

IMAGES OF SOLITUDE

IN SHELLEY'S

POETRY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Shelley's close affinity with solitude manifests itself in the prolific use of images of solitude in his poetry. His letter to Mary Shelley on August 15, 1821, exemplifies his nostalgic yearning for it: "My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society. I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea, would build a boat, and shut upon my retreat the floodgates of the world."¹ Attuned to solitude as his mind is, his ideas find their natural expression through these images. In this study, I shall show that Shelley's images of solitude play a significant role in projecting his idea of a presiding spirit in the universe, his ideal vision of love, and his concept of evil. Though these findings are not new, no one, to my knowledge, has undertaken a full-length study of Shelley's images of solitude that reveal these ideas. Moreover, I shall give new insights, wherever possible, to reinforce the views of those critics who contend that Shelley's poetry reveals these ideas and to refute those of critics who hold that it does not express them.

Since no author however original lives in a vacuum, in the first chapter I shall briefly discuss the treatment of solitude by some of Shelley's predecessors and contemporaries. My review of earlier treatments of solitude in English literature shows that his predecessors use

solitude as part of a poetic convention that associates solitude with the seclusion of the phenomenal world or the isolation of the human mind. They see the quiet and tranquil environs of nature as a setting conducive for deep and serious reflections or as a temporary abode for relief from the stress and strain of living in the city, in order to regain mental balance for the resumption of normal life. As for his contemporaries--the Romantics--solitude assumes great significance because their attitude toward nature undergoes a drastic change. From the Renaissance until the eighteenth century, despite the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, the belief in a divinely designed hierarchical order both in the natural and the human world prevails, but in the Romantic period, this concept of nature does not hold because the empirical view gains ascendancy. According to Northrop Frye, the Romantics dismiss the concept of an ordered universe as a strategy to rationalize class privilege.²

Frye explains the change in the Romantic attitude to nature by referring to the Fall of man. Before his Fall, man was unified with God and enjoyed heavenly bliss, but his fall hurled him down to a lower region where nature's position was not better than his. Therefore, his salvation lay not in aligning himself with the forces of nature but in disengaging himself from them. In order to reclaim his lost Paradise, which is the ideal state of nature, he must perform his duty as a social being by conforming to the law, morality, and religion set up by society. Therefore, his means of deliverance was not nature but the city. Conversely, the Romantic idea is that man's redemption consists in his identification with nature because his severance from ideal nature causes his Fall.³ The Romantics also emphasize the potential of the human mind. This emphasis on the human mind and nature is vital to our understanding

of Shelley's images of solitude. As a consequence of the reversal in nature's role, Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats turn to nature and through their active interchange with nature seek union with the Divine.

The second chapter presents chronologically a study of Alastor, "Mont Blanc," "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," "Ode to the West Wind," "The Cloud," "To a Skylark," "To Night," and Adonais. Here I demonstrate that Shelley's images of solitude display a close interchange with nature and that this intimate interchange results in a tension between his empirical and transcendental views. Nevertheless, his empirical bias, which makes him suspicious of the mind's power to communicate with the Divine, cannot shake his faith in the existence of a Supreme Being. In Alastor, for example, the poet-hero wanders through nature and upon catching a glimpse of the Supernal rushes on in pursuit of the Ideal; then, notwithstanding his misgivings about the mind's power to unravel the mysteries of this Unknown realm, he courts death in the seclusion of nature for union with this Being. Some other images of solitude that express Shelley's noumenal experience of a Supersensuous Being are the lofty mountain hurling down its "ice-gulphs"⁴--thus forming the ravine and the Arve river--in "Mont Blanc"; the rejuvenated earth on a spring day in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"; the raging west wind in a wood beside the river Arno in Florence in "Ode to the West Wind"; the solitary cloud flaunting its power over the earth, water, and the sky, changing but remaining indestructible in "The Cloud"; and the lone bird soaring into the sky in "To a Skylark."

In "To Night," night is envisioned as a beautiful lady, clad in a star-bedecked dress, spending the entire day alone in an eastern cave

weaving "dreams of joy and fear" (5), which are both "terrible and dear" (6). In other words, night symbolizes an Omnipotent Being, who is both a destroyer and a preserver. And Shelley's intense longing for Night to come "o'er the western wave" (1) signifies his yearning for communion with the Divine. In Adonais, to indicate that Keats's soul merges with that of the Eternal, Shelley likens the soul of Adonais to a star that shines "through the inmost veil of heaven" (493) and "beacons from the abode where the Eternal are" (495). Thus, though Shelley's images of solitude reveal a close contact with nature, they also symbolize man's apprehension of the Infinite as well as his limitations in the unveiling of its deep mysteries.

The third chapter will deal with images of solitude that set forth Shelley's idealized view of love. From my study of these images, I discover that Shelley's love resembles the old concept of love,⁵ the Platonic concept of the heavenly eros, and the concept of the Christian agape. The ancient concept values love as a creative force, which produces unity and harmony, and its absence strife and division. Shelley illustrates this idea through images of solitude in Prometheus Unbound. Chained to an icy precipice in the remoteness of the Indian Caucasus, Prometheus nurses hate and revenge for his adversary, Jupiter, who is his own creation. Though his fight and suffering for the liberation of mankind are noble and admirable, he is oblivious of the fact that his hateful defiance of Jupiter only perpetrates the evil against which he strives. Nevertheless, his suffering in the sequestered mountain makes him conscious of the futility of hate, and, being remorseful, he revokes his curse on Jupiter. His hate-free soul longs for Asia, who is the other half of his divided self or love:

thou art far,
 Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
 Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
 Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
 All things are still: alas! how heavily
 This quiet morning weighs upon my heart (I, 808-813).

His longing and isolation also indicate that he is moving toward his release and union with Asia. Asia, who is separated from Prometheus by his hostile attitude toward Jupiter, is also placed in a similar situation. Panthea emphasizes Asia's loneliness by describing her temporary residence "in that far Indian vale / The scene of her sad exile" (I, 826-827), which is "desolate and frozen like this ravine" (I, 828). Asia's touch has, however, enriched the valley, for now it is adorned "with fair flowers and herbs" (I, 829) and "haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow / Among the woods and waters, from the ether / Of her transforming presence" (I, 830-832). Nevertheless, Panthea fears that Asia's life-giving power in reviving the barren land will not endure unless Prometheus secures his release and joins Asia. The beauty and the bloom that enliven the scene will "fade / If it were mingled not with thine" (I, 832-833). And it is to a cave "all overgrown with trailing odorous plants, / Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers" (III, III, 11-12) that after his release Prometheus with Asia repairs to "weave harmonies divine, yet ever new, / From difference sweet where discords cannot be" (III, III, 38-39). Here I must point out that the image of Prometheus's entrance into the cave with Asia is still an image of isolation because their union, which signifies the wholeness of the human soul when it is not divided by hate, takes place in the isolation of a cave.

In Epipsychidion, the ideal love that Shelley seeks through a union

of his epipsyche and its antitype finds utterance in images of solitude. The rapturous descriptions of the edenic and secluded island where the poet-persona dreams of experiencing ideal love with Emilia validate the truth of this assertion:

There are thick woods, where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond
Or serene morning air (435-438).

And "every motion, odour, beam, and tone" (453) that permeate the secluded island speak of a "deep music" (454) that acts "in unison" (454), "which is a soul within the soul--they seem / Like echoes of an antenatal dream" (455-456). In "The Sensitive Plant," the lady, who is "an Eve in this Eden" (116) and who has "no companion of mortal race" (127), takes tender and loving care of all the plants as long as she thinks that they will reciprocate her love, for "ere the first leaf looked brown--she died" (174).

The other concept of love that emerges from his images of solitude approximates the Platonic heavenly eros and the Christian agape. As explained by Anders Nygren, the Heavenly eros demonstrates the wistful aspiration of the human soul for the possession of Divine virtues, whereas the Christian agape shows God's impersonal love for his created beings.⁷ In Alastor, for instance, the poet-hero's love is symbolic of the heavenly eros. His knowledge of the Transcendent is inadequate; therefore, he pines away for the possession of it. All the images of solitude to be discussed in Chapter Two reveal the Heavenly eros. In Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus's love and sacrifice for mankind that find expression through images of solitude are representative of Christian agape. And the love that Shelley speaks of through these

images in Epipsychidion and "The Sensitive Plant" is symbolic of both the Heavenly eros and the Christian agape.

Though Shelley brings into play his dramatic and dialectic skills to elucidate his idea of evil, his images of solitude also serve this purpose. The fourth chapter evaluates the role of these images in Prometheus Unbound and The Triumph of Life as they reflect this idea. In Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus invites his loneliness and suffering by allowing Jupiter, whom he himself creates, to rule over him. He also increases his misery by nurturing hate and revenge for his enemy. But years of suffering and isolation have impressed upon him the futility of hate, and in remorse he withdraws the curse he had earlier invoked upon Jupiter. The point Shelley makes here, as M. H. Abrams points out, is that "man is ultimately the agent of his own fall, the tyrant over himself, his own avenger, and his own potential redeemer."⁸ In The Triumph of Life, nature's blind devotion to the sun and the poet's departure from the norm imply that evil originates in man's refusal to exert his own will. Thus Shelley's images of solitude deftly illustrate his belief in the Transcendent and his concepts of love and evil.

ENDNOTES

¹Frederick L. Jones, ed. The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964), II, 339.

²Northrop Frye, A Study of English Romanticism (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 14.

³Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, pp. 7-9; p. 17.

⁴Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Mont Blanc," in The Complete Works of Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1965), I, line 17, p. 229. All subsequent citations of Shelley's poems will be from the first four volumes of this edition of Shelley's poetry.

⁵Ficino explains this concept of love in the chapter entitled "The Origin of Love from Chaos" in Commentaries in Convivium, I, iii, 374. I have not read Ficino's Commentaries in Convivium. John Erskine Hankins paraphrases this concept of love, as explained by Ficino in Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Thought. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978, pp. 38-39.

⁶My source for the concept of the Platonic "Heavenly eros" and the "Christian agape" is Anders Nygren's Agape and Eros, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. ix.

⁷Nygren, Agape and Eros, p. ix.

⁸M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 302.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTENT OF SHELLEY'S IMAGES OF SOLITUDE

Poetic convention associates the word "solitude" with seclusion in nature¹ and the isolation of the human mind. Therefore, for a clear understanding of images of solitude, as used by Shelley's predecessors as well as his contemporaries, a synoptic review of their attitude toward nature and man is essential.

The Renaissance belief is that God has created the physical universe for man, who occupies the highest position in the scale of being. God has also made man in his own image and bestowed upon him the supreme gift of reason by virtue of which he rules on earth as does God in heaven. To use Irving Ribner's words, "He [man] was the microcosm, a small model and reflection of the macrocosm, of the great universe of which he was a part."² This concept of man and nature is based on the medieval notion of an ordered universe, derived from classical learning and its Christian interpretation. The rational order, manifest in nature, points to a higher order that controls it. For the Renaissance man, as Douglas Bush explains the matter, "the physical and the moral universe constitutes a rational order, under the reign of divine and natural law. Man's God-given reason enables him to comprehend the nature of that order and to cooperate with it."³ In other words, the order seen in the physical universe or nature speaks of a Divine power that creates that order, and man's reason, which is a gift of God, enables him to apprehend that

power. In this concept of nature and man, then, nature is merely a means to man's perception of God. But Bush adds that the "pre-scientific and religious conception, which links nature closely with God and man, is also a poetic and and mythic conception."⁴ That is, nature is not only a means to man's pursuit of the Spiritual but also in its conceptual form an aid to his poetry and mythopoeia. The Renaissance aspiration, therefore, is to look beyond nature to comprehend the power behind cosmic harmonies rather than to seek the mystery in nature itself.

Expressing the Renaissance view of nature as an agent of God, Milton writes in The Christian Doctrine,

There can be no doubt that everything in the world, by the beauty of its order, and the evidence of a determinate and beneficial purpose which pervades it, testifies that some supreme efficient power must have pre-existed, by which the whole was ordained for a specific end. There are some who pretend that nature or fate is this supreme power: but the very name of nature implies that it must owe its birth to some prior agent, or, to speak properly, signifies in itself nothing.⁵

Since Milton regards nature as a creation of God, he seeks the spiritual beyond the physical universe rather than within it. Such a view accounts for his relative lack of interest in the sensuous aspects of nature and for his emphasis on the imaginative or intellectual conception of it. His knowledge of nature derives more from his reading of classics than from his actual observation of nature. In Paradise Lost, for instance, describing Satan's followers in hell, the narrator states that they

stood,
Their glory wither'd. As when Heaven's Fire
Hath scath'd the Forest Oaks, or Mountain Pines,

With singed top their stately growth though bare
 Stands on the blasted Heath.⁶

Here Milton is under the erroneous notion that when lightning strikes a pine tree, it sings it. Another discrepancy is that of "Mountain Pines" standing "on the blasted Heath." Commenting on this discrepancy, T. H. Banks writes,

Critics suggest various literary parallels, particularly a passage in the Iliad (XIV, 414-417) in which Hector falls beneath the blow of a rock as an oak falls uprooted beneath the stroke of Zeus. The blasted heath, furthermore, suggests Macbeth.⁷

Since his conception of nature is more intellectual than physical, Milton does not share the Romantic ecstasy in the phenomena of nature, nor does he intuit the Divine in them alone as distinct from God Himself.

Milton views solitude in the same light as he does nature. Solitude, to him, is a state that engenders the calm and serene setting necessary for deep reflections. His purpose in invoking Melancholy or Darkness in "I1 Penseroso" is more to create a solemn atmosphere to hold converse with immortal minds and to unravel the mystery behind cosmic harmonies than to revel in the silent beauty of the night. In this poem, he causes the persona to wish that his "Lamp at midnight hour, / Be seen in some high lonely Tow'r" (lines 85-86) where he

may oft outwatch the Bear,
 With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
 The Spirit of Plato to unfold
 What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold
 The immortal mind that hath forsook
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook (87-92).

Apparently, he does not long for night for the sheer thrill of it, nor

does he await the break of dawn for its glory; on the contrary, he implores Melancholy to shut out the light of day:

And when the Sun begins to fling
 His flaring beams, me Goddess bring
 To arched walks of twilight groves,
 And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
 Of Pine or monumental Oak,
 Where the rude Axe with heaved stroke
 Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,
 Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt (131-138).

With the aid of solitude he intends to ponder over cosmic harmonies, which may lead to his discovery of some eternal truth:

And may at last my weary age
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,
 The Hairy Gown and Mossy Cell,
 Where I may sit and rightly spell
 Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew,
 And every Herb that sips the dew;
 Till old experience do attain
 To something like Prophetic strain (167-174).

Apart from phenomenal solitude, physical isolation also constitutes Milton's poetic imagery. Though he does not seek physical isolation, such a state, when forced upon him by a personal calamity, enables him to bear his affliction with calm fortitude. The sense of loss that he feels on becoming blind brings him the wisdom of Christian resignation. The following lines from "Sonnet XIX" illustrate the pain and emptiness he experiences at the loss of his vision:

When I consider how my light is spent,
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one Talent which is death to hide,
 Lodg'd with me useless (1-4).

Nevertheless, his blindness also strengthens him to accept his limitation as the will of God: "'God doth not need / Either man's work

or his own gifts; who best / Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best'" ("Sonnet XIX," 9-11).

Marlowe⁸, however, treats psychic isolation in his poetic dramas as a device to emphasize the potentialities of the human mind, when free from all restraints and inhibitions. His protagonists alienate themselves from others by their single-minded devotion to their goals--Tamburlaine's conquest of the world, Faustus' quest for infinite knowledge, Barabas' revenge, Edward II's love for Gaveston. While it is true that in his tragedies Marlowe also delineates the nature of evil and the workings of the human mind, the dominant note is that of Renaissance humanism, which emphasizes freedom of thought and the potential of the human mind. By questioning and flouting the accepted norms and beliefs of society, Marlowe's protagonists are voicing a new direction to human thought. Through them the playwright is, in fact, verbalizing his own doubt and skepticism about established ideas and beliefs. Yet, since he himself cannot offer any new ideals which will set at naught the accepted ones, he compromises with the existing ones. This compromise, on his part, explains the downfall of his protagonists. Speaking of the irony, K. Smidt remarks,

He [Faustus] has rebelled knowingly against a power or principle he cannot quite deny and cannot all accept. The spectacle of Faustus reduced from pride and pleasure to mortal panic, of the ambitious blasphemous ripped apart and dragged off to hell, was probably very invigorating to the devout in Marlowe's audience. To Marlowe himself it may have been the supreme irony of this ironical tragedy.⁹

In his tragedies, Shakespeare approaches psychic isolation as a restorative and spiritual force. By his defiance of the universal moral law, Shakespeare's tragic hero lets loose a reign of chaos and anarchy

and as a result suffers extreme pain and mental anguish. But his total annihilation is necessary for the restoration of the order he has disrupted. Referring to the natural law that manifests itself in the tragic action, Northrop Frye states, "We see the tragic hero as disturbing a balance in nature, nature being conceived as an order stretching over the two kingdoms of the visible and the invisible, a balance which sooner or later must right itself."¹⁰

In Macbeth, the protagonist violates the natural order by his cruel and heinous murder of King Duncan, and this act initiates a rule of horror and tyranny. His life, stained in blood, sets him apart from the rest of the characters. Even Lady Macbeth, who is his principal accomplice in the murder of King Duncan, becomes a victim of madness and dies, leaving him alone in the world. His ghastly deeds have cut him off from the rest of the world, and he realizes that he cannot expect the comforts of old age:

My way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have (V, III, 22-26).

But in order to restore the order that Macbeth has upset, he must die.

G. Wilson Knight discusses this movement from chaos to order in Macbeth:

"In a final judgement the whole play may be writ down as a wrestling of destruction with creation . . . and then creation's more firm-set sequent concord replaces chaos."¹¹ Though John Holloway does not see the outcome of the tragic action as the restoration of the moral or natural order, he nevertheless attributes the order to primal myth and ritual. He writes of Macbeth,

We are invited to see him as a kind of ritual victim: a scapegoat, a lord of misrule, who has turned life into riot for his hunted time, and is then driven out and destroyed by the forces which embody the fertile vitality and the communal happiness of the social group.¹²

In the four major tragedies, too, Holloway discerns "a repeated and recognizable pattern."¹³ Thus, for Shakespeare, isolation, though it is used as a symbol of regeneration, is a painful experience.

In addition to psychic isolation, Shakespeare also deals with solitude in nature. While Milton welcomes phenomenal solitude solely to evoke a quiet ambience for serious meditation, Shakespeare, following the tradition of Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, and Virgil, who employ nature as a symbol of death and rebirth in their pastoral elegies,¹⁴ turns to it to represent a kind of spiritual rebirth in some of his romantic comedies and romances. In consonance with the Renaissance concept, which places man's mind above nature, Shakespeare does not suggest a permanent return to nature. To Shakespeare, its simple and tranquil surroundings, away from the art and the deception of the court, are simply a means to indicate a temporary phase for man's introspection and soul-searching, needed for his return to the normal or civilized world, which his mind has created. However, in some of his comedies and romances we cannot use the word "solitude" to imply "isolation" because characters commonly enter the forests together. Nevertheless, we can apply the term to mean the simple and quiet environment of nature, which is important to Shakespeare in so far as it helps in effecting a change for the revitalization of life.

In his romantic comedies--The Two Gentlemen of Verona, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and As You Like It--and his romances--Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest--the comic conflict is resolved through

the intervention of the green world. Alluding to this aspect of Shakespeare's romantic comedy, Frye asserts,

The action of comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world.¹⁵

R. M. Frye supports this view when he comments on the aim of comedy:

Like the green world within a comedy, comedy itself can offer us no permanent escape from life, and it does not pretend to do so. But, like the green world again, comedy can give us, while we are under its spell, a healthy, hearty, and joyful experience, before it dismisses us with the catharsis of laughter back into the world in which we live.¹⁶

E. M. W. Tillyard detects in Shakespeare's romances--Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest--"the same general scheme of prosperity, destruction, and recreation."¹⁷ He also focuses on Shakespeare's use of the green world as a symbol of resurgence. Citing an example from The Winter's Tale, he says, "It is Florizel and Perdita and the countryside where they meet which make the new life."¹⁸

Believing in the Renaissance concept of an ordered universe, the landscape poets of the eighteenth century see an order in the natural world and seek to impose it on their descriptions of nature. They look upon nature as detached and dispassionate observers who force this order on it for what they consider is beneficial to mankind. In this regard, while discussing Pope's treatment of nature, R. A. Foakes contends that in Pope's poetry "nature is 'methodized' in accordance with an aristocratic scale of order and value in society, which in turn is given the sanction of moral law."¹⁹ Pope's "Ode on Solitude" validates the truth of Foakes' assertion. The countryman who does not aspire to move

beyond his "paternal"²⁰ "bounds" and thus does not violate the hierarchy of natural order is a happy man. His duty is simply to carry on the modest chores of his life in the quiet environs of nature. That this life is an ideal one is implicit in the following lines:

Thus let me live unseen, unknown;
 Thus unlamented let me die;
 Steal from the world, and not a stone
 Tell where I lie (lines 17-20).

The landscape poets also continue the tradition of using nature as an agent for generating an appropriate atmosphere for their subjects. As Pope himself remarks,

There is certainly something in the amiable
 Simplicity of unadorned Nature, that spreads over
 the Mind a more noble Sort of Tranquillity, and a
 loftier Sensation of Pleasure, than can be raised
 from the nicer Scenes of Art.²¹

James Thomson also stands at a distance from nature in his "Hymn on Solitude." In his invocation of solitude he himself does not experience the phenomenon but merely visualizes it in different forms--as a philosopher, a bird winging through the sky, a shepherd, a passionate lover, friend, morning, noon, evening, etc. For Thomson, as J. Robert Barth points out, "Solitude dwells in the 'deep recesses' of the 'oak-clad hill,' and there the poet can take refuge when the sight of London in the distance--'its crimes, its cares, its pains'--becomes more than he can bear."²² Barth comments that Thomson "hails solitude as something apart from him; he appeals to solitude to let him 'pierce thy secret cell'; he can look upon its 'thousand shapes,' but he cannot share its life."²³ Though there is a momentary intimation of the Transcendent in solitude, the poet does not experience the Divine

intimation. As Barth says, "The transcendent remains distant, apart. Light shines, but from an unseen source apart. Matter and spirit do not become one in vision; immanent and transcendent only point to one another."²⁴

Thomas Gray, Edward Young, and Robert Blair--poets of the graveyard school--carry on the tradition of using images of solitude to create a somber setting as an occasion for contemplative thought and meditation. Against the backdrop of the graveyard or night they reflect on subjects such as social vanity, physical decay, the afterlife. Peter Thorpe also holds the view that the aim of the graveyard poets is "to create and then build upon a setting of nighttime in a place of burial, usually a churchyard or a crypt; many of the graveyard poems open with the sun just setting or having set over the grave."²⁵ In Night Thoughts, Young welcomes death, man's inevitable end, by entreating Night, which is prophetic of death, to relieve him of his insufferable pain and agony:

Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
 In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
 Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumb'ring world.
 Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
 Nor eye, nor list'ning ear, an object finds;
 Creation sleeps, 'Tis as the gen'ral pulse
 Of life stood still, and nature made a pause;
 An awful pause! prophetic of her end.
 And let her prophecy be soon fulfill'd;
 Fate! drop the curtain; I can lose no more.²⁶

Here nature is used not for its own sake but for building the proper atmosphere to ruminate on serious subjects. As C. V. Wicker points out,

In the Night Thoughts nature is not looked upon by the poet as a source of beauty; but a limited range of tiringly reiterated images--night, the night sky, graves, yew trees, the sea, for example--is merely used as atmosphere, the appropriate garb for the subject, that is, the contemplation of death and man's destiny.²⁷

However, though Young uses nature primarily for evoking a grave and serious atmosphere, he also perceives in its stillness the prophecy of death and thus helps to prepare the ground for Wordsworth's reflection on the interaction of nature and the human mind.

In The Grave, Robert Blair brings out with dismal vividness the vanity of material power, wealth, and honor, for they all lead to the grave. Regarding Blair's penchant for heaping such grim and lurid images, Thorpe comments, "The grove lavishes much description on the 'blank' faces of corpses and on the vaults that are 'Furred round with mouldy damp and ropy slime.'"²⁸ His description of the grave illustrates his deftness in evoking a dark and gloomy atmosphere:

Ah! how dark
Thy long-extended realms, and rueful wastes,
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark night,
Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
Athwart the gloom profound!²⁹

In his "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," Gray also slowly builds up an atmosphere, which is in tune with his theme--death, the leveller--though more specifically the subject is man's identity with his fellow men. There are other subtle suggestions in the poem, but more to the point, Gray uses solitude to present a setting for deep reflections. As John W. Draper comments, "The poem opens with a darkening landscape and the 'knell' of departing day, as so many elegies begin with a touch of rural scenery and the death-knell of the deceased."³⁰ He continues, "The poet then proceeds to contemplate the brevity, and perhaps something of the vanity of life."³¹ To further intensify the gloom of the scene Gray adds the hooting of the owl--the only sound that disturbs the "solemn stillness":³²

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
 The moping owl does to the moon complain
 Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign (9-12).

Then he introduces his real subject--the grave--which leads to his musing on death:

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,
 Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap,
 Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
 The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep (13-16).

Thus, we find that poets from the Renaissance until the eighteenth century envision solitude in nature as a phenomenon to provide a calm and serene atmosphere for metaphysical speculations and introspections or as a kind of escape in which men may enjoy a brief recess from the harshness of life in order to return to the normal world with a change in perspective for purposeful living. And they treat mental isolation as a painful experience, which leads to their protagonists' self-examination and self-revelation and finally to the restoration of the order, previously disturbed by them. Their relationship with nature is one of detachment or aloofness rather than of participation or involvement.

Though the vestiges of the past linger in the poetry of the Romantics as part of the poetic convention, their attitude to nature and man undergoes a drastic change, and understanding this change is vital to a clear perception of their images of solitude. The old myth of a divinely ordained hierarchical order in the natural as well as the human world, which holds its sway from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century, despite questions raised by Machiavelli, Montaigne, and Copernicus, gives way to a new myth in the Romantic period. The empirical concept gains

ground over the traditional view. To the Romantics, the idea of social stratification as divinely willed is also arbitrary and stems from "rationalizations of class privilege."³³ For Shelley, Northrop Frye explains, liberty is something that man, not God, wants for himself; gods who restrict this liberty are the inventions of his own cowardice and superstition. Even a revolutionary such as Milton thinks that liberty is something that God wants man to have and not something that man himself wants to have.³⁴

Concerning this change in attitude, Frye refers to the Christian idea of the fallen man, specially in its medieval form. Before his expulsion from the Garden of Eden man was one with God and nature, as he was not conscious of his separate identity. His self-awareness, according to Frye, causes his demotion to an inferior world where nature holds the same position as he. Frye's example of Dante's Paradiso elucidates this point: "Dante's Paradiso is symbolized by the heavenly bodies, and the starry spheres, with their unheard harmonies, form the central image of nature as God had originally designed it, before the 'lower part of it 'fell' with man into an unsymmetrical chaos."³⁵ Therefore, his redemption lies not in his identification with the forces of nature, but in his alienation from them. In order to regain his lost paradise--ideal nature--he must adhere to the law, morality, and religion imposed by society; therefore, his redeemer is the city, not nature. The Romantics re-orient this myth by stressing the idea of man's redemption through his union with nature because his separation from it has caused his fall. "The alienated man cut off from nature by his consciousness," Frye continues, "is the Romantic equivalent of post-Edenic Adam."³⁶ Discrediting the theory of rigid hierarchical order either in the physical universe or in society and emphasizing the

importance of individual perception, the Romantic poets (except Blake) turn to nature, for they experience a sense of the sublime in nature. As R. A. Foakes remarks,

Whereas for Shakespeare and Pope the natural world had reflected the order and values of man's world, of human society, an order attributed . . . to a divine dispensation, it now came to be used to embody the aspiration of the Romantic poet, to reflect directly a transcendent or spiritual order.³⁷

Here I must point out that Harold Bloom regards Romantic poetry as anti-nature and rejects Frye's interpretation of the Romantic perspective by arguing that the renovative strength in Wordsworth resides in mind's power over external sense.³⁸ But what Bloom overlooks is the fact that though Wordsworth ranks the power of the mind over nature in Bk XIV of The Prelude,³⁹ Wordsworth never denies the role of nature in facilitating the poet's perception. Besides, in Bk X of the same poem Wordsworth addresses nature as the "Power supreme! / Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe" (420-421; 1850 edition). It will perhaps be well to remember that, as Stephen Prickett says, "tension and paradox are of the essence of romantic poetry."⁴⁰ My main idea in directing the reader's attention to Bloom's stand in this matter is to point out that the images of solitude used by the Romantics emphasize the mind's interchange with nature. Referring to this interchange, Abrams explains,

Natural objects enter, flow, are received, and sink down into the mind, while the mind dwells in, feeds on, drinks, holds intercourse with, and weaves, intertwines, fastens, and binds itself to external objects, until the two integrate as one.⁴¹

Wordsworth himself speaks of "an ennobling interchange / Of action from

without and from within" (Bk XIII, 375-376; 1850 edition).

Notwithstanding the fact that each major Romantic poet has an individual approach to nature, he (with the exception of perhaps Blake) demonstrates an active involvement or affiliation with it. Whatever truths the interplay of mind and nature may bring to them, their images of solitude reveal the impact of this interchange. Since the emphasis shifts from a collective preconceived notion of the world to the individual perception, man's scope for progress and enlightenment becomes large and infinite. Thus, through his constant interchange with the natural world he strives to attain an ideal state. In short, Wordsworth's quest is internal--what Bloom calls "an internalization of quest-romance"⁴² or what Abrams terms as "the apocalypse of imagination."⁴³

Revelations through an intimate interchange of mind and nature, which constitute the essence of Wordsworth's poetry, find their resonance in his images of solitude. For instance, when Wordsworth exclaims, "My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky,"⁴⁴ beholding the rainbow is an emotional experience. As Stephen Prickett argues,

The rainbow can exist only if there are certain conditions present in the atmosphere, and if there is an observer present. Without Wordsworth, the observing eye, there would be no rainbow. It is for him a perpetual reminder that nature, in all our senses, is something in which we participate.⁴⁵

Again, the joy that Wordsworth experiences from his sensuous perception of external nature is a manifestation of God as a joyous being, and the memory of that joy transforms it into an all-encompassing, enduring spiritual love. Thus, from his personal experience of joy in the

natural world comes his apprehension of the spiritual. As A. C. Bradley puts it, "The perception of the daffodils as dancing in glee, and in sympathy with other gleeful beings, shows us a living, joyous, loving world, and so a 'spiritual' world, not merely a 'sensible' one."⁴⁶

In Bk I of The Prelude, recounting his departure from London and his walk to the vale of Grasmere, Wordsworth tells us of the physical joy the "gentle breeze" (line 1) brings to him, which makes him conscious of "a correspondent breeze" (35). Herbert Lindenberger brings up this point while discussing Wordsworth's images of interaction:

From the beginning the breeze seems both rooted in the sensory, observable world and at the same time ("half-conscious of the joy it brings") connected to higher powers. A few lines later the poet speaks of his own breathings . . . and soon thereafter the two processes, the breathing within nature and within the poet are brought together, and then connected with the creative process.⁴⁷

Other emotions that Wordsworth's images of solitude reflect from his intercourse with nature are those of fear, awe, and wonder. In Bk I of The Prelude, Wordsworth informs us that he "grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear: (301-302, 1850 edition). In the same book he recalls a boyhood incident on a moonlit night on Esthwaite Lake. While rowing a boat, which does not belong to him, he sees the huge peak of Wetherham rear its head from behind a craggy steep and grow in stature as he rows along. The great peak appears to him "with voluntary power instinct" (379), and he feels that it strides after him "with purpose of its own, / And measured motion like a living thing" (383-384). Terrified, he rows back ashore, but the memory of the spectacle continues to haunt him. He says, "My brain / Worked with a dim and undetermined sense / Of unknown modes of being" (I, 391-393). Relating another

incident in the same book, Wordsworth reports how, on yielding to his boyhood pleasure of snaring woodcocks on the mountain slopes, he hears . "low breathings" (323) and "sounds / Of undistinguishable motion" (I, 323-324).

The Snowdon scene in Bk XIV of The Prelude provides another example of Wordsworth's mystical experience through this process, which instills awe and wonder in the poet. In the darkness of the night as Wordsworth, his friend, and the guide scale the mountain, they come upon an awe-inspiring scene. The sea at the base and the surrounding hills are enveloped in a deep mist. The only sound that breaks the silence of the night is the "roar of waters, torrents, streams" (59; 1850 edition). Over this scene presides the "full-orbed Moon" (53), the symbol of imagination, which dispels the darkness in the landscape. What Wordsworth suggests here is that the human mind can transcend the earthly scene which has evoked a sense of the sublime and can get intimations of the Divine. Referring to the Snowdon description, Robert Rehder remarks,

Here the inner world is made continuous with the outer world and the whole scene becomes 'The perfect image of a mighty Mind.' This is the end to which this poem on the growth of the poet's mind builds. The progress up the mountain is also a movement from darkness to enlightenment. . . . The darkness is illuminated by the moon, instead of fog there is a landscape, the fog forms tongues, the roar of waters becomes a voice, then the scene passes and is replaced by understanding.⁴⁸

Through the same process Wordsworth's solitaries--the old soldier in Bk V of The Prelude, the old beggar in "The Cumberland Beggar," and the old leechgatherer in "Resolution and Independence"--radiate a dignity and solemnity in the midst of pain and hardship that seem to rebuke the

poet for magnifying his own sorrow and to give a new meaning to his life. His encounter with them reveals to Wordsworth their human predicament, their stoic resignation, and their genial demeanor, which carry a divine message for him. The leechgatherer, for instance, seems to be "a man from some far region sent, / To give me human strength, by apt admonishment" ("Resolution and Independence," 110-111). The leechgatherer's kind and cheerful disposition relieves Wordsworth's own depression, and in gratitude he raises his prayerful thanks to God: "'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure; / I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'" (130-140). In "The Thorn," the thorn, laden and "overgrown with moss" (49) becomes an "aged" (6) and "a wretched thing" (9)--a symbol of human misery. Wordsworth has this interaction in mind when he declares in The Recluse that the "individual mind" (801) and the "external world" (806) are "exquisitely" (804) "fitted" (804) to accomplish the "great consummation" (799) he speaks of in this poem.

The apprehension of the spiritual through a reciprocity of mind and nature is also evident in the images of solitude used by Coleridge in his poems written before 1802. Being greatly influenced by Wordsworth in these poems, Coleridge affirms his faith in the illumination of the Supersensuous through a close interchange between the mind and the sensory world. However, in "Dejection: An Ode," which was published in 1802, Coleridge seems to repudiate his earlier conviction of this intimate interchange, for he declares that he does not "hope from outward forms to win / The passion and the life, whose fountains are within"⁴⁹ and that whatever "of higher worth" (47) we "behold" (50) in the "inanimate cold world" (51) "must issue forth" (53) "from the soul" (53) "within" (46). Here we find him turning toward Kantian idealism,

which advocates the primacy of the mind in the illumination of deeper truths. Nevertheless, we must remember that Coleridge wrote all of his major poems before 1802 and that in "Dejection: An Ode," he in fact records his grief at the loss of his poetic powers. Wordsworth also expresses a similar opinion in his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," but unlike Coleridge, after Wordsworth's initial rejection of nature, at the end of the poem, he makes his reconciliation with nature: "To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears" (202-203).

In his conversation as well as in his major poems, Coleridge speaks of a rapport between mind and nature. One level of consciousness, animated by the observable world, generates a deeper level, which, to him, constitutes the creative process. In "The Eolian Harp," the poet persona, seated beside his cottage with his "pensive Sara" (1) on a quiet evening, views the surrounding landscape--the cottage "o'ergrown / With white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leav'd Myrtle" (3-4), "the clouds" (6), the "bean-field" (10), and "the distant Sea" (11). The jasmine and the myrtle symbolizing "Innocence and Love" (5), the clouds, the "exquisite" (9) "scents" (9) of the beanfield, and "the stilly murmur of the distant Sea" (11) -- all these stimulate or activate his mind. But his mind, still in suspended animation, as the hushed scene implies, gradually gathers momentum by the rhythmic notes of the lute in the casement, produced by the "desultory breeze" (14). The hushed atmosphere may also mean, as K. M. Wheeler suggests, "the lulling of the busy faculties"⁵⁰ for internalization. Now the mind, fully activated by the harmony of sight, smell, sound, and touch, awakens to "one Life within us and abroad" (26) and experiences the unity of being--"one intellectual breeze, / At once the Soul of each, and God of all"

(47-48). As M. H. Abrams asserts,

The poet breaks through sensation into vision, in which the phenomenal aspects of the landscape, its colors, music, and odors, are intuited as products and indices of the first manifestations of the creative Word, gravitation and light, in whose multiform unions all nature and life consist.⁵¹

In "Frost at Midnight," the cold, brooding silence engendered by the frost, the windless night, and the "owlets's cry" (2) are intensified by the silence within the cottage. The other inmates of the cottage are "at rest" (4), and his infant boy sleeps at his side. The hooting of the owl and the chill of the frost are contrasted with the fluttering of the "film" (15) on the grate and the warmth of "the thin blue flame" (13) on the "low-burnt fire" (14); thus, the stage is set for internalization. The "babe" (48) and the "fluttering stranger" (26), symbols of the creative mind, bring to Coleridge memories of his childhood days, and this retrospection, in turn, takes him to the future. He feels happy that his child, unlike him who is bred in the city, will have nature to nurture him, and through the mediating force of nature he will be able to

see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself (58-62).

Thus the child's oneness with nature is emphasized here also.

Disabled by an accident, the poet in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" laments that he cannot join his friends in their jaunts through the countryside. Left all by himself in a lime-tree bower, he nostalgically calls to mind the beautiful and alluring sights they will

be viewing, as they

On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge (7-13).

While thus musing, he suddenly remembers Charles, who is one of the group and who, like him, was once confined in the city, as he is now confined in the bower, and this empathy dispels his gloom, for nature's close contact will offer his friend the mystical experience the poet himself has earlier enjoyed:

So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence (37-43).

The memory of the natural scenes, which instills an inner calm and love for his friend, gives him delight as if he were there with his friends to share their joy, and, more important, makes him conscious of nature's beauty that surrounds him. As Richard Haven says, "The imagined experience in which the speaker has vicariously participated has led to an awareness of this bower flooded with the same 'delight' as that known by absent 'friends.'"⁵² In addition to his awakening to love and beauty, the poet's interchange with nature brings him another revelation--that of not losing the joys of living, even at the deprivation of those joys:

No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ

Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
 Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
 'tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
 That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
 With lively joy the joys we cannot share (61-67).

Though The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Christabel also operate on two levels of consciousness, neither can equal "Kubla Khan" in articulating this process. In the images of solitude used in "Kubla Khan," Coleridge's idea of the creative process of imagination in which the mind, awakened by the phenomena of nature, receives intimations of the Supernal finds supreme expression. All men possess the power of imagination, but the poet has it in excess. All human beings are perennially interchanging with the phenomenal world and creating, but their creation is nothing as compared with the poet's. The tremendous energy and power with which the fountain erupts from the chasm suggest the potency and vitality of the creative force. The following lines describe the abundant energy and releasing power of imagination:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
 As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
 A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
 Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail (17-22)

Through images of solitude Coleridge describes the process of the two levels of consciousness. The river, which stands for the creative power of imagination because it emerges from the bursting fountain, is sacred. Kubla Khan, deriving inspiration from nature, erects the "stately pleasure-dome" (2), for it stands at a place through which the "sacred river" (the symbol of imagination), after meandering "through wood and dale" (26), representative of the phenomenal world, joins the "caverns measureless to man" (27) and finally sinks "in tumult to a

lifeless ocean" (28), both symbolic of the spiritual world. Again, on the sacred river falls the shadow of the "pleasure dome," a phenomenon of the natural world. The implication is that imagination (the sacred river), animated by the natural world (the shadow of the dome), can hear the "mingled measure / From the fountain and the caves" (33-34) or, to be precise, can perceive the spiritual.

However, Kubla Khan's creativity through his interchange with nature falls far short of that of the poet. A poet, through the same process, which Coleridge's reference to the "Abyssinian maid" (39) and her "song" (43) indicates, possesses the power to convert "that sunny dome! those caves of ice!" (47) into monuments of such rare beauty and artistry that they can shadow forth heavenly brilliance. On beholding this magic dome, people will exclaim that the poet has fed on "honey-dew" (53) and "drunk the milk of Paradise" (54). Wheeler's comment on the creative powers of the poet and those of a layman is noteworthy here:

In 'Kubla Khan' the contrast between the Khan's architectural and landscaping gesture in lines 1-11 and the natural, wild, and unencompassed scene of the 'deep romantic chasm', its fountain, and so forth, in lines 12-30, suggests the distinction between the secondary activities of art and culture, which use the materials of nature to create new materials, and the primary activities of perception.⁵³

Keats's images of solitude also accent the creative process through a fusion of the mind and the world of the senses, but whereas Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley emphasize the transcendental aspect of nature, Keats lays stress on the phenomenal. Though he, too, quests for the eternal, his attraction for the terrestrial is so strong that he is never able to transcend the physical. As Barry Gradman points out, "Sense experience always remains the 'sine qua non' for Keats and is not over-

whelmed by the imagination but, rather, refined and transmuted by the intensity of its creative power."⁵⁴ So intensely does Keats luxuriate in the beauty of the sensory world that he recreates ancient myths, which assume symbolic significance. For instance, in Endymion, he begins with his dictum that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever"⁵⁵ and goes on to describe some of the natural scenes that are sources of his joy:

Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms (I, 13-19).

Thereafter he equates the power of nature's beauty with the appeal of "lovely tales" from which he passes into the realm of myth and re-orientates the myth of Endymion and Cynthia. And soon Cynthia becomes a symbol of Ideal beauty and Ideal love. To use Wigod's words, "Like the first myth-makers, Keats broods upon the moon's beauty so profoundly that he recreates the Cynthia-Endymion myth. The moon gradually becomes the symbol of Ideal Beauty toward which the poet aspires,"⁵⁶

The lure of the cosmic moon's beauty leads to the poet-shepherd's love of Cynthia, the moon goddess. After long pining, he realizes that he is running after a shadow, which will always elude his grasp, so he transfers his love to an Indian maid, a mortal being:

Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.
On earth I may not love thee (IV, 656-659).

And he tells his mortal love that their home will be in the idyllic surroundings of nature where they will lead an ideal life:

Under the brow
 Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
 Would hide us up although spring leaves were none;
 And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
 Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
 O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;
 Dusk for our loves yet light enough to grace
 Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:
 For by one step the blue sky shouldst find,
 And by another, in deep dell below,
 See, through the trees, a little river go
 All in its mid-day gold and glimmering (IV, 670-681).

But with "tears of sorrow" (IV, 725) she replies, "as the golden morrow /
 Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east" (IV, 726-727) that she cannot
 accept his love, for her love is "forbidden" (IV, 752). Dejected, he
 decides to become a hermit and bids her and his sister Peona farewell,
 but when they reach "a cypress grove" (IV, 906), he stops them to request
 one more meeting with the maid, promising to return to the grove "at
 vesper's earliest twinkle" (IV, 915). Then he rests "his head upon a
 mossy hillock" (918), and thoughts of death overtake him. Preparing his
 mind for death, he repairs to the grove to keep his appointment with the
 maid and his sister. At this point the maid is transformed into Cynthia,
 suggesting that only through the mortal can he reach the immortal:

And as she spake, into her face there came
 Light, as reflected from a silver flame:
 Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display
 Full golden; in her eyes a brighter day
 Dawn'd blue and full of love (IV, 982-986).

The same pattern is repeated in the "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a
 Grecian Urn," and "Ode on Melancholy." In the "Ode to a Nightingale," for
 instance, oppressed by thoughts of love and death, Keats describes the
 depths of his mental depression:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk (1-4).

The song of the nightingale, a phenomenon of the natural world, lifts him from his deep despair, and he seeks loss of consciousness through the effect of wine to "fade away" (line 20) with the bird "into the forest dim" (line 20) to forget "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" (23) of this world. However, he rejects the idea of taking flight "charioted by Bacchus and his pards" (32) and decides to fly "on the viewless wings of Poesy" (33). Even while he is flying with the bird in the darkness of the night and slowly sinking into the world of unconsciousness, he reveals his attraction for the real world by recalling scenes from the natural world with vivid and graphic detail:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thickèt, and the fruit-tree wild;
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
 Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
 And mid-May's eldest child,
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves (41-50).

Thus, despite his pursuit of the ideal, he is drawn to the real, and though he is "half in love with easeful Death" (52), his spell soon breaks, for he calls the fancy a "deceiving elf" (74), and the word "forlorn" (71) is "like a bell / To toll me back from thee to my sole self!" (71-72). So he bids adieu to the bird:

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet can not all conceal
(IV, CLXXVIII, [1594-1602], p. 457).

To sum up, like their predecessors, the Romantics also use phenomenal solitude as a poetic convention, but they sharply differ from their forerunners in their attitude toward it. While both the earlier and the Romantic poets recognize that life on earth is a painful experience, they do not seek solitude for the same reasons. The poets prior to the nineteenth century view isolation of nature primarily as an effective means of producing an appropriate ambience for deep, reflective thought or as a temporary refuge for escape and recuperation from the trials and complexities of urban society whereas the Romantics, disgusted with the ugliness and corruption of society, seek seclusion in nature as a source of truth and enlightenment. For those who precede the Romantics, phenomenal solitude is a backdrop, useful for regeneration; but for most of the great Romantics, it is a reality, vital for the illumination of truth. Thus, through their active participation in and interchange with nature, the Romantics seek to delve deeply into the mysteries of life. Though the experience may be unpleasant or painful at times, it is nonetheless gratifying because of the revelations it has to offer.

ENDNOTES

¹By "nature," I mean natural phenomena such as mountains, seas, rivers, forests, caves, islands, the sky, and wind.

²Irving Ribner, ed., The Complete Works of Shakespeare (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1970), p. 6. In a revised version of Kittredge's edition of The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Ribner makes this observation. I have summarized the Renaissance concept of man and nature from Ribner's introduction, p. 6. The citation of Shakespeare's Macbeth is also from this book.

³Douglas Bush, Themes and Variations in English Poetry of the Renaissance (Claremont, California: The Claremont Graduate School, 1971), p. 11.

⁴Bush, Themes and Variations, pp. 19-20.

⁵John Milton, The Christian Doctrine, ed. James Holly Hanford and Waldo Hilary Dunn in The Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1933), Vol. XIV, 27.

⁶John Milton, Paradise Lost, in John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), I, lines 611-615.

⁷T. H. Banks, Milton's Imagery (New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 101, N.I.

⁸I have treated Milton before Marlowe because I wanted to explain the Renaissance concept of nature first and to discuss Milton's images of phenomenal and physical isolation together.

⁹K. Smidt, "Two Aspects of Ambition in Elizabethan Tragedy: Doctor Faustus and Macbeth," English Studies, 50(1969), 241.

¹⁰Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 209.

¹¹G. Wilson Knight, The Imperial Theme (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1951), p. 153.

¹²John Holloway, The Story of the Night: Studies in Shakespeare's Major Tragedies (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 73.

¹³Holloway, The Story of the Night, p. 97.

¹⁴Thomas Perrin Harrison, The Pastoral Elegy: An Anthology (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), pp. 1-6. Harrison also discusses nature as a symbol of death and rebirth in his Commentary and Notes in this book, pp. 1-6.

¹⁵Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 182.

¹⁶R. M. Frye, Shakespeare: The Art of the Dramatist (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 96.

¹⁷E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Last Plays (1938; rpt. New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1964), p. 26.

¹⁸Tillyard, Shakespeare's Last Plays, p. 42.

¹⁹R. A. Foakes, The Romantic Assertion: A Study in the Language of Nineteenth Century Poetry (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958), p. 44.

²⁰Alexander Pope, "Ode on Solitude," in The Norton Anthology of Poetry, revised by Alexander W. Allison (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1975), line 2.

²¹Alexander Pope, The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Norman Ault (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1936), p. 145.

²²J. Robert Barth, The Symbolic Imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 28-29.

²³Barth, The Symbolic Imagination, p. 30.

²⁴Barth, The Symbolic Imagination, p. 30.

²⁵Peter Thorpe, Eighteenth Century Poetry (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Co., 1975), p. 55.

²⁶Edward Young, Night Thoughts in The Poetical Works of Edward Young, introdu. R. J. Mitford (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1970), Vol I, lines 18-27.

²⁷C. V. Wicker, "Edward Young And The Fear of Death: A Study in Romantic Melancholy," University of New Mexico Publications in Language And Literature, 10(1952), 16-17.

²⁸Thorpe, Eighteenth Century Poetry, p. 55.

²⁹Robert Blair, The Grave: A Poem (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), lines 11-16.

³⁰John W. Draper, The Funeral Elegy And The Rise of English Romanticism (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), p. 311.

³¹Draper, The Funeral Elegy, p. 311.

³²Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," in The Norton Anthology of Poetry, line 6.

³³Northrop Frye, A Study of English Romanticism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 14.

³⁴Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, pp. 14-15.

³⁵Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, pp. 7-9; p. 17.

³⁶Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, p. 18.

³⁷Foakes, The Romantic Assertion: A Study in the Language of

Nineteenth Century Poetry, pp. 44-45.

³⁸Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," in Romanticism And Consciousness: Essays in Criticism, ed. Bloom (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 9-10.

³⁹William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. Ernest De Selincourt and revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1959), XIV, 448-450, p. 506.

⁴⁰Stephen Prickett, ed., The Context of English Literature: The Romantics (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), p. 215.

⁴¹M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), p. 281.

⁴²Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest Romance," p. 9.

⁴³M. H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," in Romanticism and Consciousness, p. 107.

⁴⁴William Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up," in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. De Selincourt and revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1940), I, 1-2, 226. Subsequent citations of Wordsworth's poems other than The Prelude are from volumes two, four, and five of this source.

⁴⁵Stephen Prickett, ed., The Context of English Literature, p. 213.

⁴⁶A. C. Bradley, Oxford Lectures in English Poetry (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1934), p. 130.

⁴⁷H. Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's Prelude (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 70.

⁴⁸Robert Rehder, Wordsworth and the Beginnings of Modern Poetry (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981), p. 151.

⁴⁹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode," in English Romantic Writers, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1967), lines 45-46. Citations of Coleridge's other poems will be from this source.

⁵⁰K. M. Wheeler, The Creative Mind in Coleridge's Poetry (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), p. 73.

⁵¹M. H. Abrams, "Coleridge's 'A Light in Sound': Science, Metascience, and Poetic Imagination," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 116(1972), 474-475.

⁵²Richard Haven, Patterns of Consciousness: An Essay on Coleridge (Amherst: The Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1969), p. 72.

⁵³Wheeler, The Creative Mind in Coleridge's Poetry, p. 33.

⁵⁴Barry Gradman, Metamorphosis in Keats (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1980), p. xviii.

⁵⁵John Keats, Endymion, in The Poems: John Keats, ed., E. De Selincourt (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1905), I, line 1. Citations of Keats's other poems are also from this volume.

⁵⁶Jacob Wigod, The Darkening Chamber: The Growth of Tragic Consciousness in Keats (Salzburg, Austria: Institut Fur Englische Sprache Und Literatur, 1972), p. 4.

⁵⁷J. Lovell, Byron: The Record of A Quest: Studies in a Poet's Concept and Treatment of Nature (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1949), p. 67.

⁵⁸Ernest Hartley Coleridge, ed. The Works of Lord Byron (1898-1904; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966), IV, 70-74 104; the citation of Byron's Childe Harold is from the second volume of this source.

CHAPTER III

"THE AWFUL SHADOW OF SOME UNSEEN POWER"

Like Wordsworth's "ennobling interchange" (The Prelude, Bk XIII, line 375), Shelley's images of solitude also evince "an unremitting interchange / With the clear universe of things around" ("Mont Blanc," 39-40). Shelley explains this interchange in his essay "On Love":

In the motion of the very leaves of Spring in the blue air there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes like the enthusiasm of patriotic success or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone.¹

However, whereas Wordsworth's interchange with nature strengthens his faith in the mind's power to apprehend and communicate with the supernal, Shelley's interchange with nature does not ensure this faith because his philosophical speculations make him skeptical. Nevertheless, in spite of his earlier support of the necessitarian doctrine in Queen Mab, Shelley's mystical experiences incline him strongly to a belief in Ultimate Reality, but he seriously questions the mind's power to penetrate the mysteries of the realm beyond the awareness of this reality. Disregarding the dichotomy between Shelley's empirical and strongly transcendental views, as C. E. Pulos points out, "one might

insist that despite this hostility in theory, Shelley in practice resembles the strict transcendentalists; for in dealing with the great and eternal questions, he turns from reason to the imagination, exactly as they turn from the 'understanding' to 'pure reason.'"² Given Shelley's strong platonic affinities, this argument is largely valid; we cannot, however, ignore the undercurrents of doubt and pessimism that surface from his assertions of such beliefs. Pulos adds that Shelley "in conceiving of what lies beyond phenomena . . . resorts to the sceptic's faith or the sceptic's doctrine of probability. He does not make dogmatical assertions about unknowable things but expresses tentative feelings about things recognized as unknowable."³ Pulos' point here is crucial to our understanding of Shelley's images of solitude because the ideas expressed through these images reflect his skeptical attitude toward matters related to the Transcendent.

These images show a tension between two views of romantic imagination. As defined by T. J. Diffey, "In one interpretation of Romantic imagination, what is imagined is a higher reality beyond the reach of the senses; in another, imagination is the power to perceive more adequately the universe in which we already live rather than some alien, supersensible reality."⁴ Shelley's close relationship with nature impresses upon his mind the existence of a supreme power beyond the natural world, but since this knowledge does not give him access to the abstract and ideal realm, he is reticent about the mind's power to comprehend the Infinite. Another point of difference between Shelley's and Wordsworth's images of solitude is that Shelley's images depict more the unfamiliar aspects of nature than do Wordsworth's; nonetheless, both show an intimate association or partnership with nature. For instance,

in addition to using images from the visible earth, Shelley also displays a keen interest in the other three traditional elements of nature--air, water, and fire. As Joseph Warren Beach comments on this aspect of Shelley's nature imagery,

His view is less confined to the surface of the earth where man dwells, more free to follow the movements of cloud and tide and lightning; he visits the secret caves of the earth and circles the orbits of the planets. He is more prone to dwell on the forces and processes--electricity, gravity, light, heat, chemical force, vegetation--by which nature is constituted an entity for scientist and mathematician. The sensuous appeal is as rich and constant in Shelley as in Wordsworth; but it is on a different level of experience, less familiar, and calling for a greater stretch of imagination.⁵

Yet, in spite of Shelley's keen sensitivity to natural phenomena, his images of solitude assume symbolic and mythic qualities more obviously than Wordsworth's.

Despite his recurring doubt and uncertainty about the mind's power to measure the Infinite, Shelley uses a large number of images of solitude that indicates his faith in a Transcendent Being. In this chapter, I shall examine some of his poems chronologically to substantiate my contention that one of the major themes underlying his images of solitude is his quest for the spiritual and that his quarrel is not with whether or not such a power exists but whether or not the mind can probe its mysteries. The poems that I shall discuss here are Alastor, "Mont Blanc," "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," "Ode to the West Wind," "The Cloud," "To a Sky-Lark," "To Night," and Adonais.

In Alastor, which was composed in the fall and winter of 1815, Shelley's images of solitude delineate a poet-narrator, who writes, as Richard Cronin states, "an elegy"⁶ for another poet. The poet-hero is

the projection of Shelley's own idealized self, and the poet-narrator and his poet-hero represent, as Wasserman contends, "Shelley's polarized impulses,"⁷ which reflect the conflicting strains of empiricism and transcendentalism. The poet-narrator apparently voices Shelley's empirical views. Shelley's close association with Mother Nature and her wonders have inspired his deep love for her and his yearning for knowledge of her mystery, for he says,

I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries (19-23).

In order "to still these obstinate questionings" (26) he has made "charnels" (24) and "coffins" (24) his bed. Speaking of his continuing efforts toward this end he tells us,

In love and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talks and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge (29-37).

Though nature has not yet disclosed her "inmost sanctuary" (38), he has gained "enough from incommunicable dream, / And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought" (39-40) to restore his peace and serenity. His objective is to remain within the bounds of nature, that is, the "brotherhood" (1) of "earth, ocean, air" (1) "to recompense the boon" (4) that the "great Mother" (2) has granted him. Fire, which in Shelley's symbolic universe, according to Donald Reiman, "represents

spiritual vitality,"⁸ is not one of the elements in the "beloved brotherhood" (1), suggesting that the quest is not spiritual. His desire to know more about the physical universe is motivated by his love for nature and mankind. Therefore, though "serenely now / And moveless" (41-42), like "a long-forgotten lyre / Suspended in the solitary dome / Of some mysterious and deserted fane" (42-44), he awaits nature's "breath" (45) to "modulate" (46) his "strain" (45)

with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man (46-49).

"His enquiry is," as Wasserman mentions, "only into the mystery of 'what we are' as creatures of the physical world."⁹ Unlike the poet-narrator, the poet-hero, who is the poet-narrator's idealized self, is not content with his knowledge of the physical world. He is the youth of the "Preface," who "seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception." Images of solitude pile up to describe the youth's insatiable thirst for knowledge of the Infinite and his whole-hearted dedication to this one goal. He has shunned society to drink deeply of "the fountains of divine philosophy" (71). He leaves "his cold fireside and alienated home / To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands" (76-77). "Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness / Has lured his fearless steps" (78-79). He has followed "nature's most secret steps" (81) "like her shadow" (82),

where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge or where the secret caves

Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
 Of fire and poison, inaccessible
 To avarice or pride, their starry domes
 Of diamond and of gold expand above
 Numberless and immeasurable halls,
 Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
 Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite (82-94).

Other objects of his "love and wonder" (98) are "the varying roof of heaven" (96) and "the green earth" (97), for "he would linger long / In lonesome vales, making the wild his home" (98-99). He also visits the ruins of ancient civilizations in his pursuit of ultimate truth:

Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
 The awful ruins of the days of old:
 Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
 Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
 Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
 Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
 Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
 Or jasper tomb, or mutilated Sphinx,
 Dark Ethiopia in her desert hills
 Conceals (107-116).

At last his long cogitations enable him to see "the secrets of the birth of time" (128). But this discovery does not relax his search for the Divine. His undivided and tireless pursuit of the ideal makes him oblivious of the attentions of the Arab maid, who "watched his nightly sleep, / Sleepless herself" (134-135) and who returns "to her cold home / Wildered, and wan, and panting" (138-139), "when red moon / Made paler the pale Moon" (137-138). It is significant that the youth meets his dream-vision in "the vale of Cashmire" (145) amid idyllic natural surroundings. Enchanted by the natural scene when he lies down to rest his tired limbs, he gains his mystical experience in the form of a dream:

The Poet wandering on, through Arabia
 And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
 And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
 Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
 In joy and exultation held his way;
 Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
 Its loveliest dell, whose odorous plants entwine
 Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
 Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
 His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
 There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
 Had flushed his cheek (140-151).

The description of the dream-maiden appearing in the seclusion of the vale as uniting "all of wonderful, which the poet, the philosopher or the lover could depicture" ("Preface" to Alastor) makes it clear that she is Shelley's approximation of a Platonic soul-mate. As William H. Hildebrand states, "By achieving 'mystic sympathy' with nature, the Poet is rewarded with the vision of the veiled maiden--a reward that amounts to a lifting of the veil of eternity."¹⁰ Shelley, as shown here, expresses his idea of the Platonic quest for Ideal Beauty through nature and woman. According to James A. Notopoulos,

The sphere wherein ideal beauty manifests itself for Shelley is (1) nature, which is a veil of ideal beauty, a realm in which "some spirit of great intelligence and power" invests the visible world with beauty; and (2) woman, who is for the poet the prototype on earth of his own Platonic soul, a veiled maid, as in Alastor, "whose voice was like the voice of his own soul."¹¹

Here I shall discuss Plato's influence on Shelley and the major interpretations of the dream-vision to reinforce my argument that the images of solitude strongly suggest that the dream-maiden is an incarnation of the Divine. The images of solitude used by Shelley to describe the scene prior to the appearance of the dream-maiden and his description of her as "a permeating fire" (163) and an evanescent

spirit, implicit in "her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil / Of woven wind" (176), "her beamy eyes" (179), and "dissolving arms" (187) indicate that nature is a means of divine intimations and that the maiden is an image of the Divine, created by the poet-hero's ideal self. She is his prototype, his epipsyche, not his antitype. The definitions of these terms given by James O. Allsup will make this point clear:

A prototype ('in the first form') is a model; and antitype ('opposite to the die') is an image of the prototype. A prototype is to an antitype as an original painting is to a reprint; or, less strictly, as the original is to an imitation. An epipsyche ('soul upon a soul') is a soul within the soul, a quintessential soul. This inmost soul is man's primal spark that longs for return to its origin, the quintessential fire of heaven.¹²

Explaining the Platonic concept of Ideal love and Beauty, William

J. McTaggart makes the following statement:

Love is a link between the sensible and the eternal worlds. Man's soul yearns for the dimly discerned good. In order to progress towards that Ideal, man looks for a partner who possesses a beauty of soul equal to his own. Having achieved this first step, which is love for a beautiful soul, regardless of the beauty of the body, the Platonic philosopher progresses to a love of moral beauty in general, then to a love of the beauty of knowledge. Finally, through knowledge he comes to that vision of the Form of Beauty itself which gives complete and unifying knowledge of truth concerning the entire universe.¹³

The main point of difference between Plato's and Shelley's concepts of Ideal soul-mate, therefore, lies in Plato's emphasis on the beauty of the mate's soul and in Shelley's emphasis on the physical beauty of the mate as well. Moreover, in Plato's concept, the sex of the soul-mate is optional, for the mate can be either male or female. Notopoulos points

out that "whereas Plato seeks a completely intellectualized and unsensualized idea, Shelley seeks a 'veiled maid' who incarnates Ideal Beauty."¹⁴ He regards Shelley's search for a "physical counterpart of Ideal Beauty"¹⁵ as an expression of Shelley's natural Platonism, though he points out that the influence of the Platonic tradition is evident even in Shelley's natural Platonism, for "starting with Dante, philosophic poetry had made woman an immanent and transcendent symbol, a veiled intermediary between the ideal and earthly world."¹⁶

Some critics have discounted Shelley's Platonic inclinations (including his natural platonism) in their interpretations of the dream-vision. For instance, O. W. Campbell thinks that the dream-maiden is "much too earthly and realistic; she who should have been but a symbol of the soul's desire steps out of the land of imagery like some scantily dressed beauty of a society ball."¹⁷ But E. K. Gibson has well countered the argument by saying that "such an objection disregards the statement of the Preface,"¹⁸ according to which "the vision is a three-fold creation of 'the intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of the sense.' The omission of the sense details would have left the image incomplete."¹⁹ Gibson also refutes the premise by pointing out that "the Preface states that all love is sympathy with like qualities in others. The vision is a creation by his soul of an ideal 'soul-mate,' one who will respond to every characteristic of his soul on all three planes."²⁰ Gibson, however, sees a contradiction in this interpretation in the following lines of the poem: "The Spirit of sweet human love has sent / A vision to the sleep of him who spurned / Her choicest gifts"²¹ (203-205) because something that is created by the poet's soul cannot be sent by an extraneous power. But it is not a

contradiction if we remember that the spokesman of these lines is the poet-narrator, who does not aspire after the Infinite but who, limiting himself to the physical universe, seeks nature's help for the amelioration of the physical world. He is the poet-hero's "polarized impulse," as Wasserman calls it. Therefore, it is but natural that the poet-narrator, an advocate of human love, would consider that "the spirit of human love has sent / A vision to the sleep of him who spurned / Her choicest gifts."

Carlos Baker interprets the dream-vision as Shelley's idea of a perfect human maiden, implying that the quest is erotic and not spiritual. His position is that in this poem Shelley gives his version of Plato's psyche-epipsyche strategy.²² In this strategy "the mind (psyche) imaginatively creates or envisions what it does not have (epipsyche), and then seeks to possess epipsyche, to move towards it as a goal."²³ Though the pursuit of ideal human love is necessary for happiness, it inevitably entails disappointment and death. To use Baker's words, "The paradox is that the pursuit of phantoms is necessary to human happiness but inevitably productive of despair, while one who refuses to admit illusions to his thinking at the same time dries up the springs of joy in life."²⁴ My argument against Baker's contention is that if the pursuit is necessary for human happiness, regardless of its gloomy and disastrous end, then the poet is not guilty of doing anything wrong, but the poem says that "the spirit of sweet human love has sent / A vision to the sleep of him who spurned / Her choicest gifts" (203-205). Here the same argument that the lines in question are spoken by the poet-narrator may be raised, but the answer to that question is that the poet-narrator will have no quarrel with one who upholds his own ideals. Quite con-

scious of this problem, Baker quotes Peacock to establish the point that Shelley had not come upon a title of the poem even after its completion, and his friend Peacock came to his rescue by providing him with one.²⁵ Shelley, says Peacock, "was at a loss for a title, and I proposed that which he adopted: 'Alastor; or the spirit of solitude. The Greek word, 'Αλάστωρ, is an evil genius. . . . The poem treated the spirit of solitude as a spirit of evil."²⁶ The implication of Baker's statement is that Shelley liked the title Alastor, which means an "evil genius" and that in order to fit the title to his poem, he wrote the second paragraph of the "Preface." Considering Shelley's independent nature for which he had to suffer much, it seems highly improbable that he would be willing to jeopardize the meaning of his poem for the sake of a title. Shelley must have felt that it was an ideal title for his poem; otherwise, he would not have accepted it.

Baker's other objection to the curse-motif is that Shelley does not deem solitude an evil.²⁷ While it is true that Shelley does not look upon solitude as an evil, he certainly implies that the poet's single-minded devotion to solitude produces a baneful effect on him because he denies his fundamental need for human sympathy. Shelley's portrayal of the poet as heading toward his doom and destruction for neglecting human love is consistent with Shelley's assertion in the "Preface" that "the Poet's self-centered seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to a speedy ruin" ("Preface," Alastor). Thus, Baker's conclusion that the "Greek idea of the avenging spirit"²⁸ was not in Shelley's mind at the time of the composition of the poem is untenable. So also are his inferences that Shelley's need for a title gives rise to all the confusion in the poem

and that his acceptance of Peacock's suggestion forced him to explain his new title in a new preface so he could avoid revising the entire text. My purpose in calling the reader's attention to these interpretations is to show that Shelley's images of solitude make it very clear that the dream-maiden is symbolic of Ideal Beauty and that this conclusion is consistent with the poem, its title, and the "Preface."

Though I may not use the phrase "images of solitude" frequently, I am always citing these images to illustrate my points. After gaining a glimpse of the Divine through the mediation of nature, the poet-hero no longer requires nature as an intermediary between God and him. He now longs for direct communion with the Infinite in order to discover the essence of the universe. John C. Bean agrees: "Nature becomes for the poet now a distracting phantasm uninformed by spirit, often deceptive and treacherous. The loss of the safe Wordsworthian vision is the poem's crisis, for the poet, no longer satisfied with indirect intimations of the invisible world, longs for direct mystical union."²⁹ Suddenly, nature seems to have lost its glory:

Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven (196-202).

The disappearance of the "beautiful shape" (211), which sparks off the Divine fire, "in the wide pathless desert of dim sleep" (210) plunges the poet-hero into a deep despondency; nevertheless, he resolves to pursue her. His yearning for intimate communion with the dream-vision

takes such extraordinary proportions that he is even prepared to face self-annihilation to achieve his goal. His question to Sleep implies that he is already contemplating death:

Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms? (211-219).

Thus, during the day he holds "mute conference / With his still soul" (223-224), but at night, the passion having taken possession of him, he sallies forth "into the darkness" (227) in search of the dream-maiden:

By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled (233-237).

Starting his pursuit of her from Cashmire, he wanders through Bactria and Balk before he reaches "The lone Chorasmian shore: (272). The long journey, which takes days to cover, leaves him exhausted and prematurely old:

Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin (245-251).

This description of a frail mortal being is a prelude to the poet-hero's imaginary embarkation on death from "the lone Chorasman shore" (272) to the shore of Paradise for a close dialogue with the Infinite. From this point on the poet-hero's journey assumes visionary and symbolic proportions, for such a journey is possible only on the map of the mind. Besides, it is a journey by boat, and a boat, for Shelley, symbolizes, as Neville Rogers states, "the aspiration of Man's soul in its quest for Love and Beauty."³⁰ Another point in favor of this conclusion is Gibson's searching insight that a "sluggish stream" (276) issues out of "putrid marshes" (274) and joins the sea. The poet, decayed in body, stands on this lone shore of life, ready to enter the "ocean of eternity."³¹ The repetition of the image, as Gibson has noted, also supports this conclusion: "The stream which rises in the well (477-479) and empties in the immeasurable void (567-569) is, we are told, an image of life."³² I, however, do not agree with his assertion that the image of the swan in the poem is indicative of "the loss of consciousness of the world of physical nature."³³ On the contrary, the image of the swan "scaling the upward sky, . . . / High over the immeasurable main" (278-279) in order to be united with its mate symbolizes the poet-hero's passionate longing for union with the Divine.

His search for the Infinite having been futile so far, the poet-hero wonders whether even death will bring him spiritual enlightenment. He knows for certain that he cannot trust Sleep, but he has no reason to believe that he can trust Death either: "For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly / Its precious charge, and silent death exposed, / Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure" (292-294). The series of images of solitude that Shelley uses to describe the poet-

hero's pleasant and unpleasant experiences in this voyage reveal Shelley's doubt as to the mind's power to resolve the mystery of the universe, but they do not suggest his disbelief in the existence of a Transcendent Being. Despite his wavering between doubt and belief as to man's ability to measure the depths of the mysterious,

A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep (304-307).

Driven by this impulse, he leaps into an "abandoned" (301) and dilapidated boat, which speeds on. "o'er the tranquil sea / Like a torn cloud before the hurricane" (314-315).

Swept by a whirlwind, which blows "with fierce gusts and precipitating force" (321), the boat buffets its way "through the white ridges of the chafed sea" (322). His joy and composure in the face of the fierce whirlwind and turbulent waters suggest his heroic courting of death in the fond hope of gaining celestial light:

Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood in whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes (326-332).

Thus battling the waves, at midnight the poet-hero views in the moonlight the towering cliffs of the Caucasus, the scene of his dreamvision. With his return to the place of his first encounter with the Divine, his visionary voyage comes full circle. At their "cavern'd base the whirlpools and the waves / Bursting and eddying irresistibly / Rage and resound for ever" (355-357). The boat is speedily heading towards its

final destination, overcoming great obstacles--the "boiling torrent" (358), the closing crags "with black and jagged arms" (359), and "the shattered mountain" (360) hanging over the sea. The boat enters a gaping cavern, which "amid its slant and winding depths / Ingulphed the rushing sea" (364-365). The poet-hero's address to his dream-vision leaves us in no doubt that he is entering the gates of Death:

"Vision and Love!"
 The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
 Shall not divide us long!" (366-369).

Emerging from the cavern by the force of the spiralling waves, the boat finds itself "shuddering" (394) "in the opening of the rocky bank" (391):

Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
 With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
 Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
 Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
 Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
 The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
 Of glassy quiet mid those baffling tides
 Is left, the boat paused shuddering (387-394).

Then, suddenly, "a wandering stream of wind" (397) brings the boat to a cove by "the musical woods" (403). The ascending waves, which bring the boat to the cove, and the lush greenery and the fragrance of the "musical woods," which were so far undisturbed by mortals, symbolize the poet-hero's visionary ascent into Paradise to measure the depths of the Infinite. Reiman makes a similar observation: "The youth's retreat to the Vale of Cashmire and later, back into the heart of the Indian Caucasus parallels the retreat of a secular Eden."³⁴ But, even here,

when he sees the yellow flowers' "drooping eyes / Reflected in the crystal calm" (407-408), he is momentarily seized by a desire to return to the natural world: "The Poet longed / To deck with their bright hues his withered hair" (412-413). This "strong impulse" (415), however, is "as lightning in a cloud / Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods / Of night close over it" (418-420), for it soon yields to his longing for the Divine: "But on his heart its solitude returned, / And he forebore" (414-415).

The number of erotic images used to describe the isolated woods where the poet-hero looks for a space for his final rest also supports the premise that he longs for union with Ideal Love and Beauty:

The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
 Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
 By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
 He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
 Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
 And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
 Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
 Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
 Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
 Most solemn domes within, and far below,
 Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
 The ash and acacia floating hang
 Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
 In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
 Starr'd with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
 The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
 With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
 Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
 These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
 Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
 Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
 And the night's moontide clearness, mutable
 As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
 Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
 Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
 Minute, yet beautiful. One darkest glen
 Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
 A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
 To some more lovely mystery (426-454).

But the poet's perspective soon changes. Beyond the musical woods, there is a well or a stream, which images the poet's own life. Standing beside the stream, he encounters "a Spirit" (479), which seems to be the Spirit of nature, trying to lure him back to the natural world, for it is "clothed in no bright robes / Of shadowy silver or enshrining light" (480-481) "but, undulating woods, and silent well, / And leaping rivulet" (484-485). It almost wins him over when his gaze falls on "two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought" (490), which seem to beckon him "with their serene and azure smiles" (491). His attraction for the dream-maiden far outweighs his love for nature; therefore, "obedient to the light / That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing / The windings of the dell" (492-494).

The source (the well or the fountain) and the winding courses of the stream beside which the poet journeys in his pursuit of the Ideal represent the various stages of his life:

The rivulet
 Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
 Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
 Among the moss, with hollow harmony
 Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
 It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
 Then, through the plain in tranquil wandering crept,
 Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
 That overhung its quietness (494-502).

And just as the source of the stream is "inaccessibly profound" (503), and its waters joining the ocean are measureless, similarly his journey through life in the pursuit of the Ideal is inscrutable and mysterious:

"O stream!
 Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
 Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
 Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
 Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,

Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
 Have each their type in me: And the wide sky,
 And measureless ocean may declare as soon
 What cozy cavern or what wandering cloud
 Contains thy waters, as the universe
 Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
 Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
 I' the passing wind!" (502-514).

The analogy of his life to a stream, which withholds its dark and
 abysmal mysteries, suggests the poet-hero's failure to find what he has
 been seeking in the "musical woods." This assumption gains added
 potency by the fact that the landscape changes drastically. Instead of
 the beautiful and Edenic scene, there rises an ugly and dismal one:

With rapid steps he went
 Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
 Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
 The forest's solemn canopies were changed
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky
 Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
 The struggling brook: Tall spires of windlestrae
 Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
 And nought but knarled roots of ancient pines
 Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
 The unwilling soil (522-532).

Though the change is "gradual" (532), it presents a barren scene,
 for

from his steps
 Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
 Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
 And musical motions (536-539).

The ghastliness of the scene grows in magnitude:

On every side now rose
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms
 Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
 In the light of evening, and its precipice
 Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
 'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning caves,

Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream (543-550).

These images of solitude depicting the dreary and gloomy landscape illustrate an increasing sense of disharmony and disintegration:

A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause,
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds (561-570).

Despite these discordant notes, the poet-hero does not fully despair of mystical union because he regains his buoyancy, though only to relapse into despondency again. This oscillation between doubt and belief continues throughout the poem, and the issue remains unresolved.

His finding a "silent nook" (572) "even on the edge of that vast mountain, / Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks" (573-574) indicates that the poet-hero still has a lingering hope of union with the Divine. Moreover, it is "a tranquil spot" (577) that seems to "smile / Even in the lap of horror" (577-578). The images of solitude used here to suggest erotic union and cyclical regeneration provide further evidence to the soundness of this assertion:

Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves forever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rivals the pride of summer (578-586).

The repetition of the image "one human step alone, has ever broken / The stillness of its solitude" (589-590), the references to the silent spot being "the haunt / Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach / The wild to love tranquillity" (586-588), and the poet's being a kindred spirit also suggest the same conclusion. Another point, which adds weight to this statement, is the description of the landscape as being enveloped by mist and pale moonlight. The moon is the symbol of romantic imagination, and the reference to this majestic scene implies that the poet still hopes to achieve his end. As Bean says, "Lying before him are the beautiful, mist-laden landscapes (lines 553-559) which still suggest the lands beyond human knowledge."³⁵

But the poet-narrator's condemnation of and admonishment to Death that never again will the poet-hero offer "the unheeded tribute of a broken-heart" (624) at Death's "dark shrine" (623) indicate that despondency has assailed the poet-hero again. Succeeding dark and morbid images create a sense of void and emptiness, expressive of the poet-hero's reservations about the mind's power to perceive the mysteries of the Ideal World. Though death has released the poet-hero from "hope and despair" (639), his torturers in life, and he is "at peace, and faintly smiling" (645), "his last sight / Was the great moon" (645-646) with "whose dun beams" (649) darkness "seemed to mingle" (649). What is more,

when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air (659-662).

The poet-hero's mortal frame now has "no sense, no motion, no divinity" (666). He is "a fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings / The breath

of heaven did wander" (667-668) and who is "still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now" (671). He leaves for those "who remain behind, not sobs and groans" (716), "but pale despair and cold tranquillity" (718). These images are not symptomatic of Shelley's joy at the realization of his dream, but rather of his despair and frustration. Speaking of the poet-hero Albert S. Gerard says that "he is not absorbed into the oneness of the cosmic spirit. He fades away into nothingness."³⁶ But we cannot be sure of this conclusion because the poet-hero leaves the matter vague and ambiguous. Though the weight of dark and dreary images illustrates Shelley's proneness to doubt and skepticism about the mind's power to delve into the Unknown, a sizable number of idyllic and lofty images reveals his hope of union with the Divine. Notwithstanding his misgivings about the mind's power to tread the path of the Unknown, Shelley's encounter with the dream-vision, his voluntary acceptance of death in pursuit of her, and his welcoming of death despite his despair clearly exemplify his faith in the existence of the Suprasensible.

The images of solitude in "Mont Blanc," which Shelley wrote in May and August of 1816, reflect a more direct interchange with nature in the revelation of the Divine than those in Alastor because a trip to the Vale of Chamouni in the Swiss Alps occasions the poem. Moreover, his invocations "thou, Ravine of Arve" (12) and "Thou . . . great Mountain" (80) and his physical presence at the scene indicate that the poet is standing alone and having an intimate dialogue with nature. Here, too, the conflicting strands of empiricism and transcendentalism are intertwined together, though the latter is shown to be the stronger of the two. Critical opinion, however, is divided on this matter. I shall refer to critics who hold the view that "Mont Blanc" symbolizes the

Infinite in the course of my discussion of images of solitude in this poem. Those who contend against the transcendental position attribute the "Power" (96) in this poem to the amoral power of Necessity, basing their conclusions on Shelley's assertion in his essay "On Life," published in 1819, that the "mind . . . cannot create, it can only perceive."³⁷ Shelley reiterates this statement in his "A Defence of Poetry," published in 1820: "All things exist as they are perceived."³⁸ Even so, it is in this "Defence" that Shelley also speaks of the creative nature of poetry:

But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.³⁹

Another point in favor of these critics is Shelley's letter to Elizabeth Hitchner in 1811 in which he says that "Locke proves that there are no innate ideas, that in consequence, there can be no innate speculative or practical principles, thus overturning all appeals of feeling in favor of Deity, since that feeling must be referable to some origin."⁴⁰ In another letter to Hitchner in 1811 he expresses his faith in innate ideas: "I have considered it in every possible light and reason tells me that death is the boundary of the life of man. Yet I feel, I believe the direct contrary, and there is an inward sense that

has persuaded me of this."⁴¹ The contradictions indicate Shelley's recognition of the plausibility as well as the limitation of these philosophical concepts. As Thomas A. Reisner has pointed out, "What impresses the reader of Shelley's remarks is not the inconsistency of his opinions but his monumental integrity in discerning the flaws and yet upholding the truth of a philosophical system founded in contradiction."⁴²

The images of solitude in "Mont Blanc" vividly portray the solemn and majestic scene which leaves Shelley spellbound. It undoubtedly is the impelling force in the making of the poem. In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock on July 22, 1816, Shelley describes it as follows:

Mont Blanc was before us but was covered with cloud, and its base furrowed with dreadful gaps was seen alone. Pinnacles of snow, intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc shone thro [sic] the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of extatic wonder, not unallied to madness. . . . Though it embraced a great number of miles the snowy pyramids which shot into the bright blue sky seemed to overhang our path--the ravine, clothed with gigantic pines and black with its depth below.--so deep that the very roaring of the untameable Arve which rolled through it could not be heard above--was close to our very footsteps.⁴³

He also records the impact of the scene in his "Preface" to History of a Six Weeks' Tour (1817), writing that the poem "was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which these feelings sprang."⁴⁴

The symbolic nature of the poem, however, has led some critics to believe that Shelley uses his actual experience merely as a pretext to voice his philosophical ideas. For instance, Wasserman complains that "'Mont Blanc' opens, not, as we might reasonably expect, with a view of the mountain, but with a metaphoric definition of the universe in terms of the 'intellectual philosophy': 'The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind.'"⁴⁵ Cameron argues that "since the poem is concerned essentially with philosophy and not nature, the emphasis on its descriptive aspects is apparently an attempt to divert the attention from its anti-religious nature."⁴⁶ Notwithstanding the poem's heavy symbolism, the fact remains that the poet derives his inspiration from the natural scene. His direct contact with nature prompts him to reflect on the subject-object relationship. As Judith Chernaik remarks, "The scene itself, in its 'untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity,' is the source of speculation about 'the mind of man and the universe.'"⁴⁷ Just because the poem does not open with a description of the actual scene, we cannot overrule its significance in the composition of the poem. Shelley's interchange with nature induces him to believe in the intuitive powers of the mind, but such a belief clashes with his empirical views; nevertheless, his intuition leads to his cognition of a noumenal power beyond the physical universe.

In the first two sections of "Mont Blanc" Shelley uses images of solitude to symbolize the reciprocity of mind and nature and in the succeeding three sections, though the interchange continues, the upshot

of such a reciprocity. "The everlasting universe of things" (line 1), which stands for external reality, is conceived of as a river that "flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves" (2), and the mind, which is "the source of human thought" (5) and whose origin is secret, is likened to "a feeble brook" (7), which loses half of its identity "in the wild woods, among mountains lone" (8) because "waterfalls around it leap for ever" (9), "woods and winds contend" (10), and "a vast river / Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves" (11). As Chernaik points out, "The simile suggests . . . the poet's reaction to the scene; he is stunned, awed by it, profoundly challenged to comprehend its immensity."⁴⁸ This interplay of mind and nature is further expanded in Section Two through the metaphors of the Arve Ravine and the Arve River, and a vivid picture of the actual scene is presented to the reader. Though the Ravine of Arve owes its being to the Arve River, the ravine also provides shelter to the river because it flows through it. Through the "many-coloured, many-voiced vale" (13) of the Ravine of Arve (the Universal Mind or the Collective Unconscious), "Power in likeness of the Arve" (16), a representative of the Infinite, charges down "from the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne, / Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame / Of lightning through the tempest" (17-19). There is an interchange not only between the Ravine and the Arve river, but also between the "pines, and crags, and caverns" (14) and the "fast cloud shadows and sunbeams" (15) that sail over the valley. The Ravine is constantly assailed by the "ceaseless motion" (32) of the "Arve's commotion" (30) and its "unresting sound" (33). The winds serve the pines by causing them to move, and in return the pines allow the winds to "drink their odours" (23) and to hear "their mighty swinging" (23).

In the physical scene before him Shelley sees the workings of his own mind, as he holds "an unremitting interchange / With the clear universe of things around" (39-40), and the result of this interchange is the creation of poetry as the following images exemplify:

One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the Still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there! (41-48).

Though my interpretation of the poem differs drastically from I. J. Kapstein's, I endorse his first reading of the above lines because it sounds most logical to me. He states that "the plain sense of the first four lines of this passage is that the poet's mind, i.e. the 'legion of wild thoughts,' wandering over the landscape of the Ravine finally settles down to re-creation of the scene in poetry."⁴⁹ He thinks that

By "that" in l. 43 Shelley means his mind, the "legion of wild thoughts," and by "thou" he means the Ravine. That both are not unbidden guests in the cave of Poesy is Shelley's way of saying that both poetic activity and the object it makes poetry about are welcome to his mind.⁵⁰

His explanation of the line "till the breast / From which they fled recalls them, thou art there" is also valid, for he says that "if 'breast' is metonymical for the poet's mind, Shelley means that until his mind, free to do as it likes, withdraws its impressions from the cave of Poesy, he will continue to make poetry about the Ravine."⁵¹ Charles H. Vivian's interpretation of these images as reflecting the mind and its mystery also makes good sense. He says that here mind

("legion of wild thoughts") is contemplating itself. Sometimes the mind may muse on things that are not very mysterious or obscure ("now float above thy darkness") and sometimes it may delve into the inmost recesses of the mind ("the still cave of the witch Poesy"). This kind of contemplation poses a difficulty because the object of the pursuit is elusive.⁵² The "shadows" and "ghosts" are, as Vivian puts it,

the elusive traces of the mind's mysterious operations: shadows of subliminal mental activity, and ghosts--i.e., reflections or Lockean "ideas"--of "all things that are" in the objective external world. "Till the breast from which they fled recalls them"--that is, as long as the introspecting mind keeps them before itself as objects of active contemplation, and until it allows them to slip back into its own mysterious depths--"thou [Ravine] art there": the mind is there, accessible to examination, or as accessible as it ever can be. . . . The elusive and tenuous nature of the material is what makes introspection so difficult.⁵³

Another important point to note regarding the images of solitude in these two sections of the poem is the repetition of the word "secret." The Ravine of Arve, representative of mind, is "dark" (12) and "deep" (12); "a feeble brook" (7), symbolic of "human thoughts" (5), rises from "secret springs" (4); and the River Arve, emblematic of nature or external reality, is a "Power" (16) that comes down / From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne" (16-17). Obviously, the suggestion is that both creation and mind draw their sustenance from a hidden and mysterious source, which is aligned to the power, symbolized by Mont Blanc. Here Shelley uses Mont Blanc as a symbol of the Eternal. As Notopoulos states, "The relation of Mont Blanc and the Arve is symbolic of the immanent and transcendent relation of Intellectual Beauty."⁵⁴ If this assumption is true, Shelley may be saying that since the Divine

resides in man as well as nature, the reciprocity of both helps in man's perception of the Divine. This Power, however, is accessible to man only in "likeness of the Arve" (16), not in its naked splendor. Another example of man's partial apprehension of this power is the Ravine's "earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep / Of the etherial waterfall, whose veil / Robes some unsculptured image" (25-27).

In Section Three Shelley describes the process of interchange, which inspires him to speculate on the ontological question about existence and which becomes the subject of his poem:

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,--that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live (49-53).

Then he looks up at Mont Blanc and wonders whether his intuition of its "omnipotence" (53) will enable him to gain "gleams of a remoter world" (48) or whether he is in a dream: "Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled / The veil of life and death? or do I lie / In dream . . .?" (53-55). Perhaps sleep does not offer glimpses "of a remoter world," as some people say: "Does the mightier world of sleep / Spread far around and inaccessibly / Its circles?" (55-57). He is simply baffled, for his "spirit fails, / Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep / That vanishes among the viewless gales!" (57-59). But the towering Mont Blanc "far, far above, piercing the infinite sky" (60) "still, snowy, and serene" (61) makes a tremendous impact on his mind. In contrast to the image of the majestic and solemn Mont Blanc, which is a symbol of power and eternity, Shelley uses a series of images of solitude to describe its "subject mountains" (62), which present a cold, devastating, and hideous scene:

Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
 Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
 Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
 Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
 And wind among the accumulated steeps;
 A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone.
 And the wolf tracks her there--how hideously
 Its shapes are heaped around / rude, bare, and high
 Ghastly, and scarred, and riven (62-71).

Whether the mountains have undergone any change, he ponders, "none can reply" (75), but what one can be sure of is their eternal aspect. The idea is that these contrasting images present a spectacle, which engenders both doubt and faith in the existence of a Transcendent Being--doubt in terms of its inhuman and terrifying nature and faith in terms of its magnificence and eternity:

The wildness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
 So solemn, so serene, that man may be
 But for such faith with nature reconciled (76-79).

The above-mentioned lines have provoked various interpretations. For instance, Harold Bloom argues that "here we (and surely Shelley as well) must think of Wordsworth, the mysterious tongue may teach a 'faith so mild, / so solemn, so serene' as to prevent us from being able to reconcile ourselves to the seemingly malevolent aspects of nature."⁵⁵ John Kinnaird's reading is similar, though his postulate is slightly different. He thinks that the very intensity of "the 'serene' faith that inspires the hope of reconciliation with nature" prevents the mind from being reconciled with "either the violent flux of nature or with the lifeless serenity of glacial desolation into which the violence of the wildness subsides."⁵⁶ According to him,

Only an ideal or eternal object not nature in its mutability and death, can fully and finally satisfy the aspiration to serenity which nature (both by action and reaction, both in its "mild" and in its "awful" aspects) awakens, just as the peak of Mont Blanc, rising in tranquillity above the landscape, continually draws the mind upward to and beyond itself.⁵⁸

Timothy Webb takes "awful doubt" to mean that "the terrifying traces of chaos indicate either that there is no god and no rational plan in the universe or that the natural world is ruled over by an evil deity."⁵⁸ And "this faith 'so mild, / So solemn, so serene' is probably the recognition that the processes of nature are governed by laws of their own, not by the capricious will of god."⁵⁹ In view of Chernaik's explanatory note on an earlier manuscript of the poem, which reads "in such a faith,"⁶⁰ her view of the lines seems most convincing. She argues that despite nature's gloomy and gruesome aspects, its grandeur and solemnity inspire man's reconciliation with nature. Lloyd Abbey's argument is equally plausible: "Precisely because the Power is inscrutable, the intuition of its existence frees one from dogmatic explanations of life's origin and meaning. The doubt it teaches is a distrust of religious dogma; the faith an awareness, that, beyond the natural world, there is another reality."⁶¹ No less persuasive is Vivian's reading of the lines. For him, the two lessons--doubt or faith--that the wilderness teaches depend on how a particular observer looks at it:

If he looks at the chaos and not at the peak--if he cannot see past the distracting welter of experience and intuit the Principle beyond--then he will fall into skepticism about the meaning of life itself. If, on the other hand, while of course perceiving the flow of experience, he can discern the Principle

and recognize its significance, then he will see all things sub specie aeternitatis.⁶²

Though the lesser mountains hold out an ugly and hostile scene, Mont Blanc, as a monument of solemn power and eternity, stands aloof from them. It is a superior force, which teaches only faith, not doubt, in a Suprasensible reality. That Shelley distinguishes between the power manifest in the "subject mountains" and that in Mont Blanc is clear from his address to the mountain immediately after describing the repelling and ghastly scene: "Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal / Large codes of fraud and woe" (80-81). Shelley is implying here that the mountain is not representative of an anthropomorphic god who exercises force and tyranny to rule the world but that it is an illuminative power, which can end fraud and woe. Against this premise Spencer Hall argues that "recent critics have tended to see it as some kind of supernatural essence, available to human consciousness only in privileged states of apprehension; but these interpretations do not really fit the skeptical, tentative, and experiential quality of Shelley's thought."⁶³ Critics in question, however, have legitimately associated the apprehension of this power with privileged beings because Shelley himself states that the "great Mountain" (80) is "not understood / By all, but which the wise, and great, and good / Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel" (81-83). As to his second point Hall himself comments on "the skeptical, tentative, and experiential quality of Shelley's thought," and it is this quality which accounts for his vacillation between doubt and belief, though belief gains victory over doubt here.

In the following images, which are predominantly images of

solitude, Shelley makes a general statement on cyclical change or flux in the physical world and the tranquil inaccessibility of ultimate reality:

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
 Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
 Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain,
 Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
 The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
 Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
 Holds every future leaf and flower;--the bound
 With which from that detested trance they leap;
 The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
 And that of him and all that his may be;
 All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
 Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.
 Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible (84-97).

Next, his gaze falls on the ravine and the "subject mountains" (62), and he, again, uses a number of hideous and aggressive images of solitude to show that, though the mountains cause death and destruction to man and nature alike, they are also the source of life for them:

The glaciers creep

Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
 Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
 Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
 Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
 A city of death, distinct with many a tower
 And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
 Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
 Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
 Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
 Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
 Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
 From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
 The limits of the dead and living world,
 Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
 Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
 Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
 So much of life and joy is lost. The race
 Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
 Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
 And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
 Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,

Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
 Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
 The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
 Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,
 Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air (100-126).

These images, which demonstrate that both man and nature are subject to natural laws, have made some critics conclude that the Power, symbolized by Mont Blanc, is the amoral power of Necessity. For instance, Wasserman's contention is that "having none of the attributes of the human mind, Power has no will and is therefore amoral, manifesting itself as it does according to the fixed laws inherent in its nature, and not by choice."⁶⁴ And Kapstein remarks that "up to the last three lines of the poem Shelley's attitude is awe and worship of the remote, amoral power of necessity ruling eternally the mutable universe of matter and the human mind. Of this power the towering peak of Mont Blanc is the central symbol of the poem."⁶⁵

But what these critics may have overlooked is the fact that Shelley does not include Mont Blanc in Section Four in his description of the Power exerted by "subject mountains" over the Ravine, probably with the purpose of separating the Power of the mountains from that of Mont Blanc. Moreover, this power is not inimical; on the contrary, it is capable of repealing "large codes of fraud and woe" (80-81). Regardless of the chaos and change described in Section Four, Shelley says, "Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:--the power is there" (127). Some may argue that the "subject mountains" derive their power only from Mont Blanc and that, therefore, it is the actual power that governs natural laws. Shelley's point here is that only when the discerning man can overcome the barriers between him and the Eternal through his interchange with nature is he able to transcend the phenomenal and have intimations of

the Divine. This power, however, remains impregnable and inscrutable:

the snows descend
 Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
 Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
 Or the star-beams dart through them:--Winds contend
 Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
 Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
 The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
 Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
 Over the snow (131-139).

No human being can see the snow descend from the inaccessible height of Mont Blanc, nor can he see the snow melt in the sun there; yet, he is aware of this process of nature. That is, man's intuitive powers, gained through his interchange with nature, make it possible for him to perceive the Eternal, though he may not be able to penetrate its deep mysteries. This message is implicit in the rhetorical question with which the poem ends: "And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and seas, / If to the human minds's imaginings / Silence and solitude were vacancy" (142-144).

As in Alastor and "Mont Blanc," spiritual ecstasy is the leitmotif of Shelley's images of solitude in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," written in the summer of 1816, but the mode of experience is different in each case. Whereas in Alastor the dream-vision plunges the poet-hero into an exclusive and relentless pursuit of Ideal Beauty, and in "Mont Blanc" the solemn and eternal aspect of the "Great Mountain" leads to the poet's mystical experience, in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" "the awful shadow of some unseen Power" (1) visits the poet-persona intermittently. Here, too, as in most of his poems, the invocatory note intimates the isolation of the poet from other human beings.

By and large, critics seem to agree that the "Power" (1) in the

poem is a Suprasensible one, though Kenneth Neill Cameron and Jean Hall dissent from this view. Here I shall discuss their postulates to show some of the fallacies in their arguments and to substantiate the point that the "Power" as revealed by images of solitude is indeed a Suprasensible one. Cameron begins his argument by rejecting N. I. White's claim that Intellectual Beauty "supplanted Necessity in Shelley's mind."⁶⁶ In that case, Cameron contends, "intellectual beauty would have become central to Shelley's social philosophy from 1816 on, but that it did not is shown by the fact that in The Revolt of Islam and other works written later than the Hymn, the ruling force in society and the universe is necessity."⁶⁷ There is, however, disagreement among critics because they do not see either The Revolt of Islam or Shelley's other poems written later than the "Hymn" in the same light. Beach, for instance, asserts that "the word necessity ceases to be prominent in the finer poetry of Shelley's later years. And in the evolution of Shelley's thought, the deterministic implications tend to fade out of the idea of necessity even when the word is used."⁶⁸ Neville Rogers' view on this issue is also similar: "If Queen Mab, begun in about 1812, marks the climax of the doctrine of Necessity in Shelley's poetry . . . in his mind it has passed its climax and begun to move in other directions."⁶⁹ We must, however, concede that even in Shelley's later poetry, traces of Necessity are evident, but they do not take precedence over his search for the Transcendent or his concern for humanity. Citing additional evidence to prove that "Intellectual Beauty" did not play a significant role in Shelley's social philosophy, Cameron states that "nowhere in any of his other poems does Shelley mention intellectual beauty. In actual fact, he does not use the term in the

text of the Hymn, only once in the title. In his prose it appears only once, in the translation of Plato's Symposium.⁷⁰ The absence of the phrase "Intellectual Beauty" in Shelley's works other than his translation of Plato's Symposium and in the title of one poem offers a rather weak argument to prove that "Intellectual Beauty" does not occupy a key position in Shelley's social philosophy.

Cameron's next point is that the word "intellectual" simply refers to mind because in Queen Mab and in his translation of the Symposium, Shelley implies such a meaning.⁷¹ He quotes the following lines from Shelley's translation of the Symposium to illustrate his point:

The lover would then conduct his pupil to science,
so that he might look upon the loveliness of
wisdom . . . and that contemplating thus the uni-
versal beauty would turn towards the wide ocean of
intellectual beauty, and from the sight of the lovely
and majestic forms it contains, would abundantly
bring forth his conceptions in philosophy.⁷²

Here we must remember that Shelley is translating and that therefore he should not interpolate his own ideas into the poem. Besides, the word "then" in the quoted lines refers to the time after the lover has sought "an intercourse with beautiful forms."⁷³ That is, from the lover's worship of beautiful forms will follow his apprehension of Intellectual or Spiritual Beauty, and with the help of spiritual power he will be able to "bring forth his conceptions in philosophy." The point I am making here is that though the emphasis is on the mind, the lover's worship of "beautiful forms" serves as an aid to his "conceptions in philosophy." Therefore, the emphasis is not entirely on the mind. Moreover, it is wrong to suppose that a word cannot have different connotations in different contexts. Then in support of his argument that whereas Plato's concept of the mind is philosophical,

Shelley's is artistic, Cameron cites lines from Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry": "Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed."⁷⁴ Though it is true that Shelley conceives of poetry as an artistic creation, he also believes that "a poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not."⁷⁵ Lastly, Cameron argues that in one of his prose works the poet equates the word "Power" with "the collective energy of the moral and material world."⁷⁶ If Cameron is referring to the One mind of intellectual philosophy, then the individual mind, which is a constituent of the Universal Mind, has no separate existence, but in the poem Shelley apparently appeals to a "Power" that dwells outside of him. Besides, "Shelley's thought," as Wasserman has noted, "is not tightly systematic, and depending upon his objectives, he may treat the individual as portion of the One Mind of Existence, or . . . he may consider the individual self the vehicle of the mysterious Transcendent Absolute."⁷⁷

Though Hall's approach is different, she takes a similar stand, for she says that "the entire poem is transformed into a hymn that reveres not an external power but the mysteries within the speaker's own self."⁷⁸ She arrives at this conclusion by arguing that in the first four stanzas Shelley implies that "Beauty is like light and depression is like darkness; but this assumption is transformed by the image of Beauty as a darkness descending upon the dying flame of the human mind. Vacancy, depression, the dark drifting states in which self-control is surrendered, can be valuable after all. They may be the enabling condition for intuitive visions."⁷⁹ No such transformation takes place

because by Hall's own admission light ("exhilaration") and darkness ("depression"),⁸⁰ as she points out earlier, are polar states of the human mind. The poet uses the image of "Beauty as a darkness descending upon the dying flame of the human mind" as an analogy only to describe the benign influence of light, not of darkness, and this analogy does not imply that darkness is inherent in beauty. Moreover, darkness descends when beauty disappears.

Now to return to our discussion on Shelley's images of solitude, the image of the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" (1) visiting the solitary poet in flashes while he contemplates life in the midst of blossoming nature portrays "Intellectual Beauty" as a stranger coming from an unknown and mysterious realm. The elusive or transient nature of Divine visitations described in images of solitude and the association of light and loveliness in these images with "Intellectual Beauty" clearly indicate that he relates "Intellectual Beauty" to Ideal or Spiritual Beauty. Moreover, his inability to apprehend this "Beauty" except in flashes, which leads to his awareness of her "Power," suggests the immanent and transcendent relationship between man and the Eternal. Furthermore, Shelley's reflection on man's limited powers to apprehend the Spiritual makes it probable that he has Ideal Beauty in mind when he speaks of "Intellectual Beauty" rather than the beauty or the transforming power of the mind as Cameron and Hall would have us believe.

The very first stanza of the poem sets up the intangibility and remoteness of this "Power" as well as its awe-inspiring nature: "The awful shadow of some unseen Power / Floats though unseen amongst us" (1-2). The "shadow" of this "Power" is only a shadow, and "unseen" at

that, a tenuous presence, suggesting that the poet-persona's intuitions of the Divine are twice removed from the Ultimate Power. As Bloom states, "The Power is unseen at a double remove, for its awful shadow is itself unseen by us, though we can know, beyond the senses, when it has come and when it has gone."⁸¹ And this capricious and evanescent "Power" parallels the variability and the transience of natural phenomena. The shadow of this "Power falls upon the

various world with as inconstant wing
 As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;
 Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
 It visits with inconstant glance
 Each human heart and countenance;
 Like hues and harmonies of evening,
 Like clouds in starlight widely spread,
 Like memory of music fled (3-10).

Again, using a number of images of solitude Shelley asks the "Spirit of Beauty" (13) why it does not abide with mortals for ever to relieve them of the sorrows of this dark and grim world and why it does not answer their questions about existence:

Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
 This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
 Ask why the sunlight not forever
 Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
 Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
 Why fear and dream and death and birth
 Cast on the daylight of this earth
 Such gloom? (16-23).

In Stanza Three, Shelley regrets that all attempts to resolve such issues have failed because "no voice from some sublimer world hath ever / To sage or poet these responses given" (25-26). Let me point out here that Shelley ostensibly ascribes this "Power" to something external and not to the indwelling power of the mind, as Cameron and Hall suggest,

for Shelley says that no "sage" or "poet" has been able to give any satisfying answers to these ontological questions. For Shelley, visitations of "Intellectual Beauty" alone, fitful though they be, give meaning to a colorless and drab existence:

Thy light alone--like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream (32-36).

The repetitions of the word "light" (32) to describe "Intellectual Beauty" and of darkness to describe the human predicament in the poem strengthen the position that the "Power" the persona speaks of in this poem is Spiritual Power. As Chernaik remarks,

Beauty is imaged as a light that consecrates with its own hues all that it shines upon; its effect is compared to various forms of natural light (that of sun, moon, stars), and to light seen through substance or reflected or refracted by it (clouds, mist, rainbow, hues and harmonies of evening). The world of "Doubt, chance, and mutability" is imaged in terms of darkness. Our state, in the absence of beauty, is a "dim vast vale of tears" (17); "fear and dream and death and birth" cast a "gloom" on the "daylight" of this earth (21-23); human thought is like a "dying flame" (45); life is a "dark reality" (48); this world is imprisoned in a "dark slavery" (70).⁸²

David Perkins also associates "Intellectual Beauty" with a Transcendent Power:

One of Shelley's habitual ways of suggesting Intellectual Beauty, or what he frequently Platonized as Intellectual Beauty, is by a surprisingly beautiful woman or goddess. Asia, the Witch of Atlas, the "veiled maid" known by the protagonist of Alastor in a dream (line 151), and the female "shape" seen by Rousseau in "The Triumph of Life" (line 352) are all more or less

equivalent. They stand for the permanence to which man aspires, and hence are invariably associated with images of light and fire."⁸³

Moreover, the poet-persona does not have this "Power" at his command. When he seeks it, he does not find it. As a boy he, like the Poet-narrator in Alastor, has "sought for ghosts" (49) and wandered "through many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin, / And starlight wood" (50-57) with the "hopes of high talk with the departed dead" (52), but all to no avail. However, on a spring day when nature is reviving and when he ruminates "deeply on the lot of life" (55-56), the "shadow" of "Intellectual Beauty" falls upon him, unbidden, and the suddenness of its appearance makes him shriek:

at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of buds and blossoming,--
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in extacy! (56-60).

His shrieking and posture certainly betoken spiritual ecstasy and prayerful obeisance. Another point to note is the poet-persona's vow to dedicate his "power" (61) to "thee and thine" (62), that is, to "Intellectual Beauty" and to the world she has created. Here by "powers" Shelley implies his poetic powers; thus, it seems clear that Shelley means Spiritual Beauty when he refers to "Intellectual Beauty." In addition to joy these visitations of the Divine give him hope "That thou--O awful Loveliness / Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express" (71-72). The implication is that his poetic powers have not enabled him to end "dark slavery" (70) and that "Intellectual Beauty" will show him a way to do so. In the last stanza he implores "awful Loveliness" (71) to deepen his apprehension of the Divine, which he has

first experienced in youth and whose spells have bound him to revere himself and to love mankind:

The day becomes more solemn and serene
 When noon is past: there is a harmony
 In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
 Which thro' the summer is not heard or seen,
 As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
 Thus let thy power, which like the truth
 Of nature on my passive youth
 Descended, to my onward life supply
 Its calm, to one who worships thee,
 And every form containing thee
 Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
 To fear himself, and love all human kind (73-84).

The images of solitude in this poem also reflect the immanent and transcendent relationship between man and the Infinite. The mind's power to perceive the Divine, notwithstanding its suddenness and brief duration, shows that a part of the Divine resides within man. As Notopoulos observes,

In the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" the often experienced intuition of an immanent and transcendent Beauty is articulately expressed as a Power whose shadow visits Shelley and the world too infrequently, a power which is intellectual in the sense that it is unseen, or seen only by the eye of the mind as it lives in the world of Beauty.⁸⁴

Tracing the similarity of conception in Plato's Phaedrus Rogers comments that

in the Hymn and the Phaedrus the conceptions are very similar, for both of them are expressions of the natural philosophy of a mind which sees immanent and transcendental relationship between the intellectual and the relative world and both express this relationship in terms of the imagery of light and shadow.⁸⁵

Rogers also points out the essential difference between the Shelleyan and the Platonic concept of Ideal Beauty:

A comparison of Shelley's poem with the Symposium shows the great fundamental difference between the Shelleyan lover and the Platonic one. It is that whereas the former is constantly seeking on this earth for the Shadow of an abstract, eternal Beauty, the latter starts with the shadow of earthly Beauty and immediately transcends it in a dialectical pursuit of its shadows in morals and sciences.⁸⁶

Besides, the images of solitude in this poem also illustrate that though man's apperception of the Divine is fragmentary and elusive, the "Power" itself is stable or permanent. Chernaik makes this point very clear:

Thus moonbeams are flickering, though the moon is fixed; clouds and mists are visible momentarily through reflected light; the rainbow is a chance effect of sunlight in mist; music is caused by wind passing over strings, moonlight on a stream is a wavering reflection of a real astronomical body.⁸⁷

In "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," then, as in Alastor and "Mont Blanc," Shelley reaffirms his faith in a Supersensuous Power and reflects on its remoteness and partial comprehensibility.

The images of solitude in "Ode to the West Wind," written in the autumn of 1819, like those in "Mont Blanc," manifest an intimate interchange with nature, though the poet's method and intent are different. The ones in "Mont Blanc" reveal the persona's apperception of a supersensory Power through close interchange with nature; those in "Ode to the West Wind" articulate not only his numinous experience through active participation with nature, but also his appeal to the Omnipotent to sharpen his poetic powers so that, he, too, like the West Wind's revitalization of dead nature, can revolutionize society for "a

new birth" (64). As in "Mont Blanc" and "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," "Ode to the West Wind" begins with an apostrophe. Shelley's address "O Wild West Wind" (1) conjures up the figure of an isolated being, who finds himself in the midst of a raging storm caused by the West Wind. External evidence also confirms his seclusion in a wood, for in a note to the poem in the 1820 volume Shelley writes about its genesis:

This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild, and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.⁸⁸

And from his contact with nature comes his awareness that the Wind is both a "Destroyer" (14) and a "Preserver" (14), which finds expression in a series of images of solitude. The autumn West Wind appears to the persona as a destroyer:

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,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave (1-8).

This experience prompts his reflection that the earth will awaken from its sleep in spring, and thus the spring West Wind emerges as a "Preserver" or Savior:

Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow
 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 (9-12).

After describing the West Wind's power on land, the persona records its sway over air and water. It shakes "loose clouds" (16) "from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean" (17) "like Earth's decaying leaves" (16), which are "angels of rain and lightning" (18). It also causes "the dome of a vast sepulchre, / Vaulted with all" (25-26) the "congregated might / Of vapours" (26-27) to burst into "black rain and fire, and hail" (28). It causes such a commotion in the calm and "blue Mediterranean" (30), which usually slumbers in late summer, that "the sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear / The sapless foliage of the ocean" (39-40) "suddenly grow grey with fear, / And tremble and despoil themselves" (41-42).

This image of the West Wind as a "Destroyer and Preserver" leads to the persona's mystical experience that a Power controls the cycle of death and rebirth, which the Wind represents, in the mutable world. Since he sees the West Wind as a revelation of the Divine, he urges it to exert the same power over him: "Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" (53) and "make me thy lyre, even as the forest is" (57), and "be thou, Spirit fierce / My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!" (61-62). These addresses suggest exhortations rather than commands, for his relationship with the West Wind is that of a suppliant pleading with a deity. And through this relationship, as William H. Pixton points out, Shelley "experiences an empathic transformation into the being of the Wind, a state by means of which Shelley is raised into sublimity itself by his participation in the Wind's immortal vitality."⁸⁹ His

noumenal experience and supplication--both indicate that he no longer equates the destructive and generative power of the West Wind with the amoral power of Necessity. Though he distinguishes between the power of the West Wind and that of the Transcendent Absolute, as his desire to be the "comrade" (49) of the West Wind's "wanderings over Heaven" (49) indicates, he now looks at it as a means of his gaining the Divine gift of poetry to inspire a revolutionary change in the creation of an ideal society.

Notwithstanding the fact that the West Wind draws its power from a superior and unknown force, some critics associate the destructive and restorative powers of the West Wind with the impassive laws of Necessity or the One Mind of intellectual philosophy. For instance, Donald H. Reiman says that "the Poet prays that the wind of Necessity, which he invokes as ruler of the vegetation of earth (stanza i), air (ii), and water (iii), might make him its lyre."⁹⁰ For Wasserman, the Wind is symbolic of the one Power, which is "the moving spirit of all the 'energy and wisdom' within existence and governs both human thought and all the operations of nature by a uniform impartial law of sequences."⁹¹ A careful reading of the images of solitude in this poem counters this assumption. The West Wind's "presence" (2) is "unseen" (2); it derives its power from a higher source, as the phrase "wanderings over Heaven" (49) suggests its access to the region; its communion with the Unknown empowers it to destroy and recreate. Reiman's note on the words "Destroyer" and "Preserver" reinforces the idea that Shelley has come to regard the terrifying and beneficent forces of nature as manifestations of a superior Power beyond the physical universe: "These titles came directly from the titles of the Hindu gods Siva the Destroyer and Vishnu

the Preserver, known to Shelley from both the translations and writings of Sir William Jones and Edward Moor's Hindu Pantheon (1810).⁹² According to Hindu religion, God is the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer, all in one. The absence of Brahma, the Creator, from the Trinity has a special significance because though the West Wind can destroy and recreate, it cannot create anything new, for this power rests only with Brahma, the Creator. Even if Shelley draws the analogy from the Bible--the death of Christ, his resurrection, and the Judgement Day⁹³--as R. H. Fogle points out, the implication is the same. Fogle also comments on the rich association of the death and regeneration theme, represented by the West Wind, with the Hindu gods: "The West Wind is both Siva and Vishnu of the Hindu triad, destroyer and preserver together. Only Brahma, the creator, it is not."⁹⁴

Shelley solicits the Power of the West Wind because to him it is a mediating force between the earth and the Infinite; because it is a destructive and renovative power, which he seeks for effecting a radical social change; and finally because it is a means of his securing the creative power of Brahma. Though Shelley wants to root out evil from society and to preserve or protect the good, he evidently does not imply that the good he seeks to implant should also undergo a change like the cyclical changes enforced by the West Wind. For he asks the West Wind not merely to spread his "dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!" (63-64), but also to transmit his Divine message to the world. In other words, he seeks the help of the West Wind to produce a revolutionary change in society that will endure, and he hopes to acquire, through the Wind's mediation, the creative power of Brahma, which will impart a spiritual force to his

poetic powers to inspire mankind:

And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of prophecy! O, wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? (65-70).

His ideas are not like "withered leaves," which lie cold and dead on the wintry bed for the West Wind to revive them in spring, but they are new ideas, driven by the Wind and inspired by the Divine, for the word "incantation" has spiritual overtones. Moreover, the sparks are not extinguished but smoldering, and they will burst into flames by Divine inspiration. Shelley's implicit analogy of the Hindu gods to the West Wind may also imply that just as the soul of a person undergoes purification through various cycles of death and rebirth in order to be merged with the soul of the Supreme Being, similarly by transforming the undesirable elements in society, Shelley, aided by the creative power of the Divine, will implant his new ideas on the reclaimed soil, which will eternally yield rich harvests. However, a point against this interpretation is that Shelley desires to bring about a speedy change, and the process of purification, according to the Hindu concept, is slow and gradual. In conclusion, Shelley's images of solitude in this poem clearly indicate that he imagines the West Wind as a harbinger of his spiritual hope, which adduces his faith in a Transcendent Power beyond the natural world. Chernaik has very aptly summed up the essence of the poem: "The poet addresses his invocation and prayer to a deity whose powers are superbly evident in nature. But with the opening image of the Wind as the 'breath of Autumn's being' the Wind's natural powers are

assimilated to the supernatural, mythical and divine."⁹⁵

The images of solitude Shelley uses in "The Cloud," written in 1820, also illustrate an active interchange with nature. He composed the poem, as Mary Shelley informs us, "as his mind prompted . . . marking the cloud as it sped across the heavens, while he floated in his boat on the Thames."⁹⁶ Here Shelley assumes a completely different role by breaking away from his customary "thou and I" stance; instead of the poet-persona speaking, the cloud-persona speaks for itself and thus makes a perfect image of solitude. The Cloud, rising from the ocean and soaring into the firmament, takes on symbolic significance, as it reveals through its activities its intangibility, power, freedom, joy, love, beauty, and permanence--all Divine attributes. And despite the fact that it is a phenomenon of the natural world, it becomes a symbol of the Transcendent.

The first stanza itself epitomizes the qualities that we associate with the Celestial. The cloud wields its power to sustain the earth, which demonstrates its love and tender care for it; its dews awaken a bright and beautiful world; it ranges widely and freely, for it rises from "the seas and the streams" (2), wanders over plains, and again dissolves in rain. It performs these tasks not because it is morally bound to do so, but because it derives sheer joy in doing them. Moreover, in this poem, as Chernaik says, "joy is freedom--freedom of movement, of spirit, freedom which comes both from power and from immunity to cause and effect."⁹⁷ The tricks and laughter of the Cloud evoke the innocent joy of childhood as well as wonder at the wilful nature of the Unknown Power. As Timothy Webb has said, "Here Shelley has attempted to reconcile his conflicting feelings about the natural

world in the image of the divine child, who is capricious and ultimately beyond the range of human comprehension."⁹⁸ And the change and indestructibility of the Cloud bring to mind the mutability of the natural world and the immutability of the Permanent:

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
 From the seas and the streams;
 I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
 In their noon-day dreams.
 From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
 The sweet buds every one,
 When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
 As she dances about the sun.
 I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
 And whiten the green plains under,
 And then again I dissolve it in rain,
 And laugh as I pass in thunder (1-12).

In Stanza Two, the images of solitude Shelley draws to describe the contemporary theory of cloud-formation also reflect a close rapport or mutual love between atmospheric and oceanic spirits. To put the matter differently, atmospheric electricity or lightning, which is produced by the sun as it converts water into vapor, by a natural process returns to the earth in the form of lightning, dew, frost, and rain; thus, there is a constant interchange between the two spirits:

Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
 Lightning my pilot sits,
 In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
 It struggles and howls at fits;
 Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
 This pilot is guiding me,
 Lured by the love of the genii that move
 In the depths of the purple sea;
 Over rills, and the crags, and the hills,
 Over the lakes and the plains,
 Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
 The Spirit he loves remains (17-28).

The images in Stanzas Three through Five demonstrate not only the Cloud's important role among the luminaries of the sky, but also its acting in eternal harmony with them to adorn nature. At sunrise, it allows the sun to leap "on the back of its sailing rack" (33) and, when sunset exudes an atmosphere of love and rest, it also folds its wings to rest:

And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
 Its ardours of rest and of love,
 And the crimson pall of eve may fall
 From the depth of heaven above,
 With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
 As still as a brooding dove (39-44).

Equally considerate is the Cloud to the moon, for it permits her to glide "glimmering ov'r" (47) its "fleece-like floor" (47), which is spread "by the midnight breezes" (48). And wherever the moon's "unseen feet" (49) break the fabric of its "tent's thin roof" (51), "stars peep behind her and peer" (52). These rifts in its tent, when enlarged, make it possible for the reflection of the stars and the moon to fall on "calm rivers, lakes, and seas" (56) and appear "like strips of the sky fallen through" (57) the Cloud from a height, "each paved with the moon and these" (58).

In Stanza Five, it forms rings around the sun and the moon; during whirlwinds it spreads across the sky like a roof; and it marches through the "triumphal arch" (67) of the rainbow:

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
 And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
 The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
 When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
 From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
 Over a torrent sea,
 Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
 The mountains its columns be.

The triumphal arch through which I march,
 With hurricane, fire, and snow,
 When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
 Is the million-coloured bow;
 The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
 While the moist earth was laughing below (59-72).

In the final stanza, the images delineating the immanence of the Cloud in all natural elements, its changes, and its eternity symbolize the immanence of the Permanent in the transient, the various manifestations of the Divine, and the permanence of the Transcendent respectively. The Cloud draws its life force from the earth, water, and the sky and though it changes its form, it cannot die:

I am the daughter of earth and water,
 And the nursling of the sky;
 I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
 I change, but I cannot die.
 For after the rain when with never a stain,
 The pavilion of heaven is bare,
 And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams,
 Build up the blue dome of air,
 I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
 And out of the caverns of rain,
 Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
 I arise and unbuild it again (73-84).

Thus, evidence in the poem strongly suggests that the Cloud appears as a symbol of the Incorporeal World. Shelley's use of the Cloud primarily as a symbol of the Transcendent, however, does not rule out the validity of other readings of the poem; rather they add to its enrichment. Reiman, for instance, cogently argues that "for Shelley the Cloud was an analogue of the human mind."⁹⁹ No less plausible is Wasserman's postulate:

In this eternal circle of nature that denies any point of annihilation, and in the conviction that but one Power moves both mind and the universe, Shelley found grounds for optimistic faith in a

moral cycle in which a period of moral decay is actually transitional to a moral revival and even generative of it.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the power and love the Cloud displays to protect nature; the love and cooperation it extends to work in harmonious union with the heavenly bodies; the joy it radiates to give the simple joy of life; the freedom it enjoys to escape the bondage of cause and effect, the changes it undergoes to be reborn--all testify to Shelley's using the symbol of the Cloud essentially for a Reality higher than the phenomenal.

In "To a Sky-Lark," written in June, 1820, Shelley returns to his habitual stance of an isolated speaker, who in rapt ecstasy, apostrophizes an unresponsive listener. The scene of action is the wide expanse of the sky and the object of inspiration is a natural phenomenon, which suggests seclusion, height, remoteness, invisibility, and abstruseness or mystery. The images of solitude in this poem indicate that as a result of his interchange with nature, the Skylark appears to Shelley as a symbol of the Transcendent. He watches an actual Skylark in flight one evening and hears its soul-stirring song. In Stanza One, after the invocation of the "blithe Spirit!" (1), which has already reached its destination, for it sings "from Heaven, or near it" (3), the persona tells us how the diffusing joy of a skylark's song that pervades the air and the gradual disappearance of the bird from view, as it soars higher and higher into the sky, inspire his reflection and how its total eclipse from sight and the unaccountability of its pure and rapturous strain prompt him to associate it with the Infinite.

As the Skylark flies higher and higher, it gets closer to the sun, and its visibility becomes so faint that it appears like "a cloud of fire" (8). The pure effusion of its song and the moving speck of fire

are the only signs of its being there:

Higher still and higher
 from the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest
 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest (6-10).

Its floating and darting "in the golden lightning / Of the sunken Sun, / O'er which clouds are brightning" (11-13) symbolize its commixture with celestial light, and the joy it feels from its union with the Divine makes it "an unbodied joy" (15).

The persona next compares the Skylark to Venus, the evening as well as the morning star, which is a fixed star, but unseen in "broad day-light" (19). In other words, he is likening it to the Transcendent, whose existence mortals can apprehend but whose mystery eludes them:

The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight,
 Like a star of Heaven
 In the broad day-light
 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

 Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
 Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear,
 Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there (16-25).

Chernaik's comment in this regard further elucidates the point: "The image of the morning star serves as physical evidence for the objective reality of that which can be known only through intuition; the lark itself serves as a symbol of just such divination."¹⁰¹ Another luminary that it bears comparison to is the moon. Its "voice" (27) resounds through "all the earth and the air" (26) as the moon "rains out her beams" (30) through a "lonely cloud" in the clear blue sky. After

relating the song of the skylark to "a cloud of fire," the sun, the star, and the moon, he wonders what the bird is. Its brightness and music are the only realities to him, and the rest is beyond his comprehension:

What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see,
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody (31-35).

The persona's constant association of the skylark's song with light illustrates that he believes the source of the unsurpassing and inimitable joy of its song to be the Divine. As James O. Allsup puts it, "Throughtout i-vii music is interassociated with sun, moon, stars, and clouds to create the truthful illusion that light is the source of the lark's song."¹⁰² The idea that the Infinite can be intuited and not probed is highlighted by a number of images of solitude in which the skylark is likened to "a Poet hidden" (36) "singing hymns unbidden" (38); to a love-lorn maiden "in a palace tower" (42) comforting herself with music that "overflows her bower" (45); to a glow-worm "in a dell of dew" (47), which unseen scatters "its aerial hue / Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view" (49-50); to a rose "embowered / In its own green leaves" (51-52), which is "deflowered" (53) "by warm winds" (53) and which in the process emits its sweet fragrance. Each of the series compared--the poet, the maiden, the glow-worm, and the rose--is hidden from view like the skylark and has something to offer, but the bird's offering surpasses all of theirs. The apparent reason is its proximity to the Celestial.

Again, the persona tries to divine the cause of its ecstatic joy:

Bloom, however, takes Night to be "male and creative,"¹⁰⁴ but evidence in the poem questions this assumption. The persona's request to Night to "wrap" (8) her "form in a mantle grey, / Star-inwrought!" (8-9) and to "blind" (10) with her hair "the eyes of Day" (10) provides further evidence that the persona visualizes Night as a woman. Her being in a cave, which in Shelley's symbolism, among other things, represents Ultimate Reality,¹⁰⁵ and her weaving "dreams of joy and fear," which are both "terrible and dear" (6), suggest that she is Shelley's conception of Ideal Beauty. Her dwelling in a far "misty eastern cave" shows her remoteness and inaccessibility. It may appear that her weaving "dreams of joy and fear," which are both "terrible and dear" connects her with the forces or laws of Necessity. But for Shelley, as we have seen in "Mont Blanc" and "Ode to the West wind," the experience of joy and fear is a stage, preparatory to spiritual enlightenment. And the persona seeks to cross this stage by persuading Night to emerge from the cave, for as long as she is within it, he will not succeed in gaining spiritual illumination. Besides, the cave is far away in the misty east where the sun (a symbol of the Infinite) rises, a fact that lends force to the argument that the persona identifies this woman with "Intellectual Beauty."

In Stanza Two, the persona proposes to Night the steps she should take to hasten her flight to him and thereby expresses his intense longing for communion with the Divine. He asks her to "blind" Day with her hair, which is dark. He presumably images Day as Night's child (daughter) who demands her mother's full attention and care; hence, his suggestion is that she "Kiss her until she be wearied out" (11). Then she, his "long-sought" (14), should rush to him after wandering "o'er city, and sea, and land, /

Touching all" (12-13) with her "opiate wand" (13). Images of solitude in Stanza Three reiterate his spiritual ardor:

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sighed for thee;
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
 And the weary day turned to his rest,
 Lingering like an unloved guest,
 I sighed for thee (15-21).

Day, in this stanza, however, is used for the sun and not for Night's daughter; this fact explains the use of the possessive "his" for Day. In Stanza Four, the persona declines to have either Death, brother of Night, or Sleep, the child of Night, as his companion:

Thy brother Death came and cried,
 Wouldst thou me?
 Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
 Murmured like a noontide bee,
 Shall I nestle near thy side?
 Wouldst thou me?--And I replied,
 No, not thee! (22-28).

The images of solitude in the final stanza offer grounds for the persona's dismissal of both Death and Sleep. The end of Night will soon force him to resume his sad and weary life in the "dim, vast vale of tears" ("Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," 17), which is like living death, or as Bloom phrases it, "Death-in-life of common day."¹⁰⁶ The passage of Night will bring sleep--both literally and metaphorically--literally because he will be awake the whole night in order to hold converse with "Intellectual Beauty" and thus sleep during the day and metaphorically because Day will renew his usual passive and meaningless daytime existence, which is like the semi-unconscious state of sleep even when he is awake:

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon--
 Sleep will come when thou art fled;
 Of neither would I ask the boon
 I ask of thee, beloved Night--
 Swift be thine approaching flight
 Come soon, soon! (29-35).

And an implicit reason for the persona's rejection of Sleep and Death, as William H. Pixton points out, is that "they decrease or terminate the alertness of the mind and thus through insensibility prevent it from all perception and apprehension."¹⁰⁷ The persona fears that by yielding either to Death or Sleep he will be undermining his chances of a dialogue with the Infinite and his hopes of freedom for mankind, through Divine guidance, from the tyranny and oppression of the world. Thus, the images of solitude in this poem articulate Shelley's yearning for the Immutable.

Though Shelley's Adonais, written in June, 1821, is an elegy on John Keats in the tradition of the pastoral elegies of Bion, Moschus, and Milton, its central themes are the continuity of great poetry and the immortality of soul. Shelley's faith in the soul's immortality naturally presupposes his faith in a Spiritual Reality beyond the terrestrial. Despite the fact that in this poem Shelley does not evince a direct interchange with nature, he draws images of isolation from nature to express symbolically his views on the Supernal. Here Shelley portrays himself as an ostracized poet-genius advocating the cause of his prototypes, who suffer a similar fate at the hands of cruel and venomous critics for the latter's insensitivity to their poetic excellence and as a hermit groping in the dark for light, who finally discovers that life is an illusion and that true reality transcends the

world of sense. And through the flower-star image, which Wasserman has very subtly analyzed,¹⁰⁸ Shelley symbolically represents the incorporation of the individual soul into the oneness of the eternal soul.

In Stanza Three, the persona invokes Urania, mother of Adonais, to "wake and weep" (20) for her son, "for he is gone, where all things wise and fair" (24) "descend" (25) and laments the irreversibility of his state: "Oh, dream not that the amorous Deep / Will yet restore him to the vital air" (25-26). In Stanza Six, Shelley compares Adonais to "a pale flower by some maiden cherished, / And fed with true love tears, instead of dew" (48-49), to "bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew" (52), and to a "broken lily" (54) after "the storm is overpast" (54) to indicate that adverse criticism has cut his life short. The poet sees no hope of Adonais's awakening to life but death and darkness:

He will awake no more, oh, never more!--
 Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
 The shadow white Death, and at the door
 Invisible Corruption waits to trace
 His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place (64-68).

In contrast to the despair of death, we have in the mournings of "The Quick Dreams" (Keats's poetic creations) an affirmation of life and continuity and also an extension of the flower-motif. One of the Dreams (Splendours) refuses to accept the fact of its dear one's death, for he says,

"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
 "See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
 "Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
 "A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain" (84-87).

The second Dream "from a lucid urn of starry dew / Washed his light

limbs as if embalming them" (91-92). The third Dream makes a wreath out of her locks and puts it on his head like a coronet of flowers. Another one, in an effort to rekindle his poetic powers has his "mouth alit" (100), his mouth, symbolizing his expressive powers which could produce the effect of lightning and music, but "damp death / Quenched its caress upon his icy lips" (104-105) and "as a dying meteor stains a wreath / Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips / It flushed through his pale limbs, and past to its eclipse" (106-108). Glenn O'Malley rightly says that "Adonais by implication is wreathlike or flowerlike. And since the 'flush' of life with which the Splendour endows the corpse is meteoric, we are reminded that Adonais is starlike also."¹⁰⁹ Thus the image of the flower by extension is transferred to that of the star.

But the gleam of hope discernible in the desperate efforts of the Dreams to revive Adonais vanishes when nature springs to life with the return of spring and Adonais's body lies inert and lifeless: "Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone, / But grief returns with the revolving year; / The air and streams renew their joyous tone" (154-156). And he regrets that everything in the natural world should live and the "intense atom" (the mind, 179) should glow for a while and then be "quenched in a most cold repose" (180). He feels trapped in a sad situation because there seems to be no escape:

Great and mean
 Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
 As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
 Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
 Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow
 (185-189).

Yet, the fusion of the flower and the star image implies hope and anticipates what is to follow. The corpse of Adonais is now a

participant in the revival of spring, for it causes the flowers to bloom: "The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender / Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath" (172-173). And the flowers are "like incarnations of the stars, when splendour / Is changed to fragrance" (174-175). The analogy is valid because the flowers depend on light for their fragrance and the brightness of their colors. Thus flowers, symbolic of organic life, are linked with stars, emblematic of the Celestial.

However, in keeping with the conventions of the pastoral elegy, Urania and fellow poets, among them the persona himself, continue to bemoan the loss of Adonais. Then a sudden revelation or insight changes the persona's attitude completely. Adonais's departure from this sordid world is not a matter of grief, for their "delight is fled / Far from these carrion kites that scream below" (334-335), and he triumphantly scorns the critics, who, he thinks, have caused his death: "He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead; / Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now" (336-337). And though his body perishes, his soul or spirit will merge with the Eternal Soul:

Dust to dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
 Back to the burning fountain, whence it came,
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
 Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
 Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame
(338-342).

Here again, Shelley gives a flower image that is succeeded by a star image. Adonais, who is like a flower, will return to the "burning fountain" (339), that is, a star, "which must glow / Through time and change, unquenchably the same" (340-341). Elated, he declares that Adonais lives, for "'tis Death is dead, not he" (361), and therefore

there is no reason to mourn for Adonais. And he bids the dawn, the caverns, the forests, the flowers, the fountains, and the air to partake of the rejoicing:

Thou young Dawn,
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, far from thee
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
 Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
 Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou air,
 Which like a morning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
 O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
 Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair! (362-369).

Now, since he has become a part of the Eternal, he pervades the physical universe like the Immortal Being:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
 He is a presence to be felt and known
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
 Which wields the world with never wearied love,
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above (370-378).

And in the famous Stanza Fifty-Two, the persona reaffirms his faith that true reality lies beyond the physical world and that the darkness or grossness of mortal life obscures or veils the pure light of Eternity:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments (460-464).

Life is an illusion; therefore, in order to attain ultimate peace, we must seek release from the illusory world through death: "Die / If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!" (464-465). As Notopoulos states, "Mortality is simply an illusion like all the phenomena of

nature; it is only in death that we really live and the soul finds its true home in the Platonic reality above and beyond the physical world."¹¹⁰

Disregarding all evidence in the poem, Cameron, however, objects to this interpretation of this stanza:

Despite the usual interpretation of this stanza, Shelley could not have been referring to the Platonic "One" or to a supernatural "Heaven" or "eternity," because he had no belief in any of them. He did, however, use the word "heaven" as a synonym for the spirit of nature, and "Eternity" to designate lasting values.¹¹¹

To say that Shelley does not refer "to the Platonic 'One' or to a supernatural 'Heaven' or 'eternity'" on the ground that "he had no belief in them" is to make an arbitrary statement, for all evidence in the poem suggests the contrary. Further, he says that "Shelley's general concept is, as in Essay on Christianity, more ethical than metaphysical."¹¹²

Judging a poem by whatever Shelley may have said in his Essay on Christianity is hardly reasonable. Besides, as we have already seen, Shelley's views on a particular subject are not irrevocable, for he goes back and forth. Additionally, despite Shelley's earlier repudiation of a Higher Reality in Queen Mab, in his later poetry he does not deny the existence of this Reality. What he is skeptical about is whether or not the mind can unravel the mysteries of this world. If "Heaven" is a synonym for "the spirit of nature" and if death may reduce life simply into nothingness,¹¹³ as Cameron contends, then the question arises as to how we shall account for Adonais's becoming "a portion of the loveliness" (379) of nature, yet retaining "his part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress / Sweeps through the dull dense world"

(381-382). Furthermore, Cameron thinks that "thou" in "If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek"¹¹⁴ refers to the critic. In that case, Shelley will be equating Adonais, who is now enjoying Heavenly bliss, with the critic because his advice to the latter is to die, which is contradictory to what Shelley says to the critic in Stanza Thirty-Seven:

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
 Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
 But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
 And ever at thy season be thou free
 To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
 Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
 Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
 And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt--as now (325-333).

The word "thou" in question apparently applies to Shelley himself, who seeks release from the prison of life to share the Celestial bliss with Adonais. As Ross Greig Woodman remarks,

The moral dimension of the elegy resides in a metaphysical defence of suicide (415-23). . . . In Adonais, Shelley has been lured "to the brink" first by his rejection of materialism, which conducts to annihilation, and then by his rejection of mutability, which traps the poet within the limits of Nature.¹¹⁵

In Stanza Forty-Three, referring to Adonais' becoming "a portion of the loveliness" (379) of nature, Cameron argues that by "the one Spirit's plastic stress" (381), Shelley means "a unifying force within matter"¹¹⁶ rather than a transcendent Power. But in this stanza, Shelley also says that, though Adonais' being is one with Nature, he retains his "part" (381). The idea of retaining the identity of the individual soul even when it is merged with the Universal soul brings to mind the

philosophical concept of the one and the many. As Carl Grabo explains the matter, "The seeming paradox of individual survival and of reunion with the One involves the philosophical concept of union in multiplicity, of the one and the many."¹¹⁷ Detecting a similarity between this concept and the oriental concept of "Nirvana," Grabo thus explains it:

The Oriental concept of Nirvana is expressive of the same idea, the belief that the multifarious universe composed of an infinite number of particulars is at the same time a single thing, permeated by one spirit. Death affords an escape from the pain which is the concomitant of individual existence and permits ultimately reunion with God, who is all. Yet at the same time this reunion does not imply complete loss of personality. The soul survives as a cell which is yet a constituent part of a larger whole.¹¹⁸

Here I have cited some images that are not images of solitude, to substantiate my point that in Adonais, Shelley expresses his faith in a superior reality beyond the sublunar realm and not in the Power of Necessity, as Cameron has claimed.

Finally, the flower-image of Adonais becomes a star-image, when "the splendours of the firmament of time" (388), that is, other immortal poets, who have preceded Adonais and have now become stars, welcome him as one of them and offer him an exalted position in the hierarchy of stars:

"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
 "Swung blind in unascended majesty,
 "Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
 "Assume thy winged throne, thou vesper of our throng!"
 (411-414).

Wasserman has very minutely analysed the import of the flower-star image

in Adonais:

Thus through the relation of flower to star an analogous relation has also been established between their adjuncts, dew and light, so that there are both horizontal and vertical relations among Keats-Adonais (the nature god) and Adonais-Vesper, flower and star, dew and light; that is, the relation may also be stated as one between Adonais-flower-dew and vesper-star-light. With this final extension, the image pattern attains its full symbolic function, the dew-moisture representing the principle of organic life and light representing absolute life.¹¹⁹

Having intuitively perceived this "absolute life," the persona has drifted far, though "fearfully" (492), from the shore of life, when Adonais, "like a star" (494), beacons to him. Adonais's assurance is symbolic of the persona's full conviction in a Spiritual Reality:

my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are (488-495).

This chronological review of Shelley's images of solitude in the poems discussed in this chapter attempts to show that during the period 1815-1822, when his poetic mind matures and blossoms, Shelley affirms his faith in a Transcendental Reality. A tension between his empirical and transcendental views certainly exists, but this tension does not come in the way of his belief in the Infinite, although it expresses itself in his doubt of the mind's power to unveil the mystery of the Unknown. His interchange with nature results in his experience of the sublime, but when fortified by his experience, he strives to uncover the

veil of mystery surrounding this realm, he cannot reach any definite conclusions about it. Though the images of solitude in all the poems except those in Adonais in this chapter reveal a direct contact with nature, they later become symbols either of his faith in the Spiritual or his awareness of the mind's limitations to apprehend fully the mysterious. Even in Adonais, where a close interchange with nature does not take place, Shelley uses images of solitude from nature to express his faith in the Divine.

ENDNOTES

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⁵¹Kapstein, "The Meaning of Shelley's 'Mont Blanc,'" p. 1052.

⁵²Charles H. Vivian, "The One 'Mont Blanc,'" Keats-Shelley Journal, 4 (1955), 60.

⁵³Vivian, "The One 'Mont Blanc,'" pp. 60-61.

⁵⁴Notopoulos, The Platonism of Shelley, p. 206.

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⁵⁶John Kinnaird, "'But For Such Faith': A Controversial Phrase In Shelley's 'Mont Blanc,'" Notes and Queries, 15 (1968), 332.

⁵⁷Kinnaird, "'But For Such Faith,'" p. 332.

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⁶⁰Chernaik, The Lyrics of Shelley, p. 59.

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⁶²Vivian, "The One 'Mont Blanc,'" p. 62.

⁶³Spencer Hall, "Shelley's 'Mont Blanc,'" Studies in Philology, 20 (1973), 199.

⁶⁴Wasserman, Shelley, p. 234.

⁶⁵Kapstein, "The Meaning of Shelley's 'Mont Blanc,'" p. 1046.

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⁶⁸Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English

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⁶⁹Rogers, Shelley At Work, p. 31.

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⁷¹Cameron, Shelley, p. 237.

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⁷³Plato, Symposium, p. 205.

⁷⁴Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in Works, VII, 137,
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⁷⁵Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," Works, VII, 112.

⁷⁶Cameron, Shelley, p. 238.

⁷⁷Wasserman, Shelley, p. 182.

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⁸⁰Hall, The Transforming Image, pp. 34-35.

⁸¹Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking, p. 37.

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⁸³David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence: The Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), p. 139.

⁸⁴Notopoulos, The Platonism of Shelley, p. 203.

⁸⁵Rogers, Shelley at Work, p. 41.

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⁸⁷Chernaik, The Lyrics of Shelley, p. 38.

⁸⁸percy Bysshe Shelley, "Note on 'Ode to the West Wind,'" Works,
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- ⁸⁹William H. Pixton, "Shelley's Commands to the West Wind," South Atlantic Bulletin, 37 (1972), 71.
- ⁹⁰Reiman, Percy Bysshe Shelley, p. 97.
- ⁹¹Wasserman, Shelley, p. 239.
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- ⁹³R. H. Fogle, The Permanent Pleasure: Essays on Classics of Romanticism (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1974), p. 66.
- ⁹⁴Fogle, The Permanent Pleasure, p. 67.
- ⁹⁵Chernaik, The Lyrics of Shelley, pp. 90-91.
- ⁹⁶Mary Shelley, "Preface to The Collected Poems, 1839," Works, I, XII.
- ⁹⁷Chernaik, The Lyrics of Shelley, p. 132.
- ⁹⁸Webb, Shelley, p. 249.
- ⁹⁹Reiman, Percy Bysshe Shelley, p. 116.
- ¹⁰⁰Wasserman, Shelley, p. 243.
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- ¹⁰⁴Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking, p. 7.
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- ¹⁰⁷W. H. Pixton, "The Intellectual Movement of Shelley's Later Poetry," Diss. Univ. of North Carolina 1968, p. 108.
- ¹⁰⁸Wasserman, Shelley, pp. 477-478.
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CHAPTER IV

HEAVENLY EROS AND CHRISTIAN AGAPE

Apart from revealing his quest for the Transcendent, Shelley's images of solitude also manifest his faith in the potential of love. Notwithstanding his qualms about the mind's power to apprehend the Infinite, his yearning for it expresses itself even in the images of solitude that articulate his gospel of love. This gospel is a combination of Platonic heavenly eros and the Christian agape. Defining Plato's heavenly eros, Anders Nygren writes that "in Eros-love man seeks God in order to satisfy his spiritual hunger by the possession and enjoyment of the Divine perfections."¹ An example of eros is provided by the plant in "The Sensitive Plant," which feels isolated from other plants because they bear flowers, but it does not. This incapacity makes it sad, for "it loves" (76) and "desires what it has not--the beautiful" (77). And in Epipsychidion, Shelley yearns for Ideal Beauty and Love through "an image of bright Eternity" (115), which he sees in a human form. And in agape, "God loves because it is His nature to love, and His loving consists, not in getting, but in doing good."² Though agape is theocentric, I am using the term to denote human imitation of God's impersonal love demonstrated by Prometheus, a representative of mankind, in Prometheus Unbound. Prometheus, chained to an icy precipice in the Indian Caucasus, endures endless pain and torture for man without expecting any reward in return. Though his hatred of and desire for

vengeance against his adversary, Jupiter, are not God-like sentiments, his pain and isolation finally enable him to conquer these evils.

Shelley's love aims at transforming human nature into a "type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest motives to the best and noblest ends" ("Preface" to Prometheus Unbound). That Shelley earnestly believes in this kind of love is borne out by his assertion in "A Defence of Poetry":

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own.³

Love, for Shelley, silences all discordant notes and creates harmony to make life meaningful and fulfilling. This vision of love is analogous to the ancient concept which sees love as a creative force, imparting life, order, and harmony to the disorder of chaos.⁴ Although Shelley rejects the Christian belief in the creation of man, his concept of love is similar to Neoplatonic Christianity. Juan Luis Vives states that "love was the cause of our being created. . . . From that love we have been separated, forsooth by the love of our selves. . . . By love, i.e., by our love to God, we are to return to our source, which is also our end."⁵ This view of love is applicable to Shelley's in so far as it regards love as union and hate as division. It is very true of Prometheus. As Abrams points out, "Prometheus, like Blake's Albion, is also a descendant of a familiar mythical figure: the one man who was once whole, has fallen into division, and proceeds to redeem his lost integrity."⁶ In the exposition of Shelley's vision of love through

images of solitude, I shall refer to the heavenly eros, the Christian agape, and the ancient concept of love to which Shelley was indebted. From here on I shall simply use the terms "eros" and "agape" for the heavenly eros and the Christian agape.

Before I continue with my discussion of Shelley's images of solitude that illustrate his concept of love, I shall draw the attention of the reader to the term "solitude," which, as poetic convention has it, means the isolation provided to human beings by natural phenomena and the isolation of the human mind caused by some personal distress or rejection for which either man himself is responsible or over which he has no control. By way of example, in Prometheus Unbound, Shelley uses images of solitude to describe the unifying power of love and the divisive effect of hate. To delineate the integrating power of love Shelley uses the image of the cave, an image of isolation from the world, notwithstanding the fact that Prometheus and Asia enter it together. Besides, the symbolic meaning of their separation is the distortion or division of the human mind because of lack of love, and the meaning of their entrance into the cave is the restoration of the divided mind to a unified whole. With this example in mind, in this chapter, I shall discuss the images of solitude in Alastor, Prometheus Unbound, "The Sensitive Plant," and Epipsychidion to demonstrate that they reveal his views on love.

The images of solitude in Alastor, as already shown in Chapter Two, disclose Shelley's impassioned longing for eros, but they also evince his keen sensitivity to the disastrous effect of neglecting human love for an elusive, remote, and abstruse world. That is, instead of aspiring after the perfections of the Divine, man should accept his

fellow men with their imperfections and love them, and this emphasis on human love is an expression of agape in the sense it is used here.

The message of the poem, expressed through images of solitude, is simple. Instead of meddling with the Infinite, which defies full apprehension, man should try to transform the real world into an ideal one through his love for his fellow men. It may also suggest that the poet-hero is imprudent, as James O. Allsup argues, in not seeking the Divine through the human:

An epipsyche ("soul upon a soul") is a soul within the soul, a quintessential soul. This inmost soul is man's primal spark that longs for return to its origin, the quintessential fire of heaven. Proper return is through love for one's fellows. In epithymia the wise lover seeks an antitype of his epipsyche, a woman reflecting his clearest self. But the youth in Alastor is more mad than wise. He yearns for divine prototype without rather than through human antitype. . . . His love for the divine is the other side of his scorn for the human⁷

As the images of solitude illustrate, the poet-hero is not scornful of human love, but he is certainly indifferent to it. Oblivious of the love and tender care of the Arab maid, he moves on in the pursuit of Ideal Beauty: "He eagerly pursues / Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade; / He overleaps the bounds. Alas! Alas!" (205-207). The poet-narrator speaks in no uncertain terms that by venturing into the Unknown realm, the poet-hero oversteps his bounds. Anterior to the appearance of his dream-vision, the poet-hero, though unaware, shows his detachment towards the Arab maid. Consequently, "the spirit of sweet human love has sent / A vision to the sleep of him who spurned / Her choicest gifts" (203-205). His yearning for spiritual union is so irresistible that he seeks death to secure it. He asks Sleep whether

the "bright arch of rainbow clouds" (213) and the "pendent mountains" (214) reflected in the calm water of the lake lead only to darkness and mystery. Yet he hopes that perhaps "death's blue vault" (216)--the sky--notwithstanding the "loathliest vapours" (216) that hang around it and its foul grave, hides the "delightful realms" (219).

This image of the poet-hero's preparedness to seek even death for union with his dream-vision depicts his increased isolation from the material world. He defers his action during the day: "While daylight held / The sky, the Poet kept mute conference / With his still soul" (223-224), but,

At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distermpere'd dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness (224-226).

By describing the poet-hero's pursuit of Ideal Beauty as an obsession, a frenzy, and by paying him glowing tributes at his death in the wilderness, the poet-narrator implies that though the poet-hero's aspirations are high and noble, he is seeking the impossible and denying his moral obligations to his fellow men. Since he places eros above agape, he must suffer punishment.

His doubts and frustrations in the pursuit of the Ideal, however, cannot daunt the poet-hero's spirit, for his search continues unabated. He still shows no desire for human relationship. Seeing him "on some dizzy precipice" (258), "the mountaineer" (257),

deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career (259-262).

"In terror at the glare of those wild eyes" (264), "the infant would conceal / His troubled visage in his mother's robe" (262-263) and "youthful maidens" (266) "would press his pallid hand / At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path / Of his departure from their father's door" (269-271). Seraphia Leyda states that "The Poet, in his alienation, remains oblivious to all these reactions. He has cut himself off from any meaningful relationship with other humans; and although he is the cause of sympathy in others, he does not extend sympathy."⁸ The poet-hero is not one of their kind because he is a solitary who does not respond to their concern for him.

The images of solitude in the poet-narrator's invocations at the poet-hero's death also help in unfolding Shelley's emphasis on human love. They express the poet-narrator's intense longing to bring back his friend to life by some magic power so that the poet-hero could continue his search for the Eternal. First, the poet-narrator wishes for Medea's magic:

O, for Medea's wondrous alchymy
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! (672-675).

The poet-narrator's next wish is for his friend to gain immortality for the realization of his dream, even if it means a barren and isolated life. The curse of eternal life which Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, bears is preferable to the poet-hero's death:

O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse

He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! (675-681).

The poet-narrator's third wish is that if the alchemist, despite his mortality, can dream of a rich world by converting base metals into gold in the cave of his mind, so should the poet-hero:

O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! (681-686).

But the hard truth that he is simply indulging in wishful thinking distresses him:

mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn music:--but thou art fled--(692-695).

In short, Shelley's skeptical self seems to be telling his idealized self that though the latter's pursuit of Ideal Beauty is lofty and sublime, it is self-oriented and exclusive of human love and is therefore destined to fail. Thus, despite his proclivity toward spiritual love, Shelley makes a plea for human love, which is expressive of agape.

The images of solitude in Prometheus Unbound, written during 1818 and 1819, mainly emphasize agape and the ancient notion of love as a unifying force and its absence as a disrupting one. They also suggest eros in the sense that Asia, who variously represents love, the creative power of imagination, and physical nature, enters a dark cave and engages herself in a dialogue with Demogorgon to unravel the mystery of

the Infinite. In interpreting the poem, however, critics have reached different conclusions. Wasserman, for instance, finds in Prometheus Unbound "the history of one mind's evolution into perfection."⁹ Carl Grabo discovers that in the poem "the necessitarian God (Jupiter) of man's creation, who can exist only in time, is destroyed by the God of Love, who is timeless."¹⁰ Ross Greig Woodman contends that the war between Prometheus and Jupiter "dramatizes the psychic struggle in man between a perverse desire to realize a false security through adjusting to the curse which binds him to the familiar and terrestrial world and a desire to transcend it through his imagination."¹¹ Each of these critics has made a strong case to establish his thesis. Though they have offered new and valuable insights into the poem, I believe that a clear understanding of it is possible without entering into the complexities and subtleties of Shelley's philosophical ideas, if we shift our emphasis to Shelley's images of Solitude in the poem. These images symbolize the wholeness of the human mind when love controls it and its fragmentation when hate takes its place. As a rule, images of solitude evoking harsh, cold, dark (excluding, of course, the dark images used for Demogorgon), and numb sensations signify a division in the wholeness or soundness of the human psyche; those evoking gentle, warm, glowing, and robust sensations suggest union or harmony. In his adaptation of the Aeschylean myth, Shelley uses these images as symbols to transmit his central theme of love, which is an affirmation of agape.

In his "Preface" to Prometheus Unbound, Shelley states that the sight of blossoming nature in the quiet of mountain ruins inspires the composition of the poem, a statement that seems to validate the argument that Shelley expressly employs images of solitude to elucidate his concept of love:

This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of Baths of Carcalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama ("Preface" to Prometheus Unbound).

Rejuvenating nature in the wilderness thus provides Shelley with the subject of his poetic-drama--the integrating and divine power of love--which he portrays, as he himself tells us, through imagery "drawn from the operations of the human mind or from those external actions by which they are expressed" ("Preface" to Prometheus Unbound). These images, which show the workings of the human mind as it comes in contact with the outside world, are also images of solitude. Shelley's declaration of purpose in the "Preface" further supports the theme of love as revealed by images of solitude:

My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness ("Preface" to Prometheus Unbound).

The emphasis, then, is on the power of the mind, when it is guided by love and its attendant virtues, instead of cold and calculating reason. All the mythic characters in Prometheus Unbound dramatize the transfiguration of a dark and enslaved world through love. They also enact the mind's effort to grasp the Eternal through its perception of the phenomenal and the truth it draws therefrom. It is, in fact, Shelley's version of Blake's The Four Zoas. Prometheus before the recantation of his curse represents Blake's Urizen or reason; Asia, in turn, symbolizes Luvah or love; Urthona, creative imagination; and Tharmos, the senses or physical nature; Jupiter, evil for which man himself is responsible; Panthea and Ione, emissaries of love; Earth (in the first three acts), man's false fear and hope; and Demogorgon, man's conception of both the Infinite and the finite.¹² All these characters, including the Earth, for she is the mother of the Titans, are immortals; this fact implies that the health or wholeness of the human mind stands constantly threatened because man may at any moment choose to yield to hate. Inherent in this hypothesis is the idea that love brings concord and hate discord.

The images of solitude used in this poem clearly reflect Shelley's ideal vision of love. As the poetic-drama opens, we find Prometheus, chained to a precipice in "a Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus" (stage directions, I), addressing Jupiter, his adversary, as the "Monarch of Gods and Daemons" (I, line 1). The time is night, and Prometheus and Jupiter alone watch the heavens with "sleepless eyes" (I, 4). By aligning himself with his foe, the protagonist suggests that they are kindred spirits at war with each other. The images of Prometheus bearing excruciating pain and torture in a far, isolated

region for mankind and of Jupiter tormenting Prometheus for his rebellion and watching over him at night with "sleepless eyes" depict man's capacity for both good and evil. Though Prometheus's suffering is Christlike, unlike Christ, he is "eyeless in hate" (I, 9) and enjoys a triumphal pride in enduring pain to defy Jupiter:

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.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair (I, 9-15).

Since Prometheus still nurses hatred for his enemy, he looks at him with scorn and contempt: "These are mine empire: - More glorious far than that which thou surveyest / From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!" (I, 15-17). For all his noble sacrifices for mankind, the protagonist yearns for revenge. He derives comfort from the fact that, as his hours of pain and loneliness wear on, Jupiter's day of doom draws nearer:

And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
Their wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
--As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim--
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave (I, 44-52).

His agony and persecution increase in massive proportions. The anguished cry of an isolated and lonely being is evident here:

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.

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, 31-38).

The implication of these images of solitude portraying the protagonist's increasing and extreme pain is that, as long as man allows himself to be dominated by the disintegrating power of hate, he continues to suffer pain and that his suffering is self-inflicted because he refuses to show love for hate. The protagonist resents the fact that nature does not show any sympathetic concern for his suffering:

I ask yon Earth, have not the mountains felt?
 I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
 Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
 Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
 Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
 Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever! (I, 25-30).

But he fails to see that despite his altruistic motives and noble sacrifices, he has yielded to hate and by so doing he is perpetuating evil. His surrender to hate may be compared to the fallen state of man. As Richard H. Fogle points out, "The images of deadness, most prevalent in Act I, stand for a dead world of the Fall, in which the evil principle predominates."¹³

Prometheus's conflict with Jupiter has also cost him separation from his beloved Asia, the symbol of love, poetic imagination, and external nature. Speaking of his separation from Asia, Prometheus nostalgically recalls "O'ershadowing woods" (I, 122) through which he "wandered once / With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes" (I, 123). But it is his suffering and loneliness which enable him to see the negative effect of hate and revenge, and therefore he regrets having

uttered his curse on Jupiter and decides to recall it:

I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then, ere misery made me wise.--The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall (I, 56-59).

As a measure to wipe out the curse from his mind, he appeals to "Mountains" (I, 59), "icy Springs" (I, 62), "Air" (I, 64), and "Whirlwinds" (I, 66) to repeat it. Instead of repeating it, they dwell on its dreadful and cataclysmic effects. The Earth corroborates what the voices of nature declare:

The tongueless caverns of the craggy hills
Cried "Misery!" then; the hollow Heaven replied,
"Misery!" And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds (I, 107-110).

Finally, the Earth, on Prometheus's request, consents to have his curse recalled by the Phantasm of Jupiter. Here what she tells Prometheus is significant: "Call at will / Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter" (I, 210-211). That is to say, Jupiter, for whom Prometheus harbors hate and revenge, is his own creation. Since Jupiter has been created by man, he is like a shadow that haunts Prometheus; therefore, by recalling Jupiter's phantasm Prometheus wants to rid himself of his enemy. As Richard Cronin remarks,

Both the form of the drama and its action insist
that to exorcise a ghost one must first raise it. . . .
Jupiter appears as he is internally and
internally he is a ghost, lacking any real
substance, that appears only when summoned by
Prometheus. Prometheus has allowed independent
reality to what in truth is only a ghost of his own
imagination.¹⁴

The images of solitude in Panthea's description of the Phantasm of

Jupiter further emphasize the ugly and repressive power of hate:

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
 Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
 The shape is awful like the sound,
 Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
 A sceptre of pale gold
 To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
 His veined hand doth hold.
 Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
 Like one who does, not suffers wrong (I, 231-239).

Even the curse is articulated through images of solitude, and they portray Jupiter to be a condemned and isolated man when the curse befalls him:

And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
 An awful image of calm power
 Though now thou sittest, let the hour
 Come, when thou must appear to be
 That which thou art internally.
 And after many a false and fruitless crime,
 Scorn track thy lagging fall thro' boundless space and time
 (I, 295-301).

On hearing his curse, Prometheus cannot believe that the revengeful words escaped his lips, and in remorse he revokes it: "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, 303-305). The revocation of his curse symbolizes the conquest of hate by love. As Ronald A. Duerksen concludes, "Thus Prometheus, who has been his own destroyer, becomes his own preserver as he acknowledges and assumes the power of love, the quality that can exist only in the original state of his union with Asia."¹⁵ By his portrayal of the mental torture, inflicted on Prometheus by the Furies, Shelley seems to be saying that it is difficult to conquer hate but that the victory is within man's power, if he wills it. Prometheus's discursive parley with the Furies

throws more light on the poisonous and destructive effect of hate than the images of solitude; nevertheless, some of these images make this point quite clear. For instance, the images that show the Chorus of Furies torturing Prometheus by drawing his attention to the misrepresentation and distortion of Christ's message to the world imply that his efforts to save mankind are futile, for man is more susceptible to evil than to good:

Hark that outcry of despair!
 'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
 Wailing for the faith he kindled:
 Look again, the flames almost
 To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
 The survivors round the embers
 Gather in dread (I, 553-559).

The images depicting the lonely and gentle ghost of Christ bewailing and the desperateness of the human condition that the Furies present plunge Prometheus into a deep despondency in which he realizes that spiritual illumination is attainable only after death, but then he reasons that though he himself is a god he cannot find peace. His despondency, however, does not weaken his spirit because now he views Jupiter's revengeful act as a defeat, not victory. Thus, strengthened by the power of love, he gains control over himself and foils their attempt to subdue him:

Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
 I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
 Thy works within my woe-illumined mind,
 Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
 The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
 I am a God and cannot find it there,
 Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
 This is defeat, fierce king, not victory
 The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
 With new endurance, till the hour arrives
 When they shall be no type of things which are (I, 635-645).

These images show that Prometheus's rejection of hate enables him to withstand the mental tortures of the Furies. The Spirits of Human Thought also stress the power of love because they assure Prometheus that it will eventually triumph. They tell him that just as a wandering herdsman in spring knows that "the whitethorn soon will blow" (795), they know that Prometheus's mission of love will ultimately succeed. And by making the Indian Caucasus their temporary abode to comfort Prometheus, even after his separation from Asia, Panthea and Ione, Asia's sisters, suggest the accessibility of love, if man chooses to have it. In other words, they are messengers of love. This emphasis on love is aimed at showing its unifying and benign effects. And Prometheus's ability to forgive Jupiter, despite his adversary's hatred for him, links him with God, Who loves His created beings, regardless of their love or hate for Him. Thus Prometheus's love becomes an imitation of agape.

As prophesied by the Spirits, when Prometheus, inspired by love, withdraws the curse, nature shows visible signs of change; it breathes the air of a rejuvenation or rebirth, and the action of the play moves toward the release of Prometheus and his union with Asia. Once love makes its way into the human heart, it grows until it flowers into full blossom. Now Prometheus's longing for Asia increases in intensity, expressing his despair and loneliness:

thou art far,
Asia! who when my being overflowed
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart (I, 808-813).

Panthea hastens to give the message of Prometheus's transfiguration to

Asia, who has taken shelter in the rough and barren Indian valley after her separation from Prometheus. Panthea's fear is that unless Asia's divided self (Prometheus), which is now purified by love, is united with Asia's self, the valley, which is turned into an idyllic one by Asia's touch, will be reduced to its former state:

the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine (I, 825-833).

In Act Two, Panthea uses images of solitude such as the one in which the dazzling celestial light that flows through Prometheus's limbs permeates Panthea like the warmth of the morning sun enveloping the atmosphere before the dew is dissolved. Speaking of this effect on her, she tells Asia that the atmosphere enwrapped her "in its all-dissolving power, / As the warm ether of the morning sun / Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew" (II, I, 76-78). Asia looks into her sister's eyes to interpret her dream and there sees a "Shape" (Act II, 120), which seems to presage her union with Prometheus:

There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build o'er the waste world? (II, I, 119-126).

Images of solitude abound in the poem's movement toward Asia's union with Prometheus. The dark caverns, the dense forests, and the musical woods that Asia and Panthea pass through in their journey to the

nether realm of Demogorgon and the description of the land they are bound for as being unknown indicate that Asia is also symbolic of the poetic or intuitive power of imagination by means of which the mind tries to perceive the Divine. For instance, the Echoes ask Asia and Panthea to follow:

Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Thro' the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean! (II, I, 178-187).

The Echoes, then, tell the Oceanids where they are going and the purpose of their journey:

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean! (Act II, Sc I, 190-194).

Semichorus I of Spirits informs us of the thick and almost impenetrable woods Asia and Panthea traverse, thus stressing the remoteness and the inaccessibility of the region:

The path thro' which that lovely twain
Have past, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers (Act II, Sc II, 1-6).

And describing the perennial music of "the voluptuous nightingales" (Act II, Sc II, 24) that pervades the woods, Semichorus II says, "Like many a lake-surrounded flute, / Sounds overflow the listener's brain / So

sweet, that joy is almost pain" (Act II, Sc II, 38-40).

The poem's association of Asia with the enchanting and awe-inspiring beauty of nature and the Oceanid's own admiration for it bear out the fact that Asia is also representative of the Edenic state of nature where there is no division. Asia's glowing and graphic portrayal of the solemn and majestic beauty of nature that she and Panthea behold below them from the pinnacle of a rock seems to emphasize the benign influence of nature on man:

Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns and stream-illumed caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains,
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops (II, III, 19-32).

And Asia's description of the melting snow rushing down the mountains and gathering in layers in the valley after being "thrice sifted by the storm" (II, III, 38) implies the probability of man's knowing the Divine through the phenomenal because she likens this process to the thoughts of "Heaven defying" (II, III, 39) men until "some great truth / Is lossened" (II, III, 40-41).

These images of solitude clearly illustrate the flight of the poetic imagination through the phenomenal into an unknown and mysterious realm in the hope of finding satisfactory answers to man's ontological questions. Panthea's account of the "mighty portal" (II, III, 2) of Demogorgon's cave, which they are to enter, indicates the mind's readi-

ness through its interchange with the natural world to probe the mystery of the Eternal. The "mighty portal" is

Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication (II, III, 3-8).

The "veiled form" (II, IV, 1), observed by Panthea, the falling of the veil, noticed by Asia, and Panthea's description of Demogorgon as "A mighty Darkness" (II, IV, 3)--all point to the mysterious power of the Infinite, which the mind tries to conceive through its intuitive powers and which it does not fully comprehend.

Though the power and formlessness of Demogorgon revealed through the images of his "Mighty darkness" (II, IV, 3) and "shapeless" (II, IV, 5) form responding to Asia's questions from the remoteness of a cave link him with the Divine, his own admission that God created the world counters the assumption. Added evidence is Demogorgon's reply to Asia's question as to who gave man the sense that makes him aware of the existence of a Suprasensible reality:

Asia. Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?
Demogorgon. Merciful God (II, IV, 12-19).

This evidence advances the paradoxical position that Demogorgon is the Divine and yet not so. Asia's reflections on Ultimate Truth provide further evidence that her own knowledge concerning it is as good as his.

She calls to mind the history of the cosmic universe to know the truth:

"There was the Heaven and Earth at first / And Light and Love" (II, IV, 32-33). And from that blissful state man falls when Saturn gains control and rules over mankind, which marks the beginning of time.

Saturn's rule, though peaceful, is unjust because he deprives mankind of knowledge and power:

then, Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love (II, IV, 33-42).

Then, Prometheus, the champion of mankind, gives Jupiter wisdom on the condition that man be made free, but Jupiter breaks his promise. Asia's review of past history in which images of human isolation occur brings her the knowledge that Jupiter rules, for "to know nor faith, nor love, nor law: to be / Omnipotent but friendless is to reign / And Jove now reigned" (II, IV, 47-49). Thus, she arrives at the truth that evil (Jupiter, man's own creation) rules.

Enraged at Jupiter for breach of contract, Prometheus undertakes the task of delivering mankind from slavery by wakening his hopes,

Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart (II, IV, 60-65)

In addition, Prometheus gives power to mankind, but for all his

services, he "hangs / Withering in destined pain" (Act II, Sc IV, 99-100). By his unwillingness at the beginning to forgive his enemy, his own creation, and by his worship of him as a god, he creates his own misery and loneliness. Asia learns from her thoughts that

Man looks on his creation like a God
 And sees that it is glorious, drives him on
 The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
 The outcast, the abandoned, the alone (II, IV, 102-105).

Demogorgon's equation of evil with enslavement indicates the division or isolation of the human soul. By telling Asia that "all spirits are enslaved who serve things evil" (Act II, Sc IV, 110), Demogorgon implies that Jupiter is evil and by saying that "Jove is the supreme of living things" (II, IV, 114), Demogorgon means that hate has control over mankind. Isolation of the human mind is implicit in both statements. To her persistent question as to what Ultimate Truth is, the dark, formless Demogorgon in the cave responds that it is unknowable: "If the abyss / Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice / Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless" (II, IV, 114-116). But he does tell her that love can free man from his slavery, for "all things are subject but eternal Love" (II, IV, 120). It is clear, then, that Demogorgon represents man's perception (not his perceiving power) of the Infinite as well as the finite through his poetic imagination of which Asia is a symbol. The perception is that the Infinite is no personal God, for the truth has no image; that it is inscrutable, for no voice from the Unknown realm has enlightened us on it; and that the only reality is love because when it motivates human actions, it frees man from all evils such as hate which enslave him.

As already stated, the image of Demogorgon as a "Mighty darkness"

(II, IV, 3) in a cave addressing some of Asia's metaphysical questions, yet failing to answer her question on Ultimate Truth delineates him to be human perception of both the Eternal and the temporal, as perceived by poetic imagination. And Asia's dialogue with Demogorgon in the cave about the mysteries of the cosmic universe symbolizes human longing for the Divine, and this desire for Divine knowledge is a demonstration of eros. Here I shall counter the arguments of some critics who see Demogorgon as an emblem of the amoral power of Necessity to validate my interpretation of Demogorgon. Epithets such as "mighty law" (II, II, 43) and "Power! Magnificent" (II, III, 11) used by Semichorus of Spirits and Asia to identify Demogorgon and Demogorgon's identification of himself as "Eternity" (III, I, 52) may have led to this belief. Carlos Baker, for instance, believes that "Demogorgon is the eternal law of amoral necessity which requires an act of mind in order to be set in motion."¹⁶ Peter Butter maintains that Demogorgon "is related to Shelley's earlier conception of Necessity."¹⁷ While conceding the possibility of other interpretations, Douglas Bush also connects Demogorgon with Necessity, for he says that Demogorgon "stands for mysterious reality, the eternal order, behind and above the temporal world, and he is something like Greek fate, with a strong coloring of Shelleyan 'necessity.'"¹⁸ This postulate leaves some of the inconsistencies regarding Demogorgon unresolved. For example, in Act III, Sc I, Demogorgon tells Jupiter that he is the tyrant's child and that both must dwell together in darkness:

Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness (III, II, 53-56).

Admitting the fact that by the eternal laws of nature, Jupiter faces self-annihilation at some time or other, I, however, do not see any logical basis for the argument that Demogorgon, who acts by natural laws, who neither condemns nor upholds actions, should be the progeny of Jupiter, who deliberately chooses to be evil. Moreover, Demogorgon betrays arrogant pride and a sense of accomplishment in the overthrow of his father, which show the exercise of free will. They certainly do not deserve the same fate. Furthermore, it seems strange that Demogorgon, who has no will of his own, will offer to answer Asia's questions about existence. As already shown, we have strong reason to suppose that Demogorgon represents the power of the Infinite, but he himself disclaims this power. However, if we argue that mind's delving into the mysteries of existence brings the revelation that the Infinite is "imageless" and incomprehensible and that power begets power, which is self-destructive, we can untangle the discrepancies concerning Demogorgon. Pulos has rightly observed that "to the mature Shelley, as to Hume, Necessity is fundamentally an unknown power."¹⁹ As pointed out earlier, Asia also stands for nature, which aids the poetic imagination in its metaphysical speculations. Though the images of solitude portray Asia primarily as a symbol of human love, as her separation from Prometheus as a result of his hate for Jupiter clearly indicates, she is also a symbol of man's attempt to reach the Divine through nature.

The increasing radiance of Asia's beauty, as she and Panthea set out for the Indian Caucasus in the chariot of the Spirit of the Hour, which is like "an ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire" (II, IV, 157) to join Prometheus, signifies the closeness of the hour of union of two divided selves into one. Her growing splendor also implies the

revelation of the poetic imagination that the Divine is remote and inaccessible and that human love is divine because it resolves all conflicts and restores peace and happiness. Dazzled by the light in the cloud-laden sky, Panthea asks the Spirit of the Hour: "O Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light / Which fills this cloud? the sun is yet unrisen" (II, V, 8-10). The Spirit replies that the light radiates from Asia:

The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister (II, V, 10-14).

Panthea also detects a change in Asia, for she cannot endure the bright radiance emanating from her sister. Then Panthea relates to Asia in the following images of solitude the story of Asia's birth, which is, in fact, the birth of love:

on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and 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; 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, 21-30).

Asia herself expresses the harmonizing power of love in such images of solitude as the one in which she compares her soul to "an enchanted boat" (II, V, 72) that floats like a "sleeping swan" (II, V, 73) on the musical waves produced by the singing Voice, who brings the message of love:

My soul is an enchanted boat
 Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
 Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
 And thine doth like an angel sit
 Beside the helm conducting it,
 Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
 It seems to float ever, for ever,
 Upon that many-winding river,
 Between mountains, woods, abysses,
 A paradise of wildernesses!
 Till, like one in slumber bound,
 Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
 Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound
 (Act II, Sc V, 72-84).

These images foreshadow the release of Prometheus by Hercules and his union with Asia. We learn of this union when Prometheus describes to Asia and her sister nymphs the environs of their dwelling, which call up images of solitude. It is from here that they will watch over mankind and send their message of eternal love:

There is a cave
 All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
 Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
 And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain,
 Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.

.

And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
 A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
 Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
 As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged
 (Act III, Sc III, 10-24).

Here we must remember that Panthea and Ione are also symbols of love; their representation of love is different only in degree. Therefore, Prometheus's union with Asia also implies his union with them. After giving a description of their abode in the seclusion of nature, Prometheus bids Ione to give the "curved shell" (Act III, Sc III, 65), a "nuptial boon" (Act III, Sc III, 66) to Asia from Proteus, to the Spirit of the Hour so that it could blow the message of love. As bidden, the

Spirit of the Hour travels all over the world blowing the shell of love and on returning apprises Jupiter of the penetrative and transforming power of the music that pervades the atmosphere:

Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky, and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-encircling sunlight were transformed
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the sphered world (III, IV, 98-103).

All succeeding images of solitude show an elaboration of the theme of love and its celebration by means of which Shelley dreams of establishing an ideal life on earth. Act Four is, in fact, a repetition of the division-union theme for emphasis, which finds expression in the visions of the Earth and the Moon, as seen by Ione and Panthea. Both the Moon and the Earth sing of the invigorating and harmonizing power of love on them. The Moon, for example, tells the Earth²⁰ that the snow on her inert mountains melts by the warmth of his love and breathes fresh life into her bosom:

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine! (IV, 356-362).

And the Earth replies that her love permeates his stony and dead mass and revives him:

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from the obscurest bowers (IV, 370-375).

Speaking of this union between the Earth and the Moon, Abrams very deftly summarizes the theme of the poem:

Held in its circular course by the embrace of the earth, the cold and sterile moon bursts into restored life and fertility, as the earth's enhanced energy manifests itself in a heightening of its electromagnetic forces and its radiated heat and light--those attributes which in Shelley's spiritual physics are material correlates of the attractive and life-giving powers of universal love.²¹

Thus the images of solitude in Prometheus Unbound unfold Shelley's idea of love, which encompasses the ancient concept of love as union and its absence as division, the heavenly eros, and the Christian agape. Prometheus's separation from Asia symbolizes the division or isolation of the human mind, and his union with Asia represents its wholeness or harmony. An example of heavenly eros is Asia's persistent question to Demogorgon as to what Ultimate Truth is. Above all, Prometheus's selfless love and sacrifice for mankind and his rejection of hate and revenge even for his adversary, Jupiter, who hates him, demonstrate a human version of God's love or agape.

The images of solitude in "The Sensitive Plant," written in March, 1820, as those in Prometheus Unbound, emphasize the unity or harmony of love. The images depicting the intermingling of flowers with their breath, colors, odors, and music in the Edenic garden during spring and their interchange with the stars of heaven represent the unity that pervades the natural world when love regulates it, and those portraying their ghastly mutilation and death in winter emblemize the division that occurs when love ceases to be the guiding principle. As long as harmony prevails in the garden, the Spirit of Love and Beauty presides over it. The Edenic garden, which represents the unfallen state of man,

is not a lost garden; it exists for ever if only man will allow its ministering angel to nurture him. The spiritual ecstasy experienced by the apprehension of Love and Beauty in the natural phenomena gives man reason to believe in the infallibility of his perception, but when his vision of Love and Beauty, which has caused the ecstasy, fades away, he begins to question the fallibility of his perceiving power.

In the drama of "The Sensitive Plant," the characters are the three solitaires--the garden, the Sensitive Plant, and the Lady--who variously represent the external world, the mind of man, and an agent of Love and Beauty. The scene of action is the Solitude of nature. Love's universality in Stanza Ten establishes the validity of the garden symbol being used for the natural world:

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime (lines, 37-40).

In the spring of this garden, all the flower-plants bear fragrant and beautiful flowers, but

the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not the beautiful! (74-77).

Although the Sensitive Plant belongs to the garden, it does not possess "the beautiful," as do the flower-plants. By isolating the Sensitive-Plant from the rest and by stressing its yearning, the narrator-persona is implying man's longing for Ideal Beauty. And by calling the Lady "the ruling grace" (116) and "an Eve in this Eden" (116), the persona associates her with an emissary of Love and Beauty.

The narrator-persona states that the garden's bursting into life with the coming of spring produced such a bracing and salutary effect that it seemed as if the "Spirit of Love" (6) pervaded the garden. This comparison sets up the key motif of the poem, which is love. The very first stanza initiates this motif. The Sensitive-plant in this garden is tended with loving care and affection and is sustained by the light of the sun and the dew of the winds:

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night (1-4).

The recurrent interlocking of various sensations in the poem and the connection of these sensations with Heavenly light closely relate the garden to Heaven. Added to these suggestions are references to mythological figures with their sexual overtones, implying that when love transfuses the mortal world, man, purified by human love, pines for the Divine. In this connection Priscilla P. St. George correctly argues that "the aureole of Greek mythology cast over the flowers summons up obliquely the image of youth yearning after ecstatic union with the beloved, and supplies the intellectual vocabulary that Shelley felt loveliness required."²² And the constant bringing together of flowers and stars also points to the same conclusion. Wasserman has very lucidly illustrated the flower-star relationship:

The flowers are "the meteors of that sublunar Heaven" (II, 10). The lily's cup, for example, is "moonlight-coloured," and within it is its eye, a "fiery star" that gazes "through clear dew on the tender sky" (I 33-36). In the daytime, that is, the lily is an inversion of the nighttime sky. Surrounded by its own moonlit hemisphere, the flower's star, shining through its dew, gazes on the

heavens, just as at night, in the moonlit sky, stars gaze on the earth through the moist atmosphere.²³

Sexual connotations of images of solitude in stanzas five through nine suggest not only the excess of human love, but also a passionate longing for the Divine. For instance, "the wand-like lily" (33) "lifted up" (33) "its moonlight-coloured cup" (34) like "a Maenad" (34) until "the fiery star, which is its eye, / Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky" (35-36). And the beauty of the rose blossoming into a full-grown flower is like a "nymph to the bath adrest" (29), as she takes off her garments one by one until "the soul of her beauty and love lay bare" (32), apparently implying the different stages of love--from human to the Divine. The active interchange between the phenomenal world and Heaven continues throughout the first part of the poem. Flowers "when Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them" (62), "Shone smiling to Heaven" (64), "as mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem" (63). And every one of them "shared joy in the light of the gentle sun" (65). The sweet fellowship of love is emphasized in lines sixty-six and sixty-seven: "For each one was interpenetrated / With the light and the odour its neighbour shed."

After stressing the divine nature of love, the narrator-persona introduces the idea of the immanence of the Transcendent in man through the symbol of the Lady, who has "no companion of the mortal race" (13). She, the guardian angel of the garden, is an agent, not an incarnation of the Divine, for she is "to the flowers" (117) "as God is to the starry scheme" (118). Moreover, she is "an Eve," a creation of God, not God Himself. This intermediary between God and man has come to reside in the phenomenal world to take care of mankind; in other words, she is

the Divine spark in man. On earth, her dreams are "less slumber than Paradise" (130), for she is still in contact with Heaven, as the simile of the "bright Spirit" (131) deserting Heaven at night to remain with her even during the day, though invisible, clearly indicates. "Her dreams were" (130)

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Tho' the veil of daylight concealed him from her (131-134).

Inspired by love in the natural world, the flowers which represent humans feel the compelling power of Spiritual love. As the narrator-persona says,

I doubt not the flowers of the garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers thro' all their frame (143-146).

But the scene changes when gloom and death descend upon the garden with the death of the Lady, who has taken loving care of it. As long as the plants respond to her love by their greenness and blossoms, she kindles the dormant spark of heaven that is within every human heart, but before the browning of the first leaf she departs or dies. That is to say, the spark, which has been brightened by the harmony in nature, or symbolically by human love, is extinguished by the Lady's anticipation of dissonance invading the garden before she dies:

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown--she died (171-174).

All the flowers, including the Sensitive Plant "felt the sound of the funeral chant" (180). The scene of the funeral procession is drawn with ghastly detail:

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank (183-186).

And the garden, which has been a veritable paradise, becomes a corpse like the corpse of its ministering angel:

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul:
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep (191-195).

Ghastly images of solitude accent the sad and devastating effect of the lady's death: "The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan, / Like the head and the skin of a dying man" (202-203). The "brown, yellow, and grey, and red" (208) leaves "with the whiteness of what is dead" (209) pass "like troops of ghosts on the dry wind" (210) and make "the birds aghast" (211) by "their whistling noise" (211).

Strangely enough, with the return of spring, the Sensitive Plant does not revive, for it is "a leafless wreck" (289), "but the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels" (290) raise their heads "like the dead from their ruined charnels" (291). There is no mention of the flowers' revival either. The fact that the Sensitive Plant, which is a participant in the flowers' joy, remains frail and wan implies that they meet the same fate. The inability of the Sensitive Plant and the flowers to revive suggests the ebbing of love from the natural world,

and the departure of love produces the same crippling effect as that produced by the poisonous and narcotic plants. Though the flowers and the Sensitive Plant do not show any severing of their love, they unknowingly show signs of browning, which sadden the Lady's heart. Anticipating discord in the prevailing harmony of the garden, she withdraws herself from the scene. The insensitivity of the Sensitive Plant and the flowers to this change, their grief, and their death-like slumber denote human unconsciousness of the waning of love, which is the root cause of all evil. They are like Prometheus, who is full of love for mankind but unaware for a time of the futility of hate, which causes pain and suffering.

On another level, the harmony and beauty of the isolated garden, attended by a representative of Ideal Love and Beauty and the Sensitive Plant's longing for the Beautiful signify man's belief in the existence of a Superior Reality, when he is able to apprehend it through his intuitive powers. The spiritual raptures that he experiences ensure him of the infallibility of his perception, but his failure to recall the experience, represented by the death of the Lady and her garden, fosters his doubt concerning the infallibility of this perception. Here we have Shelley's skeptical self entering the poem. In this frame of mind he expresses his uncertainty:

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat,
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say (Conclusion, 1-4).

But his old faith in Platonic Reality returns, for he says that the Vision of Ideal Beauty has not disappeared; it is only we who have changed:

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
 And all sweet shapes and odours there,
 In truth have never pass'd away:
 'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed! not they (Conclusion, 17-20).

Thus the poem epitomizes Shelley's whole concept of love, which is a blend of the ancient belief of love as an integrating power that restores order to the chaos of life, of eros that longs for heavenly perfections, and of agape that demonstrates impersonal love. The harmony prevailing in the garden is symbolic of the ancient concept of love as union; the Sensitive plant's yearning for the Beautiful is indicative of eros; and the natural love and cooperation of the flowers which act in union are representative of agape.

Shelley's vision of Ideal Love and Beauty, which he seeks through the human, finds its most eloquent expression in such images of solitude as the isolated human idol, the boat, the island, and the tower in Epipsychidion, written in Jan-Feb., 1821. They also express his realization that such love is possible only in the Ideal World and that human love with all its aches and pains is welcome and gratifying. After a long search in the mortal world for an antitype of his epipsyche, he finally finds her in Teresa Viviani or Emily, as he calls her in the poem. She answers his vision of perfect beauty, for she is the "Seraph of Heaven!" (21), the "Veiled Glory of this, lampless universe!" (26), the "Moon beyond the clouds!" (27), the "living Form / Among the Dead!" (27-28), the "Star above the Storm!" (28), the "Wonder" (29), the "Beauty" (29), the "Terror!" (29), the "Harmony of Nature's art!" (30), and the "Mirror / In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun, / All shapes look glorious" (30-32). Thus she is isolated from the terrestrial world and becomes a visionary image of Ideal Love and

Beauty. The poem is packed with images of solitude that associate her with the Divine. Describing her beauty the poet-persona states that

the brightness
Of her divinest presence trembles through
Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
Embodied in the windless Heaven of June,
Amid the splendour-winged stars, the Moon
Burns, inextinguishably beautiful (77-82).

The music from her lips is like the sweet music of the planetary "stops" (85); her radiant light inspires spiritual ardor and her glory in the form of Love, light, and motion permeates the whole universe:

And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
Killing the sense with passion; sweet as stops
Of planetary music heard in trance.
In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
The sun-beams of those wells which ever leap
Under the lightnings of the soul--too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
The glory of her being, issuing thence,
Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
Of unentangled intermixture, made
By Love, of light and motion; one intense
Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence (83-95).

The "sweetness" (108) of her "warm fragrance" (105) "seems to satiate the faint wind" (108), and "in the soul a wild odour is felt, / Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt / Into the bosom of a frozen bud" (109-111). These synesthetic images of solitude that describe Emily's beauty reinforce the idea that Shelley seeks the spiritual through the human, for they denote harmony. As Glenn O'Malley explains, Shelley's "use of synesthesia is broadly symbolic in the best meaning of the word--'harmony' of the senses being at once sign and part of a greater harmony."²⁴ And finally she is

indued
 With love and life and light and deity,
 And motion which may change but cannot die;
 An image of some bright Eternity;
 A shadow of some golden dream (112-116).

After starting the poem "in medias res," the poet-persona recalls in retrospect what caused him to pursue Ideal Beauty in mortal forms. He first images her in his dreams; this image is that of his epipsyche--"man's primal spark that longs for return to its origin, the quintessential fire of heaven":

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
 Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
 In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
 Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
 Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
 Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
 Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
 Paved her light steps;--on an imagined shore,
 Under the grey beak of some promontory
 She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
 That I beheld her not (190-200).

He also feels the presence of his dream-Being in natural phenomena:

In solitudes
 Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
 And from the fountains, and the odours deep
 Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
 Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
 Breathed but of her to the enamoured air;
 And from the breezes whether low or loud,
 And from the rain of every passing cloud,
 And from the singing of the summer-birds,
 And from all sounds, all silence (200-209).

He is so haunted by this Ideal Beauty that he is seized by a passionate desire to possess her:

Then, from the cavern of my dreamy youth
 I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
 And towards the loadstar of my one desire,

I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
 Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
 When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
 A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
 As if it were a lamp of earthly flame (217-224).

But she whose voice he hears in the woods and from the fountains is indifferent to his "prayers" (225) or "tears" (225) and passes "like a God throned on winged planet, / Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it, / Into the dreary cone of our lifes's shade" (226-228). He would have continued his pursuit of her into death, had not a voice stopped him:

And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
 I would have followed, though the grave between
 Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:
 When a voice said:--"O Thou of hearts the weakest,
 "The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest" (229-233).

In despair he asks where he can find her:

Then I--"Where?" the world's echo answered "Where?"
 And in that silence, and in my despair,
 I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
 Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
 Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul (234-238).

The images of solitude, therefore, reveal that the poet-persona, on envisioning his epipsyche in dreams and solitude, yearns for his human antitype, which will lead to his union with the Divine.

Though the "night" (242) "closed on her" (242), it could not "uncreate / That world within this Chaos, mine and me / Of which she was the veiled Divinity" (242-244). That is, the discords, the stresses, and strains of this life could not extinguish the Heavenly fire that burnt within him, for "in mortal forms" (267) he "rashly sought / The shadow of that idol" (267-268). In the course of his pursuit, he meets

some beautiful and wise women, but their earthly beauty, which decays, and their cleverness, which makes him suspicious of their sincerity, fail to satisfy his inner urge. He, however, comes across one woman whom he likes, but unfortunately, she does not return his love. In his disappointment he feels "as a hunted deer that could not flee" (272) and "stood at bay, / Wounded and weak and panting" (273-274). But "deliverance" (277) soon came, for "one stood on my path who seemed / As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed" (277-278). She is

As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
 Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
 The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
 Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles.
 That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
 Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
 And warms not but illumines (279-285).

Although she brightens up his life and thus provides partial fulfillment of his desire, she does not live up to his vision of Ideal Beauty, for her cold attitude toward sex prevents the perfect union that he seeks through his antitype. As he says,

Young and fair
 As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
 She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
 From its own darkness, until all was bright
 Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
 And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
 She led me to a cave in that wild place,
 And sat beside me, with her downward face
 Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
 Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
 And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
 And all my being became bright or dim
 As the moon's image in a summer sea,
 According as she smiled or frowned on me;
 And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
 Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead (285-300).

At long last, he finds the Ideal Beauty of his dream in the form of Emily. The profusion of light and synesthetic images, which are also images of solitude, establishes the fact that Shelley sees Emily as a shadow of his Ideal Beauty rather than a mortal being:

At length, into the obscure Forest came
 The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
 Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
 Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
 And from her presence life was radiated
 Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead;
 So that her way was paved, and roofed above
 With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love;
 And music from her respiration spread
 Like light,--all other sounds were penetrated
 By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
 So that the savage winds hung mute around;
 And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
 Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air:
 Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
 When light is changed to love, this glorious One
 Floated into the cavern where I lay (321-337).

By the poet's own admission, Emily is only a vision of Ideal Beauty, not an incarnation of it, for she is "the shadow of that idol" (268) and "an image of some bright Eternity" (115).

By inviting Emily to elope with him to an enchanted and Elysian island far away from human habitation where they will live in a ruined tower whose "lampless halls" (503) are lit up by "parasite flowers" (502) with their "dewy gems" (502) and by "Moon-light patches, or star atoms keen" (505), the poet-persona expresses the ethereal and insubstantial nature of their venture. And by expressing his incapacity to articulate the intensity of the spiritual ecstasy he will experience through the sexual union of his epipsyche and its antitype, he indicates that such an ideal union is a dream, which can materialize only in the Spiritual World. Moreover, the fact that Emily lures the poet "towards

sweet Death; as Night by Day, / Winter by Spring" (73-74) also supports this conclusion. Benjamin P. Kurtz has rightly said that "this sweet death lures him not with a promise of a retreat from too much living, but with a promise of a yet more glorious realization of the Idea that can be offered by any mortal incarnation of it."²⁵ The boat journey, which in Shelleyan corpus symbolizes a Spiritual voyage, and its destination "to the intense, the deep, the imperishable (391) also confirm the poet's visionary flight into the Ideal World.

Despite Shelley's localization of the island, its elysian, picturesque, and tranquil surroundings lend enchantment and a Spiritual aura to it. Though it is "an isle under Ionian skies" (422), it is "beautiful as a wreck of Paradise" (423). It is "a far Eden of the purple East" (417), "an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea, / Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity" (457-458). The idyllic beauty of this island makes it an Eden indeed:

The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
 With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
 Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
 And all the winds wandering along the shore
 Undulate with the undulating tide:
 There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
 And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
 As clear as elemental diamond,
 Or serene morning air; and far beyond,
 The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
 (Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,)
 Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
 Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
 Illumining, with sound that never fails,
 Accompany the noonday nightingales (430-444).

O'Malley supports the visionary nature of the island when he says that "the island where the eloping lovers might find heaven, though variously described, is clearly supernatural. . . . Any actual location in the

Aegean can be merely incidental to its true nature."²⁶ Moreover, in beauty the isle is "an atom of th' Eternal" (479), which manifests itself "o'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green" (481).

The image of the tower enhances the visionary nature of the island, for the "chief marvel of the wilderness / Is a lone dwelling" (483-484), a tower in ruins. Though it is not "a tower of strength" (486), "it overtops the woods" (487) "with its height" (486). It is not "a wreck of human art, / But, as it were Titanic" (493-495). Rising "in the heart / Of Earth" (494-494), then growing "out of the mountains" (496), it lifts "itself in caverns light and high" (497). The height of the tower, the illumination of its "lampless halls" (503) with the "dew gems" (502) of "parasite flowers" (502), the "Moon-light patches" (505) and "star atoms" (505) suggest communion with the Divine as a result of the lover's union. And "when years heap / Their withered hours, like leaves, on our decay" (536), they are to "become the overhanging day, / The Living soul of this Elysian isle, / Conscious, inseparable, one" (538-540). And in this sequestered abode they are to consummate their marriage (between his epipsyche and his antitype), which will finally unite him with the Divine:

The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
 Confused in passion's golden purity,
 As mountain-springs under the morning Sun.
 We shall become the same, we shall be one
 Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
 One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
 'Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
 Those spheres instinct with it become the same
 Touch, mingle, are transfigured (570-578).

This idealized view of love, however, does not hold, for the poem ends on a note of despair:

The winged words on which my soul would pierce
 Into the height of love's rare universe,
 Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.--
 I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire! (588-591).

The poet's lament seems to suggest his failure to sustain the intensity of his spiritual rapture resulting from his physical union with Emily, and thus it also seems to imply his negation of the Heavenly eros, which he has fervently asserted in the poem. But what he means here is his failure to express in words his idealized vision of love. As Reiman puts it, "At the end, mere human expression is inadequate to the vision."²⁷ Though his failure does not imply a rejection of Spiritual love, it does indicate a denial of reaching the Divine through ideal human love, for ideal human love is non-existent. The poet-persona's command to his "Weak Verses" (592) in the "Epilogue" clarifies the ambiguity. His command is actually his message to mankind that ideal human love through which he seeks the Spiritual is beyond human reach. Therefore, instead of seeking "an image of Eternity" in the human, man should accept his limitations and love his fellow men with their weaknesses and shortcomings. He proclaims that human love, though painful, is sweet and that Spiritual love, which consists in the soul's merger with the Divine, is attainable in the realm of death: "Love's very pain is sweet, / But its reward is in the world divine / Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave" (596-597).

Thus, the concept of love that emerges from a review of Shelley's images of solitude in Alastor, Prometheus Unbound, "The Sensitive Plant," and Epipsychidion shows a synthesis of the old belief in love as a unifying force which accords order to the chaos of life; of the heavenly eros, which expresses man's intense longing for Ideal Beauty

and Love; and of the Christian agape, which emphasizes selfless and dispassionate love without expectation of any reward in return.

ENDNOTES

¹Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. ix.

²Nygren, Agape and Eros, p. ix.

³Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," Works, VII, 118.

⁴Ficino explains the ancient concept of love in the chapter entitled "The Origin of Love from Chaos" in Commentaries in Convivium, I, iii, 374. I am grateful to John Erskine Hankins, who refers to this concept of love in his discussion on "Chaos and the Elements" in Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Thought (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), pp. 38-39.

⁵Juan Luis Vives, On Education, trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge: The Univ. Press, 1913), 28.

⁶M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition And Revolution In Romantic Literature (New York: W. W. Horton & Company, 1971), p. 300.

⁷James O. Allsup, The Magic Circle: A Study of Shelley's Concept of Love (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1976), p. 49.

⁸Seraphia Leyda, "'Love's Rare Universe': Eros in Shelley's Poetry" in Explorations of Literature, ed. Rima Drell Reck (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), p. 47.

⁹Earl R. Wasserman, Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Critical Reading (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 31.

¹⁰Carl Grabo, Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1968), p. 103.

¹¹Ross Greig Woodman, The Apocalyptic Vision In the Poetry of Shelley (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 146.

¹²Here by saying that Demogorgon represents man's conception of both the Infinite and the finite, I do not mean man's intuitive powers, but his ideas of the Permanent and the Temporal through his perception of the phenomenal.

¹³Richard Harter Fogle, "A Limited Reading of Prometheus Unbound," in The Permanent Pleasure: Essays on Classics of Romanticism (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1974), p. 77.

¹⁴Richard Cronin, Shelley's Poetic Thoughts (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 139.

¹⁵Ronald A. Duerksen, "Shelley's Prometheus: destroyer and preserver," Studies in English Literature, 18 (1978), p. 626.

¹⁶Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1948), p. 116.

¹⁷Peter Butter, Shelley's Idols of the Cave (Edinburgh: At the Univ. Press, 1954), p. 185.

¹⁸Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry, a revised edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 146.

¹⁹C. E. Pulos, The Deep Truth: A Study of Shelley's Scepticism (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1954), p. 63.

²⁰Here the Earth is masculine, not the feminine Earth of the first three acts.

²¹Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism, p. 307.

²²Priscilla P. St. George, "The Styles of Good And Evil In 'The

Sensitive Plant," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 64 (1965), 482.

²³Earl R. Wasserman, Shelley: A Critical Reading (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 160.

²⁴Glenn O'Malley, Shelley And Synesthesia (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), p. 10.

²⁵Benjamin P. Kurtz, The Pursuit of Death: A Study of Shelley's Poetry (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1933), pp. 256-257.

²⁶O'Malley, Shelley And Synesthesia, pp. 104-105.

²⁷Donald H. Reiman, Percy Bysshe Shelley (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1969), p. 131.

CHAPTER V

MAN'S SELF-IMPOSED DOOM

Though dialectic and rhetoric figure prominently in elucidating Shelley's views on man's predicament in the mortal world, images of solitude also play a significant role in unfolding them. In Prometheus Unbound, for instance, Asia engages herself in dialectic with Demogorgon to find answers to her metaphysical questions (II, IV). In the same poem, the Fury, having failed to subdue Prometheus by physical torture, resorts to rhetoric to torment him mentally by showing him the hopelessness of his lofty ideals for the elimination of human pain and suffering from the world:

The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love, and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill (I, 625-628).

Nevertheless, the images of solitude in Prometheus Unbound, written during 1818 and 1819, and those in The Triumph of Life, written in May-June 1822, which I shall discuss in this chapter, fairly convey his idea of evil. In both poems, these images reveal that man is not born with evil, that it is not forced upon him by some external god, and that it is his own creation. It ruins man's life because he himself delegates power to it by not exercising his will. Melvin T. Solve aptly explains this idea:

In Prometheus man is represented as having a mind which has power to create good and evil as it sees fit, with power to heed or not to heed Nature's silent eloquence. Neither good nor evil are [sic] imposed upon the world by extraneous gods. Good is inherent in the universe, which works toward its own inscrutable ends; evil is also inherent and not imposed by an omnipotent Demon.¹

In the opening soliloquy of Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus, bound to a precipice in the Indian Caucasus, calls attention to the isolation of both Jupiter and himself and defies the tyrant by telling him that he has enslaved all "but one" (I, 2), meaning himself. In the following images of solitude,² Prometheus informs Mercury that he gave power to Jupiter, and for this act he hangs chained to the mountain:

I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-winged snow cling round my hair (I, 381-385).

The implicit suggestion is that Jupiter has failed to conquer Prometheus not only because the saviour of mankind has rebelled against the oppressor, but also because the rebel is superior to the ruler, for he has given Jupiter all that he has. Therefore, by his own stupidity and lack of wisdom, Prometheus has imposed upon himself the tyranny of Jupiter. Ironically enough, despite his proud defiance of Jupiter's rule, Prometheus has enslaved himself by declaring his hate for his adversary, for he says in the same soliloquy,

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).

Both the avenger and the avenged are isolated beings, who have

allowed hate to govern their lives. Thus the images of solitude indicate that evil is not inherent in man but that he creates it by not using his judgment or wisdom. To use Michael Henry Scrivener's words, "Jupiter was created by Prometheus at the moment the human soul divided itself, installing a powerful deity in heaven to worship and fear, but maintaining hope in the eventual downfall of the tyrant."³ In this battle between the oppressed and the oppressor, the oppressor also suffers from the fear of self-annihilation and unrest because he stands in constant peril of being overthrown. Images of solitude in Asia's dialogue with Demogorgon make this point very clear, for she argues that like men, Jupiter does not worship his own creator, that is, man, because he is always afraid of being betrayed by his maker: "Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, aye when / His adversary from adamantine chains / Cursed him, he trembled like a slave" (II, IV, 106-108).

Though evil is man's own creation, he does not realize that it is so and wonders why he suffers. By taking upon himself the task of emancipating mankind from the tyranny of Jupiter, Prometheus thinks that he is rendering great service to humanity--and rightly so, but what he does not understand is the fact that by harboring hate and revenge for his adversary, he is only perpetuating the evil against which he rebels, for hate breeds hate. Speaking of his sacrifices for mankind, Prometheus describes the isolation and torture that 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).

His pain and isolation cannot force him into submission--a brave and noble stance indeed--which deserves praise and shows man's potential for good. However, his arrogant and contemptuous pride betrays itself when Prometheus tells Jupiter that his own abject state is far superior to Jupiter's:

More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
 From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God
 Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
 Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
 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, forever! (I, 16-23)

And he does not understand why he is not delivered from his misery. He asks the Earth, the Heaven, and the Sea why they are insensitive to his suffering:

I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
 I ask yon Heaven--the all-beholding Sun,
 Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
 Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below--
 Have its deaf waves not heard my agony? (I, 25-29).

Then he goes on to describe the extreme and endless pain and isolation he endures at the hands of Jupiter. Prometheus's unremitting pain and seclusion are symbolic of man's misery and unhappiness when he allows himself to be ruled by an extraneous power, instead of imposing self-rule. Blinded by hate and despair, he longs for the day when his enemy will face a worse fate than his:

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, 53-56).

Nevertheless, suffering and solitude lead to his recognition of the futility of hate and revenge, for he says,

I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then, ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall (I, 56-59).

Being liberated from his enslavement, Prometheus appeals to the mountains, the cataracts, the springs, the air, and the whirlwinds to repeat the curse so that he can wipe it out completely from his mind:

Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voiced Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering thro' India! Thou serenest Air,
Thro' which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poised wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orb'd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak (I, 59-73).

Though the voices of nature do not repeat the curse, they recount the adverse effects of Prometheus's curse on the phenomenal world. The Voice from the Mountains says that their "snowy crest" (I, 91) "never bowed" (I, 91) "as at the voice" (I, 92) of his "unrest" (I, 92). The Voice from the Springs relates the effect thus:

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be (I, 93-98).

And the report of the Voice from the Air is equally dark and gloomy:

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
 My still realm was never riven:
 When its wound was closed, there stood
 Darkness o'er the day like blood (I, 99-102).

The Voice from the Whirlwinds speaks of a similar effect:

And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
 To frozen caves our flight pursuing
 Made us keep silence--thus--and thus--
 Though silence is as hell to us (I, 103-106).

Finally, Mother Earth sums up the enormity of the baneful and damaging aftermath of the curse:

The Tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
 Cried "Misery!" then; the hollow Heaven replied,
 "Misery!" And the Ocean's purple waves,
 Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds (I, 107-110).

Earth, the mother of the Titans and therefore also the mother of Prometheus, feels proud of her worthy son and rejoices because he stands up for the rights of men, but when she finds him being tortured and humiliated, her anger and sorrow bring pestilence and starvation to the natural world. Distracted by the havoc her suffering causes, she utters her imprecation on Jupiter. Describing the violent and ravaging effects of her rage and distress, she says that the inhabitants of the "million worlds which burn and roll" (I, 163)

beheld

My sphered light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
 Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
 From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
 Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
 Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
 Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
 Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled:

When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
 And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
 And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
 Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
 Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
 With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
 With the contagion of a mother's hate
 Breathed on her child's destroyer (I, 164-179).

The curse of the Earth represents the hatred of the oppressed masses against the oppressor. Just and righteous though their cause may be, both the leader and the led expose a burning desire for hate and revenge and thus unwittingly defeat the very purpose of their war against tyranny and oppression. The leader boldly challenges the authority of the despot by expressing his hate and anger, while his timid followers wait for an opportune moment for revenge. The Earth tells Prometheus that even if he does not remember the curse, her seas, streams, mountains, caves, winds, and air preserve it, as the following images of solitude reveal:

I heard
 Thy curse, the which if thou rememberest not,
 Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
 Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
 And the inarticulate people of the dead,
 Preserve, a treasured spell (I, 179-184).

Nevertheless, his affliction and seclusion finally exonerate Prometheus from the crippling power of hate; and thus freed from the self-inflicted slavery, he withdraws his curse on Jupiter: "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, 303-305). But the masses whom the Earth represents take his recantation as his acceptance of defeat and grieve over his change of heart:

Misery, Oh misery to me,
 That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
 Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
 The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
 Howl, spirits of the living and the dead,
 Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquished
 (I, 306-311).

Thus we may conclude that though in Prometheus Unbound, Shelley adopts a dialectical and rhetorical approach to articulate his idea of evil, he also accomplishes this purpose through his images of solitude.

The whole drama of man's seemingly irrevocable but redeemable situation is enacted in solitude in The Triumph of Life, written in May-June, 1822. The poem, as Cameron has noted, is reminiscent of *Alastor*.⁴ The visions of both the poet-narrator and of his mature self in the crippled form of Rousseau, which constitute the action of the poetic drama, appear in the isolation of mountains. The characters--the poet-narrator, Rousseau, the "Janus-visaged" (94) charioteer, the deformed "Shape" (87) in the chariot, "a Shape all light" (352)--are all solitary figures, except, of course, the ones, who appear in the pageant of life. But even they are portrayed as lonely, isolated, and enslaved beings, aimlessly hurrying along the desert-road of life. Thus they also become images of solitude.

The images of solitude in the first forty lines of the poem themselves disclose Shelley's idea as to the cause of all ills and human suffering in the world. Harold Bloom, I think, first detected in these images a worshipful devotion of mindless nature to the Sun, which she must perforce obey, but man, endowed with consciousness, is free to exert his own will.⁵ When man, like nature, surrenders himself blindly to an external power, benign though it may be, he invites his own doom and destruction. At dawn, the duty-conscious sun hastens from his

eastern abode to perform his daily task, and on his appearance, jubilant nature pays her homage to him:

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth (1-4).

Lines five through fourteen conjure up the picture of a temple where a devotee performs rituals such as burning incense on its altar to propitiate a deity:

The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray

Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air (5-14).

The image of the birds tempering their morning song with the prayer of the Ocean is also an image of isolation because the poet envisions this scene in the seclusion of the mountain. Bloom beautifully describes the worshipful obeisance of nature to the sun: "The mountain snows are 'smokeless altars'; the ocean contributes its 'orison'; the birds pray by tempering 'their matin lay' (like small monks); the flowers (like acolytes) swing their censers, while the sun kindles their 'orient [i.e. 'morning'] incense,' so that they can send 'their odorous sighs up to the smiling air.'"⁶ The "mountain snows" (5), the "Ocean" (7), the "flowers" (9)--various objects of nature--wake up with their Sun-father

to do their portion of the work, which he, by his example, commands them to carry out. This expectation in itself is an imposition or exploitation of power:

Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own and then imposed on them (16-20).

The mindlessness of nature and her total submission to the blind power of Necessity are likened to human enslavement to inherited dogmas and ideologies. Since men do not care to exercise their own judgment or intellect to control their lives, they fall victim to the power of tyrants or oppressors. As David Quint comments, "The human mind habitually ignores or accepts its imprisonment, and worships the shapes it or other, similar minds have created."⁷ Recognizing the vicious and tragic effects of human apathy and ignorance, the isolated poet-narrator disregards the natural order by refusing to follow the beaten track: During the night he keeps "as wakeful as the stars that gem / The cone of night" (22-23) and at the break of dawn, he lies down "beneath the hoary stem / Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep / Of a green Apennine" (24-26) to rest. It is at this time, in the midst of nature, that the poet-narrator of The Triumph of Life has his wakeful dream:

the deep

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head,
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread

Was so transparent that the scene came through
As clear as, when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills, they glimmer; and I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
 Bathe in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
 And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn

Under the self-same tree, and heard as then

The birds, the fountains, and the sea still hold
 Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air,
 And see those clouds o'er the horizon rolled (27-40).

The Vision, in fact, conveys in human terms the same idea as that implicit in the sun-nature imagery evidently for emphasis. The dream-panorama that unrolls before the poet-narrator brings out with remarkable vividness and precision the isolation, the purposelessness, the indifference of teeming humanity, as they drift along in the stream of life without caring to steer their course. Each one in the crowd moved on, but

none seemed to know
 Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
 He made one of the multitude, and so

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
 One of the million leaves of summer's bier (47-51).

There were others who

mournfully within the gloom

Of their own shadow walked and called it death;
 And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
 Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath (58-61).

The darkness cast by their shadows, which is symbolic of their misery and wretchedness on earth, is their own creation; and the fear generated by the darkness, which is symbolic of their lack of courage to destroy it, is also a figment of their imagination. They are not concerned about finding a way out of their dilemma, though the way is open to

them. They followed the path

where flowers never grew,--
And weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew

Out of their mossy cells for ever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths and wood-lawn interspersed,

With over-arching elms and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brook (65-72).

These images of solitude imply, as Reiman has said, "the inherent possibilities open to the man who exercises his will to liberate himself from bondage both to external necessity and to his own blind passions."⁸

The solitary images of the blindfolded, "Janus-visaged" (94) charioteer and his silent companion--the death-like "Shape" (87) in the chariot--emphasize the isolation and affliction of man, caused by his refusal to exercise his will and by his resignation to the blind forces of Necessity. The poet-narrator's description of the growing frenzy of the crowd indicates the gravity of man's predicament: "And as I gazed, methought that in the way / The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June / When the south wind shakes the extinguished day" (74-76). And the brilliance of the light that heralds the approach of the chariot symbolizes the crushing and blinding power of Necessity. The dazzling light blurs even the glare of the sun, a situation which suggests that man is so immersed in his dark and gloomy life that he does not see the glory of the sun, which is there for his pleasure and enjoyment, if only he is willing to cast out the oppressive and malignant glare:

And a cold glare intenser than the noon,
But icy cold, obscured with blinding light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon

When on the sunlit limits of the night
 Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
 And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might,

Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
 The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim form
 Bends in dark aether from her infant's chair,--

So came a chariot on the silent storm
 Of its own rushing splendour (77-87).

The idea of man's dreary and pitiful state, brought on by his surrender to the power of Necessity, is made explicit by the image of an isolated, ugly, deformed, death-like figure within the chariot, which is led by a charioteer whose eyes are bandaged. It is also significant to note that the chariot is drawn by winged shapes whose identity cannot be determined because of the glare of lightnings. Apparently, the meaning is that the charioteer himself, who represents Necessity, does not know his own destination, for he moves on by a relentless force:

and a shape
 So sate within, as one whom years deform,

 Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
 Crouching within the shadow of a tomb;
 And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape

 Was bent, a dun and faint aethereal gloom
 Tempering the light. Upon the chariot beam
 A Janus-visaged shadow did assume

 The guidance of that wonder-winged team;
 The shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
 Were lost (87-97).

The chariot, then, is the chariot of life, and the charioteer is a symbol of the blind forces of Necessity. Though most critics regard the charioteer as representative of Necessity and the chariot by implication of life, Ross Greig Woodman maintains that the chariot is "an emblem of the creative imagination."⁹ Cameron, for instance, writes, "The

charioteer, then, is necessity, which Shelley regarded as a universal force, permeating both nature and society."¹⁰ This idea is implicit in Reiman's comment: "Because necessity is blind, 'ill was the car guided,' no matter what its speed or power."¹¹ Carl Grabo holds a similar view: "Life is charioted by blind force."¹² The images of solitude, as I have already demonstrated, clearly portray the charioteer as an emblem of Necessity. The bandaged eyes of the charioteer further support this contention, since they suggest his lack of knowledge of the past, present, and future:

All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been, or will be done (99-104).

The car, though ill-guided, speeds "majestically on" (106). So enchanting is its spell that

The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw, like clouds upon the thunder-blast,

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around (107-111).

Though these images are not strictly images of solitude, they create an impression of isolation and doom of the teeming millions, as they yield to the enticements of the amoral power. We must, however, concede that the poet-narrator's dialectic with Rousseau in succeeding lines (111-307) explain the conquest of all men except "the sacred few" (128) by "Life" (180) more perspicuously than do the images of solitude.

Among the captives of the chariot are men of all sorts--despotic rulers and their persecuted subjects; lewd debauchees; military, religious, and intellectual leaders, and finally Rousseau himself, who is overpowered by his "own heart alone" (241). The poet-narrator's dialogue with Rousseau undoubtedly adds force and vitality to Shelley's position on man's sad, lamentable situation; nevertheless, the images of solitude also illuminate it.

As the images of solitude in Alastor delineate the poet-hero's pursuit of Ideal Truth and Beauty in youth, similarly these images in The Triumph of Life portray Rousseau's search for the Infinite in the prime of his life. Rousseau is, in fact, the poet-narrator's mature self. His passionate longing for the Transcendent finds expression in the form of a dream, as he falls asleep under a mountain:

In the April prime,
When all the forest tips began to burn

"With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young season, I was laid asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time

"Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep;
And from it came a gentle rivulet,
Whose water, like clear air, in its calm sweep

"Bent the soft grass, and kept for ever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sounds, which whoso hears must needs forget

"All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love (308-319).

That this vision epitomizes Rousseau's conception of Ideal Beauty and not reminiscences of his prenatal life is clear from the following images of solitude:

And whether life had been before that sleep
The heaven which I imagine, or a hell

"Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
I know not (332-336).

There is also no ambiguity concerning the Divine nature of the "Shape all light" (352). The light that permeates the place is not the light of the "common sun" (338) and the music that overflows is a harmonious blend of diverse sounds. These facts reinforce the Shape's divinity:

"Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place

"Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun;

"And, as I looked, the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the sun's image radiantly intense

"Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest's maze
With winded paths of emerald fire; there stood

"Amid the sun,--as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain paved with flashing rays,--

"A Shape all light (337-352).

Some critics see this "Shape" as a malevolent being, basing their conclusion on the blankness of mind that her soft, musical tread on the waves of the stream produces:

"And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them; and soon

"All that was, seemed as if it has been not;
And all the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers; and she, thought by thought,

"Trampled its sparks into the dust of death,
 As day upon the threshold of the east
 Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

"Of darkness re-illumine even the least
 Of heaven's living eyes! like the day she came,
 Making the night a dream (382-393).

Quoting lines 385-392, P. M. S. Dawson, for instance, states that "a rather higher level of ingenuity is needed to establish the credentials of the Shape as heavenly representative when we come to consider these lines."¹³ And Reiman argues that "the 'Shape all light' is like the Witch of Atlas, a daughter of the sun and is, therefore, worthy of worship by the terrestrial creatures. But, also like the Witch of Atlas, she is the daughter of an earthbound water spirit."¹⁴ He adds that "a union of the Absolute and the limited, the Eternal and the temporal, inevitably resulted in the distortion of the Ideal."¹⁵

The "Shape," it is true, as Reiman points out, is an emanation of the sun, and thus it is a divine incarnation. Moreover, it emerges from a realm of no earthly bonds of love or hate--where there is absolute peace and tranquillity. And its omnipresence as Venus, which is both a morning and evening star, provides further proof of its being a symbol of Eternity. But I cannot accept Reiman's argument that the Shape's gentle treading of the waves makes her the daughter of an earthly water-spirit. It rather emphasizes the insubstantial and ethereal nature of the "Shape." The literal meaning of her gentle walk on the river is that the reflection of the sun's diffused light falls on the water. As a result of this diffusion, there is interchange between the Ideal and the phenomenal. Rousseau tells us about the salutary effect of this contact: "Like a willow" (364), "her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream / That whispered with delight to be their pillow"

(365-366).

As to the blotting out of all thoughts by the "Shape," the implication is that man's attempt to probe the mysteries of the Transcendent is destined to fail. The shape slowly obliterates all traces of Rousseau's Ideal Vision in order to divert his attention to the temporal. Other lines that critics cite to prove their point that Shelley meant the "Shape" to be an evil spirit are as follows:

And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning's vital alchemy

"I rose; and , bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

"Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,

Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts;--so on my sight
Burst a new vision, never seen before (401-111).

Referring to these lines Ann Shealy asks that "if the 'Shape all light' is good, why should the effects of drinking nepenthe be evil--that is, the fading of the ideal vision and betrayal into the power of evil."¹⁶ The effacement of the vision does not prove the "Shape" to be evil; on the contrary, it cautions him of his limitations, and his decision to join the captives of the chariot of "Life" shows his mature thinking that despite the madness and frenzy of the throng, his duty is to be one of them and learn from the experience. And this realization comes as a beneficial effect of his coming in contact with the Ideal. His urge to become one of the crowd is so intense that nothing can dissuade him from doing so:

me, sweetest flowers delayed not long;
 Me, not the phantom of that early form,
 Which moved upon its motion--but among

"Thickest billows of that living storm
 I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
 Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform (461-468).

Despite the chariot's "cold light," which has a paralyzing effect, Rousseau hopes to climb Dante's higher realm of love, which for him is changeless and eternal:

"Before the chariot had begun to climb
 The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
 Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme

"Of him whom from the lowest depths of hell,
 Through every paradise and through all glory,
 Love led serene, and who returned to tell

"In words of hate and awe, the wondrous story
 How all things are transfigured except Love (469-476).

He, however, regrets that the world does not respond to Dante's message of love, which is clear from the following images of solitude: "For deaf as is a sea, which wrath makes hoary / The world can hear not the sweet notes that move / The sphere" (477-479).

Then Rousseau describes in images of solitude that "the grove / Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers, / The earth was grey with phantoms" (480-482). In a series of animal images he makes explicit what is implicit in the shadow imagery. Man himself is to blame for these shadows or phantoms, which give rise to power, corruption, and exploitation. Though these shadows proliferate and kill the joy that sleepers like Rousseau in the valley of forgetfulness experience, there is still hope for mankind, for some, among whom Rousseau himself, finally withdraw themselves from the hideous dance:

These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown

"In autumn evening from a poplar tree,
Each like himself and like each other were
At first; but some distorted seemed to be

"Obscure clouds, moulded by the casual air;
and of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there,

"As the sun shapes the clouds; thus on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all; and long before the day

"Was old, the joy which waked like heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley died;
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,

"And fell, as I have fallen, by the way-side (528-541).

After having thrown their lot with their fellow beings, Rousseau and some others realize the depths of ignorance, depravity, cruelty, and corruption infecting the world, and this realization enables them to extricate themselves from the throng, implying that these few, wise men will save mankind from their present deplorable and pathetic state. Moreover, Rousseau's look at the chariot "as if that look must be the last" (546) also confirms the fact that he had at last freed himself from the vicious and ghastly influence of the chariot of "Life." Furthermore, as Reiman suggests, "the extended reference to Dante seems to presage the method of human salvation from the inferno of the Poet's vision as well as from Rousseau's."¹⁷ Thus the images of solitude in The Triumph of Life succeed in unfolding the cause of man's hellish and tragic life on earth and also the means of his redemption. The cause is man's enslavement because he does not exercise his will, and the means of deliverance are self-rule and love.

ENDNOTES

¹Melvin T. Solve, Shelley: His Theory of Poetry (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 37.

²Here I cannot avoid repeating some of the lines from Prometheus Unbound, which I used in Chapter Four in my exposition of Shelley's concept of love through images of solitude.

³Michael Henry Scrivener, Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), p. 156.

⁴Kenneth Neil Cameron, Shelley: The Golden Years (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 464-465.

⁵Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 224-225.

⁶Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking, p. 224.

⁷David Quint, "Representation and Ideology in The Triumph of Life," Studies in English Literature, 18 (1978), 639.

⁸Donald H. Reiman, Shelley's "The Triumph of Life": A Critical Study (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 186.

¹⁰Cameron, Shelley, p. 454.

¹¹Donald H. Reiman, Percy Bysshe Shelley (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1969), p. 155.

¹²Carl Grabo, The Magic Plant: The Growth of Shelley's Thought (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 405.

¹³P. M. S. Dawson, The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 271.

¹⁴Reiman, Shelley's "The Triumph of Life," p. 63.

¹⁵Reiman, Shelley's "The Triumph of Life," p. 63.

¹⁶Ann Shealy, Journey Through the Unapparent: A Reading of Shelley's The Triumph of Life (Hichsville, New York: Exposition Press, 1974), p. 68.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Besides treating phenomenal solitude as a poetic convention, Shelley regards it as a means of truth and Divine revelation. A good example of his use of solitude in the traditional sense is found in the sun-nature imagery in The Triumph of Life that suggests man's self-invited doom and destruction as a result of his not exercising his will. But he looks at it primarily as a source of Divine inspiration and illumination. His interchange with natural objects brings him intimations of a world that transcends the mortal world. In "Mont Blanc," for instance, the huge and formidable mountain appears to him as a symbol of the Omnipotent; in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the revived earth on a spring day leads to his mystical experience of the visitation of Ideal Beauty; in "Ode to the West Wind," the tempestuous west wind in a wood by the side of the river Arno in Florence makes him conscious of the destructive as well as the preserving power of a mysterious Being; and in "To a Skylark," the solitary skylark winging through the sky becomes an embodiment of a Transcendental power. Again, in Alastor, it is in the isolation of idyllic natural surroundings that the poet-hero gains his mystical experience. Though such experiences are punctuated by moments of doubt and disillusionment because of his empirical affiliations, they reflect his uncertainty about the mind's power to perceive the mystery of the Unknown realm rather than his doubt

about the reality of this world. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that his images of solitude reveal his close interchange with nature, they also appear as symbols of mind's ability to apprehend the Transcendental as well as its inability to probe its mysteries.

Shelley's images of solitude are also expressive of his idea of love. When love determines human actions, it resolves all conflicts and creates harmony; and when hate rules them, it insemminates discord and division. In Prometheus Unbound, for instance, Prometheus's loneliness and unmitigated pain, as he hangs chained to an icy precipice in the Indian Caucasus, symbolize this division because the protagonist scornfully awaits the overthrow of his adversary, Jupiter, whom he creates himself. When, however, realizing through pain and solitude the baneful effect of hate, he withdraws his curse on Jupiter, he gains his release and union with Asia. Their union is indicated by their entrance into a cave, which is suggestive of the wholeness of the human soul. In Epipsychidion, too, he envisions, through such images ideal human love, which he discovers is possible only in the realm of death. In "The Sensitive Plant," the presiding spirit of the garden, who is isolated from human contact, dies before the browning of the first leaf. The implication is that she withdraws herself when she suspects a possible defection of the plants' allegiance. Even the images of solitude which reveal Shelley's concept of love demonstrate his passionate yearning for the Divine.

Though dialectic and rhetoric are the chief devices by means of which Shelley seeks to convey his idea of evil, his images of solitude also effectively express this idea. In The Triumph of Life, he

poignantly describes the isolation of the human mind through images of solitude. Speaking of the captives, the poet-narrator says that they deliberately resist the good by following the "path where flowers never grew" (65) and though "weary with vain toil and faint for thirst" (66), they do not hear "the fountains whose melodious dew / Out of their mossy cells for ever burst" (67-68), implying that it is within their power to avoid evil. They spend their lifetime searching for an external cause of evil without realizing that they themselves are the cause of it.

Thus through images of solitude which depict either the isolation of natural phenomena or the isolation of the human mind, Shelley expresses his central ideas on the Infinite, love, and evil. Nature plays a vital role in these images because he seeks truth and Divine knowledge through his interchange with nature. He also uses these images symbolically to express his ideas. Though his interchange with nature does not give him the satisfaction of unveiling the secrets of the Invisible or the Unknown world, it does not interfere with his faith in its existence. Images of solitude also reveal his concepts of love and its antithesis hate or evil. He envisions love as union, which ends all conflicts and discords of life, and hate as division, which germinates strife and dissension and poisons life. It is Shelley's firm belief that evil is man's own creation because instead of exercising his own will, he allows himself to be dictated by others.

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