

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, DYNAMIC ORGANICISM AND COSMIC HARMONY

Dr. George Ewane Ngide

Senior Lecturer of British and American Literature, the University of Yaoundé 1, Cameroon.

ABSTRACT: *This article examines Shelley's philosophic and poetic visions of social and political mutations in the universe. It posits that Shelley's Romantic Imagination is one that views the universe as a single organised mechanism (the Whole), and yet one that is corrupt by man through deviant social and political behaviours that are not commensurate with his being as at creation, thus leading to evils and divisions (the One). We further contend that Shelley's vision is one that encourages "a therapeutic drive", a movement that looks like a progression but which is actually a regression to an Edenic past, (the Whole), what Shelley calls the Golden Age. This Golden Age is an earthly paradise where, like in Genesis, both the animate and the inanimate, the flora and the fauna, the organic and the inorganic, the material and the immaterial brief, where man, hitherto considered as the "butcher of nature" is at one with himself, with other species and with Nature. This is what Pope calls "The Great Chain of Being", Wordsworth's "Cosmic Harmony" and Shelley's "Millennial Future", "Golden Age" or "Everlasting Spring". It is the realisation of this finality that indeed is the crux of this study.*

KEYWORDS: Dynamic Organicism, Cosmic Carmony, Philosophic Vision, Millennial Future, Golden Age, Shelley

INTRODUCTION

Studies in the notion of Cosmic Harmony have over the past several years been an interesting field of academic investigations. Karina Williamson (2004) considers Cosmic Harmony as "silent harmony" or "the music of the spheres". In his article entitled "From Heavenly Harmony to Eloquent Silence: Representations of World Order from Dryden to Shelley" he traces the notion of harmony and the shifts in meaning from the Pythagorean through the Copernician Revolution, the Newtonian science to the Augustan period. Other critics have discussed the notion of Cosmic Harmony over the years. ZHOU Houjuan in "Inaudible Symphony: Harmony in Queen Mab", as the title indicates, uses Shelley's poem "Queen Mab" as a basis for his discussion on Cosmic Harmony. According to him Percy Bysshe Shelley shows his desire for harmony in three different ways namely: harmony between man and God, between man and Nature, and between man and man. (13). L. H. Liu, (2004), Geoffrey Hartman (2010), Mandy Swann (2013) and others have discussed the notion of cosmic harmony in relationship with the poetry of P.B Shelley. Unfortunately none of these studies has really captured the meaning of cosmic harmony and how this is made manifest in the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley as a philosophical vision for the universe. This brings us to the fundamental question-what is cosmic harmony? Lambo (2002) considers Cosmic Harmony as the "Microcosm-Macrocosm Theory". He explains that it is based on the assumption that "the many is represented in the little, the whole in the part and the infinite in the finite..." (89). Lambo's explanation of the theory is however limited to the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth.

Research Questions

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

Hypothesis

As stated earlier, in this article we examine Shelley’s philosophic and poetic visions of social and political mutations in the universe. We posit that Shelley’s Romantic Imagination is one that views the universe as a single organised mechanism (the Whole), and yet one that is corrupt by man through deviant social and political behaviours that are not commensurate with his being as at creation, thus leading to evils and divisions (the One). We further contend that Shelley’s vision is one that encourages “a therapeutic drive”, a movement that looks like a progression but which is actually a regression to an Edenic past, (the Whole), what Shelley calls the Golden Age. This Golden Age is an earthly paradise where, like in *Genesis*, both the animate and the inanimate, the flora and the fauna, the organic and the inorganic, the material and the immaterial brief, where man, hitherto considered as the “butcher of nature” is at one with himself, with other species and with Nature. This is what Pope calls “The Great Chain of Being”, Wordsworth’s “Cosmic Harmony” and Shelley’s “Millennial Future”, “Golden Age” or “Everlasting Spring”. It is the realisation of this finality that indeed is the crux of this study.

Shelley’s Poetic Vision

Shelley's poetic goal was to show that reform and improvement in the lot of mankind were possible. He saw that in spite of the corrupt nature of the universe there was a possibility for man to change by becoming infinitely good and create a millennium of freedom, independence, selflessness, love and brotherhood. It is this universal brotherhood where man reconciles with himself and nature, where man returns to his roots and lives a paradise on earth that we call the “Golden Age”, the “Millennial Future” or better still, the “New World”. Graham Hough calls it “the therapeutic drive” (50). This means, in his own words “the attempt to ‘heal’ the division between mind and world, subject and object, citizen and state” (50). In this New World or the “Everlasting Spring” (the expressions are used as synonyms) man becomes just man, loving, friendly, and there is no division among the different elements of the universe. Shelley's objective was to show that reform and improvement in the lot of mankind were possible. There is a certain cosmic harmony that permeates the universe and brings the many into the one. Shelley in “Mont Blanc” also calls this “The everlasting universe of things”. In her notes to “Queen Mab”, Mary Shelley contends that Shelley in his poetry was:

...animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is bursting. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to

create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. ... He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement: nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood, which he thought the proper state of mankind, as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. ... He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. (Hutchinson, 837)

The new world that Shelley envisages is captured in a number of his poems but mostly expressed in “Hellas” and “Queen Mab”. The most quoted chorus in “Hellas” is clear about Shelley’s vision of a future new state or the “Golden Years” that return after the lost paradise. The last chorus in “Hellas” describes the new world:

*The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her wintry weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream. (477)*

In the poems studied above, as in many others, Shelley’s millennialism takes the form of a universalised harmony among the different elements of nature. The Golden Age signals not only the return to Nature, but also the harmony in Nature. This cosmic harmony is, indeed, a successful return to the lost glorious past, achieved through both necessity and human will. The paradise regained is, to say the least, Biblical in content and the fulfilment of Shelley’s Dynamic Organicism achievement, primarily, through the imagination. Shelley in his poetry exhibits a profound awareness of the existence of an external law of harmony which governs life and the entire universe. The apparent fragmentation of life, according to Shelley and Wordsworth, is illusory. This is because a fundamental, well-defined unity permeates the universes. To this all embracing law both the flora and the fauna, the organic and inorganic aspects of creation respond. They act it out in their own conscious or unconscious being. This is what John Akwe Lambo in his treatment and analyses of the poems of Blake and Wordsworth refers to as “Cosmic Harmony” (83), that is the interdependence of things in nature, organic or inorganic, animate or inanimate, all of which respond to the same mood, sad or happy. This interdependence of things in nature is also referred to as Monism or the Microcosm-macrocosm theory. This theory is one way by which romantic poets attempt to explain the universe as a family of harmonious elements. As Lambo puts it, “this theory is based on the assumption that the many is represented in the little, the whole in the part and the infinite in the finite”. (89)

Blake and Wordsworth, for instance, feel that the other elements which make up the cosmos are united in God. According to them, God is the “cosmic raw material, the self sufficient cause and, obviously the cause of all that is”. As “the ontological basis of man, nature and the universe as a whole, the things must necessarily be united in Him” (90-91). Shelley, on his part, sees harmony in the cosmos not only from the perspective of Blake and Wordsworth, but also from

the point of view of love, which love for this titanic Romantic poet is the mother of necessity, which necessity apparently acts in the individual as a universal concern that makes man a complete being and renders society harmonious.

The Vegetable World

One example of this transcendental reality, or cosmic harmony, is the human feast in “The Revolt of Islam”. The verse line “My brother, we are free” (92) summarises Shelley’s poetic purpose, that of a universe free from past bondage in both the social and the political domains, free from man-made laws, tyrannies, monarchies and all forms of moral and culinary perversion. Laon and Cythna wage the eternal war of love and truth against tyranny. The peaceful revolution renders the opposing and resisting powers shadowy and incredible. Although both revolutionary characters are savagely tortured, there is a visionary spectacle in which hate is impotent and pain dissolved into ecstasy. The world is freed from torture and misery and by some enchantment, human nature is born again:

*My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,
The gray sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers; man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow; (92)*

The most suitable dwelling place for humanity is a green and natural environment. This environment is characterised by “plains and mountains”, “forests and fountains” and “the gray sea-shore”. It is in such an environment that freedom is found because in it, the “common bondage” of “man and woman”, known in ordinary society, is replaced by “lawless love”. Such lawless love, as lived by the other habitable elements of the universe, will be an example for the corrupt human society where freedom is hard to achieve by virtue of artificial laws. From the perspective of cosmic harmony, the plains and mountains, the sea-shore, the forest and fountains form a unity of being where love reigns. “Common bondage” refers to the ills of society that characterised the human universe. These ills are now “burst”. “Burst” is a powerful image that translates the manner in which the ills and pains of the human society have been cured. The image is taken from an abscess, a collection of pus in the human cavity. This abscess and the pus therein are as painful as the ills of society. Bursting the abscess and taking out the pus soothes the pain and cures the wound. It is in this light that Shelley imagines the end of human worries and the pleasure derived thereafter. Man having been cured from the ill joins in the universal love and borrows freely from the example of the lawless love of the vegetable kingdom.

The vegetable environment that Shelley proclaims in the poem is proof of his vision of what today is called “Green Literature¹”. This is not limited to literature alone, but it is also an idea that fights environmental degradation, combats climate change and has become a socio-political ideal in contemporary international relations. In such an environment, freedom is total

¹ Green Literature is synonymous with Ecocriticism. It seeks to study the way the environment and Nature in general is presented or represented in literature.

and final. Every element in nature participates in the same joy and glee. Like Shelley portrays in the poem:

*My brethren, we are free! the fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming.
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming!
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness;
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free! (92)*

The “earth” shall become “our home”. Home here means a place worth living in, where there is peace, harmony, freedom and all that is “beautiful”. Shelley’s visionary home is a place where “the fruits are glowing”, where “the night-winds are flowing”, where “the birds and beast are dreaming” and where “Never again may blood of bird or beast / Stain with its venomous stream a human feast” (92). In this home, “the dwellers of the earth and air”, that is, both animals and birds, shall not fear man. On the contrary, they shall “in gladness” “throng around (man’s) steps” from where they shall seek “food or refuge”. What we notice here is a perfect harmony between man, the environment or nature, and the other living organisms. Diseases, fear, and madness, which are the consequences of man’s wickedness to the animals, birds and the environment “shall have ceased”. The new world shall have some moral values that will make it a paradise. Among these values are “truth” and “joy”, fearlessness and no kings. In stanzas LV and LVI Shelley intimates that the new earth, home, will be a festive one. The birds, the animals, and man will enjoy the same foods and drink the same water. Man will no longer feed on other animals and by so doing diseases and illnesses will be things of the past. Shelley intimates that in this Golden Age, the Universe is both a reconciliation of the different “warring children” of “the general mother”, “Earth”, and a “Festival” to celebrate the reconciliation:

LV

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,

*Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn; to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children--she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance, they relenting weep--
Such was this Festival, which from their isles
And continents and winds and oceans deep
All shapes might throng to share that fly or walk or creep;*

LVI

*Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But, piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet. (93)*

The festival described above is a kind of reductive monism which reintegrates the many into the one. Lambo writes that “If man’s distorted vision is corrected, amplified and extended, he will be able to perceive the world, not as consisting of a vast number of isolated and unrelated entities, but rather as a collection of the related parts of one unified totality”. (143) Although Lambo refers here to Cosmic Harmony in the poetry of William Blake and William Wordsworth, this also holds for Shelley. The festival described above is a cosmic one. All shapes on “Earth”, whether they “fly or walk or creep”, share in the festival of “peace and innocence”. Having reconciled with Nature, man and all the other “shapes” share not in a meal of animals and birds, but in one of “pomegranates and citrons”, “Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root / Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes” (94). The water that they drink is from “pure streams”. This return to vegetarianism is also a return to the lost felicity and thus to a lost Golden Age as in *Genesis*.

“Adonais”, “The Skylark” and Shelleyan Transcendentalism

“Adonais”, which is an elegy on the death of Keats, is one of Shelley’s finest poems that stress the notion of cosmic harmony. “Adonais” or “Adonai” is a name given to a deity in the Old Testament. This name is usually translated “Lord” but can also mean “Jehovah”. Although a seemingly spontaneous poem, which corresponds to his faith in “unpremeditated art” (“To a Skylark”, line 5), it is a very carefully written poem. The rhetorical pattern is finely handled. The poet seems to have his eye on the object. He starts off by announcing what the poem is all about namely, a mournful poem on the death of Adonais (Keats) considered by Shelley as a master, a lord and a kind of poetic god. He then goes on to invoke Urania (Keats’ mother) to “Lament anew, Urania!-He died, / Who was the sire of an immortal strain” (29-30). When she ceases mourning, “the mountain shepherds” take over. These include Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge and Shelley himself who is “Actaeon-like”. He ends up by idealising Adonais’ position. Although he is dead, he is spiritually alive and becomes immortal:

*He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Can touch him not and torture not again...(440)*

*He lives, he wakes- 'tis Death is dead, not he;
 Mourn not for Adonais.-Thou young Dawn,
 Turn all thy dew to splendor, for from thee
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone... (440)*

*He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder, to the song of the night's sweet bird;
 He is a presence to be felt and known (441)*

What Shelley means in clearer terms is that Adonais lives forever. He has triumphed over death and worldly torments wrought by social and political evils. He has become part of the entire cosmos in which he now participates, alongside other elements in nature to the “gleeful” atmosphere that, like Wordsworth says, induces in man a certain “spiritual sensation” and a “sense sublime”. In fact Shelley here extends the romantic notion of Monism or Cosmic Harmony. Shelley sees Adonais’ present situation as superior and thus identifies himself with his eternal lot:

*...From the world's bitter wind
 Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
 What Adonais is, why fear we to become... (443)*

The soul of Adonais, like a star,

Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are (444)

The argument throughout the poem is consistent. The object seems to have been realised in the end. The fact is, as John Donne also feels in his *Holy Sonnet 10* (“Death Be Not Proud”) and Thomas Hardy in “Friends Beyond”, death simply opens the way to eternity. It becomes an “antidote” to the problems of the world, and makes one “triumph” over worldly existence and troubles. Nevertheless here, as in other poems, there is still the profusion of images. The metaphors are compared to other metaphors. In stanza XLIX for example, Shelley compares the “wrecks” of Rome, where Keats is buried to “shattered mountains”, and this to “flowering weeds, and fragrant copses”. He then goes on to say that on the green slope where Keats is buried, “a light of laughing flowers” is spread along the grass “like an infant’s smile over the dead”. What are these flowers which laugh, and how are they “like an infant’s smile”? One is tempted to ask. There is something incongruous in his use of metaphors. One does not perceive their functions and how they relate to one another. In stanza L he talks of “dull time” being “like show fire upon hoary brand” ; “One keen pyramid” being “like flame transformed to marble”; of “a newer band” having “pitched in Heaven’s smile their camp of death”. The images here seem to take an incongruous and bizarre life of their own, apart from the subject at issue. One does not know how to grapple with the images. This certainly is why Shadrach Ambanasom quotes John Parry who holds that Shelley’s imagery “is frequently drawn from the air, wind, moon, light and soul, and ‘while the result may be beautiful and moving, the words are gone as soon as they are read and leave nothing solid behind”.

In Keats, on the contrary, like in other poets of the romantic imagination, the images are controlled and charged with meaning. In the “Grecian Urn”, for instance, Keats says “She dwelt with beauty, beauty that must die”. This is what we mean by coherence. The images are coherent and work together, unlike Shelley who seems to have no consistent way of coping with a large number of images and tends to charge the poems with more images than they actually need. Although it is true that Shelley’s images run into each other incoherently, it is equally true that this affirmation holds only for his long poems. His shorter poems, on the contrary, display images that are carefully handled. They do not only serve the purpose of decoration, but are also pregnant with meaning. They help in the advancement and development of the subject. This is why Louis Cazamian quoted by Ambanasom (2001) holds that:

Shelley’s lyricism is incomparable. In no other do we find the perfect sureness, the triumphant rapidity of this upward flight, this soaring height, the superterrestrial (sic) quality as well as the poignant intensity of the sounds which fall from these aerial regions. Truly, never was the soul of a poet so spontaneously lyrical.... (99)

Like “Adonais”, Shelley’s “To the Skylark” is also a powerful symbol of harmony in the cosmos achieved through a certain romantic transcendentalism. This is another incantatory invocation in which he hails the skylark as a “blithe spirit”, above everything else, which man should unite with. He calls on it to:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,

What sweet thoughts are thine:

I have never heard

Praise of love or wine

That panted forth a float of raptures so divine (603)

Teach me half thy gladness

That thy brain must know,

Such harmonious madness

From my lips would flow

The world should listen then-as I am listening now. (603)

Shelley here seeks after the divinity and happiness of the skylark (a small brown bird which is known for its beautiful singing). The skylark is very symbolic in Shelley's vision of the new golden age. It is unseen but still it is compared to a poet composing, a maiden in love, a glow worm throwing out its beams of light, a rose in bloom diffusing its scent, and the sound of rain on twinkling grass. Shelley finds the Skylark as the embodiment of all these qualities which are not found in a single human being. To Shelley, the human song symbolises "an empty vaunt" comparing it with the Skylark's joyful songs. Compared with the Skylark's singing, all human songs would seem to be meaningless. We feel that there is some hidden want in human performance. Thus Shelley makes the bird, Skylark, a symbol of pure, unalloyed and unrestricted happiness. While he uses the West Wind to symbolize the power of nature and of the imagination inspired by nature, he makes the bird, Skylark, a symbol of happiness and perfection, the ideal which is necessary for humanity. The bird's perfection of arts is seen in contrast with the imperfection of human life and arts as well. The bird comes nearer to the example of how and why human beings should try to achieve the ideal. In an agonising gesture Shelley questions the bird what philosophy of life enables it to live in the realm of perfection. The archetype of fountain as a symbol of poetic inspiration comes in Shelley's mind along with the beautiful forms of nature such as "fields", "waves", "mountains" and so on.

In the next stanza the lark's joyfulness is seen in contrast with the inevitable short life of the highest human emotion, love, "Thou lovest but ne'er knew love's sad satiety." So in Shelley, art and life become inter-related. This is evident in the question—"What ignorance of pain?" The poet confronts the paradoxes of life in the expression "We look before and after, / And pine for what is not". Shakespeare in *Hamlet* makes his Prince utter similar words, "Sure he that made us with such large discourse / Looking before and after gave us not / That capability and Godlike reason." The crux of the matter is that like a great poet, Shelley has also come to understand the great divide in the human psyche, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." The reason he traces is human adherence to "the ground" or the material world opposed to the spiritual world as Plato taught. The lark can achieve perfection because it is "scorner of the ground". This is where we come to the difference of attitude of the two Romantic poets, Shelley and Wordsworth. Shelley's skylark is an inhabitant of purely ethereal arena and is a symbol of perfection. On the other hand, Wordsworth's skylark in his poem "To a Skylark" is an inhabitant of both earth and ether.

In the last stanza Shelley has stated his intention clearly. He longs to follow or imitate the eudemonic being and learn the "harmonious madness". This Platonic concept of divine frenzy

clearly indicates Shelley's desire for artistic creation which will be perfect products, and he perhaps thinks that this is possible only in art or imagination, not in real life. Towards the end of the poem the skylark is transfigured into a sort of poetic inspiration for the poet as he desperately craves for the possession of the artistic qualities essential for the creation of his own poetry, that kind of poetry that will, as he puts it:

*“Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now!” (603)*

Shelley thus sees in the skylark the symbol of joy and happiness that man should seek and understanding the reasons for the joy of this “blithe spirit” will permit him translate same to the universe through poetry. If he is the skylark, and not like the skylark, his message of universal peace, happiness and harmony will be listened to and understood by all creatures.

Shelley in “To a Skylark” compares the bird to a number of things. The skylark is “like a poet hidden / In the light of thought, /...like a higher born maiden / In a palace tower; / Soothing her love-laden / Soul in secret hour / ...like a rose embowered / In its own green leaves/” etc. This is a kind of escalation of images that are loose and do not hold the poem tight to its object. However, the Skylark remains a perfect symbol of cosmic harmony that Shelley achieves.

This cosmic realisation is also manifest in Shelley's poem entitled “Fragment: ‘When Soft Winds and Sunny Skies’”. It is a short poem pregnant with meaning and the realisation of the universal harmony that in nature impels all humanity. In the poem, Shelley writes:

*When soft winds and sunny skies
With the green earth harmonize,
And the young and dewy dawn,
Bold as an unhunted fawn,
Up the windless heaven is gone,-
Laugh- for ambushed in the day,-
Clouds and whirlwinds watch their prey. (660)*

The winds are soft, the sky is sunny and the earth is green and all come together. With them also harmonise the dawn which is young and dewy and all then join the windless heaven in a sweet laugh. The adjectives “soft”, “sunny”, “green”, “young” and “dewy” reflect the natural and uncorrupted universe where there is a certain harmony that brings joy to every element. The same cosmic harmony is manifest in Shelley's “Epipsychidion” in which Shelley gives us not only a vivid and sonorous picture of winds and waves, of surge and ebb, of the shining

sun and dancing spray seen on the sea's surface, but also of the mysteries suggested by dark and deep waters which the sun rays reach at noon. The poem reads:

*Of Earth having assum'd its form, then grown
 Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
 Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
 For all the antique and learned imagery
 Has been eras'd, and in the place of it
 The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
 The volumes of their many-twining stems;
 Parasite flowers illum'd with dewy gems
 The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
 Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
 With moonlight patches, or star atoms keen,
 Or fragments of the day's intense serene;
 Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
 And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
 And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
 To sleep in one another's arms, and dream
 Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
 Read in their smiles, and call reality. (422)*

“Earth” refers to the universe. It has been transformed into something divine and united with other elements of the cosmos. Its transformation has been made possible by the fact that it has assumed itself, that is, taken its original and natural form. The universe has now lifted itself, that is, become new thanks to the assumption, so to speak. All its “antique” and “learned imagery” refer to its sins or ills and these have been “eras’d”. In the golden age of the earth, the notion of cosmic harmony is realised. The “ivy” (an araliaceous evergreen plant that climbs by roots on trees and walls) and the “wild-vine” (a woody climbing plant that produces grapes) “interknit”, that is, grow around each other in a sweet and warm embrace. Lampless halls are lit by “parasite flowers” which are in turn lit by the “sky” or sunlight through roof tops when the flowers fade away. The sun is in turn replaced to light the halls by “patches of moonlight or the stars. The “earth and the ocean” also sleep in each other’s arms, and both dream sweet dreams of elements of their natural environment such as waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks and all the joy these natural organisms produce. For Shelley, this harmony in the cosmos produces a sweet sensation and harmonises every being.

“Julian and Maddalo” carries the same Shelleyan idea of cosmic harmony. The poem is a conversation between Shelley and Byron during a walk taken in the wild. Shelley’s observation of the environment provokes in him and his friend a sense of belonging to the same cosmos as they partake in the joyful company of the solitary places. Shelley writes:

*I love all waste
 And solitary places; where we taste
 The pleasure of believing what we see
 Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
 And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
 More barren than its billows; and yet more
 Than all, with a remember'd friend I love
 To ride as then I rode; for the winds drove
 The living spray along the sunny air
 Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
 Stripp'd to their depths by the awakening north;
 And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
 Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
 Into our hearts aëreal merriment. (190)*

The “solitary places”, “the wide ocean”, “the shore”, “the winds”, “the sunny air”, “the blue heavens”, and “the waves” are all elements of nature that blend in one sweet and harmonious note. To this natural landscape is added Shelley and Byron (Julian and Maddalo) as they take a walk. Shelley intimates that in this “waste and solitary places”, the pleasure is “boundless”. The boundless pleasure is such as man will want to feel eternally. This is because the natural landscape teaches man the pleasure of togetherness and peace. The “living spray” that the wind sends through, and the delightful “sound” of the “waves” are like music that reach Julian and Maddalo, straight into their “faces”. Their “faces” refers to their entire being. They savour the breathless and deathless music of the waves and the winds as it penetrates their entire being and echoes around the landscape. According to Shelley, the sound harmonizes with their hearts, which heart or soul is in “aëreal merriment”. “aëreal” or aerial (in modern English” means “reaching high into the air or lofty”. What this means is that the sweet music produced what Wordsworth calls “a jocund” environment characterised by peace, love and harmony. In other words, Julian and Maddalo, the natural landscape, including “heaven” join in the music of the wind and the wave to produce a cosmic harmony. This is because all the elements, including man, represented by the two friends, form a common and unified mechanism. This is the achievement of Shelley’s dynamic organicism. The return to nature is total and complete through this cosmic realisation.

CONCLUSION

Shelley's philosophic imagination is therefore one that sees the universe as a unified mechanism. It is a vision, like that of Blake and Wordsworth, which underscores the need for change or mutation in a universe that is corrupted and perverted by human artifice in both the social and political domains. Through mutation, the world becomes a paradise and everything is united with every other thing in a fusion that is infinite. This subtle intermingling of the different elements of Nature is what Plato and Plotinus, founders of Neo-Platonism, call "The World Soul". This world soul is also called the *Anima Mundi* which is present in all things, animates and unites the entire universe. Shelley was certainly acquainted with this Platonic or Neo-Platonic conception of the World Soul. Platonism holds that this World Soul is created by God, the "Supreme monad" who established order and harmony as in Genesis. For Shelley, as for other Romantics, the universe is an original harmony and unity, not a composition of elements. The apparent differentiations in things are no more than particularisations of what is originally homogeneous, one, indivisible, and continuous. This is what Hugh refers to as the "One Mind" achieved through what he calls "the therapeutic" (50) drive which is "an attempt to 'heal' the division between mind and world, subject and object, citizen and state, that the radical enlightenment had forced open" (50). Shelley's Romantic philosophy is, therefore, one of reconciliation, or synthesis of whatever is divided, opposed and conflicting. He has achieved this reunion of the many into the One and confirms, like Pope does with telling finality in *Essay on Man*, that "All discord" is "harmony not understood" (x).

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