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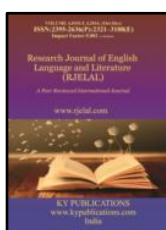
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"IL BUON Tempo Verra": Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Millennial Future.

George EWANE NGIDE (PhD)

Senior Lecturer, Department of English, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon

E-mail: ngidengide@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

This article is based on the Romantic principles of the organic concept of nature, the dynamism involved in the evolution of man in the universe and the need to return to a new and ideal society. Shelley believes in such an ideal society and his belief is carried in the inscriptions on the ring he wore "IL BUON Tempo verra" (THE GOOD Time Shall Come). We posit that Shelley's Romantic Imagination is one that views the universe first, as a single organised mechanism, then as one that has been corrupt through socio-political ills and changes, and lastly as one that needs to regain its lost organic content. It is therefore Shelley's altruistic goal to work towards regaining the original organic state of the universe for a millennial future, a kind of New Jerusalem, and one where the human being will be freed of all evil, social or political.

The methods to be used, proposed by Shelley, are varied and range from universal love, nonviolence, to vegetarianism. We contend that Shelley's poetic vision is contemporary in the sense that it is aimed at purging life of its misery and evil, with Shelley himself considering political and socio-economic freedom as the direct agent to effect change. Shelley opines that after rooting out evil from society man will become "just man" in equal status with other beings, whether animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, material or immaterial, finite or infinite. The universe will then become a paradise of harmonious beings with a certain cosmic harmony regained and the New Millennium, a true paradise on earth. The Romantic theory will serve to advance the argument.

KEY WORDS: Percy Bysshe Shelley, Millennial, Romanticism, Cosmic Harmony, "ilbuon tempo verra", change.

Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley's writings and philosophy of life have been subjects of academic debates and a burgeoning area of research. Critics of Shelley's philosophical vision of life have generally been divided into two polarised camps. The one maintains that Shelley was "a falsetto screamer, a sentimental narcissus, a dream-ridden escapist, an immoral free-love cultist with a highly inflammable nature and particularly, in the present age, as the weakling author of the lyric called 'The Indian

serenade" (Carlos Baker, 11). Mathew Arnold (1865), for instance, opines that Shelley is an "ineffectual angel". Francis Thompson's view is that he was a "winsome child" and André Maurois (1923) thinks of him as an "impulsive Ariel".

George Santayana (1913) in *Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion* ascertains that Shelley was "a dogmatic, inspired, perfect and incorrigible creature" who "abounded miraculously in his own clear sense" but who was "obtuse to the droll, miscellaneous lessons of

fortune" (511). What Santayana intimates here is that the events of life left Shelley "dazed and sore" yet he remained "uninstructed". According to him, Shelley was incapable of understanding reality and so reacted variedly to the events of life to the extent that when he felt oppressed "he hated the world", and gasped for freedom. This is what, according to him, led Shelley into "creating world after world in idea" (511). The idea expressed here is that Shelley was not, like other human beings, a product of a social environment, but a mystic outgrowth of nature, "like a bee or butterfly" and that his philosophy, likewise, is not the product of a social environment, or apparently, of an intellectual one either, but of the pure substance of his own mind, a dream fantasy which led him into "creating world after world in idea" (511).

In clearer terms, these critics consider Percy Bysshe Shelley's thoughts on the creation of a new world order, the Millennial or the Golden Age and on the return to one's natural state of innocence and infinite goodness, as mere fancy evolving from childlike dreams.

Contrary to the above critique on Shelley, Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (1996) consider Shelley as "Poet and legislator of the World" (6). Harold Bloom (2001) sees Shelley as a "unique poet, one of the most original in language". (1). According to him, Shelley's poetry is "autonomous, finely wrought, in the highest degree imaginative and has the spiritual form of vision stripped of all veils and ideological coverings..." (1). William Wordsworth (2002) on his part concedes, even though reluctantly, that "Shelley was one of the best artists of us all: I mean in workmanship of style" (15). According to Baker (1948), Shelley has been praised, among other things, as a "foe of political oppression", "an optimistic and altruistic idealist", and as a "deliverer with a message of brotherly love" (11).

Mary Shelley on her part claims that the criticisms levied against this poet, her husband, "generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism" (ix) are lopsided. In the "Preface by Mrs Shelley to the First Collected Edition, 1839" of Hutchinson's *Shelley: Poetical Works*¹, she stresses that Shelley has been judged partially. She insists that if he were

judged impartially by critics "his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any of his contemporary". She stresses that without the negative and partial criticism, the exalted nature of Shelley's "soul would have raised him into something divine" (ix). It is on this account that Mary Shelley seeks to re-establish what she terms "the truth" about her husband's poetic vision and philosophical thought. She draws her reasoning and argument from what she considers to be Shelley's attachment to the cause of human happiness and improvement, the fervent eloquence with which he discussed his subjects and the happy abundance and beautiful language in which he clothed his poetic ideas. She concludes that the "ruling passion" of Shelley's "soul" was to defecate life of its misery and evil. According to her, Shelley dedicated to this passion "every power of his mind, every pulsation of his soul". She further contends that Shelley looked on political freedom "as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind" (ix).

Statement of the Research Problem

The treatment of Shelley by critics and reviewers, therefore, leaves us with many unanswered questions about Shelley and his works, his mission and vision as well as the essence of his writing. Did Shelley write poetry just for the sake of art? Is "art for art's sake" the goal of poetry as Keats claims? Is there no ennobling goal in Shelley's vision? Is Shelley truly "incapable of understanding reality" as George Santayana has emphatically stated? Can his poetry be completely dismissed as "juvenilia"? Is there no underlying philosophy in Shelley's poetic meaning? If Shelley has been accepted as a Romantic poet, what is it that is romantic in his imagination, in his appreciation of the nature of things, in his vision of cosmic reality, in his perception of the universe? This last question provokes in us yet another question. Does Shelley view the universe as a static, complete and finite mechanism incapable of mutation?

Hypothesis

In answering the questions above, we posit that the ring Shelley is said to have been wearing on which was written "IL BUON TEMPO VERA", roughly translated as "THE GOOD TIME SHALL COME", is a thematic summation of his vision and philosophy of

life. Shelley was of the innate conviction that the universe was created whole and holy but that the human being, through what William Wordsworth calls "meddling intellect" has corrupted the universe and himself through social and political ills that are not akin to his being as at creation. In spite of this "Edenic" loss, man still has the possibility through will as a necessity to go back to his past and lost glory. This movement is what we call in this study Dynamic organicism and what M.H Abrams(1973) in *Natural Supernaturalism* calls "the therapeutic drive".

This article is not concerned with that movement. Rather its chief goal is to portray the millennial future that Shelley dreamed of, a New Golden Age, an earthly paradise achieved through Will and a conscious human effort. In this ideal universe, everything is at one with everything else where like Alexander Pope says, "all are but part of one stupendous whole" and the intimations of Barry Commoner(1971) in his *First Law of Nature* that "Everything is connected with everything else".

Methodology

In unveiling Shelley's millennial future, we shall make recourse to a number of his poems that project that vision. Among such poems are "Queen Mab", "Hellas", "The West Wind", "The Cloud", "The Revolt of Islam", "Adonais", "Prometheus Unbound" and a host of other poems. We shall also examine the symbols used by Shelley to drive through his message of the possibility for the universe to move towards achieving the past and lost glory. Some of such symbols include the snake, the cloud and the wind. These poems and the symbols, like others, bare Shelley's personal stamp of the transformation of mankind to a new millennium of peace and cosmic harmony. Through a profound textual analysis, we bring out the beauty of Shelley's other elements of language that further his millennialism.

Shelley's Vision of the Golden Age

Shelley's goal, we stated earlier, was to show that reform and improvement in the lot of mankind were possible. He saw that in spite of the corrupt nature of the universe there was a possibility for man to change by becoming infinitely good and create a millennium of freedom, independence, selflessness, love and brotherhood. It

is this universal brotherhood where man reconciles with himself and nature, where man returns to his roots and lives a paradise on earth that we call the "Golden Age", the "Millennial Future" or better still, the "New World". Graham Hugh(1967) calls it "the therapeutic drive" (50). This means, in his own words "the attempt to 'heal' the division between mind and world, subject and object, citizen and state" (50). In this Millennial Future, New World or the "Everlasting Spring" (the expressions are used as synonyms) man becomes just man, loving, friendly, and there is no division among the different elements of the universe. Shelley's objective was to show that reform and improvement in the lot of mankind were possible. There is a certain cosmic harmony that permeates the universe and brings the many into the one. Shelley in "Mont Blanc" also calls this "The everlasting universe of things".

In her notes to "Queen Mab", Mary Shelley contends that Shelley in his poetry was:

...animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is bursting. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. ... He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement: nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood, which he thought the proper state of mankind, as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. ... He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. (Hutchinson, 837)

The Snake Symbol

The new world that Shelley envisages is captured in a number of his poems but mostly expressed in "Hellas" and "Queen Mab". The most quoted chorus

in "Hellas" is clear about Shelley's vision of a future new state or the "Golden Years" that return after the lost paradise. The last chorus in "Hellas" describes the new world:

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her wintry weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires
gleam

Like wrecks of a dissolving dream. (477)

The earth here is compared to a snake that renews its skin after years of crawling on the ground and wearing out its skin. The snake passes in some tight corner in order to leave behind its old skin and have a new and fresh skin that makes it brighter and shiny. The dramatic comparison here is that the earth, like the snake, has gone through difficulties in the past but through a conscious effort, the difficulties notwithstanding, has left behind these old habits of corruption, dictatorship, evil and hate and become a new and fresh universe, just like the snake. The "Snake" is, therefore, one of the leading symbols in Shelley's poetry. Robert A. Hartley (1974) calls it the "Uroboros", that is "the figure of the encircling serpent" (524). In Shelley's work, the snake is related to the idea of eternity. Hartley further contends that the snake is viewed by Shelley's commentators as a symbol of eternity. Accepted that it is a symbol of eternity, the snake in Shelley's poetry also embodies time and universal change. The snake symbol runs through all the periods of Shelley's writing. Its first appearance is as far back as "The Daemon of the World". The daemon exhorts the spirit of pure-hearted Ianthe to awake so that she can act to remove the shroud of "earth's unsubstantial mimicry".

Therefore from nature's inner shrine,
Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
Majestic spirit, be it thine
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
Where the vast snake Eternity
In charmed sleep doth ever lie. (3)

No mention is made here of the snake's circularity. Rather it is described as sleeping. In the 1817 poems, the symbol of the snake appears twice. In "The Revolt of Islam", the Snake appears at the

beginning of Canto IV where Laon recovering from his ordeal on the column, wonders if the events of his youth, including his love for Cythna, were dream or reality. She questions whether her "spirit" woke "From sleep as many-coloured as the snake / that girds eternity" (73). Still in "Hellas", the earth's past is likened to "wintry weeds" that are outworn. In this golden age, the wintry weeds are cleared giving room for gleaming "empires" and a smiling "Heaven". Put differently, the earth becomes heaven and heaven becomes the earth, both dissolve into each other, in a kind of cosmic interfusion or intermingling that makes the cosmos a paradise of being. Still in this new world:

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star;
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo claims the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore. (477)

There is a "brighter Hellas", "waves serener far", "fairer temps bloom", "Another Orpheus sings again", and "A new Ulysses leaves once more / Calypso for his native shore". The image of Ulysses (in Greek Odysseus and English Odyssey) tells the return of the world from conflict and war to peace and harmony. In Greek mythology he is husband of Penelope, father of Telemachus, and son of Laërtes and Anticlea. Odysseus is renowned for his guile and resourcefulness, and is hence known by the epithet Odysseus the Cunning (or "cunning intelligence"). He is most famous for the ten eventful years he took to return home after the ten-year Trojan War and his famous Trojan Horse trick. The return of Ulysses is the return to felicity and order. It might have taken years like the renewal of the universe or the necessary return to a lost paradise might take but it, in the end, does take place.

Again, in this golden age another "Orpheus

sings again". In ancient Greek mythology, Orpheus was a legendary musician, poet, and prophet. The major stories about him are centred on his ability to charm all living things and even stones with his deathless and breathless music, his successful attempt to retrieve his wife, Eurydice, from the underworld, and his death at the hands of those who could not hear his divine music. What Shelley intimates here is that in this new world, the earth is alive again and divine or heavenly music is at the background of every existence. Everything is new and fresh whether "Peneus" (a Greek river god), "Tempes" (a vale in Greece), "Argo" (the ship captained by Jason in Greek mythology), or "Cyclads" (Greek island group in the Aegean Sea, south-east of the mainland of Greece). Greece is a representation of the universe and everything thing there, in this new world, blooms with a gleam. Shelley further intimates that in this millennial future the past is dead and buried and a new life of freedom begins:

O write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be--
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free,
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if naught so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy!
The world is weary of the past—

O might it die or rest at last! (477-478)

For Shelley the world is weary of the past and a new world emerges from the ashes of the past. There is universal harmony, love, brotherhood and an unprecedented oneness in the universe.

The same notion of a millennial future is expressed in "Queen Mab". Desmond King-Hele (1960) quotes Shelley as having written to his prospective publisher that "the Past, the Present and the Future" were its "grand and comprehensive topics" (31). He adds that as a basis for his philosophical poem Shelley uses the "well-worn eighteenth-century artifice of the conducted tour" (31). Shelley's tour covers the whole universe. The fairy Mab, who acts as guide, comes down to earth and steals a mortal victim, Ianthe, who passively watches as Shelley, through Mab, unfolds his chosen world picture. The first two cantos of the poem are devoted to Ianthe's abduction and a rather hasty survey of the past. In Cantos 3-7 Shelley attacks the present ills, notably tyrants, war, commerce, wealth and religion. In Cantos 8-9 he describes the millennial future. Ianthe, after the revelations, is brought back to Earth thoroughly indoctrinated and urged to fight tyranny, falsehood and "heart-withering custom". She is also warned that reform will be slow.

The Present to Shelley is characterised by tyrannical kings who enjoy every luxury while the masses suffer. The kings' power is "like a devastating pestilence, / Pollutes whate'er it touches;" (773) and "Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame, / A mechanised automation" (773). War is also considered as not the evil of men in general, but from the intrigues of kings and others who have a vested interest in war like the priest, the lawyer and the hired assassins. Religion is criticised. Shelley reserves his fiercest critique against power-seeking priests and the concept of a revengeful anthropomorphic God. The power-seeking Churchmen pay lip-service to Christian ideals while perverting the church into a machine for grinding down the poor and preserving the established order.

In Canto 8, Shelley reveals that dark deeds of the past and present give way to rosy dreams of the future. Shelley is convinced that "every heart

contains perfection's germ" and that the germ will flourish under the light of a liberal education. He merely describes the happy society he foresees. He does not bother to explain the process of change. His perception and conviction are based on the fact that man has the innate capacity to change by a simple will and fortitude of mind.

In Shelley's *Millennial Future* or *Golden Age*, deserts are converted into pasture, the Polar Regions are thawed without a rise in sea level, "bright garden-isles" begem the oceans, and "fragrant zephyrs" replace the storms which once deformed "the beaming brow of heaven". He contends that:

'The habitable earth is full of bliss;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were
hurled
By everlasting snow-storms round the
poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate or live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are
unloosed;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing
groves
And melodize with man's blest nature
there. (793)

"Wastes of frozen billows", "snow-storms", and "frost" represent the corrupt universe and the ills therein. These ills destroyed the vegetable universe and did not give room for any bloom and blossoming. But in this golden age, they are "unloosed". They have been replaced by "fragrant zephyrs", "spicy islands", "echoings sweet", "heaven-breathing groves" and a "blest nature". "Zephyrs" refers to the west wind, a soft gentle breeze that brings with it solace and joy, both internal and external. There is a universal joy that permeates the once deserted landscape. Life has returned, frost has disappeared, the vegetation now blooms, the islands are "spicy", the ocean "rolls" and "surges to the sloping sand" thus producing "echoings sweet" that "murmur through the

heaven-breathing groves" and together with "fragrant zephyrs" "melodize with man's blest nature". Thanks to this west wind, every ill of the universe is swept away and a new and fresh fragrance permeates the universe. The medicinal and healing power of this wind is echoed in Shelley's other poems and its symbolic significance in rejuvenating the landscape and every organic or inorganic material is evident in, and runs through Shelley's poetry. The "wind" is thus the most expressive and present symbol in Shelley's poetic imagination. It is both a preserver and destroyer.

The West Wind Symbol

Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" is a poem in which he evokes, through an elevated incantation, the uncontrollable wind, praying that it re-endows him with poetic inspiration when his powers do sober down. The poem gives expression to his wild and free imagination. He says:

Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new
birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among
mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophesy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?
(579)

Shelley wishes the wind to whirl him about as it does to the withered leaves, clouds, and waves. He also wishes that the wind should act as his emissary, spreading his reformatory ideas to mankind. The fact that the wind is an "unseen presence" shows that it is divine and supernatural.

Oh! Lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and
bowed
One too like thee: tameless, swift, and
proud. (579)

Shadrach Ambanasom(2001) holds that what we notice in this poem as in most of his poems is some

generosity in his use of images. The wind is at once like "loose clouds...", and the "loose clouds" are like "leaves". It is also like "some fierce maenad". One finds it difficult to bring the metaphors and similes together. Their relationship seems to be far-fetched and metaphorical. To use rhetorical looseness and the over-profusion of images is no doubt a sign of poetic immaturity and spiritual restlessness on the part of the poet. This notwithstanding, Shelley's desires and message are still driven home to the reader. This is what happens in "Ode to the West Wind". The wind in this poem does not become an arbitrary projection of an emotional state. It exists in its own right both as a destroyer and a preserver. In this perspective, the wind sweeps away the old in storms and gently fosters the new with Zephyrus (a soft gentle breeze from the west winds). In the opening stanza, the wind drives away the dead leaves and conducts the seeds, apparently cold and dead, to their graves. The second stanza pictures the wind in its stormy and terrible aspect. The third opens with an iridescent picture of Zephyrus who produces flowers and fruit by the sweetness of his breath. It states that "The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low, / Each like a corpse within its grave, until / Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow". (577)

The three stanzas stated above are built on the antithesis between the two powers of the wind, namely its terrifying powers of destruction and its gentle fostering influence of preservation noticed in the "unseen presence" of the "Wild West Wind" that simultaneously drives "leaves dead" "like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing" and "chariotest to their dark wintry bed/ The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low" and yet wakes the seeds through the soothing influence of its "azure sister of the spring". Hough points out that Shelley's own sense of oppression and constraint is related to the wind's freedom and strength;

He would like to be a dead leaf, a cloud, or a wave to be swept along by the wind's power; yet once he has been able to imagine that the wind's power was his own; and a similar power is naturally and by right his own: - he too is tameless(sic) and swift, but has been crushed by the weight of the

world. (144)

In Shelley's attempt to create a new millennial future, the wind becomes a very essential symbol. It is seen as a great power of nature that destroys in order to create, that kills the unhealthy and the decaying to make way for the new and the fresh. Shelley believes that without destruction, life cannot continue. This symbolization of the wind as both "preserver" and "destroyer" furthers this hypothesis. He envisions the West Wind as a devastating force that has the strength to destroy the evils of the existing society and preserve the good things of it. He sees it as a symbol of destruction and preservation, decay and regeneration, death and resurrection. He invokes the West Wind to free his "dead thoughts" in order to prophecy a Renaissance among humanity "to quicken a new birth", the new birth being the Golden Age. In the beginning of the poem we find the destructive loon of the West wind. In the first stanza of the poem the poet addresses the west wind as "Wild" and the "Breath of Autumn's Being." It is a powerful force which drives the dead leaves which are yellow, black, pale and hectic red, to distant places like ghosts from an enchanter. The west wind carries winged seeds to their dark wintry beds underground. "Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead / Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing," As a preserver the west wind scatters the seeds and covers them with dust. When spring comes, the scattered seeds beget new plants. The new plants with their luxuriant foliage and flowers usher in bright new colours and sweet odours that fill the landscape. Nature thus gets a new life and a new look. So, symbolically the west wind is a destroyer of old modes of life and old customs and preserver of new ways of thoughts and new patterns of life.

Shelley uses four kinds of colours namely "yellow", "black", "pale", and "hectic red" in order to characterise the "leaves dead." The colours are the colours of diseases. "The leaves dead" also symbolize all the aged practices, customs, traditions, institutions, rites and rituals. The West wind also expresses the very spirit of Shelley. He envisions that the invisible West Wind scatters the clouds in the sky. These clouds are the signals of the coming

rain. Rain carries away all the evils from nature and brings a changed and new look. Shelley hopes that his "rain" of thoughts would cause regeneration among mankind and sweep away all the unjust. Thus, Shelley's great passion for the regeneration of mankind and rebirth of a new world finds a fitting expression in the symbolization of the West Wind. The closing night, in Shelley's poetic vision is the dome of a vast tomb, in which the closing year will be buried. The accumulated water vapours also make the roof over the dying year and the atmosphere seems to be solid because of thick layers of dense clouds. The point is that Wind operates with the same and single point agenda, namely that it destroys the dead and preserves the living, and creates a universe of peace and harmony. The universe becomes a paradise of harmonious beings. Even the deserts, which are symbols of human misery vegetate and with them, the human being and the universe. Again, in "Queen Mab", Shelley captures this new universal spirit, the Golden Age. He writes:

'Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervors scarce allowed
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
ow teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Cornfields and pastures and white cottages;
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
A tigress sating with the flesh of lambs
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang,--
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet. (793)
The birds can now live and sing, grass now

springs, the universe once again teems "with countless rills and shady woods", "cornfields and pastures and white cottages". The newly vegetated universe has replaced the desert where "a savage conqueror" who fed on "kindred blood" lived, and where the "tigress" satisfied its hunger and thirst with "the flesh of lambs" thus creating wailings and "howlings" in the desert. With the new vegetable universe even the tigress "smiles / To see a babe before his mother's door, / Sharing his morning's meal / With the green and golden basilisk / That comes to lick his feet." (793).

The Vegetable World

In this new world that is seemingly paradise, "fertile valleys, resonant with bliss, / Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave, / Which like a toil-worn laborer leaps to shore / To meet the kisses of the flowrets there." (794). As Shelley puts it in very straight and simple language:

'All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life.
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness;
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues and diffuse them all abroad;
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glow in the fruits and mantles on the stream;
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint, and blushes into love. (794)

There is a certain sweetness and fragrance of rejuvenation in the air. The fruits are "ripe", the flowers are "fair" and the entire universe is filled with "consentaneous love" that "inspires all life". This is as far as the vegetable kingdom is concerned. In this general joy in nature, all animals also partake,

including man.

The fiercest animal, the Lion, has lost its claws and ferocity. It has become a friend of the lamb and no longer thirsts for blood. As Shelley prophesises:

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood;
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane
Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows;
All bitterness is past; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.
(794)

The Lion, with its once fearful symmetry, is friendly to kids and to the Lamb. It has, indeed, transformed into a Lamb itself because "His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made / His nature as the nature of a lamb". The lion, the lamb and the "dreadless kid" sport or play together. The lion is a metaphor for the corrupt nature of man. It symbolises tyrannies, Kings, statesmen, priests, despotism, destruction, wickedness, killing and murder, brief, the ills of the universe. In this Millennial Age, the lion has become the lamb. The Lamb here is a metaphor for the innocence of man, his natural disposition of calmness, meekness and mildness. Brief, the lamb is a symbol of the divine image of man as at creation characterised by peace, unity, and harmony. This is what Blake talks about in the poem "The Lamb". Like in Blake's poem, there is a trinity of being here that reminds us of harmony in the cosmos. The lion, having been transformed and recreated, naturally, into a lamb, has become a lamb and a child. The child is also a lamb and a harmless lion, just like the lamb is also the child and the harmless lion because all three share the same nature, that of innocence and purity. Among these three, that in this case could safely represent the Holy Trinity, "All bitterness is past".

Man in the Millennial Age

In this general dance and joy in nature man,

once the execrable being, the butcher of nature, is not left behind. He too is utterly transformed. Man has fulfilled himself. He has become kind, peaceful, free, nonviolent and healthy. He conquered disease by becoming a vegetarian. He is now an equal among other animals and among fellow man, "He chief perceives the change; his being notes / The gradual renovation and defines / Each movement of its progress on his mind." (794). Shelley writes that:

And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision stands
Immortal upon earth; no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging Nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humors in his frame,
All evil passions and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease and crime.
No longer now the wingèd habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play. (795-796)

By becoming vegetarian man is a friend to both animals and birds. He no longer "slays the lamb that looks him in the face, / And horribly devours his mangled flesh," In this way man has lost his violent passions. He is now reconciled with nature and has taken a journey backward to his natural state of felicity. As such all disease and organic lesion that resulted from his breaking of the natural order of things "Nature's broken law" is now in the past. "Hatred, despair and loathing in his mind, / The germs of misery, death, disease and crime." have bygone him. In other words, man is kind, happy, loving, lively, healthy and crimeless. "Nature's broken law" refers to the fact that man went against

the law of creation that made him a vegetarian in Genesis, which law he flouted by becoming omnivorous.

The birds too that used to fear every human form are also at one with man, knowing that he has been transformed utterly. The "winged habitants" no longer "flee away" from every "form of man" "but gather round, / And prune their sunny feathers on the hands / Which little children stretch in friendly sport / Towards these dreadless partners of their play". (121-124). The New World is a ceremony of innocence and harmony. The chain of being is re-established and man, the birds and animals eat of the same food and drink of the same water, savouring the same sweet breeze and enjoying the heavenly scenery and landscape. Shelley had thought of man, like most Romantic poets did, as the one that breaks the natural chain and distorts the harmony in the cosmos. The dominion and prerogatives that man had arrogated himself over other living creatures have been lost in this Millennial Age.

All things are void of terror; man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals; happiness
And science dawn, though late, upon the
earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates
the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth
extend
Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter
lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of
truth

To decorate its paradise of peace.' (796)
"Terrible prerogative" above refers to man's usurpation of the right of dominion over other creatures which is not the natural order of things as at creation. Having lost this unnatural power and become ordinary by shunning evil and all forms of dominion, he is, at this Golden Age", like every other

creature. For this reason the universe is one of peace which is stressed by the adjectives "cheers", "renovates", and "cease". In this universe there is no illness or disease, as opposed to man's previous life that was characterised by an odd mixture of disease and pleasure.

Now the universe is a complete pleasure. "Reason" which refers to man-made laws that stifled individual and collective freedoms and which conditioned his behaviour in society has given way to complete "pleasure". "Pleasure" here means freedom to do as one wants and wishes, briefly, the liberty to enjoy oneself without any restraints whether in love relationships or in any other domain that does not impede on the pleasure of others, after all, all of humanity at this age is in pleasure. It is thus a universe where all pleasures are blended to produce a holistic pleasure. "Omnipotence of mind" to which every creature of the universe "lends / Its force" further stresses the freedom and liberty of man to act as his mind dictates given that the mind or soul determines man's divine actions and behaviours in the universe. This freedom is compared to "a gem of truth", which truth "decorates" the "paradise of peace". Put differently, in this universe, treachery and lies are absent. The mind is divine and likened to God. It is therefore the source of all happiness. Lambo, in discussing the notion of cosmic harmony in the poetry of William Blake and William Wordsworth asserts, forcefully, that in the universe of things, God is the cosmic raw material from which other elements are made. These elements thus have God as their source. The universe has become a paradise of peace where the finite and the infinite, the material and the immaterial, the animate and the inanimate, the organic and the inorganic live in perfect harmony. King-Hele holds that in this utopian future:

The wild beasts too are tamed, and man stands among the animals as an equal, instead of trying to slaughter them. The aged are active and unwrinkled, being free from disfiguring passions and crippling diseases. Love needs no fetters and 'prostitution's venom'd (sic) bane' no longer 'poisons the springs of happiness and life'. Cathedrals and palaces, silent

reminders of the past, stand derelict. (36)
This future is man's "glorious destiny!" (792) and, according to Shelley, it will come with "Time!" (792) that is, when man would have torn that "gloomy shroud" (792) of his. The gloomy shroud refers to man's deviation from the natural order of things and his adoption of evil as a *modus operandi*. The fairy herself describes the Earth as Heaven. She says:

'O HAPPY EARTH! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that
ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe,
aspire!
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly working will
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space
and time,
Verge to one point and blend forever there!
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place
Where care and sorrow, impotence and
crime,
Languor, disease and ignorance dare not
come!

O happy Earth, reality of Heaven! (796)

Notice the uppercase letters of both "HAPPY" and "EARTH" in the above excerpt. What this insinuates is that the universe before this Golden Age is not a place worth living. At the same time, the uppercasing of the two words means that the universe is completely transformed from a place of misery and unhappiness to a happy and serene environment comparable only to "Heaven". The universe is in the image of heaven.

This, according to Shelley, has been the ideal aspiration of all human beings in the universe. The earth once consumed all hopes and aspirations of its inhabitants. Earth was once the place of tyranny and misery which Shelley considers as "glorious prize of blindly working will / Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time". In the New World, however, the earth is habited by "purest spirits", that is, transformed and utterly changed beings, and the earth itself has become a "pure dwelling-place", that is a kind of heaven, perhaps heaven itself. This Golden Age knows no worries like "sorrow", crime, languor, ignorance and disease. Earth is simply in the image of heaven and like

Heaven, it is once again a place of universal love, peace and harmony. The Golden Age is characterised by a kind of reductive monism. Nature is an emanation of the divine. In Shelley's poetry, nature is not distinguished from the spirit of beauty, the "One", as in "Adonais". This Romantic identification of Nature and spirit suggests a Neo-Platonic monism. One of the characteristics of Neo-Platonism is the idea of effluence and emanation. This idea looks upon the world as an overflow, as a diffusion of the divine life. Thus, the universe emanates from the absolute as light emanates from the sun. Thomas Taylor, quoted by Joseph E. Baker, states that "All intellects emanate from one first intellect; all souls from one first soul; all natures blossom from one first nature; and all bodies proceed from the vital and luminous body of the world" (56). What this means is that the cosmos is in perfect unity wherein God is the cosmic raw material, that is, the source or the effluence from which all other elements of Nature emanate. In "Queen Mab", the earth (emanation) reunites with Heaven (effluence) and both form a divine unity. This unifying force in nature finds a suitable expression in Shelley's poetic image of the cloud and other elements of the cosmos.

The Cloud Symbol

The "Cloud" expresses, like the wind, the Romantic theme of man finding deity in nature. Shelley in this poem makes the cloud take several forms - a gardener, a shade-bearer, provider of water to "the thirsty flowers", a nurturer, a redeemer, a comforter and a creator. It is personified, speaks and describes its functions in the first person. Apart from bringing showers to flowers, it basks in the sun, it colours the atmosphere, hangs like a roof everywhere and it is the daughter of Earth and Water and the baby of the sky. The cloud changes into different forms:

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 caverns of rain,

Like a child from the womb, like a ghost
from the tomb,

I arise and unbuild it again. (602)

Ambanasom argues that the cloud is “a deathless element in the sense that it dies and comes back to life” (107) and in this birth, death, and rebirth, “it leads a cyclical existence”. The cloud is therefore, unlike the wind, essentially positive and immortal. It is above worldly existence with its panoply of troubles and worries. The cloud is a kind of celestial being that provides positive things like bringing rain to the thirsty earth. Although Shelley does not directly identify with the cloud in the poem, there is the unspoken and unwritten suggestion that he would love to be like the cloud. Ambanasom once again recognises this and stresses the point of Shelley’s desires vis-à-vis the cloud. He thinks that “Perhaps in “The Cloud” Shelley obliquely wishes to share in the attributes that are the Cloud’s; its positive functions and immortal Nature” (108). The speculation and doubt in Ambanasom’s mind and writing can be dispelled when one considers Shelley as a sensitive spirit, one whose goal is to reform the world through his poetic ingenuity, message, and imagination. The cloud therefore symbolises, so to say, the immortality of Shelley’s socio-political thoughts and philosophy as well as his penchant for making the world a better place.

The point I am anxiously making here is that Shelley recognises himself in the cloud, and shares a certain harmony with it. This explains why the cloud is personified and certainly in the image of the poet. It is a personification and a metaphor for the perpetual cycle of transformation and change in nature. All life and matter are interconnected and undergo unending change and metamorphosis. Like the wind, the cloud becomes in its ever-changing modes a symbol of regeneration. It is like “a child from the womb” and like ‘a ghost from the tomb’ that rises into a new life. With its sentient traits that personify the forces of nature the cloud is everywhere, it brings rain and ushers a new birth of spring and hope as well as general joy in nature. The corrupt nature of society is considered by Shelley as “the thirsting flowers”, “the leaves when laid / In their noonday dreams”, “the dews” etc and these are transformed, naturally, by the cloud into “fresh

showers”, “light shade”, “sweet buds”. In this way, the cloud does not die, it only mutates like life itself. For Shelley, the cloud is thus the symbol that brings an everlasting spring, a new millennium, where “the blue dome of air” is “Build up”. Shelley uses the poem as a metaphor for his view on politics. Like the cloud, the political situation of the world is always changing. Corrupt politicians change everything to suit their own personal needs and yet their own change will also be natural because the only thing that is constant in the universe is mutation as the cloud does. In Shelley’s world of imagery the notion of restrained movement is closely associated with human freedom and perfection. The never-ceasing movement is a symbol of the essential supreme state of universal humanity. This is equally epitomised in “Mont Blanc” where “The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves, / Now dark- now glittering, now reflecting gloom / Now lending splendour....” (1-4) Yuki Oda (???) contends that:

This true phase of humanity, this everlasting movement may have long been concealed to oblivion and smothered to stagnation under the “heavy weight of hours”....Yet this is where his hopes and beliefs were set - as, at the call of spring, every sentient being is awakened into bloom, so, some day in future, human spirit must, bursting the icy chains of convention, flow out into the boundless ocean of freedom, regaining this essential phase of uninterrupted movement. (51)

The “heavy weight of hours” (Ode to the West Wind) is Shelley’s favourite phrase to denote the oppressive influence exerted upon human souls by secular forces and power. The overthrow of this “heavy weight of hours” leads to man’s freedom and liberty which in turn leads to the resurrection of the universe and the springing of a millennial future.

The Spirit of the Hour or the Millennial Future

The fulfilment of the Golden Age is expressed in the Spirit of the Hour, the ideal society of freedom and excellence, change and love, peace and forgiveness, briefly, a regeneration of mankind. In Act III, scene IV of “Prometheus Unbound” the Spirit of the Hour is a prophetic speech of what the

millennial future is all about. Jupiter is overthrown by Demogorgon, and the unchained Prometheus is reunited with Asia in a forest cave. The Spirit of the Hour describes the universal liberation after the fall of kings and the end of social classes, nations and racial distinctions. I hereby reproduce the speech deliberately:

As I have said, I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering
went
Among the haunts and dwellings of
mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I
looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and
men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate,
disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon ye who enter here";
None frowned, none trembled, none with
eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse,
to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling
lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained
to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own
heart
The sparks of love and hope till there
remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among
men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold,
hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the yes it

breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light
and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant
forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not
think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared
not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor
pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured
gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe,
love. (252-253)

The Spirit of the Hour wanders "Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind" (252) and what it sees is a world totally changed. In this new world, "thrones were kingless" (252) and there seemed a kind of harmony among men and the cosmos. "Thrones" and "kings" are symbols of oppression, tyranny and torture. These have disappeared. The sight is a joyful one, where "men walked / One with the other even as spirits do, / None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear, / Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows / No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell," (252). To fawn means to flatter in order to gain favours and such hypocritical attitudes of man no longer exist in this Golden Age. The earth that before now looked like Hell has utterly changed. Hate, disdain, fear, and selfishness have disappeared and men walk brotherly together "as spirits do". There is no frowning, no trembling and "None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines / Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak" (252). The events have now "made earth like heaven" (252).

In this new world, women also have a place and a right, "And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind / As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew / On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant

forms, / From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;" (252). The women are compared to heaven, to rain, to light and dew. These elements that are in the image of the woman bring freshness and joy to mankind. They are pure and their beauty radiates the universe.

Shelley's Golden Age, as viewed by the Spirit of the Hour, is one void of jealousy, envy, shame and other social and political ills. In this millennial future "Thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons;" (253), which represent respectively the monarchy, the church, law, and other societal chains, have dissipated and fallen like a mask. As the Spirit says:

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king

Over himself; just, gentle, wise: (253)

The mask is the hypocrisy of man and his dominion over other species including fellow man. His authoritative nature and wickedness have ended. The new society is one of freedom and liberty, equality and fraternity. All symbols of authority have fallen, class distinction ended, tribalism and nationalistic tendencies vanished, worshipping fellow humans has become a thing of the past, and all creatures are equal, just, gentle, and wise.

In other words, the Poet in "Prometheus Unbound" is disgusted with the present set up of the society characterised by hatred, fear, self-love, and self-contempt. He is in search of hope instead of disappointment, freedom instead of slavery, social justice instead of exploitation, kindness instead of anger and cruelty, rule instead of anarchy and lawlessness in the absence of kings and rules. The Poet is a messenger of Golden Age. He wants all social evils thrown off, and truth and virtues established. He hates falsehood, hollow talk and hypocrisy. He would like to live in such a society where even women are frank, beautiful, and kind. He envisages a universe where they are wise and do not suffer from pride, envy, jealousy and ill shame. The poet makes a prophecy about a new world which would be of an extraordinary set-up. There would spring up a golden age in which none will

utter false words. Nobody will engage in hollow talk. Hypocrisy will be swept away. That Golden Age will be free from mistrust, disbelief and treachery.

The language of the poem is well knit and the words carefully arranged. The ideal society will be like a heaven. Wise people will be free from pride and prejudices. They will dominate the society by their fine emotions and broad outlook. The point is that Shelley here, as in most of his longer poems, captures the theme of the human need for love to fulfil what is incomplete and to reintegrate what has been divided, both in the individual psyche and in the social order. Shelley fuses the myth of a lost Golden Age with the Biblical design of a fall, redemption, and millennial return to a lost felicity, and gives special prominence to the associated Biblical figure of the exile, return, and marriage of the bride.

This is expressed in "Prometheus Unbound" like Keats does in "Hyperion". In the preface to "Prometheus Unbound" Shelley states that he chose the Titan Prometheus for his protagonist over Satan, "the hero of Paradise Lost," because Prometheus has Satan's heroic virtues of courage and firm "opposition to omnipotent force," but without the moral defects which, in Milton's "magnificent fiction," engender "in mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measures" (Hutchinson, 205). Shelley is therefore a RomanticMiltonists who revises Milton's great imaginative conception of the evils and agonies of human experience.

The fact of the world becoming a paradise of peace is also the subject of Shelley's "The Revolt of Islam". The poem was originally published in 1817 under the title "Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century". The plot centres on two characters named Laon and Cythna who initiate a revolution against the despotic ruler of the fictional state of Argolis, modelled on the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Although the general subject of religion is addressed, the poem is not particularly about Islam. Shelley wanted to make the poem a symbolic parable on liberation and revolutionary idealism following the disillusionment of the French

Revolution. The subtitle, "A Vision of the Nineteenth Century" sounds Shelley's millennialism and the ideal future state. Mary Shelley(2008) in *Notes on the Revolt of Islam* asserts that Shelley:

chose for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world, but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine-- full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death ... It best details the impulses of Shelley's mind, and his motives: It was written with entire unreserve; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the shadow of the valley of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring (Hutchinson, 156-157).

The happiness of mankind in an ideal universe is thus the core of Shelley's mission and vision. Mark Kipperman (1998) calls this universal change and millennial future "the universal secularisation of paradise" (189). "The Revolt of Islam", Shelley's longest and most neglected major work, contains some of his most rigorous thinking on the subject of revolution. The poem also shows a substantial growth in his poetic skill. It occupies a crucial place in Shelley's poetic development. Written after "Queen Mab" and before "Prometheus Unbound", "The Revolt of Islam" is the link between them, in technique as well as in content. In the poem, the dogmatic, declamatory style of earlier works gives way to narrative and conversation. Necessity as the instrument of social change is replaced by individual will, the desire to make the world a better place.

In "The Revolt of Islam" Shelley found his mature voice. His subject, the philosophy of reform, and conclusions therein, persist throughout his

career. The poem shows Shelley's empiricism, relentlessly examines the consequences of "reform" as well as tyranny, and is the transition between his earlier works and the great poems which would follow. Shelley wished "The Revolt" to appeal "to the common sympathies of every human breast," emphasizing both that his readers share important concerns and that he directs his poem primarily to their hearts. Both his desire to write for society, to converse with a readership rather than dictate to a coterie, and his belief, in accord with Hume, that the will is motivated by emotions, show Shelley's inheritance from the eighteenth century. Those few critics who have studied "The Revolt of Islam" have usually seen it as a simple chronicle of the war between Good, as represented by the revolutionaries, Laon and Cythna, and Evil, as appearing in the Tyrant and the Iberian Priest. While such a paradigm is indeed established in the allegorical opening Canto, as the poem progresses, however, this facile dualism disintegrates. Even the protagonists are potential tyrants. Laon's contradictory language and Cythna's elevation as High Priestess of Equality demonstrate that revolution cannot be achieved instantly, finally, or easily. This is because evil derives not from external circumstance alone, but also from each man's potential "dark idolatry of self." Another important aspect of "The Revolt" is the personal immortality achieved by Laon and Cythna after their martyrdom. The poem consistently attacks Christianity and all organized religions. The Paradise of the concluding Canto is actually not an unreal or mystical state but the culmination of the poem's empiricism and Shelley's idealism.

"The Revolt of Islam", like "The Mask of Anarchy", "Hellas", and "Queen Mab", carries Shelley's poetic and philosophic visions. It stresses the millennial future and the New Golden Age. Stuart Peterfreund says that the poem, "Laon and Cythna" or "The Revolt of Islam" articulates the language of the poem's original sub-title "A Vision of the Nineteenth Century" in the aftermath of the fall of Napoleon (135). Although much of the poem expresses the sorrow and plight of the masses in the face of dictatorship, there is hope of a golden age and a return to the vegetable universe as in Genesis.

The New World is characterised by “a fierce and monstrous gladness” that “Spreads through the multitudinous streets” (147). In this renewed universe all are equal.

Conclusion

In the poems studied above, as in many others, Shelley’s millennialism takes the form of a universalised harmony among the different elements of nature. The Golden Age signals not only the return to Nature, but also the harmony in Nature. This cosmic harmony is, indeed, a successful return to the lost glorious past, achieved through both necessity and human will. The paradise regained is, to say the least, Biblical in content and the fulfilment of Shelley’s Dynamic Organicism achievement, primarily, through the imagination. Shelley in his poetry exhibits a profound awareness of the existence of an external law of harmony which governs life and the entire universe. The apparent fragmentation of life, according to Shelley and Wordsworth, is illusory. This is because a fundamental, well-defined unity permeates the universes. To this all embracing law both the flora and the fauna, the organic and inorganic aspects of creation respond. They act it out in their own conscious or unconscious being. This is what John Akwe Lambo(2002) in his treatment and analyses of the poems of Blake and Wordsworth refers to as “Cosmic Harmony” (83), that is the interdependence of things in nature, organic or inorganic, animate or inanimate, all of which respond to the same mood, sad or happy.

NOTE

¹Unless otherwise stated, all textual citations of poems in this study are drawn from *Shelley: Poetical Works*, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

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