Percy Bysshe Shelley's Poetic Conversations with Islam (1814-1818): Theological and Philosophical Contemplations

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Dedication

In loving memory of my grandmothers. My guiding stars from East to West.

Abstract

My thesis examines Shelley's usage of Islamic tropes and Qur'anic symbolism in order to further poeticise his belief that through the revision and combination of mythic patterns poetry could produce an ameliorative effect on the evolution of human consciousness. By combining his Eastern-inspired poetics with his ruminations on interanimation, Shelley consolidates the faith within a mythographic schema where concepts are reinterpreted through the meandering lineage of tradition. I argue a deeper understanding of the Islamic tradition on a theological and philosophical level will help contextualise his mythopoetics as an exploration of how communal sign systems can meaningfully revise previous myths without dogmatic overtones. The structure of the thesis is centred on Shelley's poetic engagement with Islam during the years of 1814-18; part one examines *The Assassins* from an Ismaili perspective and draws links between Shelley's melodic strain of poets and the Imamate chain of hierophants whilst also investigating the significance of using Muslim figures as a means of expressing his own enthusiastic world-historical call for reform. Part two explores *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude* from a sufistic perspective by offsetting the paradoxical relation between lover and Beloved in Hafez and Rumi's poetry against the Shelleyan dynamic between poet and muse whilst offering a comparative analysis of Shelley's allegorical commentary on material idealism with Ibn Tufayl's natural mysticism. Part three delves into *The Revolt of Islam* as a revolution of, rather than against, the titular faith by assessing how Shelley reimagines two concepts (the Book of Fate and Holy War): the former transfigures Ash'arite fatalistic atomism where Power and miracles rule into a Lucretian materialistic form of atomism where birth and decay is not governed by transcendent forces but fissures within organic processes; the latter adapts Sunni historiography regarding the conquest of Mecca and rewrites Muhammad's revolution into Laon and Cythna's Oriental uprising.

Introduction: Recognising Islam in Shelleyan Scholarship

The depiction of Islam that occupies the pages of Romantic scholarship can be read as both accurate and intellectually shallow, from a philosophical and theological perspective.[1] This lack of depth in characterising Islam is not the result of any academic deficiency but, to echo Edward Said, '[Romantic] Orientalism is a discursive phenomenon, internally consistent and self-perpetuating'[2] and thus, coming to grips with Islamic intellectual heritage becomes irrelevant (in terms of context) or superfluous (in terms of literary analysis). I am not suggesting that Romantic scholars seek to reinforce these stereotypes since such conceits are employed as interpretive tools to understand Romantic engagement with the Orient (and by extension Islam); instead, I argue for critical license in allowing Islam to articulate itself by introducing Islamic texts that were historically situated on the periphery of the Romantic imagination. If Said's central thesis is that 'Orientalism overrode the Orient'[3] then I suggest that Romantic Orientalism overrode Islam. As scholars of Romanticism continue to analyse the interconnections between Islam and either Romantic faith or colonialism, it is important to employ a conceptualisation that is not simply descriptive but recognises Islam as a living faith that is at once heterogeneous, ambivalent, and paradoxical. Professor in comparative religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, offers a cogent and striking definition of this unity in diversity by acknowledging that 'Islam' might lend itself to a rather neat systematisation had it not: 'existed in such abundant actuality, at differing times and in differing areas, in the minds and hearts of differing persons, in the institutions and forms of differing societies, in

[1] Peter Cochran serves as an ideal example of a scholar who understood the need to refrain from a monolithic conception of Islamic thought and practice but was so dedicated to providing a contextually sound portrayal of Romantic Orientalism that he allowed the ignorance of the Romantics to curtail any theological research of his own that might potentially expand the discussion. For example, he writes, 'there are as many interpretations in Islam as to exactly what predestination involves as there are in Christianity. But neither Christian or Islamic theology was a discipline which Byron studied.' (*Byron and Orientalism* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2006), p. 50). In this instance, Byron is given the final word as to the extent of his engagement with Islam.
[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 5.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 96.

the evolving of different stages.'[4] A valuable definition of Islam, if it is to be used as a heuristic tool for comparison in literary analysis, is required to allow Islam an expansive, composite and discordant nature inherent in any historical phenomenon which stems from the human encounter with Divine Revelation. Given the range of Muslim thinkers that I refer to throughout the thesis (incorporating Shi'i, Sufi and Sunni thought) it is important that I provide an interpretation of Islam that does not limit the scope of my discussion to legitimate and illegitimate forms of Islamic expression but rather, in allowing more voices to speak authentically on behalf of (and within) the tradition itself, I intend to allow for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between Islam and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

It is useful, therefore, to reiterate Shahab Ahmed's tripartite distinction of Islam as 'Pre-Text, Text, and Context' in order to gain a systematic understanding of how both Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers can engage with the Book of Islam to uncover meanings that are intrinsically Qur'anic and deeply personal:

> By conceptualizing Islam as meaning-making for the self in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muḥammad as Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text—that is, with the entire phenomenon and matrix of Revelation, rather than just the Text of Revelation—we are able, once and for all, conceptually to account for, accommodate and understand the relationship between variety and unity in human and historical Islam—and thus to conceptualize Islam in terms of coherent contradiction[5]

In this schema, Islam is composed of a Context which relates to local knowledge that is subject to change, a Text which relates to Revealed knowledge that is eternal, and a Pre-Text which relates to the *communus sensus* and possesses the potential to reveal either universal or

[4] William Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 145.
[5] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 405.

particular knowledge subject to human understanding. These terms expand the number of avenues through which other traditions can be authentically appropriated. In instances where Greek thought was assimilated into Arabic philosophy, it would be fair to say that Aristotle and Plato become *Islamic* not simply due to the fact that their ideas are being filtered through the Arabic language but, more specifically, any issues they are tasked to resolve will be unique to Islam, as opposed to Christian Platonism, because of the fundamental differences within their theology. These elements which might easily be dismissed as heterodox or plagiarised from external sources are instead, revealed to be responding to questions that were central to the formation of, 'historical societies of Muslims as discursive',[6] in a constitutive relation with other systems of thought through which the scope of available identities expanded on either side through an accommodative and reiterative process. Hence, interpretative liberties are not necessarily malicious attempts at discrediting the founding texts of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* rather they internalise, adjust and re-produce these forms of revelation as both meaningful for themselves but also, because it is rooted in and wrestles with Islamic sources, reproduces meaning for the faith as a whole through its ongoing development.

When discussing Romanticism, it is less relevant whether the individual reimagining and reinterpreting the content of Islam is Muslim because what matters is demonstrating a commitment to engaging with the text, or context, of Islam. After a foreign idea has been translated, by Muslims or non-Muslims, into terms that are meaningful within the faith it becomes etched onto the walls of *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam) whose basis is the exegetical lineage of Qur'anic scholars searching for new ways to decipher that immutable message. When analysing the relationship between Romanticism and Muslim thought, I urge scholars to employ this conception of 'Islam' as a 'community of discourse' with a 'mutually

[6] *Ibid*, p. 97.

intelligible language in which [to] agree [and] disagree meaningfully'[7] because, doing so, would help forestall a tendency to dismiss the faith as nothing more than a branch of Oriental studies, or an amalgamation of other, more prominent, streams of Romantic thought such as Christianity and Platonism. As Romantic critics, we do an injustice by preventing ourselves from apprehending and benefiting from what those Islamic existences and endeavours have to offer us by way of making meaning for ourselves when in dialogue with the Romantics. In attempting to generate a more theologically minded approach to the relationship between Romantic and Muslim thought, I suggest that influence is not causative but reciprocal as a prior idea is reconstituted in the act of being responded to.

More generally, this study is driven by the same impulse that led McGann to write *The Romantic Ideology* (1983), a belief that Romantic scholarship concerning Islam is deeply Romantic in character which is not to indicate that there is an overreliance on commonly accepted tropes as points of interest when discussing the topic (the sublime, the individual consciousness, the natural world) but rather a reluctance to explore outside the purview of those Islamic texts within the collective conscience of the Romantics. An unwillingness to examine works which inspired the Arab and Persian texts that were in circulation during this period. The call being made is not for New Historicist approaches to the Romantic period to be discarded entirely, as their critique of the traditional history of ideas approach to literature is largely correct in its assertion that there is no body of work which exists in a vacuum free from the influence of external, socio-political forces. At the same time, however, such rigid commitment to uncovering literary meaning by closely scrutinising contemporary definitions of words is not entirely an objective practice since those interpretations are themselves products of subjective interpretation, often sourced from eighteenth-century writings on literature, sociology, or history. Scholars unwilling to accept the unavoidable consequences

[7] *Ibid*, p. 292.

of presentism on any reading of past texts run the risk of uncritically adopting a period's self-conceptualisation and thus, both Islam and Romanticism need to be equally appreciated as complex, contradictory, and subject to internal ideological and political tensions. Nevertheless, as McGann himself has acknowledged since the publication of *The Romantic Ideology* in 1983, in completely doing away with the synthesising efforts of criticism like those offered by Abrams, one risks abolishing an object that is particularly useful to scholars of comparative literature (a historical-critical model) through which to compare and contrast the products of European Romanticism. Models or historical theses, such as the one suggested by Abrams, are necessarily limited in their verisimilitude but, without them, both literary history and comparative literature might cease to be possible. It is clear, therefore, McGann does not advocate steering wholly clear from the self-understanding of any group when attempting to make sense of the worldview that critical consensus acknowledges they inhabit but rather, the true value lies in using those ideas to assess individual expressions alongside one another as well as being unafraid to express our position as contemporary critics open to new avenues of thought. The depiction of Islam or the Prophet within Romantic poetry should not be dismissed as apathetic purely on the basis that borrowing information and icons second-hand from translations creates disingenuous viewpoints given the blind-spots these resources possess. To assume a real faith might be accessible if freed from prejudice but remains unavailable during the period in which the Romantics were writing can lead to the notion that the only version of Islam which possesses critical importance is the popular eighteenth-century Orientalist rendition and any discussion that introduces texts unknown to the writers themselves produces baseless speculation unable to meaningfully modify our understanding of Romantic engagement with Islam. Rather, I argue, the decision to employ Islamic motifs and personages (positively or negatively) is an intrinsically interested act with such symbols lacking meaning when divorced from context

until an author interprets and grants significance to them through their text. As meaning builds around a work through the dissemination of various readings, new perspectives begin to outweigh the original to the extent that there are more thoughts about the text than it is seemingly capable of sustaining which indicates influence is not necessarily causative as its originary form is inevitably read through the lens of its offspring. Particularly when analysing poetry, hermeneutical attempts to decode words, images, and ideas as rigid literary signs runs the risk of assigning a fixed meaning to them and, thereby, bringing an end to a potentially endless process of new readings. This notion of engaged misreading can offer a more productive approach to the perception of Orientalist poetics not as spiteful appropriations but responses in line with prior readings (i.e. interpretations of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*) that similarly sought to employ these images and ideas to question their own socio-political milieu. To accept this argument is to appreciate how, in becoming more aware of prior conceptions situated within a tradition, comparative analysis becomes less dualistic and antagonistic as each interpretation is an attempt to engage with a predominantly spiritual lineage to better understand their own predicament. It should not be misconstrued that the expanded scope of this study is meant as a vaccine to immunise the field from so-called harmful Orientalist approaches but rather I posit a different goal to strive for within that niche by arguing that the Romantic poeticisation of the East must be balanced with a definition of Islam that is neither overly ambiguous nor zealously stringent, incorporating Muslim responses to Islamic thought in a complementary fashion to the Romantic communities. As a result, we might better understand how moral, aesthetic and intellectual debates shape the discourse either about, or through the lens of, the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

Conceiving Romantic interest in Islamic themes and imagery as merely part of a larger imperial desire to codify or critique the East reduces literature to simply being a commentary upon unfolding events and confines poets to the role of political activists

divorced from their theological or philosophical backgrounds. Those writers thought to be sincere and capable of achieving a level of authenticity in their assessment of the East, remain a product of their time perpetually distanced from the other due to divisions caused either by imperial hierarchies, financial instability or race relations (the exact dynamics and boundaries of which are determined by their context) and thus, whenever drawing from another culture's beliefs and practices, are not depicted as writing *within* a tradition but simply *about* a tradition. It is no surprise that historicist readings attempting to delineate a link between Britain's imperial interests in the East, including British writers' imaginative involvement in religions of the East, deny little to any critical engagement on behalf of the authors to Islam as an intellectual lineage since the notion of legacy remains largely absent. In seeking to ground what is perceived in Said as an inattentiveness to contextual readings in favour of ideology but, in focusing primarily on colonial or economic factors, it reinforces a devotion to historicism as the superior methodology for discerning facts and in turn, acquiring a greater understanding of the day-to-day reality of a people. An overly historicist approach to Romantic Orientalism tends to prioritise detailing the dialogues taking place within, and immediately around, the period whilst refusing to accept their responses as also being an extension of Islamic history with a transferential dynamic being the connective tissue. This method inevitably instils an incommensurable duality within the Eastern allusions themselves; on the one hand, interweaving contextual evidence to add nuance across every facet of representation whether it be discerning Romantic circles in which a particular depiction became prevalent or tracing intellectual dialogues through letters which pinpoint authors who may have proved useful in shaping a work; on the other hand, magnifying, to the point of stultifying, a point of time and downplaying any sense of these thinkers as part of a philosophical or theological tradition transcending geographical and temporal bounds. The use of Islamic concepts or personages in Romantic thought is not simply related to questions

of canon formation but also participates in questions surrounding identity formation in the moral sphere. As Bryan Turner notes, the fear with regards to Oriental despotism and 'the absence of civil society in Islam' was 'a reflection of basic political anxieties about the state of political freedom in the West',[8] particularly in relation to Locke and Mill's debates surrounding individualism versus communitarianism and the extent to which a person can determine their own liberty without the aid of government interference but with the help of equally disenfranchised individuals. I raise this topic to merely indicate that even negative depictions which surfaced during the period should not abolish any hope for a genuine engagement, mediated by a scholar, between Romanticism and Islam since there is an intellectual history that subsists beneath these tropes which is being invoked as an act of soul searching carried out by certain Western writers for the benefit of making sense of their social, theological, political reality. Indeed, taboo imagery depicted in Islamic poetry from *khamr* (wine) to *zina* (fornication) can be dismissed as unorthodox on the basis that it promotes ideas that contradict the Qur'an but these motifs have also been critically refigured as intently engaging with the text of revelation and as such, increasingly come to constitute part of the context of revelation.

Embedded Spirituality

There is a sense of ideational belatedness characteristic of Romantic Orientalism recognising itself not as, 'unique but merely one of many', acknowledging, 'those of the East being older and, perhaps, its source',[9] which I shall expand upon through my analysis of Shelley's metahistorical reframing of Islam. Belatedness, as I characterise it in this study, is an awareness of the complexity of historical development as not necessarily an Hegelian

[8] Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism & Globalism* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, London & New York, 1994), p. 34.
[9] Timothy Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 'Romanticism and colonialism: texts, contexts, issues', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830*, eds. by Timothy Fulford and P. J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-13, at p. 10.

drive towards higher levels of enlightenment but a complex overlapping of intertwining narratives born out of a genuine human interest in the collective search for meaning, from a period which became synonymous with: 'comparative mythography, [the] notion of world literature [and] the contemporary order of interacting sovereign nation states'.[10] Within this framework, it becomes reasonable to suggest that there is a level of Romantic engagement with Muslim thought (however brief or expansive) which can be seen as a continuation of that Islamic act of making meaning from the Qur'an and *Sunnah* to respond to contemporary issues internally or communally. It is within the particulars of this thesis that Islam can speak through the traditional body of work available without reducing the investigative scope solely to those works known to the Romantics themselves and in turn, remain attentive to the countless manifestations of each concept passed down, adapted, and reinterpreted through the lens of disparate legal and theological schools. In doing so, I hope to lessen some of the binary rhetoric surrounding religious influence with respect to being, or not being, part of a community. It is important to avoid judging Romantic thinkers on the basis of a sterile, one-dimensional reading of Islam given that Shelley, for instance, did not seek to be assessed by standards which practitioners differ over and, in any case, belief is not the only way to participate in the truths of a tradition. This transhistorical approach must be coupled with the understanding that temporal denominations such as Romanticism, are useful critical tools but, realistically, the entire period is more akin to 'a theatre for the conflicts and interactions of the ideologies of Romanticism'.[11] I cite McGann not to comment on the multivalent nature of Romanticism as a self-enclosed system, for that reiterates the same monolithic terms under question on a wider scale, rather to admit that not only might Islam be conceived in the same

[10] Jared Hickman, *Black Prometheus: Race and Radicalism in the Age of Atlantic Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.77-78.
[11] Jerome McGann, 'Rethinking Romanticism,' in *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, ed. by Lawrence Besserman (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 165.

way[12] but these two realities are not mutually exclusive. The significance of certain symbols and folklore that persist in the form of cultural memory – like a palimpsest haunting and colouring new systems of thought – modify, amend and appropriate ancient wisdom into relevant knowledge. For instance, the conceptual building blocks of Avicenna's system is composed mainly of Qur'anic, Platonic, Aristotelian and Plotinian terminology but they are subjected to critical analyses: some are rejected, some are accepted in their original form; others are modified, rethought and expanded on. Akin to the Romantic self-fashioning through the composite remains of disparate ideologies, Avicenna's system is an integrated whole that has a character all its own and yet, in consolidating these divergent traditions, reimagines new forms of identity available within each worldview by reconceptualising what it means to be a Muslim, a Platonist, an Aristotelian.

I am gesturing towards a form of thinking between cultures which would involve a sharing of concepts and categories that refrains from allowing either side to render the other mute during comparative analysis and instead, by involving both voices (appreciative of the mediatory role a critic unavoidably adopts when engineering such a discussion), trace how the significance of indigenous concepts is re-negotiated when displaced within a new context. My central focus revolves around Shelley's usage of Islamic ideas to examine the mechanics behind his transvaluation and discern how he is engaging with a tradition in a way that coheres with his poetic sensibilities but that he may not have considered. In citing texts Shelley was more readily exposed to as a means of introducing lesser known thinkers, I consciously exercise my position as a contemporary scholar to call upon the wide assortment of Islamic sources available for the sake of mitigating a critical depiction of the faith that wholly conforms to Shelley's self-conceptualisation since this approach would produce a reading where all images can be collapsed into one viewpoint.

[12] In other words, every Muslim community since the time of the Prophet each serve as individual theatres for the conflicts and interactions of the ideologies of Islam.

The Dynamics of Shelley's Mythography

The scope of worldviews alluded to throughout Shelley's corpus is evidence of his mythographic schema's malleability. His ideational universality could potentially be critiqued for lapsing into relativism since the Romantic poet reimagines each ideology to cohere with his own ideals as part of a larger call to free tropes, images and values: 'from the bondage of religious dogma [so that they may] become the property of the mythmaking poet'.[13] There is, however, an inner logic to this schema necessitating each worldview to be exceptional in some way as the varied expressions constituting the history of ideas from religion to philosophy help contextualise how the One Mind has developed by offering patterns not only to predict how certain intellectual strands might evolve but assess whether they are more likely to create harmony or confusion for mankind. Just as there is scepticism inherent in Shelley's idealism, there is a compulsion towards historiography embedded within his universalism that is tied to poetic language as not only a reflection of thought but a structuring and restructuring of rhythm, metre and even tropes, which express rather than simply imitate the subtle motions governing the Spirit of Nature. A visionary structure is inherent in Shelley's conception of mankind as an Aeolian harp that is at once in sync with the universe, passively internalising its melodies, as well as serving a generative role by establishing harmonies of their own. Shelley emphasises the embodied nature of myth-making accumulated over time as part of our collective consciousness whilst acknowledging how an individual creative mind must engage with pertinent social issues by composing messages that appeal to contemporary sensibilities. Artwork as it relates to the artist, clarifies the way its author perceives the world by unlocking the sonorous and metaphorical potential of language in order to linguistically re-enact the links already perceived mentally not only in the hopes that their reconceptualising of reality resonates with others but that they contribute

[13] Spencer Hall, 'Power and the Poet: Religious Mythmaking in Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 32 (1983), 123-49, at p. 140.

their own voice towards an expanding cosmic symphony rather than devolving into a group of followers who all sing from the same hymn sheet, devoid of tonality or texture. There is a level of universality, or de-orientalising as Andrew Warren terms it, where a particular worldview is not dismissed purely on the grounds of its geographical or historical origins since the *Sophia perennis* (possessed by spiritual visionaries, poets and philosophers) is praised for not only pertaining to truths that transcend existence but also enacting a democratising effect on knowledge. This wisdom becomes synonymous with a culturally disparate lineage of legislators who, through written, visual or spoken messages, inspire others to seek the beatitudes and bring infinity into actuality. Shelley's depiction of mythology is far from ahistorical for the symbols that a particular community develops to express universal values are interesting precisely because of how their tropes (adapted in response to a diverse host of immediate concerns) offer perpetually shifting angles of vision for conceiving otherwise perennial questions.

Due to an aversion of being stigmatised with a narrow set of preconceptions associated with radical atheism, coupled with his poetic identity as part of a tradition which idealises immateriality and deals in metaphors, Shelley is led to include religiously charged language alongside instances in which the Promethean spirit denies being indebted to a transcendent order reclaiming self-autonomy by exposing such supranatural figures as being merely shadows. Douglas Bush cites those moments of human exaltation as exemplifying an overall disengagement with any core principles fuelling those worldviews he subsumes within his grander mythography so that Christian allusions are emptied of their previous significance since Shelley's humanistic ideals overpower and contradict the form of humanism which Bush believes to be indicative of Christ's teachings, arguing that, although 'Shelley does certainly glorify a Spirit of Good […] there is a difference between being the father and being

the child of one's deity.'[14] This narrow understanding of religious allegiance reduces communal belonging to orthodoxy by affixing essential truths to a higher, immutable order instead of acknowledging how such atemporal attributes are continuously moulded in a process of meaning-making whereby concepts, images, allusions and allegories can develop via seminal texts engaging with contemporary issues. From this experiential angle, an individual's worldview constitutes, as much as it is constituted by, the ongoing self-conceptualisation of those traditions it takes from and the barrier for entry with regards to influence becomes more open-ended. Kenneth Neill Cameron dismisses Shelley's use of religious language as hollow gestures due to a lack of devotional undertones: 'when these passages are examined […] they are found to be essentially non-committal and not to go beyond his own agnostic definition of the Power infused in the universe',[15] but I would argue that principles of faith need not be logically sound to be believable as Shelley expands the scope of acceptable belief to include both arguments that appeal to reason and notions which he would like to believe[16] alongside concepts he feels compelled to internalise as part of an unspoken poetic creed: 'to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation[al aspects of existence]'.[17] These forms of conviction (reasoned, inspirational and poetic) supply a wider dialogical frame within which practitioners and non-practitioners can converge by acknowledging, to varying degrees, a mechanism within religious or philosophical worldview's to spiritually (i.e. emotionally) rejuvenate all classes of people. A paradoxical middle ground is carved out between Shelley's sceptical side which actively seeks to dismantle deep-seated misconceptions regarding the

[14] Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 158.
[15] Kenneth Neill Cameron, 'Shelley as Philosophical and Social Thinker: Some Modern Evaluations', *Studies in Romanticism* 21 (1982), 257-66, at p. 261.
[16] For instance, his fascination with the notion, as opposed to the existence, of an Abrahamic perspective on death where, 'we awaken from the languor of disease [to] the glories and the happiness of Paradise'. (*The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), I, p. 256).
[17] *Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley,* ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 637.

nature of reality caused by myth's power to delude and his poetic identity which revels in the fictitious as true precisely because it originates from the genuine human need to tell stories. Neither common folk nor visionaries can create from nothing but, in producing symbols, they are able to expand their search for meaning when confronted with life's obscure mysteries (i.e. phenomena tinged by sceptical uncertainty due to an insufficiency in our finite senses) and thus, Shelley foregrounds this sublime capacity to both dismantle and rebuild sign systems as a way of elevating poetic language to the level of humanistic prophecy.

Shelley's Islam

Examining Shelley's engagement with Islam in relation to the ethics, mindset and rules underpinning his mythography helps foreground the Muslim intellectual tradition as similarly concerned with theological as well as philosophical issues being poeticsed from fatalism to revelation. This methodology not only curtails the need to rely solely on geopolitics as the source and circumference of all discussions regarding the faith but also prevents a discussion centred on belief from devolving into a diatribe on orthodoxy.

It serves to assess the comparison made between Christ and Muhammad in a piece of prose entitled 'The Moral Teaching of Jesus Christ', in which Shelley characterises the essence of both religions as an attempt to ascribe, or rather inscribe, divinity onto an object of devotion (whether Jesus or the Qur'an) from which to derive correct moral behaviour and, in the poet's mind, erect strict laws for the general public. It is unsurprising that there is a marked emphasis on Shelley's part to insist that divinity is conferred upon these icons by either the church council or Muhammad himself and there is nothing intrinsically divine in the sense of them actually being the Word made flesh or the uncreated Word of God made scripture:

> [t]he preachers of the Christian religion urge the morality of Jesus Christ as being itself miraculous and stamped with the impression of divinity. Mahomet advanced the same pretensions respecting the composition of the Koran and, if we consider the number of his followers, with greater success[18]

Shelley presents an image of Islam that, as an extension of Christianity, replicates the same myth of 'urg[ing]' or 'advanc[ing]' the 'same pretension' of a miraculous conception whether in reference to the 'preachers' belief in Jesus' virgin birth or the unlettered prophet who 'compos[es] the Koran' in order to 'stamp' them 'with the impression of divinity'. [19] In tracing these similarities, it becomes more tenable to posit a Shelleyan reading of Islam by assessing his comments on Christianity; at his most virile, Shelley perceived the deification of a single human being as creating a monopoly on divinity that limited the scope of the sublime potential he wanted to believe humanity possessed. This reduction of human value was, Shelley felt, compounded by the doctrine of original sin and atonement which he viewed as actively discouraging people from maturing spiritually and even chastising their lowly state due to an uncontrollable event, leading him to label the doctrine: 'inconsistent with justice and subversive of morality […] Certainly this is a mode of legislation peculiar to a state of savageness and anarchy; this is the irrefragable logic of tyranny and imposture.'[20] In his more positive conceptions of Christianity, the divine nature of Jesus is configured as sharing in the natural sublimity available to all but, considering his visionary teachings, elevated to the degree of other thinkers (e.g. Shakespeare, Lucretius) to be ranked amongst the 'sublimest and most holy poet.'[21] Similarly, depending on the period Shelley is writing,

[18] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, eds. by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), p. 255.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 255.
[20] *The Prose Works*, p. 103.
[21] *Ibid*, p. 256.

the Qur'an's inimitable quality as the pinnacle of speech could potentially be construed as dissuading originality since if the mythographical function of creativity is to uncover deeper truths and the ultimate creative act has already been revealed then the only remaining use for imagination is to clarify that monolithic interpretation in different ways. Furthermore, the new versions cannot even be said to surpass the core revelation because, unlike Christian scriptures whose apostolic origin admits the potential for formal error, the Qur'an purports to exhaust the most perfect form. In conceiving language as equally obfuscating and enlightening; maintaining a Humean scepticism regarding cause and effect; promoting an essentially positive conception of mankind as representatives (i.e. representations) of a greater force accommodating both ideals and necessity; rejecting the notion of trinity as well as atonement, a number of affinities emerge between Medieval Muslim thought and Shelley's intellectual interests through which to engage in more thorough examinations regarding Shelley's transvaluations of Islam. The iterative core of Islam as reforming alterations made to previous messages is briefly touched upon in an unpublished Prologue to *Hellas* the play, depicting a debate between Jesus and Satan which concludes with Christ chastising Satan for prioritising the false delights of materialism and hedonism in favour of a spiritual and contemplative life, '[t]rue greatness asks not space, true excellence/Lives in the Spirit of all things that live,/Which lends it to the worlds thou callest thine'.[22] To close the metaphysical dispute, however, Shelley introduces Islam through a soliloquy by Muhammad:

> Mahomet: Haste thou and fill the waning crescent/With beams as keen as those which pierced the shadow/Of Christian night rolled back upon the West,/When the orient moon of Islam rode in triumph/From Timolus to the Acroceraunian snow./[next stanza]Wake, thou Word/Of God, and from the throne of Destiny/Even to the utmost limit of thy way/May Triumph/[next

[22] *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, III, pp. 15-16.

stanza]Be thou a curse on them whose creed/ Divides and multiplies the most high God[23]

Surprisingly this rendition of the Islamic prophet as a revolutionary fatalist with a universal message that both supersedes and extends the influence of Christianity is not dissimilar to the image that Gordon Nickel suggests surfaces in his reading of classical Muslim hagiography where: 'Muhammad's authority includes the right to determine both theological truth and political power. The narratives have intertwined conquest and controversy so tightly as to make them virtually inextricable'.[24] Just as Shelley foregrounds the prophet's Eastern origin with a recognition of the universal aspirations of his message: 'the orient moon of Islam rode in triumph/From Timolus to the Acroceraunian snow', Islamic hagiography contextualises the Prophet's life through anecdotes that detail tribal politics for the sake of reinforcing Muhammad as a distinctly Arab messenger dealing with issues pertinent to a particular time and place despite the universal nature of his call. The split affinity underlying Shelley's, 'ambivalent relationship with Islam', emerges where Muhammad is figured as: '[a]dmonishing the Christian "creed"', even while seeking to rouse Christ to, '[t]riumph […] ambiguously appeal[ing] to the "Word/of God" [but simultaneously] heralding his own religion's victory.'[25] Nevertheless, the affinities of Muhammad's teachings with eighteenth-century radicalism would not have been lost on Shelley who was fully aware that Trinitarian preachers typically evinced a conservative political outlook that sought to maintain the power of the elite whereas, to be a radical thinker, 'virtually meant to be a rationalist, a Deist, an Arian or a Socinian: at any rate, an

[23] *Ibid*, p. 16.
[24] Gordon Nickel, 'Conquest and Controversy: Intertwined Themes in the Islamic Interpretive Tradition', *Numen* 58 (2011), 232-58, at p. 256.
[25] Jeffrey Einboden, *Islam and Romanticism: Muslim currents from Goethe to Emerson* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2014), p.144.

anti-Trinitarian'.[26] Accordingly, Shelley, in a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener regarding his pamphlet *An Address to the Irish People* (1812), shows not only an awareness but a clear affinity with those who sought to spark political change by exposing the illogical nature of the Trinity, explaining that the work is:

> intended to familiarise to uneducated apprehensions ideas of liberty, benevolence, *peace* and toleration. It is *secretly* intended also as a preliminary to other pamphlets to shake Catholicism at its basis, and to induce Quakerish and Socinian principles of politics without objecting to the Christian Religion[27]

Implanted within this wider context of Shelleyan mythography, it becomes important not to pathologise Shelley's engagement with Oriental thought in the hopes of determining whether he falls short of replicating an Islamic worldview but rather explore affinities and disparities in his usage of certain tropes. Shelley, in line with his mythographic schema, does not necessarily have to know or even believe that his reimagining of motifs and concepts constituting a particular tradition are directed towards the same ends for this generates the unreasonable expectation of complete parity, wholly confining validity opinion to synergy of thought. The following chapters reassess the Orientalist paradigm which often clouds his involvement with the faith in light of, what I deem, the more potent universal and intellectually interested undercurrents fuelling Shelley's poetic transvaluations and taps into the more ecumenical ethos that: 'the only perfect and genuine republic is that which comprehends every living being'.[28] Despite being problematic, this is a less myopic and geographically insular starting point when interpreting his reimagining of Islamic concepts.

[26] Monica Brzezinski Potkay, 'Incest as Theology in Shelley's 'The Cenci'', *The Wordsworth Circle* 35 (2004), 57-65, at p. 63.
[27] *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p.254.
[28] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 264.

The structure of this thesis revolves around three core poems in Shelley's oeuvre spanning 1814 to 1818 as a means of tracing Islam's role in granting the Romantic Poet a host of motifs, characters and settings through which to poeticise his own development and to posit that, just as he might invoke Zoroastrian or Platonic myth in a subversive manner, his decision making with regards to depicting Islam should be considered from an intellectually engaged standpoint. I argue not on the basis that Shelley was steeped in Muslim thought but rather to recognise his allusions often gesture towards an interpretive history which is left unheard despite undergoing drastic alterations across the span of his Oriental poetics. Humberto Garcia has characterised this trajectory as a, 'short-term infatuation with [the] faith',[29] born from a Bonaparte-esque interest in an Islamic republic of politically and spiritually minded revolutionaries which culminates in the anti-Islamic rhetoric of *The Revolt* where he prioritises a secularised eschatology signalling the end of all religions, commencing with the fall of a Muslim dictator. During this four year window between *The Assassins* and *The Revolt*, Muslims are presented as: enthusiastic radicals committed to proclaiming Nature's Oneness without fear of upsetting the status quo; martyrs who uphold the sanctity of the sublime in a world fixated on icons; freethinkers preserving the human quality of the creative imagination by grounding it within historical cycles of prophetic-legislators; as well as deterministic despots whose iron law reflects the iron pen of an equally tyrannical Transcendent figurehead reified to the position of an abominable Will. A faith driven by the potency of language as the isthmus between humanity and divinity, guided by a principle of universal brotherhood, or an organised religion which cultivates political hierarchy and inculcates slavishness. However, in either instance, Islam is not suddenly removed from the transvaluative dynamics of Shelley's mythography rather the terms of engagement shift to variously articulate the desired register and thus, whether syncretic or philhellenic in spirit,

[29] Humberto Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670–1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. xi.

my study seeks to overcome the scholarly bias that Shelley's disdain or presumed disinterestedness justifies critical amnesia with regards to Islamic intellectual history as a theologically and philosophically rich tradition. Rather than assuming interest only in those images which positively affirm Muslim identity, I seek to highlight how Islam plays a pertinent role in thinking through Shelley's split affinities; whether caught between quietism and radicalism or monistic materialism and materialistic idealism, Muslim thought granted him a lexicon through which to express or contrast his conceptual solutions from interanimation via the Gnostic group of Shi'is to Cythna's mental Book of Fate as a Qur'anic inversion of the One Mind. Given that the most immediately available texts included Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, William Jones' Persian translations and Romantic Orientalist literature such as Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, Shelley was exposed to Islam on a historical, metaphysical and tropological level. From these sources, he was driven to subsequently exercise his creative authority and summon them accordingly within his poetry in order to place them in dialogue with other Western schools of thought from rewriting Islamic determinism into a Lucretian void or embedding Sufistic devotional poetry into the framework of a bildungsroman governed by Lockean empiricism and Humean scepticism. This line of thought might appear to strip representation of its particularity by reducing all Oriental motifs to hollow vessels gesturing towards an irrelevant system or event and yet, I argue, this approach critically reconstructs an identity forgotten or drastically altered through transfiguration and reinstates this more historically substantial and intellectually weighty figure back into the web of his mythography. Indeed, the investigative spirit underlying readings which explore Shelley's subversion of Christian imagery in *Prometheus Unbound* and 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'[30] is not wholly dissimilar to my own exploration of how an understanding of Shelley's Islam

[30] Shelley's Christian allusions are often mined for what they reveal about his artistic sensibilities and ideological affinities despite often leading to both a critical as well as unrecognisable appropriation of the faiths identifying principles.

can be elucidated through his Eastern-inspired poetry from *The Assassins* to *The Revolt of Islam* despite the fact that the different metaphysical frameworks within which the Islamic, Christian and Shelleyan worldviews are situated naturally result in rather different implications.

By poeticising aspects of the Muslim faith, whether amongst his radical circle or the general public, Shelley is contributing to the eighteenth-century literary memory of Islam by recontextualising its principles into a set of tropes. Shelley's usage cannot be understood as simply neutral or accidental just as the term, "Islam", can never be said to exist in a vacuum for it has come to symbolise a set of values and principles (regardless as to how varied such expressions might be) formulating an identity continuously shaped by the responses of those who grapple with, or contribute to, its literature, artwork, or exegesis. These expressions are all implicated within a network of voices that constitute its image within the public consciousness. The connotative force of such nominal terms (e.g. Europe, America and Islam) is governed by the self-understanding of the particular era being examined just as other writers who invariably flirted with the topic of religion when discussing the East (including Byron, Southey, William Jones and Edward Gibbon) all infuse the faith with different elements of their own sensibilities whilst also striving to attain varying degrees of authenticity. Therefore, to dismiss Shelley's Eastern work after *The Assassins* as reflecting his disenchantment towards Islam's revolutionary potential and arguing that he advocates for, 'a state of universal Sameness', where all are homogonised and subsumed beneath, 'a fantasy of the universalism of revolutionary reason',[31] requires a more holistic examination of the value judgements being made when re-presenting Islam that explores beyond the scope of the political realm. This is an ideological question and thus, benefits from a cross examination of philosophical or theological principles generating those policies. Shelley is internalising

[31] *British Romantic Writers and the East*, p. 89, p. 128.

imagery and terminology that has come to signify the Islamic tradition for the sake of conceptualising to the reader his own critiques regarding idealised revolution or centralised power in much the same way he employs Christian allusions in *Prometheus Unbound* and whilst it can be argued a geopolitical reading uniquely haunts any seventeenth or eighteenth century appropriation of Eastern faiths, the notion of Western values was no less politicised or contested. By attempting to move away from an antagonistic discourse surrounding Shelley's later usage of Islam, I seek not to depoliticise Shelley but rather harness those insights as stepping stones towards discerning why the Romantic might have had an affinity with a faith whose adherents were known as the, 'outlaw Ismael[s]', due to being perceived as exiles in a lineage they claim to most truthfully represent and whose entire output was subconsciously fixated on, 'the portion of inheritance [i.e. recognition] of which [they] had been unjustly deprived'.[32] The question as to whether this revised Islam is less a sincere gesture of Shelley's cosmopolitanism and more a familiar reference point to eventually deprive the native entirely of their original beliefs in exchange for a Western veneer remains an important concern but, in overly relying on a geographically focused Orientalist approach, this language of exploitation risks curtailing any serious consideration of Islam as a theological system that Shelley is responding to. In noting the transvaluative decision making taking place during his displacing of Islamic concepts for new purposes, I intend to critically engage with the same quandaries that his mythopoetics sought to examine such as the question of how civilisations generate shared values through disparate narratives and why humanity derives icons from principles. Arguing that Shelley did not possess enough information to author a valid conceptualisation of Islam is useful insofar as it prompts contemporary critics to incorporate primary and secondary sources not with a view to invalidating his transvaluation as unorthodox (for that dismisses the creative aspects in his

[32] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 500.

mythography) but rather offer a more nuanced perspective on the nature of his inversions and the design behind such choices.

Inasmuch as the representations Shelley receives are filtered through specific cultural lenses and his own portrayal is modified by personal interests, it might be argued that there remains a difficulty in discerning what benefit ushering Muslim voices into the frame of the text would have. My methodology, however, refrains from positing the Islamic interpretations as more genuine for, in writing a literary as opposed to theological study, the focus is not to establish a hierarchy between orthodox and unorthodox because that would assume, on the part of Muslim history, a coherent, self-contained and continuous process and reduce its identity as a diverse tradition capable of being variously situated and resituated over time. There exist divergent scholars associated with Ash'ari, Mu'tazili, Ismaili, and Maturidi thought who utilise different rhetorical modes to produce interpretations that vary from the abstract to the literal, all of which are in dialogue with external systems from Neoplatonism to Zoroastrianism and range from questions regarding the nature of God's transcendence (*tanzıh*) and immanence (*tashbıh*) or the synthesis between reason (*aql*) and revelation (*naql*). Failing to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of Islamic intellectual history characterised by dynamism and discrepancy, literary analysis will continue to reduce the faith to a static artefact that signifies nothing beyond the tropes provided and although I do not assume that reclaiming these voices is an unproblematic process for recognition implies an already altered form of cognition, 'ruin[ing] the power of knowing [because] it never lets me cease reaching what I cannot attain,' and yet, if the 'ungraspable [is] inescapable', then it is endeavour worth undertaking rather than avoiding.[33] Recognition, therefore, is at the heart of my study as I attempt to salvage those perspectives from whose text, context and pre-text Shelley simultaneously adopts, adapts and embeds within his

[33] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), pp.29-30.

poetically grounded mythography which similarly reformulates stale perception into fresh associations, 'mark[ing] the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuat[ing] their apprehension [within the web of] human intercourse',[34] and thus, attune to both the retroactive and forward-facing aspects of inspiration, retracing these intertextual and metonymic links should hopefully revitalise critical perception of Islam within the context of Shelley's literature. This struggle for recognition (to be recognised and to recognise others) also thematically pervades each part of my thesis: *The Assassins* revolves around restoring awareness of a melodic strain of philosopher-poets (resembling the lineage of hidden Imams) in order to remind others of their connection to a forgotten tradition; *Alastor* explores the different ways humanity chooses to recognise what is sensed, but not yet accounted for, behind the veil of phenomenal existence; *The Revolt of Islam* emphasises the need to grant martyred voices recognition for their sacrifice which causes them to fade and become tropes. None of these instances of cognitive renewal rail against obfuscation but rather intellectual obscurantism for the latter implies overindulgent sophistry and religious fanaticism whereas the former includes paradoxes, Lucretian voids and Demogorgon-esque shadows which are posited as necessary corollaries for motivating enlightenment and revitalising apprehension.

Thesis Overview

Part One explores *The Assassins* by first contextualising Shelley's rendition of the titular Order alongside the opinions of other eighteenth and nineteenth-century Orientalists from Silvestre de Sacy to Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall to discern the extent to which Shelley echoed those who regarded them as fanatical zealots blindly spreading violence or enthusiastic reformers who, facing persecution, stood up to preserve their way of life and the sanctity of a spiritual lineage. As both an expansion of the sentiments shared in *An Address to the Irish People* as well as a precursor to *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819), *The Assassins*

[34] The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley, p.637.

warrants closer eamination for what it reveals about Shelley's seemingly paradoxical stance on violence as a means to achieving a desired end. In having his necessitarian naturalists occupy a mountainous region in solitude only to be met by a stranger whose rhetorical adeptness enables him to enact an almost supranatural command over this disenfranchised community, Shelley not only invokes the image of Hassan bin Sabbah (the Assassin leader) but inadvertently draws comparisons to himself with this figure as a poet as well as a reformer. By displacing Hassan's originary aims, the Romantic poet re-envisions the groups in line with contemporary attitudes towards secret societies which posed a threat to monarchy. Hence, Shelley's desire for anarchy and gradualism causes him to become intrigued by Islamic expressions of the revolutionary spirit he sees as vital to the natural order and in turn, through his prose and poetry, entertain such voices from the Wahabees to the Hashashin.

In the companion piece I take a more metaphysical approach, offsetting the esoteric doctrine of the Imamate and the Hidden Mahdi with Shelley's living melody of bards whose voices awaken the unenlightened masses in order to discern the extent that Shelley's own theories on inspiration and its embeddedness within creatively deterministic cycles of good versus evil reveal an underlying affinity for the occult which finds its expression not simply within Christian but also Ismaili Gnosticism. To carry out this comparative analysis, I invoke Ross Wilson and Wilfred Dowden's concepts of interanimation and metempsychosis as inroads through which to mediate a comparative analysis between Shi'i theology and Shelleyan poetics and, in delineating the overlaps as well as the conflicts, structure a more comprehensive understanding of Shelley's transvaluative decisions when, by writing about the sect, he invariably introduced Ismaili thought into the frame of his mythography. Emphasising the continued lineage of human responses reveals a shared pattern of successive guides who revitalise appreciation for forgotten apprehension as a means of overcoming a

temporal retard. I seek to reestablish the sect as being more relevant to Shelley's conceptualisation of mythopoetics than would otherwise be presumed on an understanding of Shi'i Gnosticism as an innately authoritarian hierarchy which contradicts Shelley's radicalism as promoting free thinking.

In Part Two, I compare the psychology between lover and Beloved as expounded in *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude* and expressed in the translated works of mystical poets from Rumi to Hafez. I invoke Lacanian neurosis and Derridean aporia as hermeneutical tools through which to mediate the Sufistic and the Shelleyan conceptualisations of a bereft wanderer yearning for an ideal companion. Each approach emphasises the productive power of paradox by disparaging language's inability to convey that which cannot be expressed. Shelley and the Sufi poets analysed in this chapter reject a linear narrative founded upon progression and tending towards finality in favour of producing works that warn against assigning fixed images to life's mysteries and appreciate how interpreting the ideal only exposes further veils. I utilitse non-contemporary philosophies in order to expand the bounds of recognition by looking forward and in doing so, highlight intertextuality as not solely an endeavour relegated to the past but a principle which can shed light upon, and be illuminated by, subsequent thought. To the extent that my thesis is driven by a desire to add depth to Islamic history within Shelleyan scholarship there is a similarly strong impulse to expand that depth in the opposite direction through Shelley himself. Throughout this study, I explore Shelley's relation with Muslim thought through his relevant interest in Godwin, Locke, Hume, Drummond, and Lucretius, as well as Freemasonry, radical Protestantism and syncretism. I am, therefore, compelled to examine how this dialogue might elucidate the nature of his psychoanalytic and deconstructive tendencies in order for my reading to be truly multidimensional and transhistorical.

The subsequent chapter presents a comparative analysis between Percy Bysshe Shelley's

Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude and Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* by examining their commentaries on the roles of intuition and deduction in discerning Nature's mysteries. The Enlightenment interest in Edward Pococke's translation of the allegorical novel feeds its way into Shelley's discourse via figures such as John Locke and David Hume. In delineating the material and idealist strains permeating both Shelley and Ibn Tufayl's philosophy –offsetting the former's engagement with Lockean empiricism and Humean scepticism against the latter's reimagining of Ibn Sina's tabula rasa and al-Ghazali's occasionalism – a clearer picture emerges as to how Islamic thought not only pervades the imagery in *Alastor* as a byproduct of William Jones's Persian translations but also enters into the frame philosophically inasmuch as Shelley's engagement with eighteenth-century philosophy of mind informs his depiction of mental content versus material object. The existence of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* within this intellectual milieu provides a new avenue to approach the poem through questions relating to the human mind as self-sufficient, the benefit of creative imagination when perception proves insufficient, the disregard for religious institutions as the sole means to salvation, and appreciating how the eudaimonistic component in insight adds tangible value to an individual's existence.

Part Three revolves around *The Revolt of Islam* exploring how Cythna is not necessarily rebelling against Islam to the extent that she frames herself as an ex-Muslim against the canonical, fatalistic interpretation symbolised by Othman; instead, she strives to reformulate the collective consciousness with regards to how these concepts are understood as she adapts rather than discards the Book of Fate. In other words, she produces a subjective and pluralised rendition in contrast to the monolithic and inflexible alternative. The impact of revolutionising Islam, as denoted by the title, reverberates even at an atomic level and serves as a commentary on Eastern Fatalism as Shelley traverses a path between upholding free will whilst recognising how external, non-human forces play a key role in determining reality. In

balancing humanity's inner capacity for reformation alongside Necessity's compulsion to materialise potentialities, Laon and Cythna hope others will remain attune to life's unknowability and unpredictability whilst allowing this existential mystery from hardening into dogmatic certainty. Shelley metonymically displaces God's sovereignty upheld within an Ash'arite atomistic worldview in favour of a Lucretian atomistic void shaped by the indifferent hand of Necessity, harmonised by the Spirit of Beauty and altered by humanity's actions which inevitably subverts the role of martyrdom. Even though the notion of death is key to both atomic systems the significance differs as Muslim occasionalists argue atoms are destroyed and recreated in each instance to allow for miracles over creation whilst the materialism of *The Revolt* rests on a Lucretian entropic spontaneity and thus, the former foregrounds Allah's Will as the One who gives and takes life whereas the latter posits the ghosting effect of others as the catalyst for futurity.

The Revolt as a reframing of Islam informs the other companion piece for I argue the characters are amalgamations of figures constituting Islamic history in an attempt to transvalue the notion of holy war. The Muslim enthusiasm to undertake reform driven by a unshaken commitment to a principle of universal brotherhood (present in *The Assassins*) is still reflected through Laon and Cythna whose pacifistic rebellion to dethrone a superstitious, tyrannical ruler echoes the conquest of Mecca as outlined in Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and thus, it is in offsetting Laon and Cythna alongside Muhammad and A'isha that their differences as revolutionary messengers emerges. Although the desert sands provide a foundation upon which to establish the likes of Othman's despotic government its shifting nature also opens up a space for instability and flexibility which translates to the amorphous gender dynamics at play as Laon is increasingly feminised and Cythna assumes a masculine label until becoming interconnected upon death in an allegorical afterlife, a transsexual rhetoric that I trace within Sufistic circles as it pertains to female

mystics who assume male pronouns and male wayfarers who are positioned in an effeminate position relative to their spiritual guides.

Ultimately, determining Islam's place within Shelley's mythopoetic schema requires an understanding of how the idiosyncrasies in his interpretation of the faith constitute a literary persona through which he can vocalise and visualise a specific set of values that are collectively unavailable via other belief systems he creatively transvalues. My intention is not to reduce Shelley's Oriental poems to discussions regarding a geographical Other but rather assess which tenets he deems contemptible, which concepts or images he chooses to reimagine, which character archetypes he promotes as respectable blueprints; and, in turn, consider what his decision making process (when revolutionising Islam for poetic consumption) reveals about his mythographic tendencies at large. Although the aim of this piece is not to uncover hidden devotion to a faith Shelley never professed to believe, it is interesting to ponder what form Shelley's 'Islamite'[35] might take and, given his poetic tendency to transvalue various religious iconography and concepts as part of his mythographic project, it is not surprising the shape it adopts is as deeply paradoxical as the sceptical idealist himself. When describing the poetic process Shelley lapses into a submission-based transaction with regards to an all-pervading Spirit even as he promotes liberty and the interconnected nature of inspiration on a human level. To conceptualise his stance of destiny, Shelley maintains a rhetoric of inscription (whether mental or textual) even as he attempts to circumvent the metaphysical connotations of the Islamic Book of Fate. Despite perceiving fanaticism and patriarchy as oppressive forces, he romanticises martyrdom and posits the Orient as a constantly shifting landscape where flexibility regarding sexuality is possible. From a revolutionary standpoint, Shelley respects the Socinian

[35] A reference to Byron's message to Shelley transcribed by Thomas Medwin during their trip to Italy, 'Sale, the translator of the Koran, was suspected of being an Islamite, but a very different one from you, Shiloh' (Thomas Medwin, *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron*, ed. by Ernest J. Lovell, Jr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 79-80.

rebellious spirit even as he denounces monotheism as leading to monolithic power structures and, in terms of philosophy, he coheres with an Ash'arite scepticism regarding any empirically verifiable link between cause and effect but refrains from transcendentalising a potentially mediating force.

Part One: 1814

Chapter 1

Godwinian Quietism or Hashashin enthusiasm? Ismaili Gnosticism as a prototype for Shelley's cosmology of Violence

The Assassins (1814) depicts a Shelleyan reimagining of an historical branch of twelfth-century Persian Shi'i's (combined with strong allusions to another Christian Gnostic sect that moved from Jerusalem to Lebanon around 70 A.D) who live in modest seclusion, committing themselves to the universal principle of love, communing with Nature, as well as spurning the material obsession for status and wealth sought by the majority of mankind. The result is a poetic rumination on how to balance French Radicalism and Godwinian quietism – self-assertion and selflessness. Shelley's necessitarian naturalists occupy a space between metahistory and mythography as they are chronologically proto-Assassins gesturing towards 'a time in which Mount Lebanon "would become the staging-post of world reform",'[1] whilst also being imagined retroactively in light of the Ismaili myth. I seek to bridge this conceptual gap by expanding the frame of reference to include Shelley's prose works on reform as well as elucidating the Ismaili thought underpinning the Islamic sect in order to move beyond Bryan Shelley's assertion that, 'Shelley confused a primitive Christian community with a heretical Islamic sect',[2] which reduces the title to being simply a foil for Christian Gnosticism or an empty vessel for conveying contemporary revolutions and instead, build upon Humberto Garcia's claim that: '[t]he Prophet's teachings preserved a primitive Jewish-Christian Gnosticism [which influenced] the story of the "Gnostic" Assassins [to revolve] about a pseudo-Muslim idyllic community'.[3] In delineating various ideological affinities with

[1] Youssef M. Choueiri, 'The Romantic Discourse of Ameen Rihani and Percy Shelley', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44 (2013), 1-20, at p. 14.
[2] Bryan Shelley, *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 1.
[3] Humberto Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment*, 1670–1840 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 197.

the Assassins, Shelleyan scholarship can gain a greater appreciation as to how the title is more pertinent to Shelley's cosmology of violence than perhaps is first assumed.

God as Nature

Shelley initially describes his rendition of the Assassins as, 'a little congregation of Christians [who applied] no laws but those of God [from which] they modelled their conduct towards their fellow-men by the conclusions of their individual judgment', they evince a rather typical Shelleyan aversion to manmade institutions signified by the likes of Rome which subjugate its population via, 'the slavery of pagan customs and the gross delusions of antiquated superstition'.[4] Even during the opening section, the Assassins are presented as pious Christians who revolve their lives around Christ's laws as well as rationalists who believed that the mysteries of scripture were not simply meant to be confined within the realm of Divine Knowledge but could be explicated through the use of human reason, maintaining that: 'the obscurest religious truth required for its complete elucidation no more than the strenuous application of the energies of mind'.[5] As a community who followed the, 'doctrines of the Messiah concerning benevolence and justice for the regulation of their actions',[6] they were dedicated to maintaining 'social happiness' which inculcated within them a deep-seated aversion towards, 'the pleasures and the customs of the degenerate mass of mankind',[7] and thus, leaving them no other option but to seek isolation in Lebanon free from the corrupting influence of Rome that would, 'not have failed speedily to obliterate the magnificence and beauty of their wild and wonderful condition'.[8] In the hopes of finding a place to call their own in which, 'Love, friendship, and philanthropy, would now be the

[4] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 124.
[5] *Ibid*, p.124.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 125.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 125.
[8] *Ibid*, p. 125.

characteristic disposers of their industry',[9] they decide to make a home in the valley of Bethzatanai since not only does it appear to be an idyllic haven secluded from the perversions of high society but it captures their imagination as the abode for an anthropomorphised spirit of Nature who: 'had become an enchantress in these solitudes [collecting] here all that was wonderful and divine from the armoury of her omnipotence'.[10] Indeed, the awe-inspiring sights of their newfound home generate, 'strange scenes of chaotic confusion and harrowing sublimity',[11] which results in an increased appreciation of the Natural Sublime to take shape within the hearts and minds of the Assassins and which, over the course of their stay, overrides any earlier commitment to Christ with an enthusiastic zeal for the 'God of nature' who, under the veil of mystery, was believed to possess 'great intelligence and power'.[12] Their increasing love of nature as the closest approximation of uncorrupted spirit apprehensible in this world generated, a 'new and sacred fire [burning] in their hearts and sparkl[ing] in their eyes',[13] and, 'perfected the singularity and excellence of their character', to the point of causing irrevocable damage to previous 'religious tenets' as their initial sense of indebtedness which, 'they owed to the benignant Spirit [who] had not only […] created but redeemed [them]', slowly became 'less the topic of comment or contemplation' and instead, was conferred to a more amorphous benefactor, felt 'among the solitary rocks, and has its dwelling alike in the changing colours of the clouds'.[14] Having implicitly renounced the saving power of Christ and denounced the civilising principles of Rome, Shelley presents his Assassins as free from the two great forces of tyranny, revealed religion and imperial politics, which both rely on the, 'assumed kindness of commercial man',[15] to maintain harmony within community as opposed to those who follow Nature's Law and destabilise hierarchies

[9] *Ibid*, p. 125.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 127.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 128.
[12] *Ibid*, p. 128.
[13] *Ibid*, p. 129.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 130.
[15] *Ibid*, p. 130.

that rely on monolithic forms of power encapsulated by a singular figurehead (e.g. God or King). The community desires a natural equality where mankind employ their heightened intellectual faculties to produce happiness in others and as a consequence, create a republic in which all citizens: 'labour in unconstrained equality to dispossess the wolf and the tiger of their empire, and establish on its ruins the dominion of intelligence and virtue'.[16] At this point Shelley discusses the role of violence as a necessary evil in order to maintain such peace, the Assassins bridge the gap between a type of gluttonous drive for immediate gratification promoted in high society and the passive renunciation of desires for delayed reward in an afterlife encouraged by the church since they seek to, 'produce immediate pain or disorder for the sake of future [worldly] benefit', causing them to take matters into their own hands and 'wage unremitting hostility from principle'. [17] In a world where the majority would dismiss their actions as purely barbaric, they would only become associated, 'among the vilest and most atrocious criminals',[18] due to the 'bestial' nature of those under the yoke of human institutions preventing them from 'feel[ing] their chains' and recognising the unnatural restrictions being imposed through civil life, removing any sense of humanity as part of a natural order. The Assassins believe that contentment is only achieved when a person realises, 'man is eminently man',[19] which entails recognising oneself as an organic entity who is superior, on an intellectual and creative level, to the rest of creation but being both bound by necessity as well as miniscule in relation to the grandeur of Nature. In contrast to the false sense of supremacy engendered by a cosmopolitan society cut off from any sense of an external sublime or the Christian meekness inculcated by a doctrine which transcendentalises the natural world to a supranatural degree, the Assassins teach others to recognise the futility of challenging nature's course and instead, in learning to function within the unavoidable

[16] *Ibid*,p. 125.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 131.
[18] *Ibid*, p. 131.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 132.

impositions of fatalism whilst also cultivating those uniquely humane qualities, work alongside nature to attain the closest approximation of human nature perfected, until 'his affections and his judgment pay tribute to the God of Nature'.[20] Unifying with necessity invariably leads these Gnostics to become a natural force which is principally driven to wage war against those who 'pander to falsehood and desolation', wiping out anything unnatural and becoming martyrs to the greater cause of maintaining nature's harmony leading to a legacy in which their heroic 'path through the wilderness of civilized society would be marked with the blood of the oppressor and the ruiner'.[21] In terms of ethics, the group occupies a middle ground between being both duty-bound as well as intrinsically compelled to be religiously motivated by love of, '[c]ourage and active virtue, [alongside an] indignation against vice', is maintained but transfigured into, 'a hurrying and irresistible passion', which takes the form of those same naturalistic forces that it seeks to replicate, 'like the imprisoned earthquake, or the lightning shafts [hanging] in the golden clouds of evening', all of which are unified under a common law dictated by the God of Nature, 'the author of their felicity'.[22]

The Order of Assassins in Romantic Orientalism

An examination of Shelley's understanding of the sect would be incomplete without also detailing the assumptions held by eighteenth-century Orientalists with regard to the Nizari Assassins as well as providing a brief survey of manuscripts that were accessible to scholars in order to ascertain to what extent any biases inherent in these sources might have found their way into popular opinion. The main points of reference when studying this Islamic sect during the Romantic period came from two equally negative if largely disparate perspectives encompassing both East and West; on the one hand, European accounts included documents

[20] *Ibid*, p. 132.
[21] *Ibid*, p. 132.
[22] *Ibid*, p. 133.

from theological tracts written by Crusaders who carried out widespread military campaigns on the already divided Ismailis spread across Egypt and Syria to travel accounts composed by the likes of Marco Polo which, for the sake of commercial scandal, benefitted from weaving an overly negative portrayal of Muslims as barbaric; on the other hand, Sunni manuscripts available at the time held a number of prejudices towards the Ismailis as an unorthodox sect who posed a real threat to the Abbasid caliphate and Sunni rule with the Fatimid empire even going as far as to develop the pejorative term *hashishis* ('low-class rabble', 'irreligious social outcast')[23] to describe the Assassins. Consequently, Shelley's violent but revolutionary depiction of the Assassins was a scandalous portrayal of a historical group known as the *fidais* (devotees), popularised by Marco Polo and expanded upon amongst Romantics by Orientalist Silvestre de Sacy in *Memoire sur la dynastie des Assassins, et sur l'etymologie de leur nom*, accusing them of drugging and transporting their victims to a real life reimagining of paradise, in the form of a beautiful garden, so that they might gain a taste of the pleasures awaiting them in the next life. [24] Hasan bin Sabbah (founder of the Assassin Order) was believed to have incited these practices on the shared understanding that, in following these steps, his followers would reach higher levels of spirituality after death which offers a pertinent image to analyse Shelley's fragment given that, as Cian Duffy notes: the 'natural republic [of the Assassins] clearly represents a revision of Hassan's legendary pleasure-garden at Alamut'. [25] Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) was amongst the more notable Oriental scholars who reiterated the negative stereotypes found in Sunni historiography as well as Marco Polo's work declaring that, 'what the Byzantines, the

[23] Farhad Daftary, 'The "Order of the Assassins:" J. von Hammer and the Orientalist Misrepresentations of the Nizari Ismailis', in *Iranian Studies* 39 (2006), 71-78, at p. 74.
[24] Farhad Daftary also notes, in defence of the rebuttals against these claims, that the historian 'Ata-Malik Juwayni (d. 681/ 1283) who staunchly opposed Ismaili doctrine and even spent time investigating the Nizari fortress of Alamut in northern Iran as well as the impressive library of Alamut never described the existence of an idyllic garden where such events supposedly took place ('The "Order of the Assassins"', p. 75).
[25] Cian Duffy, 'Revolution or Reaction? Shelley's "Assassins" and the Politics of Necesity', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 52 (2003), 77-93, p. 86.

Crusaders, and Marco Polo related of them, was long considered a groundless legend, and an oriental fiction', but as developments are made in the study of Arabic and an increasing number of manuscripts continue to be unearthed that shed light on the period in which the Assassins lived, then 'the veracity of the father of modern travel, like that of the father of ancient history [Herodotus], only shines with greater lustre'.[26] The severity and resentfulness that pervades von Hammer's assessment of this group that he deems a, 'union of impostors and dupes which, under the mask of a more austere creed and severer morals, undermined all religion and morality,'[27] is largely a response to what he perceived, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, as the increasing influence of, 'secret societies [from the Freemasons to Jesuits] in weak governments, and of the dreadful prostitution of religion to the horrors of unbridled ambition'.[28] This cultic association stirred within him a very real fear of the mob mentality that arises when frail minds are stripped of their will during, 'various grades of initiation[wherein they swear an] oath of unconditional obedience to unknown superiors, to serve the ends of the order.'[29] In general, this seditious interpretation is largely derived from a selection of stories revolving around the assassinations of certain government officials which are themselves shrouded in legend with certain scholars, such as the thirteenth-century Persian historian Ata-Malek Juvayni who wrote a number of anti-Ismaili texts, interpreting their behaviour as acts of terrorism whilst others echoed Shelley's more positive outlook by choosing to reframe such conduct in terms of heroic guerrilla warfare intended for survival such as modern Orientalist Clifford Bosworth who argued the Ismailis were attempting to maintain peace in a politically hostile environment between the Franks and Sunnis and Bernard Lewis who lauded their steadfastness in the face of devastating odds: 'Hasan [bin Sabbah] founded a new way, by which a small force, disciplined and devoted, could strike

[26] Joseph von Hammer, *The History of the Assassins, derived from Oriental Sources*, trans. by Oswald C. Wood (London: Smith and Elder, 1835), p. 2.
[27] *Ibid*, pp. 1-2.
[28] *Ibid*, p. 217.
[29] *Ibid*, p. 217.

effectively against the overwhelmingly superior army'.[30] The public manner in which the *fidais* either verbally threatened or physically assassinated prominent officials was testimony to the fact that their use of force served to undermine government power not purely for the sake of killing but to send a message to invaders or rival tribes so that no more blood had to be spilled which presents an alternate perspective from which to view the group in a similar manner to Shelley's own poetic transfiguration wherein the oft-repeated narratives of extreme violence and unsympathetic brutality are retold not in terms of: '[a] despot's struggle for power, but as the Necessary, violent assertion of natural equality in the face of oppression'.[31] Taken in context, they were attempting to uphold the sovereignty of their Ismaili brethren in the face of a rising Sunni presence across Iran encouraged by the expanding Seljuk dynasty (1037-1192) which they perceived as potentially abolishing not only a sense of religious identity but also bringing into question what it meant to be Persian in the same way that the conquest in Manzikert by Alp Arslan, the Sejuk empire's second sultan, is typically cited as not simply the catalyst for Byzantines waning influence in Anatolia but also credited as laying the foundation for the predominance of Turkish identity in the region. As Alp Arslan stormed through the Byzantine Empire on his way to attack the heartland of Ismaili rule, the Fatimid dynasty, there lingered a very palpable threat to identity formation and self-conceptualisation and it lay upon Hasan-i Sabbah's shoulders to maintain the wellbeing of his followers against a rather antagonistic backdrop.

Unlike von Hammer who used the Assassins as an example of how secret societies abused the weak infrastructure generated during times of political turmoil by providing a sense of belonging in the name of extremism, Shelley envisions their fictitious republic as a defence against conservative, religious accounts of nature's sublimity that judges intelligent design as proof of a transcendent Creator in a missassociative flight of fancy which Shelley

[30] Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967) p. 130.
[31] 'Revolution or Reaction?', p. 89.

would have interpreted as unnecessarily projecting mankind's true essence as something beyond creation and drawing attention away from the organic bond of Anthropos as constituted by a more immediate Spirit of Nature. Rather than produce a contrived perspective of the world based purely on a desire to conform to popular discourse, the Assassins are lauded as being in direct opposition to Shelley's schoolboy qualms regarding the superstitious nature of Christianity which promotes uncritical belief in immaterial entities including tales, 'of the Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor [that are] irreconcilable with the knowledge of the stars', unlike these engaged spectator of nature who: 'rightly feels its mystery and grandeur [and] is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe'.[32] In every aspect of their existence the Assassins either experientially or physically rail against a status quo that demands conformity in a manner that grants insight into Shelley's views on gradualism since, free from the imposition of hierarchical systems, the Assassins strive to maintain equality amongst themselves with each member being appreciated as a necessary part of a large organic whole and generating a sense of undifferentiated unity that is reflective of the self-contained solace of their surrounding valley. Nevertheless, far from cultivating a natural or passive outlook, constant exposure to the awe-inspiring sights of the Natural Sublime exposes the insincerity characteristic of modern life as governed by monarchical or ecclesiastical rule which obliges them to right wrongs by force if necessary and although they: 'were innocent […] they were capable of more than innocence; for the great principles of their faith'.[33] As a community they are guided by reason, their beliefs and behaviour are determined by personal assessments irrespective of tradition or societal pressure, this elevation of rationality and self-will over the dictates of custom even extends to their religion (in a lose sense of the term as defined by worship of an amorphous spirit intuited in nature) which is a doctrine that

[32] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 66.
[33] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 133.

commands little authority within itself or, at the very least, without the supreme power of intellect to discern what should be followed or ignored:

> they could not be persuaded to acknowledge that there was apparent in the divine code any prescribed rule whereby, for its own sake, one action rather than another, as fulfilling the will of their great Master, should be preferred[34]

Mirroring an Epicurean understanding of *eudaemonia*, the Assassin's association of virtue with pleasure leads them to seek moral goods with actions that generate the most delight: '[t]he path of virtue and felicity was plain and unimpeded [...] They could not conceive an instance in which it would be their duty to hesitate, in causing, at whatever expense, the greatest and most unmixed delight'.[35] A danger arises, however, when lives are governed by a compulsive drive for pleasure as this self-indulgent attitude can easily devolve into selfishness or a general inconsideration for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. Nevertheless, the wholehearted willingness to destroy for love was a principle that Shelley could at least respect theoretically, if not also relate to practically,[36] which is why he conveys them as misunderstood by a superficial society overly concerned with outward horror of their methods (whether violence or hedonistic) rather than making the effort to understand the beliefs from which they stem: '[s]ecure and self-enshrined in the magificence and preeminence of his conceptions, spotless as the light of heaven, he would be the victim among men of calumny and persecution.'[37]

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[34] *Ibid*, p.125.
[35] *Ibid*, p. 131.
[36] It is interesting to note, Shelley's unabashedly romantic need for love was also marked by a similar prioritisation of delight, he was willing 'to cause his intellectual master William Godwin the most grievous pain by eloping with his only daughter, and simultaneously crush the self-respect of Harriet Westbrook [because he] judged that he produced in Mary Godwin – a greater and more unmixed delight than was available in his relations with William Godwin or Harriet Westbrook'. (Harold G. McCurdy, 'Shelley the Assassin', *The Georgia Review* 27 (1973), 182-93, at p.184).
[37] 'Shelley the Assassin', p.185.

Indeed, in direct opposition to the likes of von Hammer, Shelley's reading at the time of composing *The Assassins*, particularly Abbe Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*,[38] highlights how Shelley's depiction of the Shi'i sect was closely aligned with his understanding of eighteenth-century secret societies as bastions of an undying revolutionary spirit which railed against monarchy and clergy. Philosophers from Voltaire to Jean Jacques Rousseau were condemned for their sustained attack on the church and critiqued for destabilising Christianity's power under the false names freedom and equality. [39] These thinkers provided the rationale for certain secret societies to undermine any conservative opposition that sought to curtail the advancement of the French Revolution inspired by works such as Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* and Rousseau's *Social Contract* which had: '[birthed] that disquieted spirit which fought to investigate the rights of sovereignty, the extent of their authority, the pretended rights of the free man, and without which every subject is branded for a slave – and every king a despot'.[40] It was this 'disquieted spirit' compelled by a particular scholar, or group of intellectuals, that imparted to their followers a kind of sceptical doctrine through maxims such as, '[s]uperstition sets the whole world in flames; philosophy quenches them',[41] which comes closest to replicating the organising principle of the Imamate when it comes to prompting the real life Assassins to action even though, historically, this leadership was not entirely free from the deification or negative stigma various enlightenment radicals associated with a priesthood who hypocritically called to God whilst engaging in illicit acts. Critics, like Barruel, preferred to interpret the Jacobin mission of disarming monarchies of their power as indicative of a larger disregard for authority or structure ushering them to squash, 'underfoot the altars and the thrones in the

[38] 'Revolution or Reaction?', p. 91.
[39] Abbé Augustin Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1799), Vol. 4, Conclusion, p. 561.
[40] *Ibid*, Vol. 2, chap. 4, pp. 136–137.
[41] Geoffrey Parrinder, *The Routledge Dictionary of Religious and Spiritual Quotations* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 24.

name of that equality and that liberty which summon the peoples to the disasters of revolution and the horrors of anarchy',[42] as opposed to emphasising their disdain for imperial colonialism as a system of dispossession. The devout followers in question from the Freemasons to the Order of the Illuminati who are characterised as being, 'the adepts of impiety, the adepts of rebellion, and the adepts of anarchy',[43] are useful approximations of Shelley's Assassins since they too were sects believed to hold a potentially violent, if elitist, desire to deconstruct any form of concentrated power by, 'extirpating this infamous superstition [of Christianity and monarchy among those] worthy of being enlightened',[44] and, as a result of their fervent campaign to redistribute rights in opposition to traditional prejudices governed by superstition, they were condemned as: 'all zealous for the Revolution, and all ready to rise at the first signal and to impart the shock to all others classes of the people'.[45] Notably, in extreme cases, the call for an uprising was elitist in the sense that only those ready and willing to develop alongside the shift in power structure (both politically and cosmologically) would survive the radical intellectual onslaught but, due to the far-reaching nature of such a complete societal reboot, the consequences would be felt amongst all classes who would be shocked into conformity for their own benefit or risk become as equally non-existent and disenfranchised as those before them. Caught between the paradox of quietism and insurrection, the Assassins are depicted equal part radical sect and secret society providing Shelley with a balance between the enthusiastic, rebellious fervour he admires in the Wahabees alongside a Gnostic element in the form of the Imamate which echoes his own belief in poets as unacknowledged legislators who are brought to, as well as shaped by, their age to challenge falsehood through a deeper appreciation of the natural order.

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[42] *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, chap. 2. p. 36.
[43] Graeme Garrard, *Counter Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 48.
[44] Chris Mathews, *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), p. 16.
[45] *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, chap. 14, pp. 461-462.

A Middle Path Between Pacifism and Insurrection

Having provided context for the socio-political milieu in which Shelley was writing the Assassins, it is useful to assess the validity of Cian Duffy's assertion that not only is, 'the stranger who enters the Assassins' valley', a poetic reflection of the real Assassin leader, Hassan bin Sabbah, but he would also have functioned as, 'the violent antithesis of a Godwinian steward, transforming the dormant sect into precisely the kind of revolutionary secret society that Godwin feared.'[46] Shelley's politically minded works, particularly during the early 1800s to 1819, exhibit a split personality with change being driven at times by a call to gradualism and passive resistance which require individuals to determine their own livelihood by first taking a hold of their inner life as well as morally shaming those in power by refraining from adopting the same underhand tactics to which they are subjected to whilst, at other times, Shelley champions violent overthrow of tyranny as a necessary expression of a universal spirit of nature that redresses imbalances or inequality in the natural order. To better understand how this complex amalgamation of pacifism and rebellion characterises Shelley's use of the Assassins it serves to assess the plight of another religious minority, the Irish Catholics, who Shelley sought to advise in an *An Address to the Irish People* (1812) alongside an examination of his response to the Peterloo Massacre within the prose piece *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1819) which raised questions as to the utility of passivity as a force for revolution in the face of indiscriminate brutality carried out by the government. In order to dissuade the Irish from seeking violent revenge for the injustices enacted upon them by the Protestants, Shelley reminds his audience of the historical persecution that Protestants had endured during the Inquisition not as a means of burdening either side with past sins for, 'you are not answerable for the faults of your fathers any more than the Protestants are good

[46] 'Revolution of Reaction?', p. 91.

for the goodness of their fathers',[47] but to warn them of the pitfalls of righteous vengeance wherein either side seeks divine reward in exchange for upholding God's Honour at any cost without recognising that 'was the very worst way for getting into favor with a Being who Is allowed by all to be best pleased with deeds of love and charity'.[48] The principle of pursuing justice for the sake of upholding honour is not an emotion that Shelley strives to suppress entirely for even he acknowledges 'the warm feelings of an Irishman sometimes carries him beyond the point of prudence' but this 'honorable warmth' should be 'moderate[d]' rather than 'root[ed] out' for it is only under the influence of institutions (either political or religious) that such fervour is taken to an extreme as was the case with the atrocities committed by the Roman Catholic Clergy under the Pope's commands. Shelley feared that even the most logical human being could be persuaded by poverty and charismatic leaders to denounce their belief in pacifism as a force for change in favour of retaliation since: 'even though rational people are very good in their natural state, there are now, and ever have been very few whose good dispositions despotic power does not destroy'.[49] It is at this point that the potential origins of Shelley's interpretation of Hassan bin Sabbah in *The Assassins* can be traced not only to the historical personage but to the Romantic poet who perceived himself in similar terms: an outsider fighting for a disenfranchised community driven from high society who possessed a command over language through which he connected to a strain of forgotten poetic voices who all similarly attempted to persuade an entire nation into action on a world-historical level in exchange for complete trust.[50] Both leaders promise to remain committed to the plight of those whose company they inhabit but only on the understanding that their dedication is reciprocated; the only difference is in degree rather than kind as Shelley's

[47] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 10.
[48] *Ibid*, p. 11.
[49] *Ibid*, p. 12.
[50] The strangers call for conviction, 'in return for the affection with which I cherish thee and thine, thou owest this submission', (*Ibid*, p.135) echoes Shelley's plea to the Irish, 'I seek your confidence, not that I may betray it, but that I may teach you to be happy, and wise, and good.' (*Ibid*, p. 12)

request for conviction, '[i]f you will not repose any trust in me I shall lament, but I will do every thing in my power that is honorable, fair, and open, to gain it',[51] is seemingly less overbearing than the stranger's pleas which can be read as verging on totalitarian and yet, given the fragmentary nature of the piece, it remains ambiguous enough to be a genuine call for acceptance, '[your partner] must love me more dearly than a brother. I must be the playmate of your children; already I regard them with a father's love'.[52] It could be argued such ambiguity indicates that the stranger is a foil for '[t]he Monks and the Priests of old' who Shelley despised for abusing the confidence of their followers[53] but the stranger is described as speaking in a poetic register with, 'tones [that] were mild and clear as the responses of Æolian music', allowing him to assert control over his listeners not on the level of religious incantation or deceptive political jargon but rather in the spirit of a true poetic legislator who activates within their audience a greater attunement to self by cultivating their emotional intellect: '[t]hey floated to Albedir's ear like the warm breath of June that lingers in the lawny groves, subduing all to softness'.[54] As a poet legislator, Shelley challenges the partisan politics of religious leaders by arguing on the basis of faith as an epistemological act that any attempt to defend a position that goes against a person's own belief system is ultimately futile and would only lead to hypocrisy or hostility regardless as to whether it would be in their best interest to do so, for if 'you have a friend of whom you wish to think well [and] he commits a crime, which proves to you that he is a bad man,' despite attempts to think well of him afterwards, 'to secure your own peace of mind […] your attempts are vain', indicating that man, 'cannot believe what he does not think true'.[55]

[51] *Ibid*, p. 12.
[52] *Ibid*, p. 135.
[53] *Ibid*, p. 13.
[54] *Ibid*, p. 135.
[55] *Ibid*, p. 15.

It is not the case that Shelley's disdain for retribution and discouragement of blind hatred is born entirely from a disinterested belief in the relativity of truth or falsehood rather he intends to disrupt the obsession on outward forms, which are contingent, in order to praise or condemn more universal expressions of good and evil: '[d]o not inquire if a man be a heretic, if he be a Quaker, or a Jew, or a Heathen ; but if he be a virtuous man, if he loves liberty and truth, if he wish the happiness and peace of human kind'.[56] Despite Shelley's atheistic outlook, there exist immutable ethical principles underlying reality that, if disregarded, lead to a rise in social inequality as an expression of the disequilibrium felt across the natural world and thus, no man made law has the power to essentially alter morality: 'no act of a National representation can make any thing wrong, which was not wrong before; it cannot change virtue and truth'.[57] Radicals who fight on the side of the Catholics against the British Parliament are protecting universal values as opposed to solely protecting the interests of those immediately involved: 'I am no less desirous of the reform of these evils [inequality and prejudice] than for the Catholic Emancipation [itself]'.[58] Rather than convincing himself of the need to uproot the forces of evil by any means necessary, this blend of naturalism and essentialism is the impetus for Shelley's pacifism since they are not simply giving their persecutors a taste of their own medicine but partaking and in turn, promoting the spread of evil behaviour on a transhistorical scale which makes them culpable for the wrongs perpetrated both against their own people as well as any disenfranchised communities that replace them: '[i]n no case employ violence, the way to liberty and happiness is never to transgress the rules of virtue and justice. Liberty and happiness are founded upon virtue and justice, if you destroy the one, you destroy the other'.[59] Nevertheless, the same line of reasoning directs Shelley away from wholly advocating isolationism or quietism since the life

[56] *Ibid*, p. 13.
[57] *Ibid*, p. 104.
[58] *Ibid*, p. 17.
[59] *Ibid*, p. 17.

of a slave is equally as unnatural as the repressive existence of a violent dictator for: 'the poor man does the rich no service by obeying him — the rich man does the poor no good by commanding him,'[60] rather it remains imperative for the slave to either help reform the oppressor, or at least the subsequent generations, by exemplifying correct conduct otherwise the vicious Hegelian cycle will continue wherein workers grow independent of their masters only to eventually forget the consequences of their wrongdoings and succumb to the traps of decadence. To emulate the underhand tactics used by those in power to maintain control is to put one's own immediate interests over and above subsequent communities which is the reason for any righteous cause advanced at the cost of dignity and self-preservation being dismissed as counterproductive since, as Shelley dictates to the Irish in his address, any use of 'violence and intolerance among[st] yourselves can leave an excuse to your enemies for continuing your slavery.'[61] The most notable reason for Shelley's decision, 'to raise a Rebellion', and make the Catholics, 'dissatisfied with [their] present condition' as opposed to an insurrection whereby the disenfranchised, 'take something from the rich man's store by violence', is driven by his recent memory of the French Revolution which serves as a warning rather than a blueprint, 'it is the renewal of that unfortunate era, which I strongly deprecate, and which the tendency of this address Is calculated to obviate'.[62] Regardless as to whether its advocates had good intentions, their efforts were marred due to employing excessive force as opposed to fostering discussion amongst one another in a calm and deliberate manner: 'you can in no measure more effectually forward the cause of reform than by employing your leisure time in reasoning, or the cultivation of your minds'.[63]

However, what initially might be dismissed as a tension between Shelley's enthusiastic tone and gradualistic message becomes decidedly less ambiguous in *A Philosophical View of*

[60] *Ibid*, p. 24.
[61] *Ibid*, p. 23.
[62] *ibid*, p. 36.
[63] *ibid*, p. 18.

Reform as his strong sense of duty towards humanity prompts him to internalise the lessons of recent events in a reactionary manner which results in mutually contradictory positions being held simultaneously. For instance, the brutal massacre at Peterloo fuels a tirade against the army as an institution that destroys the moral fibre of a society by indoctrinating the lower classes into believing that officially sanctioned killing is somehow more palatable than cold-blooded murder, '[a soldier] is more degraded than a murderer; he is like the bloody knife, which has stabbed and feels not; a murderer we may abhor and despise; a soldier is by profession beyond abhorrence and below contempt',[64] whereas, just a few pages earlier, Shelley actively promoted increasing government spending on the navy to keep, 'our ships manned by sailors well-paid and well-clothed, [so they might keep] watch round this glorious island against the less enlightened nations'.[65] Likewise, Shelley scrutinises events such as the French Revolution and Peterloo with a level of tenacity on par with his commitment to gradualism and pacifism evinced in *The Address* whilst also failing to uphold other, less contemporary, revolts to the same degree of introspection if it serves his narrative to depict them as successful, even stripping away details that otherwise would clash with his revolutionary ideals. Shelley's admiration of the American Revolution is an instance in which he presents an overly sterilised depiction of a more tumultuous event by arguing for, '[t]he just and successful Revolt of America',[66] with a large majority of its civility stemming from the Declaration of Independence established as a response to the injustices faced by the colonies at the hand of George III for the purpose of securing free election. Revolution, in these terms, becomes a human right for those who suffer political discrimination. Although the number of casualties incurred was relatively miniscule given the magnitude of the event, there were ten thousand deaths as a result of battles spanning each of the thirteen colonies including The Battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts and The Battle of

[64] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 623.
[65] *Ibid*, p. 618.
[66] *Ibid*, p. 599.

Yorktown in Virginia. Shelley fails to critique such skirmishes for derailing the original plight of the colonists despite bemoaning the French Revolution for devolving into violence because it contributed to the realisation of a greater cause in the form of a 'Republic governed by one assembly', which has, 'no chamber of hereditary aristocracy which is at once an actual and a virtual representation of all who attain through rank or wealth superiority over their countrymen'.[67] Another early instance in which Shelley justifies violence for the sake of overturning tyranny appears in 'Essay on Christianity' (1817; 1859) where he lauds those who killed Julius Caesar because, unlike dictators who threaten punishment as a means of being praised for restraint, the Assassins understand virtue and civilisation thrives as a consequence of freedom from such oppressive fear-mongering and thus: '[t]hey destroyed the usurper of the liberties of their countrymen, not because they hated him, not because they would revenge the wrongs which they had sustained.'[68]

I do not intend to suggest that, in these instances, Shelley is necessarily contradicting his overall message as to the dangers of quietism, '[t]he advocates of Reform ought indeed to leave no effort unexerted, and they ought to be indefatigable in exciting all men to examine [their current state]',[69] and the futility of employing violence for the sake of liberty:

> a republic, however just in its principle and glorious in its object, would through the violence and sudden change which must attend it incur a great risk of being as rapid in its decline as in its growth[70]

His seeming inconsistencies instead reveal a willingness to deemphasise the disastrous consequences of certain uprisings if the outcome is perceived to overshadow such immediate

[67] *Ibid*, p. 622.
[68] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 254.
[69] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 630.
[70] *Ibid*, p.623.

suffering and generate a positive impact on a world-historical level.[71] In particular, Shelley entertains the notion that force might be a necessary evil for instigating change when discussing the East; for instance, he excitedly awaits the moment that the Turkish Empire, including Asia Minor and Greece, will be ruled by more freethinking colonies and yet, Shelley is not simply advocating for its overthrow via the forceful imposition of Western thought rather he champions a violent uprising from within the East itself by the 'Wahabees' who have themselves been roused by the 'spirit of human intellect' to maintain 'the Unity of God, and the equality of man' whose 'enthusiasm must go on "conquering and to conquer"', so that they might awaken the East from apathy.[72] In his discussion regarding the Eastern nations' current state of barbarism it becomes clear that Shelley's fatalism plays a key role in his ambiguous outlook on political violence as the spirit of Nature, or Necessity, is a compelling force equated with time that is driving all to a reclamation of a natural harmony which has long been subsumed under the yoke of monarchy and is part of the organic inoculation to tyranny (in its various forms) against which Mother Nature's immune system generates both intellectual and physical antibodies. Shelley attributes this heroic martyrdom to the Assassins who, out of a similar necessitarian impulse to fulfil the will of an undecipherable Natural force, are compelled by immutable principles to protect the lives of others in order to extend not only the lifespan of an individual but to propagate love and equality over acquiring personal gain with no forethought as to how self-autonomy might contribute to universal freedom: '[w]ho hesitates to destroy a venemous serpent that has crept near his sleeping friend, except the man who selfishly dreads lest the malignant reptile should

[71] This imbalance is encapsulated within the somewhat oxymoronic statement, 'every fanatic or enemy of virtue is not at liberty to misrepresent the greatest geniuses and most heroic defenders of all that is valuable in this mortal world', (*The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 261) implying that the freedom gained from defending liberty is in a sense forefeited by those who abuse or directly infringe upon this right. to the same degree. Although, in a more ideal scenario, the choice to sacrifice oneself rather than take the life of another and be thrown into a never-ending cycle of vengeance is still the preferred option, '[Jesus Christ] desireth not the death of a sinner; he makes the sun to shine upon the just and unjust' (*Ibid*, p. 254).
[72] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 604.

turn his fury on himself?.'[73] Unfortunately, the dormant state of Shelley's Assassins prevents them from enacting this theoretical enthusiasm without a poetically versed leader who can remind them that their communal boundaries expand beyond the sect to encompass humankind regardless of efforts by contemporary society to sever these connections. Uncovering and deciphering both the message and authenticity of hidden guides will enable them to harness their own commitment to enacting Nature's Will in a creative rather than apathetically peaceful or carelessly destructive manner. Both Shelley and the Stranger are outsiders who confront a marginalised community as an Other in order to circumvent their isolationist tendencies whilst nurturing any tendency towards aggression into a passionate zeal against injustice on the understanding that such righteous indignation against inequality signals a person who is innately attuned to the order of Nature. Therefore, whilst traces of Godwinian gradualism persist in Shelley's advice to the Irish, '[t]he public communication of this truth, ought [not] impede the established usages of society; however, it is fitted in the end to do them away [in a manner which] must be gradual, however rapid, and rational',[74] it is always ignited by an exuberant sense of immediacy whereby each day they live in servitude a portion of the true selves is subsumed beneath the weight of slavishness: '[a]re you slaves, or are you men? If slaves, then crouch to the rod, and lick the feet of your oppressors, glory your shame, it will become you if brutes to act according to your nature'. The only recourse that Shelley has to combat against this misrecognition wherein the general publish assume slavishness and passivity to be essential is to call those downtrodden by institutionalised oppression to act without reacting: 'employ resistance of the mind'.[75]

Consequently, Shelley's various examples of the slavish state of both Western and Eastern nations evince a belief in an eventual cure stating that the Indians who have been, 'enslaved and cramped in the most severe and paralysing forms [of hierarchical power],' will,

[73] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 132.
[74] *Ibid*, p. 28.
[75] *Ibid*, p. 18.

through the rise of Christianity, learn to adopt, 'social forms modelled upon those European feelings,' which, 'when the time for complete emancipation shall arrive [is going to facilitate] their disengagement [from superstition and hierarchy]'.[76] Likewise, in Constantinople the rise of Osman I signalled a new era of civility foregrounding the importance of art, 'Constantinople I under the government of Ottoman Bey, a person of enlightened views who is introducing [his people to] European literature and art', but, more importantly, Shelley emphasises the fact that his rule is contingent upon context inasmuch as his ascendancy has coincided with a society equally open to receiving such ideas for he is but a singular component in instigating a much grander, 'change which Time the great innovator, will accomplish in that degraded country'.[77] Shelley categorises needless violence and violence generated through oppression differently, often acknowledging how a large portion of uprisings begin from a place of sincerity before being hijacked by opportunists which indicates the Spirit of Nature can be found behind both successful and unsuccessful revolutions, creating a moral or tangible change. The Spirit of Nature interacts with the Spirit of the Age as visualised through artwork as well as being granted a voice by contemporary poets who, given Shelley's creatively deterministic outlook, could be described as chosen by time to respond to the ills of the age in which they live even if fate is anthropomorphic in that humanity itself carves out a future via a past composed of countless human responses to nature's trials. This universal component of emotional intelligence as a transhistorical phenomena defended by separate communities is the reason why Shelley can appreciate the enthusiastic zeal of Wahabees in rising up and fighting for human equality in service of Qur'anic appeals to Divine unity whilst also allowing his civilisational interest in areas such as Germany to situate these Western nations as further along the line of civility at a point where creative zeal transforms into self-reflection: 'the bold and Aeschylean vigour of the

[76] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 603.
[77] Ibid, p. 604.

imagery of their poetry [is met by a] sincere, bold and liberal spirit of criticism'.[78] The example of Osman I foregrounds the interdependence of, a 'comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit', simultaneously evolving as well as shaping the characteristics of each country and the volition of individuals within such a context to create pieces which awaken mankind to their true nature. Poetry can offer the highest form of expression from which the Spirit of Nature can spring forth across every age as a reminder to those who have drifted into debauchery and lost sight of their essential goodness resulting in the high station of Poetic luminaries as: 'priests of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they conceive not; the trumpet which signs to battle and feels not what it inspires'.[79] In other words, the revelation of poets is as much given to them as it is a product of their genius which results in times of hardship necessitating the production of equally steadfast leaders of sensibility to contribute to raising morale whilst maintaining morals by intellectually and emotionally elevating those in power who risk abusing their station as well as those downtrodden who might fall into either apathy or resentment. Shelley proposed that whenever England is at a 'crisis in its destiny' there will always be, 'philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared in our nation since its last struggle for liberty',[80] and who shall communicate the need to maintain love and freethought.

Shelley's understanding of creative reform is vital to appreciating how his split personality regarding a poetic endorsement of the mythologically violent Assassins and his prosaic indictments of destructive revolutions should not be viewed in terms of hypocrisy but rather as a byproduct of two alternating perspectives coming in and out of focus; on the one hand, striving not to dismiss the short-term effects of social instability created by warfare; on the other hand, acknowledging the potential long-term benefits that accompany either a

[78] Ibid, p. 601.
[79] *Ibid*, p. 605.
[80] *Ibid*, p. 605.

drastic exchange of power or the honour gained from standing up for one's rights. These viewpoints generate Shelley's damning, yet future facing, remarks concerning the French Revolution,

> [t]he usurpation of Bonaparte and then the Restoration of the Bourbons [left] the heart of every lover of liberty […] struck as with palsy on the succession of these events. But […] it may be the good which the Revolutionists did lives after them, their ills are interred with their bones[81]

Shelley might argue, in discussions surrounding Catholic emancipation or the Peterloo Massacre, that the ends do not justify the means but, at numerous points in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, he displays a willingness to forget that ideal or even deny its utility in severe cases where the collective conscious among either the elite or the oppressed is sufficiently cultivated to benefit from such reasoning. I am referring here to his support for the navy; his decision to neglect the violent aftermath of the glorious revolution; his dismissal of American history as built upon slavery and dispossession of land; his willingness to discuss colonisation as a model for enlightening Eastern nations; his support for the plight of the Wahabees; and, his authorial decision to poetically romanticise a Medieval sect that was disparaged by his contemporaries for their aggressive tactics. Clearly, even as he acknowledges that violence in an unsuccessful revolution only serves to distort the real motives of liberty and happiness there remains an underlying uncertainty prompting those moments in which he advocates action bordering on the aggressive. If violence leads to, or is only the immediate consequence of, events that generate positive change on a world-historical level (i.e. the Bill of Rights, the creation of America, or civility in the East) then Shelley is led to question whether the concept of Necessity render all previous suffering an ultimate good by being reducible to an

[81] *Ibid*, p. 600.

organic expression of discomfort within a universe no longer aligned and struggling towards reunification. Shelley's sceptical idealism once again creates a paradox wherein he argues that, '[i]f there had never been war, there could never have been tyranny',[82] which suggests freedom can exist independently of oppression whilst oppression requires the privation of liberty in order to exert control; and yet, if despotism is a break in the natural order of things it still remains an irreducible part in the development of the One Mind as both contingent and atemporal. In a fatalistic sense, moments of strife equally serve to awaken the collective consciousness to new forms of equality as much as positive events can be said to usher new forms of oppression resulting in a perpetual dialogue between freedom and despotism summed up by Shelley as: '[the conflict between] the unextinguishable spirit of Liberty, and the ever watchful spirit of fraud and tyranny'.[83] Simply put, if tyranny and freedom are inseparable and war is an outcome of such cruelty then violence is a valid, if less beneficial, response to the human predicament and a contributing factor to the development of humanity on an archetypal level as indicated by the way in which Shelley describes how the Glorious Revolution of 1688 led to the establishment of the Bill of Rights where, at least theoretically, the ruler should be chosen freely according to the will of the People, signalling the 'commencement of a new epoch in the history of the progress of civilisation [generated through a compromise] between the spirit of truth and the spirit of imposture'.[84] By praising 1688 as a watershed moment in democracy, Shelley reduces the subsequent bloody aftermath between supporters of James II and advocates of William III to a single sentence despite the numerous casualties incurred during the Williamite War, the Battle of Killiecrankie, Dundee Rising and, particularly pertinent given the surrounding discussion regarding the terror of Peterloo, the massacre at Glencoe. Therefore, the fact that he praises the overall results of William's revolution whilst downplaying the nationwide rupture that developed alongside

[82] *Ibid*, p. 633.
[83] *Ibid*, p. 595.
[84] *Ibid*, p.595.

these constitutional advancements indicates a willingness to overlook, 'the selfish passions and temporizing interests of men',[85] when it results in the ability for, '[p]eople to change their government [as] an acknowledged right in the Constitution of England', and the freedom to protest, 'against religious dogmas which present themselves to [their] mind as false [with the understanding that it is] the inalienable prerogative of every human being [to do so].'[86] In fact, as clarified by these examples, although good and evil are intertwined in this world there remains a level of unreality that plagues falsehood in relation to goodness as essentially true so even if cruelty outwardly appears to have gained a fleeting victory it is only as a means of eventually establishing more substantial principles (i.e. freedom and love) whereas such concepts can never be said, in truth, to serve malicious ends as indicated by Shelley's universal law of reform: 'every great people either has *been*, or is, or will be free'.[87]

Enthusiasm and Fanaticism from Alamut to Alhambra

Outside of the millenarian belief in a hidden Imam as an emblem of reunification not contingent on momentary oubursts of suffering, even the historical downfall of the Assassins and the gradual resurgence of Shi'i esoteric sects within positions of power came to serve as an image of enduring principles in the face of excessive aggression. The Order was massacred by the Mongul emperor Hulagu Khan who laid waste to their fortress in Alamut and wiped out this dissident group that had once been capable of defending itself from the advancements of Crusading and Sunni forces alike. Despite this widespread execution at the hands of a conquering Mongols (eventually reverberating even through Baghdad and Damascus) it would take the multiregional dominance of another military leader associated with the Khan lineage, Timur Lang (Tamerlane), to lay the groundwork for a Shi'i revival.

[85] Full quote, '[a]fter the selfish passions and temporizing interests of men had enlisted themselves to produce and establish the Restoration of Charles II the unequal combat was renewed under the reign of his successor' (*Ibid,* p. 594)
[86] *Ibid*, p. 595.
[87] *Ibid*, p. 601.

Timur's vengeful expeditions resulted in invasions across Eurasia which, ultimately, enabled him to gain control over the the Ikhanate, the Golden Horde as well as the Chagatai Khanate and yet, given his ties to esoteric Shi'ism[88] and his political efforts to win their support:[89] 'the seed of Shi'ism [was sowed by] Timur Lang [and] produced its fruit with the emergence of the Safavid movement'.[90] The collapse of Timur Lang created mayhem from Persia to Central Asia necessitating the rise of a regime that could align the tribal conflicts which were re-emerging; at the start of the sixteenth century, the Safavid dynasty managed to integrate, 'the unruly Turkic-speaking tribal peoples with the sedentary Persian-speaking population of the urban areas',[91] under the banner of Shi'ism and through the accumulated efforts of subsequent Shahs (leaders) produced a civilisation where poetry, rational philosophy, artisanship, and textile work experienced a modest golden age. Throughout this history there is an intertwining of sublime beauty and nightmarish brutality whether it be the Assassin rule which was associated with pleasue gardens and political murders or the successive conquering emperors attached to the Khan lineage (Hulagu Khan, most notably related to Kublai Khan, and Timur Lang who married into descendent of Genghis Khan) that inadvertently reinvigorated Shi'i influence through the emergence of the Safavid dynasty which, in turn, produced a centre of literary learning, sumptuous textiles, and architectural delights.

Accordingly, Shelley's fragment was not unique in its allusions to Shi'i history for other Romantics similarly drew inspiration from the complex tapestry outlined above in order to explore warfare as paradoxically honourable and humiliating; for instance, Timur Lang and Lord Byron were both associated with military lineages and thus, driven to engage in political

[88] His spiritual mentor, Sayyid Baraka, believed in the successive right of 'Ali and the twelve Imams.
[89] He invaded Damascus as a sign of retribution against the slaughtering of Imam al-Husayn in the Battle of Karbala by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid.
[90] Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008), p. 98.
[91] William Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History: Volume 1* (Boston: Wadsworth Cenage Learning, 2010), p. 467.

escapades despite their physical deficiencies inscribing potentially inner insecurities onto their body (the former having his right leg and right hand crippled due to an arrow and the latter being born with a clubfoot). It is not surprising, therefore, that Byron would positively cite this lame ruler in his poem, 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte', (1814) where he undercuts Napoleon's presentation of himself as a world conqueror by hinting that, 'he was more like his captive, the Ottoman sultan [Bayezit in Ankara]',[92] due to being exiled to the remote island of St Helena in the mid-Atlantic. Likewise, Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' is an amalgamation of competing allusions including the immediate connotations to the titular Mongol emperor, references to practices enacted by the Assassin Order, and visual imagery sourced from *The Arabian Nights* fables, all of which are fused together in an opiate-induced dreamlike haze that, as Samar Attar suggests, produces a 'creative and destructive energy' where the promise of building an 'earthly paradise' (whether poetically, imperially or communally) risks seducing and deceiving even the most cunning, cruel or imaginative minds.[93] There is material glory in the spectacular palaces accumulated through deposing kings and installing new orders, there is possible honour in upholding a dying lineage of shared values and there might be critical notoriety in producing an exceptional poem but the potential for wrong judgment is so great whenever establishing the foundation of a political order, rectifying a perceived injustice being perpetrated and crafting a piece of literature that the consequence of misapprehension cause all roles to be haunted by the spectre of guilt, whether due to unnecessary deaths or lost time. In the context of the failed French Revolution, both Shelley and Coleridge depict a space where an Assassin can be a poet and a poet can be a ruler[94] for they witnessed the destructive nature of language as a tool for

[92] Samar Attar, *Borrowed imagination: The British Romantic Poets and their Arabic-Islamic Sources* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 159.
[93] *Ibid*, p. 67.
[94] I am referencing Shelley's potential allusion to the leader of the Assassin Order within the figure of the Stranger since he depicts the latter as a poet-ruler hybrid whose charisma and connection to the outside world could, given the fragmented nature of the poem, either awaken them from an isolationist slumber and expand

ideologues and propagandists to strip away peoples freedom whilst also recognising the intense need for powerful individuals to be poetically and philosophically sensitive and thus, given that the Prophet became a symbol of both moral regeneration and deception during this period, they often framed their ambiguous poetic commentaries on reform in terms of Islamic history.[95] The Gnostic Assassins, with their belief in the luminous leaders that arise throughout history to curtail corruption via their connection to Fate, resonated with the millennial politics of the French Revolution and Muhammad, merging Prophet and legislator, became associated with the enthusiastic rhetoric of Robespierre as a politico-religious character who could convert Divine Will into political activism and yet, with the progressivist narrative becoming harder to maintain and the eventual demise of Robespierre, the significance of their Islamic counterparts was inevitably impacted as these radicals began to question whether it was possible to, 'bring [a] disorienting message back to the hungry crowd',[96] without the potency of this enthusiasm, 'threaten[ing] to overrun itself and drown in its own power.'[97] Nervous about allowing disillusionment to dampen his impassioned rhetoric whilst also not enabling his youthful aspirations to fuel his naivities, *The Assassins* offers Shelley a space to work through his radical politics by exploring the lines between enthusiasm and fanaticism with the former signalling a defensive pride in the value of humanitarian ideals developed from a sense of duty to an all-pervading Spirit and a belief in man's perfectibility whilst the latter connotes an apocalyptic compulsion to overturning order in a feverish attempt to marshal a new age of liberty and freelove at the cost of all else. By contemplating his own political identity in light of figures such as Hassan bin Sabbah,

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their sympathetic and naturalist tendencies on a world-historical level or exert an occultic control over the Gnostic group and subsume them back into the slave mindset they sought to escape. The blending of roles in *Kubla Khan* is noted by Attar who highlights how, 'the warrior king Kubla Khan, the excited Assassin youth, and the half-crazed narrator [...] vie with each other in spite of the fact that they belong to different categories of men' (*Ibid*, p 67).

[95] In addition to 'Kubla Khan' and *The Assassins*, Coleridge and Shelley would also write 'Mahomet' and *The Revolt of Islam* respectively.

[96] Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 161.

[97] *Ibid*, p. 163.

Shelley is determining whether he can successfully mediate between being, a 'prophet raging in the wilderness [and a lawgiver] preaching to the masses',[98] through adopting more tactful methods for relaying his reactive iconoclasm. On a public platform, the stakes are heightened and his calls for uprising in the name of universal fraternity risk devolving into empty promises of visionary fancy that are no more productive than the established regimes he feels compelled to abolish out of a disdain for custom.

Reenvisioning Muslim history in a poetic fashion to explore the dynamic between public and private discourse (outward passion and inward zeal) was not only confined within a Shi'i narrative but Shelley's use of the pleasure-garden motif as both a nurturing bower and a fortress from corruption echoes the generic conventions of Romantic alhambraism, a literary fashion which signifies the use of the Alhambra as a monumental and textual space for eighteenth-century writers to examine the ink between 'a feminine world of intimate feelings and a masculine sphere of public action'.[99] An icon of Moorish Spain, bridging East and West, Alhambra's position as a complex located within Granada contributed to its split identity within the Romantic psyche as presenting both an inwardly luxurious and opulent abode of Oriental decadence and an outwardly austere fortress of Eastern militarism. Whether or not Shelley could be definitively be identified as channelling alhambraism, the dynamics Diego Saglia pinpoints as part of this alternative exoticising discourse (associated with questions of personal comfort versus outside conflict) are inextricably tied into the mountainous retreat that Shelley's Assassins occupy as an amalgamation of the artificial opiate paradise attributed to Rashid al-Din As-Sinan and the Fortitied Alamut Castle seized by Hasan-i Sabbah fostering a space where, on a communal level, families are bonded in collective (if gradually despondent) tranquiilty whilst, on a national level, the backdrop is a world of crumbling empires and bloodshed. Additionally, the tragic trope that Saglia

[98] *Ibid*, p. 158.
[99] Diego Saglia, 'The Exotic Politics of the Domestic: The Alhambra as Symbolic Place in British Romantic Poetry', *Comparative Literature Studies* 34 (1997), 197-225, at p. 200.

attributes to this genre of the Moorish heroine who is simultaneously constrained to a domestic life whilst also being unable to attain full self-realisation within this sphere due to the fleeting nature of love is very pertinent to Shelley's personal ordeals around the time of composing *The Assassins* as his split from Harriet Westbrook in favour of Mary Godwin situates the former in a similar position to Felicia Heman's Zegri Maid who: '[d]eserted by her lover and scorned by her family because in love with an infidel [...] can only die away amidst the blooming natural beauties of her garden bower'.[100] Although there was a time gap between the event and Harriet's suicide and Shelley continued supporting her financially, the choice to dedicate one's life to true love as opposed to wallowing in servile domestication due to a suppressive contract (social or marital) and the need to find a delicate middle ground when employing passions in an instructive rather than destructive manner are embedded within the subtext of other Oriental literature of the period and as such, inevitably finds expression in *The Assassins*.

Summary

Regarding the question of acceptable conduct during times of political unrest and the validity of insurrection as a means of eliciting change, Shelley and the Nizari Assassins maintain several core principles including the belief in establishing transhistorical communities founded upon a shared knowingness, hope in the birth of luminary figures who will give shape to that collective expression on a world-historical level, and a distrust towards ruling powers that sought to discredit dissident movements through propaganda depicting them as outsiders. British xenophobia caused radical sympathisers to become associated with atheism, infidelity and, ultimately, position them as Other within the distinction between continental and English sensibilities whilst the Abbasids increased their polemical output against the Ismailis by propagating the 'black legend' which similarly imposed the stigmas of

[100] *Ibid*, p. 208.

unbelief and illegitimacy.[101] Both disenfranchised parties were critiqued as imposters working from within the system to dilute its authenticity. Violence is acknowledged as having produced certain desirable ends in establishing or advancing humanity as a moral species (i.e. American Revolution) especially when a way of life is being threatened (i.e. Fatimid Dynasty under Seljuk rule) and yet, Shelley and the Assassins discouraged such behaviour as the lesser form of cosmic reckoning secondary to enacting change via artistic or intellectual forms of engagement, whether esoteric theological doctrines or self-reflexive poetic truths, since the former is only justifiable in extreme instances[102] amongst a people who are yet to reach a level of emotional intelligence where dialogue is viable. The latter is preparatory in that it lays a foundation for those who come after to be enriched by their predecessors and build upon this legacy or, at least, not destroy their work. Whilst warfare can momentarily abolish oppression it is only in teaching people how to conceptualise of, as well as eloquently debate, the core principles underlying falsehood that freedom is gained. In particular, education is achieved through revising Qur'anic exegesis (for the Nizaris) or reframing high art (for Shelley) which exposes the unreality of institutional power by revealing the integral role that a slave fulfils in perpetuating the Master Narratives which control them and offering unconventional interpretations in the hopes society might break free from the defeatist mindset of a downtrodden worker: '[i]t is horrible that the poor must give in taxes what would save them and their families from hunger and cold; it is still more horrible that they should do this to furnish further means of their own abjectness'.[103] Through this syncretic poetic text, Shelley can sporadically entertain the Wahabee and Hashshashin zeal as complementary, even constitutive, to worldly development as non-pacifist rebellions can help instantiate beneficial advancements in the struggle for equality as indicated by

[101] The narrative posited that the Isma'ili Imams were not true descendents of Imam 'Ali.
[102] Shelley writes, '[t]he last resort of resistance is undoubtedly insurrection. The right of insurrection is derived from the employment of armed force to counteract the will of the nation. Let the government disband the standing army, and the purpose of resistance would be sufficiently fulfilled' (*Ibid*, p. 633).
[103] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 31.

Shelley's praise of the American Revolution in spite of the casualities incurred (however miniscule) on the road to attaining independence.[104]

[104] Shelley presents America, after the revolution, as now presenting, a 'victorious example of an immensely populous, and as far as the external arts of life are concerned, a highly civilized community' (*The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 598).

Chapter 2

Interanimative poetics: Metempsychosis and Transconsciousness in the Imamate and Shelley's *The Assassins*

The theological doctrine underpinning the Assassins derives, in part, from Ismaili Gnosticism which is itself an interpretation of Neoplatonic thought through an Islamic lens and thus, at its core, propounds an emanationist worldview to explain the cosmological relationship between the One and the Many. Shelley poeticises a number of these principles through the necessitarian religion of his Assassins but, I argue, the intellectual affinity moves beyond a mere fragment and the recognition of a presiding Will compelling existence to act according to their essential goodness, a historical cycle where groups of spiritually or poetically gifted people are born in every age for the purpose of articulating the underlying truths of existence, the mirage-like nature of evil in relation to truth, and an underlying unity to existence that encourages reunification to equality regardless of transitory ruptures, were all core tenets of the actual group. Although Shelley depicts the relationship between good and evil as an eternal struggle he still associates freedom with the perpetual flickering of a flame; conversely, oppression is a counteractive force precisely due to its static, voyeuristic and unproductive quality: 'the unextinguishable spirit of Liberty and the ever-watchful spirit of fraud and tyranny'. [1] Akin to the Ismailis, evil comes to possess a type of unreality due to being a distortion of the good or natural which is synonymous with a collective participation in re-creating our perception of reality.[2] The universe that emerges is creatively constituted at every minute with atemporal ideals being granted form and meaning through human

[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 595.

[2] For Ismailis, there is a level of unreality associated with unbelief as a disruption to the universal harmony understood not simply as unnatural but an event that ontologically transfigured a person to become metaphysically non-existent, generating a hierophanic scheme where 'God is the only reality [and] anyone [who] appear[ed] to be in opposition [was merely] a kind of optical illusion.' (Anthony Campbell, *The Assassins of Alamut* (North Carolina: Lulu Publishing, 2008), pp. 26-27)

interaction (i.e. composed of countless horizons of influence) as well as being deterministic in the sense of being continuously compelled, if not forward, at least into motion resulting in the inevitable cosmic interference of external forces beyond human control. It is within this balance between fatalism and imagination that falsehood can be defined as a contradiction to the ruling principles of enthusiasm and creativity which, for Shelley, equates to the centrality demanded by institutional power and results in the slavishness instilled by despotism as well as the destruction caused by warfare.

In conceiving of the Imamate as a more pertinent structure to Shelley's poetics than assumed given a purely dogmatic authoritarian understanding, it is useful to identify how the Ismaili theosophy of mythohistory posits a tripartite dynamic of preservation, restoration and transformation through intervening guides who encourage renewed recollection for the sake of overcoming the customary nature of time's belatedness. Whilst Ismailis perceive all things to emanate from God's Essence, leaders (Imams) are singled out as possessing a noticeably higher spiritual station than common believers which, at times, sees them acquiring an almost prophetic link to the supernatural realm in order to encourage new followers to flock to their side under the pretense that they shall find enlightenment in a world of illusion. Although the notion of inheritance, as it relates to intellectual lineage, differs with respect to Shelley and Shi'i understanding of discipleship, Bryan Shelley's argument that the poetic 'Assassins patronized individual reason', whereas, 'the Ismaili sect [obeyed] their Imam',[3] undermines the extent Shelley elevated illuminatory figures who awaken those predisposed to a poetic type of emotionality from the slavishness inherent in contemporary civilisation on the shared basis that, 'artistic creativity [is] the key to spiritual-political transformation [for] art leads to divine knowledge'.[4] Despite dismissing an Ismaili origin for Shelley's Assassins on the basis

[3] Bryan Shelley, *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 1.
[4] Humberto Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670–1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 197.

that the latter is committed to, 'the liberty of individual reason',[5] whilst the former perpetuates an enclosed and elitist hierarchical structure dominated by a select few, the Christian Gnostics that Bryan Shelley chooses to align the titular group with are described as resembling an enlightenment intellectual elite which either shepherds the general populace or, if they resist tutoring, dismisses them in favour of generating a contemplative space removed from such corruption: 'Shelley's Assassins share with the Gnostics a fundamental delight in the life of the spirit, which distinguishes them from the carnal masses'.[6] In light of Bloom's concept of misreading, the egalitarian element pervading either system is linked to a Gnostic willingness to reinterpret canonical texts as reflected in the Assassins natural theology shaped by individuals rather than institutionalised doctrine and coinciding with Shelley's hope of establishing a freethinking society based upon, 'divinization of the self, the merging of the spirit with the divine nature.'[7] I do not seek to dismiss Bryan Shelley's reading but offer a companion piece that highlights the Islamic side of the Assassin's who are intentionally depicted as a Frankensteinian creation composed of varying historical and theological appendages precisely because, as Shelley acknowledges, the poem is driven by the rationale that, 'no nation or religion can supersede another without borrowing heavily [from one another]'.[8] My research seeks to unravel a larger picture out of the gaps and fissures generated by the fragments hybrid structure in order to reassess the claim that, 'the similarity of Gnosticism to the religion of the Assassins was great, but not to that of the Assassins described by Shelley',[9] since such an approach indicates that Christian Gnosticism survives the transmutation intact whilst the Shi'i background is conveniently rendered into an empty husk unworthy of further examination. This attempt to confine the affinities of Shelley Assassins is disingenuous because, as part of the syncretic ethos structuring the piece, 'Percy

[5] Bryan Shelley, *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 2.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 11.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 10.
[8] *Ibid*, p. 1.
[9] *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

Shelley's "Gnostic" (antitrinitarian) Jewish Christianity [similarly integrates] an Islamic prophetic tradition that exalts creative gnosis'.[10] Given this critical background, I shall offer ways of productively re-incorporating the Imamate of Ismaili Gnosticism back into discussions regarding Shelley's appropriation of, and affinity with, the sect in order to highlight not only how the group can be used to characterise Shelley's views on insurrection but also his conceptualisation of poetic lineage as well as the link between custom and apprehension.[11]

The Successive Echoes of Inspiration

The Assassin Order concerned itself with political and spiritual issues, not dissimilar to those plaguing Shelley; positioning themselves as recognising and preserving a legacy that had been either misidentified or abandoned by the current government which, in turn, necessitates the formation of a splinter group who occupy a mountainous fortress with a leader that exudes an occult aura and seemingly possesses a greater intuition or connection with the abandoned legacy of thought. This figure subsequently encourages the disenfranchised community to be more outward-facing in how and where they channel their devotion to these principles rather than succumbing to apathy beneath either the status quo or self-imposed exile. The vizier of Cairo, Badr al-Jamali, did not fulfil the wishes of Imam-Caliph al-Mustansir to have his son Nizar succeed him upon his death and instead, upon al-Mustansir's more acquiescent half brother Qasim Ahmad, forced Nizar to escape to Alexandria from fear of death only to be eventually caught and executed after only a limited reign. Hassan-i Sabbah, the founder of the Assassin Order studying in Cairo at the time, was supposedly imprisoned by this regime but escaped to Persia with a newfound ardour to campaign for the recognition of the true spiritual succession of the Fatimid Imam. A

[10] *Islam and the English Enlightenment*, p. 197.
[11] Shelley may have learned about the transmigratory process of the Imamate, the mechanics of spiritual inheritance and the transhistorical nature of inspiration through Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Hurst & Co Publishers, n.d), vol. 3, p. 551-54.

wandering *da'i* (preacher) throughout Persia during the 1080s harnessing nationalist sensibilities as part of his wider aim to gain recognition for the Nizari Imamate lineage by framing his efforts as a response to the tyranny of Seljuk rule against which the current illegitimate and deceitful Caliphs of Baghdad could provide no remedy and thus, highlighting the fact that 'the Persian Ismailis could no longer count on receiving any effective support from the Fatimid state.'[12] To curtail the expanse of this inauthentic spiritual heritage and supplant it with an awareness that a truer lineage was still available, Sabbah established himself in Alamut castle southeast of Daylam a mountainous region, 'renowned as an area with strong independent tendencies',[13] where he encountered the Daylamites with whom he gradually cultivated and crafted an ideology based upon displacing rulers that sought to overturn or dismiss the rightful succession of Imams and who, instead, posited a new strain falsely associated with, 'the lore of ancient wisdom'.[14] It is important to emphasise that the Order was conceived, at least outwardly, from theological debates as a means of countering the suggestion that their political identity was devoid of any spiritual association since such a narrative fails to recognise the terms in which their desire for self-preservation and material conquest were framed. Sabbah chose to present himself as the Imam's chief representative (Hujjah, or proof of the hidden Imam) by either suggesting that Nizar had gone into occultation[15] or that his third son, al-Hadi ibn Nizar, had eloped to Alamut[16] in order to remain hidden and had entrusted Sabbah with both his protection as well as providing a line of communication to others. Whether it is the leader who founded the Assassin Order of Shelley's titular poem or the figurehead Rashid ad-Din Sinan who's moniker, *Shaykh al-*

[12] Farhad Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 129.
[13] Wayne Bartlett, *The Assassins: The Story of Medieval Islam's Secret Sect* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publisher, 2001), p. 42.
[14] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe* Shelley, p. 127.
[15] There exists an ambiguity surrounding Nizar's disappearance that allowd for this half-life mythic entity he came to symbolise for the assassin order even beyond his prior status as an Imam, 'Nizar's subsequent life is totally unknown. He was either imprisoned in absolute secrecy, or put to death: stories were told of both these ends, but nothing was ever known for certain.' (De Lacy Evans O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khilafat* (London: Routledge, 1923), p. 212.
[16] There are reports which claim it was Imam al-Nizar's grandson, al-Mohtadi.

Jabal, came to be attached (within the Western psyche) to the infamous pleasure garden[17] Shelley's stranger reflects a number of Assassin leaders who escaped the gaze of empire by occupying a mountainous enclave where they either formed, or helped spread the influence of, a community of similarly disenfranchised Persians under the yoke of the Seljuk empire striving for political and spiritual recognition. Embroiled in maintaining the correct succession of the Nizari Imamate, these figures gained an occult status through which they made present a hidden lineage that, beyond re-establishing appreciation for the theophanic nature of existence implicit within Sunni prophetic cycles, also gestured to a more immediate chain perpetually renewing this lost apprehension. Likewise, Shelley's Assassins are presented as channelling this intuitive emotionality by unconsciously retreading the steps of other, 'Arabians and enthusiasts [who were also attracted to] the solemnity and grandeur of these desolate recesses',[18] all of whom placed themselves in situations that would allow for customs veil to be lifted as a consequence of nature's reanimating touch: 'new contemplation [arose as] mind is united with eternal things [and] a keener and more exquisite perception [is formed]'.[19] A paradoxical scenario emerges where contemplation leads to fresh associations but also inevitably ushers another onset of perceptual fatigue over time for, 'the apprehension lost in living on is both life's apprehension and apprehension that realises its own life',[20] necessitating the constant movement through reiteration implicit in the interanimative structure underlying the poem. There is a spiritual interchange between human observer, ruined monuments and organic scenery described as an, 'epidemic transport' and an

[17] Mary Shelley in her preface to *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* exemplifies knowledge regarding the titular sect in a manner which indicates the Islamic component within this syncretic poem was a key element of its identity even though the group were transfigured into Christian Gnostics, noting that in the eleventh century there was 'a horde of Mahometans living among the recesses of Lebanon, - ruled over by the Old Man of the mountain; under whose distinction various murders were committed on the Crusaders' (Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments by Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Mary Shelley (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), I, pp. x-xi.
[18] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Assassins: A Fragment of a Romance', in *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 125.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 129.
[20] *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*, p. 61.

'overwhelming transport'[21] which foregrounds their transubstantive natures. As a group who abandoned civilisation for the sake of living in an enclosed mountainous area, their isolationist tendencies are both a blessing and a curse for it allows them mental freedom from the shackles of conventional thought but results in a rather self-serving form of knowledge that undercuts the spirit of connectivity associated with interanimation and is reflected in the temples dedicated to gods which populate Bethzatanai. Although the enthusiasm generated by inhabiting such exquisite landscapes eventually gives way to the general burden of everyday life which, 'smothered, [without wholly] extinguish[ing], that divine and eternal fire', there remains a flicker of hope that the introduction of a poetically versed stranger might excite their imagination once more.[22] This figure would not only remind them how to enact compassion towards outsiders but also instil within them a drive to transcribe and transmit, 'the lore of ancient wisdom', across communities so that they might further grasp and collectively employ, 'the human spirit and [...] human hand [to] accomplish [the] profoundest [of] miracles'.[23] Especially during his earlier poetry, Shelley's belief in the goodness of human nature over and above any acceptance of original sin fostered his willingness to accept an innate capacity for poetic expression, sympathetic communion and imaginative reciprocity with a similarly intrinsic propensity to be forgetful or grow imperceptive and in turn, acquiesce to convention: 'Southey [is] no believer in original sin: he thinks that which appears to be a taint of our nature is in effect the result of un-natural political institutions – there we agree'.[24] In spite of his disdain for institutionalised thought as the root of all vice, 'all that is evil [can be traced] to the sophistications of society',[25] there remained an equally

[21] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 129.
[22] 'The stranger's accents had lulled him [Albedir] to a trance of wild and delightful imagination. Hopes so visionary and aerial that they had assumed no denomination had spread themselves over his intellectual frame, and phantoms as they were, had modelled his being to their shape' (*Ibid*, p. 136).
[23] *Ibid*, p. 127.
[24] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, p. 216.
[25] *Ibid*, I, p. 237.

potent conviction that some form of virtuous civilisation could inspire dignity and was not necessarily a roadblock to achieving civility for even if this road was fraught with many inevitable pitfalls Caesar's assassins are notable for having uplifted an already, 'virtuous and civilized community of mankind [from the] insolent dominion of one wicked man [doing so] in the names of Country, Liberty, and Virtue [rendering them] holy patriots'.[26] Therefore, despite his pacifistic proclivities, Shelley entertains this image of the upstanding assassin who is willing to force change on a world-historical level in order to reinvigorate the public and awaken them from the monotony of accepted routine; for instance, upon recognising Albedir has only one spade and minimal space within his garden grounds, the stranger insists that, once better, he shall engage in working to help collectively cultivate the landscape and even highlights how his host would likely rather, 'perform the additional labour which [his] nourishment would require [even deriving] a degree of pleasure in the fatigue arising from this employment', but insists, 'I shall contest with you such pleasures as these'.[27] This positive rendition of the just assassin archetype is marked by an eagerness to contest over the delight of communal bonding but also an enthusiastic willingness to combat against forces which would destroy commendable ideals from Liberty to Virtue. The stranger is teaching Albedir to view reiteration as a central component of conservation rather than the end goal of preserving pleasure being contentment with habitude which would be the likely consequence if they were to remain enclosed within a cocoon of their own making without accepting the responsibility of sharing both the symbols and conveying the emotions generated by them. The answer is not to forfeit responsibility since such an approach uncritically accepts that the initial astonishment felt upon entering Bethzatanai will diminish over time along with any aspiration to inculcate these pleasures on a grander level in a manner that truly inculcates moral reform in others. In overturning their false assumption that hoarding delight preserves

[26] *Prose Works of Percy Bysshe* Shelley, p. 254.
[27] *Ibid*, p. 137.

its efficacy, the stranger highlights how social perception can only be altered by realising: 'the interdependency of different lives on one another'.[28]

It may seem that my appraisal of the ambiguous stranger as a combination of an Imam figure (with traces to Hassan-i Sabbah and Rashid al-Din Sinan) and a Shelleyan poetic legislator would oppose Peter Schock's reading which foregrounds a more menacing occult aura exuding from this elusive figure and who depicts the group as Ophite Gnostics that worship the serpent, occupy the house of Satan (Bethzatanai) and are inclined as a result of their occultic beliefs to admire, 'the demonic immortal who comes to [teach them to worship] the Luciferean God beyond the world.'[29] Associating the Miltonic Satan to this stranger on the basis of charisma, oratory skills and a tendency to infiltrate and disturb paradise is not a counter to my own interpretation since certain characters Shelley infuses with an air of superstition (e.g. Ahasuerus) are not channelling conventional Satanic tropes at the level of dark magic or demonic heritage but rather the connotative force of a fallen being striving to rally against a patriarchal figurehead which commands love through fear and labels any who attempt to introduce freethought via a competing discourse as necessarily evil. The poet's prophesying the downfall of Rome is not wholly dissimilar to the inspired hubris that fuels Satan's vow to depose, 'a Being who shall deliberately scheme to inflict on a large portion of the human race tortures indescribably intense',[30] but there is also a Christ-like sacrificial aspect to interanimation where past voices make way for new visions in the hope that fostering these rebirths allows, 'the echo of the eternal music',[31] to be prolonged and enable further instantiations of the 'beneficence and beauty by holy inspiration [to descend] on [...] searching spirits'.[32]

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[28] *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*, p. 110.
[29] Peter Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley and Byron* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 119.
[30] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 253.
[31] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 640.
[32] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe* Shelley, p. 129.

Interanimation grants a more productive focus to Shelley's reimagining of the Order beyond their willingness to threaten or enact violence for the sake of preserving their communal values since the metaphysics characterising the Imamate incorporates notions which Shelley would later expand upon in the *Defence of Poetry* and 'On Life' such as the numbing effects of apprehension requiring the rejuvenative strain of forgotten poetic perspectives to recuperate lost vision. These beacons of enlightenment are presented as the, 'great bards of elder time who [...]by their strain [made known a] living melody',[33] propagating a heritage of influence where precursor is retroactively influenced by its successor, whilst the former nevertheless anticipates the actualisation of the latter, held together by poet philosophers such as, 'Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, [and] Milton', without whom human consciousness would lose its childlike attunement to life's miraculousness: '[t]he human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements, have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences'.[34] Circumventing the deadening effects of ageing is not achieved by rewinding time to an infantile state in which experience is simply fated to repeat the same numbing motions but rather, by being perceptually reborn, an individual may supersede the rectilinear course of chronological time (generating despondency through custom) in favour of bathing in the fountain of metaphor where, 'old images that have frozen into statues or bric-a-brac [can be rebuild] from echoing clay of new living figures'.[35] Temporal retardation is overcome through imaginative rejuvenation as, within the context of the poetic universe, poets and historians both possess the potential to foretell Rome's eventual descent into slavery and degradation. The latter is prosodic in nature as it delineates transhistorical patterns for the purpose of bringing to attention relevant data for contemporary contemplation whilst the former versifies, in the sense of conjuring emotional resonance, by appealing to sensibility as Shelley indicates

[33] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, lines 274-6, p. 547.
[34] *Ibid*, p. 655.
[35] *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*, p. 45.

through his comments on the French Revolution: '[t]he sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies'.[36] In generating resonances rather than following patterns, poetry has the capacity to render history into verse which allows for a felt connection to the past through the present resulting in a medium that is less directly interested in being informative at the didactic level of imparting information but edifies through consumption which, when recited, invokes linguistic structures and tropes embodied in past sympathetic communities.

Recollection and Reintegration

The function of introspection (i.e. reflecting upon history as a means of progression) is the bridge by which to compare and contrast Ismaili attempts to synthesise a Neoplatonic emanationist rhetoric within the bounds of Islamic theology and the structural affinities noted between Shelley's pattern of visionary poetics and the transmigratory system outlined in his translation of Plato's *Ion*. Both perspectives explore how a living truth can be preserved through transhistorical connections which arise via tangible figures who accommodate within their being the collective reincarnations of prior guides united under the banner of the universal Imam or the great poem.[37]

As Creation seeks to know itself through knowledge of its Creator so too is the Creator able to reflect on His own Essence through the example of creation. This conception of God is largely impersonal with a Will that is shrouded in mystery not only due to the finite minds impoverished state relative to the Divine Intellect but also humanity's inability to comprehend the logic inherent in a time before mundane reasoning. Accordingly, Ismailis conceived of salvation as only having been achieved once an individual fully appreciates that

[36] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam. A Poem, In Twelve Cantos* (London: Printed for John Brooks, 1829), Preface, p. ix.
[37] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 647.

the hierarchy of heavenly bodies is a macrocosm of humanity's own spiritual development. The hierarchical chain becomes retroactively interpreted as a cosmological reenactment of the pre-eternal witnessing and attestation of God's Oneness by mankind resulting in similar truths echoed in Sufistic symbols such as the reedpipe which configures the memory of a lost paradisal abode. The pre-mortal state (*'alam-i dharr*) in which the Imam's and the Prophet were determined and at which point the covenant with God and his chosen representatives took place amongst the potentialities of mankind is understood as being an archetypal realm resulting in any true acts of free will being in accordance with the Primordial Will of Allah as a realisation rather than an obfuscation of this initial decree: a 'cyclical theophanic advent [perpetually renews] this Primordial Covenant [...] whereby beings are existentiated and differentiated according to their response to the divine call'[38] Hence, Shi'i cosmogony rests upon a mythohistoric framework that seeks to establish the rightful succession of authority both during and after prophecy by acknowledging the Divine guides who not only grant insights into the true nature of existence but, upon being recognised, enable individuals to reclaim a portion of their true Adamic self (*al-Adami al-muhaqqaq*) which symbolised their state during pre-existence.

Shelley, exposed to Thomas Taylor's translations of Platonic and Orphic literature and disinterested in following the contemporary academic trend of prioritising Aristotelian teachings,[39] was willing to suspend his disbelief in terms of offsetting his scepticism with an appreciation for sublime notions particularly when it came to expressing his views on love, language and childhood which culminate in a moralistic account of history as shaped by an attachment to innocence gradually lost over time whilst poetically minded figures help rejuvenate this impoverished vision. Shelley was fascinated by the Socratic connection

[38] Farshid Kazemi, 'Mysteries of alast: The realm of subtle entities (*alam-i dharr*) and the primordial covenant in the Bábí-Baha'i writings', *Bahá'i Studies Review* 15 (2009), 39–66, at p. 39.
[39] Stephanie Nelson, 'Shelley and Plato's Symposium: the poet's revenge', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 14 (2007), 100-29, at pp. 124-25.

between recollection and childhood as the latter signified a period of close proximity to a reality prior to creation resulting in him asking a mother walking across Magdalen bridge whether her infant could, 'tell us anything about pre-existence [?]'.[40] This potential to recall is obscured during adulthood – especially when entrenched within modern society – requiring those who are equipped with a poetic kind of madness[41] and who are capable of channelling 'the spirit of the age' to communicate, 'intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature',[42] as if reverting to an infantile state and becoming more intimately acquainted with that pre-existent spirit which subsequently persists in an atemporal manner. Shelley offsets poetic madness against criminal madness as, 'the root from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe', and which produces, 'all bodily and mental derangements [as a byproduct of] our unnatural habits',[43] generating a distinction between moral agents based on the understanding that although man's ability to, 'communicate his sensations, raise[s] him above the level of his fellow animals', this faculty also opens the possibility of arrogance and self-centredness since, the 'advantages of intellect and civilisation', inevitably clash with, the 'liberty and pure pleasures of natural life'.[44] This onto-ethical distinction is not dissimilar to the fidais who distinguished between the initiated and the uninitiated, the group perceived their adversaries as subsisting outside of the natural order since, in choosing not to recognise the spiritual reality of the Imam, they suppressed their mystical body and only existed on a corporeal (i.e. conditional and delusory) level which, translated into Shelley's vocabulary, pertains to harnessing a poetic consciousness that recognises and responds to the voices of past ages as a means of, 'redeem[ing] from decay

[40] James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 131.
[41] Shelley writes to Peacock in praise of poetry's capacity to capture the sublime paradoxes of reality, '[w]hat a wonderful passage there is in Phaedrus - the beginning I think, of one of the speeches of Socrates - in praise of poetic madness, and in definition of what poetry is, and how a man becomes a poet' (*The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, II, pp. 211-212).
[42] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 605.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 575.
[44] *Ibid*, p. 573.

the visitations of the divinity in man'.[45]

Sacredness and sainthood are at the heart of both conceptions of inspiration; the 'hierohistory' of the Imamate 'has at the centre of its axis the revelation [...] "am I not your Lord"',[46] perpetuated by cycles of *walayat* (i.e. companionship, guardianship) which foster interpretive communities contributing towards an eternal Religion (*din baqi, qayyim*) that, Shi'is believe, will eventually produce a newly established variant of the Adamic unity experienced during pre-existence as part of the ultimate reintegration on the Day of Judgement. The communion that the eternal Religion affords is understood as such,

> [W]e are the society of the Brethren of Purity, pure and sincere beings with generous hearts. We have slept in the cavern of Adam, our father, during the lapse of time which has brought back to us the vicissitudes of time and the calamities of events until finally, after our dispersion across various nations, there comes the moment of our encounter in the realm of the Master of the Eternal Religion, the moment when we see our Spiritual City elevated in the air[47]

Two components shape this metahistoric soteriology: ontological *tawhid* which indicates the renewed remembrance of Allah's Oneness as the central mode of revelation from Adam until the Seal of Muhammad and theosophical *tawhid* signalling humanity's re-initiation into a primordial covenant via the Imamate and culminating in the final resurrector Imam (*Qa'im*). Pre-empting a kind of Keatsian negative capability,[48] followers of the Shi'i esoteric

[45] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 657.
[46] 'Mysteries of alast', p. 65.
[47] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 32.
[48] From the famous letter to his brothers on 21 December 1817, '[a]t once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.' (John Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats*, ed. by Horace E. Scudder (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), p. 277.

doctrine accept the mysterious and supranatural elements of life without striving to fully comprehend or demystify such phenomena which is itself often the result of an egotistical desire for power through epistemological control. Indeed, the Ismailis choose to suspend disbelief via a more kataphatic approach that focuses on delineating what God is not. Shelley's own propensity for transvaluation indicates that his poetics does not intrinsically necessitate an absolute rejection of a sublime or supranatural realm but rather suggests he seeks to strip the institutionalised framework away from noumenal conceptions of Power in order to reaffirm the incomprehensible nature of the sublime back into a post-enlightenment society which risks falling into the opposite extreme of relativistic apathy. Angela Leighton and Paul Endo argue that the way in which Shelley forestalls either dogma or disinterestedness is by preventing the confusion and awe of an ecstatic encounter from developing into comprehension consolidated as doctrine and worship reduced to habit, both of which are driven by an unhealthy obsession. Accordingly, when Shelley refers to poets as 'hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration' and lauds their position as simultaneously, 'herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people',[49] these unacknowledged interpreters of life's mysteries as well as those who internalise their words and live ethically (e.g. adopt a vegetarian lifestyle) would become constituted by, 'continued pleasure, such as [felt during] favoured moments of youth', and would appreciate, 'sensational delights [in an] infinitely more exquisite and perfect [manner]'.[50] During this heightening of sensibility through communion with poetic priests, sanctity is granted not to supreme Beings but humanitarian principles, '[b]y all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth to give a fair trial to the vegetable system',[51] and the dynamic between human vessel and sublime inspiration is figured in similarly secularising terms which, as reflected in Shelley's usage of the Aeolian harp, is

[49] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 660.
[50] *Ibid*, p. 577.
[51] *Ibid*, p. 577.

likened to an artisan eliciting exquisite expression from their instruments. The interdependence between subject and object during these creative transactions is explored in, 'With a Guitar. To Jane', which examines whether an interanimative exchange is possible amongst disparate entities and across temporal discrepancies as the focal object, a guitar, grants expression to both the organic and human realm. This vessel relays nature's secrets in musical form due to its pre-existence as part of the natural scenery before being fashioned into an instrument and granted a new role within human consciousness. The guitar is capable of being student and instructor. As Ross Wilson has outlined, the concept of dead or hidden matter being brought to life and made perceptible through a melodic (i.e. poetic) strain is a common trope throughout Shelley's work often in relation to questions concerning slavery due to the concern that such a transaction might replicate that of a slave and master dynamic with tunes being seemingly imposed upon the guitar rather than being teased out. However, interpreting the image in light of Platonic conceptions of the soul,[52] memory becomes a reiterative force enabling musicians, responsive to the resonating hum of past sympathetic communities reverberating across time, to remain heard within contemporary life. Accordingly, the guitar retains records of its past life which synergise with the artistic prowess of the one playing: 'reanimation is [thus] imagined not just as a perpetuation of suspended life but as restoration and transformation at once'.[53] Although the archetypal state of pre-existence (when humanity existed *in potentia*) was an ontologically substantial reality for the Ismailis such myths are, for Shelley, inextricably attached to metaphor and deeply aware of their own origin as narrative trope as indicated by his citation of John Frank Newton: '[m]aking allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory, as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten [...] the drift of the fable seems to be

[52] Shelley's translation of *Ion* reflects this reverberating pattern of bodies across time (a string of inspired poets) which participate, via their own internalisation and transformation of certain poetic strains of thought, in recalling and disseminating this transhistorical rhythmic harmony.
[53] *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*, p.110.

this: Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth'.[54] If the sublime is to enter Shelley's work it must remain open to being continuously reframed in order to naturally encourage his audience to infuse existential meaning with lived experience rather than relying on an all-encompassing type of devotion that robs the noumenal realm of transience, dynamism and boundlessness: '[i]f the emplotting of the sublime – of its movement out of the meaningless into meaning – is necessarily ideological, the Negative Sublime suspends the crystallization into hard, dogmatic meaning through an "awful doubt"'.[55] Despite Shelley's allegorical understanding of metaphysical concepts, neither he nor the Ismailis perceived the lapse into temporality or the decay of thoughtful apprehension into uncritical perception as salvageable in the sense of returning to a prior state since, given the palimpsestuous nature of metempsychosis, reclaiming originality and overcoming belatedness was a futile endeavour: '[c]an a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages? – Indubitably not'.[56]

In positioning hierophatic figures at the helm of their mythohistorical cycles and in appreciating the therapeutic nature of remembrance as not necessarily mourning a bygone state but offering a means to move forward (in an informed and empathetic manner) various points of convergence between a Shelleyan and Ismaili conception of inspiration begin to emerge. Nevertheless, even though both rely on an interanimative framework founded upon continuation and reintegration, Shelley's emphasis falls on intertextuality wherein humanity is encouraged to assemble new strands of thought by discovering, 'the lore of ancient wisdom [...] sculptured in mystic characters on the rocks',[57] (i.e. harnessing the memories of previous writers) whilst the Ismailis foreground intracommunal harmony as all partake in the

[54] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 572.
[55] Paul Endo, 'The Cenci: Recognising the Shelleyan Sublime', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38 (1996), 379-97, at p. 379.
[56] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 580.
[57] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 127.

'symbolic reproduction of a lifeworld'[58] and in doing so, are brought beneath a collective sodality. The former seeks to recognise others as authors of their own youth via renewed vision whereas the latter recognises others as Adamic souls attached from pre-conception to a transcendent order and endowed with the emotional capacity to recollect or disregard this link.

In offsetting these worldviews, a clearer picture begins to formulate as to how the poetic rendition of the Assassins (historically linked to Ismaili theology and poetically connected to Shelley's philosophy) could assume a position that is, '[a]ttached from principle to peace', as well as evincing a willingness to, 'wage unremitting hostility from principle', since the potential use of violence, whether to maintain political stability or in the service of self-defence, is not inherently destructive due to being waged in the name of defending 'justice and benevolence' from the 'corrupt and slavish multitude' who would forget their legacy.[59]

Cyclical Belatedness and Mundane Time

Ismaili esoteric thought which reads the Qur'an in a more allegorical light posits the consecutive revelations and reiteration of universal truths through a spiritual ancestry composed of prophets and Imams who may adopt the garb of an occult cleric but metaphysically functions as a intermediary of emanation between God and creation. Given the Nizari belief that the Mahdi (an eschatological liberator) is not tied to a singular figure but is a role undertaken by each successive Imam, this focus on continuance and perseverance enables a constantly renewed link to lost wisdom in a manner less immediately present when prophetic missions have reached a definitive endpoint either through Moses, Christ or Muhammad. This pre-cosmic illumination that perpetually shines across generations and shapes the Imamate challenges conventional perception of the authoritarian Imam who

[58] Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment: An Inquiry into the Preconditions of Moral Performance* (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University, 1994), p. 331.
[59] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 131.

encourages others to submit to his divinely pre-ordained status and instead refigures him as an emissary of Gnostic secrets who prompts others to awaken their inner Imam and harness those eternal truths which he has already been made conscious of. This ecumenical approach, diffuses authority from any one manifestation by elucidating a retroactive approach which remains sensitive to the universality of the human predicament as bound within a stream of cyclical time that has its beginning in an existential delay. In other words, mankind has fallen outside of an emanatory scheme into a realm of mundane time and in doing so, is cut off from the eternal advent of being (the absolute godhead) whose existence constitutes the movement of all other angelic spheres. Assuming that it was self-actualised, the human sphere gains a consciousness separate from the other spheres and is accordingly superseded leading to, '[t]ime [being] born, a time in which there is a remoteness, a past that is no longer eternal, a past that is no longer',[60] it is the prophets and Imams who liberate mankind from this stupor by encouraging them to recognise this regression and channel their radical belatedness in a manner conducive to progress. The cosmos tends towards perfection and goodness and humans are an element of this dynamic but given our capacity to forget, transgress and fall into stagnant routines it is only via the spiritually adept guides which materialise across history that imaginations can be enlivened through restored admiration for these abandoned apprehensions which, in turn, generates a lineage of resurrections built upon collective camaraderie where: 'each adept must "resuscitate" (or "suscitate") an adept like himself [and] rising from degree to degree cause another at every step to rise to his own former rank'.[61] Light and dark imagery is often used to characterise the relationship between an Imam and his disciples as microcosms of the grander cosmological hierarchy of Intellects in the sense that it is only through a mentor that others draw closer to the Unmoved Mover and yet, it is thanks to their disciples imparting these traditions that new luminous bodies (enlightened

[60] Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, trans. by Ralph Manheim and James Morris (London: Kegan Paul International, 1983), p. 43.
[61] *Ibid*, p. 54.

beings of subsequent generations) are formed: 'the cosmic cycles revolve, the Imams and their attendant spirits move gradually upwards towards the Source'.[62] This cyclical progressivism is echoed in Shelley's early thought as he hoped that history, despite serving as a stage for mankind's atrocities, could still narrate an endless chain of human 'progression in improvement' toward a 'golden age,'[63] that although rooted in a Manichaean worldview cultivated through discussions with Leigh Hunt[64] led to a dualistic position that clung to a belief that evil was illusory relative to the substantiality of virtuous ideals, celebrating 'the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue'.[65] Admittedly, particularly during 1813 and 1817, Shelley posited a certain interconnectedness between good and evil personifying their alternation as an inevitable dynamic of existence at the level of a universal principle, '[history is] a continual struggle for liberty on the part of the people, and an uninterrupted attempt at tightening the reins of oppression and encouraging ignorance and imposture by the oligarchy',[66] seemingly granting vice an equally necessary and potent reality as an evil spirit which governs events in the mundane realm to the point where, 'gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live'.[67] Nevertheless, echoing Peacock's belief in the eventual success of love as the predominate mode of communication, Shelley hoped that through an imaginative commingling of the human and universal spheres: 'there will come a time when the human mind shall be visited exclusively by the influences of the benignant power'.[68] Expanding upon William Drummond's desire to 'elevate the mind to the contemplation of divine perfection' by connecting what consciousness reflects upon with what it loves, Shelley writes,

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[62] *The Assassins of Alamut*, p. 68.
[63] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, p. 152.
[64] When relating the beliefs of Leigh Hunt to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Shelley writes, '[he] believes that this Creator is by no means perfect, but composed of good & evil like man, produces that mixture of these principles which is evident.' (*Ibid*, I, p. 77)
[65] *The Revolt of islam*. Preface, p. vii.
[66] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 48.
[67] *The Revolt of islam*. Preface, p. xi.
[68] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 255.

> My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness[69]

Although man made institutions rely on the disenfranchisement of freethinkers to sap creativity from a community and prevent imposition of new thought structures that might threaten the status quo, poetic language requires constant renewal to prevent it from becoming stagnant or uninspired: 'if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse.'[70] New thinkers reconfigure old ideas by synthesising contradictory elements, creating rifts that did not exist previously as well as generally reading cross-culturally or trans-temporally. Each generation will produce poets, thinkers and artists that create work which draws heavily from motifs and beliefs of the dominant ideology even as they subvert it in certain areas (e.g. Milton or Michelangelo) and as such, will simultaneously transform and propagate the status quo. Creative imagination reanimates life and is itself resurrected across traditions through bygone images, tropes and topos being cited, recontextualised and reimagined as part of a process of literary reincarnation that attempts to undercut the customary processes in experience which oppress enthusiasm and stultify perceptual insight. Freedom is gained through, rather than apart from, life because experiencing something once again does not require an infinite regress to a point preceding familiarity but rather an unfolding towards ever new cycles of expression instilled by poets

[69] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 228.
[70] *Ibid*, p. 637.

who obviate the historicity of habit and, most importantly, restore admiration which, 'is not a mere additive to apprehension but rather essential to it, for, in Shelley's view, impoverished perception of life is impoverished life'.[71] Ismaili thought embeds this admiration within a cosmic process, the 'eternal movement of adoration of the Principle, which eternally actuates it toward being',[72] reframing the baggage of accumulated experience not in a manner that weighs down the soul but positions humanity as echoing the transhistorical resurrections (i.e. physical re-manifestations) enacted by the prophets and Imams. Therefore, as Samar Attar highlights, what intrigued Shelley about the Assassins beyond their willingness to break away from conventional interpretations of scripture was the notion of a, 'Hidden Imam, glowing in a world of light', that is capable of, 'liberat[ing] the soul from an evil, material world of darkness'.[73]

Akin to Shelley's successive bards who restore admiration to apprehension, the Imamate is posited as a schema to overcome the numbing effects of secondariness where the repetitive nature of worldly temporality inculcate alienation from self due to a loss of vivacity in apprehending what was once constituted by a type of undiscovered witnessing (the indistinct reverie of childhood or the prelapsarian state) that is blunted by reiteration. For Shelley and Nizaris, the strain of melody or the individuations of the eternal Imam generate states in which, the 'past is [...] metamorphosed into the future of Resurrection',[74] altering the notion of linear time as self-animated from a singular point in a chain which is destined to weaken in favour of interanimation governed by interconnected chains perpetuated through a reincarnatory system. The difference being that, for Shelley, this process resembles metempsychosis or, the 'transformation and preservation of one substance into, and in,

[71] Ross Wilson, *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 93.
[72] *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, p. 36.
[73] Samar Attar, *Borrowed imagination: The British Romantic Poets and their Arabic-Islamic Sources* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 131.
[74] *Ibid*, p. 60.

another substance, to which it, as much as anything else, contributes',[75] this notion of contribution pinpoints the embodied agency inherent within any pattern of change as compelled by events outside individual control but is also distinctly anthropomorphic due to deriving its shape from the growing influence of communal efforts to reduce or advance social cohesion through a cultivation of empathy and equality highlighting how the revolutionary spirit is beholden to the transfigurative effects of human affectivity and mental shifts. Whether memory is a stagnant or reiterative force is key to poetry's redemptive force as it recuperates mental shifts and lived emotions back into the present otherwise subjectivity would remain attached to an non-cathartic form of recollection since if, '[t]he curse of this life is that whatever is once known can never be unknown', the choice falls upon harnessing these memories poetically or risk being inextricably attached to these lost objects in a manner that, 'clings to you [and] revenges your desertion [by transfiguring] what has been [into a] seem[ing] yet to be, but [now] barren & stript of life'.[76] Imagination offers some balance to the attrition of human existence by granting access to abstract thought through which historical decay can be filtered (infusing materialism with an ideal element) and, to reverse the agony of remembrance, grants poetry an honoured role in the revitalisation of mundane experience via a visionary future constituted by an equally visionary past. In maintaining humanity's reflective capacity acquired throughout life whilst offsetting the corrupting aspects of perceptive decay and irrecoverable experience, poetry serves a moral function providing not only the best representation of the historical conscience but also contributing to the collective spirit of creative thought by producing, 'episodes to that great poem, which all poet's, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world.'[77] Through this transhistorical connectedness, poets adopt a prophetic role as their writing contains a wealth of reference points, imagery and metaphor which serve to inspire

[75] *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*, p. 101.
[76] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, II, p. 6.
[77] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 647.

further renewal and progress, 'mark[ing] the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuat[ing] their apprehension, until words, which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts, instead of pictures of integral thoughts',[78] enabling memory, or at least the language through which memory is conceived, to be both enduring and reinvigorating as ideas are available to be witnessed once again through new perspectives rather than hardened beneath the yoke of custom. Poetry remains consistently pertinent because it is able to draw upon human nature's universal principles and synergise disparate mental categories: '[a] Poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not,'[79] poetry can tap into an ideal realm and harness its positive qualities such as perpetuity and perfection but converts these unobtainable laws into available prospects for historical communities via poets who are either reacting to the spirit of the age or responding to a grander shared unconscious. Therefore, although the spirit of history functions as the overarching principle, poets remain the most accurate mirrors[80] and astute commentators with regards to developing civilised society and forging transtemporal empathetic communities serving as beacons of liberty: 'defeat[ing] the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions',[81] and producing change by renewing perception as well as instilling within those willing to listen a way of communicating their impressions to others. Conversely, in Ismaili theosophy, the guiding principle is recapitulation or reintegration into the whole as, 'eternal Time erupts in cycles of successive times whose rotation carries them back to their origin',[82] rendering the *Deus absconditus* that resurfaces at each level of theophany into a physical instantiation (an Imam or prophet) which are the mirrors repeatedly reflecting the luminescence (*nur*) of the Eternal Imam which has associations with the Word of God, Muḥammad's pre-existent soul

[78] *Ibid*, p. 637.
[79] *Ibid*, p. 638.
[80] Shelley conceives poetry as, 'a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted' (*Ibid*, p. 640).
[81] *Ibid*, p. 658.
[82] *Cylilcal Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, p. 32

(*nur Muḥammadi*) or the Universal Intellect as the First Originated Being (*al-ʻaql al-kull*) creating a transitive process not based upon poetic incantation but epiphanic manifestation.[83] More specifically, the Ismaili understanding is derived from a combination of Islamic theophany (*mazhar*) and emanationism causing the reincarnatory principle to be presented not as a metempsychosis (*tanasukh*) or divine incarnation manifest in human form (*hulul*) but an 'intercyclical homology' [84] working through a perpetual patterning of actuation, integration and recapitulation as part of an unfolding whole. Ismaili Imams and their luminary students are granted an archetypal dimensionality as the echoing resonance of their thought patterns migrate via a chain of spiritual adepts fitted for each period in a continuous strain. On all planes of existence, the result is an interlocking chain of influence that blurs the bounds between cause and effect until they become almost indistinguishable from one another when taken as a whole movement across time from conception to Armageddon with reflection being central to the overall process: 'the Imam is said to shine divine light on the souls of his followers, and their souls reflect the light as when the sun shines on glass'.[85] The divergence can be accounted for by assessing the overarching telos of either system whether it be the Grand Resurrection or the great poem. The former signals the consummation and completion of the Grand Cycle in which, 'the soul achieves the highest wisdom [and] is assimilated by the Loftiest Wisdom of the Universe, an eternal substance of divine origin'.[86] It is through this journey towards an eventual cosmic homecoming on the Day of Judgement that all created things, including humans, gain purpose as every conception or cessation of

[83] Although unorthodox amongst even the Ismailis, the concept of literal reincarnation can be found within some esoteric texts outlining a cyclical understanding of mystical enlightenment where the effect of living a spiritually unfulfilling existence leads a person to re-enter material existence upon death until they break the cycle by uncovering the hidden Imam and, through his teachings, finally awaken from this recurring nightmare. A remnant known as Fragment XVI expresses this view most clearly, '[a]s long as the soul has not recognised the Imam of the time it will return to the world of birth and death, the world of the body and the place of suffering, until it does eventually recognise the Imam and acknowledge his authority. Then it will be purified and saved. But if it does not recognise him, it will continue to come and go for many centuries.' (Quoted in *The Assassins of Alamut*, pp. 34-35).
[84] *Ibid*, p. 50.
[85] *Ibid*, p. 68.
[86] Enno Franzius, *The History of the Order of the Assassins* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), p. 83.

biological life alongside its respective spiritual awakening or closure is both driving and shaping the ultimate outcome which will not come to pass until everything has been brought back to the First Cause. The latter has no definitive point of closure as both its authorship and shape is characterised by indeterminate openness and yet, in either formulation, 'the agency of reanimation, and its dependency on what it would reanimate, [remains] a critical question.'[87]

Summary

My focus lies not in arguing whether Shelley might have perceived the transferral chains constituting Ismaili Gnosticism as anything other than a, 'Burkean celebration [...] of the stable self-reproduction of the patriarchal order [...] compelled and yet [...] motionless',[88] since the force of my reading does not lie in delineating complete parity between the Imamate and Shelleyan interanimative poetics as if to argue that Shelley's focus was to normalise Shi'i thought into the mainstream. Instead, through emphasising the hybridisation of disparate reformatory sects encompassed by the narrative, I have sought to distil one component of this alchemical mixture whose views regarding legacy or inspiration have been overlooked due to an assumed fundamental disagreement on behalf of Shelley and the Ismaili Assassins that undervalues the role of metempsychosis underpinning his transvaluative frame. I suggest that Ismaili thought is as revisionary within its own tradition as Christian Gnosticism and thus, equally pertinent to an exploration of Shelley's synthetic imagination for it further reveals how he channels the revisionary potency of religious sects which, due to their fringe status, are capable of subverting orthodox associations in ways that dismiss the assumed interpretation (whether it be a positive rendition of the serpent motif or a shifting of assumed leadership dynamic through the figure of Imam Ali). Shelley's own iconoclasm strives to

[87] *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*, p. 90.
[88] *Ibid*, pp. 79-80.

break down the power associated with monolithic sign systems but his reliance on poetry means that imagery must still persist in some form and thus, metaphoric displacement becomes an avenue for poetically minded *philosophes* to rebuild the world anew whilst maintaining a necessary level of reciprocity whenever art purports to speak on behalf of life: a 'poem [may only live] in the reader's reading, but [..] at the same time, the reader is brought more fully to life by the poem.'[89] The diverse train of thinkers Shelley cites as part of this lineage from Dante to Milton is a testimony to the transhistorical breadth of Shelley's approach to revisionism[90] as well as the risks of repeating similar structures implicit in religious discourse regarding inspiration since this pseudo-clergy begins to reflect a new type of idolatry in the guise of self-divinisation. The Assassins, as an amalgamation of Gnostic revisionary outsiders, becomes a prime example of the anticipatory fear that Shelley felt towards his rational commitment to empiricism and his ideational inclination to feeling as expressed in a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener in June 1811,

> To a belief in Deity I have no objection on the score of feeling, I would as gladly perhaps with greater pleasure admit than doubt his existence [...] Imagination delights in personification; were it not for this embodying quality of eccentric fancy we should be to this day without a God [...] this personification, beautiful in Poetry, inadmissible in reasoning [...] I recommend reason. – Why? Is it because since I have devoted myself unreservedly to its influencing[91]

The poem imagines a society through which Shelley can explore whether faith and reason must always stain one another or whether they can reach a mutually constitutive middle ground offering a space in which to conceptualise a reform that does not exploit the

[89] *Ibid*, p. 19.
[90] Although there are clear lines to be drawn as to who or what is being omitted from the lineage on the basis of factors such as faith or nationality.
[91] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, pp. 99-101.

destruction of a prior status quo in the name of erecting a new one. Consequently, I have incorporated the cumulative efforts of Ross Wilson and William Dowden to delineate a Shelleyan theory of life, however abstruse such a feat may be, characterised by interanimation and metempsychosis where, 'the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue,'[92] disseminate a poetic sensibility that awakens their audience to the habitual nature of existence and rebuilds new forms of apprehension upon visions previously buried beneath custom. It may seem as though I impose Shelley's later views on poetic inspiration and genealogy from texts such as *A Defence of Poetry* upon a much earlier text but I argue that the imagery and connotative force associated with this sect remain pertinent even throughout his later writing. One notable allusion takes place in *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1819) where Shelley's hopefulness regarding a spirit of enthusiasm that will arise from the East and awaken them from slavish subjectivity leads him to posit that it, 'must go on "conquering and to conquer"',[93] which seems a likely reference to Coleridge's play *Remorse* (1797 [1813]) where Alhadra, surrounded by a group of Moors in the mountains, proclaims: '[t]he strongholds of the cruel men should fall,/Their temples and their mountainous towers should fall, [...] And all that were and had the spirit of life,/Sang a new song to her who had gone forth,/Conquering and still to conquer!'.[94] Despite no direct reference to the Assassins it still seems highly relevant given the general iconography of mountain dwelling revolutionaries who right injustices in the name of Allah and the Prophet[95] and the fact that the Shi'i sect is a component of *Kubla Khan* (1816) as those who 'dr[i]nk the milk of Paradise'[96] Additionally, Alhadra roughly translates to "presence" or to be present

[92] *The Revolt* of Islam. Preface, p. x.
[93] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 604.
[94] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Remorse : A Tragedy in Five Acts', in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Including Poems and Versions of Poems*, ed. by Ernest H. Coleridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Act V, scene I, lines 274-9, p. 880.
[95] They refer to themselves as, 'Warriors of Mahomet! Faithful in the battle!' (*Ibid*, scene III, line 28, p. 869) and even invoke the names of Allah and his Messenger, 'May Alla and the prophet bless thee' (*Ibid*, scene III, line 25, p. 869).
[96] *Ibid*, line 54, p. 298.

which is rather fitting if she functions as the Imam figure in this scenario for they symbolise the transcendent link made manifest not through a type of indwelling of the divine within flesh but as a representative or reflection which shows forth goodness and instils ethics which would, in Shelley's rendition, become a zeal that inculcates an honourable fortitude against tyranny given their intense, '[a]ttach[ment] from principle to peace, despising and hating the pleasures and the customs of the degenerate mass of mankind'.[97] For Shelley, Imsaili Gnostics and Christian Gnostics, resurrection is the response to custom as images, previously believed to be deceased or static, are revised through a process of renewal until, at each stage, 'the past is abolished and metamorphosed into the future of Resurrection (*Qiyamat*)'.[98] These spiritual or poetic strains serve as a countermeasure to rectilinear time that offers no redemptive retroactive movement or purely cyclical time which risks devolving into a retarding repetition as opposed to a reiterative renewal. All three schemas propose dormant apprehensions must be reintroduced afresh rather than forgotten as every age perpetuates a melodic strain retuning perception to wave lengths since unheard and even though Christian and Ismaili Gnosticism reframe this process within a metaphysical schema which Shelley would have shunned, he was still aware of the idealising assumptions and fictions that could potentially infiltrate his own thinking. Both the overlaps and discrepancies which arise when examining the relationship between consciousness and transconsciousness in each system are vital in gaining a fuller comprehension as to why these authorial decisions are thematically pertinent. Even if, during the process of transvaluation, some subtleties are unperceived by the author himself, I argue that the spirit of this research still shares a similar metahistorical attunement to the transferral of ideas whereby past thoughts are not lost but remain essential to the shape of subsequent legacies, however reimagined.

Both the Imamate and the poet legislators are shaped by the Spirit of Nature or the Will of

[97] *Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 125.
[98] *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, p. 60.

Allah that provide the only sustainable ideals to strive after and which, even at the heart of an outwardly unsuccessful revolution, shall continue to persist in varying forms. The central contention being that, for Shelley, interpretive authority is not singular and the Spirit of Nature becomes synonymous with Necessity on a temporal level whilst also being an atemporal creative and volitional force constituted by humankind's collective One Mind. Whereas, for the Ismailis, the luminaries that serve to guide subsequent generations by revealing esoteric principle and correct conduct are understood to acquire their insight via an external supranatural force (Allah) with more unorthodox conceptions positing an indwelling within the Essence of God in contrast to the predominant scholarly consensus that chooses to affirm the separatedness of Creation and Creator.[99] Nevertheless, the shared importance placed on self-knowledge bridges both worldviews on the understanding that it is only by plumbing the depths of selfhood that patterns will be revealed in order to uncover more about the nature of humanity as product or producer. In each schema, *the* atemporal prototype is either immortalised by God as possessing those Divine Attributes subsequently echoed in human form or the Spirit of Nature that paradoxically animates the universe whilst also being a consequence of human imagination. Time is measured according to the unfolding stress of ontological imperfection that must be worked through rather than against by retaining the memories of its downfalls (moments where it succumbs to temporal retardation) as a catalyst for a constantly reinvigorated appreciation of existence which inspires mankind to relinquish the perceptual baggage of reality as always already made and aim toward ever more renewed observations on life. Recognising humanity's embeddedness within a grander pattern either known cosmologically or intuited symbolically, requires understanding that any implication

[99] Aside from sharing a number of similarities with a panentheistic worldview, the One retains some semblance of a transcendent deity, given the Ismaili emphasis on immutability and unknowabiilty, Its Majesty is in no way diminished or enhanced as a result of creation for 'although the One give rise to the universe, it remains quite separate and unaffected and nothing happens to it at all', and, akin to Jewish reticence to name God, they perceive any combination of letters as unsatisfactory for capturing the Essence of that which precedes created meaning (*The Assassins of Alamut*, p. 35).

within the Will of Allah or the Spirit of Nature is equally expressed through intertwined, 'bondage[s] of [...] sympathy',[100] composed of individual, collective and transhistorical consciousnesses perpetually resuscitating life from the stultifying effects of its own belatedness.

[100] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 2, stanza 16, line 803, p. 40.

Part Two: 1816

Chapter 3

The aporetic veil: Attaining madness by submitting to paradox in *Alastor* and Sufistic poetry

When developing the Poet and the veiled maiden in *Alastor* it is likely Shelley was calling upon his knowledge of Sufistic literature for it follows a similar narrative structure regarding the melancholic lover who longs to be consumed by their idealised beloved until they are gradually detached from society as a consequence of this overwhelming desire. These narratives were popularised by the likes of *Leila and Majnoun* translated in 1785 by William Kirkpatrick entitled, *Mujnoon; or, the Distracted Lover. A Tale. From the Persian*, a partial translation of Abdullah Hatifi's *Laili Majnun* by William Jones[1] and another rendition entitled, *The Loves of Mejnoun* and Leila, by Isaac D'Israeli (1797) both of which explore the duality in Arabic and Persian languages of, 'words [...] which express LOVE [but] imply also MELANCHOLY, MADNESS, and DEATH', as the Oriental trope of '[d]ying for love' goes beyond being 'a mere poetic figure.'[2] Additionally, Shelley might have been exposed to motifs of Persian love such as the image of the nightingale and the rose such as William Jones's 'The Flowers of Persian Literature' (1805) in which he cites the intellectual John Nott who states: '[t]he Persians have several poetical fables, to which they often allude in their compositions, but to none so frequently as that which supposes the nightingale to be violently enamoured with the rose',[3] together both translators rendered the works of Sa'adi and Hafiz into English who employed this metaphor in their love poetry; in particular, conceptualising

[1] Shelley's exposure to Oriental tropes can be found in a letter dated December 1812 to the bookseller, Clio Rickman, where he asks for *The works of Sir William Jones* (Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, p. 343.
[2] John Richardson, *A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic, And English: With A Dissertation On The Languages, Literature and Manners of Eastern Nations* (London: Printed by J. L. Cox, 1829), p. lvi.
[3] William Jones, *The Flowers of Persian Literature: Containing Extracts from the Most Celebrated Authors, in Prose and Verse, with a Translation into English: Being Intended as a Companion to Sir William Jones's Persian Grammar: To which is Prefixed an Essay on the Language and Literature of Persia*, ed. by Samuel Rousseau (London: Printed for James Asperne, 1804), p. 157.

the nightingale's song as a reflection of the poet's voice[4] which Nilchian notes is a sentiment echoed in *A Defence of Poetry* when Shelley writes: '[a] Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds.'[5] In carrying out a transvaluation as opposed to a translation of these Arab and Persian texts, I argue that Shelley generates a poem attuned to the visionary experience espoused in Medieval mystic writing by prioritising paradox and bewilderment as the core dynamics characterising the subject and object relationship rather than certainty, consummation and articulation which Alireza Anushiravani and Laleh Atashi accuse Jones of doing, 'the unknown and the mysterious [are] explored [until] their Eastern opacity has given way to the Western transparency'.[6] In seeking to obfuscate instead of elucidate, Shelley dismantles the progressive sense of a narrative that develops towards a finalised form by producing a text that resists imbuing signs with fixed meanings, perpetually gesturing outside of its boundaries, both mourning the inadequacy of language to convey the inexpressible whilst acknowledging the memorial immortality potentially available to Faustian artists. The contradictory nature of the maiden resists interpretive control as a help and a hindrance (a guide as well as a distraction) which is a conceit embedded within *Alastor* and mystical literature as her haunting memory both comforts the poet in the knowledge that she was real and not a figment of his imagination whilst the inconsistent nature of his recollections expose a falsity at the heart of their love: '[s]he is my cure and sickness, and her memory my care;/but for the painful distance, passion dies./But she is far away, her tribe beyond/strong, evil winds that scar the stony plains,/And crows that croak of parting, like/bereaved, lamenting, high-born Nubian women.'[7] Shelley's

[4] 'O Haufez! thy delightful lay,/ That on the wild wind floats,/ Resembles much, our poets say,/ The nightingale's rich notes;/ What wonder then, thy music flows/ In the sweet season of the rose.' (*Ibid*, p.176)
[5] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 641.
[6] Alireza Anushiravani, 'Cultural Translation: A Critical Analysis of William Jones's Translation of Hafez', *Persian Literary Studies Journal* 1 (2012) 41-58, at p. 55.
[7] Geert Jan Van Gelder, *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), p. 24.

protagonists seek to recreate themselves in the image of their beloved because, as the object of desire, the seeker's main aim is to become desirable to the other in the hopes of being accepted. The drive towards annihilation in *Alastor* remains a tenuous position to hold as it signals a break from the Symbolic realm which inculcates a form of madness where, the 'Gothic Real boils and bubbles behind the fantasmic frame until it bursts [through the divide between Real and reality]',[8] subsequently challenging hierarchies and dismantling customary perception by turning substance into superstition. Conversely, maintaining difference fulfils a similar function to Mary Wollstonecraft's presence in the Jane poems as a poetic rope from which to hoist the poet out of an indefinite Edenic slumber for the subject will never be able to enjoy the beatific vision without the moment of castration: 'when the poet is brought back to "me," to desire, and to language […] he can experience the ecstasy only because he bleeds in his separation from it'.[9] Akin to Sufistic devotional literature, Shelley's object of devotion is personified as a female who both appears to be secondary in the relationship, as a 'sister of my soul' or 'second self',[10] whilst also being lauded as the one in power and deified in comparison to the male seeker who is spiritually impoverished before their imagined immutability. The female self is the ground of masculine subjectivity due to its association with the pre-Oedipal Chora that nourishes the child in youth causing femininity to signify, for Shelley, the 'ideal prototype of everything excellent or lovely', which the masculine power must learn to embody until 'like the chords of two exquisite lyres strung to the accompaniment of one delightful voice, vibrate with the vibrations of our own'.[11] The similarities between Islamic and Shelleyan use of the spiritual maiden trope breaks down when metaphysics and metaphors collide; although Shelley's spectral relationships stem from

[8] Clayton Carlyle Tarr, *Gothic Stories Within Stories: Frame Narratives and Realism in the Genre, 1790-1900* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc, 2017), p. 89.
[9] Ghislaine McDayter, 'O'er Leaping the Bounds: The Sexing of the Creative Soul in Shelley's "Epipsychidion"', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 52 (2003), 21-49, at pp. 44-45.
[10] James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 53.
[11] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 632.

a void, coupled with the desire for renewal, the emptiness does not necessarily signal a lost unity, as Ghislaine McDayter argues: '[h]is object of desire is not simply absent, it is absence itself.'[12] There remains in Shelley's work a constant self-awareness as to the fictionality of the object of desire as an idealised rendition of a real female (e.g. Jane Williams or Elizabeth Hitchener) which curtails the ecstasy of union since behind the veil lies hollow tautology. There is no fixed point of devotion just a consciously imagined artifice that cannot even save Shelley let alone the women he reifies: 'such salvation is impossible because the imprisonment and confinement of these beings within the poet is essential [to] the poet's fantasy of stable subjectivity'.[13] Shelley strives to replicate the interpersonal, non-penetrative relationship founded upon the dissolution of gendered boundaries that he envisions as only attainable by reinstating a feminine order but the problem regarding how to imaginatively inhabit that space as a male writer persisted, leading him to fear either his ideals overtaking his poetic voice or his voice draining those ideals of any real existence. Islamic renunciation of self requires an unwavering belief in the reality of their beloved as a higher ontological existent that they can reinstate within their own selves to acquire a reinvigorated, divinely inspired frame of mind and body that is ultimately provides a more truthful mode of experience. However, Shelley recognises all his literary attempts at self-renunciation are fictional since, regardless of how much he idealises the females in his writing, the poet stands as the ultimate creator within the universe of his own literary creation resulting in any efforts to commingle with an existence other than his own to be in vein. Shelley generates the fiction of a 'glorious One'[14] in *Epipsychidion* which either, in the worst case scenario, traps him within a hall of mirrors where everything merely reflects his own self-absorption or, in recognising this tautological perspectiveness, enables him to move beyond the solipsistic bounds of ego towards a deeper understanding of humanity as constituted by particular

[12] 'O'er Leaping the Bounds', p.39.
[13] *Ibid*, p.47.
[14] *The Major Works*, line 336, p. 521.

instances within an evolving maze of accumulative experience. I shall examine Shelley's transfiguration of Sufism in light of Lacan and Derrida to portray how the psychoanalytical and deconstructive tendencies within *Alastor* work in tandem to grant Shelley freedom from the religious connotations of these esoteric tropes whilst retaining their drive to subsist within the perplexity of the Real: '[i]f idealism becomes a perplexingly difficult position to maintain, skepticism also proves a blind alley'.[15]

Lacanian neurosis

The protagonist's journey, like many mystical pilgrimages, is driven by a yearning to recover an ideal state of unity in the hope of encountering a Divine Other by erasing the individual ego amidst the universal whole and as such, this thirst for truth was instilled in the Poet from an early age upon being exposed to, '[e]very sight/ And sound from the vast earth', which subsequently sprung forth from his heart, '[t]he fountains of divine philosophy'.[16] In Ghazali's *Ascent to the Divine* he presents a character study of the wandering Muslim pilgrim which is not dissimilar to Shelley's aforementioned characterisation; they both possess an innate disposition towards a deep appreciation of existential realities and desire to solve intellectual problems through meditation and solitude. The protagonist's disinterestedness towards worldly affairs is evident from the outset as his awe-inspiring beauty enamours the Arab maiden, who 'gaze[s] upon his lips/ Parted in slumber'[17] but the mute forms of his breath are as impenetrable as the ruined temples, and she is left '[w]ildered, and wan, and panting'.[18] It is inevitable that such soul searching amongst lost civilizations will lead to a deeper questioning of one's own place in history. Similarly, the singing-girls in Medieval Arabia were poetically idealised into the image of an alluring *femme fatale* that emblematises

[15] Madeleine Callaghan, 'Shelley and the Ambivalence of Idealism', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 64 (2015), pp. 92-104, at p. 100.
[16] *The Major Works*, lines 68-71, p. 95.
[17] *Ibid*, lines 135-6, p. 96.
[18] *Ibid*, line 139, p. 97.

the divine in much Sufistic literature and reflects the feminine spectral antitype in *Alastor* who is a deification of an Arab Maiden that seeps into the protagonist's subconscious despite his outward disinterestedness and in turn, generates an image built upon nurture and affection: she 'brought his food [...] Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe/ To speak her love'.[19] Eventually his dream reawakens her and these roles are reversed. It is clear that the veiled maiden who emerges from this interaction is generated from the imagination of both Shelley (who occupies the frame of his poetry) and the speaker (who conjures her in his dream) leading her to internalise aspects of a poetic identity, '[k]nowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,/ And lofty hopes of divine liberty', whose, 'voice was like the voice of his own soul', until she slowly becomes a distinguished subject moving on her own and even initiating movement in the protagonist: '[s]udden she rose,/As if her heart impatiently endured/Its bursting burden: at the sound he turned'.[20] The purpose of this apparition is to initiate the subject's quest for unity as it is only when the subject encounters an idealised apparition derived from within that he is able to transcend his primary identity in favour of a vicarious existence in the light of a sublime alter ego, forming an 'axis round which the epipsyche-idea revolves […] the paradox of separateness-in-oneness'.[21] Consequently, the dream reflects the hero's urge to create an ideal self as a means of having his, 'lofty hopes of divine liberty',[22] realised in the sensible world because the soul is capable of projecting order upon seemingly unintelligible phenomena and thus, not only give shape to potential ideas but create essences. To better understand the identity of the spectral figure it serves to cite Evan Gibson's repudiation of Harold L. Hoffman:

> He does not fall in love with himself as Hoffman believes, who makes the vision the poet's own inner self [but rather the] vision is a creation by his

[19] *Ibid*, lines 129-133, p. 96.
[20] *Ibid*, lines 172-174, p. 97.
[21] William Hildebrand, 'Shelley's Early Vision Poems', *Studies in Romanticism* 8 (1969), 198-215. at p. 210.
[22] *The Major Works*, line 159, p. 97.

> soul of an ideal "soul-mate," one who will respond to every characteristic of his soul on all three planes [intellectual, imaginative, sensual][23]

Whilst I agree that the protagonist's soul is the creative receptacle from which the vision springs from, I believe Gibson undervalues the proximity that such a symbiotic relationship necessitates (one which Hoffman accentuates to the point of narcissism). Therefore, I seek to merge the two readings by suggesting that the female vision is an abstraction of the poet's own soul – a projection of his essential being. Al-Ghazali draws the distinction between someone's essential being (*inniyah*) which is a person's real nature, and their intelligent being (*'aql*) which is the thinking subject, as a way of explaining how a person remains aware of themselves during sleep through the median state of conscious (*mahiyyah mujarradah*). This schema helps explain how the vision can be both a projection of the poet's own soul whilst remaining an entirely separate entity. For example, when a person sees a material substance (*mahiyyah*) and then closes their eyes, their intellect presents them with an abstract image that extracts the essence of the object but, because the essential being is already free from matter, the object of his intelligence becomes the substance of the observer. Although Gibson tries to separate the two existences, I would argue that the vision never subsists externally and thus, is always an approximation of the hero's real nature as the observation made existent is simply an abstracted impression derived from within. This synergistic relationship is characterised most succinctly by M.H. Abrams as a 'bilateral transaction […] between mind and external object'[24] which is embodied by the veiled maiden who exists on the bound of reverie and mundanity – whose beating heart filled, '[t]he pauses of her music'.[25] The rhythm of her words reminds him that '[h]er voice was like the voice of his own soul';[26] the simile

[23] Evan K. Gibson, 'Alastor: A Reinterpretation', *PMLA* 62 (1947), 1022-45, at p. 1029.
[24] Meyer Howard Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 61.
[25] *The Major Works*, line 170, p. 97.
[26] *Ibid*, line 153, p. 97.

should not be read as a means of distancing but embracing because even though duality assumes difference it also leaves open the possibility of correspondence. This distinction does not, as Gibson suggests, harm the authenticity of their shared nature but indicates an intelligible relationship between soul and body which is mediated through nature as their inner selves are in harmony like the strings of an Aeolian lyre: 'her fair hands/ Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp/ Strange symphony […] in their branching veins'.[27] This external abstraction intensifies his indifference towards the physical maiden in favour of companionship with the sublime as his newly awakened imagination blinds the protagonist to the needs of the sensible world due to an overbearing need to reclaim a euphoric state of oneness. Consequently, he places the female apparition in the position of an idyllic alter ego not longing for possession, but dissolution, and, by folding 'his frame in her dissolving arms',[28] hopes to achieve a higher level of selflessness (i.e. self-loss).

For Lacan, the reflected subject perceived during the mirror stage grants a holistic but illusory sense of self, distinct from the onlooker, which engenders a totalising image that they associate themselves with and in turn, inculcates an existential misrecognition (méconnaissance) where this rupture between observer and observed generates confusion as to what exactly constitutes true selfhood. The subject yearns to enact that alienating moment and experience wholeness once again despite it being a phantasmic reflection of a mistaken identity. Therefore, given that the estranged self is an internalised projection of the subject-made-object their subsequent engagement with others becomes an extension of a greater drive towards self-reclamation. Similarly, Shelley notes a compulsive narcissistic tendency in his notion of love which denotes a wandering thirst for partnership (i.e. mirroring) on the part of a subject who, detached from a universe they sense could allow assimilation, strives for integration within any form that might potentially symbolise this ideal internalised image of

[27] *Ibid*, line 165-7, p. 97.
[28] *Ibid*, line 187, p. 98.

self, functioning '[n]ot only [as] the portrait of our external being, but an assemblage of the minutest particles of which our nature is composed [...] a soul within our soul'.[29] Similitude establishes the necessary foundation for communion and even though such blending of, 'two restless frames in one reposing soul',[30] requires a level of mutual transference – unattainable in life without collapsing the fiction of the ideal – there remains the possibility for art to sustain that euphoric moment where subject becomes wholly interchangeable with object resulting in a paradoxical instance of self-awareness in which fulfilment is attained through a vacuum, 'the chasm of an insufficient void.'[31] The idealised reflexivity inherent in Lacan and Shelley's divided subject resembles a Sufistic lover who seeks to cleanse their *nafs* (ego) until it replicates the lustre of the ultimate Beloved from whom their own soul was initially realised and leading them to realise their vicegerency as beacons refracting Allah's majesty through their conduct and perception. When describing infatuation, Sufis often delineate a change from besotted wanderer to vanquished worshipper as the earlier period of endearment (*mawadda*), which is etymologically derived from the term, peg (*wadd*), connotes the indelible impression that the beloved affixes onto the heart of their lover who is constantly haunted by their memory: '[i]f Layla should requite someone for fondness (*mawadda*) let her requite me, and should she requite for kinship, let it be me, her kinsman'.[32] Both Shelley and the esoteric love poetry he echoes foreground travel as a prelude to awakening a euphoric vision, 'there is no rest or respite to the heart over which [love] rules',[33] with Lacan similarly citing the courtly love of troubadours[34] as, 'a paradigm of sublimation', for they base their

[29] *Ibid*, p. 632.
[30] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam. A Poem, In Twelve Cantos* (London: Printed for John Brooks, 1829), line 2658, p. 146.
[31] *The Major Works*, p. 631.
[32] Abu'l Hasan al-Daylami, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. by Joseph Norment Bell and Mahmoud Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 33.
[33] *The Major Works*, p. 632.
[34] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960 - The Seminar of Jacques Lacan* (Book VII), ed. by Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. by Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), p.112. It is interesting that Lacan should specifically refer to troubadours given its etymological link to the Arab *taraba* which denotes both the act of singing as well as the involuntary shift in mood upon hearing music and as such, evokes many of the

existence on recovering something unreachable but the voyage is less physical as it is spiritual or psychological. In each instance, the epipsychidion archetype conflates the act of finding to being found whereby revelation on the part of the ideal object or the reified subject becomes synonymous with self-revelation and thus, ekstasy (inward displacement) inevitably ensues.[35] The propensity of sublimation to transcendentalise mundane objects is re-enacted by the Poet figure in *Alastor* who is responding to the Arab Maiden and the Sufistic lover in relation to the physical manifestation of beauty (female beloved) since both signify either a lack or an unobtainability relative to their ultimate goal which causes each protagonist to creatively transfigure the earthly feminine equivalent into an ideal poetic companion who speaks to their sensibilities and harnesses their creativity in a more intimate and penetrative manner. The latter remains, at best, a mundane emblem of a higher form hinting towards a greater potentiality or, at worse, an entity more mute and unperceptible than the abstract forms themselves with considerably less potential for inspiration.

The world becomes somewhat theophanic in its revelatory potential as Lacan impregnates every object with self-signification as the analysand strives to salvage their originary lack and Sufistic poetry compulsively traces the approximate manifestations of Allah who, as the locus of universal beauty, is witnessed in the acquired splendour of creation with momentary unveilings realised aesthetically via the natural world or spiritually through expressions of faith. In particular, Rumi's *Divan* uses sound (*sama*) to reflect the all-encompassing qualities of sublime love since, by piercing the stillness of silence, it becomes a lively force propelling all creatures within his poetic universe to unify beneath a singular melody (*naghma*) with the potential to invigorate through instances of rousing symphony or annihilate during quiet moments when movement is forestalled: '[natures music] animates the Sufis of the skies into

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themes found in ghazal's, namely the rapture of unrequited love being equated with the beloved's melodic voice.

[35] In Arabic the word *wajd* denotes both finding as well as ecstasy and typically signifies the overwhelming moment when the beloved is discovered and the onlooker's senses are inundated with feelings of shock and awe.

their whirling dance./The spring breeze comes running, singing;/It makes the world laugh and the autumn leave'.[36] The sensed melody is understood to be the breath of divine mercy animating creation at all levels of existence enabling it to persist after the creative command *to be* that first realised our entire universe, '[t]he entire world is only the sound of her music;/Who ever heard a melody so long drawn out?',[37] and true status is granted to those mistrels (*manshid*) who are capable of channelling these cosmic reverberations into a song (i.e. poem or treatise) that whether apophatically or kataphatically captures something of this ultimate Composer by transcribing His tones as a means of spiritually stimulating the consciousness of others: '[t]he minstrel's strains I heard/softly struck in a sharp key,/inspired ecstasy in me'.[38] The inclusive quality of nature's sounds evokes Kristeva's womb-like chora as God is often presented in maternal terms whilst the anxious wanderer occupies an infantile role aimlessly seeking sustenance (i.e. consistency) in a mortal world:

> I moved from place to place to soothe the baby of my heart;/Babies calm down when one rocks the cradle./Feed the baby of our heart, free us from the need to wander about,/O you who cure in each instant a hundred incurables like me[39]

The sonoral patterns of the Divan's poetic universe lead its protagonist to crave subsumption within the surrounding pageantry, '[y]ou go and tell the sea: 'do not be agitated O sea!'/By those sweet lips with which you blow in me;/This bagpipe has no control over its singing'.[40] By using 'agitated' and 'no control' Rumi presents this process of self-abnegation beneath a larger harmony as not comfortable but rather overpowering, stressful and

[36] Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystic Lyric: The Case of Jalal Al-Din Rumi* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), p.83.
[37] Javad Nurbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology* (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1900), p. 174.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 174.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 99.
[40] *Ibid*, p. 83.

perplexing which resists attempts at overly idealising the visionary experience of love. Given that spiritual audition permeates the text from an organic to a metaphysical level, the notion of participation is less volitional than first assumed since the modes of expression available are drawn from a pre-established set of naturally or metaphorically generated imagery whether it be: 'the roaring sea, the drum, the bagpipe, and thousands of other sounds that shake the blue dome'.[41] Although it is blasphemous to refer to the Qur'an as music, part of this deep-seated cultural conscience surrounding the overpowering nature of sound can be attributed to the narrations detailing the spontaneous onset of prophetic revelation.[42] The physical and mental strain attached to receiving revelation was due to a shift from the corporeal to the metaphysical realm entailing a brief relinquishing of the physical body. Likewise, harmony is an essential element within Shelley's more platonic flights of fancy for he, like Lacan, posits imagination as a means of entering the symbolic realm with disciplines from poetry to music helping foster creativity: 'the teachers who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion'.[43] In imagining mankind as an 'instrument [which produces] not melody alone, but harmony,' [44] Shelley hopes that a greater appreciation of beauty as refined through an engagement with high art can account for the *mysterium tremendum* of revealed religion without being beholden to the uninspiring nature of scripture as dogma. Shelley's spectral maiden reflects the Sufistic beloved whose femininity is expressed via musicality and sensuousness with both her frame and speech fascinating him into submission by maintaining a linguistic hold over the onlooker and appealing to an innate

[41] *Reading Mystic Lyric*, p. 83.
[42] According to hadith, the manner in which the Prophet received revelation was not entirely uniform even though it followed the general pattern of reception and memorisation. There were instances when the message was received like the ringing of a bell and other times in which Gabriel adopted the likeness of a human and relayed the revelation.
[43] Ronald Walter Harris, *Romanticism and the Social Order 1780-1830* (London: Blandford Press, 1969), p. 21.
[44] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p.635.

desire to fulfil a lost wholeness through communion with a reflection greater than self culminating in an intimate moment devoid of climax: '[t]he beating of her heart was heard to fill/ The pauses of her music, and her breath/ Tumultuously accorded with those fits/ Of intermitted song [but] Sudden[ly] she rose'.[45] Shelley similarly envisions the one who is visited by the phantasm of inspiration to be like a child who is sensuously awoken to the possibility of play through its mothers embrace and, after being stripped from this nurturing companion, 'seeks, by prolonging in its voice and motions the duration of the effect, to prolong also a consciousness of the cause'.[46] This maternal rupture is poetically narrated in the *Alastor* Poet's despair upon re-awakening to a hollow world devoid of an ideal other in which even death becomes a potential avenue for reclaiming this rapturous state: '[t]hat beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death/Conduct to thy mysterious paradise'.[47]

In *Alastor* and Sufi literature, yearning for self-negation gradually increases the longer this attachment subsists since the fantasy of living vicariously through a truer form of selfhood overtakes any rationale driving self-preservation: '[l]ove leaves whoever loved crazed/and bewildered, or puts a speedy end to him./The lightest love is heavy and burdensome:/it weakens and fells the staunchest man.'[48] Misassociation most staunchly colours the relationship during the period of eros (*ishq*) as all boundaries between external and private life blur until self-consciousness becomes wholly synonymous with the other inasmuch as the lover is distracted from their own identity and unable to conceive of themselves as a separate entity from Das Ding (*ma'shuq*) until the only solution is self-effacement (*ghalaba*) reflected by Majnun's intellectual intermingling with Layla: '[w]hen Layla is named I regain my reason, and the fears/of my heart return from a passion off on

[45] *The Major Works*, lines 169-72, p. 97.
[46] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 635.
[47] *The Major Works*, lines 211-2, p. 98.
[48] *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, p.33.

distant trails./I kept distant from Layla, lest passion grip me fast./But in vain! I fell in love before I kept away'.[49]

Selflessness as Suicide

Despite the primordial emptiness of religion signifying different levels of truth for both thinkers (allegorical or ontological) this process becomes a lesson in the limited nature of the subject's free will. For Lacan, *objet petit a* possesses the power to forestall fulfilment whilst the self is required to perpetually sublimate objects to the level of things in an illusory attempt to attain momentary satisfaction: 'the function of the pleasure principle is, in effect, to lead the subject from signifier to signifier [to maintain the] tension that regulates the whole functioning of the psychic apparatus'.[50] Likewise, Rumi perceives God as the Ultimate signifier who possesses the ability to prolong or forestall the final communion in death irrespective of individual efforts (suicide is not an option since the ego must be effaced naturally and spiritually beforehand) with humanity being at a further disadvantage given their finite understanding through which to comprehend signs throughout their life journey. What emerges from both schemas is an identity torn between a removed ideal and an immediate subject who, after having been separated from the means by which selfhood is sustained, feels compelled to action through an insatiable desire to incorporate this missing object in order to discard their ego and 'create from zero'[51] and thus, Rumi, Shelley and Lacan's works encourage humanity to recognise, 'the [inner] child so immersed in the fun of play as to stubbornly pursue the goal heedless of perplexity or pain.'[52] In doing so, a stage opens up beyond extinction to a point of retrospective clarity or gnosis wherein those

[49] *Ibid*, p. 36.
[50] *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, p. 119. Arab love poetry similarly equates continued acts of signification with a desire to draw nearer to their beloved for the term closeness (*ulfa*) both relates to the act of intertwining, 'to string (*allafa*) pearls', as well as composition, 'to compose (*allafa*) speech', indicating that love is a joining together of meaning into a coherent whole (*A Treatise on Mystical Love*, p. 32).
[51] *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*, p. 213.
[52] *Reading Mystic Lyric*, p. 99.

previous categories no longer engulf the seeker's entire state of being but become rungs on the ladder to a higher consciousness which mediates between knower and known and, having peaked behind the veil to become self-aware of the machinations involved in sublimation, attain a level of satisfaction unavailable to those who neither accept their indebtedness to others nor realise how drunken idealisation can devolve into stasis disguised as contentment. The initial rupture from which a second self is conceived coincides with an awakening to subjectivity resulting in the Shelleyan, Sufistic and Lacanian dynamic of self versus other being conceived neither as a duality nor a conflict but rather as mutually constitutive indwelling where subjectivity is presented as both possessing an intrinsic attachment to the idealised other whilst acknowledging that the ego can only be truly elevated through disassociation with secondary illusory attributes. In other words, the seeker is no longer simply a self-less subject but embodies the annihilatory act of overcoming an imprisoned selfhood which, in choosing to awaken the other in self as opposed to finding the self in others, enacts a kind of resurrection via negation rather than succumbing to a, 'suicidal neurosis or some sort of crude Freudian Thanatos'.[53] The period after *fana* (annihilation) entails a state of *baqa* (permanency) in which the seeker returns to comprehend mundane existence accompanied with a renewed set of faculties gained from the Beloved whose attributes endure even after the egoistic effacement and, despite a loss of willpower which occurs at various stages of this process, some volition remains in the interpretive act of imagining what constitutes the ideal nature before it is tasted experientially. Therefore, inasmuch as these lovers are taken over by a spectre of their own imagination, a thread remains through which they re-establish a connection with the natural world and may subsequently return to consciousness whilst retaining any benefits of selflessness learned during the experience. This reawakening to creation with an ongoing consciousness that sees

[53] Leonard Lewisohn, *Classical Persian Sufism: from its origins to Rumi* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), p. 304.

its beloved in everything is experienced superficially by the *Alastor* Poet who senses, a 'Spirit [which] seemed/To stand beside him [who] Held commune with him, as if he and it/Were all that was [and whose] Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought [...] To beckon him',[54] but the presence of this shrouded spectre instils a threat of being misled as opposed to eliciting reassurance. The difference being that Shelley's foundational principle is not an eternal Transcendent Being, so any solace gained from this stage never really manifests for his Poet whose nonchalant behaviour might outwardly signify unwavering commitment to the will of an ideal Other but this steadfastness only furthers annihilation in a journey that continues to reflect his inability to transcend those compulsive habits associated with love's various stage's from endearment to abandonment.[55] Shelley is closer to Lacan in believing individuals to be incapable of attaining satisfaction within worldly existence due to the unspeakable desire (the ever sought after ideal) being nothing more than a self-generated image generated from a reflection which inculcates an illusory loss that can never be reclaimed and resulting in existential anguish, 'manifest[ed] as the subject's self-chastisement for not living up to the ideal',[56] alongside, 'envying the other for his enjoyment of a privileged position [that is unavailable]'.[57] After having witnessed his gradual deterioration during the main text, Shelley depicts the Poet's final moments of dissolution which, due to his scepticism regarding the hereafter and the metapoetic aspects of this piece, does not signal a stage beyond permanency wherein the wanderer finally attains a beatific vision in death but the true beginning of permanency for Shelley's protagonist in the memory of others. As he lies in his resting spot and, '[t]he breath of heaven did wander',[58] the fate of the protagonist's

[54] *The Major Works*, lines 479-92, p. 105.
[55] Notably, his continued dismissal of the natural and human world coupled with a lack of contentment in having reclaimed his lost vision.
[56] Andrea Hurst, *Derrida Vis-à-vis: Interweaving Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Fordham University, 2008), p. 310.
[57] *Ibid*, p. 312.
[58] *The Major Works*, line 668, p. 110.

soul is indicated in Shelley's choosing of, 'the great moon',[59] to be the closing image. Evan Gibson suggests that it symbolises 'mankind's ideal aspirations'[60] and as it sets below the horizon it is indicative of the belief that, 'when man dies his ideals die with him'.[61] Gibson, however, fails to recognise that the narrator's initial desire to be harmonised with, the 'motions of the forests and the sea […] and the deep heart of man',[62] is realised in the poet's death. The concluding scene, therefore, can be explained through Ghazali's definition of the moon's role as that which gives forms to material substance which would indicate the moon's disappearance to be a relinquishing of figures, not of ideals. Whilst both seem rather destructive there is a stark difference; as the shadows are cast upon forms and their visual existence shrouded in darkness it empowers the hero's ideal of self-loss because even when all, 'the shows o' the world, are frail and vain',[63] his life devoted to the ideal has become memorialised. Conversely, if the setting of the moon depicts a world of silhouettes then its initial appearance enables the protagonist to internalise the beautiful forms before they are extinguished externally. For Ghazali, the purpose of celestial bodies is not only to give light to an existing reality but, through their awe-inspiring nature, gesture towards an ideal one. When the moon sinks behind the jagged hills to be transformed into, 'a divided frame',[64] the protagonist's body and soul simultaneously begin to disintegrate into the environment causing, 'the Poet's blood [to mix with] nature's ebb and flow'.[65] The Poet ends his journey having become an atemporal icon within the symbolic realm and having attained immanence within the natural world through his narrative memory. His existence becomes a sign of decay as perpetuity; spiritually being lost in, 'Nature's vast frame', whilst corporeally still

[59] *Ibid*, line 646, p. 109.
[60] 'Alastor: A Reinterpretation', p. 1043.
[61] *Ibid*, p. 1044.
[62] *The Major Works*, lines 47-9, p. 94.
[63] *Ibid*, line 711, p. 111.
[64] *Ibid*, line 650, p. 109.
[65] *Ibid*, lines 651-653, p. 109.

caught in 'the web of human things'.[66] By distilling *baqa* as a return to the world and remaining in conscious approximation with the ideal it becomes clear that although Shelley cannot promise eternality through subsistence in a noumenal dimension he can offer his protagonist a literary afterlife securing the perpetuity of the narrative as well as the Narrator who represents both Shelley as the one who relays stories and the audience who might receive, embellish and transmit Shelley's poetry. Despite the fact that uncertainty also plagues a life dedicated to the poetic muse and the production of art there is, nevertheless, the potential for a legacy wherein identity (as a creative interpreter of life's melancholic sublimity) is assimilated within the symbolic realm to become something of an abstraction itself whilst retaining the capacity to effect worldly change on an emotional as well as political level: '[p]oetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man'.[67] Although a Lacanian reading of the Sufistic underpinnings in *Alastor* helps preserve the value of imagination so as to avoid an overly nihilistic interpretation of its conclusion there is a risk of prioritising a positive portrayal of esoteric thought which glosses over the sinister underpinnings within the Islamic understanding of visionary experiences. From 'To a skylark' to 'Ode to the West Wind', there is a hope that by becoming an Aeolian harp and pursuing inspiration a poet might persist beyond material decay in the lines of his poetry just as the protagonist in *Alastor* memorially re-engages lived existence by reversing the Hegelian master-slave dynamic in favour of becoming the eye through which the beloved contemplates itself and yet, because sublimation derives from inaccessibility, Shelley's scepticism can never fully commit to this dream. To better map out the ambiguities inherent in this dynamic between self and other it is useful to complement a Lacanian reading with a Derridean one by granting a voice to the deconstructionist concerns (e.g. the fictitiousness of symbolism and instability of meaning) in a manner that does not derail but deepens a comparative analysis

[66] *Ibid*, line 719, p. 111.
[67] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 657.

with Islam for these issues are echoed in the sufistic belief that madness (i.e. embracing paradox) is a key element in sublime love.

Derridean bewilderment

A consequence of the oral culture in Arabo-Islamic societies was the rise of female (or at times effeminate male) courtesan who were sometimes trained in a variety of skills from reciting poetry to singing in order to impress the elite patrons whilst allowing them to climb the social ladder; an opportunity only available in a bourgeois society where upward mobility is made accessible to the middle classes. Singing-girls came to exist in the psyche of theologians as signifying seduction and offering a pleasurable distraction; they believed that *eros* induced a form of insanity, what the Greeks termed *theia mania* ('madness from the gods'), directing both the men who take pleasure in the act, as well as the women who partake in it, away from worship. Ibn al-Jahiz, a ninth century Arab scholar, examines the ways singing-girls allured their prospective patrons and in some cases they became so enamoured to the point of deifying the female:

> They [singing-girls] provide a man with a combination of pleasures such as nothing else on the face of the earth does. Pleasures all come by means of the senses [...] But when one comes to consider singing-girls, three of the senses [sight, hearing, touch] are involved all together, and [the pleasure of] the heart makes a fourth. [...] All these senses are as it were scouts for the heart, and witnesses testifying before it. When the girl raises her voice in song, the gaze is rivetted on her, the hearing is directed attentively to her, and the heart surrenders itself to her sovereignty'[68]

[68] Abu Uthnan Amr Al-Jahiz, *Risalat al-qiyan: The Epistle on Singing-girls of Jahiz*, trans. by Alfred Felix Landon Beeston (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1980), pp. 30-31.

The bewitching effect of music is latent in the etymology of the Arabic word as the same root *mutrib* for 'singer' relates to *tariba*, 'to be/become affected with emotion, a lively emotion, excitement, agitation, or unsteadiness, moved with joy or grief, to be delighted, be over joyed, be transported with joy', and *tarraba*, 'to delight, to fill with delight, to enrapture, to please, to gratify',[69] highlighting how much power Arab society afforded music to elicit profound physiological and psychological effects that the listener could not control. The uncertainty and danger implicit in this understanding of the visionary experience is hinted at during various stages of Sufistic love since the term for fascination (*sh'af*) is etymologically linked to *fitna* which simultaneously denotes seduction and distress with the former pertaining to the loss of willpower and reason in the compulsive contemplation of a beloved whilst the latter describes periods of social strife where dictator's overpower their civilians.[70] Both definitions expose the potential oppression in love when the master-slave dynamic is simply reversed rather than eradicated, these sinister undercurrents are further exemplified in the notion of eros (*ishq*) and abandon (*istihar*) which configure love as an illness whose symptoms include delirium, a lack of self-awareness and an internal fever that overtakes the entire body: '[eros] makes its nest [in] the heart, and drinks from the streams of the liver. It takes hold of the lead ropes of the ribs, and seizes the reins of the limbs. Then it becomes generalized and bursts into flame'.[71] The possibility of following either a sublime or daemonic spectre of inspiration coupled with the inability, during the quest, to break away and objectively distinguish truth and illusion can lead to *hayaman* (bewilderment) denoting the madness of irresolution that results from enduring the visionary experience and which can

[69] Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Wafs, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory* (Leiden: Brill Studies, 2003), p. 147.
[70] For Islamic authors, this inversion in power dynamics poses no real logical conundrum since the Master is signified by Allah who is infinitely Wise but Shelley, adopting sufistic tropes, does not have the same recourse to an Omniscient, Omnipotent and morally perfect Other when encountering these questions.
[71] *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, p.122. Sufis can still gain pleasure from this dangerous transaction because the Ideal Other (God) can be trusted to both mitigate discomfort and make the struggle ultimately beneficial whilst Shelley, without a Transcendent Being grounding his second self, leaves these potential pitfalls open to become more valid concerns.

prematurely cause certain seekers to self-combust under the growing anticipation as indicated by Majnun's plea: 'I am sick with love, and the wandering disease has struck me./Stay away from me so you will not catch what I have'.[72] Supranatural interactions are intrinsically bewildering and those who refuse to subsist within the gaps of paradox are prevented from attaining a relationship with Allah due to fear of the irrational for this station requires leaving oneself open during the period of irresolution where the experience is so overwhelming as to be hard to discern between a sublime, selfish, or satanic source. However, a true vision teaches that vulnerability in the face of the unknown must be an existential crossroads not overcome by transcending the confusion but by embracing impossibility and silence to achieve a freedom of consciousness that complements the clarity gained through self-effacement and melody. The seemingly insoluble apprehension caused by undecidability, partly satiated by the internalisation of paradox, becomes another angle through which to analyse the relationship between *Alastor* and esoteric conceptions of visionary love by incorporating Derrida as a mediating rhetoric. Indeed, a Lacanian reading cannot quite account for Shelley's disdain for didactic poetry within its more neatly contained conclusion of, 'the light./ That shone within his soul',[73] being unproblematically positive despite its resemblance to Rousseau's 'light from Heaven whose half-extinguished beam [...]Glimmers, forever sought, forever lost [and whose] shape its obscure tenour keep[s]',[74] wherein another lost poet is depicted as being unwillingly propelled towards subsumption into a multitude (i.e. a greater whole) whose identity remains shrouded until the end with the notion that his life becomes a salvific lesson for others.[75]

[72] *Ibid*, p.36. Majnun is referring to an illness that befalls camels where they begin to perpetually crave water until they die from not having their thirst quenched in a manner that meets their now excessive requirements.
[73] *The Major Works*, lines 492-93, p. 105.
[74] *Ibid*, lines 429-432, p. 617.
[75] For instance, Michael Scrivener's posits that '[Rousseau] failed in his own quest, but by educating the speaker he has redeemed his error so that he seems finally liberated from the chariot of Life' (*Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) p. 314.

Psychosis or confusion is a way of nuancing these moralising tendencies that emerge when exploring any resemblance to theological concepts that Shelley's poetic tropes might evince by tapping into the sublime awe underlying faith without judging his characters, as Hugh Roberts does of Rousseau, for having committed a, 'mistake of [...] incorrect seeing, or choosing an inappropriate scale'.[76] Chastising or commending Shelley's protagonists for their accurate or erroneous vision simplifies the overlapping tension in Islam regarding the uncertainty felt upon encountering a visionary experience and Shelley's refusal to privilege his own position to the extent that it could ever truly be said to grant closure. It also overlooks the anti-dialectical strain within both viewpoints (esotericism and scepticism) that prioritises paradox as the ultimate position to occupy during visionary infatuation: 'bewilderment [is] the only way of nonviolently receiving the Other'.[77] Just as *hayaman* denotes a state between veiling and unveiling where realisation is stunted due to confusion, Derrida symbolises undecidability through the hymen which functions as a interstice between presence and non-presence maintaining a balance by mystifying the oppositional nature of duality whilst impeding both sides from interacting: '[n]either future nor present, but between the two [...] the hymen only takes place when it doesn't take place, when nothing really happens, when there is an all-consuming consummation without violence'.[78] More than simply a relativistic space where meaning devolves into absurdity its operation is to expose how signifiers must first be granted signification through definition indicating that bewilderment enables self and other to exist in tandem without resolution or conflict for both are derived from the act of interpretation which is a movement from perplexity to significance: 'reveal[ing] the structure of undecidability [makes] possible the generation of

[76] Hugh Roberts, 'Spectators Turned Actors: The Triumph of Life', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, eds. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 766.
[77] Ian Almond, 'The Honesty of the Perplexed: Derrida and Ibn 'Arabi on "Bewilderment"', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 (2002), 515-537, at p. 523.
[78] Jacques Derrida, 'The Double Session', in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2004), pp. 187-237, at p. 223.

very particular, often opposing meanings'.[79] Meaning can only exist in the absence of confusion but confusion must remain present for the possibility of meaning hence its mediary state between nothing and everything. Both context and text suffer from this aporia (internal contradiction) so exposing the instability behind religious or literary interpretations of God or Author as a cohesive and coherent entity is a means of gaining a more truthful glimpse into their nature since the centre of signification is characterised by dissemination rather than consolidation which Derrida calls, the 'essential drifting of the text',[80] and which leads Ayn al-Qudat Hamdani[81] to believe: 'the world of meanings is something of a infinitely delicate, flexible and flowing nature [with] no such rigid stability as corresponds to the formal or material rigidity of words'.[82] The dilemma of equivocation when determining a link between formal expression and hidden meaning is a pertinent element of Shelleyan, Derridean and Mystic thought as they each avoid affixing an all-encompassing image to the Other by not constraining it within a hermeneutical web which promises clarity but rather encourages tautology. In both *Alastor* and Sufistic poetry, the madness resulting from love requires internalising absurdity as a response to paradox because the Other is always already constituted by undecidability. In resisting the drive to interpret the unknown out of fear that something undefined can be neither devoted towards nor protected against, humanity has the potential to be free from ego and no longer indebted to mechanised or institutionalised forms of expression. The freedom gained from recognising, without becoming beholden to, the subjective straightjacket of perspectivism generates the largest discrepancy between these viewpoints since Shelley hopes that the polysemous and unstable quality of language may grant the possibility of diluting any individual ego into a universal I subsumed within the One

[79] Willemien Froneman, 'Composing According to Silence: Undecidability in Derrida and Cage's "Roaratorio"', in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 41 (2010), 293-317, at p. 296.
[80] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *A Derrida Reader*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 80-111, at p. 93.
[81] A twelfth century Persian mystic.
[82] Toshiko Izutsu, 'Mysticism and the Linguistic Problem of Equivocation in the Thought of 'Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani', *Studia Islamica* 31(1970), 153-70, at pp.157-58.

Mind. This subsumption is not a matter of usurpation under the pretense of synonymity (i.e. equality) because, ironically, such attempts at levelling result in tyranny due to it requiring self-projection at a universal level. Shelley's liberating madness decentralises systems of meaning-making that enslave signifiers to monolithic Signs in favour of highlighting how many angles of vision have existed throughout history each with their own measure of value by which they interpret reality and, in deprivileging the influence of ideals in relation to forms, dismiss that 'single monotheistic voice such as Moses heard on Sinai [for] the relative and provisional "voice" of Mont Blanc.'[83] The goal of recognising the expansiveness of self is not to conflate individual identity with creation for that mindset remains grounded within a dualistic perspective which prioritises the original subject and generates a false sense of control. Not venturing beyond, but before, intellect allows individuals to disassociate from humanity and appreciate that, '[the] tribute [...] an individual consciousness can bring to what ceaselessly and unconsciously flows through the mind',[84] is so meagre as to become depersonalised relative to all other movements in existence that constitute the, 'everlasting universe of things [...] flow[ing] through the mind',[85] and of which the subject's psyche is merely a receptacle, 'passively / Now render[ing] and receiv[ing]'.[86] Hence, internalising paradox is understood as acquiescing ego to an endless expanse of mundane forms compelled to motion biologically (i.e. entropically) and mentally as perception becomes an equally unavoidable form of stimulation.

The Haunting Silence of Self-Expression

Paradoxical feelings of alienation and familiarity characterise the interactions between *Alastor* and his idealised Other; for Muslim mystics, that same dynamic is developed from a

[83] Ross Woodman, 'Shelley's Dizzy Ravine: Poetry and Madness', *Studies in Romanticism* 36 (1997), pp. 307-26, at p. 312.
[84] *Ibid*, p. 313.
[85] *The Major Works*, lines 1-2, p. 120.
[86] *Ibid*, lines 37-38, p. 121.

different metaphysical assumption (souls recollecting their sublime nature) pervading the universe in which that dialogue takes place. Self-effacement is deconstructive in theory but strips down to something more substantial as the individual reflect's creation's theophanic fabric where signs gesture towards infinite perplexity:

> reaching [the Beloved] through the Beloved and beholding his signs in the beloved Manifestation, as though he were the true essence of every thing, [whilst also being neither] for any thing, nor out of any thing, nor from any thing, nor in any thing[87]

This process of submission of will to the Whole for the sake of gaining autonomy over ego is what leads to the more intimate Thou-Thou dynamic not as an indication of the deified status of the mystic to a level akin to God but in reference to the perspectival shift that takes place during the contemplative union of any worshipper who accepts the arduous voyage towards visionary knowledge: 'a constant awareness of God's absolute sovereignty [that a person] counters the human instinct to claim power.'[88] Shelley and Derrida posit an endless play of differences in which a central Signifier cannot be said to exist outside of this relative system, a 'diacritical relationality unregulated by the presence of a transcendental signified',[89] whilst Sufistic thought conceives the fluctuation constituting the Other to be representative of its status as an essentially divine entity upon which interpretive diversity is ontologically contingent and from which it derives its potential for actualisation. Ian Almond characterises the respective deconstructionist tendencies as such:

> For Derrida, the bewilderingly infinite possibilities of the text lead to one conclusion: that the text is semantically vacuous, a sheet of symbols

[87] *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, pp. 166-67.
[88] Sa'diyya Shaikh, 'Search of al-Insan: Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender', In *Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*, eds. by Ednan Asla, Marcia J. Hermansen and Elif Medeni (New York: Peter Lang Edition, 2013), pp. 267-309, at pp. 279-80.
[89] *Derrida vis-a-vis Lacan*, p. 100.

> bereft of depth. Ibn 'Arabi, however, viewing the perplexing variety of people's beliefs, does not come to the conclusion that there is no God but, rather, that there is "Something that cannot be known" that both embodies and is embodied by all of these infinite manifestations[90]

Given that the concept of essence has no transcendental ontological grounding in Shelley's anthropocentric system, his passage to self-knowledge requires an awareness of the communicative play of signifiers that constitute an identity because those accidental properties determine, and often generate, the divine in nature by examining the manifestation of ideals throughout history such as love, power, and equality. For mankind to understand themselves as part of a generative, unstable One Mind requires recognising this concept as a distinctly psychological, rather than theological, phenomenon whereas, for Sufis, it is the Signified (the essence) that is the subject of knowledge not the signifiers. Subsequently, Shelley differs from the esoteric understanding inasmuch as he does not examine ideals in order to shed light on the particularities of existence but examines particulars to learn about how and why humanity creates ideals. For Shelley, mankind's shared capacities reified into ideals are illusory so he demands a shift in perspective which prioritises the developmental nature of humanity rather than a static ontologically distant Essence whilst Rumi contends the accidental and ideal are signs both gesturing towards and veiling a Divine reality (an Ultimate Signifier) that is neither ontologically nor epistemologically synonymous with the ideal building blocks of life through which we mentally construct reality (power, beauty, love, time) since It conditions existence as a shadow of Itself. Both thinkers agree that self-knowledge is a never-ending process yet the journeys they take to reach this conclusion are contradictory; Shelley conceives of identity as historically constituted arguing that to acknowledge a Supreme Existent as the foundation of all life is to feign certainty which

[90] *The Honesty of the Perplexed*, p.164.

curtails creativity or flexibility when constructing identity; Rumi conceives of identity as grounded and sustained by an infinite Deity who is by nature all-encompassing and that to know yourself by coming to know your Lord is possible yet unexhaustive. In Sufism, exceeding the bounds of your immediate ego through a knowledge of essence entails self-annihilation of those outward attributes which are not necessarily un-Islamic or unimportant for the sake of engaging on the public stage but they remain inessential and, if mistaken as being indispensable, they become veils shrouding the divine origins of the believer who becomes absorbed in the importance of their own ego.

Being overly precious of the mundane form is foolish because they are signifiers of locatedness stressing the limitations of subjectivity when restrained to an embodied discourse as opposed to acknowledging them as signs of much deeper metaphysical attributes of Allah: '[i]f a man is defined [only] by beard and testicles/then every goat has beard and hair aplenty', indicating, '[true] masculinity does not result from every penis'.[91] Therefore, for Rumi, the path to self-knowledge is a return to a moment where inner and outer life was undifferentiated and which can be recaptured during ecstatic contemplation of the Divine Names. In embodying these Attributes for the sake of drawing closer to God, humanity can better anticipate the beatific vision of the afterlife. If a person takes the socially determined facade of self as their entire being, what Rumi calls '[t]he confusion of "we" and "I"',[92] they will feel anxiety of temporality leading to a self-conflicting existential crisis where the subject is caught between who they are on a supramundane level and the myriad of inessential identities they associate with as a social actor and as such, he 'who knows his [true] essence [...] has built [for himself] a palace in the security of eternity'.[93] Ironically, Sufistic self-annihilation is a means of growth where the mystic relinquishes the material veils covering the real grounding of self which originates from the Ultimate Signifier

[91] Mahdi Tourage, *Rumi and the Hermeneutics of Eroticism* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2007), p. 164.
[92] *Rumi and the Hermeneutics of Eroticism*, p. 88.
[93] *Ibid*, p. 252.

allowing them to be transfigured into a locus of Divine creativity opening up a higher realm of possibilities for identity formation in contrast to the limited amount of variations made within an individual lifetime until their heart becomes a double-sided mirror reflecting the, 'signifying power of the true signifier, i.e., the Divine, [whilst] the Divine reflects back the true self (the "essence") of the mystic'.[94] Universal laws acquire their nature from Allah indicating that, at the centre, everything breaks down not into a relativistic void but rather a relativism born from approximation to a more essential dimension of reality. The central contention regarding where the locus of meaning resides can be traced, Islamically, within the notion that each individual essence denotes an eternal and unchanging subject whose innate knowledge, will and existence is acquired from an immutable entity, whereas Shelley prioritises the historical development of mankind whose language is disordered and multivalent during the gestation period not due to the transcendent expansiveness from which it derives but more so a result of undecidedness. For Shelley, words are more authentically poetic due to not having been restrained by the formal rules of syntax since, '[e]very original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem', until subsequent generations acquiesce to the needs of society by curtailing this spontaneous process through, 'the copiousness of lexicography and the distinctions of grammar', creating artificial rifts between previously interwoven relationships in the name of taxonomy.[95] It is clear that rhetoric guided by imagination is, 'the principle of synthesis', forging connections that are internally coherent to the poet, a 'mind acting upon its thoughts', as opposed to a grammatical register that employs reason to conceive of relationships not as discursive 'in their integral unity, but [simply] the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results.'[96] Any sense of the Transcendent that emerges from these interactions is intuited not at the centre of revelation, bestowing and sustaining the essential relationships

[94] *Ibid*, p. 144.
[95] The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley, p. 636.
[96] *Ibid*, p. 635.

underlying creation, but rather occupying the borders of the poet's personal interpretation of the world as a symbol of the unspeakable that is both only conceptually knowable yet essentially unknown due to the finite nature of human comprehension. A visionary model of poetry redistributes power back into the hands of individuals as artists who infuse the sublime qualities of life with unique, discursive and ever-evolving meaning whilst democratising the act of meaning-making across all minds until, 'Poetry, and the principle of Self, of which money is the visible incarnation, [become] the God and the Mammon of the world'.[97] The responsibility of authoring one's own world is a plight fraught with uncertainty just as a poet wonders whether the voice that returns during the metaphorical transaction is, indeed, their own or the infiltration of yet another reification that threatens to reduce aesthetic appreciation to devotional worship. Tilottama Rajan perceives the effacement enacted by various Shelleyan protagonists to be an extension of the disintegration that poetry itself undergoes as part of, the 'great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind [are implicated in] build[ing] up,'[98] since the individual poem is but one instance in this wider creative consciousness. This act of distortion leads to a continuous deferral of form wherein the poem cannot be said to have successfully established itself as a totality akin to the whole from which it was derived causing it to become ensnared within a state of perpetual derangement derived from an insatiable compulsion to realise itself as a holistic text but also recognising itself as always already constituted by this ideal: 'going out of oneself [...] toward an other who is never attainable [except by inhabiting] the radical instability of a purely metaphorical world in which the meaning of a metaphor is another metaphor'.[99]

Just as the questing Poet in *Alastor* yearns after an ineffable object to feel whole, the text itself can never encompass the great poem even though it privileges that Ultimate form as the only avenue to become complete and thus, Shelley exposes both the form and idea to be

[97] *Ibid*, p. 655.
[98] *Ibid*, p. 647.
[99] *Shelley's Dizzy Ravine*, p. 314.

equally inadequate and undeveloped[100] as their transaction is founded upon suspension, erasure and contradiction. These three principles characterise Sufistic discourse regarding the relation between self and Other but adopt markedly different connotations due to the Islamic belief in mankind's potential perfectibility and fittedness both to the natural world (divorced from the negative connotations of a postlapsarian status) as well as an intrinsic connection to the Divine as the mirror by which Allah perceives His Names and Attributes. For instance, Rumi essentialises this paradoxical communion of singularity in duality by positioning the beloved as an endless labyrinth which both repels and allures its lovers into a frenzy of distress and elation, '[h]as anyone witnessed one life in two bodies?/My life is union with you, my death separation from you;/You have given me unique skills! in two [different] arts',[101] indicating that patient resignation in the face of perpetual oscillation is an innate response tied to an individual's mortal connection to the finite and spiritual association to the celestial. Consequently, the central discrepancy that arises when examining Islamic and Shelleyan deconstructive tendencies is this distinction between perversion and perfectibility characterising the source of inspiration since the former promotes the theophanic purity of creation whereas the latter engages a negative sublime which, in being essentially embryonic and distorted, is unable to achieve complete formal realisation due to its own incompleteness.[102] Ahmad Achrati, scholar of Islamic philosophy, offers a distilled example of these divergences:

> There stands the stark difference between Ibn Ginni's idea and ideal of hospitality, the perfection that is yet, to come, and [Shelley and] Derrida's contradictory claim that nothing is yet, that which is not is always already perverted, that there is no hospitality, but hospitality is already corrupt,

[100] Tilottama Rajan, 'The Work of the Negative: Symbolic, Gothic, and Romantic in Shelley and Hegel', *Studies in Romanticism* 52 (2013), 3-32, at p. 13.
[101] *Reading Mystical Lyric*, p. 38.
[102] *The Work of the Negative*, p. 13.

> which amounts to an assertion of the ontological priority of sin and defect; very un-Islamic[103]

Both Shelley and Sufis perceive presence in negation to expose the inherent vitality of paradox and, in either case, this encroaching expansiveness causes the onlooker to reflexively contemplate their current limitations and be inspired to generate new communicative strategies (sonorous or silent) which increase rather than bypass perplexity. Shelleyan and Sufistic verse trace the impossible task of translating the infinite to a comprehensible definition through the spectrum of language whilst avoiding a reduction in complexity whether it be the existential chasm that opens up for Shelley at the prospect of such an undertaking, '[w]e are on that verge where words abandon us [...] look[ing] down the dark abyss of—how little we know',[104] or the esoteric maxim that, '[t]hough interpretation of speech makes things clear/Love free of words is clearer',[105] there is a shared appreciation of such facile reductions being a figurative dead end for it is only when words are replaced in favour of gestation, sound or silence that the labyrinth can exist endlessly. However, the status of the negative differs for each schema because, for Muslims, Allah is no-thing whereas, for Shelley and Derrida, such a Supranatural entity enters into the discourse as nothing. The perspectival discrepancy between the transcendental Thou-ness of Islam and the depersonalised I-ness of Shelley can be summarised by reconsidering the divergent understandings of the relation between World and Text since Islamically *al-Lawh al-Mahfuz* (The Preserved Tablet) predates creation with all scripture and events written within. Conversely, Shelley's notion of the One Mind as constituted by the feelings, thoughts and writings of humankind across time leads to a retroactive and creative form of necessity in keeping with Mallarmé's statement that, '[e]verything in the world exists in order to end up

[103] Ahmad Achrati, 'Deconstruction, Ethics and Islam', *Arabica* 53 (2006), 472-510, at p. 500.
[104] *The Major Works*, p. 636.
[105] *Reading Mystical lyric*, p. 38.

as a book',[106] in contrast to the Islamic understanding that everything in the tablet exists in order to end up in the world. In spite of these differences, Sufis and Shelley equally chastise those who, due to emotional or intellectual insecurity, are so mystified when confronted with a sense of something greater (an ideal Other) that they cannot contend with the hysteria inherent in relinquishing ego and as such, seek to explain away phenomena rather than recognising how, 'regularly go[ing] through a kind of insanity (a controlled psychosis) [can lead to] something resembling sanity (something more than normal neurotic repression and acquiescence)'.[107]

Rumi, Hafiz and Shelley acknowledged that the type of visitation (inspiring or dogmatic) alters according to the perceiving heart as if reality possessed an inner mechanism allowing those who have gone astray to perpetuate their delusions of grandeur whilst incurring spiritual malaise. Those poet-legislators who perpetuate values Shelley perceives necessary for maintaining life's harmony are also able to continue generating art with the prospect of a meaningful legacy (at least relative to the works promoting idolatry). A tentative split is formed between Idealisation as an inhibiting process founded on a distorted and negative sublime and a staunch commitment to the empirical as an equally uninspired and insular perspective. I argue these components are necessary elements for paradox to exist since it requires an openness to something greater than self but restrained by a willingness to constantly question one's own presuppositions. In a sense, the other no longer serves as an internalised mirror but a devious refraction of a person's inner demons which only perpetuates the type of idolisation of images detested by Shelley. However, during this bewildering confrontation, figures such as the *Alastor* Poet can elicit admiration not due to any correctness of perception but because of an unwillingness to accept the totality of forms

[106] Stéphane Mallarmé, 'The Book, Spiritual Instrument', trans. Michael Gibbs, in *The Book, Spiritual Instrument*, ed. Jerome Rothenberg and David M. Guss (New York: Granary Books, 1996), 14.
[107] Bernard Selinger, 'The Navajo, Psychosis, Lacan, and Derrida', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 49 (2007), 64-100, at p. 89.

as all that constitutes existence as well as his desire to surpass dictated boundaries and thus, despite the emphasis on effacement as opposed to aggrandisement, the Poet's commitment to perishing by penetrating a supranatural realm resembles the Sufistic desire for annihilation reimagined in a Faustian form.[108]

Private Fancy versus Public Life

The discussion surrounding bewilderment does not simply pertain to the dismissal of overly facile reductions of the dynamic between self and Other but, more specifically, the possibility of disappointment or disenchantment in the visionary experience born from the difficulty of truly submitting subject to object. Even self-effacement for the sake of empathetic expansion feeds off a desire to author reality according to one's own inclinations so a balance must be struck between being open to a choric harmony whilst not succumbing to subjective fantasies: 'idealization [...] is an inability to integrate the good object into the ego [...] because there is something missing in this object that prevents it from being posited except as fantasy'.[109] I shall examine the *Arabian Nights* and, 'The Keen Stars Were Twinkling', under this notion that freedom of mind can exist in madness but, failing to recognise how far gone you are, can also lead to blindness. It is *in potentia* that the One Mind expands, free from the dark idolatry of self that comes from asserting with certainty that one's own preconceptions encompass reality in its entirety and saved from the despair of materialistic nihilism where an unwillingness to admit ignorance in the face of life's miraculous yet mysterious nature bars people from experiencing the joy of metaphor.

[108] Shelley description of Faust as a disatisfied martyr who decried mundane limitation in favour of an ecstatic life, '[p]erhaps all discontent with the less (to use a Platonic sophism) supposes the sense of a just claim to the greater, & that we admirers of Faust are in the right road to Paradise' (*The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), II. p. 406) echoes his praise, at the start of *Alastor*, for 'the pure and tender-hearted [who] perish through the intensity and passion of their search' (*The Major Works*, p. 93).
[109] *The Work of the Negative*, p. 17.

Adopting a more psychological approach to narrating the transaction between self and other, the *Arabian Nights*[110] provides a social as well as spiritual commentary as it revolves around the antagonism between, 'personal desire and a world preventing that desire from its full realization'.[111] These visions, however, are not granted primacy over mundane existence since their function as glimpses into a more truthful dimension is placed into question with its subjective origins scrutinised as potentially altering these sublime openings into self-centred projections wherein society either becomes the voice of reason or an active participant. 'The Sleeper and the Waker' questions the assumption that it is possible to break entirely from societal influence without it shaping one's waking and sleeping life for humanity remains a socially constituted being; the main protagonist, Abu l-Ḥasan, becomes so enamoured by his erotic dream that he becomes unable to discern reality from unreality and remains oblivious to the ruler's role in determining his dream experience. When Hasan unknowingly invites the Caliph, Harun al-Rashid, to his house he reveals that his deepest desire is to become Caliph for a day to achieve revenge against both the Imam and a group of sheikhs prompting Rashid to drug his drink in order to fulfil this wish and revel in the ensuing chaos. After realising his desires within the court (both politically by enacting his revenge as well as erotically by playfully interacting the courtesans) Hasan is drugged once more and left outside his mother's house who discovers him asleep muttering a courtesan's name leading her to assume that his sleep-walking is the result of a sexual dream causing her to denounce his tall tale as nothing more than a satanic mirage. These illusions of grandeur continue when he is released from prison for attacking his mother and is once more sent to the palace in a drugged state at which point he becomes completely unable to distinguish dream from reality

[110] As evidence of the impression that the *Arabian Nights* had on a younger Shelley, in a letter to Edward Fergus Graham in 1810 he writes an invocation to the Oriental tale in a manner resembling the start of the Islamic testimony of faith, 'in the name of the most merciful God—Arabian Nights' (*The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, p. 13). He is likely referring to the edition by Dom Denis Chavis and Jacques Cazotte.
[111] Henry Bowles, 'Psychological Realism in Early Prose Narrative: Dreams in the 1001 Nights and the Greek Novel', *Comparative Literature Studies* 53 (2016), 427-53, at p. 433.

believing himself both free from consequences as if sleeping but drunk on the power that he fancifully possesses resulting in an ecstatic loss of self-awareness as he removes his clothes and dances with courtesans. What emerges from this narrative is a protagonist who seeks to reimagine existence according to his own whims by denouncing his original self in favour of an idealised image of his life as Caliph which he believes so fervently to be real as to chase this dream until he devolves into a mad frenzy and becomes nothing more than a figure of mockery.

Likewise, 'The Keen Stars Were Twinkling', reveals a narrative that explores an individual intellect coming to terms with the external world through a form of inspiration which emerges from repressed desires and social interference even as it initially holds out hope that these erotic impulses are sublime in nature. Akin to *Alastor,* Shelley employs the trope of a singing woman who raises the poet into the feminine circle of motherhood through an ecstatic performance awakening them to the interconnectedness of the natural world: '[a]s the moon's soft splendour/O'er the faint cold starlight of Heaven/ Is thrown -/ So your voice most tender/ To the strings without souls had then given/ Its own'.[112] The speaker adopts the poetic identity of a submissive infant requiring a maternal voice to enliven the otherwise lifeless strings of the guitar; her voice enlightens the poets faculties to engage in an imaginative commingling with a world whose beauty he could only observe from afar but now she serves as an intermediary at once granting meaning and translating it to the speaker. As the poem progresses, however, the perceived harmony crumbles as the disparate elements begin to drift apart once more, '[t]he stars will awaken, / Though the moon sleep a full hour later, / Tonight',[113] until it is revealed that the undifferentiated unity the speaker hoped he had found in the actual world, like the Moon which casts light upon the shadows of dark scene, comes closer to an analogy of Plato's cave where the ideal realm of coherence exists

[112] *The Major Works*, lines 7-12, p. 601.
[113] Ibid, lines 13-15, p. 601.

elsewhere with the external order of this world merely acting as a simulacrum of another order: '[t]hough the sound overpowers/ Sing again, with your dear voice revealing/ A tone/ Of some world far from ours,/ Where music and moonlight and feeling/ Are one'.[114] Far from the receptive child who internalises its mother's musical plenitude, what emerges is a poetic voice more akin to the controlling and overpowering cries of an infant who decides when and how their mother soothes them, '[s]ing again, with your dear voice', until the mothers love becomes unnatural and curated so it can no longer be said to originate out of a selfless love between subjects but from a self-centred artistry between fictional selves. Even if Shelley does not intend his work to have such deleterious effects on the relationship he is fully aware of the artifice supporting his fantasy when he refers to his vision as having been undone due to a lack of mutual feeling in the real world where Edward Williams, Mary Shelley and matrimonial laws, still exist. Equal communion with the beloved is foreclosed in poetry both due to their real life attachment to other people as well as a strong desire to develop his own literary abilities. It becomes difficult to take pleasure in the ecstasy of pre-linguistic sounds whilst putting forward his identity as a poet like a child coming into a sense of its individual subjectivity free from the mother, Shelley 'does not want to give up the material presence, but he […] does want to move independently with increasing skill and agility'.[115] Shelley must either destroy the female voice at the expense of his own or accept that such self-disassociation is only possible in death and, at least, promote ideals of love and equality in the hopes they can unsettle some of the power possessed by institutional hierarchies. Abu l-Hasan, the *Alastor* Poet and the Speaker in 'The Keen Star's' present the visionary experience as ambiguous since the vanity implicit in the epipsychidion archetype can either lead to a uncritical self-absorption wherein the extinctive tendencies of self-destruction override the positive aspects of selflessness or a greater awareness of self as an extension of

[114] Ibid, lines 19-24, p. 602.
[115] Thomas R. Frosch, '"More than Ever Can Be Spoken": Unconscious Fantasy in Shelley's Jane Williams Poems', *Studies in Philology* 102 (2005), 378-413, at p. 405.

the organic world whereby narcissism actually generates a sense of pride through preserving the interests of creation in line with Nature's Spirit rather than individual ego.

Summary

Shelley's transvaluation of Sufistic tropes through the spectrum of Lacanian and Derridean thought reveals a productive dynamic between meaning-making (i.e. interpretation) and deconstruction via paradox which provides, 'a gap between hermeneutics and its dismantling, [forcing us to scrutinize] the specific myths that reading enables us to construct'.[116] Paradox is a result of alienation felt during this interaction between subject and object, it serves as a means towards greater self-understanding despite the seemingly negative process since the enticing illusions contain aspects of the onlooker's identity whether it be a projection of phenomena already encountered in the world or through the interpretive filtering that takes place upon witnessing the ideal Other. Regardless of the perspectival or ontological grounding, neither viewpoint wholly devolves into solipsism as discovery of self entails perpetual deferral towards a bewildering expanse that curtails insularity by opening the individual to the stream of life composed of all created thought and feeling constituting Being at an atemporal level. In Sufism, to penetrate the essence of Allah only leads to a paradoxical open-endedness discouraging definitive comprehension in the same way Shelley's last major work, *The Triumph of Life*, 'places interpretive responsibility with the reader while withholding reassurance that certain meanings can be found'.[117] Recognising human existence as an aporetic state caught on the cusp of unchanging constancy and destabilising entropy should not lead to uncertainty or indifference since embracing the paradoxical nature of this predicament inculcates a resistance against intellectual closure and keeps the subject open towards potentiality and flux. Even with mystic writers such as Rumi

[116] Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 277.
[117] *Shelley and the Ambivalence of Idealism*, p. 96.

the experiential process is mimicked through writing techniques that simulate bewilderment which, in turn, places the interpretive onus on the reader as they are left at the poem's end to continue the spiritual dance on their own:

> I beseech you by the one whose heart/is a sweet and fermenting ocean -
> /The ocean that has given the jewels/their precious nature;/That you
> compose the rest of this ghazal;/And hence cast the magician Samiri to
> the depths of envy![118]

This productive indecisiveness of paradox causes the audience to adopt their position as autonomous interpreters unable to simply rely on an authorial hand to guide their image of the Other and, rather than fall prey to the passivity of reading, these seekers participate in the narrative by enacting the interpretive journey for themselves.

Despite not being a didactic poem, this outward facing awareness of a space beyond the text pervades *Alastor* as reflected in the Preface which states, the 'picture is not barren of instruction to actual men',[119] as well as the gesture towards a subsequent generation that might come across the Poet's life journey and internalise some aspect of his fate: 'the infant would conceal / His troubled visage in his mother's robe / In terror at the glare of those wild eyes, / To remember their strange light in many a dream / Of after-times'.[120] The lesson is not simply a warning against the inherent pitfalls of dreaming as Susan Fischman suggests[121] nor is it an unwavering commitment to dream as enlightenment but, as with Derrida, undecidability becomes the central ethical framework governing the piece since it provides a state containing both the freedom to transfigure intuited senses into imagined images as well as the freedom from believing in their objective reality: '[t]he ghost of the undecidable is a conscience, reminding us that our laws and ethical codes are not natural but the result of

[118] *Reading Mystical Lyric*, p. 27.
[119] *The Major Works*, p. 92.
[120] *Ibid*, lines 262-66, p. 100.
[121] "Like the Sound of His Own Voice", p. 167.

human decisions that might as well have gone the other way'.[122] The infatuated psychosis of Sufism shapes the mental landscape of *Alastor* through Shelley's reimagining of such tropes enabling him to generate a narrative which places paradox at its hermeneutical centre in a manner that productively harnesses misreading whereby not only our creative output but our life becomes a text available for examination and yet, this memorial immortality is bound by the same uncertainty that allows endless interpretation: '*Alastor* is committed to vision, to creating and questioning its own fictions as it opens up interpretive possibilities'.[123] This perpetual suspension (motionless wave) is the closest corollary to Sufistic *baqa* for it replicates life-in-death by subsisting in the Real where neither 'lack' nor 'fullness' enact the role of 'transcendental signified' but give way to, 'a fundamental splitting akin to *diffirance*',[124] which protects the One Mind (i.e. the emotions and content constituting it) from becoming reified, deified and institutionalised whilst also encouraging individuals not to suppress the inspirational visions derived from this source. In the context of the epipsychidion, Shelley's transvaluation of the Islamic veil emblematises how humanity must not allow their finitude to deter them from their expanse nor allow their expanded nature to cause them to forget their limits because, by existing within this crossroads, the onlooker is no longer required to possess absolute knowledge regarding an enigmatic Other and the Beloved is released from the elucidation of revelation allowing it to be forever undeveloped.

[122] 'Composing According to Silence', p. 315.
[123] *Shelley and the Ambivalence of Idealism*, p. 94.
[124] *Derrida vis-a-vis Lacan*, p. 378.

Chapter 4

Wanderer's without guides: Logical deductivism and intuitionistic inductivism in Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* and Shelley's *Alastor*

Alastor exemplifies how Shelley's earlier interest in the sublime fluctuated between monistic materialism and sceptical idealism offering a case study through which to gauge the complex shifts and fraught allegiances implicit in his journey from a prior belief in a mind-independent material reality which would eventually be disregarded as a seductive system for naive minds. The Romantic poet reached a crossroads in which he recognised existence could not be reduced solely to cognition whilst equally acknowledging the psyche's primary role in perceptually shaping reality. A prominent figure in Shelley's acceptance of material idealism is William Drummond whose *Academical Questions* he read whilst composing *Alastor* and *Mont Blanc* drawing from a mixture of Hellenistic and Humean sceptical stances that confine comprehension to perception whereby existence becomes a sequence of events which the mind intuits as conjoined through a false sense of cause and effect. Nevertheless, despite refuting any possibility of material objects subsisting independently from the mind, he preserves the importance of experience in acquiring knowledge: 'Drummond's syncretic methods [mediates] two important traditions as no writer had done before him: classical scepticism and modern British empiricism'.[1] *Academical Questions* adopts an empiricist approach to knowledge inasmuch as it is founded on experiential data derived from sensation but with the added acknowledgement that we can only ever be immediately acquainted with our own impressions bereft of any reason to believe in the objectivity of an extramental reality given that phenomenal existence is always mediated by the observer: '[a]ll things exist

[1] William Drummond, *Academical Questions*, facsimile reprint with intro. by Terence Allan Hoagwood (Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1984), pp. iv-vi.

as they are perceived; at least in relation to the percipient'.[2] Although a material world existing independently from mind is illogical, this worldview does not necessarily negate the possibility of a reality beyond sensation cut off from experience as a consequence of the human mind's finite nature for even our universal laws: 'are the unknown causes of the known effects perceivable in the universe. Their effects are the boundaries of our knowledge, their names the expressions of our ignorance'.[3] Despite differing levels of emphasis, Shelley, Drummond and Hume accepted the futility of considering an objective world subsisting outside human perception leading them to dispel the sophistry that humanity could construct a detached assessment of physical space in a manner that circumvented their own received sensations. For Shelley, the inscrutable nature of reality had to be upheld on some level in order to preserve intuition as central to poetry's capacity for instilling empathy and reinvigorating a childlike reverie in those impressions stultified through habit.

If Shelley shared Hume's belief that sympathising with other minds can be a means of self-knowledge in a perceptually bound universe, his politics were also shaped by a Lockean approach to individualism which promoted autonomy, freethinking, and stated that, should a person learn to be accountable for themselves by reflecting upon their conduct, they invariably safeguard the interests of their peers. Just as '[s]elf is the great problem for Shelleyan ethics, and love [...] is the great answer',[4] an appreciation of humanity as constituted by freestanding agents is equally important since society would be irrevocably weakened if each discrete portion was faulty within itself. Displacing individual autonomy is not the solution to establishing a loving community because it risks establishing a monolithic group consciousness where people at the bottom feel they must conform to tradition or their

[2] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 658.
[3] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, eds. by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), p. 48.
[4] Brent Steven Robida, PhD thesis, 'Shelley's Delusive Flames: Self and Poetry in The Major Works' (University of Tennessee, 2016), p. 221.

reputation will be ruined. Working to counteract the suppression of authority despite potential repercussions to social standing is the keys to engendering a society of strong-willed individuals who uphold their human rights in a rational manner whilst allowing others to forward their unique experiences and ideas: '[t]his individualist ethos is basic to Shelley's visionary humanism'.[5]

Going beyond the stability implicit in Locke's understanding of self where people can persist through time despite their material existence (i.e. their atomistic composition) being altered, Shelley adopts Hume's scepticism regarding the consistency of personal identity and the reliability of perception but chooses to downplay man as simply a disordered amalgamation of impressions. In mediating between these positions, Shelley seeks to maintain the subjective quality of experience with the understanding that certainty in causation both as a subject persisting through time and the assumption of cause and effect occurring extramentally is an untenable position whilst also upholding the individual as a political subject held together not by immutable laws but through human passions which psychologically mediate experiences. Shelley's propensity to uphold self-sovereignty whilst emphasising joint co-operation is born out of a desire not to lose sight of the individual as merely a cog within a communal wheel but in a manner which forestalls the potential narcissism in self-love by expanding the empathetic frame to include mankind on a collective level. What eventually, in *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1819) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), becomes a reciprocal dynamic between intersubjectivity and introspection is, in *Alastor,* a vital tension propelling the work as Shelley grapples with how to recuperate love in a world that is temporally finite yet sublimely beautiful. Uncovering the source of inspiration is implicated within questions of misidentification, 'distinguish[ing the forces and constraints

[5] William A. Ulmer, *Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 97.

of necessity] from forces and constraints subject to human agency',[6] and can often lead a person to fall into a radical materialism or a superstitious idealism both of which are bereft of indeterminacy. *Alastor* is caught between a Lucretian universe composed of atoms, voids, and a view of necessity infused with contingency, and a Schellingian or Platonic universe guided by spirit, abundance and polarity. Shelley envisions a world which, if there is a coeternal spirit, remains stripped of any verifiable Transcendent to the point where he is forced to err on the side of reason and science not out of belief in the veracity of its methods but disbelief in its religiously revealed alternative. Nonetheless, humanity itself could be described as Platonic in the sense that individuals are able to either enliven matter through creative freethinking or petrify nature through superstition until, over time, the animating spirit becomes synonymous with humanity. Tim Milnes foregrounds the function of creative sympathy in scepticism and the limits of human knowledge[7] as both Hume and Plato set aside the quest for certainty in an ideal correspondence of mind and world by grounding the remedy for such existential doubt in our relationships with others where truth does not revolve around objectivity but rather the continued resituating of error for:

> the Platonic notion of love[...] emerges in Shelley not as a means of attaining truth, but as a model for the kind of dialogue that sustains truth. [...] Shelley's interest in the logocentrifugal potential of the teachings of Lucretius, Bentham, and Plato repeatedly clashes with his foundationalist instinct that truth lies in an epistemological relation of correspondence [...] rather than in the everyday praxis of human discourse[8]

[6] William Keach, ''The Political Poet', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. by Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 123-42, at p. 126.
[7] Timothy Milnes, *The Truth about Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 122.
[8] *Ibid*, pp. 125-26.

These empiricist, materialist and idealist strains running through Shelley's commentary on individualism and collectivism are well accounted for, even acknowledging how classical Greek and Roman thought (e.g. Aristotelian scholasticism and Lucretian atomism) were recontextualised within seventeenth and eighteenth century debates regarding sensationalism and intuitionalism but critical assessment of Shelley's philosophical affiliations rarely considers the influence of translated Islamic texts on Enlightenment discourse. Samar Attar provides a number of inroads to explain how Shelley may have been inspired by Ibn Tufayl (1100-85) both directly as well as inadvertently by citing the various scholars that Shelley drew from regarding the nature of God, the link between apprehension and comprehension, or the prospect of an egalitarian future once the elite have been deposed: 'Locke, Hume, Godwin, d'Holbach, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the rest of the eighteenth-century philosophes [had been exposed to the work of the twelfth-century Spanish-Arab philosopher]'.[9] For instance, John Locke who, having studied Arabic at Oxford, became acquainted with Arabist Edward Pococke whose son translated Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* [*Philosophus Autodidactus*] in 1671 which likely contributed to Locke's conceptualisation of tabula rasa as the original narrative is known for incorporating, synthesising and reimagining Muslim philosophical and theological thought spanning across al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn Bajja (1095-1138) al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Ibn Sina (ca. 970-1037). The latter of which is accredited with a set of tales that enlist images and personages Ibn Tufayl would later employ in his own allegorical biography and whose empiricist epistemology regarded the infant babe as a blank slate gradually acquiring mental associations through experience and thus, despite discrepancies in their cosmological frameworks, 'it is obvious that Avicenna had a systematic epistemology [revolving around] empiricism [which would] later [...] appear in the work of

[9] Samar Attar, *Borrowed imagination: The British Romantic Poets and their Arabic-Islamic Sources* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 140.

John Locke'.[10]

Ibn Sina charts the acquisition of knowledge from childhood to old age, a trajectory Ibn Tufayl would similarly infuse into Hayy's own development, on the basis that the mind is utter potentiality actualised through learning and experience (*mushahada*) with the capacity to abstract (*tajrid*) universal concepts from sensible objects with the aid of reflection (*i'tibar*) as the individual transfers this awareness of intelligibles to a higher thought process which subjectively determines their relevance. The result is an initially passive state giving way to a recognition of their dominant position as the nexus through which reality is conceived, structured and passionately responded to. By extension, every act of perception reveals as much about the self as it does about the sublunar world and yet, empiricism is not trapped within the confines of selfhood, unable to comment on the external world since our comprehension of reality expands in conjunction with our knowledge of self. In an effort to inject rationalism with mysticism, Ibn Tufayl sought to mediate the Aristotelian proclivities of Ibn Sina and Ibn Bajjah with the spiritual intuition of al-Ghazali for whom sense perception became a fallible and untrustworthy source of knowledge after he underwent a sceptical crisis reflective of Hume's own arguments against epistemological certainty – a connection which might be traced through Nicolas Malebranche and Nicholas of Autrecourt who were exposed to Ghazali's critique of causal necessity. Hume's scepticism rejects empiricist ways of knowing in order to forestall blind conformity to an assumed correspondence between mind and nature and as a means of discounting the validity of miracles whereas the Ghazalian approach employs doubt as a means of removing any intellectual prejudices preventing a person from accepting the possibility of miracles. Although al-Ghazali does believe in metaphysical truths, confirmed by true revelation, he also echoes Hume in believing reality as only knowable through an individual's insufficient

[10] Dimitri Gutas, 'The Empiricism of Avicenna', *Oriens* 40 (2012) 391-436, at pp. 393-94.

senses causing the totality of man's knowledge to be rooted in knowledge of self. Alexander Bevilacqua argues Hume's engagement with Islam as an intellectual system was disingenuous: 'primarily invested in making generalisations and determining patterns across human societies, rather than [examining its] history, religion, and culture'.[11] Nevertheless, for the sake of comparative analysis between *Alastor* and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, it is sufficient to note that both thinkers were relevant in influencing the outlook of either text or author and that there exists intellectual affinity, if not a base level of familiarity, upon which they might be said to converge such as their sceptical critique of causality understood to be psychologically imposed through habitual exposure. [12] Indeed, a more immediate point of influence can be found in the writings of Simon Ockley who authored both a translation of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* as well as *History of the Saracens*; the latter of which Shelley is known to have read[13] whilst the former, published in 1708, provided a pertinent message that would have likely resonated with the Romantic poet: 'glorify[ing] reason, experiment[ation] and science, but at the same time [acknowledging] the limits of reason and the great benefits of imagination'.[14]

The Romantic Scientist and the Child at Play

Contextualising Shelley's work within philosophical debates alongside eighteenth-century Orientalist scholarship, it becomes more feasible to ascertain how Ibn Tufayl could provide a voice through which to read *Alastor* (a text which already draws inspiration from Persian poetry) attracting those who gravitated towards the narrative premise of an isolated autodidact who discerns the principles of nature through both logical deductivism and intuitionistic inductivism without the need for religious institutions or civil doctrine. Hayy

[11] Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 168.
[12] A more extreme instance of noting similarities comes from Ernest Renan, a French historian, who believed that what, 'Hume has said [concerning causality is] nothing more than [what] al Ghazzali had already said' (Eugene A. Myers, *Arabic Thought and the Western World* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1964), p. 40).
[13] *Borrowed Imagination*, p. 166.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 140.

represents self-sovereignty during the process of learning and the importance of reminding others of these capacities in the hopes that some may listen and cultivate them (as with Absal). The balance between acquiring ideas through inspirational and observational avenues is a consequence of Ghazali's own expansion of Ibn Sina's rational theory of intuition (*hads*) into a more mystical form of cognition. The latter believed prophecy to be attainable by those possessing superior intellect through an emanational chain that initially engages reason until awakening imagination at which point theological truths become perceptible in as clear and as logical a manner as when the mind receives sensory information. Ghazali acknowledged the soul's natural capacities are partly formative in prophecy but attempted to emphasise God's guidance within this process as his occasionalist tendencies necessitate that Allah determine the scope and condition of prophetic inspiration in line with divine causation. Hayy emblematises naturalistic accounts of insight given that empiricism forms an integral aspect of his psychological development; inadvertently conducting experiments as a byproduct of surviving alone, Hayy acquires higher levels of discernment through greater exposure to natural phenomena and longer periods of reflection.

During his self-education, Hayy uncovers the dynamic interplay between union and multiplicity underlying causation and becomes increasingly aware that all perceptible effects require a single, necessary and immaterial cause to be both compelled into existence as well as continuously sustained since an infinite number of causes would be illogical. Echoing Ibn Sina's philosophy that humanity can obtain sound metaphysical knowledge without direction from others, Hayy can be read as an exemplar of those who Ibn Sina believes possess a particularly potent intuition (*hads*) due to the astuteness with which he employs his observational and reflective faculties to attain spiritual proximity to Allah (*tawr al-wilaya*) whilst avoiding incorrect inferential judgements that can arise from faulty deductivism. Breaking down this naturalistic approach to knowledge, foundational principles arise in the

mind after having been unconsciously established via sense perception and, when a child grows old enough to ruminate on the meaning of these impressions, they begin searching more intently to uncover the active intellect at which point proof techniques such as induction (*istiqra*) and experimentation (*tajriba*) are employed. After focusing predominantly on flora and fauna, Hayy turns his gaze towards the cosmos noting how stars and planets are driven by set motions and arranged into particular patterns which fuels his intellectual aspirations to search for the light which illuminates (i.e. actualises) life and from which these celestial bodies derive their luminescence in order to reveal the pre-made world below. In classifying entities as prone to enact a particular state when exposed to particular circumstances rather than assuming causation is the necessary impact of one object upon another, Hayy becomes less concerned with scientifically dismantling how this world functions and adopts practices designed around increasing his spiritual maturation with the aim of uncovering a direct vision of Allah (the unknown first cause). Acknowledging the multifaceted quality of apprehension as both sensation and feeling, he engages matter as a means of uncovering the immaterial at which point the scientific emphasis on observation is exposed as insufficient and he must instead appeal to a more Ghazzalian conception of witnessing (*mushahada*). The latter consists of an intuitive knowingness whereas the former relies on *qiyas* (deductive analogy) which is analogical, logical, and syllogistic. His search for the Ultimate Cause of the Universe connects him to a Neoplatonic chain of intelligibles muted by a recognition of necessary connection as always presumed at a distance and never known objectively which (whereas Humean scepticism refuses to single out an external power accountable for preserving continuity) causes Ibn Tufayl to expand his discursive epistemology into a non-discursive one. Allah's mysterious nature is left intact even though the theophanic nature of reality is exposed and thus, he gleams transcendence through immanence.

I offset Ibn Tufayl's natural mysticism with the interpretation of *Alastor* as an exploration

of the Romantic scientist, bridging the divide between natural philosophy as a creative mode and science as a narrative mode, for both pieces depict a desire to appreciate the mystery of that which is sensed beyond form and grapple with a need to conceptualise such seemingly inexplicable phenomena to the extent that the Sufistic self-abnegation as a form of epistemology echoes the nineteenth-century scientists determination: 'to find things out, even at the risk of life. While obviously we would much prefer not to die; knowledge has been taken to be worth the price'.[15] This complex drama is played out within Shelley's own prose where he champions the prospect of, 'catalogu[ing] all the thoughts of the mind, and [...] all their possible modifications [to generate] a cyclopedic history of the Universe',[16] whilst his creative propensity preserves the enchanting nature of existence from the petrifying lens of objectivity: 'Nature is [...] marked with the most impressive character of loveliness and grandeur, once I was tremulously alive to tones and scenes [but the] habit of analysing feelings I fear does not agree with this'.[17] Kaitlin Gowan Southerly and Nahoko Miyamoto Alvey have explored how the Poet figure and Narrator of *Alastor* pursue the unknown in a manner which reflects Enlightenment scientific discourse as they enact a dangerous commitment to unveiling mystery and thus, akin to Ibn Tufayl, Shelley's narrative harbours a split affiliation at once critiquing as well as drawing inspiration from Romantic rhetoric on the natural sublime and Alexander von Humboldt's scientific travelogues, a relationship 'based, not on the domination of imagination over empirical experience and rational analysis, but on a partnership among them more compatible with scientific method'.[18] Despite not charting the *Alastor* Poet's development from birth to eventual self-loss as Ibn Tufayl does, the preface distinguishes him similarly as a, 'youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous

[15] George Levine, *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 1.
[16] *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, VII, p. 59.
[17] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, pp. 127-28.
[18] Donna Richardson, 'An Anatomy of Solitude: Shelley's Response to Radical Skepticism in "Alastor"', *Studies in Romanticism* 31 (1992), 171-95, at p. 175.

genius led forth by an imagination inflamed', reflective of Hayy's default position as pure potentiality who employs imaginative and deductive faculties to satiate his inquisitive nature spurned by a longing for spiritual unveiling after sensing something more real than the sublunary forms which assume objective status, seeking 'familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic to the contemplation of the universe'.[19] In following Nature's footsteps so intently and internalising an awareness of its mechanics, both Hayy and the Poet figure reach a point of intellectual exhaustion as they fall back on their imaginative and intuitive faculties to discern an unembodied presence resonating with their soul at a deeper frequency than anything encountered previously (i.e. an abstracted assimilation of all the material information acquired up to that point) and resulting in their perception being forever filtered through this added dimensionality. As if now truly awake to a world previously thought either bereft of fresh insights or confined to sense impressions, Hayy's revelation reinforces creation as an enchanted space through which a noumenal realm may be metaphorically intuited whereas, for the *Alastor* Poet, disillusionment sets in as the existential void from which his search stems pervades existence and renders it vacant by comparison to his newly discovered antitype: '[h]is wan eyes/ Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly/As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven'.[20]

Despite Lockean neutrality and absolute potentiality being the default state that Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Sina and al-Ghazzali ascribe to mankind upon birth, neither sullied by original sin nor tarnished by experience, there is a natural disposition (*fitrah*) which connotes a preconscious recognition of Allah's existence resulting in any perception that affirms God's presence being a form of recollection. Hence, Ibn Tufayl believes childhood to be a period of visionary openness as the mind is passively predisposed to the existence of multiple dimensions with less attachment to standardised forms of epistemology and thus, intellectual

[19] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), preface, p. 92.
[20] *Ibid*, lines 200-02, p. 98.

development into scholastic or deductivist thought should merely complement the ongoing cultivation of infantile fancy whilst also preventing such idealising tendencies from mentally disassociating an individual to the extent that they perceive Nature as a distracting phantasm rather than a resplendent theatre of divine unveilings. Similarly, Shelley cherishes childhood as an age when love and harmony is inseparable from perception as, 'we less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt from ourselves', eventually becoming obscured by the 'mist of familiarity' that veils us from 'the wonder of our being' and signals the beginning of a perceptual decline that will persist throughout adulthood unless forestalled by a return to, 'reverie', where, 'dissolv[ing] into the surrounding universe',[21] infuses this world with creative potential without overflowing, and becoming lost, in a universe behind the veil. As with *The Assassins*, *Alastor* relates to issues concerning poetic sympathy through communal contemplation with an added emphasis on the pitfalls and power of love to potentially blind or redeem concepts which would emblematise Prometheus and Asia's sympathetic relationship. At its core, poetry (inspired by nature's beauty) expands the circumference of both writer and reader with regards to self-expression and in turn, renders the medium into an ethical instrument of change for a species which is promethean in spirit but haunted by furies. The Poet's fate is, thus, a warning for those who might become mesmerised into retrospective myopia due to an inability to resolve the loss felt upon awakening from an ecstatic vision with their antitype and a desire for direct union leading to a Satanic overstepping of boundaries. If the imaginative faculty is able to balance existence and expression without allowing one to wholly submit to the other, it is possible to once again become a 'child at play'[22] by reinstituting this unifying reflectivity and reclaiming a portion of that maternal delight lost in youth: '[c]onsciousness develops not along a circle, from unity through

[21] *Ibid*, p. 635.
[22] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 635.

division back to the old unity, but along a spiral, from unity to division to a higher unity'.[23] Intellectual maturation and the acquisition of experience should not ossify vision rather they should all contribute to an increasing awareness of humanity's majesty (at once noble and dangerous) as well as the ongoing development of the creative imagination, living poetically:

> I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc [...]I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn[24]

Neither the child who generates subjectivity through play nor the poet who moulds their identity through poetry can be disregarded as illogical (i.e. the visionary experience is so open-ended as to have no internal coherence) but rather, it is the innate desire prompting humanity to creatively engage with the world which serves as the unifying force granting structure to imagination: 'feeling generates form because the self has become committed not to arbitrarily producing just anything, but to accurately recalling that which it loves'.[25] At certain points, reason contradicted what Shelley would characterise as points of belief such as his hope in an afterlife, '[c]ertainly reason can never account for, or prove, the truth of feeling. I have considered it in every possible light; and reason tells me that death is the boundary of the life of man, yet I feel, I belief the direct contrary', whist, in other instances,

[23] Paul Marshall, *The Shape of the Soul: What Mystical Experience Tells Us about Ourselves and Reality* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2019), p. 2.
[24] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam. A Poem, In Twelve Cantos* (London: Printed for John Brooks, 1829), preface, pp. xiii-xiv.
[25] Jean Hall, 'The Divine and the Dispassionate Selves: Shelley's "Defence" and Peacock's "The Four Ages of Poetry"', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 41 (1992), 139-62, at p. 148.

reason became synonymous with belief as a necessary substitute to faith which Shelley did not necessarily discredit due to its relation to feeling: 'it does not prove the non-existence of a thing that it is not discoverable by reason [...] but until I feel it I must be content with the substitute, reason.'[26] The Enlightenment streams Shelley draws from inevitably shape the aim of his visionary pursuits, the idealism inherent in his view of the world as mentally constituted provides a more democratising subjectivism in line with common sense, '[by] considering all knowledge as bounded by perception […] we arrive at a conception of Nature inexpressibly more magnificent, simple and true',[27] whilst detranscendentalising nature for the sake of re-enchanting it under a secular lens and infusing the phenomenal world with godly qualities. In shifting the locus of the sublime from the divine to the organic, mankind is divorced from their prior attachment to a celestial order compelled by a Supreme Godhead.

For both Ibn Tufayl and Shelley, ageing is depicted as a move not only towards a deeper comprehension of the empirical or rational sciences but, if it can retain childlike reverie without childish imitation, there remains the possibility of altering an individual's previously passive and helpless cognition of that, 'shadow [which] fell on me [in youth]',[28] into a morally active life focused on uncovering the divinity within by awakening themselves to the revolutionary potential of love. However, their focus on individual development as a means of heightened awareness of universal connectivity rests on rather different metaphysical assumptions. Ibn Tufayl's conception of self-understanding still revolves around Allah with each animal, plant and celestial body Hayy examines gesturing towards a higher order just as worshippers circumambulate the Kaaba to reflect the angelic motions around the Divine Throne and thus, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* does not have to present as fervent an emanative schema as Ibn Sina to be implicated within this mystical symbol of the heart encircling its Beloved. Shelley, on the other hand, presents Life itself as the 'centre and circumference' of existence,

[26] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, p. 150.
[27] *The Compiete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, VII, p. 60.
[28] *The Major Woks*, stanza 5, line 59, p. 116.

a universal principle through which all things collectively subsist, and the central object of contemplation that apprehension must learn to value despite the seeming impossibility of such a feat: 'Life, the great miracle, we admire not, because it is so miraculous'.[29] Any attempts at confining life to a single system would be disingenuous since it denotes both the conditionality maintaining everything as well as the particular objects constituting our inner and outer reality so, rather than wasting time searching for a monolithic solution for the sake of facile resolution, imagination must be willing to maintain multiple, divergent fictions at once in a more engaged and sympathetically charged position than materialism.

Narrating the self: Confessional autobiography and emotional allegory

The shared core of *Alastor* and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, 'lies in the drama of "the lost soul struggling in the wilderness"',[30] as each author employs the allegorical framework of a bildungsroman to explore mankind's yearning to uncover nature's sensed mystery whilst foregrounding the autodidactic element in perceptual development when striving after a transcendent union. Although both wanderers are unable to penetrate through every veil obscuring the ideal Other, Hayy is the only one to attain satisfaction within mundane existence on the basis that spiritual cultivation is a necessary precursor to more sensitive insights in the next life. Past experiences within nature imprint themselves on both characters in a manner which directly shapes their conceptualisation of an existence beyond form (isolated either by necessity or choice) from the input of other humans. In terms of reception, Hayy is largely shunned or ignored by society because his revelatory encounter was based on intuition and experience resulting in a feeling of estrangement when engaging others who cannot comprehend that relation to Transcendence without scripture: '[w]hen his thinking had risen to this level and the sensory world had been left behind to some extent, just as he

[29] *The Major Works*, p. 633.
[30] Madeleine Callaghan, *Shelley's Living Artistry: Letters, Poems, Plays* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), p. 57.

was mounting to a height from which he could gaze out toward the approaches of the world of mind, Hayy felt alien and alone'.[31] Conversely, Shelley foregrounds an indulgent aspect to this journey of anticipatory ecstatic unveilings by having the *Alastor* Poet carry out a self-imposed exile depicted as the alternate, but equally likely, fate of a love-struck wanderer in search for idealisms. The seeker of non-discursive experiences witnesses the presence of sublimity in mundane creation whether it be the Unmoved Mover, a Demiurge, or an abstracted principle of femininity which results in them either turning away, or being turned away, from society as a consequence of becoming overly absorbed in the remembrance of this idealised Other. Shelley and Ibn Tufayl merge empirical and intuitionistic streams of thought to fit their narrative purpose; Ibn Tufayl adopts a literary avenue to assimilate aspects of Avicenna's syllogistic metaphysics whilst following certain critical amendments al-Ghazali levelled at his scholasticism based on more esoteric foundations; Shelley, moving from his attachment to monistic materialism, championed imagination as a faculty of intuitive reason and offered a hopeful escape from the uncertainties of phenomenal illusion without allowing any noumenal reality (inaccessible to the senses) to delude his sceptically empirical eye so, just as 'Hayy violated the mystic code when he decided to go alone without a guide [...] Shelley's Poet in *Alastor* imitated Hayy, the supreme individual who believes that the divine light shines within each one of us'.[32]

Embarking without a guide on this existential journey of converting sense-perception and reason to intuition and ecstasy inevitably leads to moments of uncertainty which impacts both protagonists in different ways for different reasons and with different outcomes but each has a precursors whose own phases of doubt resonates with their own experiences. *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* reflects al-Ghazali's own autobiography, *al munqidh min al dalal* (Deliverance from Error), which narrates the midlife crisis he underwent upon recognising his learning had not

[31] Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi, *Emerging from Darkness: Ghazzali's Impact on the Western Philosophers* (New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2002), p. 200.
[32] *Borrowed Imagination*, p. 125.

been directed solely to Allah and, after perceiving the loss of his voice to be a sign, was driven to abandon teaching at Nizamiyya madrasa in Baghdad to rectify this quest for fame that had sullied all his prior learning. In *al-Munqidh*, al-Ghazali highlights three groups (scholastic theologians, Ta'limites, and philosophers) and through the course of his journey across Arabia examines them individually to discern how each reduces theology to mere dogma, superstition, or reason with their desire for such transfiguration of Transcendent mystery to epistemological certainty being a result of their disengaged spirituality, each 'paying lip service to the law!'.[33] Comprehension of God via a sacred path is replaced in favour of one's own desires for superiority as society inevitably shifts from a communal experiential knowing to hierarchical centres of learning with the latter model being particularly egregious with regard to religious discourse which should engender a sharing of wisdom as opposed to instilling arrogance: 'the knowledge they acquire only makes them bolder in disobeying God Most High'.[34] Ibn Tufayl and al-Ghazali employ the figure of an inquisitive wanderer detached from society and formal education as a means of exposing the privileging of reason as simply another form of dogma and choose, instead, to foreground certain levels of theological knowledge being attainable when reason as well as observation realise their own cognitive or perceptual limitations resulting in self being the centre of all knowledge: '[t]he heart is that which, if a man knows it, he knows himself, and if he knows himself, he knows his Lord'.[35] A pilgrim must come to know the world through their own selves but, bound by the flawed intermediary of sense, are required to taste the numinous through an ecstatic dissolution of ego in a manner which returns to the world with the sceptical recognition that objectivity is a grammatical construct attached to forms partaking in

[33] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Freedom and Fulfillment: an annotated translation of Al-Ghazali's al-Munqidh min al-ḍalal and other relevant works of al-Ghazali*, trans. by Joseph McCarthy (Michigan: Twayne Publishers, 1980), p. 104.
[34] *Ibid*, p. 114.
[35] Yasser Ad-Dab'bagh, 'The transformative effect of seeking the eternal: A sampling of the perspectives of two great Muslim intellectuals-Ibn-Hazm and Al-Ghazali', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 28 (2008), 550–559, at p. 556.

(as well as gesturing towards) many more dimensional planes than ratiocination will account for. These interior motions of the soul are intrinsically linked to a deeper prophetic reality as the, 'quiescence's, exterior and interior, are learned from the light of the niche of prophecy',[36] which is a level that Hayy reflects inasmuch as he is an emblem of Ibn Sina's rational prophetology. A person can only rely on outward forms during the early stages of their learning because, should they needlessly extend this process, their observations will cease to guide them and merely serve to confound their search as the physical world monopolises their comprehension and draws them away from recognising this world as a sign gesturing towards a suprarational realm. In this schema, it is vital that individuals harness their intellectual faculties whilst offsetting the categorical certainty provided by such methods through the tutelage of experiential intuition which instils doubt in the believer as to the concreteness of mundane life.

I offset Ibn Tufayl's incorporation of Ghazali's sceptical crisis with an analysis of Hume and Shelley's views on narrating a biographical self as Hume discerns how narrativity can provide coherence to an existence fraught with instability and Shelley similarly grapples with retroactively imposing order on an anterior self by questioning whether introspection can grant relevant information about the world or risks transforming existence into an extension of a presumed subject. For Hume, identity is an imaginative and linguistic illusion which enables individuals to make sense of their life by infusing experiences with structure, coherence and progression as new perceptions can alter past conceptions through recollection and in turn, recontextualising those emotions within the relational matrix of contemporary viewpoints. If memory remains open to re-narration then subjects are both perpetually in flux whilst also possessing a sense of continuity (from the perspective of self and others) through the mental habit of first person pronouns and proper nouns resulting in identity becoming a

[36] *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 94.

grammatical construct constituted by the social practice of storytelling. Temporal development as narratologically understood within the perceiving subject's mind (and validated within the collective consciousness) grants continuity to life rather than the causal succession of impressions between mind and world as indicated by his autobiography, *My Own Life*, which offers a therapeutic lens to chart and re-evaluate his progress as a thinker by identifying prior flaws and enacting a type of atonement through revision, 'replac[ing] his memories with a written narrative, and his body with a book'.[37]

Shelley, whose allegorical biographies range from *Alastor* to *The Revolt of Islam*, often charts the progression of a young mind awakening to sense impression by gradually discerning its position in the universe and employs the bildungsroman structure as a means of renarrating his personal awakening during childhood to a sublime yet mysterious spirit underlying phenomenal existence as outlined in 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty': '[w]hile yet a boy I sought for ghosts [...] I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed [...] Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;/ I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!'.[38] Shelley's recollection of his childhood in which, during times of youthful innocence, he had '[h]opes of high talk with the departed dead', would lose their lustre with age as he refused to allow life's mysteries to be appropriated by the 'poisonous names'[39] of 'God and ghosts and Heaven'[40] until the inexpressible becomes codified and instead, forfeiting such naïve beliefs, chose to scrutinise the material world with a discerning eye and a perceptive ear, 'I was not heard; I saw them not'.[41] Nevertheless, having experienced a similar encounter with the shadow of an unknown spirit, Shelley cannot wholeheartedly condemn the wandering Poet's aspiration to uncover life's secrets as this curiosity is a response to his discontentment towards habitual

[37] Robin Valenza, 'Editing the Self: David Hume's Narrative Theory', *The Eighteenth Century* 43 (2002), 137-60, at p. 155.
[38] *The Major Works*, stanza 5, lines 49-60, p. 116.
[39] *Ibid*, stanza 5, lines 52-53, p. 116.
[40] *Ibid*, stanza 3, line 27, p. 115.
[41] *Ibid*, stanza 5, line 54, p. 116.

apprehension. In both the child and the Poet exists Shelley's tendency to personify the inspiring qualities of nature as if it were an separate entity, 'Nature was the poet whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest',[42] channelling its artistry and beauty into those who can both passively receive impressions as well as actively imprint their own readings back upon the world. A reciprocal transferral of authority where Nature provides the original stimulation for its human observers to produce derivative visions which are reframed in new ways, reimagined afresh and shared in a manner that encourages the proliferation of subsequent revisions born from individual engagements with this felt organic harmony. Noting this alteration between passive and active participation in perception, the Wandering Poet initially internalises the sense impressions he gleams from the natural world, investigating 'Nature's most secret steps / [...] like her shadow,'[43] until eventually these accumulated observations actualise an imagined projection that takes on a life of its own which is in line with Hume's understanding of imagination as synthesising and ordering experience in a creative manner: 'Man [as an] inventor [denotes] the use he makes of the principle of the association of ideas [by employing imagination for the sake of] separat[ing], and join[ing], and compos[ing them] into all the varieties of fiction'.[44] The entire process is not directed towards the imposition of monolithic interpretations upon the world in the name of objectivity but recognises that phenomenal existence is filtered through subjectivity and that the inherent perspectivism in all empirical observation should not lead to relativistic nihilism but rather mobilised to deprivilege institutional discourse. Through the world of *Alastor,* Shelley ruminates on the potential for visionary experience as well as the possibility for building social and organic connections despite the Poet being trapped within a passive mode unable to progress towards an innovative, as opposed to imitative, stage. The Poet

[42] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, p. 497.
[43] *The Major Works*, lines 81-82, p. 95.
[44] David Hume, *On Human Nature and the Understanding*, Antony Flew ed (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 302.

recasts the events that occur into an ideal form causing his reflections to ossify into a lingering presence that overwhelms the world until any sense of change is transfigured into an obsessive death drive and he is rendered incapable of appreciating life's interconnectedness at a social and organic level: '[l]ike Lockean man he is a mirror that accurately reflects the flow of his phenomenal experience, but has no power to construe it'.[45]

From his youthful longing to unveil nature's secrets to his sceptical crisis regarding materialism, Shelley often re-presents his deep-seated metaphysical concerns and mythologises them through his works which collectively serve to enact this mental schism between natural science and poetic thinking indicating that, although there is a significant relation between Shelley and his fictional personas, any identification is dispersed and filtered through numerous voices as a way of attesting to, 'the amorphous [and] often contradictory fragments of the self of the poet'.[46] Shelley's visionary experience is figured as 'a radical spilt in the subject's spiritual history and postulates the possibility of a new birth'[47] so that revelatory moments represent a discontinuity between the old and new self where the subject is constantly being born again to new readings of their place in the world. A lifetime composed of numerous contradictory selves coming into awareness. The lifelong process of severance and reinterpretation (illumination of new possibilities and obscurity of past identities) is shown to be at the mercy of readers who choose whether to disseminate the remains of your old works amongst those who will recreate the artistic persona in response to their own experiences: 'Shelley figures the effect of poetry as a kind of haunting power and proceeds to ghost-write his own life, to ghost himself, in poems like *Alastor*, *Adonais* and *The*

[45] Jean Hall, *The Transforming Image: A Study of Shelley's Major Poetry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 27.
[46] Frederick Kirchhoff, 'Shelley's "Alastor": The Poet Who Refuses to Write Language', Keats-Shelley Journal 32 (1983), 108-22, at p. 109.
[47] Spencer Hall, 'Power and the Poet: Religious Mythmaking in Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 32 (1983), 123-49, at p. 146.

Triumph of Life'.[48]

Ibn Tufayl does not present Hayy's visions within the secular terminology of artistry but as working within an intellectual tradition investigating the phenomenon of prophecy by echoing Ghazali's point of view (reliant on Ibn Sina's theory of imaginative prophecy) that realising prophethood through mystical experience, spiritual enlightenment and constant remembrance is possible to a degree in regular individuals but only fully attained by the prophets themselves. The difference between a directly inspired messenger and someone who struggles (with Allah's help) to rise in spiritual ranks is that, although the prophets are also humans, the latter can never be said to reach infallibility as to their insights or interpretations since there remains the possibility for their dreams (related to the term for perception) to be clouded by limitation. The Qur'an sets up a distinction between *ru'ya* to denote divinely-sourced inspiration and *hulm* to denote a fictitious imagining derived from either internal desires or satanic whisperings[49] which postulates a rift between those pure enough to receive a celestial message with minimal distortion and those blinded by corrupt passions (*shahwa*). The allegorical biography grants Shelley and Ibn Tufayl the ability to trace a character who is at once open to intuition as well as predisposed to sensation, the secondary artistry of the *Alastor* Poet and the pseudo-prophecy of Hayy possess both commendable and potentially duplicitous qualities capable of re-infusing the world with a splendour lost to conventional apprehension whilst potentially reflecting or conforming simply to what has already been instilled either through institutional learning or material forms

Comparing these various renditions of spiritual biographies, it is unsurprising the theological and philosophical tenets characterising their crises would share the closest

[48] Andrew Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 19.

[49] The term is used in the Qur'an when Pharaoh and his two prisoners ask Joseph to interpret their dreams in the hope of unlocking some visionary insight behind their abstract imaginings but also possesses sexual undertones as its etymology (*hulm*) is employed to describe the objections levied towards the Prophet by the enemies of Islam.

resemblance with their respective traditions yet the choice of form and voice creates links across both pairings. Hume and Ghazali adopt a confessional and autobiographical approach to relaying life events with the hopes of attaining mastery over past doubts. Conversely, Shelley and Ibn Tufayl relay their tale allegorically within a visionary mode based not on confessing personal details or indulging in internal monologues but displacing meaning, as metaphor does, outside the frame and towards an implied audience:

> convert[ing] the reader's secondhand "idea" of that dream [or divine witnessing] into a direct "impression" [so that] ownership of the dream passes to the reader, who leaves the poem ready to commence his own equally intense search [for a community of feeling][50]

Both seek to reinstate revelation (creative imagination) back within the human realm but do so in different ways; Shelley seeks to balance the consecutive force and permanency of sense impressions whilst retaining the hopeful openness offered by reflection resulting in his conception of the mind as a, 'chronicle, register, book of account, and other such forms of immutable record',[51] through which mankind can either reflect on what it has been in order to rewrite new paths forward or continue being a receptacle but never an author. In mediating between Locke's tabula rasa and Hume's narrative memory, Shelley develops an introspective mode that seeks to transmit passions from one person to another via a corporeal textuality that privileges individual as well as collective authorship through the displacing effect of metaphor and within the mutually constitutive realm of the social body. Even during *Queen Mab* Shelley considered consciousness as impressionable with each sensation imprinting itself on the mind gradually informing behaviour through the acquisition of new ideas:

[50] Andrew M. Cooper, *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 172.
[51] Thomas A. Reisner, 'Tabula Rasa: Shelley's Metaphor of the Mind', *Ariel* 2 (1973), 90-102, at p. 96.

> O Spirit! through the sense/By which thy inner nature was apprised/ Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled,/And varied reminiscences have waked/ Tablets that never fade;/All things have been imprinted there,/ The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,/Even the unshapeliest lineaments/ Of wild and fleeting visions/ Have left a record there/To testify of earth[52]

However, especially as Shelley more strongly emphasises the productive role of imagination in perception, he expands the Lockean analogy of mind to account not only for sense and self-reflection but highlights mankind's visionary capacity with the caveat that sensory experience provides material which is transfigured into mental content. The transitory nature of spontaneous insight may generate an inexpressible delight but can also lead a person to chase delusions. For Ibn Tufayl, working within an Islamic framework, the mind preserves impressions and is granted the logical tools of deduction as well as creative insight to convert these sensations into momentary unveilings which heighten the level of accountability with regards to how these insights are put into practice. All of these individual chronicles are intimately related to the ultimate record attributed to Allah's Knowledge, the Preserved Tablet (*Al ‑Lawh Al ‑Mahfooz*), which, although a created entity, is also protected from additions, deletions or alterations[53] and contains a transcription of every motion, deed, statement, and thought as part of the Unseen (*al-ghayb*): '[when] the heart thus becomes [like] a polished, shiny mirror, the veil is removed momentarily between the Preserved Tablet in the heaven and the heart, and the record of the Tablet is reflected on the heart'.[54] From a metaphysical perspective, if life can be re-narrated and the mind is a record then the world

[52] *The Major Works*, canto VII, lines 49-59, p. 52.
[53] There is a difference of opinion as to whether it can be said that the Tablet is free from alteration from its conception or whether changes can take place under Allah's permission but both take into account His foreknowledge and attribution of Will.
[54] Kojiro Nakamura, 'Imam Ghazali's Cosmology Reconsidered with Special Reference to the Concept of 'Jabarut'', *Studia Islamica* 80 (1994), 29-46, at p. 35.

becomes a text which is interpreted through rational and creative inquiry to uncover the real nature of existence then Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Tufayl and Ibn al-Nafis[55] write allegorical novels to compensate for their longing to uncover 'a grand Author' behind creation whereas Shelley desires to uncover the 'authors of feeling',[56] as they possess the power to grant signs meaning.

World as Text

To expand the investigative scope with regards to textuality and intellect, it is useful to offset Ibn Tufayl's commitment to Islamic revelation against Shelley's conception of poetry as an acorn. Ibn Tufayl's naturalistic mysticism is influenced by a Ghazalian metaphysics which posits humanity is capable of intuiting aspects of the noumenal through movements perceived in the phenomenal realm and yet, the former chooses not to present his poetic world in such distinct terms as the latter who delineates this dynamic as true knowledge being attained from the *malakat* (the unseen world) that sound hearts gleam from the *mulk* (the apparent world) in a symbolic (*mithal*) and metaphoric (*mathal*) form after being filtered through the imagination (*khayal*). Just as nature is the primary artist for Shelley due to its inspiring qualities, the empirical method remains vital for Ibn Tufayl regardless of the need for mystical assent precisely because man is only capable of gaining insight into life's mysteries by distilling images into their essential qualities as a consequence of mankind being tied to the world of metaphors (*al-'alam al-majazi*) requiring them to creatively participate in rebuilding their perception of existence for the sake of unveiling Reality (*al-Haqq*). The connection (*muwazanah, munasabah*) between our world and an alternative higher realm is figured in terms of a mirror-like reflectivity with all the implications of distortion associated with that comparison and thus, even if an individual attempts to intuit

[55] A Muslim scholar known for his work in medicine who wrote a similar novel entitled, *Al-Risalah al-Kamiliyyah fi al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, narrating the development of an individual born in isolation as they learn the truths of existence through reason and deduction.
[56] Jerold E. Hogle, 'Shelley's Texts and the Premises of Criticism', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 42 (1993), 66-79, at p. 76.

the true nature of existence through their creative faculties, there is a chance their deductions are entirely fanciful and specious. Those confined to forms are either wholly unaware, or emotionally unable to account for, the sensed transcendence within immanence whereas those who appreciate the shadowy aspects of existence as metaphor must balance between recognising our apprehension is not the extent of life's dimensionality: '[t]he image in the mirror comes second and stands for the effect of a cause on the level of being, but it comes first when you want to know yourself'.[57] The importance of maintaining equilibrium so as to neither be blindly misled by the totality of created existence nor acquiesce wholly to self-intuited fantasies as equally all-encompassing is indicated by the highest exemplars in Islam, the prophets, who are intermediaries between the sublime and created world and for whom the epiphanic and the everyday are integral to self. Given that creation is acknowledged as the expression of a divine blueprint, images have a tendency to imprint themselves onto the hearts of observers to the extent that a transitory visual representation remains in the mind's eye even after its physical counterpart has disappeared producing a ghosting effect via recollection that enables the imagination to enlist any symbols or images accumulated through sense-perception to develop their abstractive faculties and in turn, more intuitively ascertain their essence. If Allah is the Supreme Architect then the prophets, and those closest to them in spiritual rank, are most adept at witnessing the unveiling of those plans (*surah*) engraved on the Preserved Tablet.

The problem of mimesis (i.e. whether art can be representative of reality) is a key question that Shelley is also working through as he poeticises his movement from monistic materialism to empirical scepticism and which leads him to see the perfected form of humanity as, 'hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration'.[58] By grounding humanity within the metaphorical, poetic language is capable of reinvigorating the mind through fresh

[57] *Imam Ghazali's Cosmology Reconsidered*, p. 33.
[58] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 660.

associative reference points as a counter measure against dogmatic language which erects laws, parrots scripture and deifies abstractions. Imagination hangs tentatively between inspired intuition and self-aware fictionality so as to neither exist in a, 'dim vast vale of tears,' nor assume linguistic representations corresponds to ontological realities, '[t]he poet [...] is both image-maker and image-breaker'.[59] The recreative force that Shelley attributes to poetry is described not in terms of unveiling but renovation coupled with obfuscation, 'high poetry [...] is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially [so even if] Veil after veil may be undrawn […] the inmost naked beauty of the meaning [is] never exposed,'[60] as the anthropomorphic One Mind (an empty sign constituted by every individual interpretation) replacing the Grand Author (a Sign that incorporates all other signifiers) momentarily reveals a portion of itself whilst constantly evolving and eluding any complete comprehension. The world as a text is not a mirrored entity but a locus for competing points of view all contributing to dethrone the antiquated Symbolic order and develop new modes of discourse. *Queen Mab* provides a pertinent reminder of the revolutionary capacity of interpretation as the Fairy bemoans the loss of freethinking to the strictures of scripture, 'Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,/ And priests dare dabble of a God of peace,/ Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood',[61] but there remains a glimmer of hope in society's eventual advancement as subsequent generations learn to be accepting of difference. The extent to which the Spirit of Beauty fuels individual minds in a productively enlightening or reductively obfuscating manner is explored further in 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' where Shelley examines the human tendency (including his own) to project insecurities onto idealised concepts in order to satiate another innate desire for immortality both of which he perceives as flaws preventing mankind from reaching their full potential. In this schema, the

[59] Lloyd Abbey, 'Shelley's Bridge to Maturity: From "*Alastor*" to "Mont Blanc"', *Mosaic* 10 (1977), 69-84, at p. 76.
[60] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, pp. 652-53.
[61] *The Major Works*, canto VII, lines 43-45, p. 52.

attainment of human perfection is only available in a transcendental realm instead of being directed towards contemporary reform. Throughout the poem Shelley repeatedly prevents himself from elevating his written creations to the level of autonomous existence even when acknowledging the importance of mythmaking in his own poetics as he questions the truth of vacant signs artificially granted metaphysical signification: '[n]o voice from some sublimer world hath ever/To sage or poet these responses given –/Therefore the names of God, and ghost, and Heaven,/[…]Frail spells'.[62] However, Shelley subsequently affirms the poem's own belief (if not hope) in the sublime reality of Beauty, '[t]hy light alone – like mist o'er mountains driven,/ Or music by the night wind sent[...] Or moonlight on a midnight stream,/ Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream',[63] he is caught between the need to reconfigure old mythologies in order to prevent poetic language from becoming habitual and cliché without allowing this visionary freedom to overtake the organicist vitality of nature itself. Enlightenment and illusion are mutually constituted yet contradictory forces enacted during the relationship between Intellectual Beauty and human thought; on the one hand, luminosity can signify the blinding awe elicited by Intellectual Beauty which, in the hands of soothsayers and sophists, is inundated with transcendental meaning despite connoting nothing more than a vacant space; on the other hand, Intellectual Beauty might be figured as a shadowy reflection of the mysterious phenomena in nature with the flame of individual human thought subjectively bringing to light its meaning. In the *Alastor* volume, creative imagination is a potentially estranging force within the realm of human discourse (harnessing a quasi-religious idealisation of immateriality that is problematic when abstraction is viewed as superstition) whilst also infusing existence with a reconstructive potency to form connections previously forgotten which in turn, generates a balanced outlook where: 'the poet himself must be the battleground for the perpetual war between the visionary imagination and

[62] *Ibid*, stanza 3, lines 25-29, p. 115.
[63] *Ibid*, stanza 3, lines 32-36, p. 115.

its opposite [since] one who would profess how the earth can be made paradise risks becoming his own hell'.[64]

The pursuit of knowledge is where Shelley and Ibn Tufayl convene and diverge; both accepting its synonymous nature with the quest for perfection but differing as to whether the ability to conceive of perfection is man's greatest tragedy, or accepting that, 'in seeking knowledge we seek perfection, and in perfection beauty resides'.[65] The pilgrimage to attain such knowledge, however, is born out of an existential need for rejuvenation whether through creating renewed associations or developing a reinvigorated spiritual life as a counter to the stultifying habits inculcated by institutionalised learning and thus, they perceive the world as providing the tools (creatively and logically) to unlock mankind's potentiality as much as their enslavement. As Hayy attains mystical insight without having to outwardly proclaim a faith, Shelley's *Queen Mab* highlights the dangerous effects of passivity if the natural goodness of humankind is not cultivated but allowed to waste away under the atrophic effects of slavish civility which stifles those youthful sensations by curtailing contemplation: '[l]et priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man/Inherits vice and misery, when force/And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,/Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good'.[66] In their commentary on civil society it is clear neither believes it ideal to force others to drink from the spiritual well, alongside religious institutions that Shelley saw as legitimising a social contract built on servitude and which, Ibn Tufayl reasoned, only served to maintain a neutral status quo resulting in a stark contrast between those contented masses who continue to occupy these societies and those wandering observers of nature who, 'tear every leaf from

[64] Neil Fraistat 'Poetic Quests and Questioning in Shelley's "*Alastor*" Collection', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 33 (1984), 161-81, at pp.174-75, p. 178.
[65] Mashhad Al-'Allaf, *The Essence of Islamic Philosophy* (Washington: IIC Classic Series, 2003), p. 153.
[66] *The Major Works*, canto 4, lines 117-20, p. 34.

the accursed book of God, [and instead] read the inscription on his heart.'[67]

Ironically, Shelley employs a Humean scepticism regarding the existence of supernatural beings so that his empiricist philosophy does not need to account for anything which might be explained as miraculous in a divinely ordained sense whereas Ibn Tufayl employs Ghazali's method of doubting worldly causality to make way for Allah as the single prenatural cause which has the added effect of introducing miracles as an extension of God's Will subverting His own habitual established processes. Nevertheless, each thinker accepts that our finitude generates the impenetrable veils which obfuscate the totality of life's mysteries and as such, critique groups which stultify metaphysical ideas by transposing them into a setting of instutionalised learning. Indeed, both perspectives recognise that the Transcendent can never fully enter into human sign systems as this world is grounded in the metaphoric which bars perception from penetrating the realm of presence. Shelley relegates the question of a remote Power to a blank space (not necessarily empty but blindingly unknowable) refracted by life's colours, '[l]ife, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,/Stains the white radiance of Eternity',[68] the *mysterium tremendum* is transfigured into the beautiful embellishments that invigorate the mundane with a sense of sublimity and which supply the necessary creative materials for ecstatic experiences within the symbolic realm, otherwise '[i]f one has become stuck in a certain narrow or predictable way of seeing [and] no fresh light can come into the mind, the colour and beauty fade from life'.[69] Rather than focusing solely on a colourless Divine Light in the hopes of directly accessing its spiritual reality, Shelley calls for humanity to displace their infatuation with this ideal Beyond and invest it into the human palette of diverse expressions generated through imaginative encounters with natural beauty so as to expose the heart to constantly evolving forms of delightful splendour.

[67] *Ibid*, p. 78. This is an extreme example with regards to Ibn Tufayl's protagonist for Hayy would not perceive his insights as disagreeing with revelation. My central argument, however, is that he still reaches this knowledge by way of experience rather than doctrine.
[68] *The Major Works*, stanza 52, lines 462-63, p. 545.
[69] John O'Donohue, *Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* (London: Bantam Books, 2004), p. 28.

For Ibn Tufayl and Ghazali, whilst a spiritual union with the Transcendent was momentarily attainable by cleansing the heart until it becomes a vessel for Divine inspiration they never claimed that individuals became Allah or that their impoverished status was overwritten. They argued that this state was merely a witnessing or tasting because only the Creator is intimately conscious of Himself and, given that any lordly traits attributed to human beings are solely metaphoric in nature, humanity can find contentment within an apophatic epistemology. Intuition is not divorced from cognition since these are stages in the process to acquiring metaphysical insight (the latter relying on reason and the former being visionary in nature) producing different outcomes between theoretical philosophy and experiential tasting relative to the level of human perfection attainable at either rank.

Ecstasy, Eudaimonia and Education

When seeking intellectual and perceptual union with an Ideal Beloved, the pleasure principle is not merely directed towards higher forms of cognition but introduces a sensual aspect as an added goal that differs from the worldly equivalent in that it subsists past death. In this case, enjoyment functions as the effect as well as the end goal of mysticism since it is both the byproduct of living a life of active contemplation and used by Ibn Tufayl to describe the eternal state attained by those who occupy the Ultimate stations of paradise. Despite the overlaps with Aristotelian Eudaimonia, Aristotle foregrounds theoretical knowledge in the field of science, philosophy and logic where a contemplative life, directed to the highest idealisms, is enriching due to a deeper intellectual appreciation of those principles and any sense of happiness is derived from the act itself. Ibn Tufayl, on the other hand, presents a protagonist whose intuitive cognition grants the seeker enjoyment to the extent that they come to not simply know but envision and experience the source of all knowledge. To shed further light on the type of reflective enjoyment expounded in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, it serves to examine a precursor to Ibn Tufayl and an influential figure in al-Ghazali's ethics, Ibn

Miskawayh (936-1030), for whom *sa'adah* (happiness) was attained when an entity (inanimate or otherwise) perfectly realises the property that makes them unique.[70] For Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Miskawayh, anyone who seeks happiness in material gain or contemplation of high ideals for their own sake without directing inquiry towards their source will never be satiated because those pleasures are neither self-desirable nor self-sufficient. Hayy and Absal, upon entering into a mystical union with the Divine, become illuminated by His Majesty as their cognition of mundane forms become immediate perceptions of ultimate truths, becoming satisfied (not only by their undignified thoughts being curtailed) but because they no longer live for the approval of others as they understand that virtue is an end unto itself. A key difference between the visionary or experiential and the scientific or speculative forms of knowledge when it comes to comprehending the Creator is that although theoretical contemplation can grant the philosopher knowledge of the highest principles, the only way of tasting these truths is to internalise them as they are being revealed. Hayy is on a path where higher stations of insight confer a type of tangible happiness that, given the text's reliance on al-Ghazali, will likely persist through to the afterlife.

Regardless of Shelley's potential qualms regarding Ibn Tufayl's delineation of existence as a theophanic self-expression of Allah, there is pleasure to be attained through his own intellectualising of nature since he both sympathised with, and criticised, the *Alastor* Poet's aspiration to directly know his own idealised miniature as moments of ecstatic insight can revive dead apprehensions: 'the idea of love [which takes] from life and refine[s] into art'.[71] These newfound aspirations cannot be satisfied by simply elevating the natural world to the level of transcendence since, as Shelley discovered during his exploration of this internalised feminine antitype in *Epipsychidion*, the main pitfall in love rests in, 'seeking in a mortal

[70] Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, 'Miskawayah's Conception of Sa'adah', *Islamic Studies* 2 (1963), 317-35, at p. 323.
[71] *Shelley's Living Artistry*, p. 218.

image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal'.[72] Nevertheless, this acceptance was the result of his own complex (and at times failing) relationships with women, whether it be Emilia Viviani, Jane Williams, Harriet Westbrook or Mary Godwin, he came to know first-hand how the desire to follow one's passions could lead to a type of self-destruction in much the same way he was wary of taking mere shadows for enlightenment after having experienced such ecstatic revelations in his youth. This fine line between pleasure and pain in poetic insight rests on making sure that love, 'a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own',[73] does not result in such self-loss and complete enrapture with an intuited Other that submissive devotion becomes an intrinsic part of the relationship for, as with the *Alastor* Poet, it risks fostering an enclosing rather than enlarging viewpoint – the expansiveness associated with imaginative sympathy is reduced to a myopic introspectiveness. The Poet privileges the visionary content and not the interstitial mental connections which allow for its existence whereas, for Shelley, satisfaction comes from the journey as opposed to the destination (ie. the moment of unveiling) because when one vacuum is displaced another will inevitably arise indicating *Alastor* is not an attempt to demonise those searching after the shadows of Intellectual Beauty but a cautionary tale for any who might misattribute substantiality to the image of their devotion rather than the, 'sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings'.[74] This focus on the minds associative capacities rather than Divine Providence is similar to Hume's conception of the missing shade of blue which posits the imagination is capable of generating simple ideas not merely through direct apprehension or sensation but also through a blending process where ideas, acquired experientially, can lead to other abstract images as a result of closely resembling simple perceptions being metaphorically arranged into new formulations and as such, 'we think God by augmentation of experience,

[72] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, II, p. 434.
[73] *The Selected Poems and Prose of Shelley*, p. 642.
[74] *The Major Works*, preface, p. 92.

and think this particular blue by elision of experience'.[75] Filling absence through elision generates a new image which is a psychological intermediate of impressions gleamed from nature but which also takes on a life of its own as Hume and Shelley recognise how humanity interpolates the gaps in life's mysteries and their works expose the ease with which a person can blindly argue for the ontological existence of substances and powers that they do not know directly. A subject can only claim to know the simple impressions accumulated through perception and arranged by the mind in such a manner as to give rise to this now seemingly self-subsisting image. A sense of emptiness propped up by life's illusions is the key component in spurring humanity's search for an externalisation of our inner soul but the ephemeral quality of those spiritual visitations presented as the truth made manifest are also the catalyst for widening this existential lacunae. The unbounded feeling conjured during the ecstasy of imaginative sympathy, a going out of oneself, is both a dangerous and freeing sensation for it can liberate the mind to new avenues of thought and away from the calculating view of reason but it also risks inculcating within the observer a false sense of boundlessness where they perceive themselves as a reflection of that sublime sensation precisely due to their own incapacity to adequately respond (i.e. their limitedness); for, 'a rational subject has the tendency in relation to the mathematical and dynamic sublime to become a sublime, transgressive thinking-speaking-acting subject'.[76] Given that reason is unable to substantiate an individual's imagined object of adoration, they are forced to transfigure this pain of an unconsummated relationship into a non-cognitive harmonious joy. A key point of contention regarding Ibn Tufayl and Shelley's views on eudaimonia as a form of cognition results from their differing beliefs on Beauty as an ideal good; the Shelleyan female principle, manifested through the actions of wives and mothers, is as integral to the

[75] Susan M. Purviance, 'Arguing against Cognitive Nativism: Hume vs. Locke', in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 23 (2006), 137-50, at p. 141.
[76] Victor J. Vitanza, *Negation, Subjectivity, and The History of Rhetoric* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 74.

creation of Beauty (as an atemporal concept) as the notion itself is in spurring those acts and physical traits deemed beautiful. This experiential synergy generates a more mutually constitutive relationship than the Platonic split between ideal forms and their terrestrial counterparts with the immutable concepts representing true reality as opposed to the Demiurge inspired, divine faculties possessed by mankind which are secondary. Being immersed in the material idealist tradition, Shelley is inevitably responding to, and in turn working within, the framework of Locke's tabula rasa which, in the hands of sceptical thinkers such as Hume (who expanded the ancient scepticism regarding essence to include existence) exploits its experientially blank nature as well as its limited attachment to a priori knowledge as a means of hiding matter behind the veil of psyche and unsettling conviction in an immaterial essence as the ground of being: 'the soul is now unknowable or even hypothetical; Locke had emptied it out [it] is a vacancy, whose extent is discovered as it is filled [and is] more or less unconscious emptiness.'[77] Unable to find others who are empathetic or willing to search for their antitype in a life beyond our own, a person may examine the organic world to uncover this likeness they feel so bereft without. In turning to nature, the subject may become conscious of a nonverbal harmony which resonates with their soul as disparate natural phenomena collectively gesture towards the existence of an underlying spirit. As Shelley writes:

> the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something

[77] Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 14-15.

within the soul awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and
bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes[78]

This synchronicity of forms highlights mankind's inherent attachment to the universe as a constituent element of its perceptual unfolding which is marred by a tendency to anthropomorphise and in turn, makes union difficult to discern from projection – the spiritual and the psychoerotic become intertwined. The sensuousness by which Nature exposes itself to the enraptured seeker causes utter disassociation from corporeality as a means of allowing such a non-discursive experience to take place and urges the individual to recognise transcendence is achieved by exceeding cognitive norms and generating fresh insights from dead apprehensions.

The inevitable distortions which take place as a consequence of man's narrow comprehension and restricted perspective become the means by which they creatively expand beyond their locality through the contributions of other minds existing both as contemporaries and transhistorically. This sense of boundless finitude can be either a blessing or a curse depending on whether it nurtures sympathetic openness where humanity recognises their role as secondary artists in relation to the Spirit of Beauty whilst appreciating how they collectively contribute to upholding, shaping and engaging with emotionality; otherwise, it fosters a type of self-aggrandisement where an individual perceives themselves to be above the natural order (in a hierarchical mindset that often seeps into social beliefs) and, as Hume would argue, their notion of a Supreme Being is simply an extension of their own ego contemplating the mechanics of their own mind but abstracted to an unlimited degree. Consequently, Mother Earth, Intellectual Beauty and love are contingent upon human behaviour infusing those concepts with power, whilst Muslims would consider human actions as acquired from Allah, with the notion of individual behaviour adding or diminishing from

[78] *The Major Works*, p. 632.

His Majesty being blasphemous. Ibn Tufayl creates a theophanic universe where the material veil gestures towards a Transcendent Power which is an immaterial Agent. Generating a conception of history that assumes all humans are naturally predisposed to seek perfection but only those who take the time to refine their emotional intellect and critically engage with the world as an interconnected whole can justify their God-given vicegerency and avoid being swept up with any who allow these faculties to go unnoticed under the oppressive influence of civilisation. The embodied nature of pleasure, gained through achieving a constant state of awareness of the Divine, is highlighted in the importance Ibn Tufayl places on developing a body that is as equally cultivated in a morally upright manner as the intellect due to its role in providing a healthy vessel for the inquisitive mind to work within. Otherwise, Ibn Tufayl fears, a corrupt foundation will produce unhealthy results which spurns Hayy to develop his own dietary plan that omits the killing and eating of animals since he feels it would be an abuse of his natural superiority over the animal world and runs counter to his intrinsic desire to use that power for protection rather than destruction for personal gain. The ecstatic moments which arise during a Sufistic contemplative encounter with the Divine results in a luminous flash of inspiration, attained not through theory but an experiential tasting. Hayy's formative period in which he carried out forms of scientific inquiry through biology and astronomy as well as asking philosophical questions regarding the ethics of killing animals for survival were vital in enabling him to carry out his metaphysical investigations but, at some point, a perspectival shift must occur where the thinker must examine the cause itself rather than solely inspecting Its effects lest they remain forever in the first, non-essential (i.e. non-pleasurable) stage of sublime observation. Ultimately, Locke and Drummond were more willing to accept a deity within the confines of their philosophies on cognition; the Muslim thinkers cited previously believed man's neutrality at birth never denied God's sovereignty over man nor a deeply felt resonance regarding His existence; and,

for Shelley and Hume, such apodictic certainty was not something they could believe in as even when such abstract conceptualisations of a noumenal realm were entertained it would be conducted towards moral and social change rather than a spiritual afterlife.

Consequently, Shelley is caught between an appreciative respect for those who desire to seek ideals within an unregulated state of nature and a cautionary censure of the gullibility and superstitious blindness that can result from such a visionary existence. This duality is reflected in two other eighteenth-century philosophes, Voltaire and Rousseau, who were also both enchanted and dissatisfied by Ibn Tufayl's allegorical novel. Rousseau recognised human nature as naturally endowed with the capacity to develop morally and intellectually due to their essential being deriving from God's will and in turn, he scorned the stifling effects of habit and compulsion that governmental policies levy against the free spirit. Nevertheless, Rousseau is unwilling to leave man completely unaided within nature as Ibn Tufayl had narrated with Hayy since his trust also falls partly upon the guiding influence of thinkers, such as himself, who can shade individuals from the deadening impact of society and help extract their intrinsic talents. The isolation that comes from pursuing and reclaiming a natural morality requires the refocusing touch of other human beings who can prompt one another to harness and realise these lessons but without the dehumanising dynamics of industrial society which is grounded upon dependency and unfulfilled desires: 'the price paid for experiencing anything is the experience of ourselves as alienated'.[79] However, in his novel *Emile, or On Education* (1763), it becomes clearer why love is not substantial enough to rectify his qualms regarding a moral education sought to rid people of a bourgeois mindset driven by self-importance and dissatisfaction; just as the *Alastor* Poet's journey exposes the illusory nature of pleasure through beauty, Rousseau shows the idea of positing a beloved either within nature or within another likeminded spirit will always be a subjective projection

[79] Michael Davis, *The Autobiography of Philosophy: Rousseau's the Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), p. 270.

of beauty and, attached to this sentimental image, transfigures any contentment into a contingent object of desire. Likewise, Voltaire was actively engaged in the plight of thinkers and groups who were influenced by Ibn Tufayl's thought (from Locke to the Quakers) and who worked to promote the importance of religious freedom which resonated with the French writer due to his own disdain for clerical monopoly in matters of epistemology that should be fuelled by induction and scientific experimentation. However, this optimism, inquisitive exploration and rational accumulation of talents through self-education is satirised in his novel, *Zadig ou la Destinée* (1747), where the titular character, Zadig,[80] exemplifies the problems that arise when attempting to live in society as a good-hearted but disillusioned philosophe for all his powers of deduction or optimistic youth are unable to help him avoid being taken advantage of. Eventually, Zadig comes across an angel disguised as a hermit who teaches him to justify acts of wickedness as beneficial since every movement in creation is a necessary balancing of order and thus, his final submission to fate serves as a mockery of Leibniz's attempt to reconcile human suffering with Original Sin and the argument that God chose the best of all possible worlds.[81]

To some extent, these authors would appreciate Hayy's split from dogmatic centres of religious or social education as a sign for others to take control of the curriculum and embark upon a journey for self-knowledge, or spiritual enlightenment in a manner that foregrounds autonomy and tolerance. Nevertheless, there remains a naivety underlying his hopefulness and a futility underlying his alienation which prevents them from wholeheartedly trusting this natural religion as a miracle cure for the modern malaise resulting in them feeling disenchanted or inconsequential upon realising: 'the problem of moral education for our

[80] An ancient Babylonian philosopher whose name refers to the Arabic word, Sadiq, which denotes a truthful person.
[81] For a more extensive comparison of Ibn Tufayl, Voltaire and Leibniz, see Samar Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), pp. 103-06.

species remains unsolved'.[82] For example, the journey that Shelley's protagonist embarks upon in *Alastor* evinces similar themes to those found in Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782) since both explore the workings of a mind that has recently become aware of the decay, transience and mundanity of nature the secrets of which no longer elicit excitement or joy just despondency at life's ephemerality so they direct their passions inward. Each show an interest in the visionary gleam of youth that fades over time as the *Alastor* Poet's age starts to accelerate from the point he awakens from his erotic dream he slowly loses the very perceptive and creative faculties that gave birth to his beloved in the first place even as he draws nearer to final stage of annihilation. The simultaneous death drive and pleasure drive spurning the protagonist to that cherished Shelleyan instance of self-castration manifests physiologically as the fresh spark of innocent youth that caused the 'virgins' to 'pine' and 'waste' due to a 'fond love of his wild eyes'[83] eventually cause him to lose his only attachment to the phenomenal realm when his eyes fade into perpetual darkness: '[t]he fire of those soft orbs ceased to burn'.[84] For both Rousseau and Shelley, this extinguished aspiration is a result of intellectual degeneration experienced by those who direct their entire being in service of ideals whilst dismissing, and being dismissed by, society. Alternately, Zadig's injured eye that he acquires after being attacked by bandits does not symbolise his pariah status amongst humanity but within Fate itself as the countless misfortunes resulting from his attempts at doing good serve as a mockery against those whose optimism would blind them from visible injustices within the world and who, in turn, rationalise these events as wise decisions from a monarchical king or an Abrahamic God rather than the arbitrary rule of a self-serving clergy and a Deistic clockmaker. Ultimately, Shelley, Rousseau and Voltaire's refusal to fully replicate the autodidactic, self-contented wanderer represented by Hayy –

[82] Imannuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by V. L. Dodwell and H. H. Rudnick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 243-44.
[83] *The Major Works*, lines 62-63, p. 95.
[84] *Ibid*, line 64, p. 95.

despite appreciating him as an image of freethought and man's perfectibility – results from Ibn Tufayl's own readiness to trust in the guiding and all-encompassing nature of Allah as the Qur'anic understanding, '[t]he East and West belong to God: wherever you turn, there is His Face',[85] becomes central to the educational narrative in a way that the other texts cannot fully endorse.

Summary

I have investigated how Muslim thought inadvertently feeds its way into the genealogy of *Alastor*'s commentary on the relation between mind and matter through the Enlightenment interest in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* with a more focused comparative analysis of how Ibn Tufayl employs al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina to form his naturalistic mysticism alongside Shelley's engagement with Locke and Hume to formulate a fledgling sceptical idealism as he begins, developing 'an aesthetic of inspiration from the unlikely ground of his early empiricism [but] beset by uncertainty and scepticism'.[86] I have also sought to foreground the dynamic interplay between these philosophical affinities and transvaluative differences as a means of complementing the earlier chapter by offering further reasoning behind why Shelley embeds aspects of his narrative around the East, whether geographically or symbolically. Both thinkers attempted to accommodate the intuitionalist and the empiricist views on the origin of ideas by admitting the agency of two contributory sources of knowledge — intuitive impulse and sensory stimulation — each playing defining roles (however unequal) in the genesis of ideas. Throughout this journey, the *Alastor* Poet's fixation on the abstract elements constituting his mental antitype result in his dissolution as a warning that our creative faculties can easily lapse into the compulsive infatuation for a Supreme Being characteristic of religious consciousness unless productively channelled towards establishing sympathetic

[85] Muhammad Abdel-Haleem, *The Qurʾan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2: 115, p. 14.
[86] Angela Leighton, *Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 25.

communities in this world. This yearning for ideational companionship is due to a feeling of existential seclusion endured by all who occupy a world where mind and matter are not fitted together in a Wordsworthian sense and, given this insufficient correspondence between phenomenal existence and the terra incognita, are forced into misrepresentation whenever the former is conceptualised through the latter's anthropocentric lens. In refraining from viewing connectivity in terms of epistemology, passions (such as love) can be cherished for their role in instantiating the very drives which prompt these quests to search beyond and it is through expanding the experiential breadth of our finite mind that life becomes valuable:

> the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regards to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dullness [...] Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise[87]

Hayy Ibn Yaqzan and *Alastor* emphasise mankind's responsibility in how they choose to perceive reality, Hayy's own spiritual trajectory is generated as a response to Islamic theology and philosophy which eventually became, in the eighteenth century, an emblem of anthropocentrism where the human mind was rendered self-sufficient with no need for formal training and freed from the deadening grip of cultural norms. Given this fusion, it becomes clear how an examination of Ibn Tufayl's tale would reveal an Islamic counterpart to this lineage of human-sized erotic striving which Shelley himself fashioned out of a response to Humean scepticism and Lockean empiricism alongside Romantic strains of influence from Wordsworthian naturalism to William Jones's translations of Vedantic and Sufistic literature. Matter is not existentially tainted due to a Fall, humanity can both strive for sublimity whilst acknowledging how their own finitude limits them from assuming complete epistemological

[87] *The Major Works*, p. 83.

dominance over creation since employing concepts and relying on observation reduces knowledge to vague assertions and general principles, none of which can claim to possess ontological validity.

There is a shared feeling of compulsive emptiness driving Hayy, the protagonists of Islamic love poetry, and the *Alastor* Poet, since their quests for an idealised other adapt similar symbols of homesickness from the reedpipe to the Aeolian Harp but, from an Islamic perspective, these are born out of an underlying yearning to reclaim a Paradise lost whereas, for Shelley, recognising life's eroding sway renders any attempt to grasp and formulate an account of it always tenuous, there remains a lingering hope for an earthly Paradise yet to be fully discovered. Shelley sought to retain the purity of nature's voicelessness whilst Muslim thinkers sought to remove all distractions to allow God's voice to shine through as external signs clarify Qur'anic expression. The former generates an insular inversion of the Buberian I-Thou configuration of Christianity[88] into an I-I relationship whereby ideal concepts, such as justice or beauty, provide mankind with seemingly immutable ethical or aesthetic principles through which to live by whilst also being largely constituted, and shaped, by the collective emotional responses to the human condition that civilisations have elicited over the ages. On the other hand, Islamic thought is centered around the notion of remembrance on a cosmological, scriptural, and hagiographical level; whether it be recalling the primordial covenant where all souls were gathered to testify to the Oneness of God or the Qur'anic emphasis on the rejuvenative, cyclical nature of prophecy creating a system in which every sign not only leads back to Allah but also signals further development towards eventual reunion.

[88] See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).

Part Three: 1818

Chapter 5

The mental Book of Fate: Ash'arite occasionalism and Lucretian atomism in Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*

Alongside the geographically focused interpretations of *The Revolt* that argue, '[a]part from its title, *The Revolt of Islam*'s most direct engagement with the Orient comes in the Preface',[1] it is important to assess how Shelley's universalising project is tied to transvaluing tropes or concepts in a manner that attempts to harness imagery affiliated with past traditions in order to mould an adequate response to contemporary issues. Shelley's sceptical idealism is a combination of Enlightenment cynicism with a Romantic deconstructive self-awareness; the former influences the secular framework underlying his conceptualisation of the One Mind through which he determines inspiration as interrelated and history as cyclical; whereas, the latter fuels his attachment to personification as a method of invoking religious symbolism free from the constraints of orthodoxy. These two components inevitably feed into and shape his transvaluation of Islamic concepts from the Book of Fate[2] to holy war.[3] I intend to examine what the Book of Fate signifies within the context of Shelley's exploration of oriental determinism as shaped by Thomas Peacock's interest in Manichean thought, particularly as it relates to Oromazes and Ahrimanes (i.e. good and evil) which, when vying for power, personify the ethical battle taking place within every individual. Moreover, Shelley's mythographic interest in Eastern Fatalism, prompted by John Frank Newton and Peacock, merges with his intellectual interest in sceptical philosophy, informed by the likes of Godwin and Hume, both of which drove him to poeticise the tenuous position of humanity as caught between hopeful improvement and uncertain afterlives. The Romantic poet sought

[1] Andrew Warren, *The Orient and the Young Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 194.
[2] Related to causality, scepticism, atomism, exploitation of God's Will by priests and rulers
[3] Related to martyrdom, revolution of self and community, whether retribution against the oppressor should be sought or not

to cultivate a heightened awareness of how reform may seem futile in the moment, especially driven by the despondency felt upon witnessing a failed revolution, but these individual setbacks must be appreciated within a larger context of radical campaigns against tyranny just as the Preserved Tablet is a pre-existent counterpart to the actual Qur'anic text which is revealed, and unfolds, within time. Shelley's mentalised version of this theological concept is employed when referring both to an individual state of mind as well as the collective mind that freethinkers contribute towards and derive inspiration from. In other words, when read as part of Shelley's mythographic schema, *The Revolt of Islam* is understood not only as an Oriental allegory for the French Revolution but also as *The Revolt*[ion] *of Islam*, a transvaluation of perceived Islamic values not dissimilar to how Spencer Hall reads 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' as offering, 'an alternative to conventional Christian theology [with] its mythmaking confer[ring] a religious valuation on the secular state of consciousness', in the hopes of reinforcing, 'man's faith in the active, humanistic virtues of "Love, Hope, and Self-esteem"'.[4] Akin to the commentary on causality mediated by Hume and Ghazali through the spiritual biographies of *Alastor* and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, a dialogue is taking place in *The Revolt* between Lucretian and Ash'arite atomism through the Book of Fate as trope and its Islamic formulation as the Preserved Tablet (*Lawh al-Mahfuz*). Even though it would be easy to dismiss any genealogy between the two on the basis that Shelley's conceptualisation is a response to other Romantic writers such as Southey's Book of Fate in *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) both poeticisations unavoidably incite comparison with their Qur'anic counterpart. Citing any tradition within a new context will inevitably produce far-reaching intellectual implications and if it can be appreciated that, 'Shelley looked to Lucretius' entropic, Epicurean vision of the universe for a philosophical articulation of the relationship between

[4] Spencer Hall, 'Power and the Poet: Religious Mythmaking in Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 32 (1983), 123-49, at p. 133.

atomic 'anarchy' and a non-despotic unity',[5] then a deeper understanding as to how the Islamic imagery is being subverted remains vital to characterising the metaphysical revolution driving the poem. The purpose of bringing these disparate worldviews into dialogue, Lucretian materialism and Ash'arite occasionalism, is to complicate the surface-level portrayal of Oriental fatalism that the poem supplants onto Othman and focus on how Cythna, under his rule, refigures the terms of her oppression as the means of her liberation.

Shelley is not only employing Lucretian atomism to outline his views on determinism but, in grounding these notions within an Oriental setting[6] and in proximity to concepts such as the Book of Fate, he is recontextualising prior Muslim interpretations of God's will in light of similar phenomena from desert landscapes to tyrannical governments. Dismissing these comparisons purely on the pretence that they are potentially inadvertent or fraught with negative preconceptions is to recognise Shelley's adaptation of a tradition without assessing the process by which he generates this reimagining. The mutability of outward forms (i.e. the notion that states are continually in flux and that death compels the renewal necessary for perpetuating life) is a component of Islamic atomism which similarly posits Allah as recreating existence in every instance due to mankind's inability to subsist autonomously coupled with an appreciation of humanity's relative level of control within the grander spectrum of reality. The central difference is that, for Islamic atomists, God remains the grounding ontological principle whilst in *The Revolt* and 'On Life' our materiality is beholden to biological processes creating determining principles separate from individual will but largely anthropomorphised and thus, indicating humans are as central in moulding their trajectory as they are in influencing the shape of the One Mind. This equilibrium Shelley strives for when determining the mind's relation to nature is achieved by, 'steer[ing] a course

[5] Tim Milnes, *The Truth about Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 120.
[6] The backdrop specifically references Islamic architecture, '[a]mid the aereal minarets on high,/The Ethiopian vultures fluttering fell/From their long line of brethren in the sky' (*The Revolt of Islam. A Poem, In Twelve Cantos* (London: Printed for John Brooks, 1829), canto 10, stanza 16, lines 3928-30, p. 220).

that would avoid the twin shoals of transcendentalism and atomistic empiricism',[7] not necessarily signifying an ontological split between a noumenal and phenomenal realm but rather continuously warning against believing too intently any mental world generated from either the creative or rational faculties.

Islamic and Lucretian Atomism

The Revolt entails a transvaluation of Islamic determinism for the spirit of beauty or spirit of revolution (as in *Prometheus Unbound*) that compels harmony in the face of dissonance is not an omnipresent or omniscient entity guiding outcomes whilst granting humanity the intellectual freedom to shape their reactions and intentions accordingly but rather a mixture of blind necessity charged with a level of human emotionality. The core sense of directedness derives from the organic world's ability to return towards growth even in the face of destruction which is a movement guided not by a progressivist impulse but as a consequence of cycles of birth and decay implicit within Lucretian materialism. There remain external powers free from our control just as there are minds beyond our control which, when reified to the level of a singular principle in the universe, have the potential to be either life-affirming or soul-crushing but, in either case, reveal something about the human predicament. To name an abstracted entity is to enact a cosmological injustice against mankind and the underlying principles themselves precisely due to the impossibility of defining the essentially indefinable. Hence, there is a clear aversion to the type of fatalism conventionality attributed to the Orient which strips away human volition in favour of submission to a monolithic power source that is undoubtedly conceptualised in a way that echoes Islamic imagery as Cythna warns the mariners of, 'the dark fiend [with an] iron pen,/Dipped in scorn's fiery

[7] Bryan Keith Shelley, 'The Synthetic Imagination: Shelley and Associationism', *The Wordsworth Circle* 14 (1983), 68-73, at p. 72.

poison',[8] urging them instead to, '[l]ook on your mind – it is the book of fate',[9] echoing her own decision to impess her name upon the sand and take the authorial power into her own hands. This solipsistic reading of the One Power is invariably associated with a despotic mindset characterised as, 'solitary, self-sufficient and self-consuming [standing] as a false unity',[10] it reflects itself in everything else until it becomes instantiated into a position of power purely on the basis of repetition and when, on a cosmological level, 'all are mirrors of the same',[11] it becomes easier for that authoritarian Will to be replicated on a worldly stage where allegiance to a ruler becomes simply an extension of the values embedded in submission to an Omnipotent Deity. The fear of becoming beholden to a singular ideology or idea reified into an ontologically tangible force fuels Cythna's remarks regarding self-sovereignity and prompts her to question: '[w]hat then is God? Some moon-struck sophist stood/Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown/ Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood/ The Form he saw and worshipped was his own'.[12] In this instance, Cythna warns against misusing our creativity or propensity to *draw* connections between events and imbue them with cosmic meaning without first recognising our role in *inscribing* existence with our own likeness for a lack of awareness can cause a person to believe their projections have control over them rather than the inverse. The act of relinquishing the mental pen by which we author reality in favour of an abstract iron one, unnecessarily creates social imbalance due to an internalisation of certain submissive behaviours slowly eroding the potential for freethought and the zeal for revolution by creating a rift between the eternally saved and the eternally damned whose fate is decided in direct correlation to their level of commitment: 'men say, God has appointed Death/ On all who scorn his will, to wreak immortal wrath'.[13]

[8] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 8, stanza xx, lines 3374-5, p. 187.
[9] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza xx, line 3372, p. 187.
[10] *The Young Romantics*, p. 212.
[11] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 8, stanza xx, line 3374, p. 187.
[12] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza vi, lines 3244-7, p. 180.
[13] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza vi, lines 3250-52, p. 180.

The closest corollary in Islam to replicating this form of determinism can be found in the concept of *ajal* to denote how Allah apportions a measure of lifespan before an individual's birth which can neither be shortened nor delayed outside of supplications or deeds that are already known and accounted for in *al-lawh al-mahfooz* (Book of Fate) indicated by various Qur'anic passages, 'He is the one who created you from clay, and specified a term [for you] and another fixed time [ajal]',[14] and, 'God does not reprieve a soul when its turn comes: God is fully aware of what you do'[15]. Even factors unrelated to time which, instead, concern actual provisions (*rizq*) such as wealth and food are subsumed beneath this pre-mortal knowing and apportioning from the Divine storehouse of potentialities made actual: '[n]o misfortune can happen, either in the earth or in yourselves, that was not set down in writing before We [God] brought it into being'.[16] A person's decreed time of death as being in the purview and decree of Allah extends beyond the act of reaching old age to even include an inward compulsion towards the particular time and event that has been written for that individual as shown during the verses written in response to those who critiqued Muhammad's decision to retaliate against those Meccans who were attacking them in Medina: '[e]ven if you had resolved to stay at home, those who were destined to be killed would still have gone out to meet their deaths'.[17]

The negative elements in Shelley's portrayal of Oriental Fatalism derive from his scepticism of the unempirical since he believes those who follow the principles outlined above simply allow abstracted entities to possess absolute control over living beings by manipulating how they act or think within a predetermined set of boundaries instituted prior to creation. When Shelley airs on the side of enlightened cynicism he critiques the possibility of this mute deity (a shadow subsisting beyond and between cause and effect) as needlessly

[14] Muhammad Abdel-Haleem, *The Qurʾan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6:2, p. 80.
[15] *Ibid*, 63:11, p. 375.
[16] *Ibid*, 57:22, p. 361.
[17] *Ibid*, 3:154, p. 46.

instilling a hierarchy of willpower in creation and exasperating the very real duality between good and evil by establishing a partition between those who are fated to occupy eminent positions and those who should be content with their naturally subservient role. On the one hand, misnaming is employed in order to infuse abstracted entities not only with an existence separate from the Mind of humanity but ontological supremacy over and above the creative intellect of those who both will it into existence and, through continuous reimagining, allow it to subsist (e.g. the type of power held by a transcendent godhead in religious circles or monarchical kings in the political sphere). On the other hand, the misattribution of ideals Shelley values as being tangible forces for change in an anthropocentric universe such as, love and equality can have a positive or negative effect on humanity's ability to distinguish falsehood from truth if twisted to benefit the self-serving agenda of an institution. Even if human perception was sensitive enough to pierce the veil of the noumenal realm and ascertain its existence, we would be none the wiser as to the rationale behind its decision to grant life outside of our own deluded interpretative attempts:

> [t]hese are blind fancies--reason cannot know/What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive;/There is delusion in the world--and woe,/And fear, and pain--we know not whence we live,/Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give/Their being to each plant, and star, and beast[18]

Accordingly, it is this spirit of beauty free from uncritical deification (aka Shelleyan necessity as harmony) that transposes the solipsistic figurehead wielding the pen of fate without consideration of human emotions. It is important, however, to recognise the process by which this unknown cause has been conceptualised in light of Islamic tropes both as a means of denouncing the mariner's worldview (synyonmous with the type of tyrannical, Oriental monotheism found in Southey's poetry) as well as a way for Cythna to reformulate

[18] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 9, stanza xxxiii, lines 3758-762, p. 209.

(from within her native tradition) a more productive notion of atomistic fatalism from the spirit of Islamic ash'arism. In other words, when Cythna enacts her own will and defines her own mindset she purposely mirrors Qur'anic terminology which is inevitably distorted through a Shelleyan lens given his authorial position.

As Andrew Warren notes in *The Young Romantics*,[19] Cythna prefigures Shelley's notion of the One Mind in 'On Life' by showing an awareness of her singular mind's situatedness within a grander universal movement paradoxically coursing through time at an atemporal level both constituted by innumerable caverns of thought whilst also being elevated beyond the sum of its parts to generate a singular stream of consciousness attune to the subtle movements of its constituent psyches. The dynamic that emerges between an individual mind like Cythna's and the collective consciousness made One is characterised by a private inner life which is simultaneously altered and contorted according to the natural, primordial harmonies composing the Spirit of Nature (a mutable, asymmetrical, ever-changing constant) infiltrating the organic life of flora and fauna to the psychological residue of past nations now embedded in the fibres of existence: '[w]e live in our world, and mine was made/From glorious fantasies of hope departed'.[20] Consequently, whilst Shelley resists attempts to name and know the One Power in any fixed, monolithic sense, he does not dismiss the utility of acknowledging the unnameable and unknowable on a discrete level. A deeper understanding of how groups have come to configure the One Power can elucidate not the disembodied force itself but the spirit of Nature and, by extension humanity, refracted and expressed amongst the countless interpretive communities established throughout history. Shelley not only bemoans language's tendency to obfuscate but also acknowledges its propensity to encourage ambiguity in a manner that demands re-conceptualisation and serves as a warning against establishing strict dichotomies between the One Power and the One Mind. Instead,

[19] *The Orient and the Young Romantics*, p.229.
[20] *Ibid*, canto 7, stanza xxx, lines 3091-2, p. 171.

the act of interpretation should be foregrounded as not only granting these principles positive or negative connotations but also determining how they are enacted within the world and to what ends. When Warren argues that Cythna's, 'transcription of her thoughts into language [as written on the sand] is therefore not Southey's stable Book of Fate',[21] he recognises both as differing responses to the question of free will but which rely on similarly imagined dynamics between author and inscription in an attempt to negotiate between dictated (i.e. pre-inscribed) events and self-willed (i.e. authored) responses. Cythna's imprinted name is an act of agency as much aware of its insignificance and futility in the grander scheme as it is supportive of the need to dismantle 'fixed image[s] (or 'Idol[s]')' through an openness to [enact] change. [22]

Although Cythna's act of impressing a personal mark upon Mother Nature can be read as exerting a type of creative will unavailable to those committed to a predestinarian view of fate – wherein a Divine Author pre-eternally records events – she is implanting herself within a body of sand whose seemingly infinitesimal and granular structure reflects her figurative entrance into atomistic worldview. Indeed, I read this part as Cythna implanting herself within the, 'thousand unimagined shapes', of Shelley's *Triumph of Life* which are themselves reflective of the Lucretian atomism found within the fourth book of his *De Rerum Natura* that envisions, as Shelley perceives it, an 'earth […] grey with phantoms [and a substantially intangible] air [that is] peopled with dim forms',[23] depicting the atoms of our decaying selves becoming the stimuli for others to perceive us and which, if perceptible, would grant us 'new Vision'[24] as to how seemingly disinterested matter relates to one another in a nonlinear fashion. My focus in this reading is not only to attach, 'Cythna's writing to the *The Revolt*'s

[21] *The Orient and the Young Romantics*, p. 217.
[22] Ibid, p. 218.
[23] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), lines 482–83, p. 619.
[24] *Ibid*, line 434, p. 618.

de-Orientalizing dialectic of the desert and the despot',[25] but to highlight her reimagining of the Book of Faith as an extension of Shelley's intellectual propensity to internalise ideas or symbols of an ideology in a way that coheres with his own sensibilities rather than dismissing their value entirely for Shelley's method of philosophising was to contemplate: 'the Beatitudes until they became identified with his own favourite ideas.'[26] By choosing the sand as her medium and highlighting the correlation between willpower and authorship underlying the original Book of Fate, Cythna is not disassociating herself from her geographical origin or from those traditions that constitute it but continues through a discontinuous act the tradition of medieval Muslim atomists who similarly used the sand to elucidate theological issues regarding free will via a culturally relevant and Qur'anically inspired lens. In employing the desert as a metaphor for the creative makeup of existence, Cythna is not wholly detaching herself from the deterministic heritage of her Islamic forefathers, instead she is making meaningful its content to better adhere with her own inward sense of how we relate to Nature, Necessity and society. Cythna offers an alternative to the Southeyan tyrant's understanding of this fatalistic text which prioritises certain elements for the sake of self-empowerment and instead, channels sensibilities found in Shelley's own mythographic schema where poetic language is reflective of: 'the evolving self, which in itself is not to be considered as a reifiable entity but rather as an ongoing activity or process of enactment.'[27]

For Shelley, life events that fuel the progression of our being, propelling us into new contexts and shaping our character, are perpetually haunted by an equally persistent death drive emitted as a response to humanity's entropic nature in an existential purging of waste that could be simply figured as a type of perspiration caused by the exhaustion of experience: '[f]rom every firmest limb and fairest face/ The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left/

[25] *The Orient and the Young Romantics*, p. 210.
[26] Hoxie Heale Fairchild, *Religious trends in English Romantic Poetry: 1780-1830: Romantic Faith* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 340.
[27] Jean Hall, 'The Divine and the Dispassionate Selves: Shelley's "Defence" and Peacock's "The Four Ages of Poetry"', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 41 (1992), 139-62, at p. 152.

The action and the shape without the grace/[…]These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown [...] from a poplar tree'.[28] This ontological emission is composed, as Lucretian materialism conceives it, of atomistic and imperceptible bodies which help transmit the form of its host across space to be perceptible by others, '[m]ask after mask fell from the countenance/ And form of all',[29] which, in turn, creates a paradoxical situation where our inner compulsion towards decay at every instance enables us to both persist as well as exist by constituting the form through which we are able to interact with external bodies but only inasmuch as the spectre of who we were will allow: '[those] spent vision of the times that were / And scarce have ceased to be'.[30] The past realises the present in order for the future to become past and, as time collapses in on itself, everything levels out to make the present moment all that truly exists within the One Mind; individuals can only know the other two temporal modes through the medium of a single instance. External reality being mediated by an estranged simulacra of itself, generates a space for Shelley's sceptical idealism to acknowledge the materialistic imposition of Necessity as a constitutive, uncontrollable, increasingly indifferent force whilst promoting the need for sovereignty via critical thought and inculcating a morality refined through its attachment to high art as opposed to an exclusively duty-based ethics. The effusion model of atomism in *Triumph of Life* grants the balance between free will and determinism Shelley desires by recognising that a hybrid of self and not-self dictates our situatedness in the world since over time mankind, individually, grows increasingly distant from its former self whilst, collectively, gaining a truer sense of self through a shared contribution towards humanity's unfolding identity: '[e]ach, like himself and like each other were,/ At first, but soon distorted seemed to be'.[31] Likewise, it enables Shelley to explain how the One Mind can become a transcendentalised principle

[28] *The Major Works*, lines 520-9, pp. 620-1.
[29] *Ibid*, lines 536-7, p. 621.
[30] *Ibid*, lines 233–4, p. 611.
[31] *Ibid*, lines 530-1, p. 621.

abstracted over time from humanity's combined experience whilst not being reified to the point of becoming a static, omniscient deity as it adopts the moment-to-moment situational awareness of those it derives its consciousness from. In citing Lucretius' materialistic philosophy on life in the preface to *Laon and Cythna*, two principles may be understood as characterising the alternating dynamic between good and evil across historical cycles expressed in both texts for the atomic is characterised as infinitesimal and indivisible whilst the associative relations which bind them allows for the possibility of spontaneity resulting in a reframing of the despondency felt at the collapse of the French Revolution into a more holistic vision. Even if the symbolic battle between serpent and eagle generates momentary failure, the 'tale of human power'[32] relayed by the Temple of Genius highlights the indestructabiltiy of good as well as the possibility of breaking from the established order: '[h]ow many hearts impenetrably veiled/ Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight/ Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,/ Waged through that silent throng; a war that never failed!.'[33] Hence, *The Revolt* is posited as a tale that reminds humanity to remain hopefully for, even though good and evil are intertwined, history holds forth examples of, 'race[s] of mightier men', which if, '[s]uch man has been, [then] such may yet become!', [34] and yet, these sporadic attempts at upholding liberty and equality do not exist simply as narratives but, if Laon's perspective on the past esteems a Lucretian sense of entanglement and indeterminacy (i.e. interconnectedness and potentiality), Cythna's summation foregrounds the Lucretian principle of entropy as turbulence by stressing that, although faded,'[t]he good and mighty of departed ages', have had an irrevocable impact on those still living, '[t]o be a rule and law to ages that survive'.[35] The transitive quality associated with human bodies constituting history resemble the atomic encounters which initiate creation as described in *De*

[32] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 1, stanza lviii, line 522, p. 30.
[33] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza ii, lines 1734-1737, p. 94.
[34] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza xxii, line 766, p. 37.
[35] *Ibid*, canto 9, stanza xxviii, lines 3712, 3720, p. 207.

rerum natura, 'from encounter to encounter, a pile-up and the birth of a world,'[36] this ethos of contact as the ground of existence coheres with Shelley's desire to build sympathetic communities within chaotic times by acknowledging our contingent nature and appreciating the ways others leave lasting imprints on our being resulting in a phantom existence bereft of Divine Cause or guidance and always on the edge of loss and regeneration. This material immateriality cements Shelley's Humean scepticism as there remains the possibility for variation generated from similarity indicating that causality is not as consistent or objectively verifiable as might be assumed given that the process by which phenomenal existence is generated *is* inseparable from its own ephemerality. In contrast to organic unity, perception is constantly confronted with substitution, conversion and flux.

The Death and Rebirth of Form

This process of generation and cessation as essential to reality is expressed in Ash'arite theology but the relational nature of atoms as sporadically commingling with one another is replaced with a disconnected vacuum where each atomic instance is created and destroyed by Allah resulting in a universe devoid of contingency outside of His Will for the sake of upholding His Oneness as the Primary Cause of existence. Although any two monads are separated by a void their harmony derives from a shared connection to God in opposition to any theory of infinite regress and in turn, produces atoms whose qualities are recreated continuously (subsisting independently of one another) and which are simultaneously non-eternal as well as immaterial (pertaining to time and space). In an effort to circumvent overdetermination, Ash'ari thought downplays the notion of secondary causality by emphasising how objects (in being continuously altered and reacquiring their accidental and substantial qualities) are maintained through God's sustaining Power which preserves unity

[36] Amanda Jo Goldstein, 'Growing Old Together: Lucretian Materialism in Shelley's "Poetry of Life"', *Representations* 128 (2014), 60-92, at p. 82.

among discrete instances and enables events to occur according to a consistent set of preconditions. Given that creation does not originate independently, any action or movement cannot truly be said to have been produced by their respective agents due to an ontological distinction between those who acquire (*al-muktasib*) and the One who creates (*al-khaliq*):

> The created power of the agent can never be independent of God, Who creates in him at every moment such power or capacity (*istita'ah*) as is proportionate to the production of the intended action [He] creates the action as a physical occurrence, and determines the relation of the human acquirer (*kasib*) to it[37]

Despite radiating as an echo of God's Names and Attributes, the world's finite nature results in its ontological status as not-God which means that the actions and behaviours expressed within are capable of being taken to extremes (e.g. lying is a perversion of the Divine capacity to veil). In witnessing Allah's Omnipotence, instead of becoming lost in outward forms, humanity is urged to acknowledge when Divinity as the Supreme Cause becomes marred by the impermanence and mutability of worldly logic and integrated into the causal processes structuring everyday life not for the sake of dismissing such mechanisms as unreal but rather appreciating how their contingent relation marks them with certain limitations. In this schema, humans are morally assessed on the basis of their reaction to scenarios as well as their intention when enacting said response (i.e. reaction, intention, action) whilst the will to shape one's own situatedness in the world and the ability to intentionally actualise any of our desired goals entails such an omnipresent knowledge of seen and unseen causes coupled with an omnipotent command over their subsequent effects that no individual can assume to possess such Power self-sufficiently. Islamic determinism taps into the Romantic imagination not only as it pertains to foreign policy within the Orient

[37] Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1994), p. 54, p. 58.

or allegorical fables inherited from *The Arabian Nights* both of which became sources for defining and depicting an Eastern style of fatalism but, as Shelley was engaged in Enlightenment thought, the Book of Fate offers a trope which relates to philosophical theories on causality and phenomenology from Malebranche's occasionalism to Leibniz's preestablished harmony.

In *The Revolt*, this atomistic principle of life-in-death extends beyond the aesthetic granularity that the desert setting provides to incorporate the shifting states of being implied in the nomadic way of life that inhabits it for there is a spectrality to the granularity as; second selves haunt their other, '[m]emories, like awful ghosts which come and go';[38] past versions of self are purged and take on different forms, '[a]ll shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied';[39] and even physically deceased bodies metaphorically traverse the bridge into an allegorical afterlife, 'the dead, who leave the stamp/Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,/When they are gone into the senseless damp/Of graves'.[40] Laon's journey, in particular, entails a continued forgetting and remembering of self as he strives to harness the light within that is reflective of his lover's unabashedly positive and youthful vigour, '[i]n me, communion with this purest being/Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise/In knowledge, which, in hers mine own mind seeing,/Left in the human world few mysteries',[41] although, in this instance, Cythna serves as the symbol for a more universal revolutionary force, 'a spirit strong and mild',[42] that has attuned itself to her being and which he hopes will forestall, 'old age with its gray hair,/And wrinkled legends of unworthy things'.[43] The moment in which he figuratively breaks the shackles of his old self is when he is chained to a rock after killing the tyrant's soldiers in retaliation and subsequently forced to suffer without

[38] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 6, stanza xxvii, line 2572, p. 141.
[39] *Ibid*, canto 3, stanza xxxiii, line 1314, p. 68.
[40] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza viii, lines 1478-81, p. 79.
[41] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza xxxii, lines 946-49, p. 48.
[42] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza xxxii, lines 951, p. 48.
[43] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza xxxiii, lines 955-56, p. 48.

sustenance in the heat until he is forced to crack his skin and draw blood, '[I] bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust',[44] destroying his chains not to move freely but to pass away out of shame from his past deeds, 'I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever/Its adamantine links, that I might die'.[45] After witnessing demonic apparitions of his past selves, '[f]oul, ceaseless shadows [to which] thought could not divide/The actual world from these entangling evils,'[46] a lake subsequently reveals his newly hollowed body seems more prone to channelling the light he once gleaned in Cythna's presence but now heightened with the prospect of being taught by the aged hermit who saves him from imprisonment:

> [y]et in my hollow looks and withered mien/The likeness of a shape for which was braided/The brightest woof of genius, still was seen […] 'twas her lover's face/It might resemble her--it once had been/The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace/Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace[47]

The notion of Lucretian atomism as a perpetual shedding of selves is depicted on a macroscopic level by the ouroboros or the, 'many-coloured […] snake/That girds eternity',[48] since the evolution of humanity entails adaptation as well as renunciation of various traits in response to the changing condition of society over time. Despite a natural accumulation of past experiences being stored within the One Mind, the rise and fall of civilisations results in a type of forgetting wherein certain patterns of thought are doomed to be repeated by those unaware of their position. Shelley emphasises this cyclical death-in-life motif by employing a seasonal structure to outline a human lifespan which is not only composed of innumerable

[44] *Ibid*, canto 3, stanza xxi, line 1296, p. 67.
[45] *Ibid*, canto 3, stanza xix, lines 1270-71, p. 66.
[46] *Ibid*, canto 3, stanza xxiii, lines 1311-12, p. 66.
[47] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza xxx, lines 1676-83, p. 90.
[48] *Ibid*, canto 4, lines 1445-46, stanza iv, p. 77.

metaphorical rebirths in life[49] but even in the face of death there remains a hope that we never cease to propagate new versions of ourselves vicariously through the memories and bonds forged during existence. For Shelley, an individual's works or actions preserving their name for subsequent generations is a more compelling and believable prospect than a distant afterlife governed by the judgement of a singular omniscient Power but, in either case, the nature of a person's immortality (memorially or otherworldly) is decided through an admixture of deeds and necessity: '[o]ur many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,/Our happiness, and all that we have been,/Immortally must live, and burn and move,/When we shall be no more'.[50] Moreover, Shelley's use of fire as a symbol for an individual's state in death resembles Sufistic literature that incorporates luminous imagery in order to signal the eventual dissipation of self and commingling within the Divine Light once all veils have been removed but reconfigured as a symbol for the ongoing legacy of the deceased who enlighten other still perceiving hearts and minds: 'his spirit thus became a lamp/Of splendour, like to those on which it fed'.[51] Ironically, mankind's entropic nature possesses a rejuvenative potential by signalling an existence that has forever altered the One Mind through the indelible imprint of a life complete but still in motion as part of that ongoing stream. This quasi-redemptive capacity within every human enables Shelley to grant humanity some agency since their drives and impulses grant the One Mind its perpetuity but, given the simultaneous movement of organic matter, there remains a need for necessity and will to coincide.

In contrast to the notion that an Omnipotent Intellect designs creation with knowledge of all possible worlds and all potential outcomes within such worlds, Shelley transforms his

[49] 'This is the winter of the world;--and here/We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,/Expiring in the frore and foggy air./Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made/The promise of its birth,--even as the shade/Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings/The future, a broad sunrise.' (*Ibid*, canto 9, stanza xxv, lines 3685-91, p.205)
[50] *Ibid*, canto 9, stanza xxx, lines 3730-33, p. 208.
[51] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza viii, lines 1481-82, p. 79.

Saharan landscape into a Lucretian void where determinism is guided by the dynamic of potentially infinite rearrangements ultimately being realised into a finite set of necessary structures and patterns. It is Love, rather than Omnipotence, that is the structuring principle underlying these atomically interconnected causes as part of Shelley's de-transcendentalising of Romantic Nature poetry in which he establishes a vision of sympathetic communion amongst human and organic and non-sentient life. The One Mind coupled with Necessity generates a universe simultaneously compelled to movement – whether in the process of death or rebirth – whilst also containing the definite occurrences of actualised instances. Throughout the poem, the Earth is presented as being a life-granting force without which the growth of humanity would be impossible but it is also a force that lacks control over its children's behaviour resulting in the chaotic and unsupervised nature of an existence overrun with tyranny and war where every action has an adverse reaction: '[b]ut else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,/Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed/All native power, had those fair children torn,/And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest.'[52] Consequently, maternality, Intellectual Beauty and Love are contingent upon human behaviour infusing those concepts with power which transfigures the Ash'arite notion of *kasb* wherein human actions are acquired from Allah. On the one hand, Ash'arite occasionalism presents a theophanic worldview where the Divine Cause is perceived behind every outward form conferring upon believers a visionary capacity to appreciate the sublime manifested in all things which, to the perception of those unaware of this noumenal dimension, appears stable and self-sufficient but, if the veils were lifted, would reveal a disjointed combination of monads only harmonised as a result of being instantaneously recreated by the Divine Will. The mundane realm is perceptually transformed into a miraculous theatre of transcendent manifestation. On the other hand, Shelley's material world sustains the variability of forms

[52] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 2, stanza xxxv, lines 976-79, p. 49.

and diversity of matter cultivating it as part of its own natural growth since the microscopic particles are both divisible enduring and infinitely creative resulting in the diversity of external forms born from various particle formations instigating deviations in nature of which humanity is but one expression. Every alteration in the universe can be reduced to changes caused by the alternating arrangement of atoms which are both sporadic whilst also determined in direct relationship with the events surrounding their every instance of actualisation. The result is a mechanistic worldview that accommodates the possibility for a swerve in the regular order which supplants a level of unpredictability in the natural laws not as a means of accounting for miracles in God's design but establishing free will and radical potential in a void of fluctuating atoms.

Scepticism of Causality

Shelley plays on the Oriental image of the mirage transforming his desert into a dreamscape, where reality and illusion are indistinguishable, in order to depict his own sceptical belief in the interpretive role that the mind adopts when absorbing sensory information whilst assigning definitive causes to intuited effects. The moments of solitude experienced by both Laon and Cythna serve to exemplify the projective capabilities of the human mind and their manipulative hold over emotions resulting in several instances where the protagonists are unable to discern illusion from memory including whether their actions have genuine consequences or are merely tricks of the mind. When Cythna is taken captive her sanity begins to collapse due to the torture experienced at the hands of Othman and the isolation felt during her time in his submarine cavern resulting in: 'a madness slow and creeping,/Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air […] And the sea-eagle looked a fiend […]Thus all things were/Transformed into the agony which I wore'.[53] In the same way that Laon's punishment leads him to denounce his old vengeful self and prepares him for the

[53] *Ibid*, canto 7, stanza xv, lines 2956-63, p. 163.

eventual commingling with his beloved in the finale, Cythna's solitude inadvertently cultivates her ability to instigate change in others by inspiring their highest sensibilities. Her transformation into Laone begins in this breakdown of cause and effect as her mental world is projected outward causing these natural processes to be overridden creating surreal inversions of how human's experience reality at a default level just as she will momentarily destabilise the facade of social cohesion under the tyrant's false unity through liberty and equality. Cythna not only realises her own projective capabilities to influence those around her but by being degraded and defamed by the tyrant himself as well as those carrying out his orders she has witnessed first-hand the dangers of humanity's self-made illusions if reified to the point of worship within a monolithic power structure. The birthing of a new self amidst a disjointed causality is signified by the onset of an unexpected pregnancy which appears so miraculously during her time of need that she often questions its existence describing the baby as, 'a dream divine',[54] and, '[a] doubt which would not flee, a tenderness/Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears;/Which having passed, as one whom sobs oppress'.[55] The blissful intoxication experienced upon receiving a child during this lonely period eventually turns into a sobering reminder of her dire state as the baby is stolen which indicates that quantifiable realities related to wealth and poverty (e.g. food as well as resources) can be augmented relative to the inward condition of the individual to the extent that even temporal perception, let alone events experienced within time, is modified to reflect the protagonist's mournful or ecstatic consciousness.[56] The mirage-like nature of the shifting sands outside invades not only the solitary mind in imprisonment but infiltrates the comforting privacy of the home as the couple lie together, Laon is plagued by malevolent dreams in which he imagines being accosted by evil forms birthed from the lowest depths of society:

[54] *Ibid*, canto 7, stanza xviii, line 2987, p. 165.
[55] *Ibid*, canto 7, stanza xix, lines 2992-94, p. 165.
[56] 'Time passed, I know not whether months or years;/For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made/Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears' (canto 7, stanza 26, lines 3055-57).

> the gaping earth then vomited/Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung/Upon my flight; and ever, as we fled,/They plucked at Cythna--
> soon to me then clung/A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among[57]

The safety of this imagined assault is broken when those phantoms manifest in the real world under the guise of Othman's guards who lead both lovers to their respective punishments: 'I rose, and all the cottage crowded found/With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare'.[58] Clearly the dream does not instigate the raid but rather the sense of dread intuited in sleep from the soldiers already present generated these disturbing images and thus, the structure mocks the notion that cause and effect happens within a linear chain for whatever we take to proceed an event is not necessarily its cause since lack of understanding as to the complete context or a lapse in concentration results in faulty judgements. Likewise, when Laon is captured, he envisions both the ghost of Cythna as well as an old hermit with the former remaining nothing more than an apparition[59] whilst the latter is revealed to be an actual human come to save the fallen protagonist[60] and so, regardless as to whether one is more believable than the other, the reader is presented with a good omen and a bad omen but only one materialises into existence. This coincidence resembles the earthquake that miraculously intervenes to save Cythna purely because the plot demands it and, without such narrative aids, the larger commentary on revolution and idealism would remain unfulfilled. In all these instances, Shelley exploits literature's fictionality to depict reality as merely an extension of dreaming wherein the line between consciousness and subconsciousness is blurred until both become inextricably linked and objective cause and

[57] *Ibid*, canto 3, stanza v, lines 1148-52, p. 59.
[58] *Ibid*, canto 3, stanza vi, lines 1159-60, p. 60.
[59] 'A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue [...] whose was that withered form?/Alas, alas! it seemed that [it was] Cythna's ghost' (*Ibid*, canto 3, stanza xxvi, lines 1333-38, p. 70)
[60] 'The shape of an old man did then appear,/Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep/His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep' (*Ibid*, canto 3, stanza xxvii, lines 1348-50, p. 70).

effect is exposed as unreliable given its reliance on intuited perspective disguised as empirical observation.

It serves to contextualise this unpredictable causality within an Ash'arite perspective to better comprehend the impact of displacing theological reference points amongst different value systems. In Ash'ari thought, the relation of the prime cause to its secondary effects is conceptualised in such a way as to grant Allah primary power when realising and shaping all worldly events, '[i]t is He Who sends down water from the sky. With it We produce the shoots of each plant, then bring greenery from it, and from that We bring out grains',[61] coupled with an acknowledgement that means (by way of angels) are employed to achieve the intended results not out of necessity but as part of a *sunnah* (habit) that Allah has established within the universe. The secondary causes are presented as possessing no will of their own, no internal capacity to alter their nature or generate effects outside of Allah's decree and thus, some more seminal instances of angelic intervention to produce certain outcomes, are mentioned directly in the Qur'an from the Battle of Badr[62] to the Angel of Death.[63] The notion that natural laws are customary by design rather than necessity and the relegation of all creative control in the production of events to Allah as the One who sustains not only outward appearance but innate properties results in the Ash'arite's atomistic occasionalism that states although we perceive habitual processes in creation those effects must be continually recreated by Allah otherwise they could be said to exist independently which, in contrast to the mechanistic clockmaker of the Deists, indicates God is perpetually engaged with His creation. The scepticism of causality within Islamic philosophy does not reveal an abyss in place of the Transcendent, instead God remains the unfathomable but nevertheless emotionally approachable and ontologically immutable centre through which all

[61] *The Qur'an*, 6: 99, p. 87.
[62] '[Remember] when you begged your Lord for help, He answered you, 'I will reinforce you with a thousand angels in succession' (*Ibid*, 8: 9, p. 110).
[63] 'The angel of death, put in charge of you will reclaim you, and then you will be brought back to your Lord' (*Ibid*, 32: 11, p. 264).

worldly effects converge and without which universal laws would cease to persist. For al-Ghazali, causal relationships are a formality expressing an action taking place on a transcendent level to the extent that sufficient conditions such as fire for burning, death for decomposition, or medicine for cure, are said to be inactive without the compelling and binding force of Allah creating action and determining reaction for they are themselves fraught with instability and impermanence. Al-Ghazali presents his argument for the grounding for causality being a supreme power as such:

> [There are] among the principles of existence grounds and causes from which these [observable] events emanate when a contact between them takes place [these principles], however, are permanent, never ceasing to exist; […] they are not moving bodies that would set; [and were they] either to cease to exist or to set, we would apprehend the dissociation [between the temporal events] and would understand that there is a cause beyond what we observe[64]

This does not suggest properties are unnatural but as natural tools they are also instruments of God whose absence would result in them ceasing to possess any directedness, any consistency in form, and generally any type of presence let alone a meaningful role in existence: 'nature is totally subject to God Most High: it does not act of itself but is used as an instrument by its Creator. The sun, moon, stars, and the elements are subject to God's command: none of them effects any act by and of itself'.[65]

Shelley's reimagining of the Book of Fate frames this divinely driven scepticism of Islamic atomism in a manner which serves to maintain a transcendental absence rather than

[64] Basil Altaie, *God, Nature, and the Cause: Essays on Islam and Science* (Dubai: Kalam Research and Media, 2016), p.67.
[65] *Ibid*, p. 68.

presence;[66] there are instances where Laon and Cythna pierce the outward veils and gain insight via the One Mind which illuminates creation not by exposing the ontological grounding of transcendent principles but, muted by the understanding that the individual mind dictates the form of illumination, provides a kind of knowing discernment. There is a collective emotionality that Cythna taps into which inevitably deepens her sensitivity to the suffering of others whilst also heightening her senses and generating a level of empathy which extends beyond the present moment to incorporate our shared past and future. As a result of this empathetic wisdom, she is granted a commanding presence derived from respect rather than fear with which she attempts to guide humanity towards a world of compassionate union governed by freethought: 'I grew/Familiar with the shock and the surprise/And war of earthly minds, from which I drew/The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts anew.[67] The Book of Fate becomes the One Mind witnessing its instantiation within the innumerable intelligences constituting humanity's course over time as the individual psyche's themselves preferably realise that thought and feeling is all that can be known due to their relation to the subjective realm. Conversely, the empirical world contains forces not only beyond our control but our intellectual reach subsisting as separate from human thought whilst partly intuited on some level through reason. Causality as part of the (presumed) objective sphere is characterised as repeatable in the same way that mathematical constants are taken as universally applicable with variances classed as anomalies whilst the One Mind denotes a universe where the thoughts and emotions of each individual are refracted and reflected off one another and where self-autonomy or the choices of others are all perpetually intertwined in a disjointed bond of sympathy rather than a linear chain of influence:

[66] Burwick frames this divine vacuum as such, '[t]he consummate metonymy of the final act is realized through the transcendence, the absence rather than the presence, of the unbound Prometheus' ('The Language of Causality', p. 157).
[67] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 7, stanza xxxiv, lines 3132-35, p. 173.

> [m]y mind became the book through which I grew/ Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,/ Which like a mine I rifled through and through,/To me the keeping of its secrets gave--/One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave/Whose calm reflects all moving things[68]

There is an intuited causality in the effect of sense impressions passively being absorbed by an individual before becoming personal as they internalise those stimuli and engage their will with the object of thought indicated in Shelley's conceptualisation of Man's relation to the universe as, 'an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven.'[69] Aditionally, there is an internal movement from apprehension to reflection which retains a sense of autonomy within an otherwise unconscious process. In this split between active and passive participation, Frederick Burwick notes how worldly causality is, 'redefined as [a] reflexive [and] self-imposed',[70] state which can be influenced by the subject based on their perspective and so, a figure like Prometheus is capable of terminating his curse by acknowledging the tangible influence language possesses over seemingly cosmic and immutable events wherein a command of words becomes synonymous with command over self: '"[i]f then my words had power,/ […] let them not lose it now!"'.[71] Prometheus and Cythna symbolises an undercurrent within Shelleyan thought that attains self-empowerment through language by exposing a psychological inroad into, not only challenging the objective existence of causality, but one which retains a portion of human emotionality when perceiving reality as a counteractive force against more undeniably deterministic factors guiding outcomes (e.g. parents, inherited social issues and birth defects). Hence, even though Shelley, 'still regarded some form of Necessity as a strong and perhaps ineluctable force in

[68] *Ibid*, canto 7, stanza xxxi, lines 3100-05, p. 171.
[69] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 635.
[70] Fredrick Burwick, 'The Language of Causality in "Prometheus Unbound"', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 31 (1982), 136-58, at p. 153.
[71] *The Major Works*, act 1, lines 70-3, p. 235.

human social organization,'[72] there is a sense in which Prometheus, Laon and Cythna are a contributing factor in the eventual outcome of Necessity but more so as a mind responding to events and enabling the conditions for a cause to have effect rather than a progenitor of the cause in question.

Appealing to this Oriental inversion of the Qur'an, the psychological 'book of fate' is granted interpretive primacy once it distances itself from the voices of revealed religion, priestcraft and government to: 'in silence turn,/ And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,/ Which nature soon, with recreating hand,/ Will blot in mercy from the book of earth'.[73] The mind-as-text works in tandem with the book of nature to fill in the blank pages of the other as the non-linguistic truths intuited in nature's vast frame are rendered perceptible by poets: 'all things speak/ Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,/ In nature's silent eloquence, declares/ That all fulfil the works of love and joy, –/ All but the outcast man'.[74] Poetry might transcribe the language of nature into a fixed form but it also allows the silence to persist inasmuch as the audience are encouraged to interpret the text, with as little mediation from the poet as possible, so that their voice adds a unique perspective to the plethora of emotional responses constituting the One Mind: 'making the text the catalyst to the reader's interpretive parole rather than the encoding of Shelley's langue'.[75] A space is fostered which, if not empty, silently gestures towards the audience who persist after the text concludes to write their own interpretation aided by a positively charged inspiration rather than a replicable template because: 'all poetic veils ultimately tear away to reveal another silence at the end of the work […] and the entire [piece] takes on its fullest composite form in

[72] Carlos Baker, *Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 142.
[73] *The Major Works*, canto 6, lines 54-57, p. 46.
[74] *Ibid*, canto 3, lines 195-59, p. 30
[75] Monika H. Lee, '"Nature's Silent Eloquence": Disembodied Organic Language in Shelley's Queen Mab', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 48 (1993), 169-93, at p. 185.

the mind of the listener or reader'.[76] Whereas, the disdain towards imposing a rational system upon Allah's creation characterising Ash'arite occasionalism is a means of elevating Allah from becoming simply an object of human intellect and in turn, enabling the Creator to express Himself according to His own *Sunnah* (habit) as opposed to being confined within causal assumptions intuited by finite human minds.

Both Ash'ari thinkers and Shelley employ their respective atomistic theories out of an appreciation for the intricacy of Necessity as charactiersed not by mechanistic processes wholly predictable and deceptively simple but rather tied to an order which is beyond human comprehension to quantify as it is nonlinear and nonprogrammatic and entails habits or patterns that will not definitively reoccur. The main interest of the Ash'arites was safeguarding monotheism resulting in their scepticism regarding causality which, in recognising effects as contingent on Allah's discretion of judgment, establishes a metaphysics where natural laws could be relied upon for the sake of science or mathematics but only on the understanding that there is a supernatural order which is alone capable of miraculously shaping providence. Consequently, the universe is marked by contingency and dependency to the extent that its essential identity is in direct contrast to the independence and self-sufficiency which characterises Allah's Essence. Conversely, Shelley frames religious belief as solipsistic in nature, inculcating an uncritical desire to maintain the status quo due to an innate trust in a grander design: 'they all pined in bondage; body and soul,/Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent/Before one Power, to which supreme control/Over their will by their own weakness lent'.[77] He hopes others denounce this form of slave morality disguised under the banner of sublime unity by humanising Necessity as being driven by mankind's flawed but complex emotional response to life events rather than the immutable Will of an eternal Sovereign. There is an air of destiny in the cycles of good and evil that cultivate, on a

[76] John B. Pierce, '"Mont Blanc" and "Prometheus Unbound": Shelley's Use of the Rhetoric of Silence', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 38 (1989), 103-126, at p. 126.
[77] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 2, stanza viii, lines 730-33, p. 36.

universal level, certain minds to be fitted for the age they are assigned to and thus, without individuals harnessing the latent potentiality inhering within them, revolutions inevitably fail not due to a divine degree but as a consequence of factors not aligning or being sufficient enough to produce the desired effect. Therefore, alongside Cythna's propensity to detranscendentalise tropes grounded in superstition, Shelley maintains an inward attunement to something greater – a desire to re-establish harmony – as the sole purpose and value through which a successful life can be determined: '[a] child most infantine,/Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age/In all but its sweet looks and mien divine;/Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage/A patient warfare thy young heart did wage'.[78] The individual must not only respond appropriately to their context in order to achieve this goal successfully but also clarify over time what exactly they are being compelled to achieve and how they intend to liberate hearts or cultivate communities with the aptitudes and shortcomings their natural disposition affords them. Unlike the continuous resurfacing of prophecy within Sunni historiography driven by Allah's capacity to overturn the outwardly established order, Shelley establishes historic cycle of disparate revolutionary wills coming into and going out of existence and who leave traces of themselves in subsequent uprisings whilst never being collectively reified into a transcendent signifier. This Lucretian pattern of atomic diversity conceives of nature as produced out of a non-totalisable multiplicity and thus, hope can arise from stagnation through a swerve in the status quo. Prior radical voices can still be contemporary if the mind is reminded to think poetically in order to cultivate sympathetic bonds and in doing so, maintain interconnectivity amongst nature's atomic strands. Islamic and Lucretian atomism posit a dynamic of emergence and disintegration underlying phenemonal reality but the former maintains this flux by assuming an overarching harmony in the form of God, the latter disenchants this theological notion by attributing such

[78] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza xxii, lines 856-60, p. 43.

volatility to physical processes (i.e. the coalescing and disbanding of atoms) which are infused, for Shelley, with added instability as a result of his sceptical epistemology.

Summary

The commentary on fatalism which emerges from *The Revolt* indicates that although revolutions may be lost from the outset, so too are revolutionary minds fated to eventually re-emerge during times of despotism which, in turn, generates an unthinking yet unbreakable causal chain where: 'Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever/Evil with evil, good with good must wind/In bands of union, which no power may sever'.[79] Despite mankind's visionary capacity to transcend their attachment to an objective existence in favour of formulating and artistically contributing their own version of said reality, Shelley's necessitarian tendencies serve as a reminder that even the most creative individuals are constituted by predetermined physical, geographical, and contextual factors, as well as being subsequently shaped by equally uncontrollable events. It is this balance between scepticism and idealism that prevents the Shelleyan paradox from lapsing into hypocrisy and instead, allows his intellectual and imaginative sensibility to perpetually coexist rather than subsisting in spite of one another. Shelley chooses to personify both the worldviews he wishes to believe in as necessary fictions and the philosophical concepts that satisfy his reason. Such conflicting allegiances coincide with a need to poeticise the most appropriate values in service of his artistic vision at any particular instance. This reimagining of determinism seeks to maintain free will whilst also being attuned to the multitude of unknowable forces constituting life's mysteries without allowing them to be affixed or directed by a singular manifestation of Power. There is both an emotional drive to will change enacted by humanity as well as a shared dependency on the actualising power of Necessity to materialise and determine the shape of such willpower characteristic of Shelley's greater desire to achieve

[79] *Ibid*, canto 9, stanza xxvii, lines 3708-10, p. 206.

balance between reality and ideality or self-determination and Fatalism wherein: '[f]ortitude, endurance, hope, love are all of vital consequence; but they are not by themselves determining. The mood must coincide with the moment, the spirit with the hour'.[80]

The core transvaluative act taking place when Shelley has Cythna internalise and subjectivise the Book of Fate is a re-evaluation of submission to the Will of a Transcendent Power into a harnessing of some universal revolutionary spirit for the sake of conjuring beauty in response to injustice within blind cycles of perpetual war between good and evil. The mirage-like quality of his fluctuating Oriental selves emphasises the futility of pronouns when distinguishing cause and effect in order to maintain a negative sublime and de-emphasise tendencies towards erecting a hierarchical structure. Shelley perceives the desert as a Lucretian void (or, in this case the world configured as a nourishing darkness) not enlivened and sustained by the spirit of an Absolute Existent but an empty expanse upon which reform is enacted by the human spirit of creativity. The poet praises such freedom afforded by cosmological vacancy which counteracts any propensity to seek homogeneity in service of an external, immaterial One and reject uncritically accepted conventions founded on terror and confusion as stated in the Lucretian epigraph *Primum quod magnis doceo de rebus; et arctis Religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo* (I tell of great matters, and I shall go on to free men's minds from the crippling bonds of superstitions). Although Shelley inherits certain Oriental tropes (e.g. the association of rule with despotism) he depicts the desert as a space of potential freedom where people are no longer bound by custom or institutionalised thought which cultivates the type of freethinking encouraged by Lucretius's atomistic universe. There is a tangible vivacity in *The Revolt* that often overpowers the typically solipsistic depiction of an Oriental landscape for the desert landscape fosters engaged minds like Cythna, Laon and their revolutionary band of mercenaries who seek to

[80] Stuart M. Sperry, 'Necessity and the Role of the Hero in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound', *PMLA* 96 (1981), 242-54, at p. 250.

enact change amongst those most disenfranchised and are provided an intrinsically malleable (i.e. shifting) zone within which to enact that uprising. The divergence in thought, therefore, can be understood as a byproduct of Shelley's radical sceptical idealism leading him to believe, 'what is needed is not to fill a void, but to evacuate one, to forget',[81] indicating that his standard for humanity (the prototypical Prometheus) does not steal the knowledge of fire from the god's for the sake of Enlightenment in the sense of replacing one monolithic cosmology for another but rather burns away old systems and, from those ashes, continues to amalgamate new patterns of thought into a flexible mythography that prioritises human interpretive power. The God that emerges from this rational metaphysics is a pervasive spirit of love constituted by human emotion as opposed to constituting its source, '[o]h, that this deity were the soul of the universe, the spirit of universal, imperishable love! Indeed I believe it is',[82] and comes to know itself within history as each generation adds to the unfolding of human consciousness made sublime. To acknowledge a deity external to the human mind, Shelley feared, would instil a false consciousness within the heart of man which emphasised devotion to ecclesiastical dictates concerning correct behaviour and in turn, direct attention away from the goodness of humanity which would encourage true self-improvement. Therefore, although Shelley's thought can sometimes be construed as Utopian due to his insistence on mankind's promethean ability to enact change and spread positivity without Divine intervention, the price for self-determination is a looming uncertainty as to whether history will progress incessantly or whether subsequent generations will choose violence, loathing and retribution, over respect, optimism, and peace: '[historical development] must remain provisional; for [the] human being itself is a perennially provisional creation'.[83] If poetry signifies the pinnacle of human creativity, due to its ability to straddle the line between

[81] *The Orient and the Young Romantics*, p. 157.
[82] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, p. 45.
[83] 'The Divine and the Dispassionate Selves', p. 162.

spontaneous emotion and formal expression, and if history denotes the unfolding of human emotion on an atemporal plane of existence, then the development of poetry becomes inseparable from the development of mankind as individuals contribute not just to a collective consciousness but a collective text: '[the] great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world'.[84]

Cythna displaces the Divinity behind this pluraity in favour of a positivistic and naturalistic materialism that, even though sceptical of the possibility of an objectively knowable phenomenal world, is primarily concerned with immanence given that the aim of poetry is to, '[defeat] the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions [...] purg[ing] from our inward sight the film of familiarity',[85] emphasising the embodied nature of perception as constituted by, as well as constituting, existence. In this schema, reality is sufficiently dynamic, non-linear and inscrutable without needing to account for an idealistic metaphysics by invoking an all-encompassing entity as Berkeley and Ash'ari theologians are led to do. The function of Prometheus or Cythna within Shelley's mythography – revolutionary poets calling others to reclaim thought or language as their own – stems from his democritisation of language as de-transcendentalised or, in other words, language as free from the eternal duality of Signified and Signifier. What emerges from *The Revolt* and *Prometheus Unbound* is a universe where definition is mutable due to the titular hero's displacement of language from the archetypally divine realm to the realm of human experience. In either case, mankind is urged to employ thought as a means of altering their mental landscape and in turn, contribute on a social level by psychologically combating against monarchical forms of ideology through a belief in metaphor rather than metaphysics. Although Shelley does not entirely dismiss the sense of an existence or existent beyond perception, his humanism causes him to anthropomorphise the sacred by elevating emotion

[84] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 647.
[85] *Ibid*, p. 658.

and imagination to the level of universal principles which compel creation and actualise potentiality whilst dismantling institutionalised superstition by positing that Love, Liberty or Necessity are reliant on their human counterparts to be granted expression: 'spirit is [...] within [...] co-existing, co-eternal, in every way equal: unenslaved, unenslavable, unbowed and boundless'.[86] Conversely, in positioning Allah as possessing absolute power and ownership over mind and reality (creating both human cognition as well as extramental objects) revelation becomes the precedent by which transcendent meanings can be mapped onto human cognition with exegesis (whether outlined poetically or prosaically) serving to bridge the hermeneutical gap between God's eternal expression and its linguistic manifestation as well as determine how this message resonates with ideas already derived from experience: 'theology [becomes] less about human cognition and reason and more about what God [does] with human mental contents'.[87] Cythna's mental Book of Fate is poetic rather than revelatory as Shelley attempts to overcome the, 'passivity or inertness of substances, the exclusive reference of all causal operations to God, [and] the intransmissibility of accidents',[88] perceived in the Islamic attempts to uphold Allah's creative freedom. The transvalued book exists not at a pre-mortal and archetypal level in the Knowledge of God but subsists at the level of the One Mind as a means of signalling humanity's creative freedom to author reality whilst also acknowledging the indebtedness of each individual to the minds that have shaped the world prior to their existence. Existence already poses a considerable burden upon humanity through contextually imposed constraints and expectations, whether social, mental or physical, without also imposing upon oneself a restraining Will that supersedes our ability to act or think of our accord. Humanity is tasked

[86] Ann Wroe, 'The Necessity of Atheism: 200 years young', in *Grasmere 2011: Selected Papers from the Wordsworth Summer Conference*, ed Richard Gravil (Penrith : Humanities-Ebooks 2011), pp. 7-25, at p. 22.
[87] Alexander Key, *Language between God and the Poets: Ma'na in the Eleventh Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), p. 149.
[88] Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism: And its critique by Averroes and Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 145.

with holding themselves accountable for how they react when faced with life choices despite also acknowledging Necessity might impose hardships indifferent to their current situation. Patterns become discernible over time inevitably leading to a sense of predictability which fuels further reinvigoration. Rather than becoming disheartened at the futility of such decision making in light of an eventual death mankind must instead, 'burst the chains which life for ever flings/On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,' for it is only when we are no longer a, 'careless slave of that dark power which brings/Evil', that mankind may laugh, 'o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid'[89] and avoid relinquishing agency to an abstracted phenomena: '[a] fate/Which made them abject [but] in such faith, some steadfast joy to know'.[90] In transvaluing this Islamic concept through *The Revolt,* Shelley is furthering his own mythographic, universalising aim to promote the Divinity in creativity without reifying it to the level of a deity by continuously grounding feeling and the faculty of choice in an awareness of mankind's faults and situatedness.

[89] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 2, stanza xxxiii, lines 958-63, p. 48.
[90] *Ibid*, stanza ix, lines 1488-90, p. 79.

Chapter 6

Shelley's Jihad: Pacifism Through Poetry and Spiritual Transsexualism in *The Revolt of Islam*

In his study, *Playing the Fool: Subversive Laughter in Troubled Times*, Ralph Lerner examines Francis Bacon's lamentation of Christianity's waning influence within the social sphere born from a meek contentedness, 'a religion, shorn of majesty, that knows its place and minds its manners',[1] which he seeks to enliven with his own vision for a society where religion serves as a structural device to govern social morals but for the sake of what Bacon deems sacred (i.e. reason, philosophy and science). Bacon's usage of Christian imagery when outlining his project, such as light and salvation, no longer signify divine knowledge or sacrifice but rather, become means of elevating mankind's creative ability to imagine new worlds and uncover old ones with the prospect of such enlightened minds developing a utopia that is attainable in this life as opposed to the hereafter, governed by a 'public policy, not particularly humane, but broadly and visibly humanitarian [whilst] relentless[ly] refocusing of people's thoughts and acts on bodily well-being in this world'.[2] Lerner conceives of Bacon's, 'An Advertisement Touching a Holy War' (1629), as a 'jihad'[3] against traditional forms of governance and religion reflecting the political and theological break from perceived conventions signified by Islam and the transformation it sought to enact both in the idolatrous marketplace of Mecca as well as the anthropomorphising doctrines of Christianity by cultivating a nation that could carry out 'an empire-building campaign'[4] not under the yoke of monarchy or clergy but through merging, 'philosophy, politics, and religion alike [and in

[1] Ralph Lerner, 'The Jihad of St. Alban', *The Review of Politics* 64 (2002), 5-26, at p. 25.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 18.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 25.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 24.

turn,] remaking [...] the world and [...] man's place in it'.[5] Echoing Lerner's interpretation of Bacon as channelling an Islamic spirit in his call for social reform, I intend to approach Shelley's statement regarding *The Revolt* as composed, 'without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners',[6] by assessing the impact of his authorial decision to present his own beau ideal revolution through the spectrum of an Islamic reformation indicating an ideological rather than physical conflict as Laon and Cythna, through their words and character, seek to redefine uncritically accepted social or religious concepts until the 'Book of Fate' becomes the Book of Mind,[7] and holy warfare becomes a 'patient warfare'.[8] It would be shortsighted to argue that, by admitting no intentional relation between the history constituting the tropes and his presentation of them, Shelley invalidates any reading which seeks to reconstruct Islamic voices as interpretive avenues for understanding the ethos of his Eastern poem for such an approach fails to appreciate the self-aware continuity implicit within Shelley's mythopoetics, a phenomena William Ulmer applies to *Prometheus Unbound* and which is equally appropriate to describing the dynamics at play in *The Revolt*:

> [Shelley] validates the conservative conventions [he] criticizes [...] in the very act of choosing them for criticism [and his] demythologization of myth, in the instant of its accomplishment, becomes another myth whose relation to the past is potentially as continuous as it is discontinuous[9]

[5] *Ibid*, p. 25. More specifically, Lerner suggests that Bacon's aspirations to achieve a utopia which would reenvision man's place in the world from a cosmic to a political level was a more tempered version of the Muslim philosophers aspirations.
[6] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, p. 563.
[7] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam. A Poem, In Twelve Cantos* (London: Printed for John Brooks, 1829), canto 8, stanza xx, line 3372, p. 187
[8] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza 22, line 855, p. 43.
[9] William A. Ulmer, *Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.103.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Shelley's transvaluation in relation to the Book of Fate (i.e. cause and effect), in this section I intend to contextualise how those more abstract findings relate to worldly affairs with the key term, 'holy warfare',[10] being the linchpin through which all other concerns are filtered whether it be the honour and aftermath of martyrdom when fighting to maintain a set of values or the use of rhetoric over force when conducting a successful revolution at a domestic and foreign level. Even more so than Bacon, Shelley is choosing to frame his project of intellectual reform in terms of a holy war that establishes its identity by directly distinguishing, as well as aligning, itself with different aspects of a perceived Islamic conceptualisation of the term which is reflected both by Othman's fatalistic theocracy as well as Laon and Cythna's zealous enthusiasm to reconfigure national identity as a move away from superstition and idolatry towards an appreciation of language's sublimity. I initially intend to explore a comparative analysis of Muhammad's conquest of Mecca and Laon and Cythna's deposition of Othman to gain insight as to how they, as messengers, differ or cohere at a behavioural and ideological level. I shall complement this broader historical examination of character with a section outlining their specific messages in relation to what ideals they are fighting for in order to determine whether these theoretical viewpoints, when translated into real world scenarios, are maintained.

On the one hand, Shelley employs Islam as a signifier for how sublime intentions risk being destroyed by fanaticism replete with its own institutionalised issues from superstition to arrogance that could plague even Athenian society; on the other hand, his transfiguration of religious martyrdom at the end of the piece indicates an awareness that Islam did not die out

[10] 'Holy warfare' was also a phrase used by Gibbon to describe the Prophet's practices during the, 'nine battles or sieges; and fifty enterprises of war [he fought],' throughout his prophecy whilst striving to maintain a level of, 'clemency', in all engagements whether it be, 'seldom trampl[ing] on a prostrate enemy […] promis[ing] that, on the payment of a tribute, the least guilty of his unbelieving subjects might be indulged in their worship, or at least in their imperfect faith'. (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Hurst & Co Publishers, n.d), vol. 3, p. 525).

during the early calpihate but rather continued to thrive in numbers.[11] In having his protagonists echo Islamic personages as well as reappropriate Islamic discourse with alterations, it enables him to call upon its example for both the positive qualities and cautionary lessons it can provide for a new set of people and circumstances within the stream of thought. In channelling Islam to reconstruct a lost European identity, *The Revolt* becomes Shelley's subversive call to a new jihad (denoting not simply views on warfare but also incorporating a holistic vision of reform) that delves into an individual's reasons for struggling during their daily life as well as through cataclysmic events – whether governed by metaphysical beliefs or personal moral judgements – and cohesively encapsulates his grander aspiration to inculcate within humanity: 'a virtuous enthusiasm [i.e. zealous piety] for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind'.[12] The resulting narrative creates a textual space where the identity of Islam as well as Europeanness are being simultaneously critiqued and transfigured in light of one another with such 'metahistorical' bond being mediated through the romance and epic narrative format which both rely on an allegorical temporality where characters and settings are on the cusp of fact and myth: 'based on [an] interpretation of the past [subsequently] project[ed] into an idealised vision of Europe's potential future'.[13] In other words, Shelley is exploring an Oriental Other to trace what constitutes Europeanness but the universalising element which foregrounds human decency and refined sensibilities as not being the property of a single civilisation prevents this dynamic from becoming too polarising since Laon and Cythna are shown to be developing a response to Othman's rule using a modified version of the rhetoric

[11] A reference to Shelley's comment regarding Muhammad having amassed more followers than Jesus, 'if we consider the number of his [Muhammad's] followers [it is a] greater success' (Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, eds. by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), VI, p. 255).
[12] *The Revolt of Islam*, preface, p. v.
[13] Paul Stock, *The Shelley-Byron Circle and the Idea of Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 102.

available to them (fatalism, submission, and armed aggression) but recontextualising its usage as a form of retaining social relevancy whilst empowering a new set of values. The suggestion that Shelley is depicting Islam as already possessing the tools for both its redemption and destruction might be met with scepticism but, I would argue, it reflects a wider conflicting sentiment regarding the Eastern faiths split personality as equal parts ignorant and sublime, an inevitable paradox from a people who were esteemed as hospitable and derided as hostile.

Edward Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire* emblematises the inconsistent impression of Islam through contemporary attitudes towards the prophet as simultaneously, 'a solitary of Mount Hera, [a] preacher of Mecca, and [a] conqueror of Arabia,'[14] whose following was gained through a doctrine that called to the, 'same God who afflicts a sinful world with pestilence and earthquakes',[15] but also theologically rationalised Arab understanding of the transcendent to generate, 'a creed too sublime, perhaps', positing a Creator unaffected by idolatry, 'abstracted from the unknown substance [of] all ideas of time and space, of motion and matter, of sensation and reflection'.[16] It is this perceived dual identity of spiritual simplicity paired with complex ambitions that generated early schisms in the community after the loss of the prophet who functioned as a vessel to synthesise such behavioural and intellectual conflicts through a singular, undiluted vision: 'Arabia, free at home and formidable abroad, might have flourished under a succession of her native monarchs. Her sovereignty was lost by the extent and rapidity of conquest'.[17] The setting is also granted a split personality of its own as Paul Stock notes the synergistic quality of

[14] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 537. Even though Shelley commented on his disdain for Gibbon in comparison to Rousseau, there is evidence that he consulted his work when writing poetry even in relation to Islamic history as indicated by his notes whilst researching 'The Assassins' in April 1815: '"The Assassins,' Gibbon, chap. lxiv. All that Assassins' is to be found in 'Memoires of the Academy pp. 127' (E. B. Murray, 'The Dating and Composition of Shelley's "The Assassins", *Keats-Shelley Journal* 34 (1985), 14-17, at p. 15.
[15] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 538.
[16] *Ibid*, p. 510.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 555.

Constantinople being a border zone between Europe and Asia, 'neither simply a disguised European city in the throes of revolution, nor an example of authoritarian Oriental rule; rather, it is a combination of both', and yet, this conceptual bridge between nations quickly becomes signposted so as to perpetuate strict boundaries which essentialise either side and undercuts any meaningful crossings, the dynamic is assumed to be characterised by: 'a European history (presenting an ideal of past, and the possibility of future, revolutions) and as a non-European "other" – an unenlightened oppressive state, opposed to liberty and revolution'.[18] Stock's recognition that there exists a mutually constitutive element in the relation between the East and the West as presented in the poem remains geographically isolated, ideologically polarised and his metahistory is divorced from Shelley's mythopoetics.

The Conquest of Mecca and the Deposition of Othman

Gibbon's biography of Muhammad in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* provides a suitable, contemporary reference point that Shelley would have been exposed to when outlining Laon and Cythna (their character, uprising and setbacks) and reveals how Islam did not simply provide a title but an, 'author of a mighty revolution appears to have been endowed with a pious and contemplative disposition,'[19] whose values and life experiences enabled Shelley to convey a particular message regarding the role of intellect and aggression in conducting a widespread shift in thought. The combination of Gibbon's own opinions as well as his references to the companion's own viewpoints depicts a man with an intrinsically different sensibility and belief system than those around him causing him to become a stranger in his own land despite being engaged on a social level, 'Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation [often withdrawing to] the cave of Hera, three miles from

[18] *The Shelley-Byron Circle and the Idea of Europe*, p. 14.
[19] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 537.

Mecca',[20] indulging in sublime thoughts (Gibbon refrains from suggesting prophecy but a contemplative mind is at least granted)[21] until he formulated a potent revolutionary message that both rewrote Arab national identity and offered an alternate power structure to the idolatrous political system practiced during his day. The basis of his community would become a, 'congregation of Unitarians, who revered him as a prophet', whose morale was satiated predominantly as a result of sublime language and its sonorous impact of its continued recitation, 'he seasonably dispensed the spiritual nourishment of the Koran', a mode of edifying his followers that, especially before the allowance of self-defence, 'asserted the liberty of conscience, and disclaimed the use of religious violence.'[22] Out of fear of his influence spreading, Abu Sufyan (leader of the Quraysh) called for Muhammad's death which inevitably resulted in his exile to Medina as this, 'holy outcast of Mecca',[23] gradually met more who believed in the same cause until, after ten years, they finally marched back to Mecca to dethrone those who had exiled them and broken their treatise but, '[i]nstead of indulging their passions and his own, the victorious exile forgave the guilt, and united the factions of Mecca', and whlst there were a handful of casualties, these were 'blamed [on] the cruelty of his lieutenant; and several of the most obnoxious victims were indebted for their lives to his clemency or contempt.'[24] The immediate victory would be fleeting, however, as the Muslims were eventually surrounded by a nearby clan, the Hawazin, who perceived the gestation period of a newly installed government as the opportune moment to take control and channel the centralised rule that the Quraish had held for their own benefit and yet, after massacring countless believers, they were still unable to wrest control from a community who would go to great lengths to protect their prophet and their faith. I should stress that Shelley

[20] *Ibid*, p. 509.
[21] Gibbon describes him as possessing an, 'imagination sublime [as well as a] judgment clear, rapid, and decisive' (*Ibid*, p. 508).
[22] *Ibid*, p. 521.
[23] *Ibid*, p. 522.
[24] *Ibid*, p. 531.

chooses to disperse these responsibilities across Laon and Cythna as both fulfil the journey from exile to redemption (curtailed by treason) but the former is a vessel through which to narrate the atmosphere of conquest during Othman's disposition whilst the latter practically amasses support through the force of rhetoric and so, despite functioning as a corollary to A'isha (Muhammad's younger female companion), Cythna must also symbolise elements of the prophetic role due to Shelley's thematic emphasis on revolution as driven by both genders. Apportioning the duties and narrative beats of an Eastern figurehead who previously redefined national identity between both characters does not dilute the pertinency of comparative analysis since Shelley intentionally amalgamates their journeys by creating the hybrid name of Laone, having both characters die for the other as if ontologically inseperable and intertwining their legacy during the metaphorical afterlife. I interpret *The Revolt* in light of how this general overview reveals a number of similarities between Muhammad and Laone (used here to signify their collective cause rather than simply denote Cythna); both were presented as revolutionaries whose messages imbued language with sublimity as an affront to the idolatrous monarchy in their native land who dictated public access to the divine for the sake of commerce and control resulting in a forced exile (ten and seven years respectively). Whilst they were shunned by the respective leaders of their original communities, they slowly amassed enough solidarity amongst a fledgling group of likeminded supporters that they were able to return home and depose the tyrants in a predominantly pacifistic manner until nearby forces attempted to sabotage their victory with a surprise assault at which point their narratives diverge as Muhammad succeeded in maintaining control whereas Laone is driven to self-sacrifice.

Closely examining the events during the overthrow of tyranny as well as the subsequent fallout highlights specific points where habLaon and Muhammad are confronted with similar situations and each reaction, when analysed in tandem, reveals the ideological impetus behind

their decision making and serves to determine which elements of their worldviews are compatible with one another. Upon being asked for help by an allied tribe of the Muslims after the Quraish had violated their peace treaty, the Prophet enlisted ten thousand men with a view to curtailing the oppression across the province that had been authored by Meccan leaders and the hope of establishing a community directed towards a transcendent unity rather than allegiances dispersed across a fractured pantheon of idols. Likewise, Laon is driven back to the gates of his native city upon hearing of a revolution that (unbeknownst to him) his 'second self' has generated to overthrow the monarchy and establish equality for the sake of love, Shelley amplifies this image of a disenfranchised community that develops solidarity in response to being downtrodden and who desire for others the justice that they were so fervently denied. In moving together as one to face their oppressor they become an image of the ideals they hold to be true, 'a nation/Made free by love;--a mighty brotherhood/Linked by a jealous interchange of good',[25] leading by example in their conduct both towards those who wronged them as well as those under the yoke of monarchy who, silent but complicit, changed their disposition after being exposed to such a display of sincerity: 'their own hearts grow mild,/And did with soft attraction ever draw/Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law'.[26] Unlike the Qur'anic recitation which indicates divine providence is directing the succession, Laone's congregation are guided by, '[t]he friend and the preserver of the free!,' and, on a more sublime scale, driven by an immense feeling of liberty which, although simply a principle, is realised to such an extent through the newfound community that it gains some existential value as it colours perception in a manner both subjective and collectively sensed: '[t]he light of a great spirit, round me shone;/And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted/Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun'.[27]

Regarding the actual deposition that took place in Mecca, not only was general amnesty

[25] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 5 stanza xiv, lines 1839-41, p. 100.
[26] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza xvii, lines 1870-72, p. 102.
[27] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza xviii, lines 1875-80, p. 102.

granted to the population but the 'chiefs of the Koreish', after having acknowledged they could neither overwhelm the Muslim troops nor justify their prior condemnation towards them, were decidedly at the mercy of the prophet's discretion when responding to the question, '"[w]hat mercy can you expect from the man whom you have wronged?"', to which they replied with a general plea to forgiveness, '"we confide in the generosity of our kinsman"', and in turn, received a collected response, '"[a]nd you shall not confide in vain: begone! you are safe, you are free"'.[28] In a similar manner, the Prophet chastises an officer who becomes overly enamoured with the thought of conquest without considering the etiquette behind their expedition, stating '[t]oday is the day of battle. Today your lives and property are treated to be lawful (for Muslims)', resulting in Muhammad stripping him of his position as such a reaction could tarnish their reason for revolt which, as highlighted in a sermon following their victory, was to establish a common bond where piety rather than wealth or clan would structure this Adamic fellowship, '[p]eople, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another'.[29] Laon finds himself in a similar situation where certain members of the community call for justice through vengeance, '[a]nd he is fallen!' they cry, 'he who did dwell/Like famine or the plague [...] he is here!/Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!'',[30] prompting Laon to debate their morality should they wish to inflict the same hardship commited against them upon another party purely because the power dynamic has shifted rather than using this as an opportunity to demolish old institutions and erect monuments of the heart to Mother Earth:

> [w]hat do ye seek? [...] that ye should shed/The blood of Othman? [...]
>
> This one poor lonely man--beneath Heaven spread/In purest light above

[28] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 531.
[29] Muhammad Abdel-Haleem, *The Qurʾan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 49: 13, p. 339.
[30] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 5, stanza xxxi, line 1993-98, p. 108.

us all, through earth--/Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles

shed/For all, let him go free[31]

In either case, their reasons for reform overlap on a broad scale with regards to instigating a new era founded on a revised framework of timeless principles that wipes away past blood feuds and yet, when Cythna proclaims, 'Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!/Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations',[32] Shelley is signalling a split between the Muslim community and his own band of revolutionaries for their wondrous submission is not directed towards a transcendent cosmic entity, the stars are unresponsive, instead they dethrone the patriarchal image of a kingly God along with their worldly representatives to empower humanity through an awareness of universal values: '[a]lmighty Fear,/The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,/Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,/While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns!'.[33] Cythna, in particular, exposes the mental shadows imposed by institutions who benefit from monolithic worldviews with a clear ontological hierarchy for it enables sovereignty to be more easily wrested from the masses through a risk-reward dynamic where morality is inculcated through blame and those most sincere remain fixated on procuring recompense for the hereafter as opposed to infusing this world with beauty, wisdom and art: 'mak[ing] this Earth, our home, more beautiful,/And [using] Science, and her sister Poesy,/[to] clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!'.[34] Both are revolutions of the mind since they encourage their people to question whether the identity unwittingly absorbed through immediate context alone is necessarily correct but they differ in that Muhammad called to this altered perception as a way of glorifying the Creator of mind whereas Laone's movement is ushering an era where mind itself is glorified: '[t]he dawn of mind [...] far illumines space,/And clasps this barren world in its own bright

[31] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza xxxiii, lines 2008-15, p. 109.
[32] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza LI.6, lines 2257-58, p. 123.
[33] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza LI.6, lines 2268-71, p. 123.
[34] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza LI.5, lines 2254-56, p. 123.

embrace!'.[35]

Following the deposition, neighbouring tribes disrupted the supposed calm of victory by launching a precautionary assault on Mecca out of a worry that this governance would spread its new mindset further afield, '[f]our thousand Pagans advanced with secrecy and speed to surprise the conqueror', catching Muhammad and his followers offguard and slaughtering their forces by breaking them apart, '[the Muslims] numbers were oppressed, their discipline was confounded, their courage was appalled, and the Koreish smiled at their impending destruction', until eventually the Prophet and his uncle 'Abbas called out for renewed effort which strengthened morale and turned turned the tide, 'the furnace was again rekindled: his conduct and example restored the battle'.[36] The Qur'anic account of this battle attributes the Muslims renewed vigour not to Muhammad or Abbass' rallying cries since those are outward expressions gesturing towards the actual angellic intercession which took place serving as a reminder that, despite their victory and physical strength, they still needed God's aid:

> [y]ou were well pleased with your large numbers, but they were of no use to you: the earth seemed to close in on you despite its spaciousness, and you turned tail and fled. Then God sent His calm down to to His Messenger [...] and He sent down invisible forces[37]

This rude awakening upon presumed success is replicated in *The Revolt* as Laon hears the tormented cries of his community besieged by a foreign army seeking revenge for the sake of Othman, 'rallying cries of treason and of danger/Resounded: and - 'They come! to arms! to arms!/The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger/Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!',[38] he responds by surrounding himself with his closest allies in a show of solidarity that would come to echo Peterloo: '[i]mmovably we stood--in joy [...]The old man whom I

[35] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza LI.4, lines 2239-41, p. 122.
[36] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 532.
[37] *The Qur'an*, 9:25, p. 118.
[38] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 6, stanza iii, lines 2353-56, p. 129.

loved--his eyes divine/With a mild look of courage answered mine/And [...] now the line/Of war extended, to our rallying cry/As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die'.[39] Ironically, after many companions had been mercilessly slain, an angel similarly reveals itself in time to save Laon but she is human and not driven by divine providence but rather love of justice and hatred of oppression who, despite previously cultivating the rebellion on the basis of her sublime rhetoric, has reached a point where she is unable to influence anything beyond her own immediate actions: '[a] black Tartarian horse of giant frame/Comes trampling over the dead, the living bleed/Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,/On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,/Sate one waving a sword'.[40] The reunion is too late, however, as the remaining revolutionaries are pushed back into exile through fear of death and live their remaining days in solitude exchanging painful stories whilst a plague befalls those who carried out the attack not as evidence for karmic interference but rather a narrative device to satirise superstitious belief in sacrifice for divine aid as a contrast to the bond between Laon and Cythna that persists during hardship (and eventually death). The difference in outcome is emblematic of a larger disparity that haunts all prior overlapping events; namely, the metaphysical worldviews underpinning these narratives inevitably influences not only the directives of revolution but determine the potential number of available outcomes (i.e. the possibility for divine intervention) which is why Shelley is so adamant the poem is: 'a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference'.[41] The poet may praise love and equality as worthwhile values and might even deem them forces for change when channeled correctly but he has become deeply sceptical as to whether they can salvage uprisings on their nature alone.

[39] *Ibid*, canto 6, stanza x, lines 2416-24, pp. 132-3.
[40] *Ibid*, canto 6, stanza xix, lines 2499-503, p. 137.
[41] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ix, pp. 250-51.

What Constitutes Holy Warfare?

Delving into contemporary attitudes regarding Muhammad as a revolutionary poet-prophet reveals a man who, even within a society where poets were the 'historians and moralists of the age […] inspir[ing] and crown[ing] the virtues, of their countrymen',[42] was able to stimulate an unparalleled movement which attuned a faith-based morality to the literary sensibilities of the Arabs by placing himself in the, 'more humble, yet more sublime [position] of a simple editor', whose messages and policies were delivered piecemeal on an earthly plane whilst originally, 'subsisting in the essence of the Deity, and inscribed with a pen of light on the table of his everlasting decrees'.[43] Although the likes of Gibbon derided the Qur'an as being unimpressive to European sensibilities, 'the European infidel [...] will peruse with impatience the endless incoherent rhapsody of fable, and precept, and declamation, which seldom excites a sentiment or an idea', he marvels at the respect Muhammad was able to elicit by capturing and modifying the imagination of his own people: 'whose mind [became] attuned to faith and rapture; whose ear [was] delighted by the music [and] sounds [of its] sublime simplicity'.[44] Especially during the early years of his message, when he was actively being persecuted, the Prophet incited new behaviour or refined old values largely on the basis of his sublime rhetoric and introspective character which enabled him to channel the Arabian hospitality into spreading charity amongst, 'the animal creation [as well as] the indigent and unfortunate', not only on the basis of, 'merit, but as a strict and indispensable duty', resulting in, 'Mahomet, perhaps, [being] the only lawgiver who has defined the precise measure of charity'.[45] Gibbon also notes how Muhammad reinforced positive characteristics of the pre-Islamic Arabian mindset including, 'courage, patience, and sobriety [as well as] the love of independence [that] prompts [one] to exercise, the habits of

[42] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 501.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 512.
[44] *Ibid*, p. 513.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 516.

self-command,'[46] becoming an example of those virtues through his conduct and worldview as someone who: 'despised the pomp of royalty […] submitted to the menial offices of the family […] mended with his own hands his shoes and his woollen garment [and] observed, without effort or vanity, the abstemious diet of an Arab and a soldier'.[47] Despite being considered the conqueror of Mecca, Muhammad was still perceived as having a relatively tempering effect on the, 'sanguinary spirit [of tribal Arabia]',[48] through the sublime tonality of revelation coupled with his own tutelage, 'he breathed among the faithful a spirit of charity and friendship; recommended the practice of social virtues; and checked, by his laws and precepts, the thirst of revenge',[49] and even select moments of warfare throughout his career are justified in Gibbon's mind as being the natural right of man, 'to defend, by force of arms, his person and his possessions', as well as the natural response of someone who, 'had been despoiled and banished by the injustice of his countrymen'.[50] At this point, any decision to resort to aggression needed to be sanctioned by a rightful political authority on the understanding that said force was temporary and directed towards re-establishing a state wherein Islam could be practiced and preached via more conducive methods whether it be contributing towards societal improvement (e.g. intellectual advancements) or written and spoken transmission of hadith and Qur'an.

The Qur'an became the central mode through which the Prophet restructured Arab self-conceptualisation whether it be to address socio-political injustices (e.g. female infanticide), introduce the concept of proportionality in aggression[51], or curtail the ongoing cycles of violence and lawless anarchism generated by inter-tribal warfare all for the sake of creating a

[46] *Ibid*, p. 499.
[47] *Ibid*, p. 539.
[48] *Ibid*, p. 501.
[49] *Ibid*, pp. 554-55.
[50] *Ibid*, p. 524.
[51] There are numerous Qur'anic verses that seek to mitigate the use of excessive violence by using God's foregiveness of those who forgive as a mediating principle between enacting force as a deterrent whilst also refraining from merely escalating the conflict to a point where the situation could potentially spiral into further disarray, 'God will help those who retaliate against an aggressive act merely with its like and are then wronged again: God is pardoning and most forgiving' (*The Qur'an*, 22: 60, p. 213).

society where order was achieved not through fear of retribution but by elevating the honour of others as Adamic creatures and ultimately: 'endow[ing the] human struggle to remake a common world with existential weight.[52] In this sense, jihad is a linguistic as well as lived reality which necessitates struggle to understand and propagate religious texts (*jihad bil Qur'an*) as a means of establishing a scripturally literate society capable of critical thought as to the appropriate application of verses within a given period rather than relying upon forced conversion or uncritical submission due to a lack of appreciation for the multifaceted nature of exegesis. The concept of jihad came to signify a perpetual struggle against the demons within or a counter to the evil forces without, resulting in a predominantly introspective principle that is cognisant of the symbiotic relation between an individual's state of mind and the collective body of a nation as harmonious integration of disparate parts and required those parts to maintain a sense of mutual understanding over certain common principles. In being able to protect the sovereignty of a people on a political level as well as establish individual sovereignty on a moral level a sense of camaraderie is cultivated with the goal of fostering a stable society just as the ability to make pilgrimage and stand in unison irrespective of social or cultural differences is an echo of the eventual levelling that will take place on the Day of Judgment. Striving in the way of Allah to improve societal conditions requires balancing both material as well as spiritual priorities with the wellbeing attained through worldly gains being perceived as a means towards the more vital metaphysical ends indicating that reform is individualistic, at heart, and collective, in expression, as each member seeks inward solace through engagement as part of a harmonious whole.

When turning to Shelley's inversion of jihad, it is clear from the outset that his Oriental setting is a place where holy warfare is an inevitable facet of life, '[h]ow, to that vast and

[52] Roxanne L. Euben, 'Killing (For) Politics: Jihad, Martyrdom, and Political Action', *Political Theory* 30 (2002), 4-35, at p. 22.

peopled city led,/Which was a field of holy warfare then,'[53] whilst also offering a brief insight into the conflicting approaches that Othman's troops or the titular heroes adopt when interpreting this term as the former brutalises those who oppose it, leaving behind a trail composed of 'the dying and the dead',[54] whereas the latter is like, 'an angel in the dragon's den', which is similarly 'fearless' but in a more self-sacrificing manner trying to uphold universal principles, 'I braved death for liberty and truth'.[55] Each response reveals their differing conceptions as to what constitutes an inviolable principle, how best to preserve those values in a manner befitting of their station and whether or not there are metaphysical repercussion from enacting either mindset. As the poem progresses the split becomes more apparent with the tyrannical will who is, 'bent/Before one Power, to which supreme control/Over their will by their own weakness lent', allowing pride over the majesty of what they hold sacred to fuel an overly protective, even obsessive, attachment that facilitates any disregards for the sanctity of their own sovereignty let alone others and deifying that which is deplorable, '[a]ll symbols of things evil, all divine'.[56] By contrast, those for whom, 'the heart's warfare', determines their actions will be engaged in internally transcribing, 'life's various stor[ies]', such as, 'a mother's desolate wail/O'er her polluted child', to expand their capacity for empathy and their sense of beloniging as part of the One Mind united in mutual benefit rather than exploitation: 'gather[ing] food/To feed my many thoughts [as insperable from the] tameless multitude!'.[57] Laon, Cythna and the hermit are engaged in a war over warfare, all struggling to change the way conflicts are resolved by both attempting to maintain the old rhetoric of valour, dedication and martyrdom so as not to present themselves or their cause as enfeebled by comparison. For instance, Laon's 'soul-subduing tongue' is 'a

[53] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 1, stanza xliv, lines 514-15, p. 23.
[54] *Ibid*, canto 1, stanza xliv, line 516, p. 23.
[55] *Ibid*, canto 1, stanza xliv, lines 517-19, p. 23.
[56] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza viii, lines 731-35, p. 36.
[57] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza ix, lines 739-47, p. 36.

lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong',[58] whilst also reforming their definition within the public consciousness in order to remove the base connotations of self-serving arrogance mixed with prejudicial aggression inherited from the past. The notion of a patient warfare of the heart channelled through language is a concerted effort to redefine the directives and practices originally associated with righteous indignation circulating during the time by presenting itself not simply as a definitive break from tradition but by positioning itself as a truer expression of the positive qualities festering beneath the current order. By prioritising honour over pride, inculcating a universal commaraderie as opposed to erecting a hierarchical brotherhood and respecting the sublime in humanity rather than praising a divine human, Laon and Cythna hoped to align misinformed perspectives through a predominantly psychological warfare for, '[i]f blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice/Of bonds,--from slavery to cowardice,' whereas, reframing thought patterns generates a lasting effect and, '[p]our[s] on those evil men the love that lies [beneath] those spirit-soothing eyes'.[59]

The myopic understanding of how to interpret holy warfare and its struggle to maintain what is sacred, is a natural result of indoctrination under a singular rule that has authored and normalised an otherwise disingenuous interpretation requiring fresh eyes complemented with youthful vigour as well as a sound heart to adjust the parameters of sanctity and establish, '[d]octrines of human power', whose call for, 'men [to] aspire to more', is simply a reminder of past knowledge, 'from the lores of bards and sages old', shaped into a more relevant response via, 'my [own] wakened thoughts'.[60] Although Shelley often denies the use of violence to achieve his goals (e.g. the purging that Laon had to undergo after the unsympathetic murder of his fellow brethren) he still acknowledges steadfast passivity should not devolve into apathy and a palpable sense of threat is indispensable when conducting a successful revolution because righteous indignation, if channelled correctly, can more

[58] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza vii, lines 1565-66, p. 83.
[59] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza xxviii, lines 1657-61, p. 89.
[60] *Ibid*, canto 4, stanza xii, lines 1513-20, p. 81.

immediately undercut any self-righteousness the tyrant presents as justification for their dishonesty and iniquity. The Romantic poet refuses to allow his audience to internalise their victimhood status often employing incendiary rhetoric such as, 'I grow weary to behold/The selfish and the strong still tyrannise/Without reproach or check',[61] but often warns the readers not to repeat the cruelty perpetrated upon them and reminds them to regain as sense of collectedness before channeling aggressive feelings through counterproductive actions: '[w]e all are brethren--even the slaves who kill/For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed/On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed.'[62] In denouncing evil as illusory, associating it with deceit and fraud contrary to goodness which is more substantial and genuine, momentary outrage can briefly tip the scales of dominance in favour of those who will use that opening to make space for love through a return to passivity or leave a legacy in death. To fight for equality is not just a moral imperative but, at certain points in the narrative, takes on a fatalistic quality in which nature will always produce a set of reformers for every age who are driven towards denouncing discrimination by amassing an overwhelming surge of support that threatens to erase any trace of injustice until the cycle continues and the disenfranchised must wait for another zeitgeist where the balance is placed back in the hands of those who deserve responsibility: '[i]t must be so--I will arise and waken/The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,/Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken/The swoon of ages, it shall burst and fill/The world with cleansing fire; it must, it will--/It may not be restrained!'.[63] The purpose for such inflammatory language is to kindle 'within the bosoms of [his] readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice'[64] which is not dissimilar to the righteous indignation for the sake of God often levied by the religious zealots that Shelley paints in a negative light indicating they channel some aspect of their sensibilities through the same

[61] *Ibid*, dedication, p. xxvii.
[62] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza xi, lines 1812-14, p. 98.
[63] *Ibid*, canto 2, stanza xiv, lines 784-89, p. 39.
[64] *Ibid*, preface, p. v

protective spirit to maintain the sanctity of their highest principles at all costs. Needless to say, Shelley's redefinition of holy warfare within the context of the East is indebeted to the more recent legacy of the French Revolution as he is simultaneously grappling with eighteenth-century debates regarding royalism and civil liberty and responding to contemporary conceptualisations of successful reform as necessitating an intellectual, rather than rash or brutish, approach promoted by the likes of Wollstonecraft who, in her *History of the French Revolution* (1794), hopes this battle for identity is won by instigating an intellectual reform against meek slavishness and misdirected idealism. However, when discussing the role that negative portrayals of the Orient had on the construction of a European identity, it should be acknowledged that Muhammad was commended (however disingenuously) for refining and harnessing the positive qualities of Arabian behaviour whilst tempering their baser tendencies on both a spiritual and socio-political level in much the same way Laon and Cythna are reforming social conduct by redefining national identity and realigning metaphysical allegiances.

To understand the literary dynamics of this relationship between classical revolutionary and modern-day reimagining it serves to turn to Shelley's citation of George Chapman in his dedication since the rousing passage declaring mankind's right to freedom from the chains of governance, 'there's not any law/Exceeds [mans] knowledge; neither is it lawful/That he should stoop to any other law',[65] is haunted by the spectre of its messenger, Charles de Gontaut (Duke of Byron), whose own attempts at dethroning monarchy serve as a pale imitation of the steadfastness against divine law enacted by Greek heroes from classical myth. The epitome of Chapman's heroes, Ulysses, shows signs of psychological distress in response to the injustices committed against him by the gods he is able to rationalise his suffering and acknowledge his indebtedness to 'Athena as one who stands by him among all

[65] *Ibid*, dedication, p. xiii.

dangers and without whose knowledge he never moves',[66] whereas Chapman's Byron is largely misled as opposed to becoming attached to his cause through hardship and yet, he still allows his imagined victimisation to devolve into a form of self-pity that supports his delusions of grandeur. Examining both characters reveals a fine line between fatalistic disquietude and narcissistic projection; the former has a more grounded understanding of their position within history and strives to alter their current condition on the understanding that cause and effect is interconnected so their own deeds encompass a limited sphere of influence before requiring outside help whether at a cosmic or human level; the latter is depicted as reckless due to their perception of worldly events being so self-centred, 'I will win [Fortune] though I lose myself',[67] to the extent that their desire to revolutionise perceived injustices eventually loses sight of its initial goal and becomes fixated on eliciting change for its own sake, Byron promises he will 'ruin [society] again to re-advance it.'[68] Shelley's titular revolution of Islam inevitably revolves around a failed uprising that possesses glimmers of promise indicating that his allusion to the Duke of Byron exposes a post-French Revolutionary doubt regarding the potential for ideal causes to be plagued by illusions of grandeur, naively zealous reformers and internalised victimisation leading to isolationism, all of which frame his reconstruction of Islamic tropes and Muslim history. Laon and Cythna's journey has inspiring elements as it pertains to their deposition of monarchy through a simple message of universal love as opposed to violence and yet, Shelley is acutely aware that the downfall of their plight is only a few Byronic mishaps away whether it be the result of Laon joining a revolt through hearsay, Cythna being naively deified by a group supposedly based on equality and freethought, or their general lack of foresight concerning events following Othman's fall from grace. To contextualise *The Revolt*'s indebtedness to *The Conspiracy and*

[66] Phyllis B. Bartlett, 'The Heroes of Chapman's Homer', *The Review of English Studies* 17 (1941), 257-80, at p. 276.
[67] George Chapman, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, ed. by John Margeson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), II. i. 146, p. 99.
[68] *Ibid*, I. ii. 35, p. 41.

Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron within the context of my own reading of the poem as a transvaluation of Muhammad's eventual victory in Mecca, I need to briefly cite Attar's suggestion that the poem might have been inspired by later Islamic history with the tyrant's name Uthman having ties to the 'founder of the Ottoman dynasty, (1299-1326), then his successors Uthman II (1618), and Uthman III (1754), but also the name of the third Caliph in Islam, 'Uthman Ibn 'affan (644-56).'[69] Attar draws a comparison between Cythna and A'isha who played a part in deposing both Othman and Ali as she was an 'independent Arab woman, a feminist orator, a poetry lover, a learned religious scholar with vast knowledge of medicine, a defender of the poor and the oppressed'[70] who might have been implicated in the aggression but was a victim of misinformation and denounced any association with the events afterwards.[71] These echoes are made clearer when reading Gibbon's description of A'isha as possessing, '[t]he youth, the beauty, the spirit of [to grant] her a superior ascendant [and led her to become] beloved and trusted by the prophet [as well as] the mother of the faithful',[72] evoking a similar sense of fertility, maternity, sublimity, and loyalty embodied in Cythna who; 'felt the sway of [Laon's] conceptions';[73] listened intently to his, 'holy and heroic verse,/[to which] Earth, sea and sky, the planets [became slaves]';[74] and cultivated his mind with her own thoughts, 'endowed/with music and with light [and] flowed/In poesy',[75] to become a revolutionary in her own right even when she was no longer physically, '[t]he

[69] *Borrowed imagination*, p. 128.
[70] *Ibid*, p. 129.
[71] To give an account of events, Uthman sent agents to the main provinces (upon hearing that there might be dissent) to see whether there were any qualms which could be dealt with early before a revolution was incited, for the most part there was no sense of discontent from the provinces except Egypt who were set on fast-forwarding the Caliphate of Ali not just due to a dissatisfaction with Othman's rule but primarily because they believed Ali, as the cousin to the Prophet, was worthier to political rule than Uthman who had no direct relationships other than companionship. During a consultation between Uthman and Abdullah ibn Saad, the governor of Egypt, a revolt broke out in Egypt which led the mass of dissenters to grow from Kufa to Basra until they eventually marched to Medina with the goal of assassinating Uthman who told his supporters not to fight the rebels in order to prevent fraternal bloodshed but violence took place regardless as they overpowered his forces and snuck into his chamber and killed him.
[72] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 540.
[73] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 1, stanza xxxi, line 938, p. 47.
[74] *Ibid*, canto 1, stanza xxx, lines 934-35, p. 47.
[75] *Ibid*, canto 1, stanza xxxi, lines 940-42, p. 47.

Prophet's virgin bride'.[76] We are presented, therefore, with a set of mirrored selves that either reflect one another in name or role but whose differences in orthography and characterisation symbolise an insurmountable disparity between each pairing even as they replicate certain qualities and thus, I argue *The Revolt* is a precursor to the, 'dispers[al of] identity into a ripple effect of irreconcilable crossings', in *Hellas*.[77] Condensing all of these refracted identities into a single arc complements *The Revolt*'s narratological purposes within the romance genre as Shelley is able to fully chart the rise and fall of an enthusiastic activist producing a hybrid revolutionary tale which is equal parts encouraging and cautionary by design:

> [balancing] Shelley's desire to confront the failure of the French Revolution so as to account for it and, indeed, the possibility of future setbacks [whilst also censuring the] revulsion and despair of his contemporaries by reaffirming the value of imaginative ideals of millennial fulfilment[78]

It is useful to recognise that the prophet became a symbol for how unity, founded on transcendental beliefs, might inspire more genuine solidarity than tribal bonds but could just as easily fall into disarray once the founder has passed away.[79] It is a fear of sound intentions becoming disillusioned as well as a concern that subsequent generations might lapse into old habits which plague Laon's journey. Amidst the refracted inversions of historical figures involved in Islamic revolutions to varying degrees, Laon and Cythna are positioned as Chapman-esque ironic warrior-heroes whose narrative function is to explore the possibility of

[76] *Ibid*, canto 9, stanza viii, line 3534, p. 197.
[77] William A. Ulmer, 'Hellas and the Historical Uncanny', *ELH* 58 (1991), 611-32, at p. 619.
[78] Stuart Sperry, 'The Sexual Theme in Shelley's '*The Revolt* of Islam'', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 82 (1983), 32-49, at p. 32.
[79] Gibbon commends previous Caliphs, 'Abubeker and Omar, [for] the prudence of the first, [and the] severity of the second, [in maintaining] the peace and prosperity of their reigns', whilst pinpointing Othman as the cause of the downfall of Islam, 'the feeble temper and declining age of Othman were incapable of sustaining the weight of conquest and empire. He chose, and he was deceived; he trusted, and he was betrayed – the most deserving of the faithful became useless or hostile to his government' (*The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 544).

leading a secular revolution which subsequent generations would perceive as being equally impactful on a world-historical level as the legacy's recounted in prophetic hagiography and classical epics when the gods fought on behalf of, or against, had existential value. Whilst Chapman cites figures such as Orpheus to directly denounce Byron's flaws, Shelley uses these fractured selves in a more investigative manner as he explores what a, 'holy warfare', in the name of his most cherished principles would entail by having his protagonists responding to a version of Islam (perceived as theocratic and fatalistic) with their own internalisation of those principles and tropes. The way Cythna and Laon choose to respond to Othman's tyranny channels not only Shelley's own brand of sceptical idealism and radicalism but, by subtly alluding to Islamic history, possesses an unlikely affinity with a religious leader who redefined national identity by offering a new paradigm founded upon an amalgamation of ancient wisdom[80] and whose community: '[dismissed] priesthood or sacrifice [in favour of an] independent spirit of fanaticism [that] looks down with contempt on the ministers and the slaves of superstition.'[81] Shelley's ideal revolutionary hero encapsulates both martyr and beloved; they are capable of engendering respect amongst those who were initially swayed by the false promises of kings or priests who claim to be working on your behalf in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, whilst also stripped of the strong sense of self-preservation that comes with high status and instead, willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of humanity. In other words, a person who is self-assured to the point of having a strong enough ethical compass with which to shame those who do not and, at the same time, do not indulge in their own high opinion of themselves or become naively influenced by causes that might end up being detrimental to the task of realising Universal Love.

[80] As signified for Muhammad by an unbroken chain of prophecy from Adam and encapsulated for Shelley in a type of *Sophia perennis*.
[81] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p.516.

The Reasons for Fighting and the Methods of Revelation

Shelley filters his critique on despotism through a damning indictment of theocratic societies which transcendentalise emotions as the central form of coercion rather than governing in a manner that esteems the individual's faculties and places authors of sensibility (e.g. poets and artists) in positions of influence which, due to a shift from an insular omniscient Mind to the human heart, would inculcate a spirit of freethought as intellect becomes decentralised from an otherwise overriding and immutable force generated to instantiate powers already in control: '[m]en say they have seen God, and heard from God,/ Or known from others who have known such things,/And that his will is all our law, a rod/ To scourge us into slaves [and place] Man's free-born soul beneath the oppressor's heel'.[82] His desert scene becomes the stage in which, '[t]hat monstrous faith wherewith [Princes and Priests] ruled mankind',[83] is revised in favour of a faith in the tenacity of human willpower and creativity when responding to adversity and beauty both of which are unlocked during the union of fate and subjectivity where necessity attaches individual expression to a more ancient lineage of cause and effect with a decision to assist the greater drive towards maintaining harmony or spread inequality: '[e]ldest of things, divine Equality!/Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,/The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee/Treasures from all the cells of human thought'.[84]

Love, both in a communal and intimate sense, becomes the new supplementary guiding force governing social interactions in a more tempered manner as such principles are no longer anthropomorphised into a dogmatically hardened yet, physically insubstantial figurehead, but rather recognised as emotions abstracted from the human realm which exceed any singular expression and in turn, provides the only legitimate gateway towards other

[82] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza vii, lines 3253-58, p. 180.
[83] *Ibid*, canto 10, stanza xxvi, lines 4018-19, p. 225.
[84] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza iii, lines 2212-15, p. 121.

sympathetic acts: 'O Love, who to the hearts of wandering men/Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves!/Justice, or Truth, or Joy! those only can/From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves/Guide us [...] To give to all an equal share of good,/To track the steps of Freedom'.[85] Shelley is re-envisioning the connotations of religious warfare within an oriental context by retaining the spirited conviction towards fulfilment of a greater cause whilst de-transcendentalising the reasons for fighting as equality becomes the primordial principle bolstered by its angelic servants, love and wisdom, which lay the groundwork for its actualisation within the hearts and minds of a community striving towards liberty from monolithic creeds: '[t]hat love, which none may bind, be free to fill/The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary/With crime, be quenched and die'.[86] The cosmological implications of shifting the source from which revolutionary change is sought and the ends to which societal reform is directed can be encapsulated in the line, '[a]nd earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,/For in that name they swore!',[87] functioning as a secular foil for the Islamic phrase *bismillah* (in the name of God) to bless any action with correct intention and in turn, establish *taqwa* (God-consciousness) until belief in Divine Providence as a necessary pre-requisite for conducting worldly and spiritual affairs becomes engrained within every facet of public and private life. God's power and domain remain far greater as He balances the human, natural and celestial world through destiny which infuses every instance with meaning not simply on a horizontal level of signification but also a vertical (i.e. celestial) plane: '[i]f God inflicts harm on you, no one can remove it but Him, and if He intends good for you, no one can turn His bounty away: He grants His bounty to any of His servants He will'.[88] Accordingly, Shelley utilises Laon and Cythna's opposition as a voice through which to project, and subsequently critique, a similar belief in the indominable will of a Creator God who is

[85] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza xi, lines 3289-95, p. 182.
[86] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza xvi, lines 3336-38, p. 185.
[87] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza xxviii, lines 3446-47, p. 191.
[88] *The Qur'an*, 10:107, p. 135.

paradoxically employed in the name of Mercy and adversity to dispense righteous justice: 'King of Glory! thou alone hast power!/Who can resist thy will? who can restrain/Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower/The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain?/Greatest and best, be merciful again!'.[89] Initially, it appears this type of fatalistic pride derives from a brash conviction in the unmatched power and unique existence of their particular deity is attributed to countless religions as a general indictment of how religiosity spreads anti-social behaviour under the banner of unity whilst spreading division: '[a]nd Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,/Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh [...] each raging votary 'gan to throw/Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl/"Our God alone is God!"'.[90] Conversely, this phrase can be read as a direct commentary on Muslim thought since the Islamic testimony of faith distinctly echoes the strict monotheism in Shelley's closing proclamation, *laa ilaaha illallaah* (there is no god worthy of worship except Allah), with other beliefs potentially positing exclusivity in truth whilst shunning such a hardline Unitarian approach whether it be Zoroastrianism's dualistic opposition between Oromazes and Ahrimanes, the Buddhist rejection of a singular creator god or unmoved mover, or the Hindu triumvirate consisting of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva who collectively create, sustain and destroy. The acknowledgement of a monotheistic deity and an unutterable power characterising the messages of Muhammad and Laon reflects the central difference between these iconoclastic messengers who signify the entrance of eternity into time, although they either preach or embody the maxim that, '[t]here is nothing like Him, and He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing'[91] or, implicated within Laon's phrasing, that the 'deep truth is imageless' there remains an insurmountable gulf between the Qur'anic message brought to the Prophet and the felt revelation of collective sympathy sensed within Laon. Shelley's intellectual interest in empiricism leads him to only affirm that which can be observed, the imagination can allow

[89] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 10, stanza xxviii, lines 4036-40, p. 226
[90] *Ibid*, canto 10, stanza xxxi, lines 4063-68, p. 227.
[91] *The Qur'an*, 42:11, p. 312.

the observer to move beyond the purely sensuous which tends to isolate individuals who rely solely on rational knowledge by allowing them to confer, as opposed to infer, relationships and as such: '[t]he difference is merely nominal between [internal and external impressions] which are vulgarly distinguished by the names of ideas and of external objects.'[92] Surprisingly, the discourse concerning reason as a simultaneous move away from superstition coupled with an imaginative engagement when observing the natural world is employed by Gibbon to describe Islam as founded on the prophet's, 'rational enthusiasm', through which he draws others away from deifying or worshipping mutable entities such as humans, inanimate objects or institutions, '[t]he prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols and men, of stars and planets, on the rational principle that whatever rises must set, that whatever is born must die', awakening them instead to an, 'infinite and eternal being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by the necessity of his own nature'.[93] Although the unutterable power or Demogorgon occupies a pseudo-Kantian noumenal realm that Shelley's sceptical idealism is unwilling to entirely dismiss he remains equally reticent believing in a force that perception cannot comprehend given language's incapability of elucidating Its character, merely obscuring through tautology and affixing human concepts that must affirm through an apophatic theology. In place of affirming a mysterious transcendental energy Shelley chooses to affirm the immanent power of imagination (namely metaphor) which senses that force or, otherwise put, the ideal exists within man rather than a realm beyond.

The reverential consciousness of Islam, where Allah is spiritually understood as being the only True reality relative to any worldly alterations results in a contentment regarding destiny, is transfigured into a state of mind that promotes the natural state of man as largely unbound save for a primordial maternity that establishes sympathetic bonds where: '[t]o live,

[92] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 635.
[93] *The History of the Decline and Fall*, p. 510.

as if to love and live were one,--/[requires neither] faith [n]or law, [and] those who bow/To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny [will never] know'.[94] The throne that Shelley seeks to denounce is both mental and actual with subservience to, as well as occupation of, such thrones cultivating a mindset that dismisses the maternal psyche in favour of a paternal psychosis, leads to an obsession with royalty (i.e. kingship) which inculcates slavishness rather than self-sovereignty and eventually causes the bonds of sympathy to be hijacked and horded for the adoration of a select few. Surprisingly, however, the relation between Shelley's universal principles and those inspired to call upon them is framed within equally submissive terms, 'Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,/Surround the world.--We are their chosen slaves',[95] and yet, akin to his repurposing of esoteric language to develop new avenues for conceiving past mindsets, he uses apostrophe alongside hyperbole for its artistic merit based on an understanding (derived from a love of classical art filtered through his scepticism) that literature can provide a gateway to the sacred without becoming religious (i.e. doctrinal). There is a shared appreciation of inward preparation as a necessary gateway towards social repair since our yearning for belonging will remain unfulfilled unless we can relinquishing any ego (inflated or self-defeating) founded upon custom and open ourselves to ecstatic experiences that encourage us to transcend the myopic scope of our local reality to realise there are sublime forces that connect humanity on a macroscopic level. Both Shelley's universal principles and Allah are *haadhir* (present) as well as *gha'ib* (unseen) but the latter in an omnipresent sense whereas the former is an organic byproduct of natural laws shaped by human interaction for: 'such is Nature's modesty, that those/Who grow together cannot choose but love'.[96] Not dissimilar to the discourse used in Arab and Persian esoteric literature to describe the union between sublime Beloved and servantile lover, Shelley declares these maidens of reform to be awaiting a response from a disgruntled civilian who hopes to rectify

[94] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza xii, lines 3304-06, p. 183.
[95] *Ibid*, canto 9, stanza xxiii, lines 3667-69, p. 204.
[96] *Ibid*, canto 6, stanza xl, lines 2686-87, p. 148.

their situation by overleaping the boundaries of common conduct, 'with strong speech I tore the veil that hid/Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love',[97] a revelatory experience grounded not in the distant majesty of an immutable existent whose acknowledgement results in self-loss and a subsequent sensual reawakening but rather an intuited communion with the One Mind that grants the human spirit self-reflective distance to admire itself from afar: 'I feel an echo; through my inmost frame/Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate'.[98] Love, Equality and Wisdom have no volition of their own and are only positively reinforced inasmuch as humanity is able to actualise their potential within the world whilst God has no need of human action to instantiate His existence as a moral agent indicating that esteem should be granted to humanity (the poet-legislators in particular) and thus, rather than attributing all praise to God without equal, Shelley dedicates a shrine to collective human thought: '[a]ll living things a common nature own,/And thought erect an universal throne,/Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?'.[99] In other words, Shelley tactfully divulges in outwardly devotional language to elevate certain humanitarian values within the public consciousness without instilling the belief that they are self-subsisting entities worthy of worship or gratitude precisely because they can determine lives irrespective of collective or individual willpower. Instead, the 'unutterable power' haunting Laon and Cythna's spiritual growth is reduced to a sensed absence devoid of an ontologically verifiable presence, or rather, an emotionally charged instance which is synonymous with the moment of revelation (the sense of universal belonging) felt during an equal embrace with another and gains a derivative form abstracted from the humans currently experiencing said moment whereby: '[a]ll thought, all sense, all feeling, [roll] into one'.[100] Accordingly, Shelley would

[97] *Ibid*, canto 9, stanza vii, lines 3523-24, p. 196.
[98] *Ibid*, canto 8, stanza xvii, lines 3344-45, p. 185.
[99] *Ibid*, canto 10, stanza i, lines 3796-98, p. 212
[100] *Ibid*, canto 6, stanza xxxv, line 2642, p. 145. Elsewhere Shelley expands upon this notion of an unutterable power as a, 'universal being [that] can only be described or defined by negatives, which deny his subjection to

dismiss the Islamic emphasis on the Creator's incomparability as counter-intuitive to the revolutionary aims driving the likes of *The Revolt* or *Prometheus Unbound* because such a conception inevitably generates a distinct ontological existent presiding over the universe and thus, projecting this static Being as the Ultimate Being inculcates passivity in Its followers: '[w]hy do you take protectors other than Him, who can neither benefit nor harm even themselves?'.[101]

Even though language is as obfuscating as it is clarifying, poets are able to speak from a position of self-awareness which infuses the emotions or values they espouse with fictionality and in turn, retains the truthfulness of a particular moment without becoming disillusioned as to the ontological universality of such a moment since reality, if unavoidably filtered through language, is mutable. Therefore, the revolutions of Muhammad and Laone's (i.e. Laon and Cythna's combined struggle) overlap inasmuch as they are linguistically driven, acknowledging a metalogic inherent in the sounds that constitute language, and which, beneath the interposed laws of grammatology, believe poetry or prophecy can tap into a universal resonance. The Qur'an is governed by a phonetic network of meaning (embedded in its pronunciation, rhythm, repetition, and word structure) these sonoral elements serve not only as ornamentation but awaken listeners to their createdness since proper recitation (*tajwid*) embeds oneself within the vibrations of a universal message being proclaimed by all other creatures at every moment. For Shelley, it is through the use of rhyme schemes and an attention to metre that, the 'language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry',[102] the strength of which is attested to by his phonemic reading of Shakespeare where devices such as, alliteration or assonance, are lauded for their ability to convey intense emotions that the audience has no

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the laws of all inferior existences. Where indefiniteness ends, idolatry and anthropomorphism begin' (*The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), I, p. 252).

[101] *The Qur'an*, 13:16, p. 154.

[102] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 639.

choice but to enact whilst reading. The visionary prophet, Muhammad, sought to engender a universal tribeless community united in their potential calling as God's vicegerent on earth impoverished before a higher Power that, although utterly transcendent, grants insight into Its Nature allowing humanity to improve their own selves upon realising that their faculties are approximations of a flawless expression in the Divine Archetypes. In contrast, Laon and Cythna's universal tribeless community[103] is founded on the understanding that language is essential to moulding human agency because without intention being given direction through expression there can be neither a thinking subject nor an object of thought and thus, poetry most adequately enables humanity to transcend their current ego and occupy other states from a position of understanding. The paradigm shifts that Shelley equates with creativity are poetic rather than prophetic in nature which reflects the split between how Muhammad and Laon's messages are conveyed; poetic language offers subtleties of expression, grammatical innovations, and offers a metaphorical (i.e. syncretistic) mode of thought whereas prophecy, Shelley believed, inevitably led to the imposition of abstract laws which could be abused by the powerful to generate a calculating discourse that thrives on immediate subjugation rather than immanent participation.

Domestic Revolution

The Revolt functions on a much more intimate level than purely a nationalistic or transhistorical one as the bond between sexes becomes both an integral foundation for conducting a truly sincere societal revision as well as an immutable principle that persists even during revolutionary collapse. For Shelley, if a freethinker cannot achieve equal union

[103] Shelley believed in a, 'community of feeling', that encapsulated a general sentiment of empathy available to all who sought to, 'maintain that connexion between one man and another', and who would become distraught at the thought of, 'any public calamity which [had] befallen their country or the world' (*The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 232). A similar acknowledgement can be traced in *The Revolt* which posits the desert not simply as a place in which tyranny thrives but which also harbours, 'a home/For Freedom [where] Genius is made strong to rear/The monuments of man beneath the dome/Of a new Heaven' (*The Revolt of Islam*, canto 11, stanza xxiv, lines 4432-35, p. 249).

amongst themselves and those members of society dearest to them (mothers, lovers, sisters and daughters) how can they purport to cultivate justice amongst an already indifferent or antagonistic community for, '[n]ever will peace and human nature meet/Till free and equal man and woman greet',[104] and so, an examination of Shelley's warfare benefits from a more nuanced understanding of the poem's gender dynamics (i.e. the reason for fighting). In such a climate, the validity of an individual's claim to be European becomes intertwined with their stance on marriage (whether in supporting it as an institution for upholding Christian morality or against it as a practice that actively curtails free love) invariably resulting in debates regarding what constituted Oriental identity in the position of Europe's opposite for: 'the degeneracy of some nations of the East, the Egyptians and Chaldeans [was often] traced to the marriages that were in use between brothers and sisters'.[105] Ironically, an effect of othering is that, when critiquing one's own homeland for abandoning and rallying against intrinsic values which had previously contributed to its respectable image, the scapegoated community becomes its alter ego as it emblematises a society based upon negatives (e.g. lack of ethics, lack of culture, lack of community) to justify its own choices regarding policy-making or religion and in turn, offers a transgressive space for radicals to explore. In this section, I shall trace how the setting of *The Revolt* enables Shelley not simply to critique patriarchy through the oppressive regime of Oriental despotism but affords him a morally liberating space where eunuchs inhabit the court,[106] polygamy is practiced and a faith that spiritually sanctions sexual intercourse as opposed to degrading its value, all of which serve to shock European sensibilities not through sheer horror but by also inculcating an element of wonder.

The prospect of a more free form gender dynamic posited in *The Revolt* should not be

[104] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 2, stanza xxxvii, lines 994-95, p. 50.
[105] John Hunt, *The Examiner, A Sunday Paper on Politics, Domestic Economy and Theatricals* (London: John Hunt, 1817-1819), 26 October 1817, 731.
[106] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 7, stanza viii, lines 2893-95, p. 160.

dismissed entirely as the product of exoticism since it has a basis within the Islamic tradition and thus, although subverted through a Shelleyan lens in terms of purpose and practice, is useful to consider alongside the poem's own rendition given that such a precedent does exist. Notably, the symbolic interchangeability of the sexes is made conceptually possible, or at least complemented by, the scientific recognition of hermaphrodites since the popularity of humoral theory allowed for the possibility of crossing the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. In Medieval Arab medical theory, the chances of birthing either a girl or a boy was decided by scalable factors such as how potent the sperm was and which testicle or part of the womb produced the seed allowing for a rationally justifiable open-endedness to sex. It is important to grasp this fluidity within a Sufistic context where gendered identity was deemed malleable as an extension of Allah's inimitable and delimited nature as human attempts to emulate Allah's perfection required a balance of *Jamal* (beautiful) and *Jalal* (majestic) qualities:

> Sheikhs are (rhetorically at least) fathers and mothers. They are pro creators and nurturers who give and sustain spiritual life; and they possess two bodily fluids upon which life depends: semen and milk. As fathers they impregnate their feminized disciples and thereby bring about the creation of the disciple's new life, and as mothers they give birth to and nurture their new progeny.[107]

Predominantly, Sufis would also rely on masculine pronouns to refer to the authoritative aspect of teaching; students were encouraged to readily abandon their ego by entering into an oath (*bay'a*) with their spiritual father which entailed a subordination of the will for the sake of training the mind and body to be open to, and accept, the ultimate renunciation of self in

[107] Margaret Malamud, 'Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996), 89-117, at p. 98.

the ecstatic, visionary communion with God. The masculine terminology also relates to the concept of *silsila* (chain of transmission) where mentors and their mentees are subsumed into a lineage of believers stretching all the way back to the Prophet whose teachings remain undistorted and uninterrupted, the seed of prophecy becomes available for any seeker willing to embody that lifestyle until their character (*akhlaq*) has 'been polished through their perfection in modelling themselves after the Messenger' so that they may implant that message in the hearts of others.[108]

Effeminising the student and associating the teacher with masculinity (regardless of sex) is a pattern reflected in Shelley's tale as both frameworks seek to encourage sentimentality and curtail belligerence; Laon is taught the dangers of envisioning Cythna as his 'second self' wherein she simply becomes a belated echo of his inner voice denied any substantial selfhood; when in captivity he is confronted with that perverted desire to claim Cythna as his *own*, '[a]ll shapes like [his] own self, hideously multiplied', engaging in a non-discursive relationship with a female version of himself and must learn to conceive of her not as self-projected other but an Other who is self-complementary. Laon is freed by the aged hermit from the phallic pillar chaining him to past misdeeds, taught the importance of eloquence in producing change through an appeal to emotions, is unknowingly reintroduced back into the maternal circle of Laone, encounters his spiritually surrogate daughter, all of which contribute to his receptivity both to the cause itself and those not yet involved. The final stages of Laon's transformation into what Teddi Lynn Chichester calls, 'self-feminizing male', [109] are signalled by two figurative deaths that reverse the strict sexual categories separating the lovers from true equality and allow them to both retain the beneficial aspects of their own sex whilst sympathetically attaching themselves to the experiences of the opposite gender. The first death occurs when Cythna adopts the name Laone, a feminine

[108] *Ibid*, p. 93.
[109] *Shelley's Imaginative Transsexualism*, p. 99.

reconstruction of the male protagonists name, not in a defeatist effort to renounce her will to Laon or out of a complacency towards being his shadowy self but born out of an awareness that if Laon is to shake off his patriarchal consumptive lust, evidenced by the cannibalistic hallucination in canto three, she must first show him that her spiritual station is expansive enough to accommodate them both. Chichester describes the new self:

> As a kind of compound being, "Laone" allows Cythna to enwomb her brother and transmute him into a sister-spirit, while at the same time he-she enables Laon, via his narrative, to enwomb his sister and thereby participate in her "strange tale of strange endurance," with its sufferings and triumphs that are uniquely female[110]

Sufi circles often reimagined those females who have attained a high *maqam* (devotional station) as men, 'when a woman is a man on the path of the lord Most High, she cannot be called woman,'[111] so the likes of Rabi'a al-'Adawiya (d. A.H. 185 [801 C.E.]) came to be known as symbolic men which could be misconstrued as authenticating the patriarchal power structures of classical Arab society but was understood, instead, through hadiths which deemphasised outward form in spiritual attainment: 'God does not regard your forms […] It is not a matter of form, but of right intention.'[112] In relation to the principle of tawhid, the use of man to refer to a highly devout person is not meant to indicate a disparity between the sexes in capacity or desire but rather signifies: 'the ideal human being who has reached proximity to God where there is no distinction of sexes; and Rabi'a is the prime example of this proximity.'[113] In literary terms, her physical femininity in conjunction with her symbolic masculinity serves a similar function to Cythna's newfound alias Laone, granting them a

[110] *Ibid*, p. 95.
[111] Michael Anthony Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic, and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 155.
[112] *Ibid*, p. 155.
[113] Annemarie Schimmel, 'Women in Mystical Islam', in *Women and Islam*, ed. by Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), p. 151.

level of universality wherein both genders can interpret their stories from a variety of perspectives which encourages a generative, as opposed to insular, notion of identity. Akin to the transsexualism of Shelley's males who want to be feminine and females who associate with masculinity, Cythna and Rabi'a are able to transcend gender and social boundaries given their journey from slave (or dispossessed) to spiritual leader, inadvertently becoming revolutionary figures whose passivity and edifying words, challenges the dominant hierarchical mode of discourse more successfully than any call to violence.[114] The second death takes place in stanza five where Laon confronts Laone like the poet figure in *Alastor* driven towards his own demise he wanders listlessly in the hopes of being reborn in the image of his beloved. Just as Cythna internalised a piece of him by changing her name, he now waits to be initiated into the nourishing space of the Kristevian Chora as his maiden who, behind 'a veil shroud[ing] her countenance bright',[115] announces the death of his masculine self, attached to the semiotic realm, and ushers him into the pre-linguistic world of unified vision: 'I had a brother once, but he is dead! […] This veil between us two, that thou beneath/ Should'st image one who may have been long lost in death'.[116]

It would be remiss, however, not to distinguish between a Shelleyan and a Sufistic understanding of both the male and female principles since Laon's purpose for increasing in receptivity, empathy, and collectedness, is secularised and the gendered archetypal behaviours are detranscendentalised by comparison to his Muslim esoteric precursors for whom spiritual androgyny is a matter of emulation through loss of worldly classifications of self. In Ibn Arabi's cosmology of the *insan al-kamil* (perfect man) he teaches that in order to become receptive to the *jalali* attributes of Allah (majesty, transcendence, power, independence) it is necessary to respond with their complementary counterparts such as

[114] Teddi Lynn Chichester, 'Shelley's Imaginative Transsexualism in "Laon and Cythna"', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 45 (1996), 77-101, at p. 77.
[115] *The Revolt of Islam*, canto 5, stanza xliv, line 396, p. 115
[116] *Ibid*, canto 5, stanza xlvi, lines 418-23, p. 116.

modesty and reliance because the *jalali* qualities replicated in man are related to ego and thus, in raising the believer up to God in terms of self-estimation it has the adverse effects of distancing them further as opposed to acting humble in the presence of Allah's utter sovereignty raises your spiritual station. In drawing closer to Allah through his jalal qualities the spiritual proximity to His jamal attributes increases as appreciation grows then receptivity to Divine Beauty (ease, mercy, forgiveness) follows since the servant becomes aware that any struggle which comes about from Allah's Justice or Retribution are out of Compassion, a desire to purify hearts in the crucible of hardship and make them supple. For Shelley, these gendered principles largely function on a metaphorical level, written with an awareness of their relativity and able to transcend form precisely because they gain significance through being enacted as opposed to essentially inhering within a divinely preordained system whereas the possibility for ambiguity in the Islamic usage of spiritual transsexualism derives from a sense of reverence with regards to Allah's capacity to encompass all worldly principles in truth without need for delimitation and thus, the most expansive space for mystics to embody this type of transcendent nature is their inner selves.

The reasoning behind ambiguous pronouns and the metaphorical fluidity of sex differs between both esoteric Islam and Shelley's 'imaginative transsexualism',[117] Sufis seek a form of emotional indwelling within Allah's state of being by making God the centre of their focus and inculcating an undifferentiated unity within their own self-perception and habits, preferably not for the sake of lapsing into solipsism generated from self-loss but rather to gain a heightened awareness of their indebtedness as a created being with a view towards engaging in public life, setting up just rule and similarly honing their community's receptivity. Shelley's call to inclusivity is similarly founded on a desire to generate a universal brother and sisterhood that all attest to the sublime within, as opposed to without,

[117] 'Shelley's Imaginative Transsexualism in "Laon and Cythna"', p. 86.

who strive to comprehend the universe we inhabit by generating fiction and art that attests to these beautiful truths (liberty, equality and love) in practice as much as theory. This is not purely for the sake of generating representations since their outward realities may become obsolete but contribute knowledge or emotion towards the One Mind's perception as a collectively self-reflexive process that generates archetypes and mythos through innumerable subjective interpretations of reality taking place at every moment.

Summary

Shelley's use of Islamic history to explore the dynamic between enthusiasm and fanaticism (i.e. a universal emotionality that is shared transtemporally versus the immediate drive to impose order for idealistic means) is a practice that continues beyond *The Assassins* in the spirit of Gibbon, Rousseau,[118] and Voltaire,[119] for whom Islam was suspended between anachronism and sublimity and the Prophet was, at once, a fatalistic impostor as well as, a 'reformer[,] a visionary[,] and the equivalent of [a] philosophical deis[t]'.[120] Shelley splits these components between the Oriental despot and his subjects who respectively exemplify the potential to either erect a theocratic regime founded on manipulation or a humble rebellion to reframe national identity towards unity rather than hierarchy. To focus solely on Othman as an icon of negative stereotypes without also acknowledging Laon and Cythna as symbolic of this prophetic spirit of renewal fails to appreciate how the title is interchangeable

[118] Rousseau, in *The Social Contract* (1762), refers to Muhammad as a greater legislator than Jesus whose emphasis on spirituality prevented his followers from integrating the mundane and transcendent realm and thus, the Muslim prophet was capable of offering his Arab brethren a singular banner under which their religious and political beliefs could be consolidated. Nevertheless, he still repeated the trope that the Prophet was a deceitful imposter regardless of its justifiability.

[119] In his play *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet* (1739), Voltaire depicted the Prophet as a fanatical and authoritarian figure who served to highlight the intolerant mindset of the Catholic Church within his own day. However, in his later text, *Essai sur l'histoire générale et sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* (1757), he admits that Muhammad restored the Abrahamic message in a way that Moses could not and helmed an anticlerical monotheism which surpassed even the regimes of classical Kings from Theseus to Romulus precisely because he was able to marry the roles of political lawmaker and spiritual guide. For further information on Voltaire's view of Muhammad see John V. Tolan, *Faces of Muhammad: Western Perceptions of the Prophet of Islam from the Middle Ages to Today* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 172-73.

[120] *Ibid*, p. 190.

for both the order which is being retaliated against as well as the movement which is rising up since either side can equally be read as *of* Islam. Part of the transvaluative slant of my approach is a willingness to recognise that these renditions of Islam are invariably Shelleyan in character but just as *The Revolt* maintains the hopeful aspect of martyrdom in the face of a rupture, so too do I believe it is critically important not to forget the memory of Islam when discussing Shelley's own poetic reincarnation.

The journey of Cythna and Laon exemplifies how the Orient's own traditions and symbols can be means through which to attain truths that Shelley viewed as progressive indicating that, although no singular worldview can provide total enlightenment, there remains in every intellectual heritage (religious or philosophical) the interpretive freedom to either uplift the human spirit on their journey for visionary experience or inculcate bad habits such as slavishness or a lack of critical thinking. These negative tendencies will curtail any meaningful development in the quest for questions given that just as many discrepancies in the conception of God exist amongst believers of the same belief as devised across the countless individuated faith groups:

> not only has every sect distinct conceptions of the application of this name, but scarcely two individuals of the same sect, who exercise in any degree the freedom of their judgment […] find perfect coincidence of opinion to exist between them[121]

The theological and philosophical worldviews that humanity generates are simultaneously shortsighted, self-contained and dialogical for they are rooted in language and thought shaped by lived experience (a commingling of internal and external stimuli) where the innate propensity to contemplate or make meaning is afforded a limited set of tools (i.e. senses) causing logic to become inseparable from language. The mind's inability to fully process

[121] *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 249.

phenomena as well as its subjective biases misinterpreting objective data prompts individuals to fill in any epistemological gaps and generate their own reasoning rather than a Divine Logos granting mankind a pre-ordained consciousness that automatically intuits the names of things as they are. Shelleyan jihad, therefore, is a call against misusing language for personal gain and a rallying cry to strive towards greater empathy by breaking away from institutionalised forms of expression, acknowledging our intellectual heritage in order to revise stigmas inherited from past thinkers. Moreover, to conceptualise how new avenues of thought might be formed without blindly dismissing traditional notions by default. Ultimately, *The Revolt* centres on the power of poetic language and interweaves within the core of its narrative identity various allusions, concepts and iconography associated with a faith whose central miracle is linguistic resulting in a series of necessary conflicts and revisions which, during the course of its *beau* revolution turned allegorical afterlife, generates a clearer picture as to what might constitute Shelley's revolution of Islam.

Conclusion: Overcoming Critical Anxiety of the Incommensurable in Romantic Orientalism

In developing his mythography, Shelley sought to free natural supernaturalism from the numbing effect of natural religion which projected and granted separate ontological existence to those innate sublime qualities possessed by mankind and, in deifying these abstract notions, inculcated a sense of slavishness within the general public through idolatry. Shelley demanded that others refrain from affixing meaning to these reified projections of self-absorbed preachers and rulers to acknowledge a force such as Intellectual Beauty which subsisted as an extension of humanity as both its vessel and means of expression: '[d]idst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,/ Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart./ Thou messenger of sympathies [...] Thou- that to human thought art nourishment'.[1] The epistemological ivory tower within which the God of natural religion resides is discarded in favour of a new throne within the heart of man as Shelley's call to disregard the deadening effects of institutionalised faith would require demystifying traditional concepts as well as replacing the existential void with a more anthropocentric metaphysics. In turn, Shelley hoped to engender a mode of sceptical idealism that was appreciative of the bounds of human knowledge and content with the obscurity of life's mysteries rather than striving towards an ultimate revelation which would delineate all the particularities of a transcendent Creator. Shelley's poet-prophet responds to the subtle beauty of nature and the melancholic awe of ruined civilisations by engaging their self-reflexive imagination resulting in a metaphorical transference not ushered by God's guiding hand but rather the human capacity for selflessness driven by love. The individual becomes the immanent bridge within a world of sublime potential where the traditional notion of prophecy as revelatory (an enlightening removal of the veil) is forgone in favour of a sympathetic messenger who builds a rapport with the world they interact with as opposed to instilling a hierarchy from above – sharing a

[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), stanza 4, lines 37-44, pp. 115-16.

felt expression rather than prosletysing a declaration of faith. Poetry, instead of scripture, becomes the means by which these spontaneous flights of fancy are captured without being contained as it participates in the human realm of language as well as the transitory sounds of Mother Earth, allowing for, what Jean Hall terms, Shelley's 'self-exceeding self',[2] which enables the subject to attain a heightened awareness by: 'address[ing] himself (in the metaphoric sense) to ultimate things, and [...] address[ing] himself (in what makes wonderful poetic sense) to the personified spirit of his own divine humanity'.[3] The source of selflessness which enables poets to transcend their immediate surroundings and draw inspiration from the lived existence of other entities (human or non-human) is born out of an awareness of the self as embodied – not only occupying but directly responding to a particular context.

The concept of interanimation is pervasive across Shelley's Eastern inspired poetry whether he is alluding to Islamic history through *The Assassins* and *The Revolt of Islam* or evoking Sufistic imagery via the Persian poetics of *Alastor* there remains a focus on depicting alienated radicals and their synthesis (or lack thereof) within a grander web of human sympathies. Even the solipsistic mentalscape of *Alastor* presents instances wherein bonds of sympathy, characterised as the recognition of difference mediated by an interdependent reciprocity, are glimpsed; the Arab maiden is depicted as possessing a sincere desire for communion as she facilitates the Poet's own receptivity for inspiration hoping that, in attending to his needs, she might eventually come to share his dreams rather than returning home exhausted every evening. Likewise, her idealised counterpart should not be wholly reduced to a submissive abstraction of his own repressed imagination but a subversion of the Ovidian Echo that adopts a more subtle, 'passive/active combination [fitting for a] dreamt poet', who is dependent, 'on another for her existence, and at the same time [retains] agency

[2] Jean Hall, 'The Divine and the Dispassionate Selves: Shelley's "Defence" and Peacock's "The Four Ages of Poetry"', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 41 (1992), 139-62, at p. 141.
[3] Leslie Brisman, 'Mysterious Tongue: Shelley and the Language of Christianity', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23 (1981), 389-417, at p. 415.

as a poet'.[4] Although both the Poet and Narrator are unable to bridge the divide between their sensed connection with Nature (fraternal or sexual) and a human community of feeling, they remain embedded within a metapoetic lineage of, 'exiled lives devoted to "making both comedy and tragedy" out of their own existence', as their single testimony becomes constitutive of, '"one great" poetic testament to the "immortal" beauty of erotic striving itself'.[5] *The Revolt of Islam* depicts a loss of presence (whether due to martyrdom or isolation) as not necessarily signalling the end of transmission since perspectives can be unearthed through textual or oral memory which reconstructs their mindset as a contemporary voice and thus, affords others a type of intuition gained via an internalisation of vision in a figurative rather than literal sense. This interanimative memory becomes a poignant hermeneutical tool when exploring Shelley's rendition of Islam for the faith, whose central miracle is the Qur'an, similarly established intergenerational societies driven by the transferral of memory via saintly and prophetic lineages connecting disparate localities across time. As part of his Oriental poetics, this conceptual framework is implicit within Shelley's own commentary regarding large-scale communities of transmission helping to recollect and restore a lineage of poetic thinking founded on sympathy. A critical aim of my examination is to provide a response to Nigel Leask's assertion that Shelley's Orient must necessarily be a space of contamination that cannibalises from within, 'figured as an (often oriental) female who [invokes] terror of a return of the repressed in the form of a hideous and contagious oriental disease',[6] by counterbalancing this imperialistic perspective with the notion that Shelley's Eastern spaces, appreciated as vital to his exploration of imaginative sympathy, refigure the other within the self not merely as a vampiric leach but rather a, 'living melody

[4] Susan Fischman, '"Like the Sound of His Own Voice": Gender, Audition, and Echo in "*Alastor*", *Keats-Shelley Journal* 43 (1994), 141-69, at p. 145.
[5] Bo Earle, 'The Prophetic Strain: Shelley on Erotic Failure and World Legislation', *Studies in Romanticism* 44 (2005), 605-31, at p. 631.
[6] Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 6.

[which]/ Tempers its own contagion to the vein / Of those who are infected with it'.[7] *The Assassins* depicts an Arabian landscape which incites an infectious impulse for equality, sovereignty and social cohesion founded upon a sensed interconnectedness within an transhistorical system of sympathetic voices that are gradually memorialised as part of the natural landscape:

> [t]o love, to be beloved, suddenly became an insatiable famine of his nature, which the wide circle of the universe, comprehending beings of such inexhaustible variety and stupendous magnitude of excellence appeared too narrow and confined to satiate[8]

Although this idealism risks repeating a similar isolationist standpoint often levied against the Poet wanderer of *Alastor*, there remains the possibility of real bonds being formed through this natural theology in spite of the elitism it may conjure towards outsiders for it is only in being, '[e]xcluded from the great and various community of mankind', that affection can thrive amongst those willing and predisposed to the benevolent freethinking spirit of nature as opposed to following the utilitarian social contracts which govern commercial life: 'all formed, as it were, one being, divided against itself by no contending will or factious passions. Every impulse conspired to one end, and tended to a single object. Each devoted his powers to the happiness of the other'.[9] Shelley presents the reader with tight-knit family units cautious of one another's wellbeing; an almost naive level of hospitality granted to both strangers and animals; the prospect of enacting social change on a world-historical level if aided by a poetically versed leader; and even the mute, distant ruins of *Alastor* are depicted as

[7] *The Major Works*, lines 276-78, p. 613.
[8] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 129.
[9] *Ibid*, p. 130.

containing: '[t]he lore of ancient wisdom [...]sculptured in mystic characters on the rocks', by the more relatable, 'human spirit and the human hand'. [10]

My contention lies not with the central assumption that Shelley's political radicalism, as it pertains to the East, does not solely destabilise imperialistic narratives but also fulfils a potentially 'productive [role] in furthering the imperial will';[11] rather, in confining Shelley's Eastern allusions within a matrix of power fixated upon 'the rhetorics of liberation and domination',[12] all non-Western references are fundamentally divorced from those other intellectual discourses he is writing within whether his fraught relationship with religious values and their effect on society or his engagement with Enlightenment discussions regarding reason, scepticism and idealism. I appreciate the sentiment that Shelley's Oriental poetics are in dialogue with competing colonialist rhetorics and new discourses of power are developed as a response to his counter-revolutionary message but condemning Shelley's Eastern allusions as simply evidence of a fetishistic will to power destabilises the literary as an aesthetic entity and drains Islamic tropes of their tangible history with no hope of reclaiming, let alone, bridging either side. The myopic nature of Leask's methodology is revealed when, in seeking to harness the specificity of material history by invoking colonialism, *The Assassins* Lebanon setting becomes a foil for British India's attempt at developing 'an idealised Upanishadic age' and the aggression (albeit overexagerrated) attributed to the *fidais* is left unexplored for the sake of comparing them instead to 'Indian "Thugs" with whom they were often compared.'[13] Any reference to the historical Assassins as potentially providing unique insights into their character are dismissed as simply the result of an, 'anachronistically named [title]',[14] with the ancient regime of Jerusalem being deemed

[10] *Ibid*, p. 127.
[11] *British Romantic Writers and the East*, p. 3.
[12] *Ibid*, p. 79.
[13] *Ibid*, p. 78.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 76.

representative of a singular, monolithic entity known as, the '"Islam" of the 1818 poem [*The Revolt*]',[15] as opposed to recognising the sect of Muslims to be, in much the same way Bryan Shelley's Gnostic Christians are, radical revisionaries working from within their own tradition. It is commendable to remind those who would, 'displace the real violence underpinning the project of imperialism', by forgetting how 'imperialist radicals [can fall into the trap of] construct[ing] cultural "otherness"',[16] but there is a risk of going to another extreme when exposing, 'the anxieties and transports of Romanticism [to be] as much the product of geopolitics as of metaphysics'.[17] Methodologically, Leask's approach reflects the rhetoric intimated within the Romantic writers as both Islamic history and terminology are presented as simply window dressing amidst an antiquarian backdrop, too detached from the surrounding modernising discourse to provide any useful insights. Despite purporting to possess immediacy, specificity and relevancy superior to the transhistorical approach of comparing disparate ideologies there is a silencing of the native voice and an overt presentism in the sense of difference it supposedly reclaims. Admittedly, the problem with adopting a universalising approach is that, in its most Hegelian, the underlying Idea or principle of Sameness also risks privileging certain narratives and lineages due to the interpretive freedom that the contemporary analyst possesses when deciding how difference is intuited within the chain of thought. If everything is perceived to be a reaction to earlier positions then delineating gradation within epochs (let alone transhistorically) can often result in, 'neglecting some philosophers while treating others at disproportionate length'.[18] In either case, particularly as it pertains to Shelley's Orientalism, the Islamic tradition is silenced due to privileging either aesthetic representation or material history, though both methodologies would see the potential value in comparing William Jones's translations of Rumi or Hafez

[15] *Ibid*, p. 76.
[16] *Ibid*, p. 79.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 12.
[18] Evert van der Zweerde, *Soviet Historiography of Philosophy: Istoriko-Filosofskaja Nauka* (Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media, 1997), p. 13.

with their originals or assessing Islamic historiography, from the perspective of Muslim historians, alongside Gibbon's depictions in volume three of *The History of the Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*. Such examples might give the impression that authenticity is sought in order to generate an antagonistic duality between orthodox and unorthodox interpretations, positioning the Islamic texts as possessing some truth that must be reclaimed by purging Romantic texts of their inconsistencies and prejudices. In focusing on mythography, I seek to counteract critical patterns that would erase Islam from the pages of Shelley's Eastern-inspired poetry despite his mythopoetic practice attesting to the force of invoking religious or philosophical symbols and the potency of remaking, rearranging and recontextualising such concepts on the human psyche at an individual and social level. A reasonable critique of this approach would be to suggest that analysing Shelley's Christianity or Shelley's Platonism is a more fruitful endeavour as he possessed a higher level of familiarity with their doctrine in comparison to the incomplete, biased and translated texts shaping his response to Islam which risk producing a misshapen caricature. However, such line of thought is a historicist variant of the theological argument that Shelley's criticism of Christian tenets causes his re-evaluation to be so removed from the original spirit as to render it irrelevant since the new form is founded on a fundamentally distorted image. Divesting Shelley's allusions of their Islamic perspectives on the basis that unfamiliarity or misapprehension irrevocably warps its originary significance is no different to Jerold E. Hogle's logic that, upon entering into a piece of writing, the Shelleyan One is drastically reimagined so as to become synonymous with its now transvalued status and in turn, stripped of all prior associative characteristics to the extent that these transferential processes become essential to, and override any sense of, an attainable or recoverable origin: 'the poet draws the One toward transference and reinstalls that notion at the heart of the One's various forms'.[19]

[19] Jerrold E. Hogle, *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works* (Oxford :

Even though, as William Ulmer contests, transference requires a sense of otherness or the idea of a central identity for the potency of the former is incumbent on its relationality to the latter without this tension grounded within reciprocity, Shelley's displacing of mythos loses its radical edge as a reformatory principle simply signalling a homogenous network governed by the monolithic principle of decenteredness.[20] Pinpointing an ideal within the transferential process of allusion, allegory and reimagining is inevitably a volatile endeavour due to the instability in outlining the nature and genealogy of an original context on the supposition that retrieving such a source is possible. Given the questionable likelihood of establishing origins, it is important to determine the extent to which additional knowledge can supplement readings whilst still maintaining that there are relevant connections at the level of authorial intent. Despite acknowledging the need to distinguish unassimilable otherness from its transferential product, Ulmer views the process as exhaustive and favours an inner death drive as the outcome of this alternation between declamation and recuperation[21] which still echoes the dismissive thought process of Leask with regards to incorporating Islamic history into discussions of Romantic Orientalism. In this schema, identification will forever be provisional due to allegorical reference or archetypal repetition creating a split identity within a piece characterised by distortion and repression. I argue that although transference generates symbolic ambiguity as the poem projects icons and concepts into the reader's psyche without explicitly sanctioning their genealogy, there remain traces of its original forms latent within these depictions and thus, since allusions are not only founded upon forgetfulness but also remembrance, these connections should be foregrounded as: 'constituting the very substance of thought [rather than simply overlooked as] an arbitrary

Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 266.
[20] William A. Ulmer, *Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 17.
[21] *Ibid*, p. 18.

legacy of a past that is now over'.[22]

The Muslim thinkers that I have placed in dialogue with Shelley's poetry are themselves interpreters of a grander ideal relative to the umbrella term 'Islam', the Abrahamic lineage as a genealogy, or monotheism as an archetypal thought pattern, and as such, it would be hubris to assume they can replicate the same fixed, counteractive force as, Hogle's One, Shelley's displaced ideal or Ulmer's unassimilable otherness.[23] Nevertheless, there remains a shared critical sentiment that maintaining a dynamic, 'clash of centrifugal and centripetal energies',[24] is necessary in grounding a discourse that, on the subject of Shelley's self and antitype paradigm, can often establish a monolithic decenteredness. Unlike Ulmer who posits an innate antagonism within this clash, my intention with sustaining a tangible distinction is to inculcate a collective agency as part of this dialogue wherein the transferential process refrains from allowing either text or subtext to compromise the other by preserving difference on the basis of reciprocity: 'the text cannot simply be replaced by a subtext [for] the official content of a work does not cease to exist [purely] because it is undermined from within'.[25] Neither the Qur'anic Text, nor the interpretations that convey these tropes, images and concepts across generations via cultural consciousness, disappears upon becoming subtext within Shelley's poetics even as it assimilates other competing and unaffiliated worldviews. Shelley's transvaluative design derives its will to displace myth from a sense of placement just as his interanimative framework maintains the value of embodiment by situating its renewal as a response to recurring impressions. Shelley's sceptical idealism posits renovation as a form of preservation because for the former to be effective the latter must be present

[22] Sarah Kay, 'HOW QUOTATION CHANGED THE SUBJECT OF POETRY: From the Troubadours to Petrarch', *Poetica* 46 (2014), 293-316, at p. 307.
[23] The instability inherent within any Muslim voice purportedly speaking on behalf of Islamic thought can be witnessed when assessing the propaganda written against the fidais (Assassins) as a consequence of disputation amongst the Fatimid and Seljuk dynasties which conjured a disparaging image that, in varyingly exaggerated forms, persisted even within the eighteenth century.
[24] *Shelleyan Eros*, p. 17.
[25] Peter J. Kitson, 'Milton: The Romantics and After', in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. by Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p. 21.

which reflects Maurice Blanchot's understanding that the drive to decontextualise language is derived from a position of centeredness, 'we feel rooted and so we pull at this root with an uprooting force',[26] and yet, Romantic Orientalist scholarship often seeks to cut off the Islamic roots of Shelley's Eastern allusions before their implication within his mythopoiesis is allowed to flourish. This purported rupture between signifier and signifieds within Shelley's Eastern works results in Islam becoming a foil for another event, class or ideal whether it be the Assassins as Freemasons or Laon and Cythna's plight against Othman being confined to a commentary on the French Revolution which, although viable readings, promote an amnesia with regards to Muslim history. Unfortunately, Shelleyan scholars have ignored Islamic thought as a means of reflecting upon his philosophical and theological development due to internalising his self-assessment that *The Revolt* was, written 'without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners',[27] and not fully appreciating how such omissions critically enact the dynamics of repression, projection and reification that Romantic Orientalists, such as Leask, find deplorable within Shelley's colonialising imagination. As a consequence of this violence interpolated within the self and antitype duality, Romantic Orientalism often lapses into an elegiac rhetoric where restaging loss merely heightens humanity's inability to recover squandered potential within life's unceasing irreversibility indicating that the lack of texts attempting to reconstruct a Shelleyan Islam is a result of this melancholic notion of incommensurability: 'Shelley's poetry internalizes the hierarchical structures and institutional violence endemic to Western culture'.[28] In particular, such temporal estrangement causes the notion of borrowing to be seen as improper, undeserved and derived from an impositional zeal to conquer something at once alien and native, replicating a similar dynamic of division and reflection enacted by De Man's symbolising

[26] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 97.
[27] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, p. 563.
[28] *Shelleyan Eros*, p. 23.

self which strives to appropriate a natural immortality it assumes to be intrinsic. The result is an Oriental reimagining that is perpetually aware of, 'a distance in relation to its own origin, renouncing [both] nostalgia and the desire to coincide,' due to being established, 'in the void of temporal difference'.[29] Ironically, the fetishishing process that is criticised for disfiguring and objectifying the Oriental female figure is enacted critically, Shelley's Islam becomes a poetic device that temporally echoes Reinhart Koselleck's *neuzeit* (characterised by interruption and forgetfulness)[30] and symbolically reflects De Man's division between allegory and nature as the faith's material history (composed of lived responses to scripture and hagiography) is divorced from its allegorical identity within the poet's writing. This dislocated temporality and inorganic allegory results in an enclosed perspective that privileges the present and foregrounds mechanistic discourses of power to the extent that contemporary realities, such as colonialism, are not only shown to shape Shelley's figurative language but come to encompass both its past and future – a response to the age that consequently becomes complicit within the perpetuation of these structures. Even within the context of postcolonial theory, it would serve Romantic Orientalism to create critical avenues that do not replicate these cycles of dispossession read within Shelley's appropriation of Eastern concepts as part of his wider project to universalise human reason based upon Western subjectivity and instead, as I have attempted by reinstating Islamic voices within Shelley's *oeuvre*, establish transversal correspondences. More generally, conducting a cross-disciplinary comparison between the Islamic sciences and Romantic poetry enables critical discourse to be invigorated in light of previously disconnected areas of study which have developed and evolved their own methodologies through scholars responding to unique

[29] Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Charles Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), pp. 173-209, at p. 191.
[30] According to Koselleck, the Romantic period no longer accepts experiential continuity as a mode of bridging past and present and instead, due to the French Revolution, comes to posit a rupture between both temporalities as conjunction and correspondence are no longer imputed within the passage from prior experience to future expectation.

intellectual environments and thus, the capacity to rise above the myopic view of a particular tradition as well as the freedom to observe the extent to which interpretive practices are distinct or mutually shared: 'open[ing] the possibility of ultimately establishing a transcultural metahistory of hermeneutics'.[31]

Subsequent attempts at responding to, and critiquing, Leask's position have offered novel approaches to incorporating Islam as a relevant perspective within Romantic Orientalism often caught between an appreciative awareness towards broadening the range of Eastern sources (i.e. through translation and travel) and the compulsion to remain firmly entrenched within an image of the Orient as constituted by a collective consciousness built on select tropes. Andrew Warren offers genre as a means of bridging the divide between intellectual lineage and geographic situatedness where choice of literary expression can channel the characterisation, setting and narrative conventions of a distant age through the self in a manner which evokes an Enlightenment Orientalism where, 'the self was under critique as much as any "other"'.[32] In focusing on Eastern appropriation as an extension of self, Warren seeks to portray the use of the Orient as not, 'about the West internalising Eastern tactics [but] concerns internal threats and limits within Western ideologies themselves,'[33] causing Romantic irony to become emblematic of this autocritical approach nested within their works via the double-edged awareness that destroying myths serves to generate new ones. By highlighting this insular detachment between subject and object, where difference collapses into sameness, Warren generates a number astute readings such as his assessment of how Southey reenvisions the dynamic between composition, legislation, and necessity when conceptualising his own Book of Fate but the self is afforded a level of nuance and

[31] Peter Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches', *Arabica* 36 (1989), 173-210, at p. 174.
[32] Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 3.
[33] Andrew Warren, *The Orient and the Young Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 15.

particularity (being at once mirror, reflection and onlooker) not granted to the Islamic elements[34] and thus, the dilemma that Warren senses in Byron, 'how does one escape the prison of the self? [or] how does one ever improve oneself?',[35] reveals an issue at the heart of criticism itself. How does Orientalist critique escape the solipsism of Romantic figuration and expand the available discourses in a manner which contributes to, rather than detracts from, its identity? For Warren, this impasse between actual and ideal initiates a crisis within the authors which, I argue is replicated within the Orientalist critique of such approaches, as the contradiction between what a person is versus what they say[36] creates an existential form of Leask's imperial anxiety similarly grounded within: 'a historicism with which it can neither dispense nor quite come to terms with'.[37] It is not simply the Romantic author who is trapped within their own viewpoint but the Orient is also positioned as, 'impelled and ensnared by [historical] anachronism',[38] exacerbating the bifurcated distinction between past interpretations and contemporary representation as both East and West are driven by a repetition compulsion that is despotic in nature due to being a byproduct of the waste and excess implicit in Montesquieu's Orient where: 'repetition of the same [is presented under the] guise of the new'.[39] Warren's Romantics are so steeped in cultural baggage that they become entangled in the De Manian knot cited earlier; Shelley, Byron, and Keats inherit an image of the East that feels organic but, through irony, is cognisant of its artifice and in turn, their works grapple with the possibility of overcoming an Orientalist framework that falsely purports to be grounded in nature. The result is an erotic solipsism which both reflects and interrupts how the East is textually mediated from Byron's use of, 'dazzling sound and vision

[34] In the sense of incorporating particular contradictory or complementary theological, philosophical or literary opinions.
[35] *The Orient and the Young Romantics*, p. 17.
[36] *Ibid*, p. 15.
[37] James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 380.
[38] *The Orient and the Young Romantics*, p. 10.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 7.

[alongside] an-erotic haptics',[40] to Southey's tendency, 'to indulge in stylistic ornament and miraculous narrative machinery while simultaneously critiquing such excesses in the works of the "Orientalists"'.[41] In contrast to Warren's tyrannical, 'recombinant poetics',[42] my response to, the 'dilemma of generation',[43] is an interanimative mythopoiesis that captures the disfiguring principles of transvaluation (opening a potential discussion concerning representation's repressive nature) whilst exploring the possibility for continuity within repetition to circumvent the temporal and geographical discontinuity assumed within, and critically inherited from, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalist discourse.

It may seem that, in advocating for continuity, I am replicating a Burkean generational model which, 'emphasises smooth transitions and grandual transformations',[44] but my study merely aims to loosen the rope of Romantic Orientalist discourse which strangulates Islamic allusions and prevents expressions of a much fuller significance due to a critical internalisation of the Romantic historian whose own self-perception is founded on alienation, dislocation and anxiety. I offer a transhistorical approach that forms connections to complicate, rather than cover, the fractures of succession. From this perspective, the Romantic imagination does not have to continually eclipse critical inclusion of Islamic texts as Robert Irwin argues when Mohammed Sharafuddin incorporates the Qur'an as a hermeneutical tool for assessing Byron, Southey, Moore and Landor:

> [the book] is at its best when it discusses the impact on romantic poetry of the Qur'an, or rather Sale's version of it [but] the influence of pseudo-oriental literature on all these writers was surely more important[45]

[40] *Ibid*, p. 16.
[41] *Ibid*, p. 58.
[42] *Ibid*, p. 7.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 34.
[44] *Ibid*, p. 33.
[45] Robert Irwin, 'Review of: Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient by Mohammed Sharafuddin', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 59 (1996) 348-49, at p. 349.

I share Sharafuddin's desire to add dimension to the, 'idea of imaginative escape and libidinous investment contained in the notion of orientalism', by incorporating, 'the idea of a body of knowledge outside the self and independent of the subjective desire.'[46] Nevertheless, his readings can overly idealise the transvaluative process resulting in claims such as, '[i]n Byron [...] Islam [...] plays its full part as itself',[47] which is likely based on the assumption that a meaningful incorporation of Islam necessitates the poets themselves veer radically from convention due to the importance placed on self-understanding within Orientalist rhetoric. Given that Sharafuddin inherits this need to tailor the extent of Islam's inclusion according to the poet's familiarity, he is reticent to draw from a wider frame of Muslim thinkers that might nuance his explanation of imagery or concepts being incorporated and, even from within the period itself, his citation of relevant Islamic literature contains some notable oversights, including Persian poetry. There is a resulting conflict of interest between Sharafuddin's suggestion that Islam attains a level of authenticity so as to become freed from convention[48] and his overall admission that the faith is a foil for critiquing Western institutions (i.e. an appropriated symbol calling to its own irrelevancy). This paradoxical approach caught between allusion and alteration is mimicked in Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud's, *Radical Orientalism: Rights, Reform, and Romanticism* (2015), where he subverts the Leaskian perspective of Orientalism as an outward-facing movement by arguing that *The Revolt*, 'originates 'from inside' Ottoman territory: it is of Islam rather than against it from the outside'.[49] This brief dimensionality granted to the faith as possessing an internality of its own is undercut for the sake of introducing a universalising message through which Islam, 'in

[46] Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1996), p. vii.
[47] *Ibid*, p. 243.
[48] For instance, he posits that Byron's 'Turkish Tales', 'confer an altogether new reality to Islam as a form of life [that] assumes an independence from western values and perceptions which conventional orientalism could never attain' (*Ibid*, p. 243).
[49] Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud, *Radical Orientalism: Rights, Reform, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 79.

Shelley's poem stands for any religion that props up political exploitation [...] much as the Irish were distinct religiously but still ruled by a larger oppressive "Christian" whole',[50] once again allegory serves to justify severing, rather than recontextualising, Muslim history.

My approach aligns most closely with Samar Attar's *Borrowed Imagination* (2014) and Humberto Garcia's *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670-1840* (2011) which neither impose upon Islam an alien rhetoric nor seek to diminish the potential value its terminology can provide Romantic discourse, preferring instead to understand the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets by reassessing their familiarity with, or exposure to, Muslim writers via first and second hand sources from Rousseau, Locke and Spinoza's inadvertent transmission of Islamic philosophy alongside the aesthetic contribution's that: '[t]he Arabian Nights, [...] the poetry of Arabia and Persia, [and] the numerous oriental tales [afforded the Romantic poets when] discover[ing] their inner voices.'[51] Attar and Garcia stress the need to acknowledge and investigate the Arabic and Persian sources directly and read these voices alongside their literary renditions rather than entirely reducing them to an exotic perversion within the Romantic psyche, at which point it becomes nothing more than a dislocated appendage severed from its prior existence as part of a living corpus of textual responses and social struggles, whose notions are as fruitful to explore as Plato's desire for beauty, Aristotle's virtue ethics on friendship, or Ovid's depictions of sex.[52] Eastern poetry and history offered a wealth of literary sources and a series of archetypes that tangentially altered according to the age in which they were being written whether it be Dante and Petrarch lyrically imitating the troubadour songs or the esoteric imagery of Hafezian love poetry incorporated by the likes of Goethe. It is by assessing the associative matrix generating these allusions that antecedent traditions are reinfused with critical value and provide glimpses into the transferential processes underlying (in my case) Shelley's mythopoetics.

[50] *Ibid*, p. 79.
[51] *Borrowed Imagination*, p. 177.
[52] *Ibid*, p. 173.

To move beyond the agony of allegory, my study has aimed to reevaluate the illusory nature of retroactivity that would establish an unbridgeable gap between Shelley's transvaluations of the faith and the exegetical, historical and philosophical context of these poetic tropes and which positions either side as incommensurable on the premise that any attempt to trace a transhistorical connection simply becomes entangled within the hall of mirrors constituting Shelley's authorial voice: '[w]henever this self-receding scene occurs, the syntax and the imagery tie themselves in a knot which arrests the process of understanding'.[53] The problem lies not in unravelling the relevant points of reference shaping the connotations of a piece since signifiers are inherently multifaceted but, for the sake of assessing Islam's function within Shelley's mythopoetics, new methods must be established so as to maintain displacement without the exhaustive effects of discontinuity where the antitype becomes a, 'dark double of its symbolic orientation',[54] which perpetuates Romantic Orientalism's long shadow over Islamic intellectual history. Scholarly balance lies in not relegating this impact to the past despite also highlighting how its altered form subsequently shapes the poetry of Romanticism. Consequently, I have contextualised Shelley's usage of Islam within Ross Wilson's suggestion that the poet does not, 'create a new universe but rather renovates one that has gone dead',[55] or William Galperin's premise that the everyday can only be discovered in retrospect but is nevertheless potentially recoverable by re-establishing its status as a possible world previously underappreciated: 'gyrations leading to the everyday's emergence as something missed, recovered, and writable are reparative in fostering a sense of enchantment, or hope, that is [...] a prevailing afterwardness'.[56] An uninterpreted object cannot be recovered just as an unperceived moment cannot be relived but the violence implicit in assimilating a pure object (an ideal) can be mitigated by a latent

[53] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 98.
[54] *Shelleyan Eros*, p. 18.
[55] Ross Wilson, *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 95.
[56] William Galperin, *The History of Missed Opportunities: British Romanticism and the Emergence of the Everyday* (California: Stanford University Press, 2017), p. 18.

utopianism implicit in the reparative notion of preservation espoused by Galperin and Wilson which present the possibility of a text previously read or a world already experienced to be remade anew through fresh perceptual associations. Even if transcendence is not possible, the act of returning as a means of consolation is always an option. As Tilottama Rajan notes, the potential for recuperation in the face of stagnation is a pattern that Shelley outlines in *A Defence of Poetry* as writing initiates decline through exposure causing the object to become inert after having translated pre-linguistic idea into static matter which, in turn, requires reading to unearth meaning that has been over-encumbered with the imprecision and excess of language in a way that both relies on the tangible nature of the text for the sake of expression whilst also discarding its tertiary qualities for the sake of recovering meaning: 'redirect[ing] the negativity of the text [by making it] a resource rather than a source'.[57] The potential refashioning of a concept misrepresented through writing is made possible due to humanity's capacity for abstraction as themes, concepts and images are embedded within an intricate archetypal network from which metaphoric associations can be drawn: '[a] single sentence may be considered as a whole though it may be found in the midst of a series of unassimilated portions; a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought'.[58] Characterising mental acts as 'inextinguishable' and 'unassimilated' attests to the preservatory quality of thought even during assimilation and dissemination since the synthesising process of mind merely serves to highlight the extent of differentiation as expansive associations exposing referential inconstancy resulting in ideas containing, 'within themselves the principle of their own integrity [incapable of being] subordinated to each other or to the originating thought.'[59] By bringing interanimation into dialogue with Shelley's

[57] Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 279.
[58] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. by Bruce Woodcock (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p. 640.
[59] *The Supplement of Reading,* p. 286.

'intervals and interstices',[60] the fissures that Orientalist scholarship posit as insurmountable gaps between Muslim thought and Romantic poetics are instead breakages whose negativity encourage informed insertions that foreground, 'differential interpresence and [...] self-difference,'[61] transforming history into poetry as past images are reinfused with life through new inferences, '[words can] reanimate [...] the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past'.[62] Recognising disarticulation as continuance rather than closure serves to circumvent approaches focused on spectrality, solipsism, or eroticism where, the 'cyclical repetition of different elements in identical positions', necessitates, 'equating the unequal,'[63] causing borrowing to become synonymous with inequality and associated with a position of privilege which critically justifies excluding Muslim history on the basis of discontinuity and extraneity. By bringing the past into conversation with the present through renewed associations, constancy and preservation can become key components of substitution and disruption. Shelley's repudiation of an Islamic discourse behind his allusions is not reason enough to foreclose the introduction of Muslim voices into his texts because, as he did with Milton, an astute reader can reproduce meaning through negation: 'infer[ring] the presence of something from its very absence: from the void it creates'.[64]

It is interesting to note, Islamic anthropology has also more recently focused on the everyday as an analytical framework to expand the interpretation of the faith as a discursive tradition which opens up for the subject possibilities of action and thought by, instead, highlighting the importance of individual life-worlds (i.e. a person's often conflicting intentions and allegiances produced as a response to life experience) to reveal how, 'alterity and incommensurability', shape faith in ways that, '[the] limits of discursive rationality [...]

[60] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 642.
[61] *The Supplement of Reading*, p. 285.
[62] *Ibid*, p. 657.
[63] Yury Lotman, *Analaysis of the Poetic Text*, trans. by Donald Barton Johnson (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976), p. 42.
[64] *The Supplement of Reading*, p. 294.

cannot [comprehend through] a pre-constituted discourse'.[65] Working within literature and engaging with questions of figurative representation, it becomes difficult for critics to prioritise experience, at an existential or phenomenological level, in the way an ethnographic researcher conducting field work might be able to but there exists the prospect of internalising certain principles of the everyday as a conceptual category by accounting for the diachronic and relational dimensions of symbols. I argue for the need to highlight the lived reality of those responding to these principles throughout history, including those receiving these notions (translated or inherited) during the Romantic period. My own work inevitably historicises and textualises Muslim voices by choosing to focus on Medieval history for the sake of charting valid lines of influence whether it be Ibn Tufayl, Rumi or Hassan-i Sabbah and utilising these thinkers as branching points from which to include a wider intellectual community from al-Ghazali to Ibn Sina that hopefully provide, at least within Romantic criticism, a glimpse into the intricacy of Islamic historiography as a diverse ecosystem spanning discrete and communal responses.[66] Ebrahim Moosa has more recently called for a poetic approach to history by returning to tradition as a means of cultivating an emergent, rather than stagnant, form of knowledge that generates new responses to subjective, intellectual and moral concerns plaguing a community just as poiesis signifies the process of creative production rather than denoting the completed object. Viewed as an exchange between ethos and poiesis, the Muslim intellectual tradition is not called upon as an anachronism but as a cadence of regularity and discord revising itself whilst maintaining moral and spiritual principles with thinkers such as Ghazali: 'disseminating into the reading

[65] Paola Abenante and Daniele Cantini, 'Life-worlds and religious commitment: ethnographic perspectives on subjectivity and Islam', *La Ricerca Folklorica* 69 (2014) 3-19, at p. 10.
[66] Admittedly, from an anthropological perspective, the choice to privilege authoritative voices in an effort to recreate a transnational Islam may still be too divorced from an appreciation of lived existence and hide, 'the fact that certain theological discourses are already embodied in social practice, which seems to be, in turn, the first and more direct way for experiencing and living Islam'. (Fabio Vicini, '"Do not cross your legs" Islamic sociability, reciprocity and brotherhood in Turkey', *La Ricerca Folklorica* 69 (2014), 93-104, at p. 97).

and interpretation of texts [...] an extravagant heterogeneity of knowledge'.[67] This expansiveness results in Ghazali's redeeming trait as a scholar being his ability to bridge schismatic thought and occupy, an 'interstitial location', where binary formulations become instructive not for how they can generate more evolved forms of homogeneity but for what they reveal about the gaps constituting their discrepancies, 'far from coercing one into adopting one of the polar positions as the correct position, the polarities serve as a spectrum of variabilities.'[68] In this threshold, or the *dihliz*-ian space, totalitarian epistemology remains open to reconstruction as canon is engaged in a process of radical defamiliarisation for the sake of increased longevity. Whether it be Ghazali's, 'liminal [...] hermeneutic of reconciliation',[69] or Shelley's interstitial, 'shadows that futurity casts upon the present [by] words which express what they understand not',[70] tradition is presented as a lineage of inquiry as opposed to the uncritical repetition of outdated images indicating that loyalty and interpretation are not mutually exclusive when it comes to custom due to its deep connection with human nature characterised by both possibility and limitation: 'a historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence'.[71]

The responsibility of inculcating, 'a sustained institutional practice of diversified language learning in imaginative depth',[72] is a task fitting of telepoiesis which denotes how creative acts can occupy times and places other than their own with a latent transformative potential of generating (through rediscovery and interpretation) new avenues of thought both within and across traditions. For Gayatri Spivak, telepoiesis aided in conceptualising methods that would rather reduce the subaltern to a collective without attending to more singular

[67] Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazali and the Poetics of Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 270.
[68] *Ibid*, p. 272.
[69] *Ibid*, p. 208.
[70] *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, p. 660.
[71] Thomas Stearns Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Modernisms, 1900-1950*, eds. by Steven Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano, vol 2 (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 432.
[72] William Paul Simmons, *Human Rights Law and the Marginalized Other* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 143.

experiences composing the demographic in question and in turn, granting them the possibility for self-synecdoche. Being aware of distance by recognising the diversity of discourses should not negate the potential for correspondence since the quality of sameness assumed to be necessary for interaction is reconfigured in terms of humility as any cultural, historical or ideological gap offers the potential for opening ourselves to an other. This prospect of creating towards, an 'ever-distant future [with] a distant other',[73] emblematises a shared act founded upon difference that recognises the agency of whoever receives these structures as well as preserving the voices of those whose discourses constitute the projection. Instead of wilfully excluding Muslim thought and history for fear of misrepresentation or on the basis of misrecognition, Romantic Orientalist scholarship must foster approaches that allow Islam a space within interpretations by drawing links rather than assuming synonymity or incongruence with respect to its allegorical counterpart. In cases where abstraction through translation is unavoidable, it is important to contextualise representation for the sake of offering a platform where contentions are highlighted via inclusion and particularity as opposed to dismissal and universality. Regardless of familiarity there is always a shared act of metaphoric displacement when new significance is imputed upon symbols filtered through the lens of their author's religious, philosophical, and political affinities. As 'Mont Blanc' exposes, signs can never be the property of any single speaker for they remain present (if not dormant) at all times but retain the countless voices that formed its evolution which blurs the distinction between derivation and antecedent until: 'self and antitype are mutually constitutive, which is to say that they toss the origin back and forth between them, leaving the locus of causal power highly unstable'.[74] Rather than reading this movement as a resurgence of the suppressed, an 'erotic imagination [that] projects its antitype through an act of

[73] Yahu Thabeetha Vinayaraj, *Dalit Theology After Continental Philosophy* (New Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 51.
[74] *Shelleyan Eros*, p. 20.

repression',[75] I have attempted to establish a framework that enables contemporary critics to reencounter Islamic perspectives within the context of Shelley's radical displacements not to salvage Muslim voices from an Orientalist poetics which assimilates alterity through transference but to highlight the interanimative possibility of continuation through doubling back that allows the relevant Islamic and Shelleyan discourses to be, at once, distinct and engaged. The consumptive model that exposes the disfiguring quality of appropriation remains useful for it serves as a reminder of how literary artefacts are responding to material history, of which institutionalised power is an element, but the pervasiveness of this mindset (i.e. an assumed irreconcilability on the basis of violence) risks cannibalising Romantic Orientalism. The diluting of Eastern values by Western perspectives renders the Orient a spectre incapable of existing as an embodied subject that acts as much as is acted upon. Critical imbalance becomes an extension of the position being refuted for it justifies the exclusion of an Islamic intellectual tradition on the basis that the Orientalist framework cannot accommodate it whereas my own methodology has sought to incorporate scholars for whom the afterlife is reconfigured as afterwardness in order to retain the embodied nature of what has been lost or unnoticed during perception as well as granting it an available future within the recurrent present (i.e. the history of what might have been).

Reincorporating Muslim voices into the disordered and anxiety-ridden frame of Romantic Orientalism exposes how discourse is constantly converging with, or diverging from, other discourses through a complex matrix by which self and community are shaped negatively or positively and thus, feelings of uncertainty, inconsistency, and disunity become central characteristics of both traditions as individuals creatively mobilisie available mythic, 'vocabulary in order to understand and make sense of their disrupted lives in moments of

[75] *Ibid*, p. 18.

deep uncertainty and existential concern'.[76] Consequently, when placed in dialogue, the practice of disentangling and charting these various cessations and resumptions must be critically attended to in a manner that prevents the Romantic forms of anxiety from exclusively dominating the conversation by, 'allow[ing] either side to transcend their own boundaries, and [...] make one's own anxieties intelligible to the other',[77] or, framed within Rajan's apt description, positioning 'dissemination as communication'.[78] I seek to reclaim metaphysics (i.e. Islam) from the discourse of Romantic Orientalism where translation has become the central mode of communication and the Other exists only after having been filtered through self by, instead, reinstating it as a part of Shelley's mythopoetics where interanimation becomes the transactive principle founed on the notion that revision, reform, and renewal are underlying elements of apprehension itself. The aim, therefore, is not to over-exaggerate influence but to accommodate a wider variety of Muslim voices imprinting themselves through different avenues upon Shelley's creative imagination in order to expand the critical perception of a faith often reduced to a political agenda (confined within a closed set of geographic locales) and instantiate it within the theological and philosophical debates Shelley is working through as he writes.

[76] *Life-worlds and religious commitment*, p. 10.
[77] *Ibid*, p. 16.
[78] *The Supplement of Reading*, p. 296.

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