shapes that frowned  
                  Or smiled, by turns, with seeming passion rife, —  
                  And descant joined on human themes, — though sound ...  
                  Of Mind, — not audible by mode of mortal life. —

4th edn            But sadness checked the strain. Enfevered Sleep, ...  
                  These aching thoughts; yea, into shapes that frowned  
                  Or smiled, by turns, with seeming passion rife, —  
                  And descant joined on human themes, — though sound ...  
                  Of Mind, — not audible by mode of mortal life. —

17

1st edn            Where none of all his passangers drew breath, —

4th edn            Where none of all his passangers drew breath, —

18

1st edn            It seemed a vision of the soul, — by law  
                  Of corp'ral sense unfettered, and more true ...  
                  Nor can earth's Babel syllables unfold ...  
                  Of myriad creatures, — or their monstrous mould, —

4th edn            It seemed a vision of the soul, — by law  
                  Of corporal sense unfettered, and more true ...  
                  Nor can earth's Babel-syllables unfold ...  
                  Of myriad creatures, — or their monstrous mould, —

19

1st edn            Or Mammoth; — longitude of lizards vast, ...  
                  She quaked at her strange children; — not all past ...  
                  By guess, cleping it 'Knowledge' — for the mirth  
                  —Of future worms, crawling, in pride, — to death-from birth;

4th edn            Or mammoth; — longitude of lizards vast, ...  
                  She quaked at her strange children; — not all past ...  
                  By guess, styling it 'Knowledge', — for the mirth  
                  Of future worms, crawling, in pride to death-from birth;

20

1st edn            Not old leviathan, of bulk uncouth; —  
                  Nor fabled kraken, with his sea-borne trail; — ...  
                  Which from redundant Nile his beams exhale; —  
                  Nor all that phrenzied poets exorcise  
                  From memory's grave, then weave with fancies frail; —  
                  Can image, in their shades, or shapes, or size

4th edn           Not old leviathan, of bulk uncouth;  
Nor fabled kraken, with his sea-borne trail; ...  
Which from redundant Nile his beams exhale;  
Not all that phrenzied poets exorcise  
From memory's grave, then weave with fancies frail;  
Can image, in their span, or shapes, or dyes,

21

1st edn           We reached the shore, the waves at once were lull- ...  
And void as things that never were- while they,

4th edn           We reached the shore, the waves at once were lull; ...  
And void as things that never were; while they,

22

1st edn           All that Death's ocean shewed of hideousness ...  
Its paragon: it was a wilderness ...  
No sun to fructify- no flowers to cheer ...  
Then spread throughout the plain their pois'nous perfume rank

4th edn           All that Death's ocean showed of hideousness ...  
Its paragon: it was a crude excess ...  
No sun to fructify, no flowers to cheer  
Then spread throughout the plain their poisonous perfume rank

23

1st edn           Damp, dense, and deathly,- yet the climate parched  
Those silent travellers with raging thirst;  
But sick'ning at the slimy pools, they marched  
Onward, enfevered, fainting;- 'till outburst

4th edn           Damp, dense, and deathly, yet the climate parched  
Those silent travellers, sore, with raging thirst;  
But sickening at the slimy pools, they marched  
Onward, enfevered, fainting; 'till outburst

24

1st edn           Chasms yawned, like dragons' jaws, from what seemed rock,-  
Then closed, with sulphurous smell, and horrid jar,- ...  
Gathering their troops terrific,- which came on  
With fury,- but, like some portentous star

4th edn           Chasms yawned, like dragon's jaws, from what seemed rock,  
Then closed, with sulphurous smell, and horrid jar, ...  
Gathering their troops terrific, which came on  
With fury, but, like some portentous star

25

1st edn            They still to drag their unseen burthen strove\_  
Till the wild crags came toppling from above\_  
Threat'ning to crush the strugglers into nought\_  
When lo!\_- some airy necromancy wove ...  
A web of gossamer,\_- with wizard safety fraught:

4th edn            They still to drag their unseen burden strove,  
Till the wild crags came toppling from above,  
Threatening to crush the strugglers into nought;  
When lo!\_ some airy necromancy wove ...  
A web of gossamer with wizard safety fraught:

26

1st edn            They seemed;\_- but suddenly, let down, amazed ...  
Where,\_- while they clung unto the weeds, and gazed  
Upwards, in hope to climb,\_- some weird hand felled

4th edn            They seemed;\_ but suddenly, let down, amazed :...  
Where, while they clung unto the weeds, and gazed  
Upward, in hope to climb, some weird hand felled

27

1st edn            Yet, on dry land as speedily they stood,-  
Where they again their venturous march prepared,\_- ...  
And murky air, unto the wand'ers bared ...  
Ye may a jest this dreaming rhyme esteem\_  
But these strange terrors my wrapt spirit shared;  
And, though it was the journey of a dream,\_-

4th edn            Yet on dry land, as speedily they stood,-  
Where they again their venturous march prepared,  
And murky air, unto the travellers bared ...  
Ye may a jest this dreaming rhyme esteem:  
But these strange terrors my rapt spirit shared;  
And, though it was the journey of a dream.

28

1st edn            A cavern's mouth, browed by a giant mound ...  
The semblance of a subterranean aisle,\_-  
And walked admiringly,\_- yet feared, the while, ...  
But,\_- 'midst their fears,\_- sense of unearthly light

4th edn            A cavern's mouth, browed by a giant mound, ...  
The semblance of a subterraneous aisle,  
And walked admiringly, yet feared, the while, ...  
But, midst their fears, sense of unearthly light

29

- 1st edn            Diffusing from its tracery,- that seemed woof ...  
Witness while worshipping the Nazarene -  
Pride lauding lowliness!- and past compare
- 4th edn            Diffusing from its tracery,  that seemed woof ...  
Witness while worshipping the Nazarene:   
Pride lauding lowliness!  And past compare

32

- 1st edn            Not, after pattern,  of old monkish mode; ...  
While clustered shaft,  and twisted pillar sprung ...  
To shaft and capital, festoon and groin,   
Seeming all forms of life,- all grace of flowers to join;
- 4th edn            Not, after pattern of old monkish mode; ...  
While clustered shaft and twisted pillar sprung ...  
To shaft and capital, festoon and groin,-  
Seeming all forms of life,  all grace of flowers to join;

33

- 1st edn            Through that vast aisle,- that rather glowed a field  
Of caverned wonders, where each shape did yield,   
...  
Of wondering,- pining, now, for prospect of her goal,
- 4th edn            Through that vast aisle,  that rather glowed a field  
Of caverned wonders, where each shape did yield  
...  
Of wondering-pining, now, for prospect of her goal.

34

- 1st edn            Light fled,- and dim funereal gloom rewoke  
A solemn sadness through my being. Dome,  
...  
Primeval,- high above me stretched its span
- 4th edn            Light fled;  and dim funereal gloom rewoke  
A solemn sadness through my essence. Dome,  
...  
Primeval,  high above me stretched its span

35

- 1st edn            I first perceived,- from law which did coerce  
The traveller-ghosts who reached these realms of woe ...  
To inchoate, for sin of suicide,

4th edn            I first perceived, from law which did coerce  
The vagrant ghosts who reached these realms of woe ...  
To inchoate, for sin of suicide,-

36

1st edn            Unto its clime,- or whether, now unblent ...  
She saw and knew. Suffice it,- what she willed  
To know- that knowledge swift throughout her essence thrilled.

4th edn            Unto its clime; or whether, now unblent ...  
She saw and knew. Suffice it, what she willed  
To know, that knowledge swift throughout her essence thrilled.

37

1st edn            The soul for mystic travel girt her thews,- ...  
In land where penance rebel thought subdues ...  
The gift of life probational,- and death

4th edn            The soul for mystic travel girt her thews, ...  
In land where penance rebel-thought subdues ...  
The gift of life probational, and death

38

1st edn            From whence diverged each subterranean aisle,- ...  
Of emblem'd sovereignty, or typic pile ...  
With pregnant descant on their earthly fall,-  
On fate,- on mortal change,- and being spiritual.

4th edn            From whence diverged each subterranean aisle, ...  
Of emblem'd sovereignty or typic pile ...  
With pregnant descant on their earthly fall,  
On fate, and mortal change, and being spiritual.

39

1st edn            Flowed from the soul with architectural power,-  
Or talisman of magic Esterlings  
Were there the unbound mind's mysterious dower,-  
Forthwith disclosed,- in high investiture  
Of purple, sceptres, thrones, and diadems,-  
A hall of kings assembled gleamed, obscure,-

4th edn            Flowed from the soul with architectural power,  
Or talisman of ancient Magian kings  
Were there the unbound mind's mysterious dower-  
Forthwith disclosed, in high investiture  
Of purple, sceptres, thrones and diadems,  
A hall of kings assembled gleamed obscure,-

41

1st edn            Smiled that wide palace-hall:- yet, upward, quick  
And tim'rous looks old shapes columnar cast-  
That stretched their sinews as with effort vast  
To prop the heavenly arch whose fall they feared:-

4th edn            Smiled that wide palace-hall: yet, upward, quick  
And timorous looks old shapes columnar cast,  
That stretched their sinews, as with effort vast,  
To prop the heavenly arch whose fall they feared.

42

1st edn            Scythians, with heel in front, and toes behind,-

4th edn            Scythians, with heel in front, and toes behind,

43

1st edn            And apprehensive dread;- while o'er them bowed  
The arch that still in jewelled beauty glowed.- ...  
That breathing stone the Past to gem the Future leased.-

4th edn            And apprehensive dread; while o'er them bowed  
The arch that still in jewelled beauty glowed. ...  
That breathing stone the Past to gem the Future leased.

46

1st edn            For metope, along the plinth's broad rim,  
'Tween gem-dropp'd triglyphs,- wore each classic throne:

4th edn            For metope, along the frieze' broad rim,  
'Tween gem-dropp'd triglyphs, wore each classic throne:

48

1st edn            Mute,- wonder-stricken,- long, methought, I gazed, ...  
From whom to learn their names: without a veil  
Unto the soul, the pride, pain, thought, or deed

4th edn            Mute, wonder-stricken, long, methought, I gazed, ...  
From whom to learn their names; without a veil  
Unto the soul, the pride, pain, dread, or deed

50

1st edn            Cloud wrapt, that gray Cathaian autocrat, ...  
With deathly flames;- and that foul glutton, who, ...  
Full-supper'd,- Cambes,- lord of Lydia's pampered crew.

4th edn            Cloud-wrapt, that gray Cathaian autocrat,  
                    With deathly flames; and that foul glutton, who,  
Full-suppered, - Cambes, lord of Lydia's pampered crew.

51

1st edn            Who, of his death, - fearing his son devoured, -

4th edn            Who, of his death, fearing his son devoured,

53

1st edn            Of hate upon his girded brow, though riv'n  
                    From earth, sat Telamon. A haloed heav'n

4th edn            Of hate upon his brow, from earth though riven,  
                    Sat Ajax Telamon. A haloed heaven

54

1st edn            Of brave Charondas: these, enthroned 'mid ray

4th edn            Of brave Charondas: these, enthroned 'mid blaze

55

1st edn            A stench, - the lewdling sat, whose foul desires  
                    Sought for their victim one whose spotless fame  
                    Her father saved, and snatched from maiden shame,  
                    Devoting to stern Death his virgin child.

4th edn            A stench, - sat Appius, - he whose lewdling fires  
                    The spotless maid had scathed with deathful shame,  
                    But that a father's knife preserved her fame, -  
                    Giving to deathless life his Virgin child.

56

1st edn            Impelled, when wearied with his game of blood,

4th edn            Impelled, when, wearied with his game of blood,

57

1st edn            Vile Bonosus the drunkard, - of whose fall

4th edn            Bonosus vile, the drunkard, - of whose fall

58

1st edn            They shared; - save when on that great combatant

4th edn            They shared; save when on that great combatant

59

1st edn            Neighb'ring with his stood Juba's ivory throne,-  
The Mauritanian: next, in meek array,  
The Paphian sat,- Nicocles,- who alone ...  
Took also,- and now shared the regal ray

4th edn            Neighbouring stood Juba's gold and ivory throne,-  
The Mauritanian: next, with shorn display,  
Sat Nicocles, the Paphian- who alone ...  
Took also,- and now shared the chastened ray

60

1st edn            To save the life that now was hateful. Meet  
Sisters, numerous, by Althaea slept,-  
Or gazed stonily,- forms by Mythic names yclept.

4th edn            To save the life, that thence, she loathed. A meet  
Sisterhood, numerous, by Althaea slept  
Or stonily gazed: eld forms by Mythic names yclept.

61

1st edn            Within the wave she sought a deathful rest.

4th edn            She sought by her own hand a deathful rest.

62

1st edn            Earth's kings in pride, Earth's harlots in unchaste ...  
Of Nile descended,- asp-stung heritress

4th edn            Earth's queens in pride,- earth's harlots in unchaste ...  
Of Nile descended, asp-stung heritress

63

1st edn            Sat Boadicea, simple, unadorned,-

4th edn            Sat Boadicea, simple, unadorned,

64

1st edn            Thy prophecy, sage Spartan,- proudly gibed, ...  
We are, by turns;- to periodic pain, ...  
O'er crag and rock,- or burnt or frore,- our stain  
To purge: yet, in due season, thus restored we reign!

4th edn            "Thy prophecy, sage Spartan",- proudly gibed, ...  
We are, by turns; to periodic pain, ...  
O'er crag and rock, or burnt or frore, our stain  
To purge: yet, in due season, thus restored, we reign!

65

1st edn            Err'st thou not here, presaging utter change ...  
                  And mould their minds to virtue?- foolish dream ...  
                  Crowned, sceptred and enthroned, the stream  
Of ceaseless being shall find our essences supreme

4th edn            "Errest thou not here, presaging utter change ...  
                  And mould their minds to virtue? Foolish dream ...  
                  Crowned, sceptred, and enthroned, the changeful stream  
Of ceaseless being shall find our Essences supreme.

66

1st edn            Of inborn might and energy amassed  
                  Up in all minds, who say th' unequal state  
                  In Hades, or on earth, shall terminate.

4th edn            Of inborn greatness in all minds amassed  
                  Who say,- of Hades this unequal state,  
                  And Earth's, shall end by the decree of Fate.

67

1st edn            There hath been,- and there will be. Thou may'st stroke ...  
                  Earth's mortal millions?- why, in one age shook  
                  From their sire's shoulders do the sons upheave ...  
                  Its golden sceptre?- 'Twas but to receive

4th edn            There have been,- and there will be. Thou may'st stroke ...  
                  Earth's mortal millions? Why, in one age shook  
                  From their sire's shoulders, do the sons upheave ...  
                  Its golden sceptre? 'Twas but to receive

68

1st edn            And all who seek Her statues to disturb,-

4th edn            And all who seek Her statues to disturb,

69

1st edn            What mean, I ask thee, these thronged typic forms,-  
                  These images of allegoric shape?- ...  
                  Will burst upon our being, and with gape  
                  Of chaos tomb these thrones! Aha! a jape ...  
These portraitures set forth, in this mysterious clime:-



4th edn            Of wholesome reverence for law; and nerve  
                  The arm of Power, when it grows old and faint,  
And impious men deride its ceremonies quaint.

76

1st edn            The fables of old bards,- and thy far view

4th edn            The fables of bards, and thy far view

77

1st edn            With teeming plenty;- life doth, vig'rous, strike  
                  Its roots into the soil;- and swarms that whelm ...  
Industrious, on the rock: their zeal what toil can damp?

4th edn            With teeming plenty; life doth, vigorous, strike  
                  Its roots into the soil; and swarms, that whelm ...  
Industrious, on the rock; their zeal what toil can damp?

80

1st edn            Graian, behold from China's terraced mountains  
                  Meek, peaceful myriads to the plains descend,  
And, with their brethren by the silver fountains  
Reclining, to some hoary teacher lend  
Enraptured audience, while his lips commend

4th edn            "Graian, behold, from China's terraced mountains  
                  Meek, peaceful myriads to the valleys wend,  
And with their brethren by the silver fountains  
Reclining, to some hoary teacher lend  
Enraptured audience, while his lips commend

81

1st edn            Attracting wond'ring eyes from all the earth, ...  
                  Of vast Cathay:- how science had her birth,  
In peaceful secret, there, and glided forth ...  
Of wisdom on the world, but of her spring

4th edn            Attracting wondering eyes from all the earth, ...  
                  Of vast Cathay: how science had her birth,  
In peaceful secret, there; and glided forth ...  
Of wisdom on the world; but of her spring

82

1st edn            Leal ever, as, to Wisdom's truths eternal, -  
                  By sage Confucius opened, ages roll

4th edn           Leal ever, as, to Wisdom's truths eternal,  
By sage Confucius opened, ages roll

83

1st edn           Or art, held magic once, that spreads the glory ...  
Upon the lettered page; while pyramid

4th edn           "Or art, held magic once, that spreads the glory ...  
Upon the lettered page; while pyramid

84

1st edn           That decks their palaces:- or various art  
Pictorial, that by tapestry, cartoon,  
Canvass, or marble, where dead forms upstart  
To life, - sublime instruction doth to man impart:-

4th edn           That decks their palaces: or various art  
Pictorial, that by tapestry, cartoon,  
Canvass, or marble, where dead forms upstart  
To life-sublime instruction doth to man impart.

85

1st edn           Of wisdom, Genius, skill, attribute now,

4th edn           Of wisdom, Genius, skill, attribute now,

86

1st edn           Glow with undimmed and steady lustre, still!- ...  
With things that were, or claim from infantile

4th edn           Glow with undimmed and steady lustre, still! ...  
With things that were; or claim from infantile

87

1st edn           Spartan, I challenge thee upon this theme, ...  
To the paternal wearer of the diadem

4th edn           "Spartan, I challenge thee upon this theme, ...  
To the high wearer of the diadem

88

1st edn           And why we thus hold thrones doth thence result,-  
I judge, that great maternal Nature keeps ...  
Monitions that Man's welfare reaps ...  
Shall grow intenser consciousness of Nature's love.-

4th edn            "And why we thus hold thrones doth thence result,  
I judge, that great maternal Nature keeps ...  
Kindly monitions that Man's welfare reaps ...  
Shall grow intenser consciousness of Nature's love."-

89

1st edn            Sent forth from their deep essence bright attest  
Of grateful joy. Such spiritual praise ...  
Some scorner 'mid the radiant effluence ...  
And uprose Antony,- these thoughts prepense  
Verbing of haught disdain, from his pride's prurience:-

4th edn            Each, from his essence, sent forth bright attest  
Of grateful joy. Such quintessential praise ...  
Some scorner seated 'mid the effluence bright ...  
And uprose Antony, with careless spite  
Uttering these thoughts of barbed truth and scornful slight:-

90

1st edn            Round us their waves we sink not in their whirl,-

4th edn            Round us their waves we sink not in their whirl;

91

1st edn            Till then, I scorn their lunes,- as now I scorn, ...  
Moulds monarchs- who earth's sceptres seize, and thrust ...  
Themselves, the seat of sway,- aye, with robust

4th edn            "Till then, I scorn their threats, as now I scorn, ...  
Moulds monarchs, who earth's sceptres seize, and thrust ...  
Themselves, the seat of sway; ay, with robust

92

1st edn            These are Her darlings- though a coarse-fed serf ...  
In native loftiness: old monarchs blush  
When they behold them, or wax wan with fears;-  
For, on their ominous front, deep-graved, stern change appears.

4th edn            "These are her darlings, though a coarse-fed serf ...  
In native loftiness; old monarchs blush  
When they behold them, or wax wan with fears;  
For on their ominous front, deep-graved, stern change appears.

93

1st edn            Earth's partial love,- Cathaian trumpeter,-

4th edn            Earth's partial love, Cathaian picturer,

94

1st edn            To hide their nakedness:- gaunt man, driven mad ...  
His hell on earth:- pale woman, loath to add

4th edn            To hide their nakedness: gaunt man driven mad ...  
His hell on earth: pale woman, loath to add

95

1st edn            O'er the huge tombs of city-life where droop, ...  
For vermin e'er they die:- from whom, aghast,

4th edn            O'er the huge tombs of city life where droop, ...  
For vermin ere they die: from whom, aghast,

96

1st edn            In ign'rance,- crime and folly that will burst ...  
Thou hast- let this suffice!- for, now, the glory,

4th edn            In ignorance, crime and folly that will burst ...  
Thou hast- let this suffice:- for, now, the glory

97

1st edn            Behold,- and find it but a land of tears-

4th edn            Behold, and find it but a land of tears-

98

1st edn            One of their sea-girt homes- Hibernia!- there,

4th edn            "One of their sea-girt homes- Hibernia:- there,

99

1st edn            Thou fabling phantasm,- what hath man become, ...  
Democracy of buried Rome,- controlled, ...  
Dealt to them daily,- could such slaves behold-  
Such breadless slaves- o'er earth's old region tread,-

4th edn            "Thou fabling phantasm, what hath man become, ...  
Democracy of buried Rome, controlled, ...  
Dealt to them daily, could such slaves behold-  
Such breadless slaves- o'er earth's old region tread,

100

1st edn            Thou art rebuked, justly: yet, controvert ...  
But we- Fate's darlings- merit grateful kings' regard!-

4th edn            "Justly thou art rebuked: yet, controvert ...  
But we- Fate's darlings- merit grateful kings' regard!"-

101

1st edn            Of spirits, they beheld his vanity outran

4th edn            Intense, they saw his vanity outran

102

1st edn            That thrones to thy stout valour owe huge debt,- ...  
Is true as that thou wert an anchoret!

4th edn            "That thrones to thy stout valour owe huge debt,-" ...  
"Is true as that thou wert an anchoret.

103

1st edn            Of princely spirits: mockeries, this crown  
And sceptre I pronounce,- whate'er some urge .

4th edn            Of princely spirits: mockeries, I this crown  
And sceptre must pronounce,- whate'er some urge

105

1st edn            Whom nature marks for empire: but a tool

4th edn            Whom Nature marks for empire; but a tool

106

1st edn            Of skill: ever of power appearing coy,-

4th edn            Of skill: for aye of power appearing coy,

108

1st edn            And fondly prate of barbarous unknown shores,-

4th edn            And fondly prate of barbarous unknown shores,

111

1st edn            Up evening's lingering tears: so feeble grew

4th edn            Up night's few lingering tears: so feeble grew

112

1st edn            Of fierce Maxinian:- who doest thou upbraid,- ...  
Earth's sceptres, thou unworthiest shar'st this bliss-

4th edn Of fierce Maxinian:- "Whom dost thou upbraid, ...  
Earth's sceptres, thou unworthiest shar'st this bliss,

114

1st edn Thrones of the West,- why sit ye tamely, thus,- ...  
With thought grew, now, the spirits habitant

4th edn "Thrones of the West,- why sit ye tamely, thus, ...  
With thought grew, now, the spirits arrogant

115

1st edn Of haughty Rome when rose the Pontic king,-  
Hurling a frown of intellectual might  
Among their cowering sceptres,- scattering  
Their pride,- and thus his own soul's contest symboling:

4th edn Of haughty Rome- shrunk, like a coward thing-  
When rose, with front of intellectual might  
The regal Mithridates. Thus, to bring  
Thought to Power's rescue, strove the strong-souled Pontic king:

116

1st edn That thou, with truest sapience, dost leave ...  
With rage of earth's old pride- which still doth leave ...  
And vex our fleshless essences for aye:-

4th edn That thou, with keen sagacity, dost leave ...  
With rage of earth's old pride, which still doth leave ...  
And vex our fleshless essences for aye:

117

1st edn Let Rome's throned pigmies argue, answerless!- ...  
A frown,- recalling Sylla's dreadlessness, ...  
Of six-score realms in arms- of whom none spake  
A tongue their chief unknew,- nor burned his yoke to break.

4th edn "Let Rome's throned pigmies argue, answerless! ...  
A frown, recalling Sylla's dreadlessness, ...  
Of twenty realms in arms- of whom none spake  
A tongue their chief unknew, nor burned his yoke to break.

118

1st edn Thou nobly scorn'st,-I marvel,- Graian wise, ...  
O'er mightier essences, by worn-out guise  
Of mystery: not to antagonise

4th edn           Thou nobly scornst,- I marvel, Graian wise, ...  
O'er mightier essences, by worn-out guides  
Of mystery. Not to antagonise

119

1st edn           The labouring soul her knowledge;- and, though full ...  
Take spiritual embodiment;- since live ...  
Essentially,- and Essence can derive

4th edn           The labouring soul her knowledge; and though full ...  
Take spiritual embodiment; since live ...  
Essentially, and Essence can derive

120

1st edn           Of its own ever-active energy;- ...  
Irradiate with emblemed royalty,  
Is reflex of ourselves,- and we erase

4th edn           "Of its own ever-active energy; ...  
Irradiate, thus, with emblemed royalty,  
Is reflex of ourselves, and we erase

121

1st edn           To equal state,- never to know default

4th edn           To equal state, never to know default

122

1st edn           Expect from spiritual thrones disdain  
And dumb contempt, or tempest of their mirth,-  
When to more dark-wombed wonders thou giv'st dreaming birth!

4th edn           Expect from kingly spirits haught disdain  
And dumb contempt, or tempest of their mirth,  
When to more dark-wombed wonders thou givest dreaming birth!"-

125

1st edn           In death, 'mid shapes all passionless, its gentle path.

4th edn           At death, 'mid shapes all passionless, its gentle path.

126

1st edn           That they should live,- until they seemed to fill .  
Our utmost life! Yet, were they things of nought,-  
Soul-mists which phantom-essences distil,  
In Hades,- as, on earth, ethereal, float,



4th edn Or err, for high Humanity I claim  
Precedence of all pomps. Spirits, if true might

136

1st edn Ye clepe me Prophet!- I accept the jest ...  
Earth's olden stains- the helot's stripes- the helot's tear!

4th edn "Ye style me Prophet! I accept the jest ...  
Earth's olden stains: the helot's stripes, the helot's tear!

137

1st edn For blood and slaughter,- but to disenthral  
Their new-born spirits from Faith's mystical  
Degrading chains, and shake their ancient slough  
Of sottish ignorance off: no more to crawl  
In abjectness 'fore hideous gods, nor throw

4th edn For blood and slaughter; but to disenthral  
Their new-born spirits from funereal  
And priest-forged fears; to shake their ancient slough  
Of sottish ignorance off; no more to crawl  
In abjectness 'fore hideous gods; nor throw

139

1st edn In penal clime of suicide,- our hope, ...  
And spirits throughout Hades who in scope  
Of mind excel, gathered in eloquent group, ...  
Interpreting- that, either side the tomb,

4th edn In penal clime of suicide, our hope, ...  
And spirits who in Hades never droop  
With Earth's old doubts, gathered in eloquent group, ...  
Interpreting- that, on both sides the tomb,

140

1st edn For fleshless essences,- for mortal men,  
From bondage-toil and error, welcome rest,-  
Foreshow that love fraternal with serene  
And genial beam shall thaw the icy mien  
Of selfishness to soft beneficence,-

4th edn For fleshless Essences, joy for Earth's teen,  
Truth for its error, from its lave-toil rest,-  
Foreshow that love fraternal shall with sheen  
Genial and mild dissolve the marble mien  
Of selfishness to soft beneficence;

142

1st edn           Thrones,- ye perceive your splendours 'gin to pale;- ...  
                  I cease my theme;- and may have erred,- for frail ...  
                  That Truth and Liberty shall bloom- to die,- ...  
To death,- blending, as 'twere, a breath- a smile- a sigh!

4th edn           "Thrones,- ye perceive your splendours 'gin to pale; ...  
                  I cease my theme; and may have erred,- for frail ...  
                  That Truth and Liberty shall bloom- to die, ...  
To death: blending, as 'twere, a breath- a smile- a sigh

143

1ar edn           Inevitably;- that when their brief revenge ...  
                  Themselves in vain,- and Nature doth their strife frustrate.

4th edn           Inevitably: that when their brief revenge ...  
                  Themselves in vain, and Nature doth their strife frustrate:

145

1st edn           Be summoned, or invited, when hath spent  
                  Our penance, next, on us, its chastisement:- ...  
                  Of cogitation,- and some joint consent ...  
Of Essences, when each his glowing thought displays.-

4th edn           Be summoned, when our penance-term is spent,  
                  And o'er us this gemmed roof, once more, is bent. ...  
                  Of cogitation; and some joint consent ...  
Of Essences, when each his glowing thought displays."-

Book the Second

Stanza 2

1st edn            And loftiest rhyme is deemed a worthless page  
By crowds that bow in Mammon-vassalage?

4th edn            When loftiest rhyme is deemed a worthless page,  
And Taste doth browse on bestial pasturage?

Stanza 7

1st edn            To censure soft that might find suffrance? ...  
Of custom, priestcraft, power,- ye made your stern thoughts known.

4th edn            Till priests could brook that lightning's mitigation? ...  
Of Power and Priestcraft,- ye your sternest thoughts made known.

Stanza 8

1st edn            Would frown,- save thee, to whom my spirit clings

4th edn            Would scorn, save thee, to whom my spirit clings

Stanza 9

1st edn            Since thou o'er 'darkness' lone triumph'd- I'll deem

4th edn            Since thou 'mid 'darkness' lone couldst joy, I'll deem

Stanza 13

1st edn            Ye loosed - we'll break!- ye have not toiled and bled, in vain!

4th edn            Ye loosed - we'll break: our kingless birthright we'll regain!

Stanza 16

1st edn            And seemed to hear high heaven with clash of conflict ring!

4th edn            And heaven's magnific vault with clash of conflict ring!

Stanza 28

1st edn            No votaries; and thy own spirit stirs,  
By harbouring old thoughts fantastical:

4th edn            No votaries; and thy erring spirit stirs,  
By harbouring old thoughts terrestrial:

31

1st edn For, wide diversity this banishment  
Displays of pain,- and all unlike our state

4th edn For Ease, Pain's issue, here, is incident,  
As to Earth's clime; and all unlike our fate

33

1st edn Creates, though suffering ever intertwined,

4th edn Creates, and suffering ever intertwined,

38

1st edn Thus answered:- Mystery, that ever grows

4th edn Thus answered:- "Mystery, that for ever grows

39

1st edn His being, and Life's poor grovelling race is run,

4th edn Him, and his race unto the tomb is run,

41

1st edn ... we feel  
Our heart congenial while we reveal  
Its spiritual throbbings? Not in hate

4th edn ... we feel  
Our heart congenial while we thus reveal  
Its throbbings to the core. Oh! not in hate

42

1st edn Above these mists, then would the soul find her blest bourne!

4th edn From hence, then would the soul find some more blest sojourn.

43

1st edn Even now? Age after age this servitude  
To frailty we endure,- and, all inert,  
Droop o'er our woe, or, passive, mourn! Endu'd ...  
The soul of frailty! Now her sovereignty  
This essence wields! we'll scale this Mount of Vanity!-

4th edn Even now? Age after age this irksome feud  
With frailty we sustain, or, all inert,  
Droop o'er our woe, and, passive, mourn! Endued ...  
The soul of frailty! Now for victory  
Let essence dare, and scale this Mount of Vanity!-

Stanza 46 in the first edition is omitted from the fourth edition; here

it is:

1st edn           And, as I dreamed, methought, the motley mob  
                  Babbled of names that every earthly clime  
                  Have filled with strife until the feverous throb  
                  Issued in darkest, deadliest deeds of crime -  
                  Each deed still hallowed by the things of slime -  
                  The vermin priests. Amid the hubbub wild  
                  'Cross',- 'crescent'- 'hell'- and heaven made strange chime  
                  With 'Tartarus'- 'Elysium'; and some smiled,  
                  While others gnashed their teeth:- but all still upward toiled.

47

1st edn           Was there that called on Boodh, and Juggernaut,  
4th edn(46)       Was there that called on Brahm, and Juggernaut,

48

1st edn           The spiritual air with holy jar  
4th edn(47)       The air of Hades with unholy jar

Again, stanzas 49 and 50 in the first edition do not appear in the fourth edition.

49

1st edn           Nor shrunk from challenge to renew earth's strife  
                  The scowling Moslems,- but with bitter jeer  
                  And scoff retorted. Soon the tumult rife  
                  And fiery grew: the lank Jew hurled his sneer  
                  Alike at knightly pilgrim and austere  
                  Follower of Islam,- Budhist and Bramin joined,-  
                  And mingling curse of Turk, Jew, bonze, fakir,  
                  Templar, monk, palmer, santon, hermit-coined  
A cursing tempest from their cursing tongues combined.

50

                  Anon, came on a crew that swift outsped,  
                  And soon outdinned with more relentless curse,  
                  This bitter cursing crowd. High overhead  
                  The bannered Lamb and Dove did misrehearse  
                  The spite with which their vot'ries sought to force  
                  Each other to distraction. Paradox  
                  And mystery hurling with invective coarse,  
                  These fight along,- and each his brother mocks  
With taunt of 'schism!'- frowning with haught brow orthodox.



4th edn(75) Empedocles; and he, ere deeper gauge  
Of thought the Indian took, thus urged his quest:

79

1st edn But thou, O sage,- in whom experience-  
Hath wrought deep knowledge,- who with luminous

4th edn(76) But thou, O sage,- to whom mind more intense  
Hath brought deep knowledge,- who with luminous

80

1st edn The gods our portion here? Disquietude

4th edn(77) The gods our portion here? Torturous soul-feud

83

1st edn They severed life's frail bonds,- a various state  
Hold here. From these the Poet and the Patriot band,

4th edn(80) They broke life's bonds, hold here a various state.  
From these the Poet and the Patriot band,

85

1st edn Of stern realities,- if toys bewitch  
Her here, as erst on earth,- and mists enshroud  
Her vision till all being with a cloud

4th edn(82) Of stern realities,- if gloring speech  
Mislead her, as on earth,- and mists enshroud  
Her vision till all essence with a cloud

87

1st edn And spir'tual rest be changed,- and ever know increase!

4th edn(84) For ever shall be changed,- and ever know increase.

89

1st edn In gentleness omnipotent, and take  
Her native throne within their souls,- for they

4th edn(86) In gentleness omnipotent, and make  
Her meekest throne within their souls,- for they

90

1st edn Our being is a contest and a strife  
With its own essence: struggling to be free

4th edn(87) Our being is a contest and a strife  
Of self with self: thus struggling to be free

Book the Third

Stanza 7

1st edn My withered heart, for the poor fleeting joy  
4th edn My mournful heart, for the poor fleeting joy

Stanza 8

1st edn Above,- like all thou look'st upon below  
4th edn Like human crowds thou look'st upon below?

Stanza 10

1st edn As heavenly blue as it was wont to glow:  
4th edn And heavenly blue as it was wont to glow:

Stanza 11

1st edn The prison-portals of the grave,- and I but stay  
4th edn Death's prison-portals, and I do but stay

Stanza 13

1st edn Thou dost illumine earth and her sister spheres?  
4th edn Thou dost illumine this eaŕth and sister spheres?

Stanza 17

1st edn From worship of whose flame no taunts estrange  
The persecuted Guebre of Parsee:  
4th edn Boodh, Veeshnu, Chrishna, of old shasters strange,  
Through ages hymned by Hindoo devotee:

Stanza 20

1st edn On shadows these,- and more,- leaned to the verge  
Of their poor pilgrimage; and, lest I lean  
4th edn On shadows leaning, these did vaguely urge  
Their dreaming pilgrimage; and, lest I lean

Stanza 21

1st edn The good,- the toiling one,- the crucified,-  
Who, 'spite of guards, the bonds of death unloosed,

4th edn The Toiler blest, who on the vile cross died-  
But, 'spite of guards, the bonds of death unloosed,

23

1st edn Quadruple where those love-wrought wonders live:

4th edn Of love-wrought wonders which in memory live:

25

1st edn Of a wild lake I stood, viewing with awe

4th edn Of a wild lake I stood, and viewed with awe,

26

1st edn My spiritual sense with hunger thrilled

4th edn I seemed to be with sense of hunger thrilled

29

1st edn Stamped on that dern and desolate countenance;  
For mastery- despair, wrath, shame, remorse,

4th edn To which that visage gave soul-utterance;  
For mastery- guilt, despair, wrath, shame remorse,

32

1st edn Avaunt- dissembler!- distant age and clime

4th edn Away- dissembler ! Distant age and clime

33

1st edn That thou hast spied the Traitor: now descry,  
More deeply, thine own stain: plan new device

4th edn That thou hast spied the Traitor: now thine eye  
Fix on thine own earth-stains: plan new device

34

1st edn He ceased a while, - but I no utterance felt  
Nor power to retrograde. As if a spell

4th edn He ceased a while; but I no vigour felt  
To utter speech, or flee. As if a spell

35

1st edn For company, you fallen minion!

4th edn For company, you wretched, prostrate one.

37

1st edn Where horror seemed enthroned with face unveiled:

4th edn Where sterner horrors my rapt soul assailed:

42

1st edn More wildly as he raged:- What hath consumed

4th edn More wildly as he raged:- "What hath be-rheumed

43

1st edn Arise I say,- avaunt!- betake thee hence! ...  
Rather than thee, with all thy guile prepense,-  
Thou double-dealer in each mean pretence

4th edn Rise, I adjure thee, and betake thee hence! ...  
Rather than unto thee, trickster prepense  
And double-dealer in each mean pretence

44

1st edn Traitor,- that sold his country for a price-  
Traitor!- a price!- the prostrate shape outburst;-  
Did I betray my Master, with device  
Of a false kiss, unto the foes athirst

4th edn "Traitor, that sold his country for a price,  
And then -"  
"Traitor"- the prostrate shape outburst;-  
"A price! Did I my Master, with device  
Of a false kiss betray, to foes athirst

45

1st edn When my freed spirit shall her strength exert,

4th edn When my freed essence shall her strength exert,

47

1st edn Of bygone lunes the fall'n liberticide

4th edn Of old, mad dreams the fallen liberticide

48

1st edn           And bright celestial shapes, in gems and gold  
                  Bediademm'd, with voices musical, ...  
The prize, in Fate's dark book, for Castlereagh enroll'd-

4th edn           And bright angelic shapes, in gems and gold  
                  Bediademmed, with voice celestial, ...  
The prize, in Fate's weird book, for Castlereagh enrolled-"

49

1st edn           I charge thee, - utter not again that hated name, in Hell!-

4th edn           I charge thee, name no more thy hated self, in Hell!"

53

1st edn           Hung, wizard-wise, by heels, in chimney vast,-

4th edn           Hung, by her crooked thumbs, in chimney vast,-

65

1st edn           In vain, their web of promised bounteousness-

4th edn           For me, in vain, that fair viceregal dress-

68

1st edn           And pride and lunacy, on earth, outrun;- ...  
                  Yet, seeking, like a lunatic buffoon,

4th edn           And pride and madness is, on earth, outrun; ...  
                  Yet seekst thou, like a lunatic buffoon,

69

1st edn           Found in thy crazy ear for luncs uppent

4th edn           Found in thy crazy ear for ravings pent

74

1st edn           Of impulses and dreams, with wish to palliate

4th edn           Of radiant dreams, with wish to palliate

75

1st edn           By His permission, God hath decreed and made

4th edn           By God's permission, He decreed and made

76

1st edn Thy miseries to pity, and forget  
4th edn Thy miseries to condole, and half forget

92

1st edn Satan, himself, will win an apotheosis!  
4th edn Satan shall, re-enthroned in highest heaven rejoice!

93

1st edn Before thy act: 'twas thy heart's treachery foul,-  
Daily, through all thy heart, until its spring  
4th edn Before thy act: it was thy treachery foul,-  
Through thy foul heart, until its very spring

94

1st edn With embryon of thy being! 'Twas decreed  
4th edn With embryon of thy being. And 'twas decreed

99

1st edn My spirit's crime, in this, thou hast o'erwrought  
And, if thou look'st within, wilt see thy own  
Mean soul with tide of pelfish love is overrun!  
4th edn My spirit's crime thou foully dost misquote;  
The vision deep within no longer shun;  
Behold thy soul with tide of pelfish love o'errun!

102

1st edn Hah! tortured torturer!- while they moil for bread,  
4th edn "Hah! tortured torturer!- while they moil unfed,

103

1st edn Them fellow-sharers with the knavish scribe ...  
But,- while they feasted,- left me still to war  
4th edn Them share the censure with the knavish Scribe ...  
But, while they feasted, left me to misfare

104

1st edn            Their sentence with the measure just,- as now  
                  He measures thine. Forbear thy old deceit, ...  
                  Thy heart in shame- rather than seek by taunt  
                  And scoff to harass mine. My stain, I know,

4th edn            Their sentence with the measure just, of woe,  
                  As now He measures thine. Forbear deceit, ...  
                  In shame, till it be interpenetrant  
                  Through all thy crimeful soul. My stain, I know,

106

1st edn            The mind bruised with the burthen of its woes;

4th edn            The mind bruised with the burthen of Life's woes

108

1st edn            Amid my madness! Futile medicine  
                  For mind diseased were tortures that deprave

4th edn            Amid my madness! Remedy akin  
                  To the disease were tortures that deprave

110

1st edn            Our being, we are not of vengeful wrath

4th edn            Our essence, we are not of vengeful wrath

111

1st edn            My spirit! Joy shall be eternalized-  
                  But Woe, throughout all space, shall be destroyed.

4th edn            Me! All Life's discord shall be harmonised-  
                  For Woe, throughout all Life, shall be destroyed.

116

1st edn            Cease, hellish fiend, to mock  
                  My tortures! cried the fallen minion, stung  
                  Anew to madness:- Lo! thy gibes have woke,  
                  Again that form!- but Hell's dark clime hath flung  
Strange horror o'er that brow that beamed so fair and young.

4th edn            My soul such terror shook  
                  While Judas raged, and from the snake-cave fled,  
                  Shrieking, Cray's suicide,- that I awoke,  
                  Gladly, from that soul-quelling dream of dread,  
And, joyous, blessed the morn, upon my prison bed

There are nine more stanzas in Book III in the first edition which are omitted from the fourth edition. They run as follows:

117

Hah! false, deluding phantom,- now I see  
Thou wert a minister of Hell to beck  
Me to destruction!- Jew! why thus at me  
Glares thou, wonder-struck,- and seem'st to seek  
Vainly, the object of my fear? A peak  
Among thy snakes, he sits:- behold him there!  
View'st not his frown?- dost thou not hear him speak?  
Off, Radiant fiend!- I know thee, now!- forbear  
To taunt my soul with crime for which thou spread'st the snare!

118

Thou liest, foul sprite!- the guilt of Emmett's blood  
Belongs not me: they counselled him who fled  
When brave Fitzgerald fell: joined with his mood  
Or rashness, this to hopeless struggle led  
That gallant boy! Fiend! urge it not!- the thread  
Of fate in his own hands he took;- to woo  
The daughter of the golden-tongued, instead  
Of flight, chose danger (3)- and the tiger crew  
Of Power, with vengeful fangs, upon his own life drew!

119

Foul spirit, mock me not!- thou dost but tempt  
My soul to deeper crime!-  
False minion, hold!  
Iscaiot cried;- this region is exempt  
From Earth's old dreams: nought seest thou, but hast sold  
Thyself to falsehood till thy heart is bold  
To forge wild frauds ev'n here!-  
Curst Judas, cease  
Thy taunts!- 'I come' it saith,- 'thy heaven t'unfold-  
'Thy ancient heav'n- the haggard, thought-worn face  
'Of Pitt: that thou mayst dream old dreams of power and place!'

120

Perditioned Jew!- seest not the portraiture  
The fiend hath raised?- List what he saith!- 'Now view  
'The magic eye, once more, which cleft th'obscure  
'Opaque of thy dull clay,- his fit tool knew,-  
'Accepted thy meek offers to eschew  
'Rash, youthful promises,- and cheered with smiles,  
'Prurient with place, the recreant to pursue  
'His snaky course of Patricide! Recoils  
'Thy spirit from such vision of its patriot toils?

121

'Dost think it would recal the withering sneers  
 'Of Ponsonby,- or Grattan's lightning glance,-  
 'Till thou wouldst quail with sense of ancient fears?  
 'Courage! thou thing of cut-throat puissance!  
 'What of their sarcasm's empty fulminance?  
 'Thou wast a victor- 'spite of all their gibes!  
 'Thy country's suicide was won!- Perchance  
 'Thy own for smallest sin Hibernia's tribes  
 'Will count- the hosts thou sold'st to Pitt for traitor bribes!'

122

Vile Jew! why dost thou scoff with hellish glee?  
 Hark!- 'tis the Fiend, again- 'Would'st gaze  
 'On Brandreth's gory head?- I'll bring it thee,  
 'Fresh reeking from the scaffold, with the glaze  
 'Of death still in its eyes! Hah! thou shalt craze  
 'With joy, gloating thy fill upon that throat-  
 'The mangled throat of Thistlewood!- Pourtrays  
 'It thy own wound?- Stifle the troublous thought,-  
 'And once, again, upon thy spy-trapped victim gloat!'

123

The Fiend's fierce eyes - how gleefully and fell  
 They glister- like the eyes of Earth's vile things  
 That hunt for blood! Again it saith 'How well  
 'The eyes of Castles and their glisterings,-  
 'Edward's and Oliver's, & o'er traffickings  
 'Of blood for gold - thou dost remember!- Start  
 'Not now;- for, swift, thy Radiant angel's wings  
 'Shall toil to bring - that thou mayst mock its smart  
 'With life's old relish - Caroline's lorn broken heart!

124

'Gloat,- gloat thy fill upon each tortuous pang!  
 'Dost shrink?- Courage!- they were her dying moans!  
 'The music thickens:- 'tis the sabres' clang  
 'Mingles with shrieks;- and, now, a peal of groans  
 'Comes up from Peterloo! What, though the stones  
 'Would rise and curse - were thy vile image there?  
 'Thou shalt have joy in listening to the tones,  
 'Renewed in Hell, of Hunger's loud despair!-  
 'Hark! what wild choir breaks forth in anthem debonair?

'Behold- thy Radiant angel hath called up  
'Thy bread-taxed victims, in their lank array;  
'And, with the hunger-bitten weavers' troop,  
'Thy fatherland's crushed children leave decay!  
'All rise - and hymn thy glorious deed at Cray!'-  
Hell - Fiend, avaunt!-

And, forth, the minion fled -  
Shrieking with horrid madness! Me, dismay  
and terror woke; and, from soul-quelling dread  
Set free, I blessed the morn, upon my prison-bed.

Book the Fourth

Stanza 1

1st edn From Autumn's teeming lap,- and, at gray morn,  
4th edn From Autumn's teeming lap; and, by gray morn,

Stanza 2

1st edn A while,- beyond this house of suffering!  
Away!- and I will watch for thy return,-  
Thinking, meanwhile, how, by the silver spring  
4th edn A while! Me it will cheer, imagining  
Till thou revisit this my dear sojourn,  
How, on the margent of some silver spring

Stanza 3

1st edn Within the barb-leaved hart's-tongue dwell ...  
So gracefully:- dost think the damosel ...  
Like thee,- to breathe sweet Freedom's balmy air.  
4th edn Within the beauteous arrow-head may dwell - ...  
So gracefully. Dost think the damosel, ...  
Like thee, loved bird, to breathe sweet Freedom's balmy air.

Stanza 5

1st edn Hie to you jocund band of innocence,  
4th edn Hie where young hearts gush taintless joy intense,

Stanza 6

1st edn Loved bird of Home,- Bird of our father's love,-  
Where the thatched cottage, clad with late-blown rose ...  
With the dwarf-vine, its nectared garland shews  
Unto the amorous bees that 'midst its sweets carouse.  
4th edn Loved bird of home - bird of our father's love -  
Where the thatched cottage, clad with virgin rose ...  
Among vine-leaves, with nectar-garland woos  
The amorous bees that, songful, do their love-sweets spouse

Stanza 12

1st edn And quelled the tyrant;- where Hypocrisy  
And Lawlessness, though sprung of royal seed

4th edn           And quelled the tyrant; where burns memory  
How lawless Falseness, sprung of royal seed

14

1st edn           Reverence, and for the frail- though wrong-

4th edn           Deep reverence, and for the frail, though wrong,

17

1st edn           These eunuch-felters,- and to bind them on  
Your limbs?-

4th edn           These eunuch-felters?- why so tamely don  
These chains

21

1st edn           Of consciousness: filled with this affluence

4th edn           Of consciousness: filled with this opulence

22

1st edn           And she so bright verisimilitude  
Pictured of joys bygone,- that Hades' sphere  
Forgot to frown,- and the dread clime seemed hued

4th edn           Of pleasures past, so consolably viewed  
She Life's young worships pure, that Hades' sphere  
Grew gladly bright, and the dread clime seemed hued

24

1st edn           Each bud so beauteous that speech would fail

4th edn           Each bud so beauteous that all speech would fail

25

1st edn           And mellow-throated blackbird,- sibilance ...  
Of gold or emerald, its radiance  
Amid the noonbeam sporting,- utterance  
Of love's soft throbbings by the stockdove coy,-  
Shrill minstrelsy of throstles,- puissance  
Of sylvan harmonies with flood of joy  
The heart seeming to deluge, and its sense o'ercloy.

4th edn           And mellow throated blackbird; whispering thrill ...  
Of gold or emerald, o'er pool and rill,  
Amid the noonbeam sporting; coo and bill,  
And love's soft throbbings by the stockdove coy;  
Mingled with minstrelsy of throstles shrill;-  
Blent sylvan harmonies with flood of joy  
Seeming the heart to deluge, and its sense o'ercloy!

28

1st edn And honours by spectator kings conferred,-

4th edn Of honours by spectator kings conferred;

29

1st edn Of memory, the bard his fated toil  
On earth,- his breath of hope hushed by the knell .

4th edn Of memory dread, the bard his heartless foil  
On earth, and breath of hope hushed by the knell

33

1st edn Being, and seemed to sigh, where oft, in truth, ...  
Still followed. Then a look of tenderness

4th edn Essence, and seemed to sigh, where oft, in truth, ...  
Still followed. Then a love-look of distress

41

1st edn Of human scorn and death and woe have warred ...  
Shall end: of Love and Hate the combat wild

4th edn Of scorn and death have waged the combat hard ...  
Shall end: of Love and Hate the life-war wild

42

1st edn Her iris over life till it transcend

4th edn Her iris over life she transcend

45

1st edn Short-sighted murmurers at the mingled forms

4th edn Short-sighted murmurers at the mingled swarms

46

1st edn Rethemed her yearning thought:-

4th edn Renewed her yearning thought:-

48

1st edn Of Reason! If its help, indeed, affords ...  
Of things, my soul its sterile rules discards



Book the Fifth

Stanza 3

1st edn            Whose murky archives opened would proclaim  
Yon ermined judge a gold-bought homicide,-

4th edn            Whose archives opened would yon judge proclaim  
More criminal than the thief he lately tried,-

Stanza 4

1st edn            The bawd, all palsy-twitched, whose mockery  
Of mirth, when he beholds her on the morrow

4th edn            The bawd, all palsy-twitched, whose feignful glee,  
When he beholds her face upon the morrow,

Stanza 6

1st edn            Thou stretchest o'er the land could be transformed  
Into a mirror,- how the general scoff  
Would rise at portraitures beheld deformed  
And hideous, that had hitherto their votaries charmed!

4th edn            Thou stretchest o'er the land could now be changed  
Into a mirror,- how the poor dupe's scoff  
Would burst upon his teachers seen estranged  
From rules they taught! How he would burn to be avenged!

Stanza 7        "

1st edn            That each sworn brother-knave's deceits

4th edn            Glibly, that each sworn brother-knaves deceits

Stanza 8

1st edn            And ugliest portraits thou conceal'st laid bare,-

4th edn            And ugliest portraits thou dost veil laid bare,-

Stanza 11

1st edn            Of degradation cease to rankle in your veins?

4th edn            Of slavery cease to rankle in your veins

Stanzas 13-18 included in the first edition do not appear in the fourth edition. Here they are:

13

Frost! while I rave in darkness, thou dost feel  
The sun in yon far southern felon-land,-  
But feel'st, therewith, thy chain. Thy wound to heal  
No help extends! Poor victim!- sold, trepanned  
By hirelings of the minion whose spite planned  
Thy death, and built by gallows,- but, through fear  
Of Labour's vengeance, stayed the hangman's hand;  
Victim of thy heart's thirst with bread to cheer  
England's lean artizan, and Cambria's mountaineer!

14

How many a despicable sordid tool  
Of tyranny doth flippantly descant  
Upon thy deed,- cleping thee rebel fool;  
And gallant Shell a 'broil-slain miscreant',-  
Who,- had your cause and ye proved dominant,-  
Would loudly have extolled your fearlessness,  
And boisterously swelled the choral chaunt  
Filled with the eulogy of your excess  
Of deep fraternal zeal to end Man's wretchedness!

15

Ellis,- my brother!- though but once in life  
I clasped thy hand,- for one hour's troubled breath  
Heard thy tongue's accents,- in the dungeon rife  
With sounds of maddened sorrow,- yet, till death  
Hears me in silence, of my plighted faith  
To thee as to a brother, I will think:-  
And never,- though it bring me direst wraths-  
That they have wronged thy innocence, will I shrink  
To tell the oppressors whose revenge-cup thou dost drink.

16

A perjurer sold thee to the lordling's spite,-  
The lordling's tenant-serfs dared not demur  
The verdict- for they marked his nod, though slight!-  
How sternly starless did the dread night lour  
On the low minions of tyrannic power  
When they, to exile thee,- the wronged one,- led!  
'Twas such a night as this; and grief's heart-shower  
These yielding eyes, in my lone dungeon, shed-  
For, 'mid the clank of chains, echoed thy farewell tread!

17

And thou, all guiltless of the violent deed  
Wherewith they charged thee, as the new-born child  
And he, failing t'entwine the victor's meed



- 1st edn(32)      Our agony in this strange occupance  
4th edn(26)      Our agony in this strange heritance
- 1st edn(40)      'That spiritually binds me under waves  
4th edn(34)      'Irrevocable, that binds me under waves
- 1st edn(45)      And borrowed being, sum their dwarfish praise  
4th edn(39)      And borrowed life, sum up their dwarfish praise
- 1st edn(50)      'To damn atoms of helplessness, for aye,-  
4th edn(44)      'Atoms of helplessness to damn, for aye,-
- 1st edn(52)      Of postulates as would, if granted, 'merse  
4th edn(46)      Of postulates: a dust that doth immerse
- 1st edn(56)      Soul of Condorcet!- harshly verbed the ghost  
4th edn(50)      "Soul of Condorcet!"- harshly spake the ghost
- 1st edn(57)      By further waste of reasonings laboursome?-  
4th edn(51)      By coward reasonings on this side the tomb?

Stanza 58 in the first edition does not appear in the fourth edition;

here it is:

Uncognizant of terms on which the grant  
Is made,- the tenure of the hurdle vile  
That bears the ghostly destined habitant  
Of future flames,- and must, itself, the pile  
Eternal feed, as well,- to reconcile  
The sateless cravings of your Monster's maw!-  
Why change His Druid name? Old Priestcraft vile  
Who honours,- who its phantom shapes with awe  
Acknowledgeth,- reveres fair Freedom's foulest foe!-

- 1st edn(59) Audience to reason. Feeble' and impotent ...  
With fabling dreams thou sought'st in life to controvert
- 4th edn(52) Audience to reason. Slow and impotent ...  
With fabling dreams thou sought'st, elsewhere, to controvert.
- 1st edn(60) This bondage unto weakness, and demean  
Thyself as doth become a man?- Awake  
Dreamer!- thy spirit of these coward fetters shake!
- 4th edn(53) This feminine bondage unto weakness? when  
Demean thyself like to a man? Awake  
Dreamer!- thy spirit of these fraud-forged fetters shake;
- 1st edn(65) Dark atheist brood!- the mystic shape began;
- 4th edn(58) "Dark atheist blood!"- the mystic shape began
- 1st edn(66) ye might derive  
Light from your punishment,- but that each finds
- 4th edn(59) Nor will ye strive  
To burst your dimning veil, for that each finds
- 1st edn(67) I here rebuke: until,- foul pride subtraught  
From your soul's core, and evil prurience  
Of self-willed doubt,- with duteous reverence  
Ye bow to the Most High- returning peace
- 4th edn(60) I here rebuke. Until,- foul pride ye blot  
From your soul's core, and that Hell-born offence,  
Your self-willed doubt,- and bow with reverence  
Duteous to the Most High- returning peace
- 1st edn(70) Phantasm avaunt!- no real shape thou art;-  
But gendered of our insane rage and broils;-
- 4th edn(63) "Unreal shape, begone! False mist thou art;  
Engendered of our insane rage and broils;

1st edn(71)      What saith she, shuddering, of your heinousness

4th edn(64)      What saith she, shuddering, of your foul excess

1st edn(72)      Could ye be gods, to sate your rav'ning gust  
Your votaries a human holocaust  
Must pile upon your altars day by day!

4th edn(65)      Could ye be Gods, to sate your ravening lust  
For blood, whom human hecatombs slaves must  
Pile on your Moloch-altars day by day!

1st edn(73)      And then o'er crowds enfranchised raised the axe!-...  
And drenched with gore, from touch of maniacs  
So murderous shrunk not- hurrying to wild parallax!

4th edn(66)      And then o'er crowds enfranchised raised the knife!- ...  
And drenched with gore, from such horrific strife  
Shrunk not upon her axle till she quelled all life!

1st edn(75)      Whether the Power that formed all things Man gave

4th edn(68)      Whether the Power that breathed all life Man gave

1st edn(76)      Of nations: Sheal's Thrones in agony

4th edn(69)      Of nations: Sheal's Thrones, through sympathy,

1st edn(79)      And taunt will dissipate Mind's grossness dense,-

4th edn(72)      Will chase from Mind its raylessness intense,

1st edn(80)      Regard to these rebukes: let us desist  
From unfraternal gibes whereby our woe  
Rendered,- and Earth's old jars in after-life exist.

4th edn(73)      Regard to these rebukes; let each, then, list;  
And cease these poisonous gibes whereby our woe  
Becomes,- and Earth's old jars in after-life exist.

1st edn(82)      Avails not the mind's errors to expel:

4th edn(75)      "Doth not avail mind's errors to expel:

Book the Sixth

Stanza 1

1st edn            In lieu of med'cine till his wits return,  
                  And pity, for a creature whose brain-flaw  
Urged him, ev'n while he wept, to lay his infant low!

4th edn            In lieu of medicine till his wits return-  
                  For one impelled to kill, by his brain-flaw  
And then to weep, when he his slaughtered infant saw!

Stanza 3

1st edn            'Tis passed,- the bloody cavalcade: Farewell,

4th edn            'Tis passed- the chilling spectacle! Farewell,

Stanza 5

1st edn            With mystery is God's law, and mocks man's measurement!

4th edn            With mystery is God's law: Himself knows his intent!

Stanza 6

1st edn            Man's homicidal will could salutarily chide

4th edn            Man's homicidal will so well could chide

Stanza 7

1st edn            The hangman, and together prop the stern  
Sway of brute kings,- fair uses hath your coat extern:

4th edn            The hangman, and together deftly learn  
To prop kings' sway,- fair uses hath your coat extern:

Stanza 10

1st edn            Born and brought up with beings whose old heart

4th edn            Born and brought up with bigots whose old heart

Stanza 14

1st edn            Thy rhetoric of the flames omnipotence  
Blows everlastingly for bodily sense ...  
Preying for aye, with sateless appetence

4th edn            Thy rhetoric of the flames which Providence  
Almighty ever blows for bodily sense ...  
Deathless and sateless, preying without suspence

20

1st edn So much more godlike than all godlike men:

4th edn In godlikeness above all godlike men:

21

1st edn The age of error, farce, and punishment,- ...  
Their spirits draw from thine omnipotent

4th edn Of force, the homage- time so reverent- ...  
Their spirits draw from thine all-prevalent

24

1st edn Priest! dost thou smile, beholding how the web  
Of thought, involves, at length, its devotee,  
And lays him, helpless as a limber babe,

4th edn Priest! dost thou smile, beholding how Thought's web  
Baffles and binds me with its mystery,-  
Yea, lays me, helpless as a limber babe,

26

1st edn And Right to choose, with heartfelt earnestness,

4th edn And Right to treasure in the heart's recess

37

1st edn And drooping plumes, and doves' white wings embowed,-

4th edn And wings of doves circling their callow brood,

44

1st edn And near them sat Caius th' Agrarian,-

4th edn And near them Caius sat- th' Agrarian

52

1st edn With typic forms for our admonishment,

4th edn With typic forms- on our instruction bent-

53

1st edn Or tiar had seemed mockery to place  
Upon his brow,- so brightly beamed each trace

4th edn Or tiar of gold upon his brow to place  
Had mockery seemed- so brightly beamed its trace

57

1st edn Crowds ask aloud what real excellence  
Subsists in shew; demand the proof of worth

4th edn Crowds ask aloud what truthful reverence  
Mere show can ask; demand the proof of worth

63

1st edn With Virtue's course,- fills me with bright

4th edn With Virtue's warrior course, fills me with bright

65

1st edn And glared upon a swine that wore the crown  
Of Bonosus, and held its shape erect ...  
Until the lesson did the pride correct  
Of many a ghost that there sat crowned and gemmed;

4th edn And glared upon a swine Bonosus' crown  
That wore, and held its brutal shape erect  
Till, by the lesson did his pride detect  
Full many a ghost that there sat crowned and gemmed;

71

1st edn Produced Evil,- so now, when all things shew  
The mystery of Being doth unfold

4th edn Evil produced,- so now, when all things shew  
The mystery of Existence doth unfold

82

1st edn Oft, for their guerdon, yield disquietude

4th edn Oft, for their guerdon, yield unkindly feud.

85

1st edn Of sympathy that binds their destinies  
For evil. Aid us in the bright emprise-

4th edn Of sympathetic evil that now lies  
On being. Come, aid us in the bright emprise,

90

1st edn All, - all is mystery! I sought no throne:-  
4th edn "All, all is mystery! I desired no throne:-

91

1st edn His wily soul, with sentence operose  
And tortuous, he began:-  
4th edn His frauds he made essay, or to dispose  
Them in the guise of truths:-

93

1st edn Because this Gentile fantast thus doth overween  
4th edn Because this dreaming fantast thus doth overween?

97

1st edn Not to wage spiritual war on the calm ghost  
4th edn Not scornful war to wage on the calm ghost

100

1st edn The weak, he said,- and bruised nations feel  
4th edn The weak",- he said,- "and trampled nations feel

102

1st edn Have enwrapt millions, - brothers shed brothers' blood, -  
4th edn Have enwrapt millions, men shed brothers' blood,

105

1st edn Of Pelops' son,- sat, with soul-palsy strook: -  
4th edn Of Pelops' sire- sat, with soul-palsy strook:

108

1st edn Neither cleave I to kingship from regard  
4th edn Nor do I cleave to kingship from regard

109

1st edn           How Nature thus elects, - casting, natheless,  
Each human essence in so like a mould, ...  
Despair their kind, or being, themselves, driven.-

4th edn           How Nature thus elects, yet doth impress,  
Each human essence with so like a mould, ...  
Despair their kind, or being, themselves, forth driven.

114

1st edn           Resolve preserves our state: unless I err,

4th edn           Resolve preserves our state. Thrones, I aver,

119

1st edn           Secret but strong, saw Man a devotee

4th edn           Secret but strong, made Man a devotee

128

1st edn           Ye by your own great deed, kings, can avert ...  
Of high resolve dawn from your essences!-

4th edn           "Kings, by your own great deed, ye can avert ...  
Of high resolve from forth your essence rise:

Book the Seventh

Stanza 1

1st edn Wonder-lost less with glare and magnitude  
Of mindless things than human shapes that stalk

4th edn Wonder-lost less with splendours unendued  
With Power of thought than human shapes that stalk

Stanza 6

1st edn Will knowledge, freedom, moral growth of man,

4th edn Will they, one day, the clown and artisan,

Stanza 23

1st edn Oh, 'let them grapple', - as the great one said,-

4th edn Oh, 'let them grapple', as the great one bade,

Stanza 28

1st edn Another day of dreams is gone!- yet must the sun

4th edn Another day is gone!- yet must the sun

Stanza 30

1st edn And, when the span of the huge dome they raught,

4th edn And when they reached the dome-like space, methought

Stanza 36

1st edn Its opulence on earth,- within the spirit dwelt

4th edn Its goodly gifts on earth- within the spirit dwelt

Stanza 42

1st edn As if o'ercome by that clime's puissance ...  
But soon, Mordaunt began quaint utterance  
To give unto his piebald musings strange:-

4th edn As if o'ercome by that clime's heritance ...  
But soon, Mordaunt upwaking from his trance,  
Gave utterance to his piebald musings strange:

Stanza 43

1st edn Our spirits wear in this drear land of languidness

4th edn Our spirits wear in this drear land, so effortless

48

1st edn ... And the cost,-

4th edn ... "And the roast",-

54

1st edn To being merely to destroy by th' myriad?

4th edn To being but to slay what He with life hath clad?

55

1st edn 'Benevolent design to save from throe  
'Of helpless age and lingering death: and thus',-

4th edn 'His blest design to save them from the slow  
'And lingering death of helpless age: and thus',-

59

1st edn More noble ye resemble: things of pride  
And filthiest greed ye be; and Earth o'erfraught ...  
Such grovelling clay she doth endow; the chain

4th edn More noble are ye kin: not things of pride  
But filthiest greed ye be; and Earth o'erfraught ...  
Such grovelling clay endows; the mystic chain

61

1st edn That guided our refusal to hear tell  
Of others' hopes, if we have bid farewell  
To esperance ourselves-  
Nurse no regret,  
So infantile,- said Lumley;- but dispel  
Its weakness: ne'er can dreams in me beget

4th edn When ghost-kings messaged us, that did impel  
Our souls to scoff. If we have bid farewell  
To esperance ourselves"-  
"Nurse no regret  
"So infantile",- said Lumley;- "Wisely quell  
"Its yearnings: ne'er can dreams in me beget

63

1st edn All being, and I will thy theme proclaim

4th edn All life, and I thy prophecy will name

64

1st edn With grief through Being,- into woe as dread

4th edn With grief through Nature, into woe as dread

65

1st edn Our perdurable prison. Swift, unloosed  
Essence shall be from bondage, when no more

4th edn Our perdurable prison. Swiftly trust  
Shall rise to break our bondage, when no more

66

1st edn Being itself,- or agonize with Fear

4th edn Nature herself, or agonise with Fear

67

1st edn Thy visage with contending thoughts is rife-  
Wild spirit! What brings thee here- what in thee germeth strife?

4th edn Thy visage is a herald of new strife-  
Wild spirit! Speak the thoughts with which thy soul is rife!"

69

1st edn Viewed being's gift, message they have renewed,-

4th edn Beheld life's gift, message they have renewed,-

70

1st edn Of might to subdue Evil's virulence

4th edn Of might to subdue Evil's power prepense

71

1st edn Begins to yield to science: fell disease  
Is checked,- and men shall soon begin to fill

4th edn Begins to yield to science: pestilence flees  
Her climes; and men shall soon begin to fill

72

1st edn Think ye that changes such as these forbode

4th edn Think ye that changes such as these uncloud

74

1st edn With Good through Being with th' all-wise intent

4th edn With Good through Nature; but the Blender meant

75

1st edn And Right,- of Wisdom and Equality!...  
Of dreams!- to mock our misery forbear!-

4th edn And Right, and how doth dawn their jubilee! ...  
Of dreams! To mock our abjectness forbear!

Book the Eighth

Stanza 9

1st edn Their splendid verity: nay, perhaps, 'tis near!

4th edn Their splendid verity, with vision clear!

Stanza 10

1st edn ... Ye, when the dim dreams  
Of Time's weak youth are fled, and Knowledge pure ...  
In gold, shall place each dazzling portraiture

4th edn ... Ye, when Time's dim dreams  
And weakling fears are fled, and Knowledge pure ...  
In gold, shall place each dazzling form secure

Stanza 11

1st edn Is grander than all titles;- when all things of lies

4th edn His grandest title is; when things of lies

Stanza 13

1st edn Hobbes, Herbert, Mandeville, with Locke and Boyle,-  
Hume, Godwin, may, with Beattie, Butler, shew,-

4th edn Herbert of Cherbury, Hobbes, with Locke and Boyle-  
Hume, Godwin, may, with Paley and Butler, show-

Stanza 16

1st edn Though beaming from afar,- ye will not slight

4th edn Bright beaming from afar- ye will not slight

18

1st edn Now rolls her chariot, shall a dreary void  
Be found, and Silence with Decay divide  
Rule o'er thy streets?- yea, there the badger peep

4th edn Now rolls her chariot, shall Decay divide  
Empire with Silence,- there the lizard glide  
'Mong crumbling walls,- and there the badger peep

20

1st edn Multiplied;- galleries with breath-shapes hung

4th edn Increased; and galleries vast with breath-shapes hung

27

1st edn Of grosser sight, and essence had new eyes received:

4th edn Of grosser sight, and with new eyes that soul-realm cleaved:

28

1st edn Eyes most intensely spiritual that cleft

4th edn Eyes most intensely vision-rich that cleft

30

1st edn First, rose shapes that did statue-groups compose  
Of disappointed Love:- Orpheus' joy-trance ...  
Quick changed to woe and horror, as he turned

4th edn First, statue-groups arose that did suffuse  
The soul with Love's woe-tears:- Orpheus' joy-trance ...  
Quick changed to pain and horror, as he turned-

33

1st edn Sad images depicting man's brief

4th edn Sad images depicting man's poor, brief

39

1st edn 'Can fate be shunned?- when being disappears;-

4th edn 'Can fate be shunned?- when Essence disappears;

41

1st edn           Wailing that they could not escape their being's load.

4th edn           Wailing that they could not 'scape Life's ever-during load

44

1st edn           An ever-during heritor of fame

4th edn           A rightful heritor of lasting fame

45

1st edn           Much have I longed to meet thee in this scene

4th edn           "thee have I longed to meet in this demesne

47

1st edn           Thy soul in gloom?— Roman, to me thy theme rehearse!

4th edn           Thy soul in gloom?   Roman, where lay thy life's fell curse?

49

1st edn           Appeared than the dread march:- itinerance  
Of the dark path, a second time!- the spell

4th edn           Appeared than forward march;- the sustenance  
Of Life's huge load, a second time!- the spell

52

1st edn           Bereaving the worn heart of solace or delight.—

4th edn           Bereaving the warm heart of solace or delight."-

55

1st edn           Pontalba! for man's soul no fixèd good

4th edn           Pontalba! for man's soul no genuine good

56

1st edn           Not this woe-clime,- whom Pleasure's zest brain-whirled,-

4th edn           Not this woe-clime,- whom Pleasure's zest brain-dirled,-

58

1st edn           And if Necessity all being bows

4th edn And if Necessity all Essence bows

59

1st edn The sage reverbed:- dost thou so soon forget,

4th edn The sage repeated:- "dost thou, then, forget,

61

1st edn That evil's tyranny o'er Man prevailleth:

4th edn That Evil's tyranny Man's spirit quelleth:

62

1st edn Of self, and seeing their toil's fruit by brethren shared;-

4th edn Of self, and viewing their toil's fruit by brethren shared:

65

1st edn 'Of happy brothers!- my brief being hath  
'Increased its bliss;- and after-hearts shall cleave

4th edn 'Of happy brothers!- love fraternal hath  
'Increased my bliss; and after-hearts shall cleave

66

1st edn 'Bliss, still progressing, is with being wove,-

4th edn 'Bliss, still progressing, is with Essence wove;

67

1st edn The 'Eretrian's theme:-

4th edn The good Eretrian's theme:-

68

1st edn We spiritually discerne; and bliss for us  
Remains - if it be Earth's sure heritage:-  
Yet, till kings cease their contests murderous,

4th edn We inly feel; and bliss analogous  
To Earth's shall surely be our heritage:-  
Yet, till kings cease their feuds calamitous,

Book the Ninth

Stanza 6

1st edn And forms a censure on thy every state-

4th edn And frowns a censure on thy every state:

Stanza 7

1st edn Of Nature's treasury, - what sufferings rend!

4th edn Of Nature's treasury, what keen sufferings rend!

Stanza 8

1st edn To keenest woe becomes: maternal woe,

4th edn To keenest woe condemns: maternal woe,

Stanza 11

1st edn 'A natural heart, how can ye Nature's voice believe?

4th edn 'A natural heart, how can ye Nature's pain perceive?

Stanza 12

1st edn Of reckless violence around ye yet,

4th edn Of reckless vengefulness around ye yet,

Stanza 15

1st edn That dwarf princes, vigour from thy meek breast

4th edn That dwarf all kings, vigour from thy meek breast

Stanza 19

1st edn Pursued the credent theme. Methought I viewed  
A pasture-plain, or mead, of amplitude

4th edn But credent of its day-dreams, still pursued  
The theme. A verdant pasture-plain, I viewed,

Stanza 21

1st edn The flowers themselves sheds nitrous particles

4th edn The flowers themselves sheds chemic particles

22

1st edn Of sundry blossoms wove, and, garlanded

4th edn Of varied blossoms wove, and, garlanded

25

1st edn And their dark eyes a fervour did sustain:

4th edn To their dark eyes a fervour did pertain

28

1st edn Shall wander back, and memory employ  
Her power to rewake many an image fraught

4th edn Shall wander back, and memory shall employ  
Her power to call up many an image fraught

32

1st edn Thwarted them evermore:- that type of Artifice!

4th edn Thwarted them evermore- with force, or artifice.

38

1st edn In man's strange history, that, ev'n while he bled,

4th edn "In man's strange chronicle, that, though he bled,

44

1st edn Worthiest imitation. So to sneak

4th edn Worthiest of imitation. So to sneak

45

1st edn If he refused the sacred hoard to name

4th edn If he refused the secret hoard to name

49

1st edn And sped in silent ecstasy along  
The flower-bespangled path- while distant bands ...  
'Of human suffering, and grief, and wrong!

4th edn            And sped, a silent yet ecstatic throng,  
Their flower-bespangled way; while distant bands ...  
'Of human suffering, agony, and wrong!

51

1st edn            On earth, and through their spiritual clime:-

4th edn            On earth, and thorough Hades' ghostly clime!-

Book the tenth

Stanza 2

1st edn            But to the toil of search calmly upcalls

4th edn            But calmly to the toil of search upcalls

Stanza 3

1st edn            If thee by sloth self-treasonous he lose,

4th edn            If thee by sloth self-treasonous Man doth lose,-

Stanza 4

1st edn            How noble is his mien,- how unconstrained

4th edn            How noble is Man's mien, how unconstrained

Stanza 5

1st edn            Grand in his chains,- and from the Roman won  
Generous regard: so gazed, with brow unblent

4th edn            Grand in his chains,- and from the Roman throne,  
Constrained regard: so gazed, with brow unblent,

Stanza 13

1st edn            Should perpetrate upon humanity

4th edn            Should perpetrate on human misery

Stanza 28

1st edn            Will, then, the world assume so strange a form?

4th edn            Will, then, the world assume some new-born charm?

29

1st edn To keep my soul's resolve, - and then- let come  
4th edn To keep my soul's resolve; and then unwomb

33

1st edn And when the dome we raught, our ecstasy  
4th edn And when the dome we raught, felicity

35

1st edn seemed there enshrined, - beings whose very names  
4th edn seemed there enshrined: toilers whose very names

36

1st edn A spiritual Pantheon of the Good,  
4th edn A bright Pantheon of the Meek, the Good,

44

1st edn Its settled reign within his new-born soul  
4th edn With radiance visible, his new-born soul. -

51

1st edn Too oft in error did her<sup>r</sup> champions seize  
The murderous sword. The register of Time  
4th edn Too oft in error did her champions ease  
Seek by the sword. The register of Time

52

1st edn From war and violence, hate and revenge,  
Is past, ne'er to return:- O let us borrow  
4th edn From war and violence, hatred and revenge,  
Is past. For ever, therefore, let us borrow

56

1st edn Whose joys are all from selfishness extraught:- ...  
Through scorn and suffering: as with a flood  
4th edn Whose joys are all with selfish yearning fraught: ...  
Through suffering and through scorn. As with a flood

61

1st edn           The gyves of Slavery, for ages? Let

4th edn           The gyves of Slavery vile, for ages? Let

65

1st edn           While we gaze on these brother-forms illustrious!-

4th edn           While on these brother-forms we gaze, so luminous!"-

69

1st edn           Full-pulsèd tympanum and deep-toned string ...  
Ev'n in its house of clay, rapture as deep

4th edn           Now, full-pulsèd tympanum and deep-toned string ...  
Ne'er in its house of clay, rapture so deep

76

1st edn           Of happy souls innumerable: parade  
Wrath, sorrow, guilt, for ever from their essence fled!

4th edn           Of souls whose glorious joy-light had no shade:  
Wrath, pride, guilt, woe, for ever from each essence fled!

79

1st edn           That hate, and all self-tortures of the mind

4th edn           That hate, and torture with it intertwined,

83

1st edn           Our full soul's tribute,- he arose and said,-

4th edn           Our soul's full tribute", - he arose and said,-

86

1st edn           With blindly arrogant imaginings. ...  
Her chambers filled with Virtue's symbolings,-  
Reason disdaineth pride and its false qlisterings.

4th edn           With arrogant conceit how free we were! ...  
Her chambers filled with Virtue's symbols fair,-  
Reason disdaineth pride and all its fraudulent glare.

88

1st edn           Is still unrent, our soul-state beatifical.

4th edn Is still unrent, our blest soul-state perpetual.

90

1st edn A world whose elements were his to wield  
And govern. Now,- behold the storm-tossed sea

4th edn "A world whose elements were his wide field  
For culture. Now,- behold the storm-tossed sea

93

1st edn His speech might seem assumptive occupance  
Of thought where all were equal: to revere  
The humblest, thus, the highest Puissance  
Was brought by sense of due allegiance  
To Nature and Equality. The ghost  
Of Cato rose,- after short hesitance,-  
For sternest spirits of all haughty boast  
Seemed stript; and thus he argued 'mid the spir'tual host:-

4th edn His speech assumptive occupance of thought  
Might seem where all were equal: to revere  
The humblest, thus, the highest Power was brought,  
His soul with loving due allegiance fraught  
To Nature and Equality. The ghost  
Of Cato rose,- with look which did denote  
That sternest spirit of all haughty boast  
Was stript;- and thus he argued 'mid the spiritual host:-

94

1st edn Our old dread masters- lightning, wind, and flood-

4th edn Our old dread masters- fire, and wind, and flood-

95

1st edn Men lived- the same distempered lineage  
In mind and body. Yet, thou say'st full well,

4th edn Men lived- the fool in mind diseased: the sage  
In body: helpless, both. Thou say'st full well,

97

1st edn Bowed, and became bestial in thought and look

4th edn Bowed down, and bestial grew in thought and look

98

1st edn They shall be held glorious who did bequeath

4th edn They glorious shall be held who did bequeath

99

1st edn His Grecian exemplars followed with zeal,

4th edn Followed his Grecian exemplars with zeal,

103

1st edn That men might mark her purposes aright?

4th edn That men might not her bounteous purpose slight?

104

1st edn Belonged not him who made it,- for, a host

4th edn Belonged not him who said, he found: a host

105

1st edn Of Nature's mystery, which others failed

4th edn Of Nature's mystery, which so many failed

107

1st edn And kept all planets in their bounds ere birth of Time

4th edn And keeps all planets in<sup>r</sup> their bounds from birth of Time

110

1st edn The universe now reigns by might immutable.-

4th edn The universe now reigns by might perpetual."-

111

1st edn And strong necessity, suavely addrest

4th edn And strong necessity, full suavely addrest

114

1st edn Smoothed the storm-wave, clave the live rock asunder,

4th edn The storm-wave smoothed, the live rock clave asunder,

115

1st edn By those whose boast of freedom was most loud!

4th edn By men whose boast of freedom was most loud!

125

1st edn 'Still more the measure of their ecstasy,-

4th edn 'Still more the bliss-guage of their destiny,-

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The main bibliographies I consulted in preparing this thesis were: Clement Dunbar's A Bibliography of Shelley Studies: 1832-1950 (New York and Folkstone, 1976), Keats-Shelley Journal annual Bibliography, N.I.White's bibliography of Shelley studies in his The Unextinguished Hearth: Shelley and his Contemporary Critics (Durham, North Carolina, 1938) and J.F.C.Harrison's and Dorothy Thompson's Bibliography of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1976 (Sussex and New Jersey, 1978), This bibliography consists of the works I have quoted, referred to or consulted in the preparation of this thesis and is divided into three main sections: first, Manuscript Material; second, Primary Printed Sources; and third, Secondary Sources which in its turn is divided into books and articles.

All sections are arranged alphabetically under the name of the author except for the Chartist and contemporary journals (in which most of the articles consulted are anonymous) which are entered under the title of the journal or paper itself in the Primary Printed Sources section. These journals and papers are: The Chartist Circular, Cobbett's Political Register, Cooper's Journal, The Crisis; or, the Change from Error and Misery to Truth and Happiness, The English Chartist Circular, The Examiner, The Labourer, The National, The New Moral World, The Northern Star, Notes to the People, The People's Journal, The People's Paper, The Plain Speaker, The Reasoner, Reynold's Political Instructor, The Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, The Tribune and The Yorkshire Tribune. The dates given are those of the editions or reprints used. Where more than one work by the same writer is listed, the items are listed in the order in which they were written or first published.

Unless otherwise stated, the manuscripts of Thomas Cooper and those related to him which I consulted are preserved in the Bishop's Gate Institute, London, while all the manuscripts of Ernest Jones can be found in the Archives department in the Central Library of Manchester.

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