

PART IV

THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

POETRY

'Our poesy is as a gun which oozes
From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i' the flint
Shows not till be struck: our gentle flame
Provokes itself, and, like the current, flies
Each bound it chafes'.

(Timon)

I have chosen poetry to illustrate the functioning of the Creative Imagination partly because it is the field with which I am most familiar and in which I am therefore most at home; partly because (as I learnt most impressively from my experience in up-country stations in India!) books are, generally speaking, readily available both for reading and for reference; whereas the masterpieces of painting, music and the other arts are not. You can put the whole works of Keats or Shelley (in a small edition such as the World's Classics) literally in your pocket on a trek in Kashmir; but you cannot put even your own selection of paintings, or the performances of ballet and opera or an orchestra, or the masterpieces of architecture, into your pocket to enjoy silent upon a peak by the glacier lakes.

My selection is very narrow and restricted, even of its kind. But the illustrations are chosen in the hope that they will exemplify what I believe to be 'the true genius of poetry', not only embodying in its imaginative form its own most intense experience as mens creatrix - the creative advance it has been achieving - but, no less spontaneously and characteristically - helping to create as well as foreshadow the 'world commonwealth of persons' in which it finds its natural home. If this is true, it should be possible to extend this ^{experiment} ~~venture of discovery~~ indefinitely in any field of the Creative Imagination. ~~It is an experiment which invites the creative response of every curious or interested reader.~~

If anyone wishes for a coherent, logical and reasoned basis for the selection and interpretation attempted here I need only point to Prof. John Macmurray's 'Self as Agent' where, I am convinced, he will find a most

persuasive, comprehensive and coherent argument for the reality and significance of what I have called, ~~in my own terms,~~ the 'mens creatrix', 'the creative advance', and 'the world commonwealth of persons'. The entire body of the studies included in my work may be taken (I hope) as scattered marginal comments and illustrations of that profound and masterly 'creative advance' in human understanding. ~~Such, at least, are the reflections of the Fortoise pledging as best it can in the footsteps of the Hero!~~

The Creative Imagination: Poetry.

Introduction

In order to work out a better understanding of the function of the mens creatrix as creative imagination I have tried to follow its workings in four poets in whom it was central. It would not be difficult, I think, to extend the search for evidence as to how the Imagination works in creative literature indefinitely. But these four will serve my limited purposes, and I ~~must content myself with giving a very~~ ^A brief indication of their context as ~~I understand it.~~ ^{will be sufficient}

Chaucer's main concern is directly with the world of human persons. (e.g. Troilus and The Canterbury Tales: even his animals are, as in Aesop's Fables, comic disguises - masks, symbols - for humans). The context is the medieval theological world picture; varied incongruously though typically, by the contemporary interest in the Greek and Roman classics, and by a delightfully fresh awareness of the 'natural' environment and by a strong vein of salty humour. Shakespeare is even more directly absorbed in the human actors on his 'World-stage'. His sensitiveness to nature is wider and more exquisite, but it is ^{still} in the background. Milton is wholly absorbed in the theological world-picture of English Puritanism: as he says himself, the height of his great argument is to justify the ways of God to man. Dryden is a master satirist, almost narrowly confined to politics, even the theological context being subordinated to it. Pope's world is literature - the classics and contemporary writers. His psychology and philosophy are both borrowed, the latter being Bolingbroke put into verse; the organic metaphysics of 'the Plenum' which sees reality 'as full and perfect in the hair as heart'; ^{and so} 'Whatever is, is right' - if

you can see it in its cosmic perspective.

The Romantic Movement in English literature was not centrally concerned with 'gothic', the middle ages and romantic sentiment; these were there, but in the great poets they were scarcely even marginal. What the great poets did was to put 'Nature' and imagination into the focus of interest and significance. A comprehensive and vivid awareness of 'Nature' as man's natural environment, with a sensitive and imaginative response to it, was to them a recovery of wholeness and sanity, a healing of the psychic blindness that had afflicted the 18th century and its obsession with rationalism.

Prof. Whitehead defended this as sound metaphysics in his 'Science and the Modern World'. Physical science deals with an abstract aspect of the world. The abstraction is necessary because these sciences are precision instruments: heuristic techniques for exploring the physical world and eventually gaining control of it. This process demanded the limit of accuracy, and had therefore developed mathematics as its most necessary and characteristic technique. Its most up to date development was the mathematical logic of Principia Mathematica. Bertrand Russell tells us that for a time he believed this ultra-Platonism to be the last word about 'reality'. Whitehead, on the other hand, regarded abstraction as an error - except for instrumental ~~purposes~~ purposes. To remedy the fallacy of mistaking an abstract means for an end, he restored the world-view - the 'vision' as they called it - of English romantic poets like Wordsworth. This, he saw, required a 'philosophy of the Organism'. In developing this philosophy he never quite succeeded in escaping from its limitation. This was unfortunate, as he had in fact seen beyond it. His 'God' was not only

a Platonic-Aristotelian Intelligence which integrated the universe of Platonic 'forms': this was only the 'primordial nature' of God. God also chose the particular pattern of inter-related forms that was to constitute each particular universe - such as our own. Each of these was an experiment, a new adventure, not only for its inhabitants (such as we human beings) but for God himself. The 'consequent' nature of God was therefore God discovering what happened when he made each such experiment. It was, ^{therefore} an adventure for God, and he gained new experience by it. In the last resort such a God must be envisaged as sharing the experience of the human persons who compose the particular experiment that is our human world. God therefore becomes the 'Great Companion' of man in this venture. Clearly this was insight which went beyond any possible 'organic' philosophy and required a 'personal' interpretation of the world and of God. But unfortunately Whitehead never followed this insight up; and his philosophy remained a philosophy of the organism. *Otherwise he comes near to Blake.*

Actually, the main emphasis of the first generation of English Romantic poets was different. It is true that Wordsworth tells us that in his early youth 'nature was all in all':

'... I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion, The tall rocks
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite, a feeling, and a love
 That had no need of a remoter charm
 Unborrowed from the eye ...' (Tintern Abbey).

But before long he had come to condemn this type of experience as too sensuous. The true illumination came (he considered) when he discovered that the primary reality is the 'Creative Imagination'. The first edition

of the Prelude (1798-1805), which established Wordsworth as one of the most original and genuine ^{of} poets in his own particular field, is the epic story of the 'growth of a poet's mind', tracing it from the early spontaneous but sensuous response to 'nature' referred to above, up to the conviction expressed in the closing line of the poem (end of Book XIII).

'Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified
 By reason and by truth; what we have loved,
 Others will love; and we may teach them how;
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
 A thousand times more beautiful than earth ^{that}
 Of which he dwells; above this frame of things
 (Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
 And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself
 Of substance and of fabric more divine.

This 'meta-physical' conclusion ^{had been} was anticipated in Book V in the symbolic form of a dream about 'the end of the world': an archetypal figure is escaping from an approaching Flood, carrying with him two symbols (a stone and a shell) representing science and poetry respectively. The conclusion is that even though the world itself should be destroyed, the 'mens creatrix' would remain; being the ultimate Creative Ground, it would simply create another universe.

'Yet would the living Presence still subsist
 Victorious; and composure would ensue,
 And kindlings like the morning; presage sure,
 Though slow, perhaps, of a returning day.'

← ^{same} The conviction is expressed with unmistakable clarity in Book VI:

' Imagination . . . that Power
 In all the might of its endowments came
 Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud ..
 In such visitings
 Of awful promise: when the light of sense
Goes out in flashes that have shown to us
The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode.' (vi. 525f)

In another poem he calls this

'The light that never was on sea or land
The consecration and the poet's dream'.

Since 'vision was his greatest gift', two ^{more} ^{maybe} examples are quoted, one from
the Prelude and one from the Excursion.

Pl 4
were/

'..... The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of water-falls,
(And everywhere along the hollow rent
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake to the wayside
As if a voice, in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream
The unfettered clouds, and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first and last and midst and without end.' ^{Prelude} (vi. 556f)

So he was lifted gently from the ground,
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved
Through the dull mist, I following - when a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city - boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendour - without end!
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt
With battlements that on their restless fronts
Bore stars - illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves

Blake was the most extreme exponent of this faith in the Imagination as the Creative Source of the Universe. But Blake was never content with 'Nature'; he saw it as the living background to man. He went back to the tradition of Chaucer and Shakespeare, ultimately derived (as he expressly states) from the 'Everlasting Gospel' of Jesus. As the quotations given later will show, he insisted that 'humanity' (in every sense) is the ultimate reality and the ultimate value. Man's 'Fall' consists precisely in the dis-integration of ^{his} ~~man's~~ original integrity, both as an individual and as a member of the world of persons; ^{this} ~~which~~ results in murderous tyranny and conflict between the 'members' who should have been united in understanding and friendship. The true humanity was 'embodied' in the 'divine Saviour', Jesus, through whose 'incarnation' in, and giving himself for, humanity as 'embodied love', man and mankind were restored to wholeness. The spirit of loving-kindness and friendship which creates the at-one-ment is what Blake calls 'forgiveness'. This ^{for Blake} ~~is~~ the mens creatrix - creative imagination in its highest and purest form.

Coleridge too was the prophet of the Creative Imagination as the ultimate reality. He was inspired for a time by Wordsworth's view of Nature. But what he calls 'my shaping spirit of Imagination' mysteriously died away in him too (Ode to Dejection). His genuinely original vein of poetry took the form of an imaginative-symbolic 'vision' which was haunted by a sense of guilt and evil which he did not know how to exorcise: ^{man had ~~betrayed~~ ^{isolated} his true nature.} {

For Shelley the oppression, injustice and suffering of mankind was the overwhelming fact. But he was distracted by the blue-print utopianism of Godwin, and by the fascination of a neo-platonic 'other world than this' as the 'crystalline' reality beyond the mirage ~~attempted~~ ^{of this world:}

*'Life like a dome of many coloured glass
Shains the white radiance of Eternity.'*

(The Sensitive Plant, etc.). It was only when he finally attempted to embody his most passionate convictions in the old myth of Prometheus, and as he identified himself more and more closely with his own vision of Prometheus, that his deepest experience was able to find direct and original expression in 'the Everlasting Gospel'.

It was Keats, the greatest of them all, who identified himself most consciously and most fully with the Shakespeare tradition. In spite of the early distractions of the rich sensuousness of his fertile imagination and unfortunate influences in his early poetic environment, he very soon discovered in Shakespeare the supreme source of inspiration and identification. Happily we can trace this growth in his letters as well as his poetry. By the time that he was writing his last (unfinished) mythological epic, Hyperion, man and 'the burden of the mystery' of suffering had moved right into the centre of the picture. It was as 'the mighty and miserable poet of the human heart' that he wrote in his letters: 'Among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of man - of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and Oppression ... We feel the burden of the ~~mystery~~ mystery'.

'.... None can usurp this height
But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are miseries and will not let them rest ...
~~As~~ The poet and the dreamer are distinct
Sheer opposites'. (Hyperion)

So for Keats the mens creatrix is only set free and finds its true point of creative advance when the Creative Imagination is united - as in Shakespeare - ^{and identified} ~~to identification~~ with the wisdom learnt by suffering. Here, as Matthew Arnold succinctly put it, 'he is with Shakespeare'.

9. ELIZABETHAN DRAMA.

Shakespeare. The theatre of Shakespeare's day was obsessed with the problem of violent aggressiveness, in particular revenge.

English translations of Seneca's tragedies were popular. The story of Thyestes (for example), who had his own children served up to him as a meat dish at a banquet, was familiar to all students of classical mythology. Here is a short extract from 'the argument' of an English version published in 1581:

◀ 'Megaera, one of the Hellish Furies (avengers of crime), raising up Tantalus from Hell, incited him to set mortal hatred between his two nephews.. Atreus enraged with fury against his brother, partly for defiling and deflowering his wife, practised with his servant to be revenged of his brother. Atreus, inviting Thyestes, unknown to him set before him at a banquet the flesh of his own children to eat. Atreus, for that he had thus revenged himself, took therein great pleasure and delectation'. And this is the argument of 'Gorboduc': 'Gorboduc ..x divided his realm to his sons Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell into dissension. The younger killed the elder. The Mother, for revenge, killed the younger. The people rose in rebellion and slew both father and mother. The nobility terribly destroyed the rebels ..' These were typical Senecan plots; both had been translated and successfully staged when Shakespeare began writing.

A second source of popular tragedy was the Spanish drama. These were justly known as 'tragedies of blood'. The most famous on the Elizabethan stage was 'The Spanish Tragedy'. Its theme is Revenge: 'Blood asketh Blood, and death must death requite'. The plot is briefly as follows: Horatio (the son of the Marshal of Spain) is murdered for courting Bellimperia (the Duke of Castile's daughter) by her brother

Lorenzo, and his friend Balthazar. Hieronymo, the father of Horatio, joins Bellimperia in a successful plot to kill Lorenzo and Balthazar. Hieronymo and Bellimperia then kill themselves in order to avoid the revenge their act provokes. 'Revenge' comes on to the stage in person in the Prologue, and reappears at intervals throughout the play to act as a sort of 'Greek chorus': 'They reckon no laws that meditate revenge'. Here are a few typical extracts:

← Revenge whispers to the ghost of Andrea -

'I'll turn their friendship into fell despite,
Their love to mortal hate, their day to night,
Their hope into despair, their peace to war,
Their joys to pain, their bliss to misery.'

Bellimperia: 'But how can love find harbour in my breast
Till I revenge the death of my beloved?'

Lorenzo: 'See where his ghost solicits with his wounds
Revenge on her that should revenge his death'
(stabs herself)

Hieronymo: 'Yet still tormented is my tortured soul..
Soliciting for justice and revenge...
For I'll go marshall up the fiends in hell,
To be avenged on you all for this...
Behoves thee then, Hieronymo, to be revenged.
The plot is laid of dire revenge, ..
For nothing wants but acting of revenge'.

In the end Hieronymo bites out his own tongue to prevent himself from betraying the plot.

The third main source of influence on the Elizabethan stage was Italian drama. The favourite theme is once again revenge. But, as we should expect from the outcome of Renaissance Italy, the treatment is more subtle and sophisticated. The best known on the Elizabethan stage was 'The Duchess of Malfi'. Here is the plot: The Duchess falls in love with the family

steward, Antonio, and they are secretly married. The steward is a worthy character. But the brothers of the Duchess - the Cardinal and Duke Ferdinand - partly out of that inordinate pride that characterized the Renaissance aristocracy (cf. Browning: *My Last Duchess*), partly because they had intended their sister to make a rich marriage, are seized with a furious passion for revenge. They shut up their sister in the palace and then subject her to the most refined and extreme mental tortures that they can devise until they drive her mad, and finally strangle her with two of her children. Antonio too is 'appropriately' treated. Finally, Ferdinand himself goes mad. Bosola (one of the hired murderers) kills the Cardinal, and Ferdinand avenges his brother's murder by killing Bosola.

In all these dramatic traditions, then, we find that the Revenge theme has become an obsession which has taken complete possession of the minds of all the leading characters. They might all be summed up in the title of another popular play on the contemporary stage: 'The Revenger's Tragedy'. An earlier version of Hamlet was entitled: 'Hamlet's Revenge'; and at the time Shakespeare was staging Hamlet, 'Antonio's Revenge' was being staged elsewhere; Hamlet himself, in Shakespeare's play, makes the *acid* comment: 'The croaking raven doth bellow for Revenge!' (III.II.268-9).

But the most powerful influence which had 'erupted' on to the Elizabethan stage was Shakespeare's predecessor Marlowe. Marlowe's dominating theme, which was also an obsession, was not revenge but an inordinate and ruthless ambition that deliberately set out to 'wade through slaughter to a throne'. This theme had become embodied for the Elizabethans in (their idea of) Machiavelli, who was believed to have

advised his 'Prince' literally 'to stick at nothing'. Marlowe actually brings Machiavelli on to the stage to act as Prologue to 'the Jew of Malta':

'I count Religion but a childish toy...
 Many will talk of title* to a crowne:
 What right had Caesar to the Empire?
Might first made kings, and Lawes were then most sure,
 When, like the Dracs's, they were writ in blood'.

The most extravagant embodiment of this passion for 'power after power' was presented in the character of Tamburlaine with all Marlowe's high-sounding and imaginative rhetoric:

' Scythian Tamburlaine
 Threatening the world with high astounding terms
 And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword'.

Here is Tamburlaine himself boasting of his own ambitions:

'Is it not passing brave to be a king..
 A god is not so glorious as a king..
 To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,
 Whose virtues carry with it life and death,
 To ask and have: command and be obeyed..
 The thirst of Reign, and sweetness of a Crown.
 Nature, that framed us of four elements,
 Both teach us all to have aspiring minds:
 Willis us to wear ourselves and never rest
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all..
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown..
 I that am termed the Scourge and Wrath of God
 The only Fear and Terror of the world..'

And in the end:

'Come let us march against the powers of Heaven
 To signify the slaughter of the gods'.

It is the same craving for power that drives Marlowe's Dr. Faustus to sell his soul to the devil:

* Italics mine.

'O what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence
 Is promised to the studious artizan (magician).
 All things that move between the quiet poles
 Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
 Are but obeyed in their several provinces..
 But his dominion that exceeds in this
 Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
 A sound magician is a mighty god:
 Here, Faustus, try thy brains to be a deity'.

What a contrast to Goethe's Faust! The Jew of Malta when deprived of his wealth - worth a city's ransom - by the Government of the island, is obsessed with the desire for an extremity of revenge:

'The plagues of Egypt, and the curse of heaven,
 Earth's barrenness, and all men's hatred
 Inflict upon them, thou great Primus Motor.
 I ban their souls to everlasting pains
 And extreme tortures of the fiery deep (hell)!

He pretends that his daughter has been converted to Christianity so that he can plant her in a nunnery, and bribes a ruffian to murder the nuns:

'First be thou void of these affections -
 Compassion, love, vain hope and heartless fear.
 Be moved at nothing, see thou pity none.'

Meanwhile he decoys the Governor's son into a duel 'by a forged challenge', and has the youth and his assailant ^{both} killed. When his daughter turns against her father, the Jew has her and all the nuns poisoned together:

'How sweet the bells ring, now the nuns are dead..
 Now all are dead, not one remains alive.'

By another trick he has two friars killed. And finally he betrays Malta to the Turks:

'I'll be revenged upon this cursed town..
 I'll help to slay their children and their wives..
 I hope to see the Governor a slave
 And, rowing in a galley, whipped to death.'

He then designs to kill the Turkish leaders by inviting them to a feast at a table under which is a trap where they will fall and be burnt to death,

while the Turkish army is blown up with gunpowder.

Edward II is imprisoned and murdered by the ambition of Mortimer (another 'Machiavellian') and his lover the Queen. They first kill Gaveston, the king's favourite and Edward curses them:

'If I be England's king, in lakes of gore
Your headless trunks and bodies will I trail
That you may drink your fill, and quaffe in blood..
That so my bloody colours may suggest
Remembrance of revenge immortally.'

King Edward's son ^{John} takes vengeance on Mortimer for killing his father:

'And thou shalt die, and on his mournful hearse
Thy hateful and accursed head shall ~~lie~~ lie.
Bring him unto a hurdle, drag him forth,
Hang him I say, and set his quarters up,
But bring his head back presently to me.'

In The Massacre of Paris the Duc de Guise is even more sinister:

'Now Guise begins those deep engendered thoughts
To burst abroad those never dying flames
Which cannot be extinguished but by blood..
What glory is there in the common good?..
I'll mount the top with my aspiring wings
Although my downfall be the deepest hell..
Give me a look that when I bend the brows
Pale death may walk in furrows of my face..
A hand that with a grasp may grip the world..
A royal seat a sceptre and a crown.'

To gain the crown he poisons the old Queen, ^{and} assassinates the Lord High Admiral of France, and organizes the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Eventually the King has Guise stabbed to death. The Cardinal vows vengeance:

'To revenge our deaths upon that cursed King
Upon whose heart may all the furies grip
And with their paws drench his black soul in hell' -

but he is strangled before he can carry out his threats. The King's mother curses her own son for killing Guise:

'...When thou wast born
I would that I had murdered thee my son.
I curse thee!'

Finally the King is assassinated by a friar, and the play ends with Navarre swearing to avenge his death:

King: 'Weep not sweet Navarre, but revenge my death...'

Navarre: 'I vow for to revenge his death'.

capo- Shakespeare

Such was the picture that the young and vigorous Elizabethan tragic drama everywhere presented to Shakespeare when he joined the profession in London. Even the most ordinary mind must have been caught by the spectacle. What impression would it have left on the most keen and sweeping imagination of genius? And the historical situation - not least Elizabethan London and the Court - must have powerfully reinforced it. There is no need to lay stress on this as so many admirable ^{recent} studies have brought it home to everyone.

This was the world in which Shakespeare, as dramatist - actor - stage manager, had to live and work. He had to write his plays for a theatre with this tradition and for the regular play-goers who expected it. At the same time this was the medium in which his imaginative genius as a creative artist had to discover itself and take control, and shape material to its own purposes. I shall now try to show that his creative imagination did take control with more and more power and certainty, so that we find his dramas giving expression to Shakespeare's profoundest experience and insight into the Human Predicament, as this too matured and deepened. And as he became a master-craftsman over the entire range of his craft, and as his genius was in every sense dramatic, we have an almost unequalled

opportunity to watch a great mens creatrix visibly at work at every stage of its development, until both it and 'the human situation' it surveys are illuminated in a way that might be compared to the flood-lighting on a modern stage!

There were other limiting conditions in Shakespeare's medium which have to be borne in mind as they necessarily determined the form in which he expressed his imaginative response. One was the Elizabethan stage = platform, rectangular or circular, projecting out into the auditorium, without a roof, and almost - or it might be entirely - surrounded by the spectators. How in such circumstances, in mid afternoon, in full daylight, could the playwright transport his audience to midnight on the battlements of Elsinore on a winter night so dark that it was impossible to distinguish features? The reader can follow Shakespeare as he creates the illusion in the opening scenes of Hamlet.

A parallel effect is produced in the blinding storm in Julius Caesar. This is significant because it reminds us that in the absence of realistic scenery and ^{stabs} stage effects Shakespeare had to rely almost entirely on the power of his imagination, ^{to} creating the necessary dramatic effect, and on an imaginative response in the audience. But the Elizabethan stage developed this power of imaginative response. Then again, women actors could not appear on the Elizabethan stage, therefore the parts of the young heroines had to be taken by boys. How could a boy play Cleopatra - 'the greatest courtesan in dramatic literature'? And yet Shakespeare is so bold as to call the attention of the audience to the dilemma:

Cleopatra: '... The quick comedians
 Extemporally will stage us and present
 Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
 Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
 Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
 I' the posture of a whore.'

New plays had to be found constantly; popular themes taken up and repeated (e.g. Hamlet). Hardly any of Shakespeare's plots and subjects are original; the sources from which he took them are known, and were familiar to the Elizabethan reading public.

But Shakespeare ^{apparently} wrote no plays for performing before he was thirty; and by then he had served a studied apprenticeship both in stage-craft and in mastery of poetic expression. He had in fact discovered his own poetic genius: the sonnets repeat the claim to immortality again and again.

In Shakespeare's first two (known) plays he was trying out his hand as a dramatist, just as he was training himself as a poet in the Rape of Lucrece, Venus and Adonis, and some at least of the sonnets. He was making the experiment of re-creating these acts of the creative imagination in the form that the later classical comedy and the Senecan - Marlowe (etc) tragedy had 'invented'. But if anyone were to propose that, on this account, the sonnets are not skilful craftsmanship but amateurish bungling, he would put himself out of court as a critic. In the same way, The Comedy of Errors may be a popular 'amusement' theme from classical comedy, which still survives in the Box and Cox, Heavenly Twins variety of light comedy. But to repeat it successfully on the stage depends on all the parts being neatly and exactly fitted together, as in the Chinese box puzzle; and this requires practised skill as much as successful sleight of hand does on the platform. If anyone thinks that is simple, let him try and do it.

Shakespeare's plot is carried through without a flaw and is still effective on the stage. Titus Andronicus is Shakespeare's only experiment in the Seneca - Marlowe blood and thunder tragedy. But it is just as efficient as any of them.

I have stressed this preliminary point at ^{some} ~~perhaps undue~~ length, ^{because} ~~but~~ it seems to be very important to be quite clear that Shakespeare was already an accomplished craftsman both as playwright and poet. If experience of Elizabethan London and the Court had left him at thirty in a state of romantic confusion about 'real life', he would never have learnt anything. This is plain absurdity. It follows that the tendency that crops up regularly from time to time, both among critics and readers, to dismiss the earlier comedies as silly plots with superficial characters moving in a haze of romantic absurdity is itself naively silly and absurd. Shakespeare knew exactly what he was doing and how to do it. To think otherwise is as complete nonsense as to suppose that the Bacon of the ~~the~~ Essays and the Advancement of Learning could have written the plays.

It rests, I suggest, on a confusion about 'the Comic Muse' or 'Spirit of Comedy' or however we choose to call it. The real 'Comic Muse' is the tradition of Aristophanes. This tradition is, beyond question, derived from the ancient and profound ritual-myth of life and death. Tragedy celebrates the death of the god or hero or year or Mother Earth. But year by year life returned; and that miracle of life reborn, ^{of} the defeat of death, was what 'Comedy' celebrated. The full, ^{ancient ritual} 'Act' was really one process of life into death, death into life. And in the old tradition of classical tragedy and comedy in Athens this unity was preserved in the annual Dramatic

festival - the festival of Dionysus. But soon afterwards they became separated. Tragedy in itself is essentially a 'vision' and representation of the remorseless fate that drives man inescapably, step by step, to his death. Man must die as all living things must die. Tragedy must reflect this inevitable closing in of fate, in the tragic plot, which must therefore represent 'fate' as the hunter which drives man relentlessly to his end. The plot must therefore be coherent and tightly woven: moving with inevitable logic to its inevitable end. 'Let love-devouring death do what he dare' - the defiance cannot save Romeo and his Juliet. This tragic theme already haunts the sonnets:

'Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore
So do our minutes hasten to their end' (60)

'For never resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter and confounds him there' (5)

which
'In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Way by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self doth seal up all in rest' (73)

'What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen?
What old December's bareness everywhere?' (97)

This is 'Time's Tyranny' (^{sonnet} 115 of 2, 3, 19, 22, 63-4, 68, 71, 77, 97, 98).

But that is never the end. As surely as 'hideous winter' 'seals' the summer up in death, so surely year by year, spring returns again:

'ver novum, ver canorus, ver renatus orbis est'. Comedy celebrates this annual miracle of returning life, its defeat of death. The riotous abandon of Aristophanic Comedy - like its ritual origin - expresses the immense relief and gaiety that returns with the happy ending of the struggle between the powers of life and death. What sense could there be in criticising the Frogs, the Birds or the Clouds because their plots are not

as closely woven and logical as the trilogies of Agamemnon and Oedipus, or the Bacchae? Life pours back in spring in riotous confusion; man's relief and gaiety do the same. Both the antagonists are always there; death and life, darkness and light, evil and good, the villain and the hero (or heroine). In tragedy death overcomes life, and this is the theme of 'the Tragic Muse' (goddess of divine inspiration). In Comedy too, both are present: but life overcomes death: this is the theme of 'the Comic Muse'.

Shakespeare's drama follows this pattern of the old and great myths of human destiny. The tragedies obviously celebrate the triumph of Death, where 'all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle'. But the earlier comedies celebrate the moment of life: 'For them the winter is over and gone; the time of the singing of birds has come' - and with it youth and hope and gaiety come into their own once more. And, with it, ^{return} what the old myths and the old comedy call 'the hieros games' - love 'at first sight' and the wedding of the new 'divinities' ^{and their representations}.

These earlier comedies of Shakespeare are therefore the true 'romances'; not the so called later 'Romances' ^{These latter} which do indeed have as their theme the despaired-of salvation from death, and hints of a 'brave new world' coming to birth; but, in the words of Daniel's legend 'the smell of the fire is still on them'. The early comedies of romantic love move steadily towards the tragic theme, which more and more throws them into the shadows and 'confounds them there'. The later 'Romances' are not romances: they are frank embodiments of the old myth ritual. Life and spring are there, but still scarred with the tragic experience, the smell of death. It is a ^{the} ^{recurrence} hardly believable miracle; and the last play ^(The Tempest) is myth - pure, simple and plain: the old myth of the Magus, so long exiled by the evil powers, and

now at last renewing his magical powers and bringing the 'brave new world' to birth - or at least the 'vision' of it.

The earliest comedies reflect 'the first fine careless rapture' of new life and love, embodied appropriately in the 'young goddess', the princess, the young heroine of the life-powers. But one striking fact impresses us immediately when we approach them from this point of view. It is the surprising but unmistakable contrast between the heroines and - I will not say 'heroes', but leading male characters. This is not a passing phase; it continues right through the development of the Shakespearian drama to the end; to the Tempest, in fact, where the young hero-prince, the favourite of the life-powers, is at last allowed to appear ^{as such}. The young 'heroines' are ^{always} 'heavenly true'. But the young men are either presented with acid realism, or - where the plot insists on a youthful hero for the 'princess' (Orlando, Bassanio) as conventional dummies with none of the sparkling life of the girls; as though Shakespeare found himself unable, for the most part, to become interested in them or take them seriously. ^{Although}, if we are to understand ^{why} the heroine should fall so devotedly in love with them, we ^{might} ~~ought~~ ^{have expected} surely to be able to find them worthy of such admiration!

In Titus Andronicus, Tamora queen of the Goths is made captive by the Romans and her eldest son is sacrificed to avenge the Roman dead. Aaron, a Moor, is in love with her. Together they plot vengeance:

Tamora: 'I'll find a day to massacre them all.

Aaron: 'Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
Blood and Revenge are hammering in my head!'

The Roman nobles are tricked into killing one another. Tamora's sons ravish Lavinia (Andronicus' daughter) and cut off her hands and tongue.

After more killings Aaron is condemned to be half buried and left to starve to death:

A. '... Vengeance rot you all..
For I must talk of murders, rapes and massacres..
Complots of mischief, treason, villainies..
Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did
Would I perform if I might have my will.'

Tamora is killed and her body thrown 'to the beasts and birds of prey'.

But the conclusion strikes a note never heard in Marlowe or the Revengers

Tragedies:

'Then afterwards to order well the State
That like events may ne'er it ruinate.'

But how? The play gives no answer. But it was to become Shakespeare's chief preoccupation. For the difference in ^{Shakespeare's} attitude was not only profound, it was revolutionary. I suggest that in experimenting with this type of play, and thereby embodying the issue in a concrete form, Shakespeare had come to realise clearly that the kind of response presented in all these types of drama was wrong and disastrous. It violated all his convictions and conscience about what was good and right, and it created a kind of society in which the personal relations he most valued were impossible. The whole of his experience and dramatic experiments from now on till the Tempest were to crystallize this conviction more and more clearly; every play was a new act of creative imagination by which this insight was clarified and deepened. Titus Andronicus was therefore a watershed; that one experiment was enough to begin the process of realization. This may seem a large claim to make on such a slender foundation. But the evidence is the rest of Shakespeare's work. As a working hypothesis it can be justified by considering a single example. Between Titus Andronicus and Hamlet is a period of probably ^{less} ~~not more~~ than ^{ten} years; but in the

ironical comment

latter the temper of the irony has become devastating.

The Comedies.

I may have seemed to give too much place to the parallel with the Tragedy-Comedy cycle that arose out of the old ritual myth and passed into the western tradition through classical drama. But if so, I think that judgment rests on a modern prejudice. Our stage has become more and more episodic; the plays more isolated and detached. Awareness of 'the human predicament' itself as the all-present background of human life is lost; local and temporal, here-and-now experiences and problems become the sole preoccupation. This was impossible in dramatic cycles of Athens; and equally so in the great epics. In Shakespeare we have the rare spectacle of a continuous series of dramas extending over *possibly 20* years, every one of which is an imaginative embodiment of the ~~experiment~~ experience of a creative genius of the highest order preoccupied all through with 'the human situation', and therefore a new experiment reaching after new insight. Read as a whole the plays have therefore a more than epic scope and range. But the old ritual-myth ^{had been} was concerned with nothing else than the human predicament at its most intense and challenging point; so naturally there were few essential problems that it did not raise, however imperfect its answers may have been. And as we have seen, Shakespeare frequently makes open contact with the old mythical themes and forms of experience. To what an extent the classical tradition and the Christian tradition, as they together shaped the medieval world and the Renaissance, kept 'the tragi-comic vision of humanity' at the most living centre of experience, can be learnt from any of the great creative writers such as Chaucer and Spenser. The whole atmosphere was saturated with it.

in the comedies

The central interest is love - generally in its most striking form as 'love at first sight'. This is a subject which provokes Shakespeare to mingled fascination, amusement and mockery. Yet it enchants him. From the first, it is the heroines who supply the element of constancy, loyalty and generosity. In ironical and often stinging contrast to them are the young bloods as Shakespeare met them in Elizabethan London: 'Inconstant light c' loves'

'Scrambling, outfacing, fashion-moⁿging boys
With ladies faces and fierce dragons' spleens'.

'One foot in sea and one in air
To one thing constant never.'

Critics who protest against the absurdity of the plot and characters in Two Gentlemen of Verona seem to forget that Shakespeare may have a satirical intention in his presentation of these young bloods, who ^{were} always so lightly in and out of love, and transfer ^{and} their affections so irresponsibly. For Shakespeare nearly always presents his young men like this, ^{though} But never at all his heroines. The same irresponsible shallowness is evident in the young courtiers of Love's Labours Lost, who first of all commit the absurdity of pretending they can live as celibate students and then succumb to the first temptation. If this is mere lighthearted fooling, why does Shakespeare intrude the unexpected conclusion to the play - which is anything but lighthearted foolery? This is what the Princess ends by saying to the Prince:

'Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked hermitage
Remote from all the pleasures of the world..
If frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds
Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love..'

In other words he must drop his humbug and do what he had professed he could do.

As for Berowne, the heartless 'prince of jesters', Rosaline tells him bluntly:

Ros: '... The world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks;
Full of comparisons and wounding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute
That lie within the mercy of your wit..
You shall this twelve-month term, from day to day,
Visit the speechless sick, and still converse
With groaning wretches..'

Ber: 'To move wild laughter in the throat of death?
It cannot be - it is impossible:
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony.'

Ros: 'Why, that's the way to choke a jibing spirit,
Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools.
 ... Then if sickly ears
Will hear your scorns, continue them.'

And so with the rest of the Prince's companions. This is a strange ending to a comedy of wit; and surely not necessitated by the plot or subject. But Shakespeare's bitterness is unmistakable. A similar incongruousness has shocked the critics in a later and more serious comedy: All's Well. The daughter of the late court physician cures the King of France of a malady thought to be incurable. When invited to say what she wants, she asks for the hand of young Count Bertram. This haughty young courtier contemptuously refuses her; and when ordered by the King to marry her he goes through the ceremony and then abandons her 'for ever':

'I'll to the wars, she to her single sorrow'.

In the end, cornered in his lies and evasions, Bertram is at last persuaded to see her as she is, not as his pride dictates:

'If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.'

If this partiality for Helena shocks us we find that the only character in the play who shares our feelings is Parolles: hardly a recommendation.

The king is entirely on the side of Helena; and so is the worldly but good hearted courtier Lafen^u. Most surprising of all, so is Bertram's mother; for this rare and charming woman - wise, mature and generous, the noblest character in the play - sides with Helena against her son from first to last. And so, presumably must Shakespeare. In Much Ado Claudius is another conceited 'flouting Jack', who behaves - Shakespeare evidently means us to feel - contemptibly. Benedict, who at first appears to resemble Berowne, is made a man of by Beatrice. This is the first play in which Shakespeare uses a device that becomes of cardinal importance in the last 'Romances': the wife believed dead, but at the end restored to her husband. The vagaries of love are mocked in 'the heavenly plot', when the defences against love of both Beatrice and Benedict are broken down by each in turn being brought to overhear a report - invented for the purpose - that each is secretly in love with the other! The Midsummer Night's Dream carries this mockery of 'irresistable' love even further: the love of the young people is governed by the juice of a plant dropped into their eyes in sleep! And yet this amused bewilderment at the strange way in which love exercises its 'enchantments' (the word is Shakespeare's own: 'after the last enchantment you did here') and against which human nature is so poorly armed, is not the last word. For, from now on, the Shakespeare heroine takes the centre of the stage and completely dominates it. Portia 'makes' the play in 'The Merchant of Venice'; even more so, Rosalind in As You Like It. *whereas*

Shakespeare shows
~~There is scant interest~~ in Bassanio and Orlando. Perhaps this can explain some of the unsatisfactoriness of All's Well for later criticism? Bassanio and Orlando are mainly of interest to Shakespeare as the young men who happen to 'enchant' the heroines, with whom Shakespeare (like the rest of us)

has quite evidently fallen in love. Helena lacks the gaiety, charm and wit of Portia and Rosalind, and Bertram is a cad; this does make it more difficult; but the comedies as a whole show where the centre of interest lies. [But another factor is also beginning to make itself felt: the faint undertones of tragedy can be heard in the background of Beatrice, Portia and Rosalind. Trust betrayed, one of the central themes of the tragedies, is kept in the background of the Merchant and As You Like It; but the themes are there and real. In the latter play, the dispossessed Duke and the dispossessed Orlando are an essential element in the plot and their wrongs are expressed openly in the lyric 'Blow, blow thou winter wind'. And of course in The Merchant of Venice only the 'enchantment' of Portia prevents the tragic figure of Shylock from wrecking the comedy. Portia's lovely tribute to 'Mercy' has been quoted too often in isolation; but it can never become hackneyed, because it expresses the pure essence of Shakespeare's final answer to the 'Revenge - Justice' challenge. If Shylock embodies the Wrong-and-Revenge problem in the Human Predicament, in the hymn to 'Mercy' Shakespeare's own solution sounds like a clear note: 'hark I hear it, ding dong bell'. In Twelfth Night again, the undertone of tragedy is heard distinctly, however subdued. The Duke may be 'high fantastical'; but Viola hints at the fate which may - and in the tragedies does - involve such women as her:

Duke: 'For, boy, however we do priase ourselves,
Our 'fancies'¹ are more giddy and infirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won,
Than women's are².

Viola: '.... Ay, but I know
Too well what love women to men may owe.
I knew one such...
She sat like Patience on a monument
Smiling at grief. Was this not love indeed?'

*. Fancy is 'phantasy' in Elizabethan language; the illusions of love.

The Duke is coming to a self-knowledge denied to the earlier 'young bloods'; Viola is finding an articulate voice for the heroines. In Measure for Measure Hamlet's 'harsh world' has drowned the gaiety. The nature of the 'young-blood' type is 'exposed' in its reality (*Luis & Angelo*). And the bitterness for the moment infects even the Shakespeare heroine. Isabella knows what Portia knows - 'And he that might the vantage most have took, Found out the remedy. But man, proud man ...' - but she is too obsessed with the 'Measure for Measure'; and 'this even-handed justice', in which Portia's 'mercy' has little place, does not command the ingredients of its chalice to us, or to Shakespeare.

The Historical Plays

The Histories reflect Shakespeare's 'realism'. There are no heroines; only the harsh and brutal realities of power-politics: the 'worldliness' that Hamlet hated so much. From the traditions of the ^{hundred} 100 years civil war with which the memory of England was saturated, and from observation of the power-politics of the Elizabethan court, Shakespeare drew his pictures of the soldiers and politicians who create and live in that kind of world. King John gives a satirical picture of the degenerate power-politics of pseudo-chivalry in which royal families manoeuvre and change sides for purely personal advantage while professing to be moved only by honour. 'Honour' has in fact become a mere mask concealing the smooth deceptions of diplomacy. The whole is thrown into relief by the refreshing humour and forthrightness of the Bastard Faulconbridge, who is complete master of every situation and does not pretend to have scruples, and is yet openly contemptuous of the 'tickling commodity' that rules

everywhere. This gives added significance to his surprising outburst when he suspects Hubert of having murdered the boy Prince Arthur.

'Beyond the infinite and boundless reach
Of mercy, if thou didst this deed of death,
Art thou damned, Hubert..
There is not yet so ugly a field of hell
As thou shalt be if thou didst kill this child..
If thou didst but consent
To this most cruel act, do but despair.
And if thou wantst a cord, the smallest thread
That ever spider twisted from her womb
Will serve to strangle thee ...
I am amazed methinks and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world'.

No similar protest against 'the foot, that leaves the print of blood where'er it walks' was to be heard again in the histories; such events had become too commonplace. Between the hot-headed fire-eating younger nobles, -

'High-stomached are they both, and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire' -

and cold-blooded unscrupulous schemers for power like Northumberland, Bolingbroke and Prince John, such a king as Richard II - weak, fickle, imaginative - has no chance of survival. He is murdered by Bolingbroke. But the new king is uneasy and, characteristically tries to project his sense of guilt on to his creature Exton:

'They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee: though I did wish him dead
I hate the murderer, love him murdered..
With Cain go wander through the shade of night..
Lords I protest my soul is full of woe
That bloodshed sprinkle me to make me grow.'

All of which does not change his behaviour. Prince John (I Henry IV) who uses false oaths, deceit and treachery to trap his enemies without turning a hair, is the true son of his father. 'Bluff Prince Hal' is a more complicated character. Fundamentally he is of the same mould as his

father, but is more varied and adaptable. He enjoys and seeks popularity, has strong natural impulses, and is a born leader in war. But there is a curious ambiguity about him in all the Henry plays (Henry IV, i and ii; Henry V) as if Shakespeare intended to remind us constantly that this 'popular hero' was in reality the true son of his father. He makes the most of his opportunities; ^{but} Shakespeare is careful to remind us that the brutal and cold-blooded way in which he throws off Falstaff as soon as he becomes king (II Henry V, 2 & 5) has been a calculated and deliberate intention from the first:

'I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wondered at.' (I Henry 4, 2f)

Not a pleasant hypocrisy. It makes us suspicious of the pious protestations with which he 'sugars o'er' his posing in 'the Crown scene' near the bedside of his dying father. (II Henry V 20f; especially 145-167). Perhaps it would be unjust to blame him for all the verbiage of pious humbug with which the French war is surrounded. But there is an ominous ring in many of his phrases:

'France being ours, we'll bend it to our awe
Or break it all to pieces'.

The brutal and detailed threat to hand over Harfleur to rape plunder and massacre if the citizens resist him (Henry V, III.iii) -

{ 'The gates of mercy shall be all shut up' } -

is only too literally carried out in his later order to massacre prisoners (IV.vi.36):

'Then every soldier kill his prisoners.
Give the word through'. (IV.vi.36)

And again:

'Besides we'll cut the throats of those we have,
And not a man of them that we shall take
Shall taste our mercy (IV. vii.59)

The whole of his much quoted speech before the battle (IV. i. 250f) is arrant humbug: nothing but the king's own ambitions had brought them all to France, and 'put their careful lives' in 'jeopardy'. The three parts of Henry VI (written first of the historical plays) are one long picture of the England that was falling into civil war, amid intrigues, treachery and assassination. One comment will be sufficient - Shakespeare's own:

(Stage directions): 'Enter a son that has killed his father with the dead body...

...Enter a Father who has killed his son, with the body in his arms'.

Richard III is at least cynically honest as well as more deliberately ruthless - a swaggering Marlowe ruffian on the stage of English history, in the tradition of the Morality 'Vice'.

The Tragedies

The two main themes of Shakespearean tragedy - assassination and revenge, and trust betrayed - are each embodied in an early tragedy; and in each the theme is underlined in a Prologue. Troilus pleads for 'a winnowed purity of love':

Tro: ' O that I thought it could be in a woman -
As, if it can, I will presume in you -
To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;
To keep her constancy in plight and youth
Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind
That doth renew swifter than blood decays!
Or that persuasion could but thus convince me,
That my integrity and truth to you
Might be affronted with the match and weight
Of such a winnowed purity in love;
How were I then uplifted! but alas!
I am as true as truth's simplicity,
And simpler than the infancy of truth.'

Cres. 'In that I'll war with you.,'

↑

'If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
When time is old and hath forgot itself,
When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,
And blind oblivion swallow'd cities up,
And mighty states characterless are grated
To dusty nothing, yet let memory
From false to false, among false maids in love,
Upbraid my falsehood.'

This is an excellent description of the true Shakespeare heroine. But it is not Cressida. Shakespeare makes Troilus witness her betrayal of his trust in her with his own eyes.

↑

'O withered truth ...'

↑

Tro. 'Let it not be believed for womanhood;
Think we had mothers; do not give advantage
To stubborn critics, apt without a theme
For deprivation, to square the general sex
By Cressid's rule: rather think this not Cressid.

Ulyss. What hath she done, prince that can soil our mothers?

Tro. Nothing at all, unless that this were she.

Ther. Will a' swagger himself out on's eyes?

Tro. This she? no, this is Diomed's Cressida:
If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,
If sanctimony be the gods' delight
If there be rule in unity itself,
This is not she.'

Even the Shakespeare heroine becomes a fallen angel in such an environment. Pandar and cynic act as chorus. Romeo and Juliet are indeed as true as truth's simplicity. But though their love survives in a world of murderous feuds, they themselves cannot.

Chor. 'Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;

Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
 Do with their death bury their parents' strife,
 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
 Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage,
~~The whole of the play~~

The young bloods have ^{by now} become savages! Mercutio mocks at it: ^{them}

Mer. 'Hay, an there were two such, we should have none shortly, for one would kill the other. Thou! why, thou wilt quarrel with a man that hath a hair more, or a hair less, in his beard than thou hast: thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes; what eye, but such an eye, would spy out such a quarrel? thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat, and yet thy head hath been beaten as addle as an egg for quarrelling; thou hast quarrelled with a man for coughing in the street, because he hath wakened thy dog that hath lain asleep in the sun: didst thou not fall out with a tailor for wearing his new doublet before Easter? with another, for tying his new shoes with old riband? and yet thou wilt tutor me from quarrelling!

But there is no wit in the brutal Tybalt:

'What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word
 As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee...
 Romeo, the hate I bear thee ...'

The play opens with a chorus announcing the theme. It is followed immediately by just such a scene, on which the Prince indignantly comments:

Prin. 'Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace...
 What ho! you men, you beasts,
 That quench the fire of your pernicious rage...
 And Hear the sentence of your moved prince.
 Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
 By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
 Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets...
 Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.'

And when the young heirs of both the houses have been destroyed by these 'dragon's spleens' the Prince sums up the whole significance of the play for Shakespeare:

'Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!
 See what a scourge is laid upon your hate.'

Timon is hardly a play. It is a set of variations on the one theme of Trust Betrayed. And since Shakespeare was now at the height of his powers and producing his greatest plays, he must surely have been under some almost unbearable internal pressure to produce so strange a form of drama. Timon is obsessed by a 'person', a '^{humour}mask' (Yeats) which compels him to identify himself with an unnatural and rigid 'ideal' of perfect generosity, ('friends share all'). He is deaf to all the warnings of his steward that he is ruining himself. So when he is bankrupt and all his 'friends' turn on him, his self ideal is destroyed and he becomes the polar opposite: the perfect misanthrope ('I am misanthropos and hate mankind'), cursing all alike with appalling savagery.

Coriolanus is unique among Shakespeare's plays as a study of the kind of conditions that produce the Tybalt-Laertes type. Not that we lack earlier hints. This is how Capulet addresses his nephew when Tybalt rebels against his uncle's orders:

'What! Goodman boy; I say, he shall. Go to.
Am I the master here or you? Go to.
You'll not endure him! God shall mend my soul! ..
You will set cock-a-hoop! You'll be the man ..
... Go to. Go to
You are a saucy boy.. I know what:
You must contrary me! .. You are a prince; go!

And this is what the Capulet parents say to Juliet when she refuses to marry Paris:

Cap. '.... How now wife!
Have you delivered to her our decree?

Lady C. 'Aye sir; but she will none, she gives you thanks.
I would the fool were married to her grave!'

Cap. to Juliet: '... Mistress minion, you,
Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds ..
.. Go with Paris to St. Peter's Church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
Out, you green sickness carrion! Out you baggage!

You tallow face! .. My fingers itch..
 ... I'll give you to my friend;
 An' you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
 For by my soul I'll ne'er acknowledge thee!

But Coriolanus is a full length portrait of what such a parent can produce. Coriolanus' mother, Volumentia, has the temperament of Lady Macbeth. She is not 'anti-social' solely because she is born in a society that gives her full scope. Her city (Rome) and her class (the patricians) embody all that matters to her; and she identifies herself and her ruthless ambition with them. This ideal she imposes on her son, with the whole of her rigid and domineering personality. The result is to turn him into a beserk savage; every impulse of rage, ^{and} rebellion is canalised into the ideal of the proud and irresistible fighter. He is also identified with his own class, and has therefore an utter contempt for 'the common people' (the plebs). At this point his mother's ambition creates for him an irreconcilable conflict. The plebs have now been given 'tribunes', and their support is necessary for an election to the consulship. She is determined that ^{her son} he shall be consul. In this way she drives him into violating the character and ideals she herself has imposed on him all his life, by persuading him to court popularity. It is of course impossible. Goaded beyond endurance, he breaks out into uncontrollable rage, is exiled, joins Rome's most powerful enemies, and arrives at the gates of a now helpless Rome to take revenge on her. He refuses to spare the city-until his mother cracks her whip; this produces immediate submission; he returns to Corioli where he is assassinated by his rival, the general Aufidius. At this point we are unexpectedly made aware of what has been working in Shakespeare's mind ever since Titus Andronicus. For scarcely has Coriolanus been killed than the act is deplored and repudiated:

1st Lord: 'Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep .

2nd Lord: ... Bear you hence his body;
And mourn you for him. Let him be regarded
As the most noble corpse...

Auf: ... My rage is gone
And I am struck with sorrow.

We now come to the most famous of the tragedies: ^{and} with them the issues of Trust Betrayed, Revenge and Violence, move on to the centre of the stage. In all, except Lear, the major theme is the extreme act of ambition and violence: murder. Shakespeare seems to have deliberately concentrated all his creative powers on the understanding of 'killing' and its effects on 'the human condition'. He takes in turn each of the three main human motives for such an act; they are those we found most prominent in Elizabethan tragedy: ambition for power, embodied chiefly in the crown, and jealousy: to these he adds as noble a motive as he can find, patriotism seeking to prevent a tyranny. He then lives through the experience in a concentrated act of creative imagination and exhausts what this has to tell him. In Julius Caesar he works out the significance of a political assassination. In place of Marlowe's stage villains and his own Richard III, he takes Roman Brutus and is ^{at} pains to underline that he acts from the purest political motives. The nobility of his character is stressed throughout, from the earliest tributes of his fellow-conspirators in Act I.ii (he is always 'the noble Brutus') to the concluding epitaph of his rivals and enemies:

Ant: 'This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world 'This was a man!'

Oct: According to his virtue let us use him,
 With all respect and rites of burial.
 Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,
 Most like a soldier, order'd honourably.'

So there can be no question whatever as to the nobility of Brutus' character and the purity of his motives. Further, Shakespeare deliberately caricatures the Caesar of Plutarch (and of general opinion). His Caesar is not only a boastful dictator; his superstition, vacillation and even his physical weaknesses are so exaggerated as to make him appear falling into dotage:

Caes. ' Danger knows full well
 That Caesar is more dangerous than he:
 We are two lions litter'd in one day,
 And I the elder and more terrible:
 And Caesar shall go forth.'

Caes. These couchings and these lowly courtesies
 Might fire the blood of ordinary men
 Be not fond,
 To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood
 That will be thaw'd from the true quality
 With that which melteth fools
 If thou dost bend and pray and fawn for him,
 I spurn thee like a cur out of my way...

Caes. But I am constant as the northern star,
 Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
 There is no fellow in the firmament.
 The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks;
 They are all fire and every one doth shine;
 But there's but one in all doth hold his place;
 So in the world; 'Tis furnish'd well with men,
 And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
 Yet in the number I do know but one
 That unassailable holds on his rank,
 Unshak'd of motions and that I am he.'

Shakespeare thus loads all the dice in favour of Brutus, and the justification of assassination from patriotic motives. And yet all the rest of the play throws into high relief the tragic and disastrous futility of the act. Brutus, 'noble' as he is, proves himself to be a

rigid and unrealistic 'idealist', as ignorant of other men's nature as of his own. After Caesar's assassination he develops an opinionated self-confidence that leads him into one disastrous error after another until his cause is ruined and he commits suicide in despair. But the futility of his act has already been exposed immediately after the assassination: the crowd greets him with shouts of 'Let him be Caesar.. Caesar's better parts shall be crowned in Brutus'! Act IV opens with a devastating picture of the new masters of Rome who have been put into power by the killing of Caesar. So all Brutus has done is to ruin himself, his country and his cause. Macbeth is Shakespeare's imaginative embodiment of what he is now convinced must be the outcome of Marlowe's obsession with 'the sweet fruition of an early ¹⁶ crown'. Macbeth and his wife are both dazzled by this 'glittering prize'; and circumstances seem to play directly into their hands:

' The golden round
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned withal.'

But both the tempting hopes and the metaphysical aid prove to be nothing but 'the equivocation of the Fiend¹⁷ that lies like truth':

'Infected be the air whereon they ride
And damned all those that trust them!

His words are fulfilled to the letter. The murder has hardly been committed before Macbeth realises that it is an appalling mistake:

Macb. 'This is a sorry sight.

Lady M. A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

Macb. There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder'
That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them:
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

Lady M. There are two lodged together.

Macb. One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands:
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen',
When they did say 'God bless us!'

Lady M. Consider it not so deeply.

Macb. But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.

Lady M. These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so it will make us mad.

Macb. Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep'...

Macb. How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes!
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Macb. To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.
~~Wake~~ Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

But already it is too late. Macbeth is caught in a trap. He cannot undo the murder or give back the crown. 'Returning is as tedious as go o'er'. So the crown for which he committed a murder becomes a curse which slowly turns everything into dust and ashes: 'Better be with the dead, whom we to gain our peace have sent to peace.'

Macb. Wherefore was that cry?

Sey. The queen, my lord, is dead.

Macb. She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.'

Lady Macbeth has made an equally disastrous mistake. She too does not even know herself or the real nature of her act. She imagines herself to be the ruthlessly ambitious heroine, without sentimentality, pity or weakness:

Lady M. ' Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
 Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
 And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
 Wherever in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
 To cry 'Hold, hold!'

' You shall put
 This night's great business into my dispatch;
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come
 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.'

'Leave all the rest to us.'

' I have given suck, and know
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this.

Macb. If we should fail!

Lady M. We fail!
 But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
 And we'll not fail.'

'... Go get some water
And wash this filthy witness from your hand..
A little water clears us from this deed:
How easy is it then.'

All a fatal mistake. Every word is loaded with dramatic irony. When it comes to the point her 'keen knife' could not strike:

'... Had he not resembled
My father as he slept I had done 't.'

← 'This is the very painting of your fear'; but she herself faints when Macbeth merely describes the blood on the king's body (II.iii.125).

All her brave boasts are ironically fulfilled in the sleep-walking scene:

Doct. 'How came she by that light?

Gent. Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually:
'tis her command.

Doct. What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

Gent. It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands.

Lady M. 'Out, damned spot! out, I say. One: two: why then 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky....
'~~But~~ Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?...'
'What, will these hands ne'er be clean?...'
Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh! ...
'There's knocking at the gate:... what's done cannot be undone.'

The truth destroys her. Othello. Murder out of jealousy inspired ^{Shakespeare} to the creation of one of the world's supreme masterpieces. As with Brutus, Shakespeare concedes everything that he can to the greatness of his hero. Othello is impressed on us as brave, noble, fearless and generous, giving his trust and affection completely where he feels it is justified. All the characters, including Iago, pay tribute to his cool command of himself in

danger. As Iago says: 'He is a soldier fit to stand by Caesar'; and in Shakespeare's day there could be no higher praise.

Iago. 'Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon,
When it hath blown his ranks into the air,
And, like the devil, from his very arm
Puff'd his own brothers; and can he be angry?...
There's matter in 't indeed if he be angry.'

Lodovico. 'Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all in all sufficient? This the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?

It is not easy to keep our sympathy for a man who behaves as Othello does to one of the noblest and most lovable even of Shakespeare's heroines. Shakespeare succeeds by inventing the most cunning and malignant villain ever conceived, who works with fiendish ingenuity and subtlety on Othello's trust and honesty. In the closing scene Othello rises to such a stature that no doubt of his greatness remains. But once again, this only serves to bring into relief the disastrous and tragic madness of the murder. Othello is fatally ignorant of the forces that lie hidden in the depth of his nature - only Iago recognises and works on them; but in fact these are so powerful that at one moment they drive Othello almost insane with jealousy - even though he has no material proof to support his suspicions (Act IV. Sc. i). He strikes Desdemona in public and raves like a madman:

Othello. '.... Look here, Iago;
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven
'Tis gone.
Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!
Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate!'.
'O, blood, blood, blood!'.
'.... Like to the Pontic sea,

Whose icy current and compulsive course
 Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on...
 Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
 Till that a capable and wide revenge
 Swallow them up.'

So at last he wakes to find that he has, for no cause at all, murdered
 the most loyal and loving, perhaps, of all Shakespeare's heroines.

← 'Oh she was heavenly true'.

Des. 'I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:
 If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his lovexx
 Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,
 Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
 Delighted them in any other form,
 Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
 And ever will, though he do shake me off
 To beggarly divorcement, love him dearly,
 Comfort foreswear me! Unkindness may do much;
 And his unkindness may defeat my life,
 But never taint my love.'

'The world had not a sweeter creature' and he has killed her - for nothing
 but loving him:

Othello. '... Had she been true,
 If heaven would make me such another world
 Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
 I'd not have sold her for it.'
 'Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench!
 Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,
 This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
 And fiends will snatch at it, Cold, cold, my girl!
 Even like thy chastity.'
 'Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
 Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak
 Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
 Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
 Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,
 Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
 Their medicinal gum.'

Hamlet Murder from disinterested patriotism, murder 'for sweet fruition

of an early crown', murder out of jealousy; and every one of them, Shakespeare insists, proves to be the most tragic and disastrous of errors without remedy. Like the senseless feuds that killed Romeo and Juliet. Perhaps this profound and passionate conviction was not without bearing on the play concerned with murder for revenge. For the play is a strange and ambiguous enigma. ^{And yet} For if this was Shakespeare's conclusion about murder, what was the favoured child of Shakespeare's creative imagination to make of murder for revenge? There is ^{more} ~~more~~ of Shakespeare's own mind and wit in Hamlet than in any other male character in the plays. As A. C. Bradley said with truth, Hamlet is the only Shakespearean character that we can imagine writing the rest of Shakespeare's plays. From the opening lines (Francisco: 'Tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart' - Why?) to the end, the play is saturated with an oppressive sense of evil and fatality;

- Pol. 'My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.
- Ham. You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal; except my life, except my life, except my life.* ..x'
- Ham. 'What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?
- Guil. Prison, my lord!
- Ham. Denmark's a prison.
- Ros. Then is the world one.
- Ham. A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst....
To me it is a prison...
- Ros. 'Tis too narrow for your mind.
- Ham. O God, I could be bounded in a nut-shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

Ham. 'I have of late - but wherefore I know not - lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?'

The only ^{cosmic} relief is the mordant irony of Hamlet and the ominous jesting of the gravedigger. If, as Ophelia says, Hamlet had once been 'the expectancy and rose of the fair state', the atmosphere of the Danish court has poisoned him. There is certainly something pathological about Hamlet's relation to his father and mother; and as this is not necessary to the plot (except as an exaggerated motive for the action), it may be suspected that they came to the surface from Shakespeare's own depths, now deeply troubled by his vision of life. Hamlet's father has been murdered by his brother Claudius, who has then seized the throne and married Hamlet's mother. According to the opinion of the times this marriage was 'incestuous'. Claudius makes no secret of his hatred of Hamlet; and he embodies in himself everything that Hamlet most detests. Then the ghost of Hamlet's father appears to him with the sole purpose of inciting him to speedy revenge. Hamlet's love, Ophelia, has been broken by the coarseness and cunning of her bullying father Polonius; and has been forced (he wrongly believes) into betraying him. Everything, therefore, from duty and tradition to Hamlet's own mortal danger from the King he hates, conspires to justify the urgings of the ghost to Revenge:

Ham. 'Speak, I am bound to hear.

Ghost. So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear.
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not..'

'This visitation is but to what thy almost blunted purpose.'

And yet Hamlet has to struggle with a reluctance so extreme as to seem out of keeping both with the plot, ^{with} tradition, and ^{with} the popular conception of Hamlet on the stage. His self-castigations are equally violent, futile and (sometimes) unjustified. There is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out! In fact, however, the whole social order of Denmark - like the Venice of Romeo and Juliet - has become a trap in which hero and heroine are alike reduced to tragic helplessness. The power-politics of the murderous and hypocritical Claudius; the drooling cunning and suspiciousness of Polonius; the reckless vanity and egotism of the young blood Laertes; the ghost calling for revenge - Hamlet might well have adopted the words of Faulconbridge:

'I am amazed methinks, and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world.'

But there is something older, staler, more corrupt and sinister - more 'rotten' - in the state of Denmark than in the English world of the Bastard. Even the Shakespeare heroine withers and dies in it. The generous, friendly, naturally trustful nature of Hamlet becomes frustrated and embittered, fluctuating between thoughts of suicide and a revenge that can lead nowhere. It is significant that it has already reduced Hamlet to contemplating suicide before the ghost has appeared to confirm what were his mere suspicions.)

'Thou would'st not think how ill's all here about my heart'.

But what could revenge do? Could it give him back his murdered father? Restore his lost faith in his mother? Undo the hurt done to the gentle nature of Ophelia by that bitter world? When in the end Hamlet does take revenge on his uncle, his last appeal to Horatio is to ^{endure} 'prolong the tragedy of living' at least so long as to vindicate Hamlet's reputation:

'Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story' -

For in his sense 'tis happiness to die. In this tragic vision, revenge becomes a futile irrelevance.

Lear is another picture of the consequences of 'worldliness', with its clash of ruthless ambitions and cynical inhumanity. Unquestioned authority, flattery, and obedience to his every whim as the symbol of power, has produced in 'King' Lear the uncontrollable emotional instability of a spoilt child:

Regan 'He hath ever but slenderly known himself

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash'.

He is already hardly sane when the play opens; they have fooled him to the top of his bent. This is apparent to his jester from the first; but in the end betrayal and suffering teach Lear to see it too:

'They told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not
ague-proof' (IV.vi.107).

The inhuman ambition and will to power of 'this world' is embodied in Lear's two daughters and the bastard Edmund. The Shakespeare heroine is murdered, but not before her love and strength have restored her father to child-like (no longer childish) sanity and wisdom; she has now proved herself indestructible even by the world of Hamlet and Lear.

Antony and Cleopatra is also a story of trust betrayed, not once but many times. But ^{now} there is no revenge; it would be so futile that it has become unthinkable. Antony is caught between the world-empire of power politics and the full enchantment of love. This enables the typical cold-blooded power-politician Octavian to win the empire. But the interest of the drama lies elsewhere. Cleopatra is superb - the greatest courtesan in literature. Her natural inclination and habit is always to play for her own hand. She betrays the infatuated Antony into one disastrous folly after another, until he even commits the worst treachery of a commander - he deserts his soldiers in the middle of a battle in order to follow her when she sails out of it with her fleet. This is the main theme of the play, from the opening lines:

Philo 'Nay, but this detage of our general's
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust.

Look, where they come:
Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool: Behold and see. -

to Antony's conclusion:

Ant. 'You have been a boggler ever:
But when we in our viciousness grow hard -
O misery on't - the wise gods seal our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear judgements; make us
Adore our errors; laugh at's while we strut
To our confusion. -

Betrayed I am.
O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,
Whose eye beck'd forth my wars and call'd them home,

Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,
 Like a right gipsy hath at fast and loose
 Beguiled me to the very heart of loss...
~~What, Eros, Eros!~~

'I am so'lated in the world that I
 Have lost my way for ever.'

And yet, strangely enough, this is not the heart of the play. Love for 'this enchanting queen' which had completely enthralled Antony was - in Cleopatra's curiously true phrase - 'dolphin-like': 'it showed his back above the elements' he had lived in. And it transfigures not only him but Cleopatra herself. It is this that lends such imaginative splendour to the death scenes. Antony's epitaph and Shakespeare's final judgement was spoken by one of his opponents:

Agrippa. '... A rarer spirit never
 Did steer humanity; but you gods will give us
 Some faults to make us men'. (Act V. i. 1 - 50).

The Queen's was spoken by Charmian:

'... Fare thee well.
 Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies
 A lass unparalleled. Downy windows, close;
 And golden Phoebus never be beheld
 Of eyes again so royal! (Act V. ii. 316f).

And Octavius himself speaks the last words:

'She shall be buried by her Antony:
 No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
 A pair so famous...
 Their story is
 No less in pity than his glory which
 Which brought them to be lamented.' (Act V.ii.359f).

With this transformation into something rich and strange, the great tragedied end.

The Last 'Romances'.

The title 'Romances' is justified at least in this, that at certain crises and to certain people, what one can only call an

enchantment happens; and the magic extends not only to the scene but to the language. To achieve these effects Shakespeare is quite ready to sacrifice the plot, and ^{and} other dramatic considerations!

Pericles. Pericles introduces two points of interest. One is the theme of 'restoration' after loss. Pericles believes his wife drowned in a storm. She was saved. He is told his daughter had died; but that is not true. Both are restored to him. It is in such reconciliation scenes that the 'enchantment' occurs (Act V):

Per. 'I am wild in my beholding
Oh heavens! bless my girl. But hark! What music? ..
How sure you are my daughter. But what music?

Hel. My lord, I hear none.

Per. None! The music of the spheres
... Most heavenly music,
... No more you gods! Your present kindness
Makes my past miseries sports: you shall do well,
That on the touching of her lips I may
Melt and no more be seen.'

The second striking fact is that Shakespeare deliberately puts the Shakespeare heroine to the test of being left in a brothel at the mercy of typical brothel-keepers; if she is now to win out she must do it on her own quality alone. It is as though Shakespeare wants to show (perhaps to convince himself?) that, in spite of what happened to Volunnia and Ophelia, this embodiment of all that is finest in humanity is not a sheltered plant: 'tis in ⁱⁿ pain; 'twill endure wind and weather'. This toughness of fibre, already evident in Rosalind and Desdemona, is a marked quality also of Perdita and Imogen.

The theme of The Winter's Tale and Cymbeline is the theme of Othello. Evidently Shakespeare felt this to be the fundamental problem.

He works it out through the 'restoration' motif he had experimented with in Pericles. Life does not give a second chance to an Othello or Macbeth; when they come to understand what they have done, it is too late; no realisation of their tragic folly can undo the dreadful finality of death. But Shakespeare - Prospero, the master magician of the creative imagination, is 'the creator' in his own world. Graves, at his command, could wake their sleepers, open and let them forth, by his most potent art. Suppose this could happen to an Othello when he had learnt the truth? Might this not offer the hope of a wiser humanity and a better world? This is the thought that is now 'beating' on his mind (a recurrent phrase in the Tempest). 'After the last enchantment you did here': 'Art to enchant' - he would use all his powers to create this vision, the last and greatest of all his enchantments.

The Winter's Tale. The new Othello must believe he has committed his murder; and then, long after, when he has lived and suffered with the knowledge of his folly, life could be restored and he could start again. A problem for the plot. But what did that matter? Leontes, in a fit of mad jealousy - which Shakespeare had no time to make credible as he did in Othello - sends Hermione to her death. So he thinks. Then he realises what he has done and lives with the truth for sixteen years (Act IV Chorus). Meanwhile the new-born daughter, whom he had condemned ^{to death} with her mother, has been brought up in far away Bohemia by peasants, and has grown into the perfection of the Shakespeare heroine. Florizel, the son of the King of Bohemia - (King Polixenes, who had been the suspected rival!) - falls in love with Perdita and sails away with her to escape the usual jealous folly

of these old fathers. He lands in Sicily, pursued by Polixenes; and there, at the Court, the whole truth comes out. Hermione 'comes back to life'; all is 'restored' and ends in forgiveness, reconciliation, 'at-onement'. A new world is born. This is the act of 'enchantment' -

Gent. 'I make a broken delivery of the business; but the changes I perceived in the Kings and Camillo were very notes of admiration: they seemed almost, with staring at one another, to tear the cases of their eyes; there was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they looked as they had heard of a world ransomed or one destroyed; a notable passion of wonder appeared in them; but the wisest beholder, that knew no more but seeing, could not say if the importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity'...

'Did you see the meeting of the two kings? No. Then you have missed a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of. There you might have seen one joy crown another, so, and in such manner that, it seemed, sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears.. I never heard of such another encounter, which lanes report to follow it and undoes description to do it.. I am sure my heart wept blood.. Who could be thence that has benefit of access? Every wink of an eye some new grace will be born.'

Cymbeline. But Shakespeare was not satisfied. So he tries again with a new plot. The heroine - created in the perfect prime of Shakespeare, is the daughter of a weak king ruled by a Lady Macbeth. The latter wishes to marry her out of a son to Imogen; but Imogen has already married the man she loves. So Postumus is banished to Italy and is there deceived by an 'Italianate friend' - ^a Alesser Iago. In a fit of jealous rage Postumus orders his servant to go to Wales and kill ~~Cymbeline~~ Imogen. Pisanis goes, but he cannot bring himself to kill Imogen and tells her everything. The Roman army invades Wales to reduce the British King, Cymbeline, (who has revolted) to submission and force him to pay the tax which is a mark of it. Imogen dresses as a page and is taken into service by the Roman commander. Postumus, now in utter despair at having (as he thinks) killed Imogen, returns and fights (in disguise) against the Romans; he is arrested by the

victorious Welsh as a Roman and thrown into prison to be hanged. In the final scene, however, Iachimo confesses to having deceived Postumus. Imogen and Postumus recognise one another, and from their mutual despair is born forgiveness, reconciliation, at-one-ment:

Im. 'Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?
Think that you are upon a rock; and now
Throw me again (embracing him)

P. Kang there like fruit, my soul, till the tree die!

Imogen's two brothers, abducted when babies, are 'restored' too; and the plots of the dead Queen are unmasked. At this moment of general reconciliation and at-one-ment Shakespeare throws probability and fact to the winds, announcing 'olives of endless age':

Cyn. ' . . . Well:
My peace we will begin. And, Caius Lucius,
Although the victor, we submit to Caesar,
And to the Roman Empire: promising ~~luxury~~
To pay our wonted tribute . . .

Soothsayer. 'The fingers of the powers above do tune
The harmony of this peace..

Cyn. . . . Layd we the gods;
And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils
From our bless'd altars. Publish we this peace
To all our subjects. Set we forward: let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together . . .
And in the temple of great Jupiter
Our peace will ratify; seal it with feasts.
Set on there. Never was a war did cease,
Ere bloody hands were wash'd, with such a peace.'

It certainly never did: except under that spell of 'the enchantment'.

The Tempest.

Finally, in the plot of The Tempest, Shakespeare abandons any pretence at realism, and goes back to one of the oldest myths in the world: the story of the 'hero' who is the young ^{embodiment} champion of the Life-powers; and

of the Wise Old Man ('Magus') who as King is dispossessed by 'the Evil One' (Uncle, Usurper, Witch), and driven far away to die. But the Life-powers are on his side and miraculously save him to take vengeance on the Evil Usurper, and be restored to power and happiness. The best known versions of this story are in Greek mythology: ('the Perseus cycle'). But for Shakespeare's purpose, the Magus myth was the most appropriate. What he wanted was an embodiment of the Master-Magician of the Creative Imagination (Shakespeare - Prospero) who would, in the world of his art, show the new world of the new humanity being born out of the old world - that ^{old} 'hard world' where Hamlet and Othello and Lear drew their breath in pain and which made it happiness to die. But how? Shakespeare now knew; and he could at least make the miracle happen in the world where Shakespeare was supreme, 'by his most potent art'. Then - since even his 'art' could go no further - he would leave the whole series of his dramas (those creative acts which by now attained to the final vision) to speak for him and reveal what he had discovered to all who had eyes to see. ^{After that} Then he could lay aside his powers as 'the Enchanter'. But this meant that 'the enchantment' must not (in such a play) merely break into reality at the end: the entire play must be the conscious and deliberate creation of the enchantment; it must all be 'art to enchant'. Shakespeare himself is at pains to call our attention to this:

Mir. 'If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild water in this roar, allay them ...
..... Oh I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart!
Had I been any god of power ...

Pros. ' Tell your piteous heart
There's no harm done..
The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touched

The very virtue of compassion in thee,
 I have with such provision in mine art
 So safely ordered, that there is no soul,
 No, not so much perdition as a hair
 Betid to any creature in the vessel' (I.ii)

The play is 'The Tempest': a tempest which, like everything else in it, is created by the 'art' of the Magus - ('art to enchant) and controlled by him to a deliberate end. 'Miranda', the Shakespearean heroine, the last 'wonder' child of his 'enchantment's - preserved, from the first, uncontaminated by the world; a pure embodiment of 'pity' (Portia's 'mercy'), 'the very virtue of compassion' - is to be the mother of the 'brave new world'. But before this world can be born, it is necessary to deal once for all with the problem of violence and revenge that had always bedevilled the old world. So Prospero tells Miranda the old story of trust betrayed, of ruthless will to power and temptation to revenge. His constant ^ajurations to 'attend', to 'listen', are addressed, not really to Miranda but to us:

Pros. ' ... The hour's now come
 The very minute bids thee ope thine ear;
 Obey and be attentive..

Mir. 'Tis far off
 And rather like a dream than an assurance..

Pros. Thy father was the Duke of Milan, and
 A prince of power..

Mir. What foul play had we that we came from thence?

Pros. By foul play, as thou sayest, were we heaved hence.
 I pray thee mark me - that a brother should
 Be so perfidious! - he whom next myself
 Of all the world I loved..

Thy false uncle --

Dost thou attend me? ... Now he was
 The ivy which had hid my princely trunk
 And sucked the verdure out on't - Thou attend'st not.,
 ... I pray thee mark me.

I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
 To closeness and the bettering of my mind
 in my false brother
 Awaked an evil nature; and my trust,

A falsehood in its contrary, as great
 As my trust was; which had indeed no limit..
 Hence his ambition growing, -
 Dost thou hear?

Mir. Thy tale, sir, would cure deafness...

Pros. Mark his condition, and the event; then tell me
 If this might be a brother ..

So he recounts how he was put to sea with Miranda on 'a rotten carcass'
 of a boat, and set adrift to die.

Mir. How came we ashore?

Pros. By Providence divine.

The loyal Gonzalo had secretly put on board not only clothes and food,
 but Prospero's books of Magic Art. Their isolation had enabled Prospero
 to bring up Miranda himself, just as he wanted to.

Mir. ... And now I pray you, sir
 For still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason
 For raising this sea-storm?

Pros. Bountiful Fortune,
 Now, my dear lady, hath mine enemies
 Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
 I find my zenith doth depend upon
 A most suspicious star, whose influence
 If now I court not, but omit it, my fortunes
 Will ever after droop.'

So the great crisis (Shakespeare tells us) has come which will reveal the
 whole significance of life and art as Shakespeare himself had discovered it.
 Miranda is put into an enchanted sleep and Ariel (Imagination, the servant
 of the Magus) comes to tell us that the other enchantment has worked
 perfectly:

Pros. But are they, Ariel, safe?

Ariel Not a hair perished;
 On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
 But fresher than before .. Safely in harbour
 Is the King's ship ... The mariners
 Who, with a charm joined to their suffer'd labour,
 I have left asleep..

Pros.

Ariel they charge
Exactly is performed: but there's more work.'

For we are now reminded of the inhuman powers of Evil which enslave and torment man's life, embodied in 'the sorceries terrible' of the 'damn'd Witch Sycorax', and her son, the brute of Caliban, who is now unwillingly compelled to serve Prospero. The wrecked king of Naples has a young and unspoilt son who must be the young 'hero-prince' and lover who will marry Miranda, and with her bagat the brave new world. For this ^{he} too he must be set apart and 'enchanted' by a love that will suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange:

Ferd.

'This is no mortal business, nor no sound
That the earth owes ...'

It is not; and it leads him to Miranda.

Pros.

The fringed ^{curtains} of thine eyes advance,
And say what thou seest yond ..

Mir.

I might call him
A thing divine; for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.

Pros.

It goes on I see, as my soul prompts it.

Ferd. ^(aside)

(seeing Mir.)

Most sure, the goddess
On whom these airs attend..
O you wonder ...

Pros.

^(aside)

At the first sight
They have changed eyes, Delicate Ariel,
I'll set thee free for this..
They're both in either's powers.

But, as all folk-lore reminds us - and as Mozart, too, remembers in his myth of enchantment, the Magic Flute - the hero must go through trials of his courage and manhood - those seemingly 'impossible' tasks of folk-lore - in order to prove his love and worth. So Prospero puts Ferdinand on trial, and through him, Miranda.

Pros. 'This swift business (love at first sight)
I must uneasy make, lest too light winning
Make the prize light.'

Prospero then resumes his work of enchantment. And Shakespeare keeps emphasising that all that happens, happens exactly as ^{As Prospero} intended. Nothing is chance:

Pros. 'Exactly do
All points of my command.

Ariel. To the syllable!

We now return to the representatives of the 'real' world - the worldliness of Hamlet and Lear and Macbeth - who have been trapped on the Magic Isle by Prospero's enchantments:

'But for the miracle

I mean our preservation.. But the rarity of it is -
Which is indeed almost beyond credit - That our garments, being,
as they were, drenched in the sea, hold, notwithstanding, their
freshness and glosses.. Methinks our garments are now as
fresh as when we put them on first in Afric.. Sir, we were
talking that our garments seem now as fresh as when we were
at Tunis at the marriage of your daughter...'

Shakespeare does not mean to let us forget that the enchantment - which is Prospero's power - lies over and governs every detail. Gonzalo then begins to dream of his own brave new world, and is of course mocked by the 'worldly-wise'. The enchantment then works to put the others to sleep so that we may see the ruthless murderous will to power at work again:

Antonio to Sebastian (brother of the King of Naples)
(Prospero's evil brother) The occasion speaks thee} and
My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head ...

Seb. I remember
You did supplant your brother Prospero ...
But, for your conscience ..

Ant. .. I feel not
This deity in my bosom: twenty consciences,
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, can died be they,
And melt, ere they molest!

The familiar argument goes on. But now it only serves Prospero's purpose; Ariel (invisibly watching) reminds us that 'My master through his art foresees the danger' and wakes the sleepers. After mockery of this 'worldliness' in the picture of Caliban, Shakespeare takes us back to the lovers:

Fer. 'Tis fresh morning with me
When you are by at night .. Oh you
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature best ..

Mir. I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you;
Nor can imagination form a shape,
Besides yourself, to like of ..

Fer. The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service: there resides
To make me slave to it... I
Beyond all limit of what else in the world,
Do love, prize, honour you .. Here's my hand.

Mir. And mine, with my heart in it.'

Which is just what Prospero wants: 'My rejoicing, At nothing can be more.
I'll to my book,' So back to Caliban - but even he is subject to the
magic of enchantment:

Cal. ' The isle is full of noises
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not..
....Then in dreaming
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.'

The plotters resume. And 'enter Prospero above, invisible', to work the
enchantment towards his chosen climax. Ariel appears in a clap of thunder,
to proclaim their guilt:

Ariel: 'You are three men of sin, whom Destiny -
That hath to instrument this lower world..
... You, 'mongst men
Being most unfit to live...
Remember that you three

From Milan did supplant good Prospero;
 Exposed unto the sea, which hath requit it,
 Him and his innocent child: for which foul deed
 The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have
 Incensed the seas and shores... against your peace..
 .. Whose wraths to guard you from-
 Which here, in this desolate isle, else falls
 Upon your heads - is nothing but heart-sorrow
 And a clear life ensuing'

And now ~~reappear~~ Prospero's purpose becomes plain:

Pros. ' My high charms work,
 And these my enemies are all knit up
 In their distractions: they now are in my power.'

Meanwhile Prospero explains to Ferdinand that 'all thy vexations, were but the trial of thy love; and thou hast strangely stood the test', and gives him Miranda. It only remains for Prospero to make the 'new world' ready for 'young love'. He displays his powers of enchantment to Ferdinand by creating a vision of the classic deities of heaven, who come - like the good fairies- to offer the young couple every good gift:

Fer. 'May I be bold
 To think these spirits?
 Pros. Spirits which by mine art
 I have from their confines called..
 Fer. So rare a wondered father, and a wise,
 Makes this place Paradise'.

Prospero has almost forgotten Caliban's plot. But before using that too for his ripened purpose, Prospero (Shakespeare) explains his powers of enchantment:

Pros. ' These our actors,
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air:
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff

As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'

Prospero and the Tempest are themselves dreams of the great Enchanter who has created them to serve his purpose. But meanwhile 'My old brain is troubled.. I'll walk to still my beating mind'; for now 'We must prepare to meet with Caliban', and the whole world of evil he incarnates, and who is at that moment plotting to murder Prospero:

Cal. → 'Do that good mischief which may make this island
(to Stephano) Thine own for ever..

Step. I do begin to have bloody thoughts.

The climax has come, and with it Prospero's purpose which has brought it about:

Pros. ' At this hour
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies..
Now does my project gather to a head:
My charms crack not; my spirits obey, and time
Goes upright with his carriage..
How fares the King and an's followers?...

Ariel. All prisoners, Sir..
They cannot budge till your release. The king
His brother, and yours, abide all three distracted..
Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.

Pros. Dost thou think so spirit?

Ariel. Mine would sir, were I human.

Pros. And mine shall.
Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go, release them Ariel:
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves'.

All Shakespeare's experience and 'art' had been moving, more and more clearly, towards this end. And now everything is plain. The Creative Imagination can go no further; for it has brought him to a place where, like Keats, he 'sets himself to see as a god sees and take the depths of things'. So it's work is done.

Pros.

'By whose aid -
Weak masters though ye be - I have bedimm'd
The noon-tide sun, called forth the murtinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war..

Graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let them forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and, when I have required
Some heavenly music - which even now I do -
To work mine end upon their senses, that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.'

Prospero therefore disenchant's the enemies he has completely in his power, in order to remind them of their wrongs against him, but only that he may openly and once for all declare his forgiveness, and prove that the rarer action is in 'virtue' than in vengeance:

Pros.

'... Most cruelly
Did's't thou Alonso, use me and my daughter:
Thy brother was a further in the act.
Thou art pinch'd for it now Sebastian. Flesh and blood,
You, brother mine, that entertain'd ambition,
Expell'd remorse and nature; who with Sebastian..
Would here have killed your king; I do forgive thee,
Unnatural though thou art.....

Behold, sir King,
The wronged duke of Milan, Prospero..
I embrace thy body;
And to thee and thy company I bid
A hearty welcome...

Welcome, my friends all!...
For you most wicked sir, whom to call brother
Woul even infect my mouth, I do forgive
Thy rankest fault - all of them; and require
My dukedom of thee ..'

The way is prepared for a new and better world to replace this old one: a world where Romeo and Juliet may live and reign: 'Here Prospero discovers Ferdinand and Miranda' and Ferdinand sees his father:

Fer. 'Though the seas threaten, they are merciful;
I have cursed them without cause

Alon. Now all the blessings
Of a glad father compass thee about

Mir. O wonder! ..
How beautiful mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't....

Alon. .. I am here:
But oh how oddly will it sound that I
Must ask my child forgiveness.

Pros. There sir stop;
Let us not burden our remembrance with
A heaviness that's gone.

Gen. ... Set it down
With gold on lasting pillars.'

Even Caliban is set free and Prospero takes responsibility for him!

'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine'.

Cal. I'll be wise hereafter
And seek for grace'.

Forgiveness, reconciliation, at-one-ment: this, Shakespeare says, is the utmost reach of human wisdom, the sole hope of a brave new world. And it is the utmost reach of his art, which has come to see as a god sees, and can do no more. For it still remains an imaginative 'vision' only; while the 'real' world remains what it always has been and is:

'We must prepare to meet with Caliban'.

For Shakespeare alone cannot translate his vision into fact:

Pros. 'Now my charms are all o'erthrown
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint: now 'tis true
I must be here confined by you.

(To the Magic Isle of imagination only)

Or sent to Naples. Let us not
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell

In this bare island by your spell;
 But release me from my bands
 With the help of your good hands...

... Now I want
 Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
 And my ending is despair,
 Unless I be relieved by prayer,
 Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults--

which
 The divine Mercy, ^(God) is all compassion and forgiveness:

'For ~~he~~ that might the vantage most have took
 Found out the remedy.. But man, proud man,
 Dressed in a little brief authority:
 Most ignorant of what he's most assured
 - his glassy essence - like an angry ape
 Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
 As makes the angels weep.'

BLAKE

Blake believed men to be originally, and in their true nature, each a unique embodiment of the mens creatrix: the 'energy which is eternal delight'. This Creative Imagination is the ultimate reality of the universe in which man lives; and in so far as he is truly human he can know and recognise it as such. This faith is stated clearly in the epigrams of the Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

'All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That man has two real existing principles: viz: a Body and a Soul.
2. The Energy, called Evil, is alone from the Body: and that Reason, called Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following contraries to these are true:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that called Body is a portion of the Soul discerned by the five senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound, or outward circumference of Energy.
3. 'Energy is Eternal Delight'; 'Exuberance is Beauty'.

Blake's 'Energy' thus appears to be very much what we have termed the Mens Creatrix. This is what Blake means when he asserts that all religion as well as art is 'the Poetic Genius' in man, and that 'Christ and His Apostles were all poets'. He is using 'poetry' in the original Greek sense of 'poîsis': creative activity. So 'if the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern' i.e. the senses. But 'the cherub with his flaming

sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of Life' (man's exclusion from his true home: Paradise), 'and when he does the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt'. This is the result of the Fall.

'No bird soars too high if he soars on his own wings'.

'How do you know but every Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, closed by your senses five?'

If 'to create a little flower is the labour of ages', it is in man that the Mens Creatrix has attained its fullest perfection; the labour of this creation ^{may be seen} in the Illustration: Elohim Creating Adam^k. 'Men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast'. Some will say: 'Is not God alone the Prolific?' I answer: 'The worship of God is: Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best: those who envy or calumniate great men hate Gods: for there is no other God.'

In the engravings to the Laccion group he adds: 'The Eternal Body of Man is The Imagination, that is, God himself, the Divine Body, Jesus: we are his members.' It manifests itself in his Works of Art (In Eternity Art is Vision). Therefore 'A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect: the man or woman who is not one of these is not a Christian: You must leave fathers and mothers and houses and lands' if they stand in the way of Art. Prayer is the study of Art. Praise is the Practise of Art'. 'He who sees the infinite in all things sees God.. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is' - this is the whole significance and purpose of 'the Incarnation', of which Jesus is the perfect embodiment. Thus to see truly is

* In convenience. Refer throughout to the Plates in G.W. Digby's 'Symbol & Image in William Blake'.

'To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an Hour'.

We might summarise these convictions briefly as follows.

The 'Energy which is Eternal Delight' and which is the ultimate reality, embodies itself in man as 'the Creative Imagination' or ('Poetic Genius'), + ~~The Mens-Creatrix~~. This was the 'original' state of man which, according to Blake, is 'Jesus' ^{for Jesus}. He 'embodies' the creative energy of the universe in 'the human form divine'; ^{his} ~~for the~~ act of 'Incarnation' or 'Embodiment' belongs to the very nature of the Divine Activity: (God becomes as we are in order that we may become as He is). Jesus is this divine act of self-identification with man and self-giving to man, in order that man may realise himself as the Energy which is eternal delight (the Mens Creatrix.)

Man's present state + (the Human Predicament) - Blake conceives in terms of the Myth of 'The Fall'. True man is integrated man: 'The Human Fourfold' - Reason, Imagination, Passion ('thumos') and Sensuousness; all forming a unison and working together to produce the Harmony that is true Human Nature. This harmony is enriched by a contrary (complementary opposite); that is, a ⁱⁿ cooperating union of the sexes: man and woman. ^{It is} ~~And~~ living in a world which ^{man} he experiences and knows as an infinite universe of infinite particulars, each a unique embodiment of the energy which is Eternal Delight. The 'Fall' is from this state of wholeness, harmony and unison into separation, division, antagonism:

(1) A division and war in man himself. Each member of the Human Fourfold tries to establish a tyranny over the others - (the will to power).

Blake believed that the tyrant in his day was Reason: the 'abstract' scientific intellect of Newton and Locke, the rationalism of 'the Enlightenment'. This tyrannous Intellect Blake called 'Urizen'-mind as a limiting, confining, enslaving power ~~and~~ ^{the} (Great Dictator ~~is~~). It was also embodied in the Moral Laws, ^{and} Codes of the religion of his day, typified by 'the Ten Commandments ~~is~~ ^{the} (the Grand Inquisitor) ~~is~~ ^{and so forth}. ^(Plate 46) This turns the other functions into rebels. The Imagination becomes Los - the reverse of Sol, ^{the} ~~the~~ Sun. Its true nature is seen as the 'Illumination' and 'Energy' of the two pictures entitled 'Glad Day', ^(Plate 20) Los is therefore the Imagination acting contrary to its nature; destructive or negative, instead of creative. Passion, or energy of feeling, is Cor, the Heart. In the 'Fall' or disintegration of man it becomes Roc, ^{or Orc,} rebellious and destructive Passion ^{(Plates} 26 and 38). Similarly the senses act contrary to their nature. (Plates 67 and 68).

(2) The male functions separate from the Female, ^{and both} which become 'Emanations': and these 'Abstractions' indulge in 'the war of the sexes' consumed by jealousy and acting cruelly instead of lovingly.

Man has now become an unreal 'Abstraction' of himself (cf. Plates 75 and 76) which Blake calls his 'Spectre'. And as he shrinks further and further into his isolation, his body and senses harden into a narrow and rigid 'shell' - 'the Mundane Shell' - which shuts out almost entirely the true vision of reality, ^{(and Creative (as Imaginative Understanding)} ~~or~~ Imagination. The process might be compared to becoming more and more of a self-enclosed 'monad'.

(3) Man becomes enslaved and oppressed by his fellowmen and his rebellious energies can only break out in destruction or Revolution. (cf. the poems on The French and American Revolutions which Blake sees as

examples of man's struggle for freedom and self-realization.

Since the 'Fall' is a fall from completeness, unison and harmony into a state of increasing disintegration, separation, ^{and} disunity, man's 'Salvation' must be a reversal of the Fall. The only way to this at-one-ment' and 'communion' is to discover the causes of division and antagonism and misunderstanding, and begin a process of reintegration. This is the work of the Creative Imagination as imaginative sympathy and understanding, culminating in the act of 'Forgiveness' and 'Self-giving'. This 'forgiveness' is for Blake the very essence of Christ's gospel, and therefore is Christianity. Once this understanding, forgiveness and at-one-ment could be achieved it would lead to a creative advance so great that a new kind of man would be born. In this new humanity all man's functions would work together creatively, without obstruction, in all men (who would now be co-operative), and in man and woman (who would enrich one another in mutual love and understanding), and in each individual (in whom reason, imagination, passion and sensibility would all function in harmony). e.g. Urizen in his true nature is depicted in Plate 53 (contrast Plate 46).

All Blake's major poems are several attempts to work out his myth of Humanity, the Fall and Redemption. The 'Poems of Innocence' see the world through the eyes of innocent childhood before the Fall has taken place. The 'Poems of Experience' reflect the change brought into this world of childhood by the consequences of the Fall. The Process of the Fall; the tyrannies and slavery and rebellions that result; and the hope of Redemption through Forgiveness, are the subject of all the 'Prophetic Books'. 'The French Revolution' and 'the American Revolution' are viewed as acts of the same process emerging into the historical field.

To develop this mythology Blake invents symbolic figures acting in a symbolic world of his own. The development of the myth, and the creation of the symbolic figures are so highly individual and personal to Blake that communication becomes more and more difficult. In my view, Blake's mythopoeic activity gets out of control and in his later Prophetic Books is apt to smother the Creative activity, making long stretches of the poems almost unintelligible. Nevertheless the main outlines of Blake's great Epic of the human Mens Creatrix stand out clearly, displaying a range and grandeur of vision unique in their kind.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction. Interpretation

- extracts from which follow appear below.

My interpretation of Blake's much disputed texts, is as follows. For Blake it is the mens creatrix as imaginative understanding which comprehends and makes real the harmonious unity of all men ^{in themselves, and} in their whole world. This 'State of being' he calls Jerusalem. 'The Fall' is the process which might be compared to anatomical dissection in the laboratory (e.g. 'The infant joy is beautiful, but its anatomy; Horrible, ghast and deadly'); In short, it is a dis-integration in which 'the divine Humanity' (the World Commonwealth of human persons), falls more and more into 'jarring' and warring 'contraries', becoming self-enclosed monadic units. The Fall begins when ^{arisen} Reason, as Abstract Intellect, and imposed Moral Law (~~the Commandments~~), sets itself up as the Great Dictator and Grand Inquisitor. Man then falls apart into various abstract functions and entities: the 'Spectres', 'Emanations', 'Human Abstracts' and the like. The 'divine Humanity' (Albion) and the Commonwealth of Man (Jerusalem) not only fall

into disunity but begin to make war on one another out of jealousy and ambition; they become rival claimants in a struggle for power and rule which becomes more and more ruthless and blood-thirsty. Reason (intelligent understanding), ^{having} become Urizen (*Pride Combating Power* or the Tyrant), the creator of separating 'bounds' and limits' which become 'divisions'. The Creative Imagination, which was the source of unity through imaginative understanding ('Sol' - 'the Sun of Righteousness', Apollo, Ahura Mazda, ~~etc.~~), turns into its opposite Los and fights against Urizen. 'Cor' (the 'heart' of ~~etc.~~ Pascal, the high spirited '*thumos*' of Plato, ~~etc.~~), warmth of feeling, become ^{Org:} ~~Org:~~ passion in blind rebellion against Tyrannous Urizen who seeks to bind passionate feeling in the chains of cold abstract intellectual and ^{moral} ~~world~~ abstractions. The senses become similarly estranged. (cf. Marx's 'alienation'). What was formerly the complementary Union of male and female counterparts of human nature fall apart into warring sexes (^{to} sexual strife'), each trying to dominate and torment the other with 'cruel jealousy', ~~etc.~~ The harmonious unity of man as organism (the 'vegetative' or 'vegetable' body) becomes a field of conflicting atoms, so that it shrinks more and more into his 'mundane shell'; he becomes 'enclosed' by each of his isolated senses ('his vegetable eyes') which harden into blinkers, like the vizors of medieval armour - 'Chinks' through which it peers out on to tiny patches of an alien reality.

'The Fall' for Blake is, then, nothing other than the process of the shrinking of man and all his elements and functions into 'jarring atoms': 'the war of all against all'; a ruthless conflict in which each becomes continually narrower in understanding and outlook and feeling and sensitivity, each fighting for its own hand in a civil war that becomes 'solitary, poor,

nasty and brutish.' This for Blake is 'anti-Christ', since to Blake God is the Creative Imagination and Understanding which 'resides in the Human Breast' (God only exists and is/ⁱⁿexisting beings and men'), and of which Jesus is the perfect embodiment and represents^{ing} 'the divine Humanity', 'the Saviour', 'Love'. As 'the Saviour', Jesus is the Creative Spirit which is always working to cancel the Fall and restore the humanity, wholeness and harmony of the true state of man. The core of this 'saving' or 'redeeming' 'Energy which is eternal delight' ('the human Imagination'), whose 'vision' embraces the entire universe of mankind and all individual persons, is understanding, sympathy and love. The process by which it works is, and must begin in 'Forgiveness' (Blake's central function: 'mutual forgiveness of each vice, these are the gates of paradise'). In the 'fallen' state of man, this inevitably involves 'self-sacrifice' which 'gives' itself entirely to men and for men in order to 'break down the walls of separation' - the barriers of fear, jealousy, rivalry, hatred - and restore the divine humanity in its wholeness and harmony.

It is easy to recognise in this the 'original' gospel of Jesus and Paul. The only thing that marks it out as different from the Pauline vision of 'Jesus Messiah' is that Blake declares that God is only the god in 'the human heart' ('Thine own humanity learn to adore; thou art a man, God is no more'): the Jesus who (in Paul) 'energises in us to create Christ-likeness'. And since Blake is the poet of the Creative Imagination' as the highest embodiment of this 'Energy which is eternal delight', he asserts that 'Jesus and his disciples (and the great O.T. prophets) were all 'poets', and that 'poetry'^(creation) is the supreme human function.

It is obvious that Blake is an extreme example of the 'visualising

type'; his imagery is vivid and powerful to a degree - at its best magnificent and compelling. But unfortunately it tends more and more to run away with him, until his 'mythopoeic' invention ~~gets out of control~~ and becomes as domineering as his own Urizen! This more and more involves the ~~the~~ ^{the} Prophetic Book, in passages and 'figures' of such entangled obscurity that we get lost in a maze of personifications whose identity and functions we can no longer distinguish without a most inappropriate application of Urizen. Such at least is my experience. And it seems to be borne out by the ^{many} rival interpretations of Blake's commentators.

So far as possible, therefore, I shall try to avoid these abstractions in the passages I quote (not entirely possible, however), and to limit myself to the more obvious 'imaged forms' (such as Urizen, Los, Albion, Jerusalem); together with one or two of the male and female projections of man's fallen nature.

If this interpretation is not wholly astray, there is ^{no} need to emphasise the significance of Blake to our major theme.

Blake's imagery and verse-forms are unique and create a world of their own. But the theme, and (in the Prophetic books) the form does not change. The Urizen poems are ^{all} concerned with 'the Fall' as Blake conceives it. The most detailed and elaborate account of it is Vala (? Veil) - 'the corruption of consciousness': the deceit and self-deceit involved in the de-naturing of human nature produced by the Fall. The sub-title: 'The Four Zoas' seems to indicate the ^{fourfold} nature of man ('the fourfold vision'); ^{for} Blake conceives the complete nature of man as ^{comprising the} including four elements or functions. ^{refers to above} Milton is concerned with the beginning of man's recovery ('salvation') by an act of 'self-annihilation', i.e. breaking down of the

barriers of self-centredness into which man has shrunk as a result of the Fall. This begins to heal the corruption of consciousness by an act of self-knowledge (as when Milton says 'I am Satan') and frees the creative imagination for a 'vision' of 'redeemed' man in a world which has become his natural 'home'. The process is completed in Jerusalem by the act of Jesus 'the Saviour' in giving himself for love of man, the realisation of this by the Creative Imagination (Los), and the rebirth of man in the self-realization of his true nature (Albion). The whole process is portrayed as an increase of that act of imaginative understanding and compassion that Blake calls 'Forgiveness'. The 'Emanation' is the complementary opposite of 'man' (the male): woman ('the female'). The 'Spectres' etc. are the various ^{functions when they become separating} ~~abstractions into which man 'falls'~~, ~~individualised and at war with one another.~~

ILLUSTRATIONS'The Energy which is Eternal Delight'

1. In nature:

'The sun descending in the west,
 The evening star does shine;
 The birds are silent in their nest,
 And I must seek for mine.
 The moon like a flower
 In heaven's high bower,
 With silent delight
 Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,
 Where flocks have took delight,
 Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
 The feet of angels bright;
 Unseen they pour blessing,
 And joy without ceasing,
 On each bud and blossom,
 And each sleeping bosom.'

x

'The living voice is ever living in its inmost joy.
 Arise, you little glancing wings and sing your infant joy!
 Arise and drink your bliss!
 For everything that lives is holy; for the source of life
 Descends to be a weeping babe.'

'Thou seest the Constellations in the deep and wondrous Night:
 They rise in order and continue their immortal courses
 Upon the mountains and in vales with harp and heavenly song,
 With flute and clarion, with cups and measures filled with
 foaming wine.

Glitt'ring the streams reflect the Vision of beatitude,
 And the calm Ocean joys beneath and smooths his awful waves:

These are the children of Los; thou seest the Trees on
 mountains,

The wind blows heavy, loud they thunder thro' the darksome sky,
 Uttering prophecies and speaking instructive words to the sons
 Of men: These are the sons of Los: These the Visions of
 Eternity,

But we see only as it were the hem of their garments
 When with our vegetable eyes we view these wondrous Visions.'

'Thou hearest the Nightingale begin the Song of Spring,
 The Lark sitting upon his earthly bed, just as the morn
 Appears, listens silent; then springing from the waving
 Cornfield, loud
 He leads the Choir of Day: trill, trill, trill, trill,
 Mounting upon the wings of light into the Great Expanse,
 Resechoing against the lovely blue and shining heavenly Shall,
 His little throat labours with inspiration; every feather
 On throat and breast and wings vibrates with the effluence Divine.
 All nature listens silent to him, and the awful Sun
 Stands still upon the Mountain looking on this little Bird
 With eyes of soft humility and wonder, love and awe,
 Then loud from their green covert all the Birds begin their Song:
 The Thrush, the Linnet and the Goldfinch, Robin and the Wren
 Awake the Sun from his sweet reverie upon the Mountain.
 The Nightingale again assays his song, and thro' the day
 And thro' the night warbles luxuriant, every Bird of Song
 Attending his loud harmony with admiration and love, ..
~~This is a Vision of the lamentation of Beulah over Glorion.~~

Thou perceivest the Flowers put forth their precious Odours,
 And none can tell how from so small a center comes such sweets,
 Forgetting that within that Center Eternity expands ..
~~Its ever during doors that Og and Anak fiercely guard.~~
 First, e'er the morning breaks, joy opens in the flowery bosoms,
 Joy even to tears, which the Sun rising dries; first the Wild
 Thyme

And Meadow-sweet, downy and soft waving among the reeds,
 Light springing on the air, lead the sweet Dance: they wake
 The Honeysuckle sleeping on the Oak; the flaunting beauty
 Revels along upon the wind; the White-thorn, lovely May,
 Opens her many lovely eyes listening; the Rose still sleeps,
 None dare to wake her; soon she bursts her crimson curtain'd bed
 And comes forth in the majesty of beauty; every Flower
 The Pink, the Jessamine, the Wall-flower, the Carnation,
 The Jonquil, the mild Lilly, opes her heavens; every Tree
 And Flower and Herb soon fill the air with an innumerable Dance,
 Yet all in order sweet and lovely.' ~~Men are sick with Love.~~
~~Such is a Vision of the lamentation of Beulah over Glorion.~~

'Wherever a grass grows, or a leaf buds, the Eternal Man is seen, is heard,
 is felt'.

2. The Creative Imagination.

'Let the Bard himself witness. Where hadst thou this terrible Song?'

The Bard replied: 'I am inspired! I know it is the Truth! for I Sing

According to the inspiration of the Poetic Genius
Who is the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity,
To whom be Glory and Power and Dominion Evermore. Amen.'

' In Eternity the Four Arts, Poetry, Painting, Music
and Architecture, which is Science, are the Four Faces of Man'.

'Some Sons of Los surround the Passions with porches of iron and
silver,
Creating form and beauty..~~around the dark regions of sorrow,~~
Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation.
Delightful, with bounds to the Infinite putting off the Infinite
Into most holy forms of Thought: such is the power of inspiration.'

'As the breath of the Almighty such are the words of man to man
In the great Wars of Eternity, in fury of Poetic Inspiration,
To build the Universe stupendous, Mental forms Creating.'

'I come in Self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration...
To take off his filthy garments and clothe him with Imagination,
To cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration...
These are the destroyers of Jerusalem, these are the murderers
Of Jesus, who deny the Faith and mock at Eternal Life,
Who pretend to Poetry that they may destroy Imagination
By imitation of Nature's Images drawn from Remembrance.'

'Judge then of thy Own Self: ~~thy~~ thy Eternal Lineaments explore,
What is Eternal and what Changeable, and what Annihilable.
The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself.
Affection or Love becomes a State when divided from Imagination.'

'O Human Imagination, O Divine Body I have Crucified,
I have turned my back upon thee into the Wastes of Moral Law.'

'I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the
liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination,
Imagination, the real and eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is
but a faint shadow, and in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative
Bodies when these Vegetable Mortal bodies are no more. The Apostles knew of
no other Gospel. What were all their spiritual gifts? What is the Divine
Spirit? is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?...
What are all the Gifts of the Gospel, are they not all Mental Gifts?

3. Man in his original integrity

'Then those in Great Eternity met in the Council of God
 As one Man, for contracting their Exalted Senses
 They behold Multitude, or Expanding they behold as one,
 As One Man all the Universal family; and that One Man
 They call Jesus the Christ, and they in him and he in them
 Live in perfect harmony, in Eden the land of life,
 Consulting as One Man.'

' Los and Enitharmon* walk'd forth on the dewy Earth
 Contracting or expanding their all flexible senses
 At will to murmur in the flowers small as the honey bee,
 At will to stretch across the heavens and step from star to star,
 Or standing on the Earth erect, or on the stormy waves
 Driving the storms before them, or delighting in sunny beams,
 While round their heads the Elemental Gods kept harmony.'

'Four mighty ones are in everyman; a perfect unity cannot exist but from
 universal Brotherhood of Eden, The Universal Man, to whom be glory for
 evermore. Amen.'

4. The Fall

'Hear the voice of the Bard!
 Who Present, Past, and Future, sees;
 Whose ears have heard
 The Holy Word
 That walk'd among the ancient trees,

Calling the lapsed Soul,
 And weeping in the evening dew;
 That might controll
 The starry pole,
 And fallen, fallen light renew!'

'Love seeketh not itself to please,
 Nor for itself hath any care,
 But for another gives its ease,
 And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

So sung a little Glod of Clay
 Trodden with the cattle's feet,
 But a pebble of the brook
 Warbled out these metres meet:

Love seeketh only Self to please,
 To bind another to Its delight,
 Joys in another's loss of ease,
 And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

*. his feminine counterpart

The Beast of Prey is born.

'Tyger, Tyger, burning bright
 In the forests of the night,
 What immortal hand or eye
 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
 Burnt in distant deeps or skies
 The cruel fire of thine eyes?
 On what wings dare he aspire?
 What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
 And when thy heart began to beat
 What dread hand and what dread feet
 Could fetch it from the furnace deep
 And in thy horrid ribs dare steep
 In the well of sanguine woe?
 In what clay and in what mould
 Were thy eyes of fury roll'd?

Where the hammer? Where the chain?
 In what furnace was thy brain?
 What the anvil? What dread grasp
 Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
 And water'd heaven with their tears
 Dare he laugh his work to see?
 Dare he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright
 In the forests of the night,
 What immortal hand and eye
 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

The human predicament.

'In every cry of every Man,
 In every Infants' cry of fear,
 In every voice, in every ban,
 The mind-song'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
 Every blackning Church appalls;
 And the hapless Soldier's sigh
 Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most ^{through} midnight streets I hear
 How the youthful Harlot's curse
 Blasts the new-born Infants' tear,
 And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse. ↘

'How can the bird that is born for joy
 Sit in a cage and sing?
 How can a child, when fears annoy,
 But droop his tender wing,
 And forget his youthful spring?'

'A Robin Red breast in a Cage
 Puts all Heaven in a Rage.'

'A dog starv'd at his Master's Gate
 Predicts the ruin of the State.
 A Horse misus'd upon the Road
 Calls to Heaven for Human blood.'

'A Skylark wounded in the wing,
 A Cherubim does cease to sing.'

~~'Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly,
 For the Last Judgment draweth nigh.'~~

'The Babe that weeps the Rod beneath
 Writes Revenge in realms of death.'

'The Soldier, arm'd with Sword and Gun,
 Falsely strikes the Summer's Sun.'

'The Strongest Poison ever known
 Came from Caesar's Laurel Crown.'

'The Harlot's cry from Street to Street
 Shall weave Old England's winding Sheet.'

'And Lo! he prayed and said, 'O Divine Saviour, arise
 Upon the Mountains of Albion as in ancient time! Behold!
~~They Cities of Albion stretch their hands to thee~~
 'The Twenty-eight Cities of Albion stretch their hands to thee
 Because of the Oppressors of Albion in every City and Village.
 They mock at the Labourer's limbs: they mock at his starv'd
 Childrens
 They buy his Daughters that they may have power to sell his
 Sons:
 They compell the Poor to live upon a crust of Bread by soft
 mild arts:
 They reduce the Man to want, then give with pomp and ceremony:
 The praise of Jehovah is chaunted from lips of hunger and
 thirst.'

The Grand Inquisitor

'I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds
And binding with briars my joys and desires.'

x

'The Priest sat by and heard the child,
In trembling zeal he seiz'd his hair:
He led him by his little coat
And all admir'd the Priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
Lo! what a fiend is here! he said he,
One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy Mystery.

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They strip'd him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain;

And burn'd him in a holy place,
Where many had been burn'd before:
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's shore?'

~~'Children of the Future Age
Reading this indignant page,
Know that in a former time
Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.'~~

'Cruelty has a Human Heart,
And Jealousy a Human Face;
Terror the Human Form Divine,
And Secrecy the Human Dress.

The Human Dress is forged Iron,
The Human Form a fiery Forge,
The Human Face a Furnace seal'd,
The Human Heart its hungry Gorge.'

'Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
 In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific,
 Self-clos'd, all-repelling: what Demon
 Hath form'd this abominable void.

Brooding, secret, the dark power hid.

Unseen in tormenting passions:
 An activity unknown and horrible,
 A self-contemplating shadow.

His cold horrors silent, dark Urizen
 Prepar'd; his ten thousands of thunders..

In his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains
 Of hail and ice; voices of terror
 Are heard, like thunders of autumn.

.... The Book
 Of eternal brass, written in my solitude.

One command, one joy, one desire,
 One curse, one weight, one measure,
 One King, one God, one Law.

All the seven deadly sins of the soul
 In living creations appear'd,
 In the flames of eternal fury.

Eternity roll'd wide apart,
 Leaving ruinous fragments of life.

And a roof vast, petrific around
 On all sides he fram'd, like a womb.'

'I stood among my valleys of the south
 And saw a flame of fire, even as a Wheel
 Of fire surrounding all the heavens: it went
 From west to east, against the current of
 Creation, and devour'd all things in its loud
 Fury and thundering course round heaven and earth.
~~By it the Sun was roll'd into an orb;~~
~~By it the Moon faded into a globe~~
 Travelling thro' the night.'

'The Spectre'

My Spectre around me night and day
 Like a wild beast guards my way.
 My Emanation far within
 Weeps incessantly for my Sin.

'Never, Never, I return:
Still for Victory I burn.
Living, thee alone I'll have
And when dead, I'll be thy Grave.

And to end thy cruel mocks,
Annihilate thee on the rocks,
And another form create
To be subservient to my Fate.
Let us agree to give up Love.'

'Alienation' and 'Selfhood'.

'When the Soul fell into Sleep
And Archangels round it weep,
Shooting out against the Light
Fibres of a deadly night.

Rooting over with thorns and stems
The buried Soul and all its Gems.
This Life's dim Windows of the Soul
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole
And leads you to Believe a Lie
When you see with, not thro', the Eye.'

'Then Los grew furious, raging: "Why stand we here trembling
around
Calling on God for help, and not ourselves, in whom God dwells,
Stretching a hand to save the falling Man? are we not Four
Beholding Albion upon the Precipice ready to fall into Non-entity?
Swell'd and bloated General Forms repugnant to the Divine-
Humanity who is the Only General and Universal Form,
To which all Lineaments tend and seek with love and sympathy.
All broad and general principles belong to benevolence
Who protects minute particulars every one in their own identity;
But here the affectionate touch of the tongue is clos'd in by
deadly teeth,
And the soft smile of friendship and the open dawn of benevolence
Become a net and a trap, and every energy render'd cruel,
Till the existence of friendship and benevolence is denied:
The wine of the Spirit and the vineyards of the Holy One
Here turn into poisonous stupor and deadly intoxication.
That they may be condemn'd by Law and the Lamb of God be slain..
The open heart is shut up in integuments of frozen silence
That the spear that lights it forth may shatter the ribs and
bosom.
A pretence of Art to destroy Art; a pretence of Liberty
To destroy Liberty; a pretence of Religion to destroy Religion.

'For the Soldier who fights for Truth calls his enemy his brother:
They fight and contend for life and not for eternal death;
But here the Soldier strikes, and a dead corse falls at his feet..

A World in which Man is by his Nature the Enemy of Man,
In pride of Selfhood unwieldy stretching out into Non Entity..

Instead of Albion's lovely mountains and the curtains of
Jerusalem,

I see a Cave, a Rock, a Tree deadly and poisonous, unimaginative.
Instead of the Mutual Forgiveness, the Minute Particulars, I see
Pits of bitumen ever burning, artificial Riches of the Canaanite
Like Lakes of liquid lead: instead of heavenly δ Chapels built
By our dear Lord, I see Worlds crusted with snows and ice...

Driven on the Void in incoherent despair into Non-Entity..

Every little particle of light and air became Opaque,
Black and immense, a Rock of difficulty and a Cliff
Of black despair, that the immortal Wings labour'd against
Cliff after cliff and over Valleys of despair and death.'

Below

~~I heard his voice in my sleep and his Angel in my dream,
Saying, 'Dost Jehovah Forgive a Debt only on condition that it
shall
Be Payed? Dost he Forgive Pollution only on condition of Purity?
That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven!
Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the
Heathen whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. But Jehovah's
Salvation
Is without Money and without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness
of Sins,
In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity; for behold,
There is none that liveth and sinneth not! And this is the
Covenant
Of Jehovah: If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah
Forgive you,
That He Himself may Dwell among You.'~~

'The Visions of Eternity, by reason of narrowed perceptions,
Are become weak Visions of Time and Space, fix'd into furrows
of death...

Withering the Human Form by Laws of Sacrifice for Sin!..

Striving to create a Heaven in which all shall be pure and holy
In their Own Selfhoods...

Inslav'd to the most powerful Selfhood: to murder the Divine
Humanity...

Ah! weak and wide astray! Ah! shut in narrow doleful form!..

The Eye of Man, a little narrow orb, clos'd up and dark,
Scarcely beholding the Great Light, conversing with the ground:
The Ear, a little shell, in small volutions shutting out
The Harmonies and comprehending great as very small:

'The Nostrils, bent down to the earth and clos'd with senseless
flesh

That odours cannot then expand, nor joy on them exult:
The Tongue, a little moisture fills, a little food it cloys,
A little sound it utters, and its cries are faintly heard....

They are beginning to form Heavens and Hells in immense
Circles, the Hells for food to the Heavens, food of torment,
Food of despair: they drink the condemn'd Soul and rejoice..

Yet they are blameless, and Iniquity must be imputed only
To the State of Death and not a Human existence....

Learn therefore, O Sisters, to distinguish the Eternal Human
That walks about among the stones of fire in bliss and woe..

This is the only means to Forgiveness of Enemies.'

The Inferno

'For Urizen beheld the terrors of the Abyss wandering among
The ruin'd spirits, once his children and the children of Larvah..

They wander Moping, in their heart a sun, a dreary moon,
A Universe of fiery constellations in their brain,
An earth of wintry woe beneath their feet....

Beyond the bounds of their own self their senses cannot penetrate:
As the tree knows not what is outside of its leaves and bark...

For Urizen beheld the terrors of the Abyss, wandering among
The horrid shapes and sights of torment in burning dungeons and in
Fetters of red hot iron; some with crowns of serpents and some
With monsters girding round their bosoms; some lying on beds of
sulphur

On racks and wheels; he ~~beheld~~ beheld women marching o'er
burning wastes...

Oft he stood by a howling victim Questioning in words
Soothing or Furious; no one answered; everyone wrap'd up
In his own sorrow howl'd regardless of his words, nor voice
Of sweet response could he obtain, tho' oft assay'd with tears.
He knew they were his Children ruin'd in his ruin'd world...

~~Here he had time enough to repent of his rashly threaten'd curse.
He saw them curs'd beyond his Curse: his soul melted with fear.
He could not take their fetters off, for they grew from the soul,
Nor could he quench the fires, for they flam'd out from the heart,
Nor could he calm the Elements, because himself was subject;
So he threw his flight in terror and pain, and in repentant tears,..~~

~~Void, pathless, beaten with iron sleet~~

He approach'd the East

Void, pathless, beaten with iron sleet, and eternal hail and rain.

NO form was there, no living thing, and yet his way lay thro'

This dismal world.'

Rebels.

URIZEN, LOS and ORC

The Fall of Urizen

(~~The tyranny of Reason as Abstract Intellect.~~ ^{the extracts are} / From 'Vala' i.e. Self-deception, 'the corruption of consciousness').

The birth of the Spectre :

Daughter of Beulah, Sing:

His fall into Division and his Resurrection to Unity:
His fall into the Generation of decay and death, and his
Regeneration by the Resurrection from the dead...

.. The Spectre is in every man insane and most
Deform'd. Thro' the three heavens descending in fury and fire
We meet it with our songs and loving blandishments, and give
To it a form of vegetation. But this Spectre of Tharmas
Is Eternal Death. What shall we do?...

What have I done, said Eynion, accursed wretch! What deed?
Is this a deed of Love? I know what I have done. I know
Too late now to repent. Love is chang'd to deadly Hate...

I see the shadow of the dead within my soul, wandering
In darkness and solitude...

So wail'd she, trembling before her own Created Phantasm....

The Spectre thus spoke: 'Who art thou Diminutive husk and shell
Broke from my bonds? I scorn my prison, I scorn and yet I love.
Art thou not my slave, and shalt thou dare
To smite me with thy tongue?'

Sick'ning lies the Fallen Man, his head sick, his heart faint:
Mighty achievement of your power! Beware the punishment!
Refusing to behold the Divine Image which all behold
And live thereby, he is sunk down into a deadly sleep...

Descend, O Urizen, descend with horse and chariot!
Threaten not me, O visionary; thine the punishment.
The Human Nature shall no more remain, nor Human acts
From the rebellious Spirits of Heaven, but War and Princesdom, and
Victory and Blood...

Eternity groan'd and was troubled at the Image of Eternal Death.
The Wandering Man bow'd his faint head and Urizen descended - ..

Urizen startled stood, but not Long; Soon he cried: ..

Lo I am God, the terrible destroyer, and not the Saviour.
Why should the Divine Vision compell the sons of Eden
To forego each his own delight, to war against his spectre?
The Spectre is the Man. The rest is only delusion and fancy.'

The tyranny of Urizen

'Terrific rag'd the Eternal wheels of intellect, terrific rag'd
The living creatures of the wheels, in the Wars of Eternal life.
But perverse roll'd the wheels of Urizen and Luvah, back revers'd
Downwards and outwards, consuming in the wars of Eternal Death...

Urizen rose from the bright Feast like a star thro' the evening
sky,

Exulting at the voice that call'd him from the Feast of envy.
First he beheld the Body of Man, pale, cold; the horrors of death
Beneath his feet shot thro' him as he stood in the Human Brain,
And all its golden porches grew pale with his sickening light,...

Build we the Mundane Shell around the Rock of Albion..

In human forms distinct they stood round Urizen, prince of Light,
Petriifying all the Human Imagination into rock and sand...

Aloft the Moon fled with a cry: the Sun with streams of blood...

Jerusalem came down in a dire ruin over all the Earth...

'Am I not God?' said Urizen. 'Who is Equal to me?

Do I not stretch the heavens abroad, or fold them up like a
garment?'

He spoke, mustering his heavy clouds around him, black, opaque.
Then thunders roll'd around and lightnings darted to and fro;
His visage chang'd to darkness, and his strong right hand came
forth

To cast Ahania to the Earth; he seiz'd her by the hair
And threw her from the steps of ice that froze around his throne.'

The rebellion of Los (Imagination); *the Craftsman*

'Enslav'd humanity put on, he became what he beheld...

... Fill'd with envy, firm resolv'd
On hate Eternal, in his vast disdain he labour'd beating
The Links of fate, link after link, an endless chain of sorrows.
The Eternal Mind, bounded, began to roll eddies of wrath
ceaseless

Round and round, and the sulphureous foam surging thick,
Settled, a Lake bright and shining clear, White as the snow.
Forgetfulness, dumbness, necessity, in chains of the mind lock'd
up,

In fetters of ice shrinking, disorganiz'd, rent from Eternity,
Los beat on his fetters and heated his furnaces....

Pale terror seiz'd the Eyes of Los as he beat round
The hurtling demon; terrified at the shapes
Enslav'd humanity put on, he became what he beheld;
He became what he was doing! he was himself transform'd.

The fall of Enitharmon (The feminine counterpart of Los).

'Terrific pale Enitharmon stretched on the dreary earth
Felt her immortal limbs freeze, stiffening, pale, inflexible...

And Enitharmon shrunk up, all their fibres with'ring beneath,
As plants wither'd by winter, leaves and stems and roots
decaying...

(L_o)
He stood trembling and Enitharmon clung around his knees,
Their senses unexpansive in one steadfast bulk remain.
The night blew cold, and Enitharmon shriek'd on the dismal wind.
Her pale hands clung around her husband, and over her weak head
Shadows of Eternal Death sit in the leaden air...

From the caves of deepest night, ascending in clouds of mist,
The winter spread his wide black wings across from pole to pole:
Grim frost beneath and terrible snow, link'd in a marriage chain,
Began a dismal dance.'

The Curse

'Now will I pour my fury on them, and I will reverse
The precious benediction; for their colours of loveliness
I will give blackness; for jewels, hoary frost; for ornament,
deformity;

For crowns, wreath'd serpents; for sweet odors, stinking
corruptibility; ...

For labour'd fatherly care and sweet instruction, I will give
Chains of dark ignorance and cords of twisted self-conceit
And whips of stern repentance and food of stubborn obstinacy...

Go forth, sons of my curse. Go forth, daughters of my
abhorrence'...

The Curse

~~'Oft he stood by a howling victim Questioning in words~~

'Here he had time enough to repent of his rashly threaten'd curse.
He saw them curs'd beyond his Curse: his soul melted with fear.
He could not take their fetters off, for they grew from the soul,
Nor could he quench the fires, for they flam'd out from the heart,
Nor could he calm the Elements, because himself was subject;
So he threw his flight in terror and pain, and in repentant tears...

..... He approach'd the East

Void, pathless, beaten with iron sleet, and eternal hail and rain,
No form was there, no living thing, and yet his way lay thro'
This dismal world.'

Urizen creates his own world

'So he began to form of gold, silver and iron
And brass, vast instruments to measure out the immense and fix
The whole into another world better suited to obey
His will, where none should dare oppose his will, himself being
King

Of All, and all futurity be bound in his vast chain.
And the Sciences were fix'd and the Vortexes began to operate
On all the sons of men, and every human soul terrified
At the living wheels of heaven shrunk away inward, with'ring away,
Gaining a New dominion over all his Sons and Daughters, and over
← The Sons and Daughters of Luvah in the horrible Abyss.
Urizen lamented over them in a selfish lamentation
Till a white wool cover'd his cold limbs from head to feet,
Hair white as snow cover'd him in flaky locks terrific
Overspreading his limbs; in pride he wander'd weeping, ..
Travelling thro' darkness; and wherever he travel'd a dire Web
Follow'd behind him, as the Web of a Spider, dusky and cold...
A living Mantle adjoined to his life and growing from his soul.'

Warmth of Feeling is changed

Gor (Emotion) falls into Oro (Passion)

' Thy pen obdurate
Traces the wonders of Futurity in horrible fear of the future.
I rage furious in the deep, for lo, my feet and hands are nail'd
To the hard rock, or thou shouldst feel my enmity and hate
In all the diseases of man falling upon thy grey accursed front.
Urizen answer'd: 'Read my books, explore my Constellations,
Enquire of my Sons and they shall teach thee how to War.
Enquire of my Daughters, who, accurs'd in the dark depths,
Knead bread of Sorrow by my stern command; for I am God
Of all this dreadful ruin. Rise, O daughters, at my stern
command!'

The heavens bow with terror underneath their iron hands,
Singing at their dire work the words of Urizen's book of iron
While the enormous scrolls roll'd dreadful in the heavens above; / ..
And Oro began to organize a Serpent body,
Despising Urizen's light and turning it into flaming fire,
Receiving as a poison'd cup Receives the heavenly wine,
And turning affection into fury, and thought into abstraction,
A Self-consuming dark devourer rising into the heavens.
Urizen envious brooding sat and saw the secret terror
Flame high in pride and laugh to scorn the source of his deceit,
Nor knew the source of his own, but thought himself the sole
author

Of all his wandering Experiments in the horrible Abyss..
~~In serpent form compell'd, stretch out and up~~ Therefore he made Oro,
In serpent form compell'd, stretch out and up the mysterious tree.
He suffer'd him to climb that he might draw all human forms
Into submission to his will, nor knew the dread result.'

The Tree of Life becomes the Tree of Death

Los lamented in the night, unheard by Enitharmon.
For the Shadow of Enitharmon descended down the tree of
Mystery.

The Spectre saw the Shade Shiv'ring over his gloomy rocks
Beneath the tree of Mystery, which in the dismal Abyss
Began to blossom in fierce pain, shooting its writhing buds
In throes of birth; and now, the blossoms falling, shining fruit
Appear'd of many colours and of various poisonous qualities
Of Plagues hidden in shining globes that grew on the living tree.
The Spectre of Urthona saw the Shadow of Enitharmon
Beneath the Tree of Mystery among the leaves and fruit
Redd'ning, the demon strong prepar'd the poison of sweet Love..

Ah!, poor divided dark Urthonal now a Spectre wand'ring
The deeps of Los, the slave of that Creation I created...

Thou knowest that the Spectre is in Every Man insane, brutish,
Deform'd, that I am thus a ravening devouring lust continually
Craving and devouring; but my Eyes are always upon thee, O
lovely

Delusion, and I cannot crave for any thing but thee: not so
The Spectres of the Dead, for I am as the Spectre of the Living.
Astonish'd, fill'd with tears, the spirit of Enitharmon beheld
And heard the Spectre; bitterly she wept, Embracing fervent
Her once lov'd Lord, now but a Shade, herself also a shade.'

The Remorse of Urizen

Urizen sitting in his web of deceitful religion
Felt the female death...

..... He felt his pores

Drink in the deadly dull delusion; horrors of Eternal Death
Shot thro' him. Urizen sat stonied upon his rock.....
Oft doth his Eye emerge from the Abyss into the realms
Of his Eternal day, and memory strives to augment his
ruthfulness.

Then weeping he descends in wrath, drawing all things in his fury
Into obedience to his will; and now he finds in vain
That not of his own power he bore the human form erect,
Nor of his own will gave his Laws in times of Everlasting,
For now fierce Orc in wrath and fury rises into the heavens,
A King of wrath and fury, a dark enraged horror;
And Urizen, repentant, forgets his wisdom in the abyss,
In forms of priesthood, in the dark delusions of repentance
Repining in his heart and spirit that Orc reign'd over all.'

Fallen Humanity.
 The human predicament

..... Alas, that Man should come to this!
 His strong bones beat with snows and hid within the caves of night,
 Marrowless, bloodless, falling into dust, driven by the winds.
 O how the horrors of Eternal Death take hold on Man!...

On this rock lay the faded head of the Eternal Man
 Enwrapped round with weeds of death, pale cold in sorrow and woe...
 Bowing his head over the consuming Universe, he cried:....
 Where once I sat, I weary walk in misery and pain.
 For from within my wither'd breast grown narrow with my woe
 The Corn is turned to thistles and the apples into poison,
 The birds of song to murderous crows, My joys to bitter groans.
 The voices of children in my tents to cries of helpless infants,
 And all exiled from the face of light and shine of morning
 In this dark world, a narrow house, I wander up and down.
 I hear Mystery howling in these flames of Consummation,
 When shall the Man of future times become as in days of old?..
 The Eternal Man sat on the Rocks and cried with awful voice:
 O Prince of Light, where art thou?...
 Come forth from the slumbers of thy cold abstraction! Come forth,
 Arise to Eternal births! Shake off thy cold repose.'

Urizen repents

'Urizen wept in the dark deep, anxious his scaly form
 To reassume the human; and he wept in the dark deep
 Saying: 'O that I had never drunk the wine nor eat the bread
 Of dark mortality'...
 So Urizen spoke; he shook his snows from off his shoulders
 and arose
 As on a Pyramid of mist, his white robes scattering
 The fleecy white: renew'd, he shook his aged mantles off
 Into the fires. Then, glorious bright, Exulting in his joy,
 He sounding rose into the heavens in naked majesty,
 In radiant Youth; when Lo! like garlands in the Eastern sky
 When vocal may comes dancing from the East, Ahania came
 Exulting in her flight, as when a bubble rises up
 On the surface of a lake, Ahania rose in joy.'

Integrity regained

'And the Eternal Man said: 'Hear my words, O Prince of Light
 Behold Jerusalem in whose bosom the Lamb of God
 Is seen; tho' slain before her Gates, he self-renew'd remains
 Eternal, and I thro' him awake from death's dark vale.
 The times revolve; the time is coming when all these delights
 Shall be renew'd, and all these Elements that now consume
 Shall reflourish.'

'The Sun has left his blackness and has found a fresher morning,
And the mild moon rejoices in the clear and cloudless night,
And man walks forth from midst of the fires: the evil is all
consum'd.

His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising night and day;
The stars consum'd like a lamp blown out, and in their stead,
behold

The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous worlds!....
'How is it we have walk'd through fires and yet are not consum'd?
How is it that all things are chang'd, even as in ancient times?'.
Urthona is arisen in his strength, no longer now
Divided from Enitharmon, no longer the Spectre Los.
Where is the Spectre of Prophecy? where is the delusive Phantom?
Departed: and Urthona rises from the ruinous Walls
In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science
For intellectual War. The war of swords departed now,
The dark Religions are departed and sweet Science reigns.'

'The Everlasting Gospel'

'Still the breath divine does move
And still the breath divine is love:

'To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.'

'Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

He doth give his joy to all;
He becomes an infant small;
He becomes a man of woe;
He doth feel the sorrow too.'

'Seek Love in the Pity of others' Woe,
 In the gentle relief of another's care,
 In the darkness of night and the winter's snow,
 In the naked and outcast, Seek Love there!'

Man subsists by brotherhood and universal love..

'Man liveth not by self alone; but in his brother's face
 Each shall behold the Eternal Father, and love and joy abound'.

'I will put on the human form and take the image of God,
 Even pity and humanity.'

Vala (self-delusion) unveiled.

'One error not remov'd will destroy the human soul.'

'He wither'd up the Human Form
 By laws of sacrifice for sin,
 Till it became a Mortal Worm,
 But O! translucent all within.

The Divine Vision still was seen,
 Still was the Human Form Divine,
 Weeping in weak and mortal clay,
 O Jesus, still the Form was thine.

And thine the Human Face, and thine
 The Human Hands and Feet and Breath,
 Entering thro' the Gates of Birth
 And passing thro' the Gates of Death.

And O thou Lamb of God whom I
 Slew in my dark self-righteous pride,
 Art thou return'd to Albion's Land?
 And is Jerusalem thy Bride?..

Create my Spirit to thy Love:
 Sublime my Spectre to thy Fear.

Spectre of Albion! warlike Fiend!
 In clouds of blood and ruin roll'd,
 There reclaim thee as my own.
 My Selfhood! Satan! arm'd in gold...'

'I in my selfhood am that Satan! I am that Evil One!
 He is my Spectre! In my obedience to loose him from my hells
 To claim the hells my passages, I go to eternal death!.

'Can you have greater miracles than these? Men who devote
 Their life's whole comfort to entire scorn and injury and death?'

'In the Eastern porch of Satan's Universe Milton stood and said:
 Satan! my Spectre! I know my power thee to annihilate
 And be a greater in thy place and be thy Tabernacle, ...
 Such are the Laws of thy false Heavens; but Laws of Eternity
 Are not such; know thou, I come to Self Annihilation.
 Such are the Laws of Eternity, that each shall mutually
 Annihilate himself for others' good, as I for thee; -
 Thy purpose and the purpose of thy Priests and of thy Churches
 Is to impress on men the fear of death, to teach
 Trembling and fear, terror, constriction, abject selfishness.
 Mine is to teach Men to despise death and to go on
 In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn
 Thy Laws and terrors, shaking down thy Synagogues as webs.
 I come to discover before Heav'n and Hell the Self-righteousness
 In all its Hypocritic turpitude, opening to every eye
 These wonders of Satan's holiness, shewing to the Earth
 The Idol Virtues of the Natural Heart, and Satan's Seat
 Explore in all its Selfish Natural Virtue, and put off
 In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone,
 To put off Self and all I have, ever and ever, Amen.

Satan heard, Coming in a cloud, with trumpets and flaming fire,
 Saying: 'I am God the judge of all, the living and the dead.
 Fall therefore down and worship me...

Till All Things become One Great Satan, in Holiness
 Oppos'd to Mercy, and the Divine Delusion, Jesus, ~~be~~ no more.'

Suddenly around Milton on my Path the Starry Seven
 Burn'd terrible.....

Awake, Albion awake! reclaim thy Reasoning Spectre, subdue
 Him to the Divine Mercy.....

Satan heard; trembling round his Body, he incircled it....
 Loud Satan thunder'd.....

..... To imitate

The Eternal Great Humanity Divine surrounded by
 His Cherubim and Seraphim in ever happy Eternity.
 Beneath sat Chaos: Sin on his right hand, Death on his left,
 And Ancient Night spread over all the heav'n his Mantle of Laws.
 He trembled with exceeding great trembling and astonishment.'

'Urizen said: 'I have Erred, and my Error remains with me...'
 He ceas'd, for riv'n link from link, the bursting Universe explodes.
 All things revers'd flew from their centers: rattling bones
 To bones join: shaking convuls'd, the shivering clay breathes:
 In pangs of an Eternal Birth.'

The Re-building of Jerusalem (the Commonwealth of Mankind)

'Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
 Bring me my Arrows of desire:
 Bring me my Spears: O clouds unfold!
 Bring me my Chariot of fire.

'I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant Land.'

'Forgiveness', the means of At-one-ment.

'In Great Eternity every particular Form gives forth or Emanates
Its own peculiar Light, and the Form is the Divine Vision
And the Light is his Garment. This is Jerusalem in every Man,
A Tent and Tabernacle of Mutual Forgiveness, Male and Female
Clothings.

And Jerusalem is called Liberty among the Children of Albion.....

'Superior, none we know: inferior, none: all equal share
Divine Benevolence and joy; for the Eternal Man
Walketh among us, calling us his Brothers and his Friends,
Forbidding us that Veil which Satan puts between Eve and Adam...
... A Veil the Saviour born and dying rends....
Every one knows we are One Family, One Man blessed for ever.'

'The intoxicating delight that they take in their work
Obliterates every other evil; none pities their tears,
Yet they regard not pity and they expect no one to pity,
For they labour for life and love regardless of any one
But the poor Spectres that they work for always, incessantly.'

'I heard his voice in my sleep and his Angel in my dream,
Saying, 'Both Jehovah Forgive a Debt only on condition that it shall
Be Paid? Both he Forgive Pollution only on conditions of Purity?
That Debt is not Forgivent! That Pollution is not Forgivent!
Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the
Heathen whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. But Jehovah's Salvation
Is without Money and without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness
of Sins,

In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity; for behold,
There is none that liveth and sinneth not! And this is the
Covenant

Of Jehovah: If you Forgive one another, so shall Jehovah Forgive You,
That He Himself may Dwell among You.'

'Mutual Forgiveness of each Vice,
Such are the Gates of Paradise.
Against the Accuser's chief desire,
Who walk'd among the Stones of Fire,
Jehovah's Finger Wrote the Law:
Then Wept! then rose in Zeal and Awe,
And the Dead Corpse from Sinai's heat
Buried beneath his Mercy Seat.
O Christians, Christians! tell me Why
You rear it on your Altars high.

'Startled was Los; he found his Enemy Urisen now
 In his hands; he wonder'd that he felt love and not hate.
 His whole soul loved him; he beheld him an infant
 Lovely, breath'd from Emitharmon; he trembled within himself.'

'I could not dare to take vengeance, for all things are so constructed
 And builded by the Divine hand that the sinner shall always escape
 And he who takes vengeance alone is the criminal of Providence.
 If I should dare to lay my finger on a grain of sand
 In way of vengeance, I punish the already punish'd. O whom
 Should I pity if I pity not the sinner who is gone astray?
 O Albion, if thou takest vengeance, if thou revengest thy wrongs,
 Thou art for ever lost! What can I do to hinder the Sons
 Of Albion from taking vengeance? or how shall I then persuade?'

'Then Jesus appeared standing by Albion as the Good Shepherd
 By the lost Sheep that he hath found, and Albion knew that
 Was the Lord, the Universal Humanity; and Albion saw his Form
 A Man, and they conversed as Man with Man in Ages of Eternity.
 And the Divine Appearance was the likeness and similitude of Los.
 Albion said: 'O Lord, what can I do? My Selfhood cruel
 Marches against thee, deceitful....
 I know it is my Self, O my Divine Creator and Redeemer.'
 Jesus replied: 'Fear not Albion: unless I die thou canst not live;
 But if I die I shall arise again and thou with me.
 This is Friendship and Brotherhood: without it Man is Not.'...
 And Jesus said: 'Thus do Men in Eternity
 One for another to put off, by forgiveness, every sin.'
 Albion replied: 'Cannot Man exist without Mysterious
 Offering of Self for Another? is this Friendship and Brotherhood?
 I see thee in the likeness and similitude of Los my Friend.'
 Jesus said: 'Wouldest thou love one who never died
 For thee, or ever die for one who had not died for thee?
 And if God dieth not for Man and giveth not himself
 Eternally for Man, Man could not exist; for Man is Love
 As God is Love: every kindness to another is a little Death
 In the Divine Image, nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood.'...
 Albion stood in terror, not for himself but for his Friend
 Divine; and Self was lost in the contemplation of faith
 And wonder at the Divine Mercy and at Los's sublime honour.

~~'Do I sleep amidst danger to Friends? O my Cities and Courties
 Do you sleep? rouse up, rouse up! Eternal Death is abroad!'~~
 So Albion spoke and threw himself into the Furnaces of affliction.
 All was a Vision; all a Dream: the Furnaces became
 Fountains of Living Waters flowing from the Humanity Divine....

'Awake, Awake, Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion, --
 For lo! the Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
 Appears upon our Hills. Awake, Jerusalem, and come away! --
 Then Albion stretch'd his hand into Infinitude
 And took his Bow...
 A Bow of Mercy and Loving kindness, laying
 Open the hidden Heart in Wars of mutual Benevolence, Wars of Love.'

The New Creation.

'O Mystery', Fierce Tharmas cries, 'Behold thy end is come!...
 Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field;
 Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air.
 Let the chained soul, shut up in darkness and in sighing,
 Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
 Rise and look out: his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open:
 ... They look behind at every step and believe it is a dream.
 Are these the slaves that groan'd along the streets of Mystery?----
 Then All the Slaves from every Earth in the wide Universe
 Sing a New Song, drowning confusion in its happy notes.'

'..... I see the Saviour over me
 Spreading his beams of love and dictating the words of this mild
 song.

Awake! awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! expand!
 I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine:
 Fibres of love from man to man thro' Albion's pleasant land...
 I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend:
 Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me:
 Lo! we are One, forgiving all Evil, Not seeking recompense.'----

'..... The Saviour follow'd him
 Displaying the Eternal Vision, the Divine Similitude,
 In loves and tears of brothers, sisters, sons, fathers and friends,
 Which if Man ceases to behold, he ceases to exist....
 We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
 We behold multitude, or expanding, we behold as one,
 As One Man all the Universal Family, and that One Man
 We call Jesus the Christ; and he in us, and we in him
 Live in perfect harmony in Eden, the land of life,
 Giving, receiving, and forgiving each other's trespasses....
~~If we have offended, forgive us; take not vengeance against us....~~
 In every bosom a Universe expands as wings.

KEATS

In my judgement, Keats possessed a creative imagination that, in its vitality and richness, was only surpassed in English Literature by Shakespeare. When, with his usual felicity, he spoke of 'snail-horn perceptions of beauty' he was giving exact expression to his own extraordinary sensibility, which was always expressing itself in his poetry. Keat's reputation has suffered from an unusually obtuse tradition of criticism that still lingers on in those who have not studied his poetry. It is true that - owing in part to the influence of such friends as Leigh Hunt to whom he was naturally grateful, and in part to reaction against the arrogant and narrow dogmatism of the reigning school of criticism - Keats's exquisite sensibility was encouraged for a time to indulge in the sentimental prettiness to which rich but immature sensuousness is liable. But his maturing genius very soon realised that this tendency, due to the very excess of his gifts, was a corruption of his poetic consciousness, and would lead to his becoming (in his own words) 'a pet lamb in a sentimental fence' ('base-ing vanities'). His reply to critics of his *Endymion* leaves nothing further to be said on this subject (Preface to *Endymion* and Letter to Hessey Oct. 9th, 1818); it helps us to understand how he came to develop, in less than two years, from the poet of *Endymion* to the poet of *Hyperion*.* Has such a maturing ever been surpassed in the history of poetry? The aura of the old misrepresentations still clings to his popular reputation; otherwise it would not be necessary to refer to them.

* *Endymion* was written between May and November 1817, and revised for printing in early 1818. *Hyperion* was probably begun in October 1818. By September 1819 Keats had abandoned the first *Hyperion*. The second *Hyperion* occupied the last few months of 1819.

But anyone who cares to put his mind up against the mind of Keats in his poetry ^{together with his} letters will have no difficulty in experiencing the value of living with the genius of creative imagination as it educates and develops its own powers from immaturity to maturity; and there the matter can be left.

While Shakespeare's imagination was dramatic, Keats's was, as essentially, mythopoetic. This is illustrated by the fact that he immediately found himself at home in Greek mythology. He took to it, as the old metaphor ~~(if we can recover its original vividness from alibi)~~ ^{so will put it,} as a duck takes to water. He died at twenty four. But two years before this he had already tried out the powers of his mens creatrix which were now urgently pressing for expression, in the Greek myth of Endymion: the youth who fell in love with the Moon-goddess, won her love, and was made immortal by union with her. Keats himself said that the life of every man of consequence was an allegory: * that is to say, it was continually embodying ^{itself} itself in an imaginative form which ^{gives} ~~gave~~ expression ^{to} the significance of his most profound and intense experience of life. This is certainly true of the poet. I am trying to show that it was pre-eminently true of the four poets whose work is considered here. And of no one was it more true than of Keats; ^{as he himself says} ~~he is telling us so.~~

Immature as Endymion is, it was not only full of scattered beauties, but already reveals in its 'allegory' the direction in which his experience was leading him. It was published in 1818. And as he tells us in the Preface, another Greek myth was already taking possession of his imagination. Hyperion was begun ~~(his letters tell us)~~ in order (as he supposed) to relieve his mind of the pain of watching his younger brother Tom die of the tuberculosis

* 'Allegory' simply means 'saying' (^{agorein}) something in another (allos) form or image or way. Keats does not use it in the more technical sense.

which had killed Keats's mother (to whom he was devoted) when he himself was fifteen. Tom was only nineteen; and Keats loved him and was nursing him with the knowledge (which Keats's medical training had given him) that Tom was certainly dying of the disease for which no remedy was then known. *In fact*, Keats himself was suffering from it and hardly two years later died of it (Feb. 1821. Tom died in Dec. 1818). What could be better as a distraction than to lose himself in the old Greek myth of the 'far away and long ago' when the sky-gods took possession of Olympus? So Keats supposed. But his *mens creatrix* was working to quite other ends. ^{for as} ~~she~~ he wrote, new imaginative insights began to emerge; ~~as an~~ ^{the} 'allegory' ^{was} ~~a~~ 'vision' of the intense experience being created by his love for Fanny Brawne and his dying brother. As he became conscious of this, Keats saw that he must begin again, and rewrite the whole poem in this personal context. Before he had got far, the last stages of his disease and his death put an end to his work. But not before the introductory preface and revisions of the first part of the earlier text had indicated clearly the direction in which his new insight was moving.

In the first of the three mythological poems - Endymion, Lamia and Hyperion - Keats's creative imagination identifies itself with Endymion; so deeply that Endymion becomes not merely the embodiment of the young poet-hero (~~Apollon~~ ^{the} Apollo of Hyperion), but the chosen youthful hero of the 'life-force' ^{power}, who in all primitive myth has to pass through the underworld (the womb of Mother Earth - the depths of the Sea - 'the Great Below') before he can be 'divinised'. ^{the} ~~Inanna~~ Inanna, Gilgamesh, Osiris, Persephone, Perseus, Theseus, Heracles, Orpheus, Odysseus, Aeneas, Vainamoinen, Maui and ^{many others} the rest. *It is*

The same myth is similarly reflected in the Magic Flute where the young hero, after falling in love with the 'image' of the youthful heroine, and escaping from the 'chthonic' serpent (~~cf. Delphic Apollo~~), has to pass through fire and water before he can achieve his destiny and be united to love and beauty. In the Greek myth Endymion falls in love with the young Moon-goddess, who returns his love. In Keats's version she appears and is united to him in ^{fugitive} 'visionary' experiences which leave him under her enchantment. His one aim in life is now to seek and find her again and this 'quest' leads him through the underworld of Earth and Sea to a human love (the 'Indian' maiden) who eventually reveals herself as the Moon-goddess herself; he is then united with her in 'heaven'. Keats leaves us in no doubt what the Moon-goddess symbolised in his 'allegory': she is the Beauty which the poet seeks with all the passionate ardour of the young lover - 'the mighty abstract principle of Beauty in all things' of his letters; ^{the Beauty} which ~~is also~~ celebrated in two of his great Odes. Here is his own description of these 'visitations of Beauty':

'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness,....
..... In spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. 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:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,

The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.

The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own vallies.

~~This river does not see the naked sky,
Till it begins to progress silverly
Around the western border of the wood.~~

'O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair!
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
Glance but one little beam of temper'd light
Into my bosom.

' By all the stars
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
That kept my spirit in are burst - that I
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky!
How beautiful thou art! The world how deep!
How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep
Around their axle! Then these gleaming reins,
How lithel! When this thy chariot attains
Its airy goal, haply some bow'rs veils
Those twilight eyes? Those eyes! - my spirit fails -
Dear goddess help! or the wide-gaping air
Will gulph me - help - At this with madden'd stare
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood,
Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone;
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan
Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth: Descend,
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world! ..

'Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
Our piece of heaven - whose benevolence
Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud
'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
Eterne Apollo! that they Sister fair
Is of all these the gentler-mightiest.

When thy gold breath is misting in the west,
 She unobserved steals unto her throne,
 And there she sits most meek and most alone;
 As if she had not pomp subservient;
 As if thine eye, high Poesi, was not bent
 Towards her with the Muses in thine heart;
 As if the ministering stars kept not apart,
 Waiting for silver-footed messages.†

' Wherever beauty dwells,
 In gulph or serie, mountains or deep dells,
 In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
 Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.
 Amid ~~and~~ his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;
 Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;
 Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;
 And now, O winged Chieftain! thou hast sent
 A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,
 To find Endymion.†.

'What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move
 My heart so potently? When yet a child
 I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.
 Thou seem'dst my sisters' hand in hand we went
 From eve to morn across the firmament.
 No apples would I gather from the tree,
 Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously:
 No tumbling water ever spake romance,
 But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance.'

'Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain
 By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end;
 And as I grew in years, still did'st thou blend
 With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;
 Thou wast the mountain-top - the sage's pen -
 The poet's harp - the voice of friends - the sun;
 Thou wast the river - thou wast glory won;
 Thou wast my clarion's blast - thou wast my steed -
 My goblet full of wine - my topmost deed -
 Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!
 O what a wild and harmonized tune
 My spirit struck from all the beautiful!'

Apollo, the god-hero of Hyperion, brother of the Moon-goddess, young god
 of music and poetry (Endymion - Keats) also makes his presence felt in the
 poem:

' Listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly.'

The poet's 'snail-horn perceptions of beauty' in nature, set the creative
imagination dreaming 'thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls' -

' Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From vallies where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn.'

'Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge - see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!

Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brains be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal - a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between; ..
An unknown.'

'O magic sleep! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
Till it is hush'd and smooth! O unconfin'd
Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key
To golden palaces, strange minstrelay,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,
Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight. ...

'But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh
All human; bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence.'

This leads the poet to his first attempt to express the supreme values of life ('the clear religion of heaven'):

'Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
 Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
 A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
 Full alchemis'd, and free of space. Behold
 The clear religion of heaven! Fold
 A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
 And soothe thy lips: hie, when the airy stress
 Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
 And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
 Aeolian magic from their lucid wombs:
 Then old songs waken from encloused tombs;
 Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
 Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave
 Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;
 Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
 Where long ago a giant battle was;
 And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
 In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
 Feel we these things? - that moment have we stept
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state
 Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
 Richer entanglements, entralments far
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
 To the chief intensity: the crown of these
 Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
 Upon the forehead of humanity.
 All its more ponderous and bulky worth
 Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
 A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
 There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
 Of light, and that is love: its influence,
 Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
 At which we start and fret; till in the end,
 Melting into its radiance, we blend,
 Mingle, and so become a part of it, -
 Nor with aught else can our souls intermit
 So wingedly: when we combine therewith,
 Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
 And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.'

'Now, if this earthly love has power to make
 Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake
 Ambition from their memories, and burn
 Their measure of content: what merest whim,
 Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
 To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim
 A love immortal, an immortal too.'

'My restless spirit never could endure
 To brood so long upon one luxury,
 Unless it did, though fearfully, essay
 A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.'

What is of most interest here is that 'the clear religion of heaven' has two aspects. The first is, as we should expect, the exquisite response to natural beauties akin to that which Wordsworth describes in Tintern Abbey (see above p.). But pride of place is already given to personal human relationships: friendship and love are 'the chief intensity', the crown of 'humanity', united to which 'life's self is nourished by its proper pith'. And this was now to become the chief clue. For he now meets 'the Burden of life's Mystery' in Glaucus (Ek. III. 19f). Glaucus is now a white-haired magus; but he had once been (he tells Endymion) a kind of Ariel - a light-hearted young sea spirit who had fallen in love with Circe. At first he was enchanted, but when he began to discover her cruel inhumanity she laid him under a terrible curse, with only one hope of deliverance. So Glaucus represents the tragic wisdom learnt by suffering. Endymion is the young poet, embodiment of the new creative life still in search of his goal. They meet, and out of their mutual friendliness comes a new life and a new world for both. Every detail of the story is at this point is designed to express Keats's conviction that the possibility of a creative advance lies solely in the union of the young poet's creative imagination with the wisdom learnt by suffering.

'Arise, good youth, for sacred Phoebus' sake!
 I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel
 A very brother's yearning for thee steal
 Into mine own: for why? thou openest
 The prison gates that have so long oppress
 My weary watching. Though thou know'st it not,
 Thou art commission'd to this fated spot
 For great enfranchisement.'

The secret is carried to them in a magic scroll which Glaucus reads to
Endymion:

'In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,
Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch
His loath'd existence through ten centuries,
And then to die alone. Who can devise
A total opposition? No one. So
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,
And be oppressed. Yet he shall not die,
These things accomplish'd: If he utterly
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds
The meanings of all motions, shapes and sounds;
If he explores all forms and substances
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;
He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,
He must pursue this task of joy and grief
Most piously; - all lovers tempest-tost,
And in the savage overwhelming lost,
He shall deposit side by side, until
Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil:
Which done, and all these labours ripened,
A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,
Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct
How to consummate all. The youth elect
Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd'.

The Magus tears the magic words of wisdom into little pieces, puts his own magic robe round the poet, gives him his magic wand and the 'Ariadne thread' that will serve as his clue, and finally tells him to scatter the torn pieces of the scroll on to Glaucus himself, and the rows of dead lovers who lie near. He does so, and immediately the curse is removed, Glaucus recovers his youth and beauty, and the lovers come to life. The 'two deliverers' - sage and poet now united - are 'distracted with the richest overflow of joy that ever poured from heaven'. The 'newborn god' then leads them all to the throne of Neptune. The significance of Neptune (Oceanus) will become apparent in Hyperion. Meanwhile Keats has elaborated every detail in such a way as to make it impossible to miss

the significance of his allegory. The new creative life (the young poet) and the tragic wisdom of experience both remain barren so long as they are separated; but once they are united the mens creatrix is released in a new creative advance. Endymion returns to earth: but ~~only to~~ falls into further confusion and suffering (Bk. IV). It is only when he discovers that the beauty of the human and the beauty of the divine, earthly love and heavenly love, are one and the same that he is 'spiritualised by some unlooked for change' and united to the Beauty that he worships. This is what the mens creatrix working in Keats made of the Endymion myth; something not to be found in the Greek myth; but an original discovery of Keats's creative imagination.

A year later he wrote La Belle dame sans Merci and Lamia. The solution arrived at as 'a happy ending' in Endymion was evidently too superficial. Lamia is another Greek legend, ^{about} of a young lover of Corinth, Lycius, who married a girl of fairy beauty who turned out to be an illusion (maya). She built him a palace of magic beauty and prepared a marvellous wedding feast. But cold reality broke in the form of the 'philosopher' 'Sage Apollonius'; under his stare she became a phantom and vanished.

' The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form'...

' the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased.'

'My sweet bride withers at their potency.
Fool, said the sophist, in an undertone
Gruff with contempt....'

'..... from every ill
 Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
 And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?
 Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the sophist's eye,
 Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
 Keen, cruel, piercing, stinging: ...
 'A serpent!' echoed he; no sooner said,
 Than with a frightful scream she vanished.'

The imaginative vision now seems a deceptive dream.

In Hyperion Keats adopts another Greek myth. Hyperion is the pre-Olympian sun-god. Saturn and all the other gods and goddesses belonging to his order have been dispossessed by Zeus and the Olympians. But strangely enough the old sun god still functions in the sky, with the result that Apollo is still wandering about bewildered and unhappy. Why? When we recall the story of Endymion and Glaucus the reason at once becomes plain. For the situation is the same. Apollo is not only the Sun god - the Light giver - but also the god of song, music and poetry; he is, in short, the new embodiment of the creative imagination. The part of Glaucus is now taken by Mnemosyne, the elder goddess of Memory, the wisdom of the past. As the new creative life in Endymion cannot be released in creative activity until Endymion has learnt wisdom from Glaucus (the magus), so the creative life in young Apollo cannot be released as the energy which is eternal delight until the creative imagination has been enriched with all the wisdom by suffering which Mnemosyne alone can give him. (The theme was already being considered by Keats when he finished Endymion, ^{see the} ^{his} End of Preface).

When the poem opens, Saturn and his co-gods have been driven out of heaven and find themselves a dark valley surrounded by impenetrable forests. Keats builds up the atmosphere of gloom and despair, deliberately

and with great power.

'Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud.'...

'His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unscap'd; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.'

'And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral caverns;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady.'

The next point that Keats is careful to emphasise is that Saturn is not evil, like Milton's Satan. It was not his harshness and tyranny that led to rebellion. On the contrary Keats is at pains to tell us of his essential goodness:

'..... Who had power
To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
But it is so; and I am smother'd up,
And buried from all godlike exercise
Of influence benign on planets pale,
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
And all those acts which Deity supreme
Doth ease its heart of love in.'

'..... But cannot I create?
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,
To overbear and crushle this to naught?
Where is another chaos?'

Their 'fall' can therefore only be due to the fact that they belong to the older generation which has given the best it has to give, and is now dispossessed by new and younger life. The question is therefore whether they should fight back and try to storm heaven. This is the situation which inevitably recalls Milton; and Keats must either challenge Milton at his greatest, or imitate him. Keats at once realised how dangerous this influence was and became uneasy. He is careful not to let his description recall any detail of hell.

'It was a den where no insulting light
 Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
 They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
 Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
 Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where,
 Crag jutting forth to crag.'

'.... Here found they covert drear,
 Scarce images of life, on here, on there,
 Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque
 Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
 When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
 In dull November, and their chancel vault,
 The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
 Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
 Or word, or look, or action of despair.'

Nor is Saturn allowed comparison with the superb pride and defiance of Satan.

'There saw she direst strife; the supreme God
 At war with all the frailty of grief,
 Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
 Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
 Against these plagues he strove in vain; for Fate
 Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
 A disencointing poison.'

Saturn now appeals to Oceanus as the Magus, the Sage. His answer is the crux of what Keats calls the 'allegory':

'Listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
 How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop;
 And in the proof much comfort will I give;
 If ye will take that comfort in its truth.'

'We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
 Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
 Hast sifted well the atom-universe;
 But for this reason, that thou art the King,
 And only blind from sheer supremacy,
 One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
 Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
 And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
 So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
 Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
 From chaos and parental darkness came
 Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
 That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
 Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
 And with it light, and light, engendering
 Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
 The whole enormous matter into life.
 Upon that very hour, our parentage,
 The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest:
 Then thou first born, and we the giant race,
 Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
 Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
 O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
 And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
 That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
 As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
 Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs:
 And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
 In form and shape compact and beautiful,
 In will, in action free, companionship,
 And thousand other signs of purer life;
 So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
 A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 And fated to excel us, as we pass
 In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
 Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
 Of shapeless Chaos.f.

'We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
 Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
 But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
 Above us in their beauty, and must reign
 In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
 That first in beauty should be first in might:
 Yea, by that law, another race may drive
 Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
 Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
 My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
 Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
 By noble winged creatures he hath made?
 I saw him on the calmed waters scud,

With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
 That it enforce'd me to bid sad farewell
 To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
 And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
 Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
 Give consolation in this woe extreme.
 Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.'

Could words embody more finely the truth of the creative advance? These are the very accents of the mens creatrix itself.

' There is a noise
 Among immortals when a God gives sign,
 With hushing finger, how he means to load
 His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought.
 With thunder, and with music, and with pomp.'

But 'Apollo is once more the golden theme'. So

The next crux of the allegory is the birth of Apollo into divinity. It is a denouement that we shall no longer find surprising; for it is the meeting of Endymion and Glaucus in a far profounder and more moving form. Here is the picture of the meeting between Appollo and Mnemosyne:

'The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars
 Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
 Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
 There was no covert, no retired cave
 Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
 Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
 He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
 Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
 Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
 While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
 With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
 And there was purport in her looks for him,
 Which he with eager guess began to read
 Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said:
 How can'st thou over the unfooted sea?
 Or hath that antique mien and robed form
 Mov'd in these vales invisible till now?
 Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
 The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
 In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
 The rustle of those ample skirts about
 These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
 Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
 Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,

And their sternal calm, and all that face,
 Or I have dream'd. - Yes, said the supreme shape,
 Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up
 Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
 Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
 Unwearied ear of the whole universe
 Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
 Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
 That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me, youth,
 What sorrow ~~must~~ thou canst feel.'

apollo:

' Mnemosyne!
 Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how;
 Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest?
 Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
 Would come no mystery? For me, dar, dark,
 And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes.'

' Where is power?
 Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
 Makes this alarm in the elements,
 While I here idle listen on the shores
 In fearless yet in aching ignorance?
 O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
 That waileth every morn and eventide,
 Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
 Mute thou remainest - mute! yet I can read
 A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
 Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
 Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
 Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
 Creations and destroyings, all at once
 Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
 And deify me, as if some blythe wing
 Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
 And so become immortal. - Thus the God
 While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
 Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept
 Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne,
 Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
 Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
 Or liker still to one who should take leave
 Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
 As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
 Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd:
 His very hair, his golden tresses fared
 Kept undulation round his eager neck.

During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
 Her arms as one who prophesied. - At length
 Apollo shriek'd; - and lo! from all his limbs
 Celestial *(glory dawned; he was a god)* ✕.

Apollo could not be born in the divinity of his mens creatrix until he
 had met Mnemosyne and made her tragic wisdom his own.

But by this time Keats had become fully conscious of the insight
 to which his mens creatrix had given birth in 'imagining' Hyperion. Both
 the remoteness and the 'Miltonisms' were inappropriate. The 'allegory'
 must ^{now} speak with the voice of Keats himself.

The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream opens with a directly personal 'dream'
 or 'allegory': i.e. imaginative dramatic picture:

'For poesy alone can tell her dreams,
 With the fine spell of words alone can save
 Imagination from the sable chain
 And dumb enchantment'.

Keats is in fact attempting to transform an old legend into a personal
 myth. He drinks a magic potion and begins to ~~dream~~ ^{see a vision}. The remote world
 of the fallen Titans has become the vast temple of Mnemosyne, now the
 divine Prophetess Moneta, the tragic figure of the Mater Dolorosa, her
 eyes turned only on the Past and the despairing wisdom that has been
 learnt by suffering.

'I look'd around upon the carved sides
 Of an old sanctuary with roof august,
 Builded so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
 Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of heavens
 So old the place was, I remember'd none
 The like upon the Earth: what I had seen
 Of grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
 The superannuations of sunk realms,

✕ Some version: It is not certain that Keats himself wrote the line,
 But it obviously completes the scene.

Or Nature's rocks toil'd hard in waves and winds,
 Seem'd but the faulture of decrepit things
 To that eternal domed Monument.

'The Embossed roof, the silent massy range
 Of columns north and south, ending in mist
 Of nothing, then to eastward, where black gates
 Were shut against the sunrise evermore.
 Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
 An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
 At level of whose feet an altar slept,
 To be approach'd on either side by steps,
 And marble balustrade, and patient travail
 To count with toil the innumerable degrees.'

The whole significance of Endymion, Lamia and the first Hyperion now resolves
 itself into a desperate personal challenge to Keats himself. He must
 climb the steps to the Prophetess and her altar or die where he stood. *Why?*

Why? '..... High Prophetess, said I, purge off,
 Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film. -
 None can usurp this height, return'd that shade,
 But those to whom the miseries of the world
 Are misery, and will not let them rest.
 All else who find a haven in the world,
 Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
 If by a chance into this Zane they come,
 Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half. -
 Are there not thousands in the world, said I,
 Encourag'd by the sooth voice of the shade,
 Who love their fellows even to the death,
 Who feel the giant agony of the world,
 And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
 Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
 Other men here; but I am here alone.
 Those whom thou speak'st of are no vision'ries,
 Rejoin'd that voice - They are no dreamers weak.'

'What benefit canst thou, or all thy tribe,
 To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing,
 A fever of thyself.'

Moneta then fills the mind of the poet Keats with the 'wondrous lessons'
 of wisdom which Mnemosyne had poured into the mind of Apollo. It had
 made Apollo a god ('Knowledge enormous makes a god of me'); it now does

the same for Keats.

'Then the tall shade, in drooping linens veil'd,
Spoke out, so much more earnest, that her breath
Stirr'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping hung:
About a golden oenoe from her hand
Pendent; and by her voice I knew she shed
Long-treasured tears. This temple, sad and lone,
Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
Against rebellions: this old image here,
Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
Is Saturn's; I Moneta, left supreme
Sole Priestess of this desolation.*

'..... ~~And~~ Sad Moneta cried,
The sacrifice is done, but not the loss
Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.
My power, which to me is still a curse,
Shall be to thee a wonder; for the scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain,
With an electrical changing misery,
Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold,
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not.
As near as an immortal's sphered words
Could to a mother's soften, were these last:
And yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries,
That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pin'd by human sorrows, but bright blanch'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had past
The lilly and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face -
But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back, with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things; - they saw me not,
But in blank splendour, beam'd like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not; who knows not
What eyes are upward cast.*

'So at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
I ask'd to see what things the hollow brain
Behind environed: what high tragedy

In the dark secret chambers of her skull
 Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
 To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
 Her planetary eyes; and tough her voice
 With such a sorrow - 'Shade of Memory!' -
 Cried I, with act adoring at her feet,
 / By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,
 By this last temple, by the golden age,
 By great Apollo, thy dear Foster Child,
 And by thyself, forlorn divinity,
 The pale Omega of a withered race,
 Let me behold, according as thou saidst,
 What in thy brain so ferments to and fro' V..

'Then Moneta's voice
 Came brief upon mine ear - 'So Saturn sat
 When he had lost his Realms' - whereon there grew
A power within me of enormous ken
To see as a god sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade, The lofty theme
 At those few words hung vast before my mind,
 With half-unravel'd web. I set myself
 Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
 And seeing, ne'er forget.'

Moneta now begins the story of the earlier Hyperion. He had only got as far as the entrance of Hyperion when his last illness and death put an end to it. But the noticeable thing about the revision as far as it went is the deliberate and consistent heightening of the febleness and despair of a Saturn who could not learn the lesson of 'the God of the Sea, Sophist and Sage':

'Receive the truth and let it be your balm..
 For to bear all naked truths
 And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
 That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!'

The 'naked truth' which in Keats became the power 'to see as a god sees' was still the wisdom of Oceanus.

SHELLEY

All Shelley's most mature experience and convictions, and all his craftsmanship as a poet, reach their fullest experience in Prometheus Unbound. Like Keats therefore he finds in a Greek myth the most appropriate adumbration of his thought. ^{And} ~~But~~, like Keats, he transforms the myth to express his own experience and the imaginative insight it has brought him.

This is as it should be. Indeed it is inevitable. For a myth is an act of creative imagination - that is to say, an attempt at an imaginative interpretation of experience. Which reminds us that all the Greek myths, as they have come down to us, are myths already interpreted by the later classical writers. For example, Hesiod (our main source) has more than one interpretation of the Prometheus myth. The Pandora version is quite different from that of Aeschylus. ^{Hesiod says that} Prometheus insulted Zeus by inviting the Olympians to a feast and then carefully separating all the fat of the animal sacrifices for the feast and putting it with the bones and wrapping the skin round it. The meat was reserved for Prometheus' friends; Zeus realised what Prometheus had done, but said nothing in order not to 'lose face' before the company. To punish Prometheus for this typical *hubris* (insulting pride), the Olympians created a prototype of Helen, a perfectly fascinating young female - a fata morgana - who would be the very source of mischief (of. Eve and the 'fall' ^{in Genesis}) for Prometheus' protégés, mankind. They sent her with a box full of all the evils that afflict mankind, to the world of men. Now Prometheus (Foresight) had a brother Epimetheus (Hindsight with no Foresight), who was beguiled by Pandora into letting Pandora satisfy her feminine curiosity by looking to see what was in the box.

She opened the lid and out flew all the follies and afflictions of man, leaving only delusive hope behind. This was the punishment of man for the hubris of his champion Prometheus. This is clearly a most sophisticated interpretation. Hesiod was one of the Attic farmers, who had a very tough struggle for existence; and in consequence he had the hard-bitten cynical disillusion of the peasant. The burning of the fat and skin for the 'sweet savour' which was what the god liked, is a familiar feature of the Mosaic law as well as Homer. And the attribution of all the disaster to 'the woman thou gavest me' - femme fatale - is equally familiar in the story of Eve.

What is common however to all the Greek interpretations is the fundamental concept of *hubris*. It has affinities with the Mesopotamian myth that the gods created man to be their slaves and men had better submit to their fate. This concept of Fate is closely bound up with the idea of submission and obedience. The dramas of Sophocles, in particular, are dominated by this conception of 'Moira', ^(Fate) Homer had earlier depicted even Zeus and the Olympians as subject to this impersonal and inescapable law of Destiny: ^{inescapable inescapable destiny} Virgil's 'ineluctabile fatum'. It follows that the worst human folly and sin was rebellion against, or defiance of this overall Fate or of the gods who controlled man's destiny. This defiance was 'Hubris', ^(megalomania) overwhelming pride, the one absolutely fatal and disastrous act of human folly. So much so that such a rebellion against the inevitable must be a form of madness inflicted by heaven itself: 'quem deus vult perdere' - ^{when God means to destroy a man} they first drive him mad. That is why Sophocles, though he makes plain the devastating human suffering that Fate may cause, nevertheless insisted

on the futility of rebellion against it. The only sane attitude is submission. It is this hubris that brings about the 'doom' of families such as the Atridae: they are under a 'curse'. The subsequent intentions of the victims of the curse are irrelevant. Oedipus does not know that he is killing his father and marrying his mother; far less does he intend to do so. But this does not affect his fate which is written in the decrees of the Moira whose laws have determined how the consequences of the hybris of Atreus will work themselves out. The Hindu conception of Karma provides an interesting parallel. But the Hindu saint can escape, though at a great cost. For the Greek there is no escape, only submission to 'the will of heaven'. Sophocles' own feelings about it are reflected in Ulysses' answer to Athene about the fate of Ajax:

'Goddess, I pity him, for all his hate.
 Bitter his heart - more bitter far his fate.
 Not his alone, but all men's lot I see
 Foredoomed to fall in like calamity.
 For happier chance in vain thy life I scan,
 Oh strange, sad, ineffectual shadow man.'

Euripides applies this bitter but unavailing insight - embodied in Cassandra - to the personal sphere. He translates the 'superhuman heroes' of the epics (mythical embodiments of human destiny) into actual human persons and depicts the personal suffering that the world order inflicts on them. His two masterpieces - *Hippolytus* and *The Bacchae* - illustrate this perfectly. As a poet Euripides can take refuge in dreams of beauty - 'And shall not loveliness be loved for ever?' (^{the refrain of some of his} many choruses); but Euripides is fully aware that this refreshment of the human spirit is an escape, not a solution. Aeschylus' masterpiece, the trilogy of

Agamemnon child of the doomed House of Atreus, is concerned not with a challenge to Fate but with the unbearable contradiction produced by the conflict of two elements in that destiny, which had historically been produced by the imposition of the Olympic religion of the Aryan invaders on the old 'Gnathonic' worship of the original natives - the 'Autochthones' born of the soil of the Mother Earth of Attica. This latter reflected Fate as a 'Karma' ^{and is embodied in} the spirits of Vengeance (Furies) whose home is in the heart of Mother Earth and who inevitably rise to take vengeance on all who violate her laws - above all, the slaying of a mother by her own children. - These are the terrible 'Furies' of the tragedy to which they give their name. The Olympian sky-gods were ruled by a Sky-Father, and the Olympic religion therefore required the same vengeance for the killing of the father of the family.† Clytemnestra kills her husband Agamemnon, and therefore his son Orestes is bound by the laws of heaven to kill his mother. But this is what the Furies are bound to avenge. Here are two powers of Destiny in conflict, and Orestes is caught as a helpless victim between both. Athens's solution is that the Athenians should reverence and worship both.

It is against this background that the myth of Prometheus must be seen. The original myth embodies - and perhaps justifies - the rebellion of the human spirit against the enslavement of man to this ineluctabile fatum: Prometheus was the human intelligence and cleverness outwitting the world order that imposed such suffering on him. Why should man submit to it? - the question hinted at by Euripides. But this was hubris in excelsis! And so Zeus reacts by chaining man's

'Saviour' to a peak in the lonely Caucasus, and sending his sky-bird to eat Prometheus' liver (the organ of man's life-blood). Prometheus was an immortal and could not be destroyed by the thunderbolts of the sky-gods. But this meant that he could be made to suffer interminably - his liver could be devoured daily! - until he gave up his hubris and submitted to Zeus and Moira. But Prometheus, being foresight, the Prophet, knew of the decree of Fate that the present Ruler must at last be dispossessed by his son (^{as} Ouranos ^{+ Saturn by Zeus} Saturn^s and on the 'hero' plane, Perseus, Oedipus, Theseus, ^{and so on} ~~etc.~~ ^{to protect him}). Zeus himself was born and kept hidden in a cave by his mother, from his father who would have 'devoured' him.) Prometheus knew the name of the goddess who was destined to be the mother of this son, if Zeus 'married' her; he was therefore able to drive a bargain with Zeus. And so~~x~~ man kept the fire that Prometheus had 'stolen' for him from 'heaven' ^{the star world} (where it belongs). ~~But~~ Prometheus was the mythical name for the mens creatrix; that embodied 'nisus' to better the human predicament by continual 'inventions' and discoveries (the creative advance). It is interesting that this threat of Fate to Zeus was later suppressed in the orthodox tradition of the Greek-Aryan religions, though it was still ^{remembered} ~~well-known~~ when Aeschylus wrote.

The idea of a compromise or bargain with the Tyrant-god was utterly repugnant to Shelley. Shelley was a thorough-going rebel. Even as a little child he was highly-strung, imaginative and extremely sensitive. His father was an orthodox, conventional and very stupid conservative. ^{Squire} He reacted vigorously against this queer boy and Shelley reacted even more violently. At Eton and Oxford Shelley met the same rigid and unintelligent conservatism. The result was that his 'life-
 * The same tendency can be traced in the Babylonian myth of Marduk.

pattern' became fixed in a rebel hero tyrant stereotype. Everything was fitted into it. He took over Goßwin's theory of human perfectibility and man's enslavement by kings, priests, marriage-laws and the like - a complex of imposed tyranny to which all the evils that afflict mankind are due. All man needed was freedom and love: then

'The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return.'

It was inevitable therefore that Shelley should find in the Prometheus myth everything that he most passionately believed in; and that his Prometheus should destroy the Tyrant. But not by violence. Prometheus must be the embodiment of freedom and love in their purest form; so it must be these that create the brave new world.

Prometheus Unbound opens with Prometheus 'nailed to ^athe wall of eagle-baffling mountain, Bleak, wintry, dead, unmeasured'. When he had first been chained to the rock he had cursed Jupiter. Now, having realised that hate is the great evil, he wishes to recall his curse and undo 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.'

This is what Shelley was referring to when he said in the Preface: 'Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest ends ... My purpose has been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select 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.'

Believing that 'we needs must love the highest when we see it', Shelley is calling up all his resources as a poet to create a visionary embodiment of the highest perfection of human nature ^{an image} of such power that it will enchant us into making the brave new world. This is a possible hope because, as the Earth says to Prometheus: 'Thou art more than God, being wise and kind'; ^{And} ~~but~~ ^{original} in the ~~course~~ Prometheus had said to Jupiter 'O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power' - a clear indication that it is man himself who gives the tyrant the power to be a tyrant. ^{So} If man could become really wise and kind the 'god-like' power of the tyrant would be broken. The whole of Prometheus Unbound is an imaginative 'vision' of this event. Shelley has here reached the same profound intuition of the human mens creatrix that was reached by the other three poets we have studied. The creative imagination in them ^{all} worked with such power and intensity that it grasped imaginatively the true functions of of the creative imagination in human development. This is, to become 'the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come'. As the crystallisation of the most intensely felt human experience, the creative imagination presents a 'vision' of what the human mens creatrix is struggling to become and what it must become if it is ever to real-ise itself in its integral wholeness and maturity. The 'grandeur and misery' of man is due to the fact that though his most mature experience and development has led him to a 'visionary' understanding of this brave new world in which man may become and live as himself - realise his true nature -, his 'practical' life, in the sense of the actual world of human interrelationships, has been governed by principles which are the very

contrary of this; ^{it} what we may ~~very~~ briefly summarise as the 'power-
 politics' which ^{have been} ~~are~~ the controlling 'ideal' and factor of the economic -
 political - social life of man. Either one or the other must therefore
 be abandoned. But, as all these poets have clearly seen and expressed,
 (each in their own idiom) in their imaginative 'visions', the 'human
 predicament' of the world in which they found themselves was the inevitable
 consequence of ordering the human world according to ~~what we may tersely~~
~~indicate as~~ 'power politics'. This, ^{world,} their sensitivity - their snail-horn
 perception as poets - ^{felt deeply to be} ~~is~~ an inhuman world, a 'fallen' world, a 'brute'
 world, 'the burden of mystery', a world fit for tyrants to live in. ~~or~~
~~however we may prefer to put it.~~ Shakespeare in the Tempest, Blake in
 his 'prophetic vision' of Jerusalem, Keats in the wisdom of 'wisdom' of
 Moneta and Oceanus which together enable the poet to see, 'as a god sees';
~~the one way of creative advance,~~ Shelley in Prometheus who is 'the type
 of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by
 the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest ends'; ^{each of these has,} ~~have~~ each in
 their own 'accents', embodied ^{this same} ~~their~~ vision of ^e ~~the~~ 'beautiful idealism of
 moral excellence'. But ~~whereas~~ Shakespeare ends the Tempest by acknowledg-
 ing that the Magus as poet can only create the brave new world as a vision -
 'art to enchant' - which had yet to be translated into reality by compassion-
 ate understanding, forgiveness and at-one-ment ('mercy itself'), ~~and whereas~~
 Keats called his second Hyperion 'a vision'. Blake, while declaring that
 the 'Saviour' of fallen and disintegrated man must be the embodiment of
 'Forgiveness', identified his 'vision' with ^{an} 'ultimate reality'; ^{from} ~~and Shelley~~
~~which man had temporarily escaped through the Fall.~~ ~~But~~ Shelley
 substituted his own 'idealism' for the reality of the human world and the

means of its salvation, and so simplified the 'real' problem ~~to the~~
~~point of unreality~~. It is this weakness that makes the Prometheus so
 obviously unsatisfying: a magical solution. But Shelley is so honest
 that this 'fault' in the poem becomes a valuable insight. The poet
 cannot create 'forms more real than living man' (P.U.) -
 that was the mistake of Plato, and Shelley's Platonism falls into the same
 error; but Shelley imagines his vision with such sincerity and passion
 that the consequences of his error supply their own correction of it -
 we see clearly that it won't do; and in the end the intensity of Shelley's
 creative imagination sheds its own illusions and passes into a ^{true} ~~live~~
 vision of the creative advance as it has ~~truly~~ been at work in the reality
 of human experience.

~~To resume.~~ Shelley's insight that the power of 'the Tyrant
 in the heavens', as of every tyrant, is due to the fact that man himself
 gives him that power; that man worships the projections of his own
 immature and misguided imagination as independent realities; that the
 terrors and cruelties that take possession of him and control his personal
 and social behaviour are the reflection of his own terror-stricken and
 cruelty-ridden nature - this was an immensely valuable correction of a
 fundamental corruption of conscience. But its value was obscured by the
 dogma of human 'perfectionism', which led Shelley to develop his drama
 on the assumption that the perfecting of Prometheus (the 'idealism' of
 human goodness) and the consequent end of the tyranny of man's own
 projected evil 'idealisms', would immediately and automatically produce a
 perfect mankind. This in turn disguises the practical reality: the
 immense effort required of the human mens creatrix if the human world

commonwealth of which the creative imagination has dreamed, is to become a human reality: ~~tantae melis erit.~~ Neither Shakespeare nor Keats, nor even Blake fell into this confusion.

The moment that Prometheus recalls his curse and renounces reliance on anything but love and good-will, Jupiter in alarm makes a supreme effort to break the Titan's spirit: ^{he} ~~the~~ ^{Prometheus} temptation to despair of love. ^{temptation comes} This ~~arrives~~ in the form of 'Furies' under the control of Mercury. Mercury expresses the outlook of Aeschylus' drama:

'..... Awful Sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.....
..... Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent....
..... Even now the Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here....
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven, ~~his~~
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.'

Prometheus replies:

'..... I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here...
Let others flatter Grime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err.'

The Furies are then let loose on Prometheus, and they fill his mind with nightmare pictures of despair; worst of all is the thought that evil

turns goodness itself into an instrument of its own purpose - goodness
 becomes the means of the triumph of evil:

'..... They come
 Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
 And hollow underneath, like death.'

'We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
 And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
 And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
 Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
 We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live.'

'Why more hideous than your loathed selves
 Gather ye up in legions from the deep?'

'Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
 Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
 Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
 Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

One came forth of gentle worth
 Smiling on the sanguine earth;
 His words outlived him, like swift poison
 Withering up truth, peace, and pity.

Look! where round the wide horizon

Many a million-peopled city
 Vomits smoke in the bright air.

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.

Joy, joy, joy,

Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers.
 And the future is dark, and the present is spread
 Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

Drops of bloody agony flow
 From his white and quivering brow.
 Grant a little respite now:
 See a disenchanted nation
 Springs like day from desolation;
 To Truth its state is dedicate,
 And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
 A legioned band of linked brothers
 Whom Love calls children -

'Tis another's:
 See how kindred murder kin:
 'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:
 Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
 Till Despair smothers
 The struggling world which slaves and tyrants win.⁴

' Those who do endure
 Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
 Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.⁵

'And yet they know not that they do not dare.
 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.'

Prometheus refuses to despair. And the Earth Mother calls up the
 spirits of hope:

'From the dust of creeds outworn,
 From the tyrant's banner torn,
 Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
 There was mingled many a cry -
 Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
 Till they faded through the sky;
 And one sound, above, around,
 One sound beneath, around, above,
 Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
 'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
 Which begins and ends in thee.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
 Which rocked beneath, immovably;
 And the triumphant storm did flee,
 Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
 Between, with many a captive cloud,
 A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
 Each by lightning riven in half:
 I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh:
 Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
 And spread beneath a hell of death
 O'er the white waters. I alit
 On a great ship lightning-split,
 And speeded hither in the sigh
 Of one who gave an enemy
 His plank, then plunged aside to die.

I sat beside a sage's bed,
 And the lamp was burning red
 Near the book where he had fed,
 When a Dream with plumes of flame,

To his pillow hovering came,
 And I knew it was the same
 Which had kindled long ago
 Pity, eloquence, and woe;
 And the world awhile below
 Wore the shade, its lustre made.'

and counter arguments are

The argument is repeated:

As over wide dominions
 'I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide
 air's wildernesses,
 That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-
 braided pinions,
 Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial
 tresses:
 His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I
 passed 'twas fading,
 And hollow Ruin yawned behind: great sages bound
 in madness,
 And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished,
 unupbraiding,
 Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou
 O King of sadness,
 Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected
 gladness.

Ah sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
 It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
 But treads with lulling footstep, and fans with silent
 wing
 The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest
 bear;
 Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes
 above
 And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy
 feet,
 Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster,
 Love,
 And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom
 now we greet.

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
 Following him, destroyingly,
 On Death's white and winged steed,
 Which the fleetest cannot flee,
 Trampling down both flower and weed,
 Man and beast, and foul and fair,
 Like a tempest through the air;
 Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
 Woundless though in heart or limb.

Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

In the atmosphere we breathe,
 As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
 From Spring gathering up beneath,
 Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
 And the wandering herdsmen know
 That the white-thorn soon will blow:
 Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
 When they struggle to increase,
 Are to us as soft winds be
 To shepherd boys, the prophecy
 Which begins and ends in thee.'

This is the end. A new day (in every sense) begins to dawn.

Prom. 'Most vain all hope but love..
 There is no agony no solace left;
 Earth cannot console, Heaven can torment no more.'

As dawn breaks, we learn that Asia, Prometheus' bride, is waiting for him.

In Act II, as Asia watches the day rise, she is joined by Panthea who recalls a dream which is now seen to be prophetic:

'Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
 But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
 Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
 Grew radiant with the glory of that form
 Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
 Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
 Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
 'Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
 With loveliness.'

Then the spirit of the forgotten dream appears and calls them to follow:

'A wind arose among the pines; it shook
 The clinging music from their bough, and then
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
 Were heard: O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!'

As they follow they hear a nature spirit recalling prophecies of the golden age to come:

'... Sing those wise and lovely songs
 Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
 And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
 And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
 One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer
 Our solitary twilights, and which charm
 TO silence the unenvying nightingales.'

They reach the cave of Demogorgon, the veiled Spirit of the Future.

Asia asks him to explain the riddle of the human predicament:

Dem. *(Will answer)* All things thou dar'st demand.
 Asia Who made the living world?
 Dem. God.
 Asia. Who made all
 That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
 Imagination?
 Dem. God: Almighty God.*

Asia Then Prometheus
 Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
 And with this law alone, 'Let man be free',
 Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
 To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
 Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
 And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
 First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
 Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
 Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
 With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
 Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
 And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
 And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
 Of unreal good, which levi'd mutual war,
 So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
 Prometheus saw, and waked the legion'd hopes
 Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
 Nopenthe, 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;
 And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
 Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
 The frown of man; and tortured to his will
 Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
 And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
 Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
 He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
 Which is the measure of the universe;
 And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
 Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
 Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
 And music lifted up the listening spirit
 Until it walked exempt from mortal care,
 Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
 And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
 With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
 The human form, till marble grew divine.*.

Asia *..... But who rains down
 Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
 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?
 Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, aye, when
 His adversary from adamantine chains
 Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
 Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

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

Asia. Whom calledst thou God?

Dem. I spoke but as ye speak,
 For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia. Who is the master of the slave?

Dem. If the abyss
 Could vomit forth its secrets... But a voice
 Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
 For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
 On the revolving world? What to bid speak
 Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
 All things are subject but eternal Love.'

As Panthea asks 'When shall the destined hour arrive?' the Spirit of
 Destiny appears:

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

asia

Panthea becomes transformed:

Panthea: 'How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
 I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
 The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
 Is working in the elements, which suffer
 Thy presence thus unveiled.'

'Love, like the atmosphere
 Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
 Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven.'

The verse now becomes sheer verbal music as the only adequate medium to
 convey the birth of the new world. The fall of Jupiter is described by

Apollo:

When the ship was landed which made dim
 The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
 The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
 With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
 Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
 Like the last glare of day's red agony,
 Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
 Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.'

Heraclès unbinds Prometheus, *

'And veil by veil, evil and error fall.'

The young Spirit of the Earth describes the change that has now come
 over mankind:

'A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
 When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
 The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
 Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
 A long, long sound, as it would never end:
 And all the inhabitants leaped suddenly
 Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
 Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
 The music pealed along.'

' 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, ...
 None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines...
 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.'

'The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
 Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
 All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
 The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumcised, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
 Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
 Passionless? - no, yet free from guilt or pain,

Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
 Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
 From chance, and death, and mutability,
 The clogs of that which else might oversoar
 The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
 Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.'

The transformation spreads through the whole universe, the verse again becoming 'an ocean-like enchantment of strong sound', to celebrate

'The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness
 The boundless, overflowing bursting gladness'.

'Music is in the sea air' -

'Whose singing shall build.
 A world for the spirit of Wisdom to wield' -

'An ocean of splendour and harmony'.

Finally, Demogorgon rises to give voice to Shelley's ^{Supreme} final vision of the significance of man's nature, and the wisdom to be learnt by suffering from his story.

This is the day, which down the void abyss
 At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
 And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
 Love, from its awful throne of patient power
 In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
 Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
 And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
 And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
 These are the seals of that most firm assurance
 Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
 And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
 Mother of many acts and hours, should free
 The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
 These are the spells by which to reassume
 An empire o'er the disentangled doon.

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

This is to see as a god sees.