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SHELLEY'S RELATIONSHIP TO PLATO

BY

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SHELLEY'S RELATIONSHIP TO PLATO

The purpose of this thesis is an investigation of the relationship of Percy Bysshe Shelley, a philosophical English poet of the nineteenth century after the birth of Christ, to Plato, a poetic Greek philosopher of the third century before the birth of Christ. This investigation concerns itself with three subjects: The external evidence of Shelley's acquaintance with Plato; Platonic thoughts to be found in Shelley's writings; and the influence of Platonic thought discernible in Shelley's life.

I

Shelley's Acquaintance with Plato

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, who met Shelley at Oxford in October, 1810, and was his close companion there until March, 1811, gives an account of the interest they felt in Platonic theories and of the glowing discourses delivered by the eighteen-year-old Shelley,

> "breathing forth the ideal philosophy, and in the pursuit of the intellectual world entirely overlooking the material or noting it only to contemn it."
>
> "It seems laughable", he continues, "but it is true, that our knowledge of Plato was derived solely from Dacier's translation of a few of the dialogues, and from an English version of that French translation. We had never attempted a single line of Greek."

(Hogg, Thomas Jefferson: The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley. E.P.Dutton, N.Y. 1906. P.72)

In connection with the account of their reading of Plato in translation, he speaks of Shelley's special interest in the Phaedo and in

the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul.

From Tanyrallt in December, 1812, Shelley sent to Clio Reckman of London a list of books which were to be delivered to him.

> "I should wish", he wrote, "for such editions of the classics I have mentioned as have translations subjoined; or if such are not obtainable, translations separate."

According to Hogg, this list included Plato. Hogg definitely avers, however, that Shelley could and did read Plato in the original before he settled in Italy.

> "The English version of the French translation by Dacier of the Phaedo, and several other dialogues of Plato, was the first book we had," he repeats, "and this we read together several times attentively at Oxford. We had a French translation of the Republic; and we perused with infinite pleasure the elegant translation of Floyer Sydenham. We had several of the publications of the learned and eccentric Platonist Thomas Taylor. In truth, it would be tedious to specify and describe all the reflected lights borrowed from the great luminary, the sun of the Academy, that illumined the path of two young students. That Shelley had not read any portion of Plato in the original before he went to Italy, is not strictly true. He had a very legible edition of the works of Plato in several volumes; a charming edition, the Bipont, I think, and I have read passages out of it with him. I remember going up to London with him from Marlow one morning; he took a volume of Plato with him, and we read a good deal of it together, sitting side by side on the top of the coaches. Phaedrus I am pretty sure was the dialogue--on beauty."

Mary Shelley corroborates Hogg's statement about Shelley's being able to read Greek before going to Italy. In her note on the poems of 1817 she says:

> "His readings this year were chiefly Greek. Besides the Hymns of Homer and the Iliad, he read the dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the Symposium of Plato and Arrian's Historia Indeca."

By July, 1818, Shelley was so familiar with the Greek text that, "in despair of producing anything original" he occupied ten mornings in translating the Symposium into English,

> "only as an exercise", he wrote to John and Maria Gesborne, "or, perhaps, to give Mary some idea of the manners and feelings of the Athenians".
>
> (Ingpen, Roger: The letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1909. 398-399)

He seemed to have some difficulty in retaining possession of this translation of the Symposium. In a post-script to a letter of August 22, 1821, to Thomas Medwin, he wrote,

> "I think you must have put up by mistake a MS. translation of the Symposium of Plato; if so, pray contrive to send it me".
>
> (Ingpen: 426)

In the last letter he wrote to Mary Shelley, dated July 4, 1822, he spoke of having found the translation of the Symposium.

Edward John Trelawny , a friend of the last year of Shelley's life also bears witness to the interest of the poet in the Greek philosopher. He speaks of Shelley's habit of being up at seven, "reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza". He has an amusing account of Shelley's attempting to steer a sail-boat and read Plato at the same time as one was a mental occupation, the other mechanical.

(Trelawny, Edward John: Records of Shelley, Byron, and the author. E.P.Dutton-N.Y.; The New Universal Library. P. 85-86)

"He was so uncommonly awkward", Mr. Trelawny says, "that, when things were ship-shape, Williams, somewhat scandalized at the lubberly manoeuvre, blew up the Poet for his neglect and inattention to orders. Shelley was, however, so happy, and in such high glee, and the nautical terms so tickled his fancy that he even put his beloved Plato in his pocket, and gave his mind up to fun and frolic."

In a letter of February 15, 1821, to Thomas Love Peacock, Shelley said he was reading Plato's "Ion". Among the papers published after his death were a complete translation of the "Ion" and fragments from Menexenus and the Republic.

The name of Plato was frequently traced by Shelley's pen during these twelve years of his acquaintance with the Greek philosopher. From these direct references, one may judge that he was particularly impressed with the idea of the dependence of the teachings of Christianity upon the doctrines of Plato. In a letter to Lord Ellenborough written in 1812 there is a passage which he incorporated in his notes on Queen Mab in which he spoke of the meeting of the belief in Christ's divinity with the reveries of Plato and the reasonings of Aristotle and acquiring force until it became a dogma which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy. In 1815 in the fragment of an Essay on Christianity he drew attention to the fact that the equality advocated by Jesus had been taught by Plato in his scheme of the Republic. In the fragment on The Defense of Poetry written in 1821 he referred to the Trinity of Christian worship as having had its origin in the three forms into which Plato distributed the faculties of the mind. In the poem Hellas, composed in 1821, Christ begs at the feet of Destiny for Victory for the Greeks,

"by Plato's sacred light, of which my spirit was a burning morrow"
(Hellas: Prologue, l.94)

When he wished to express great admiration for the works of his contemporaries, Shelley seemed instinctively to think of Plato. In a letter to William Godwin, dated December 7, 1817, concerning Godwin's novel, Mandeville, he wrote:

> "I do not think, if perhaps I except (and I know not if I ought to do so) the speech of Agathon in the Symposium of Plato, that there was ever produced a moral discourse more characteristic of all that is admirable and lovely in human nature, more lovely and admirable in itself than that of Henrietta to Mandeville as he is recovering from madness."
> (Ingpen, 204)

Peacock's "Rododaphne" reminded him of a passage in the Phaedrus. In a review of it written early in 1818 for the Examiner but never published, he wrote:

> "We are transported to the banks of Peneus, and linger under the crags of Tempe, and see the water-lilies floating on the stream. We are with Plato by old Ilissus, under the sacred Plane-tree among the sweet scent of flowering sallows; and above there is the nightingale of Sophocles in the ivy of the pine who is watching the sunset so that it may sing."
> (Dowden, Edward: The life of percy Bysshe Shelley. Kegan Paul Trench & Co., London. 1886; Vol.II, p. 218)

Godwin and Peacock ought to have been flattered by this resembling of their works to Plato's. It was the highest compliment he could give. In the fragment On the Revival of Literature (1815) he called Plate "the wisest, the profoundest, among the ancients". In the fragment of a Preface to the Banquet of Plato (1818) he spoke of Plato as "eminently the greatest among the Greek philosophers".

"Plato exhibits", he said, "the rare union of close and subtle logic with the Pythian enthusiasm of poetry melted by the splendour

and harmony of his periods into one irresistible stream of musical impressions, which hurry the persuasions onwards, as in a breathless career. His language is that of an immortal spirit, rather than a man."

In the Defense of Poetry (1821) he wrote:

"Plato was essentially a poet--the truth and splendour of his imagery, and the melody of his language are the most intense that it is possible to conceive."

Love found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the ancients. In the fragment of Prince Athanase Zonoras recalls to the mind of Prince Athanase the time when

"Plato's words of light in theeand me
"Lingered like moonlight in the moonless east,
"For we had just then read - thy memory

"Is faithful now - the story of the feast;
"And Agathon and Diotima seemed
"From death and dark forgetfulness released."
(Prince Athanase, L.224-229)

Although Shelley admired the Republic as

"the greatest repository of important truths of all the works of Plato"

and greatly admired the wonderful passage in the Phaedrus

"in praise of poetic madness, and in definition of what a poet is, and how a man becomes a poet",

he was most enraptured with "the story of the feast". In a letter to William Godwin of July 25, 1818, he wrote,

"The Symposium of Plato seems to me one of the most valuable pieces of all antiquity, whether we consider the intrinsic merit

of the composition, or the light which it throws on the inmost state of manners and opinions among the ancient Greeks."

In a letter to Liegh Hunt in November, 1819, he spoke of it as

"the delight and astonishment of all who read it."

The Preface to the Banquet of Plato opens as follows:

"The dialogue entitled The Banquet was selected by the translator as the most beautiful and perfect among all the works of Plato. He despairs of having communicated to the English language any portion of the surpassing graces of the composition, or having done more than present an imperfect shadow of the language and the sentiment of his astonishing production."

Shelley's admiration for Plato seemed to have in it a quality of unquestioning faith and worship. If he disagreed with any authority, ancient or modern, but agreed with Plato, he felt sure of his own position.

"I had rather err with Plato than be right with Horace", (Ingpen, 313)

he wrote to Peacock in January, 1819.

"For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to heaven with Paley and Malthus",

he proclaimed in the preface to Prometheus Unbound (1819). To Peacock in November, 1820, he wrote:

"I have been reading nothing but Greek and Spanish. Plato and Calderon have been my gods."

In a letter to John Gisborne in October, 1821, the following sentence occurs:

"I read the Greek dramatists and Plato forever."

From purely external evidence, one may safely conclude that Shelley was well acquainted with Plato intellectually; that he had

pondered over the relationship of Platonic theories to theological doctrines of the nineteenth century; that he admired the Greek for his wisdom, profundity, logic, and his truth and splendor of imagery; that he especially admired the Symposium ; and that he longed to be like this immortal spirit of long ago.

II

Platonic Thoughts to be Found in Shelley's Writings.

The word "Platonism" to the student of literature always suggested the doctrine that the poet is divinely inspired. In the Phaedrus Socrates speaks of various sorts of madness:

> "The third kind is the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses; which taking hold of a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyrical and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he who, having no touch of the Muse's madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art-- he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man disappears and is nowhere when he enters into rivalry with the mad man".
>
> (Jewett, B.: The Dialogues of Plato, translated into English with Analysis and introductions. MacMillan & Co., New York, 1892. Vol.I, p.451)

When talking to Ion, the "rhapsode", Socrates goes into greater detail concerning the divine nature of poetic madness:

> "For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. - - - - - - - - - - - - -
> For the poet is a light, and winged, and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: When he has not

attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles. Many are the noble words the poets speak concerning the actions of men; but like yourself when speaking about Homer, they do not speak of them by any rules of art; they are simply inspired to utter that to which the Muse impels them and that only; and when inspired, one of them will make dithyrambs, another hymns of praise, another choral strains, another epic or iambic verses - and he who is good at one is not good at any other kind of verse; for not by art does the poet sing, but by power divine. Had he learned by rules of art, he would have known how to speak not of one theme only, but of all; and therefore God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know them to be speaking not of themselves who utter these priceless words in a state of unconsciousness, but that God himself is the speaker, and that through them he is conversing with us."

(Ion, 533: Jowett, Vol.I, pp.501-502)

In the "Defense of Poetry" the nineteenth century poet discusses poets and poetry in much the same way as Plato.

"Poets", he says near the beginning of this essay, "according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators or prophets; a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the

gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events; such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. 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."
(Shepherd, vol. 2, p. 5)

Farther on in the essay he says:

"Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred.

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry'. The greatest poet even can not say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet."
(Shepherd: Vol.II, p. 32)

Shelley ends this first part of his Defence of Poetry in a glow of enthusiasm:

"Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."
(Shepherd: Vol.II, p. 38)

Another theory usually associated with the term "Platonism" is the doctrine of ideas. Many times Plato re-iterates the conception that the real and unchangeable world is the ideal. The sense world exists only as it partakes of the ideal. In the dialogue Cratylus Socrates is troubled by the theory of continual flux, as advocated by Heracleitus, and the apparent impossibility of knowing anything if that doctrine be accepted.

Soc. "There is a matter, Master Cratylus, about which I often dream, and should like to ask your opinion. Tell me whether there is or is not any absolute beauty or good, or any other absolute existence?

Crat. Certainly, Socrates, I think so.

Soc. Then let us seek the true beauty; not asking whether a face is fair, or anything of that sort, for all such things appear to be in a flux; but let us ask whether the true beauty is not always beautiful.

Crat. Certainly.

Soc. And can we rightly speak of a beauty which is always passing away, and is first this and then that; must not the same thing be born and retire and vanish while the word is in our mouths?

Crat. Undoubtedly.

Soc. Then how can that be a real thing which is never in the same state? For obviously things which are the same cannot change while they remain the same; and if they are always the same and in the same state, and never depart from their original form, they can never change or be moved.

Crat. Certainly, they cannot.

Soc. Nor yet can they be known by anyone; for at the moment that the observer approaches, then they become other and of another nature, so that you can not get any further in knowing their nature or state, for you cannot know that which has no state

Crat. True.

Soc. Nor can we reasonably say, Cratylus, that there is knowledge at all, if everything is in a state of transition and there is nothing abiding; for knowledge too cannot continue to be knowledge unless continuing always to abide and exist. But if the very nature of knowledge changes, at the time when the change occurs there will be no knowledge; and if the transition is always going on, there will always be no knowledge, and, according to this view, there will be no one to know and nothing to be known; but if that which knows and that which is known exists ever, and the beautiful and the good and every other thing exists, then I do not think that they can resemble a process or flux, as we were just now supposing."

(Cratylus, 439-440: Jowett: Vol.I, pp.387-388)

In the Timaeus is an explanation of the objects in universal nature:

"While receiving all things, she (universal nature) never departs at all from her own nature, and never in any way, or at any time, assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her; she is the natural recipient of all impressions, and is

stirred and informed by them, and appears different from time to time by reason of them. But the forms which enter into and go out of her are the likenesses of real existences modelled after their patterns in a wonderful and inexplicable manner, which we will hereafter investigate."

(Timaeus, 50: Jowett; Vol.III, p. 470)

Shelley, too, is saddened by the continual decay of earthly things. The poem, entitled Mutability, published with Alastor in 1816 ends with

"Naught may endure but Mutability".

Another poem, of the same title, has been placed by Mrs. Shelley among those published in 1821:

"The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
"All that we wish to stay
Tempts and then flies
"What is the world's delight?
"Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

"Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship, how rare!
"Love, how it sells poor bliss
For despair!
"But we, though soon they fall,
"Survive their joy, and all
Which ours we call.

"Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
"Whilst eyes that change ere night

Make glad the day;
"Whilst yet the calm hours creep
"Dream thou - and from they sleep
Then wake to weep."

Like Plato, Shelley comforts himself with the thought of the lasting quality of the ideal world. The conclusion of The Sensitive Plant is as follows:

"Whether the Sensitive Plant or that
"Which within its boughs like a Spirit sat
"Ere its outward form had known decay,
"Now felt this change, I cannot say.

"Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
"No longer with the form combined
"Which scattered love as stars do light,
"Found sadness, where it left delight,

"I dare not guess; but in this life
"Of error, ignorance, and strife,
"Where nothing is, but all things seem,
"And we the shadows of the dream,

"It is a modest creed, and yet
"Pleasant if one considers it,
"To own that death itself must be,
"Like all the rest, a mockery.

"That garden sweet, that lady fair,
"And all sweet shapes and odours there,
"In truth have never passed away:
"'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

"For love and beauty and delight,
"There is no death nor change: their might
"Exceeds our organs, which endure
"No light, being themselves obscure."

A third group of Platonic theories is that learning is reminiscence; that the soul has had a previous existence; that the soul migrates from men to lower animals, or vice-versa. The following quotation is from the Meno:

> "The soul, then, as being immortal, and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all, and it is no wonder that she should be able to call to remembrance all that she ever knew about virtue, and about everything; for as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no difficulty in her eliciting or as men say learning out of a single recollection all the rest, if a man is strenuous and does not faint; for all inquiry and all learning is but recollection."
>
> (Meno, 81: Jowett, Vol. II, p. 40)

The theory of the transmigration of souls is elaborated upon in the Timaeus:

> "Of the men who came into the world, those who were cowards or led unrighteous lives may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation. - -
> - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
> But the race of birds was created out of innocent, light minded men, who, although their minds were directed toward heaven, imagined in their simplicity that the clearest demonstration of the things above was to be obtained by sight; these were re-

modelled and transformed into birds, and they grew feathers instead of hair. The race of wild pedestrian animals, again, came from those who had no philosophy in any of their thoughts, and never considered at all about the nature of the heavens, because they had ceased to use the courses of the head, but followed the guidance of those parts of the soul which are in the breast. In consequence of these habits of theirs they had their front legs and their heads resting upon the earth to which they were drawn by natural affinity, and the crowns of their heads were elongated and of all sorts of shapes, into which the courses of the soul were crushed by reason of disuse. And this was the reason why they were created quadrupeds and polypods. God gave the more senseless of them the more support that they might be more attracted to the earth. And the most foolish of them, who trail their bodies entirely upon the ground and have no longer any need of feet, he made without feet to crawl upon the earth. The fourth class were the inhabitants of the water; these were made out of the most entirely senseless and ignorant of all, whom the transformers did not think any longer worthy of pure respiration, because they possessed a soul which was made impure by all sorts of transgression; and instead of the subtle and pure medium of the air, they gave them the deep and muddy sea to be their element of respiration; and hence arose the race of fishes and oysters, and other aquatic animals, which have received the most remote habitations as a punishment of their outlandish ignorance. These are the laws by which animals pass into one another, now, as ever, changing as they lose or gain wisdom and folly."

(Timaeus, 91-92. Jowett, Vol.III, pp. 573-574-575)

The mind of Shelley early seized upon these ideas of pre-existence, recollection, and transmigration; and played with them the rest of his life. He writes to Elizabeth Hitchener, November 26, 1811:

> "Might there not have been a prior state of existence? Might we not have been friends then? The creation of a soul at birth is a thing I do not like."
> (Ingpen, 99)

In Queen Mab, published in 1813, occurs the following stanza:

> "Sudden arose
> "Ianthe's Soul; it stood
> "All beautiful in naked purity,
> "The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
> "Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
> "Each stain of earthliness
> "Had passed away, it reassumed
> "Its native dignity, and stood
> "Immortal amid ruin."
> (Queen Mab, I, 130-138)

In Prince Athanase, written in 1817, when the friends of Athanase are wondering what is the "cause of his disquietude" and why he shakes with "spasms of silent passion",

> "Some said that he was mad; others believed
> "That memories of an antenatal life
> "Made this where now he dwelt, a penal hell."
> (Prince Athanase, 90-93)

In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock written in August, 1821, occurs an interesting expression of the theory of transmigration. In the main body of the letter is the following passage:

"Lord Byron's establishment consists, besides servants, of ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon; and all these, except the horses, walk about the house, which every now and then resounds with their unarbitrated quarrels, as if they were the masters of it."

In the post script Shelley writes delightfully:

"After I have sealed my letter, I find that my enumeration of the animals in this Circean Palace was defective, and that in a material point. I have just met on the grand stair-case five peacocks, two guinea hens, and an Egyptian crane. I wonder who all these animals were before they were changed into these shapes."
(Ingpen, 421)

A fourth series of resemblances between Platonic and Shelleyan fancies is discernible in their treatment of love and beauty. A conception of Plato's ideas on this subject requires many careful readings of the Symposium and the Phaedrus. Plato's writings do not readily lend themselves to quotations; and summaries are usually misleading. Since I can not transcribe the whole of these two productions, however, I am obliged to quote and summarize in order to indicate the likeness of the ideas of the two writers. The Symposium consists of six speeches upon the subject of love. Phaedrus, the first speaker ends his talk as follows:

"These are my reasons for affirming that Love is the oldest and noblest and mightiest of the gods, and the chiefest author and giver of virtue in life, and of happiness after death."
(Symposium, 180: Jowett, Vol.I, p. 550)

Pausanius, the second speaker, distinguishes between two sorts of love the "Pandemian", and the "Uranian". The one is of the body, the other of the soul. Exyrimachus, the third speaker, agrees concern-

ing the double nature of love, but adds that this double nature

> "is not merely an affection of the soul toward the fair or toward anything, but is to be found in the bodies of animals and in productions of the earth, and I may say in all that is; such is the conclusion I seem to have gained in my own art of medicine, whence I learn how great and wonderful and universal is the deity of love, whose empire extends over all things, divine as well as human. And the love, more especially, which is concerned with the good, and which is perfected in company with temperance and justice, whether among gods or men, has the greatest power, and is the source of all our happiness and harmony, and makes us friends with the gods who are above us, and with one another."
>
> (Symposium, 186,188: Jowett, Vol. I, pp. 556, 558)

Aristophanes, the next speaker, tells a mythical tale about the original appearance of human beings, who were of a double human form, possessed of four legs, four arms, two heads, etc., and progressed with a forward tumbling motion, using both arms and feet in their locomotion. Because of their rebellious spirit, these forms were sliced in two, up and down, through the middle. These halves wander about longing for the other, and, coming together, throw their arms about one another, entwine in mutual embraces and long to grow into one. If Haephrastus should ask what lovers most wish, if they wish to be melted into one, each person would agree that this was the expression of his ancient need.

> "And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love." (Symposium, 193: Jowett, Vol.I,p.562)

The poet Agathon speaks next. He praises Love as the fairest and

best of the gods, and also as the softest and most flexile;

> "for if he were hard and without flexure he could not enfold all things, or wind his way into and out of every soul of man undiscovered. Love is admirable also because of his justice, temperance and valour. Love is a poet and a maker of poets, an artist and a creator of order".
>
> "Since the birth of Love, and from the love of the beautiful has sprung every good in heaven and earth."
>
> (Symposium, 196: Jowett, Vol.I, p.565)

Socrates, giving his speech in the form of a dialogue with Diotima, concludes that love is the desire of the everlasting possession of the beautiful - a synonym with him of "the good" and of "wisdom" - and the desire of birth in beauty. For the less philosophic this desire of birth in beauty causes the production of mortal children. For the lovers of wisdom this desire causes the birth of beautiful ideas.

> "Who when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and the other poets would not rather have their children than mortal ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory?"
>
> (Symposium, 209: Jowett, Vol.I, p.580)

> "He who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only - out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another, and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will

abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness he will be content to love and tend him, and search him out and bring to birth thoughts which may improve the young, uutil he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere."

(Symposium, 210: Jowett, Vol.I,p.580-1)

This beauty is

"absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things".

(Symposium, 211: Jowett,Vol.I, p.581)

This absolute beauty is further described in the Phaedrus. All readers of Plato are familiar with that part of the Phaedrus in which the nature of the soul is described under the figure of two winged horses and a charioteer. They remember how the gods drive their chariots in a circle about the top vault of heaven while mortal souls

feebly follow, and view absolute knowledge, beauty, and goodness.

> "There", Socrates continues, "abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind, who is the pilot of the soul. The divine intelligence being nurtured upon mind and pure knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul which is capable of receiving the food proper to it, rejoices at beholding reality, and once more gaxing upon truth, is replenished and made glad, until the revolution of the worlds brings her round again to the same place. In the revolution she beholds justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute; and beholding the other pure existences in like manner and feasting upon them, she passes down into the interior of the heavens and returns home."
>
> (Phaedrus, 246-247-248: Jowett, Vol.I, pp. 452-453)

Mortals are unable to go on viewing these absolute realities because their steeds are often unruly. Their souls drop to earth and become embodied in human forms, but the sight of earthly beauty recalls to them the vision of heavenly beauty they once enjoyed with the gods.

Shelley's poems are almost as much a symposium of the praises of love as is the Symposium of Plato's. The ideas expressed by Phaedrus, Eryximachus, Agathon and Socrates are curiously mingled in the following extract from the prose fragment entitled The Coliseum:

> "'O Power!' cried the old man, lifting his sightless eyes towards the undazzling sun, 'thou which interpenetratest all things, and without which this glorious world were a blind and formless chaos, Love, Author of Good, God, King, Father! Friend

of these thy worshippers! Two solitary hearts invoke thee, may they be divided never! If the contentions of mankind have been their misery, if to give and seek that happiness which thou art, has been their choice and destiny; if in the contemplation of these majestic records of the power of their kind, they see the shadow and the prophecy of that which thou mayst have decreed that he should become; if the justice, the liberty, the loveliness, the truth, which are thy footsteps, have been sought by them, divide them not! It is thine to unite, to eternize; to make outlive the limits of the grave those who have left among the living, memorials of thee. When this frame shall be senseless dust, may the hopes, and the desires, and the delights which animate it now, never be extinguished in my child; even as, if she were borne into the tomb, my memory would be the written monument of all her nameless excellences."

(Shepherd: Vol. I, pp. 399-400)

The second quotation from Shelley which I give is a prose fragment entitled On Love. It also is a variation of the ideas of Aristophanes, Eryximachus and Socrates.

"Thou demandest what is Love. It is that powerful attraction towards all we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves. If we reason we would be understood; if we imagine we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's; if we feel we would that another's nerves would vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own; that

lips of motionless ice should not reply to lips quivering and burning with the heart's blood: this is Love. This is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists. We are born into the world, and there is something within us, which from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness. It is probably in correspondence with this law that the infant drains milk from the bosom of its mother; this propensity develops itself with the development of our nature. We dimly see within our intellectual nature, a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of every thing excellent and lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man. Not only the portrait of our external being, but an assemblage of the minutest particles of which our nature is composed: a mirror whose surface reflects only the forms of purity and brightness: a soul within our own soul that describes a circle aroung its proper Paradise, which pain and sorrow and evil dare not overleap. To this we eagerly refer all sensations thirsting that they should resemble and correspond with it. The discovery of its antitype; the meeting with an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own; an imagination which should enter into and seize upon the subtle and delicate peculiarities which we have delighted to cherish and unfold in secret, with a frame, whose nerves, like one chord of two exquisite lyres, strung to the accompaniment of one delightful voice, vibrate with the vibrations of our own; and a combination of all these in such proportion as the type within demands: this is the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends; and to at-

tain which, it urges forth the powers of man to arrest the faintest shadow of that, without the possession of which, there is no rest nor respite to the heart over which it rules. Hence in solitude, or that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, the water, and the sky. In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul awaken the spirits to dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success, or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone. Sterne says that if he were in a desert he would love some cypress. So soon as this want of power is dead, man becomes a living sepulchre of himself, and what yet survives is the mere husk of what once he was."

(Shepherd, Vol.I, pp.426-28)

A third fragment dealing with love is Prince Athanase. According to Mrs. Shelley this fragment was first entitled Pandemos and Urania. It was to be a tale of a man's seeking a woman embodying his ideal of love and beauty, and of his being betrayed into an earthly love. The idea evidently comes from Pausanius.

The sixth fragment of Prince Athanase might well have been spoken by Agathon at the Banquet.

"Thou are the wine whose drunkenness is all
"We can desire, O Love! and happy souls,
"Ere from they vine the leaves of autumn fall,

"Catch thee, and feed from their overflowing bowls
"Thousands who thirst for thine ambrosial dew;
"Thou art the radiance which where ocean rolls

"Investeth it; and when the heavens are blue
"Thou fillest them; and when the earth is fair
"The shadow of thy moving wings imbue

"Its deserts and its mountains, till they wear
"Beauty like some light robe;- thou ever soarest
"Among the towers of men, and as soft air

"On spring which moves the unawakened forest,
"Clothing with leaves its branches bare and bleak,
"Thou floatest among men; and aye implorest."

Intellectual love for ideal beauty is the sort of love with which Plato's name is usually associated. Shelley celebrates this kind of love and this kind of beauty in his Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.

"The awful shadow of some unseen Power
I
"Floats though unseen among us, visiting
"This various world with as inconstant wing
"As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,-
"Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
"It visits with inconstant glance
"Each human heart and countenance;
"Like hues and harmonies of evening,-
"Like clouds in starlight widely spread,-
"Like memory of music fled,-
"Like aught that for its grace may be
"Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery."

IV

"Love, Hope, and self-esteem, like clouds depart
"And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
"Man were, immortal, and omnipotent,
"Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
"Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart
"Thou messenger of sympathies,
"That wax and wane in lovers' eyes-
"Thou that to human thought art nourishment,
"Like darkness to a dying flame!
"Depart not as thy shadow came,
"Depart not-lest thy grave should be,
"Like life and fear, a dark reality.

V

"While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
"Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
"And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
"Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
"I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
"I was not heard - I saw them not -
"When musing deeply on the lot
"Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
"All vital things that wake to bring
"News of birds and blossoming,-
"Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
"I shrieked, and clapsed my hands in ecstasy!

VI

"I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
"To thee and thine - have I not kept the vow?

"With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
"I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
"Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
"Of studious zeal or love's delight
"Outwatched with me the envious night -
"They know that never joy illumed my brow
"Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
"This world from its dark slavery,
"That thou - O awful Loveliness,
"Wouldst give what e'er these words cannot express."

In the same spirit is The Zucca:

I

"Summer was dead and Autumn was expiring,
"And infant winter laughed upon the land
"All cloudlessly and cold; when I, desiring
"More in this world than any understand,
"Wept o'er the beauty, which like sea retiring,
"Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
"Of my lone heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
"Pale for the falsehood of the flattering Hours.

II

"Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep
"The instability of all but weeping;
"And on the Earth lulled in her winter sleep
"I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping.
"Too happy Earth! over they face shall creep
"The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping

"From unremembered dreams shalt see
"No death divide thy immortality.

III

"I loved--Oh, no, I mean not one of ye,
"Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
"As human heart to human heart may be;-
"I loved, I know not what--but this low sphere
"And all that it contains, contains not thee,
"Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.
"From Heaven and Earth, and all that in them are,
"Veiled art thou, like a star.

IV

"By Heaven and Earth, from all whose shapes
thou flowest,
"Neither to be contained, delayed, nor hidden;
"Making divine the loftiest and the lowest,
"When for a moment thou art not forbidden
"To live within the life which thou bestowest,
"And leaving noblest things vacant and chidden,
"Cold as a corpse after the spirit's flight,
"Blank as the sun after the birth of night.

V

"In winds, and trees, and streams, and all things
common,
"In music and the sweet unconscious tone
"Of animals, and voices which are human,
"Meant to express some feelings of their own;
"In the soft motions and rare smile of woman,

"In flowers and leaves, and in the
grass fresh-shown,
"Or dying in the autumn, I the most
"Adore thee present or lament thee lost."

Shelley and his heroes have a way of forgetting that this low sphere and all that it contains, contains not the complete embodiment of ideal beauty. Alastor sets out to find ideal beauty embodied in a woman. He has a vision of her,

"Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
"Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
"Like woven sounds of streams and breezes held
"His inmost sense suspended in a web
"Of many coloured woof and shifting hues.
"Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
"And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
"Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
"Herself a poet."
(Lines 152-161)

He never finds her, however, and

"blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave."

The Witch of Atlas illustrates again Shelley's ideal beauty embodied in the form of a woman. Stanza XII reads as follows:

"For she was beautiful--her beauty made
"The bright world dim, and everything beside
"Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade.
"No thought of living spirit could abide,
"Which to her looks had ever been betrayed,
"On any object in the world so wide,
"On any hope within the circling skies,

"But on her form, and in her inmost eyes."

As Plato's ideal beauty without diminution and without increase, or any other change, is imparted to the ever growing and perishing beauties of all other things, so the Witch of Atlas is the cause of all the beauty and love of the world. There is a third conception of love in the Witch of Atlas which can not be directly attributed to Plato, but is likely to be derived from his writings by one of mystical inclinations. The idea of being made one with ideal beauty, although suggested by the speeches of Aristophanes and Socrates is not definitely expressed. Shelley is fond of this idea of union. The Witch of Atlas

"had a charm of strange device,
"Which murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
"Could make that spirit mingle with her own."

Epipsychidion so well expresses a variety of Platonic ideas concerning love that I analyze it in considerable detail. The

"absolute, separate, simple and everlasting beauty which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the growing and perishing beauties of all other things", evidently seems to Shelley to exist in a concentrated degree in Emily. He addresses her as follows:

"Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
"Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman
"All that is insupportable in thee
"Of light, and love, and immortality!
"Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!
"Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
"Thou moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form

"Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm!
"Thou wonder, and thou Beauty and thou Terror!
"Thou Harmony of Nature's art! Thou Mirror
"In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun
"All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on."

From lines 75 to 122 he again attempts to describe this "beam of eternity". This description ends with:

"See where she stands! a mortal shape indeed
"With love and life and light and deity,
"And motion which may change but cannot die,
"An image of some bright Eternity;
"A shadow of some golden dream; a Splendour
"Leaving the third sphere pilotless; a tender
"Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
"Under whose motions life's dull billows move;
"A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning;
"A Vision like incarnate April, warning,
"With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy,
"Into his summer grave."

By and by in much the same spirit as in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty Shelley tells of his early love of heavenly beauty as shown in her earthly forms.

"Therewas a Being whom my spirit oft
"Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
"In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
"Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
"Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
"Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
"Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor

"Paved her light steps; on an imagined shore,
"Under the gray beak of some promontory
"She met me robed in such exceeding glory
"That I beheld her not. In solitudes
"Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
"And from the fountains, and the odours deep
"Of flowers, which like lips murmuring in their sleep
"Of the sweet kisses that had lulled them there,
"Breathed but of her to the enamoured air;
"And from the breezes whether low or loud,
"And from the rain of every passing cloud,
"And from the singing of the summer-birds,
"And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
"Of antique verse and high romance, in form,
"Sound, colour--in whatever checks that Storm
"Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
"And in that best philosophy, whose taste
"Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
"As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
"Her Spirit was the harmony of truth."
(190-216)

Farther on Shelley speaks of this Being as the

"veiled Divinity, the world of thoughts that worshipped her".

Nevertheless he expects to find her, quite contrary to Platonic teaching, completely embodied in earthly form. He is deceived by the Pandemian deity which Pausanius describes.

"There,-One whose voice was venomed melody

"Sate by a well, under blue night shade bowers;
"The breath of her false mouth was like
faint flowers,
"Her touch was as electric poison,- flame
"Out of her looks into my vitals came,
"And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
"A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
"Into the core of my green heart, and lay
"Upon its leaves; until as hair grown gray
"O'er a young brow, they bid its unblown prime
"With ruins of unseasonable time."
(Lines 256-266)

At length he beholds the vision of absolute beauty incarnate in Emily.

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

"Floated into the cavern where I lay,
"And called my Spirit, and the dreaming day
"Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
"As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
"I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
"Was penetrating me with living light:
"I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
"So many years - that it was Emily."
(331-344)

Besides these Platonic ideas of the Pandemian love, of the reality of abstract beauty, of the manifestation of ideal beauty in forms of earthly loveliness, and the Shelleyan conception of ideal beauty completely incarnate in the form of a woman, this poem contains an interpretation of the Platonic conception that the soul may rise from a contemplation of various forms of earthly beauty to a knowledge of true beauty, into a sort of advocacy of free love. Shelley says:

"I never was attached to that great sect,
"Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
"Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
"And all the rest, though fair and wise commend
"To cold oblivion, though it is the code
"Of modern morals, and the beaten road
"Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
"Who travel to their home among the dead
"By the broad highway of the world, and so
"With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
"The dreariest and the longest journey go.

"True love in this differs from gold and clay,

"That to divide is not to take away.
"Love is like understanding, that grows bright
"Gazing on many truths; - - - - -
- - - - - - - - - - narrow
"The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
"The life that wears, the spirit that creates
"One object, and one form, and builds thereby
"A sepulchre for its eternity."
(Lines 149-173)

The fifth idea expressed concerning love is that favorite of Shelley, union of the loved with the beloved. The poet says to Emily:

"I am not thine: I am a part of thee."
(Line 53)

Farther on he observes:

"The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
"In love and worship, blends itself with God."
(Lines 128-129)

When he pictures the life he will have with Emily (who now seems to have returned to a "divine beam" of ideal beauty instead of remaining ideal beauty incarnate) on the beautiful island to which he invites her, he writes as follows:

"We shall become the same, we shall be one
"Spirit within two frames, oh! Whereforetwo?
"One passion in twin hearts, which grows and grew,
"Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
"Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
"Touch mingle, are transfigured; ever still
"Burning, yet ever inconsumable:
"In one another's substance finding food
"Like flames too pure and light and unimbued

"To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,

"Which point to heaven and cannot pass away."

Even more interesting than the unraveling of Platonic ideas knit into Epipsychidion is the disentangling of the threads of Platonic love in Prometheus Unbound. In her note to the poem Mrs. Shelley says,

"Through the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world". The soft and flexile characteristic of love mentioned by the poet Agathon is twice utilized by the English writer. Panthea describes her dream in which the immortal shape of Prometheus was shadowed o'er by love,

"which from his soft

"And flowing limbs,

"And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,

"Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere

"Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,

"As the warm aether of the morning sun

"Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew".
(Act II, Scene I, lines 73-78)

When Love becomes the ruler of the earth, the Spirit of the Hour describes her conquest in this way:

"The impalpable thin air

"And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,

"As if the sense of love dissolved in them

"Had folded itself round the sphered world."
(Act III, Scene IV, 100-104)

The sovereignty of Love is definitely stated.

"For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
"On the revolving world? What to bid speak
"Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
"All things are subject but eternal Love."
(Act II, Scene IV, 117-120)

In this poem Asia at times seems to be the Spirit of heavenly beauty, or love. Panthea says to her:

"I dare not look on thee;
"I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
"The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
"Is working in the elements,which suffer
"Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
"That on the day when the clear hyaline
"Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
"Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
"Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
"Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores
"Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
"Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
"Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
"And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
"And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
"Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
"Such are thou now; nor is it I alone,
"Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
"But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
"Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak
the love
"Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not

"The inanimate winds enamoured of thee, List!"
(Act II, Scene V, 16-37)

At other times she seems only to be a "beam of the eternal". When Prometheus addresses her he says:

"Asia, thou light of life,

"Shadow of beauty unbeheld:"
(Act III, Scene III, 6-7)

In this same speech Prometheus refers to the Socratic definition of love; the desire of generation in beauty; for the true philosopher, generation of ideas.

"And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
"Then radiant as the mind, arising bright
"From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
"Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
"The gathered rays which are reality -
"Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
"Of Painting, Sculpture and rapt Poesy,
"And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
"The wandering voices and the shadows these
"Of all that man becomes, the mediators
"Of that best worship love, by him and us
"Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds
which grow
"More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
"And, veil by veil, evil and error fall."
(Act III, Scene III, 49-62)

The third act ends with the ~~poem~~ dream of love on earth. In the fourth act the whole universe celebrates love. The moon and the earth sing lyrics of love. The best of these seem to me to be the song of earth and the song of the moon, which I quote below:

"The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness,
"The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
"The vaporous exultation not to be confined:
"Ha! Ha! the animation of delight
"Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
"And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind."
(Act IV, 319-324)

"Gazing on thee I feel, I know
"Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
"And living shapes upon my bosom move:
"Music is in the sea and air,
"Winged clouds soar here and there,
"Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
"'Tis love, all love!"
(Act IV, 362-369)

Adonais, like Prometheus Unbound,"requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as Shelley's own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem". As in Prometheus Unbound, however, these mystic meanings become more nearly clear to a less subtle and penetrating mind if the reader remembers the contents of the Symposium and then allows for the variations necessarily added by a mind filled by wide reading, and an imagination as airy as Shelley's. Urania is summoned to weep for Adonais. As in Prince Athanase and Alastor, the poet confuses Pausanius's love of the beautiful, soul in the human body with the Socratic love of ideal beauty. Urania is first personified and later is in accordance with Socratic essence. With these conceptions appears that of the softness and tenderness of love, expressed by Agathon.

"Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
"Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
"And human hearts, which to her aery tread
"Yielding not, wounded the invisible
"Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
"And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
"Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
"Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
"Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way."
(Adonais XXIV)

The Socratic ideal beauty is expressed in stanza XIV of Adonais.

"That light whose smile kindles the Universe,
"That Beauty in which all things work and move,
"That Benediction which the eclipsing curse
"Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
"Which through the web of being blindly wove
"By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
"Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
"The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
"Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality."

If the Socratic exposition of absolute beauty, good, and wisdom be kept in mind, and the theory that without diminution this is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things, it is not difficult to understand the lines in stanza XXXVIII,

"but the pure spirit shall flow
"Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
"A portion of the Eternal which must glow
"Through time and change, unquenchably the same,"

and stanze XLII where Nature is identified with absolute beauty:

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

The comparison of the utterances of Plato and Shelley concerning beauty and love leads naturally to a comparison of their ideas of woman's position in society and of their ideals of marriage. Plato seems not to have much respect for women. In the Symposium, he places the affection of a man for a man on a much nobler basis than that of a man for a woman. In the quotation which I gave from the Timaeus he says that the souls of men who were cowards in their former existence or had led unrighteous lives inhabit the bodies of women in their present. In the Republic, however, he seems conscious that there are possibilities in women which should be developed and utilized for the state. Socrates and Glaucon come to the conclusion that, though in the art of weaving and the management of pancakes and preserves womankind really appear to be superior to man, in general women possess the same gifts as men, only in an inferior degree:

"If so, my friend, I said," Socrates is speaking, "there is no special faculty of administration in a state which a woman has because she is a woman, or which a man has by virtue of his sex, but the gifts of nature are alike diffused in both; all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them

a woman is inferior to man."

(Republic, V, 455: Jowett: Vol.III,p.148)

Socrates and Glaucon decide that the same education that makes a man a good guardian of the state will make a woman a good guardian. So women are to be educated as men and perform the same duties, except that they shall be given lighter work.

Having prescribed these duties to women, Socrates takes up the question of marriage. The state is of more importance to him than the individual. The state needs healthy offspring of the healthiest men mated with the healthiest women. To secure these numerous healthy offspring he would do away with family life and conjugal ties. There will be certain festivals at which a certain number of weddings will be allowed, the number to be determined by the present number of the population. At these festivals the best and bravest youths will be given the best specimens of the women as wives, and the inferior men will be given the inferior women.

"The proper officers will take the offspring of the good parents to the pen or fold, and there they will deposit them with certain nurses who dwell in a separate quarter; but the offspring of the inferior,or of the better when they chance to be deformed, will be put away in some mysterious, unknown place as they should be."

(Republic, V, 460: Jowett,Vol.III,p.154)

Nowhere does Shelley speak of the inferiority of womankind. He does feel, however, that women are oppressed and held in a condition of slavery. Plato teaches woman's duties; Shelley teaches woman's emancipation. In The Revolt of Islam, Cythna says:

"Can man be free if woman be a slave?

"Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,

"To the corruption of a closèd grave!

"Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
"Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
"To trample their oppressors? In their home
"Among their babies, thou knowest a curse would wear
"The shape of woman - hoary Crime would come
"Behind, and Fraud rebuild Religion's tottering throne."
(Canto II, Stanza XXXVII)

Later on in The Revolt of Islam the Hermit is relating to Laon the success of this reformer Cythna, who is surrounded by wild-eyed women thronging her path.

"Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
"To woman, outraged and polluted long;
"Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
"For those fair hands now free, while armèd wrong
"Trembles before her look, though it be strong;
"Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
"And matrons with their babes, a stately throng!"
(Canto IV, Stanza XX)

Shelley's heroine seems quite capable of performing the military duties which Plato demands of the female guardians of his state. Surely if, in the midst of battle, Cythna should come with reinless speed on a black Tartarian horse of giant frame, trampling over the dead while the living bleed beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed, and should say, "Mount, Socrates!", like Laon, the philosopher would rapidly obey. In Prometheus Unbound Shelley gives a less militant picture of woman freed from "custom's evil taint".

"And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
"As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
"On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,

"From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
"Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
"Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
"And changed to all which once they dared not be,
"Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride,
"Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
"The bitterest of these drops of treasured gall,
"Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love."
(Act III, Scene IV, 153-163)

The poet is, however, able to find a number of women admirable enough to celebrate as "sisters of his soul". He writes to Elizabeth Hitchener on October 18, 1811, as follows:

"My dearest friend (for I will call you so) you who understand my motives to action, which I flatter myself, unionize with your own, you who can contemn the world's prejudices, whose views are mine, I will dare to say I love; nor do I risk the possibility of that degrading and contemptible interpretation of this sacred word, nor do I risk the supposition that the lump of organized matter which enshrines thy soul excites the love which that soul alone dare claim - - - - - Henceforth will I be yours--yours with truth, sincerity, and unreserve. Not a thought shall arise which shall not seek its response in your bosom, not a motive of action shall be unenwafted by your cooler reason. - - - - - I love you more than any relation. I profess you are the sister of my soul, its dearest sister, and I think the component parts of that soul must undergo complete dissolution before its sympathies can perish."
(Ingpen, 81)

In the dedication to Harriet of the 1813 edition of Queen Mab are the following lines:

"Whose is the love that gleaming through the world,
"Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
"Virtue's most sweet reward?
"Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
"Ripen in truth and virtuous daring grow?
"Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
"And loved mankind the more?

"Harriet on thine: thou wert my purer mind:
"Thou wert the inspiration of my song;
"Thine are these early wilding flowers,
"Though garlanded by me .

"Then press into thy breast this pledge of love;
"And know, though time may change and years may roll,
"Each floweret gathered in my heart
"It consecrates to thee."

In the Dedication to The Revolt of Islam, written in 1817, the poet commends Mary who in her young wisdom didst burst and rend in twain the mortal chain of Custom. Of her he writes:

"And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak:
"Time may interpret to his silent years.
"Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
"And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
"And in thy sweetest smiles and in thy tears,
"And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
"Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears:
"And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see

"A lamp of vestal fire burning eternally."

To Emily, his"heart's sister" in 1821, he addressed the famous Epipsychidion. The poet seemed particularly susceptible to the beauty of the beam of the Eternal as manifested in the form of woman. His adoration of the divine in woman is well expressed in the second stanza of the poem, beginning "One word is too often profaned."

"I can not give what men call love,
"But wilt thou accept not
"The worship the heart lifts above
"And the heavens reject not,-
"The desire of the moth for the star,
"Of the night for the morrow
"The devotion to something afar
"From the sphere of our sorrow?"

Like Plato Shelley gives scant respect to the tie of marriage, but whereas Plato would have free love in his Republic because he thinks he will in that way contribute to the unity and strength of the state, Shelley is only indirectly concerned with the welfare of the state. His emphasis is upon the happiness of the individual. He expresses himself upon the subject in the Notes to Queen Mab.

"Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passions, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will to subdue the voluntary affections of our nature. Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness. Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is they most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence;

equality, and unreserve.

"How long then ought the sexual connection to last? What law ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. How odious a judgment should that law be considered which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement of the human mind. And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship, as love is more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object."

"The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner or the welfare of their mutual offspring: those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union, which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rend-

ered their union irksome, they would have been spared many years of misery; they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is forever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been separately useful and happy members of society, who, whilst united, were miserable and rendered misanthropical by misery. The conviction that wedlock is indissoluble holds out the strongest of all temptations to the perverse: they indulge without restraint in acrimony, and all the little tyrannies of domestic life, when they know that their victim is without appeal. If this connection were put on a rational basis, each would be assured that habitual ill-temper would terminate in separation and would check that vicious propensity."

"That which will result from the abolition of marriage will be natural and right; because choice and change will be exempted from restraint."

The last resemblance I wish to note between the thoughts expressed by the writer of the Republic and young Shelley are those concerning the simple life which the true lovers of wisdom and virtue should live, and the community of property which all the members of society should enjoy. Socrates describes the way of life of members of his ideal state as follows:

"Let us then consider, first of all, what will be their way of life, now that we have thus established them. Will they not produce corn and wine, and clothes, and shoes, and build houses for themselves? And when they are housed, they will work, in summer, commonly stripped and barefoot, but in winter substantially clothed and shod. They will feed on barley meal and flour of wheat, baking and kneading them, making noble cakes and loaves; these they

> will serve up on a mat of reeds or on clean leaves, themselves reclining the while upon beds strewn with yew or myrtle. And they and their children will feast, drinking of the wine which they have made, wearing garlands on their heads and hymning the praises of the gods, in happy converse with one another. And they will take care that their families do not exceed their means; having an eye to poverty or war."
>
> (Republic, II, 372: Jowett, Vol.III, :.53)

Glaucon objects to this sort of life. It would do only for pigs and other beasts. Socrates finally consents to construct a state where the citizens are to live in greater luxury, protesting, however,

> "In my opinion the true and healthy constitution of the state is the one which I have described."

In other parts of the Republic he says that luxury is a cause of disease; that it would not give happiness to the citizens; that it makes men cowards.

The community of property to be required of the guardians of the state, Socrates explains in the following manner:

> "In the first place none of them should have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely necessary; neither should they have a private house or store closed against any one who has a mind to enter; their provisions should be only such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage; they should agree to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay, enough to meet the expenses of the year and no more; and they will go to mess and live together like soldiers in a camp. Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they will have therefore no need of the dross which is current among men, and ought not to pollute

the divine by any such earthly admixture; for that commoner metal has been the source of many unholy deeds, but their own is undefiled. And they alone of all the citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold, or be under the same roof with them, or wear them, or drink from them. And this will be their salvation, and they will be the saviours of the State. But should they ever acquire homes or lands or moneys of their own, they will become house keepers and husbandmen instead of guardians, enemies and tyrants instead of allies of the other citizens; hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, they will pass their whole life in much greater terror of internal than of external enemies, and the hour of ruin, both to themselves and to the rest of the State, will be at hand. For all which reasons may we not say that thus shall our state be ordered, and that these shall be the regulations appointed by us for our guardians concerning their houses and all other matters?"

(Republic, III,417: Jowett, Vol.III, p.106)

Shelley discusses luxury and community of property in the fragment entitled Essay on Christianity. In this essay, under the division headed "Equality of Mankind", the young free-thinker emphasizes the fact that the doctrines of simplicity of life and of equality taught by Jesus were advocated by Plato, Diogenes and all just and compassionate minds that ever speculated on the social nature of man.

"With all those who are truly wise, there will be an entire community, not only of thoughts and feelings, but also of external possessions. - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Among true and real friends, all is common; and, were ignorance and envy and superstition banished from the world, all mankind

would be friends. The only perfect and genuine republic is that which comprehends every living being."

"Your physical wants are few, whilst those of your mind and heart cannot be numbered or described, from their multitude and complication. To secure the gratification of the former, you have made yourselves the bond-slaves of each other."

"They have cultivated these meaner wants to so great an excess as to judge nothing so valuable or desirable (as) what relates to their gratification. Hence has arisen a system of passions which loses sight of the end it would attain. Fame, power, and gold are loved for their own sakes--are worshipped with a blind, habitual idolatry."

"Meanwhile, some benefit has not failed to flow from the imperfect attempts which have been made to erect a system of equal rights to property and power upon the basis of arbitrary institutions. They have undoubtedly, in every case, from the instability of their formation,failed. Still, they constitute a record of those epochs at which a true sense of justice suggested itself to the understanding of men, so that they consented to forego all the cherished delights of luxury, all the habitual gratifications arising out of the possession or expectation of power, all the superstitions with which the accumulated authority of ages had made them dear and venerable. They are so many trophies erected in the enemy's land, to mark the limits of the progress of truth and justice."

(Shawcross, p.107 ff.)

The Revolt of Islam has a picture of a state of liberty, equality,and love.

"Yet need was none for rest or food to care,

"Even though that multitude was passing great,
"Since each one for the other did prepare
"All kindly succour."
(Canto V, Stanze XX, 1891-1894)

There are discernible, then, in the writings of the English poet who read Plato from the eighteenth year of his age until his death (1) the theory of the divine inspiration of the poet; (2) the expression of the fluctuating character of the objects of sense and the eternal existence of ideas; (3) fancies concerning pre-existence of the soul, learning as recollection, and the migration of the soul from body to body; (4) various Platonic conceptions of beauty and love; (5) convictions in regard to woman's social state and in regard to the institution of marriage related to those expressed by Plato, but differentiated by the emphasizing of the individual rather than the state; and (6) ideals of simplicity in life and community of possessions similar to the ideals expressed in the Republic.

III

Shelley, the Platonist

Shelley's intimate contemporaries often connect him with the name of Plato. Hogg has several entertaining anecdotes concerning the attempts of this idealist to apply Platonic teachings. I submit one dealing with Shelley's interest in pre-existence during his college days:

"One Sunday we had been reading Plato together so diligently that the usual hour of exercise passed away unperceived: we sallied forth hastily to take the air for half an hour before dinner. In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. Shelley was more attentive at that instant to our con-

duct in a life that was past, or to come, than to a decorous regulation of the present, according to the established usages of society, in that fleeting moment of eternal duration, styled the nineteenth century. With abrupt dexterity he caught hold of the child. The mother, who might well fear that it was about to be thrown over the parapet of the bridge into the sedgy waters below, held it fast by its long train.

'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, Madam,' he asked, in a piercing voice, and with a wistful look.

The mother made no answer, but perceiving Shelley's object was not murderous, but altogether harmless, she dismissed her apprehension, and relaxed her hold.

'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, Madam,' he repeated, with unabated earnestness.

'He can not speak, Sir,' said the mother seriously.

'Worse and worse,' cried Shelley, with an air of deep disappointment, shaking his long hair most pathetically about his young face; 'but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy perhaps that he cannot, but it is only a silly whim; he cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible.'

'It is not for me to dispute with you, Gentlemen,' the woman meekly replied, her eye glancing at our academical garb; 'but I can safely declare that I never heard him speak, nor any child, indeed, of his age.'

It was a fine placid boy; so far from being disturbed by the interruption, he looked up and smiled. Shelley pressed his fat cheekc with his fingers, we commended his healthy appearance and

his equanimity, and the mother was permitted to proceed, probably to her satisfaction, for she would doubtless prefer a less speculative nurse. Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on.

'How provokingly close are those new-born babes,' he ejaculated, 'but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding the cunning attempts to conceal the truth, that all knowledge is reminiscence; the doctrine is far more ancient than the time of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention!'" (Hogg, p. 14)

If one is inclined to doubt the testimony of the agreeable Thomas Jefferson Hogg, there is a prose fragment which seems to confirm his assertion of the seriousness with which Shelley regarded the doctrine of pre-existence. The last part of Speculations on Metaphysics is concerned with the effect of scenes upon the emotions.

"But the most remarkable event of this nature, which ever occurred to me, happened five years ago at Oxford. I was walking with a friend, in the neighborhood of that city, engaged in earnest and interesting conversation. We suddenly turned the corner of a lane, and the view, which its high banks and hedges had concealed, presented itself. The view consisted of a windmill, standing in one among many flashy meadows, inclosed with stone walls; the irregular and broken ground, between the wall and the road on which we stood; a long low hill behind the windmill, and a grey covering of uniform cloud spread over the evening sky. It was that season when the last leaf had just fallen from the scant and stunted ash. The scene surely was a common scene; the season and the hour little calculated to kindle law-

less thought; it was a tame, uninteresting assemblage of objects, such as would drive the imagination for refuge in serious and sober talk, to the evening fireside, and the dessert of winter fruits and wine. The effect which it produced on me was not such as could have been expected. I suddenly remembered to have seen that exact scene in some dream of long ---------"

"Here", the poet subjoins later, "I was obliged to leave off, overcome by thrilling horror."

In her note to this fragment Mrs. Shelley says:

"This remark closes this fragment, which was written in 1815. I remember well his coming to me from writing it, pale and agitated, to seek refuge in conversation from the fearful emotions it excited." (Shepherd, Vol.II, p. 193)

A second Platonic influence to be detected in Shelley's life has to do with his interpretations of Plato's ideas of love and marriage. Of the sincerity of his respect for love Mrs. Shelley in her note to Rosalind and Helen bears witness:

"He never mentioned Love but he shed a grace borrowed from his own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed, on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by mistake."

The Platonic ladder of love, expressed in the Epipsychidion,

"I never was attached to that great sect,
"Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
"Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend

"And all the rest though fair and wise commend

"To cold oblivion,"

he climbed by contemplation of divinity veiled in the forms of Harriet Grove, Harriet Westbrook, Elizabeth Hitchener, Mary Godwin, Jane Clairmont, Emilia Viviani, and Jane Williams. The amusing cynic, Hogg, gives an account of Shelley's relationship to one of the fair and wise friends whom he admired in 1813:

"A most engaging lady of our circle had surrendered herself a fair prey to a kind of sweet melancholy, arising, as far as I could discover, from causes purely imaginary; a pensive, languid sadness which gave a character, a grace, an interest to her society and conversation, but did not interfere in any way with the enjoyment of life, and the fullest exercise of the mental and animal functions. She required consolation, she said; she sought it, and found it at last in the poetry of Petrarch; and therefore she invariably began the day by reading attentively and repeatedly as soon as she awoke in the morning, often learning it by heart--a sonnet, or canzone--going thus regularly through the book; meditating upon it; revolving it in her mind, and, as it were, feeding upon it in her soul. For a considerable period we saw her almost every day, and the desponding fair one immediately repeated it with becoming emotion; or producing her pocket Petrarch, which she always carried about with her, and which by express testamentary direction was to be buried with her, she read it aloud with feeling; but if it was too touching to be thus given forth, she handed the minute volume to the inquirer, pointing out the proper poetic lesson in Love's scripture appointed for the day. She eloquently and not unskilfully expounded the text, which is

frequently obscure and needs exposition, neatly clearing up difficulties and displaying feelingly the beauties of sentiment and expression. She warmly recommended us, and all with whom she conversed, and who were likely to profit by good advice, to begin every day, as she herself did, by a snatch of tenderness. It would cast a pretty and a pleasant shade of sadness over the whole day; upon its business and its pleasures, mellowing and mitigating its joys, and softening and relieving its sorrows. Like all zealous persons, she sometimes seemed disposed to recommend that, by legislative enactment, all loyal subjects should be enjoined and required to begin in this manner every day of their lives.

"Shelley assured her authoritatively, that when there was a perfect republic, the day would uniformly be opened in this fashion, and the assurance contented her.

"Besides laying open to us the poem of the day; unfolding its true signification, and bringing it down to the level of our comprehension, in which kind offices she never failed; some other choice passage was selected from the pocket volume, or from a larger and more legible edition, and it received in like manner, a full explanation. Thus were we initiated gradually and efficiently, and in a most agreeable manner, in the mysteries of the amatory verses of the great poet of love. Petrarch, in a word, was her hero, the best and greatest of men, as Laura de Sades was the happiest of women, thrice and four times blessed to have been so beloved, be-sighed, and be-sonnetted by the prince of poets and of lovers. Bysshe entered at once fully into her views, and caught the soft infection, breathing the tenderest and sweetest

melancholy, as every true poet ought."

(Hogg, p.483-4)

Shelley realized that these manifestations of the divine did not possess that character of philosophic abstraction which leads to the happiness of knowing Absolute Beauty. On June 18, 1822, in a letter to John Gisborne he expresses himself as follows:

"The Epipsychidion I cannot look at, the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts back from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal."

(Ingpen, 466)

Worshipper as he was at the shrine of love, the poet considered it the source of all sorts of mischief. In a letter to Mary Shelley, written August 16, 1821, he says:

"My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society. I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea, would build a boat, and shut upon my retreat the flood gates of the world. I would read no reviews and talk with no authors. If I dared trust my imagination, it would tell me that there are one or two chosen companions besides yourself whom I should desire. But to this I would not listen--where two or three are gathered together, the devil is among them. And good, far more than evil impulses, love, far more than hatred, has been to me, except as you have been its object, the source of all sorts of mischief." (Ingpen, 425)

Shelley also lived up to his conviction in regard to marriage. "A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration", he wrote in the notes to Queen Mab, dedicated to his young wife Harriet in 1813. There was a breach in the love between Harriet and himself in May, 1814, for he wrote a poem beseeching her not to be one among mankind whose heart is harder for state, to trust no erring guide, but by a slight endurance seal a fellow-being's lasting weal. Harriet seems not to have responded to this attempt toward reconciliation. On July 28, 1814, with Mary Godwin he left England and his wife for France. Unlike many philosophers he did not have one standard of morality for himself and another for his acquaintances. Mary Godwin's ~~half~~ step-sister also disregarded the conventionality of the system concerning which Shelley says,

"none could be devised more studiously hostile to human happiness". Neither Mary nor Shelley seem to have reproached her. Shelley supported her and her child in his own home, although his own unconventional way of living and the unaccounted-for presence of Jane Clairmont's child caused considerable scandal, and like love was the "source of all sorts of mischief".

The simplicity of Shelley's personal life, and his attitude toward his own personal property conform with the ideals embodied in the Republic. Hogg describes his early life.

"His food was plain and simple as that of a hermit, with a certain anticipation, even at this time, of a vegetable diet, respecting which he afterwards became an enthusiast in theory, and

in practice an irregular votary."

"Bread became his chief sustenance, when his regimen attained to that austerity which afterwards distinguished it. He could have lived on bread alone without repining. When he was walking in London with an acquaintance, he would suddenly run into a baker's shop, purchase a supply, and breaking a loaf, he would offer half of it to his companion.

"'Do you know', he said to me one day, with much surprise, that such an one does not like bread? Did you ever know a person who disliked bread?' and he told me that a friend had refused such an offer.

"I explained to him, that the individual in question probably had no objection to bread in a moderate quantity, at a proper time and with the usual adjuncts, and was only unwilling to devour two or three pounds of dry bread in the streets, and at an early hour.

"Shelley had no such scruple; his pockets were generally well-stored with bread. A circle upon the carpet, clearly defined by an ample verge of crumbs, often marked the place where he had long sat at his studies, his face nearly in contact with his book, greedily devouring bread at intervals amidst his profound abstractions. For the most part he took no condiment; sometimes, however, he ate with his bread common raisins which are used in making puddings, and those he would buy at little mean shops."

"The common fruit stalls, and oranges and apples were always welcome to Shelley; he would crunch the latter as heartily as a school boy. Vegetables, and especially salads, and pies and pud-

dings, were acceptable: his beverage consisted of copious and frequent draughts of cold water, but tea was ever grateful cup after cup, and coffee. Wine was taken with singular moderation, commonly diluted largely with water, and for a long period he would abstain from it altogether; he avoided the use of spirits almost invariably, and even in the most minute portions.

"Like all persons of simple tastes he retained his sweet tooth; he would greedily eat cakes, gingerbread, and sugar; honey, preserved or stewed fruit, with bread, were his favourite delicacies, these he thankfully, and joyfully received from others, but he rarely sought them for himself. The restraint and protracted duration of a convivial meal were intolerable; he was seldom able to keep his seat during the brief period assigned to an ordinary family dinner.

"These particulars may seem trifling, if indeed anything can be little that has reference to a character truly great; but they prove how much he was ashamed that his soul was in his body, and illustrate the virgin abstinence of a mind equally favoured by the Muses, the Graces and Philosophy. It is true, however, that his application at Oxford, although exemplary, was not so unremitting as it afterwards became; nor was his diet, although singularly temperate, so meagre; however, his mode of living already offered a foretaste of the studious seclusion and absolute renunciation of every luxurious indulgence which enobled him a few years later."

(Hogg, pp.85-86-87)

Leigh Hunt in the Examiner for October 10, 1819, pictures the life of Shelley before he went to Italy:

"To return to Mr. Shelley. The Reviewer asserts that he 'is

shamefully dissolute in his conduct.' We heard of similar assertions when we resided in the same house with Mr. Shelley for nearly three months, and how was he living all that time? As much like Plato himself, as all his theories resemble Plato--or rather, still more like a Pythagorean. This was the round of his daily life--he was up early; breakfasted sparingly; wrote this Revolt of Islam all the morning; went out in his boat, or into the woods with some Greek author or the Bible in his hands; came home to a dinner of vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine); visited, if necessary, the sick and fatherless, whom others gave Bibles to and no help; wrote or studied, again, or read to his wife and friends the whole evening; took a crust of bread, or a glass of whey for his supper; and went early to bed. This is literally the whole of the life he led, or that we believe he now leads in Italy; nor have we ever known him in spite of the malignant and ludicrous exaggerations on this point, deviate, notwithstanding his theories, even in a single action which those who differ with him might think.blameable. We do not say that he should always square his conduct by their opinions as a matter of principle; we only say that he acted just as if he did so square it. We forbear, out of regard for the very bloom of their beauty, to touch upon numberless other charities and generosities which we have known him exercise; but this we must say, in general, that we have never lived with a man who gave so complete an idea of an ardent and principled aspirant in philosophy as Percy Bysshe Shelley, and we believe him, from the bottom of our hearts, to be one of the noblest hearts as well as heads which the world has seen for a long time. We never met, in short, with a being who came nearer perhaps so near, to that height of humanity mentioned in the

conclusion of an essay of Lord Bacon's where he speaks of excess of charity, and of its not being in the power of 'man or angel to come in danger by it'".

(Garnett, p. 105)

Trelawney's description of Shelley's way of living in Italy agrees with Hogg's and Leigh Hunt's description of Shelley in England.

"He seldom ate at stated periods, but only when hungry--and then like the birds, if be saw something edible lying about--but the cupboards of literary ladies are like Mother Hubbard's, bare. His drink was water, or milk if he could get it, bread was literally his staff of life; other things he thought superfluous. An Italian who knew his way of life, not believing it possible that any human being would live as Shelley did, unless compelled by poverty, was astonished when he was told the amount of his income, and thought he was defrauded or grossly ignorant of the value of money. He, therefore, made a proposition which much amused the Poet, that he, the friendly Italian, would undertake for ten thousand crowns a year to keep Shelley like a grand Seigneur, to provide his table with luxuries, his house with attendants, a carriage and opera-box for my lady, besides adorning his person after the most approved Parisian style. Mrs. Shelley's toilette was not included in the wily Italian's estimates. The fact was, Shelley stinted himself to bare necessaries, and then often lavished the money, saved by unprecedented self-denial, on selfish fellows who denied themselves nothing."

(Trelawny, pp.54-55)

Concerning the use of Shelley's purse by his friends, Trelawny writes with more detail in the Preface to his Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author.

"Leigh Hunt often said that he was the dearest friend Shelley had; I believe he was the most costly. His theory was that between friends everything should be common; he said you could not do your friend a greater favour than constitute him your banker, and that he could receive no greater pleasure than answering your drafts: as Leigh Hunt had an ailing wife and seven children, those drafts were frequent. Mrs. Shelley's father, Godwin, was another dear friend; his theory was that a man, labouring as he did for the advancement of knowledge, should be supported by those who agreed with the justness of his views. These two dear friends being heavily in debt, the poet had not the means of paying those debts, but the worldly philosopher, Godwin, having ascertained the poet's exact pecuniary position, as the heir of an entailed estate, suggested to him the antedating his inheritance, by raising money on post obit bonds, and satisfied Shelley as to the expediency of so doing. The poet, always prepared for martyrdom, assented, and Godwin found the ready means of executing the project. Money was raised at cent. per cent; both his dear friends' debts were paid. But experience proves that this practice is not effective; those who are in the habit of allowing their expenses to exceed their earnings will not alter their habits whilst they have credit, and the debts of these claimants being paid their credit was strengthened. Shelley repeated the process in vain. Besides these dear friends, Shelley had less costly friends, who dipped their hands into his purse."

(Trelawny, Preface X-XI)

In spite of the fact that Shelley's early life was a time of continual financial shortage, at the first hint of his being given a yearly income that must have meant wealth to him, on the condition that he

should agree to entail the Shelley estate entire to the next Shelley heir, he was greatly indignant. He writes to Elizabeth Hitchener about the matter December 15, 1811.

"I have since heard from Captain P(ilford). His letter contains the account of a meditated proposal, on the part of my father and grandfather, to make my income immediately larger than the former's, in case I will consent to entail my estate on my eldest son, and, in default of issue, on my brother. Silly dotards! Do they think I can be thus bribed and ground into an act of such contemptible injustice and inutility, that I will forswear my principles in consideration of 2,000 pounds a year, that the good-will I could thus purchase, or the ill-will I could thus overbear, would recompense me for the loss of self esteem, of conscious rectitude? And with what face can they make to me a proposal so insultingly hateful. Dare one of them propose such a condition to my face--to the face of any virtuous man--and not sink into nothing at his disdain? That I should entail 120,000 pounds of command over labor, of power to remit this, to employ it for beneficent purposes, on one whom I know not--who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its bane, or use this for the worst purposes, which the real delegates of my chance given property might convert into a most useful instrument of benevolence! No! this <u>you</u> will not suspect me of. What I have told you will serve to put in its genuine light the grandeur of aristocratical distinctions, and to show that contemptible vanity will gratify its <u>unnatural</u> passion at the expense of every just, humane, and philanthropic consideration." (Ingpen, 108)

One of them must have made this proposal to his face at the death of his grandfather some years later, and again he refused to bind himself. He writes to Godwin concerning the subject, January 7, 1816.

> "My grandfather had left me the option of recovering a life estate in some very large sum (I think 140,000 pounds) on condition that I would prolong the entail, so as to possess only a life estate in my original patrimony. These conditions I never intended to accept, although Longdill considered them very favorable to me, and urged me by all means to grasp at the offer."
>
> (Ingpen, 213)

Like the great philosopher, Shelley ranks the true statesman above the poet. January 26, 1819, he writes to Peacock as follows:

> "I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter; for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonising the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled."
>
> (Ingpen, 313)

At that time, however, he had no intention of deserting poetry for political science. In 1822 he evidently seriously thought of changing to the work he admired. According to Peacock he expressed a desire to be employed politically at the court of a native prince of India, but Peacock told him that such employment was restricted to the regular service of the East India Company. In his letter to Peacock in January, 1822, Shelley refers to this matter.

> "I wish I had something better to do than furnish this jingling food for the hunger of oblivion, called verse, but I have not; and since you give me no encouragement about India, I cannot hope to have."
>
> (Ingpen, 437)

In accordance with Platonic teachings, Shelley considered his body a hindrance to the acquisition of true knowledge. Plato's ideas on the subject of death are expressed best in the following extract from the Phaedo:

"And when real philosophers consider all these things, will they not be led to make a reflection like the following? 'Have we not found', they will say, 'a path of thought which seems to bring us and our argument to the conclusion, that while we are in the body, and while the soul is infected with the evils of the body, our desire will not be satisfied? And our desire is of the truth. For the body is the source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food, and is liable also to diseases which overtake and impede us in the search after true being: it fills us full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies of all kinds, and endless foolery, and in fact, as men say, takes away from us the power of thinking at all. Whence come wars, and fightings and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? Wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and by reason of all these impediments we have no time to give to philosophy; and, last and worst of all, even if we are at leisure and betake ourselves to some speculation, the body is always breaking in upon us, causing turmoil and confusion, in our inquiries, and so amazing us that we are prevented from seeing the truth. It has been proved to us by experience that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body--the soul in herself must behold things in themselves; and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers; not while we live, but after death; for

if while in company with the body, the soul can not have pure knowledge, one of two things follows--either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul will be parted from the body and exist in itself alone. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body, and are not surfeited with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And thus having got rid of the foolishness of the body we shall be pure and hold converse with the pure, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere, which is no other than the light of truth! For the impure are not permitted to approach the pure. These are the sorts of words, Simmeas, which the true lovers of knowledge cannot help saying to one another and thinking."

(Phaedo, 66: Jowett, Vol.II, p.205)

Trelawny says of Shelley,

"The careless, not to say impatient way in which the Poet bore his burden of life, caused a vague dread amongst his family and friends that he might lose or cast it away at any moment."

(Trelawny, p.59)

He tells of an experience he and Shelley had through which the poet almost found Truth.

"I was bathing one day in a deep pool in the Arno, and astonished the Poet by performing a series of aquatic gymnastics, which I had learnt from the natives of the South Seas. On my coming out, whilst dressing, Shelley said mournfully, 'Why can't I swim; it seems so very easy.'

"I answered, 'Because you think you can't. If you determine

you will; take a header off this bank, and when you rise turn on your back, you will float like a duck; but you must reverse the arch in your spine, for it's now bent the wrong way'.

"He doffed his jacket and trousers, kicked off his shoes and socks, and plunged in; and there he lay stretched on the bottom like a conger eel, not making the least effort or struggle to save himself. He would have been drowned if I had not instantly fished him out. When he recovered his breath, he said, 'I always find the bottom of the well, and they say Truth lies there. In another minute I should have found it and you would have found an empty shell. It is an easy way of getting rid of the body.'"
(Trelawny, p.51)

Not many months later, when there was no Trelawny with him to fish him out, the philosophic poet got rid of his body in the easy way he commended. Sailing on their way back to their wives, he and his friend Williams were caught in a storm and drowned. Trelawny believes that Shelley made no struggle to save himself.

Shelley, the idealist, had testified in his life to his belief in the Platonic teachings (1) of pre-existence, (2) of love, (3) of marriage, interpreted in the spirit of the nineteenth century, (4) of simplicity of personal life, (5) of community of possessions, (6) of the superiority of the statesman to the poet, (7) and of inability of the soul to know truth while encased in the body.

Two days before the poet's death Jane Williams had written to him:

"Why do you talk of never enjoying moments like the past? Are you going to join your friend Plato, or do you expect I shall do so?"

One can not read Shelley's writings and the records of his life with-

out wondering what was beyond the veil of death. When he left in the Italian waters the empty shell, did he, retaining his own individuality, join Plato, also an individual soul, or did they mingle as indistinguishable parts of the Eternal?

Appendix

I

Shelley's Acquaintance with Plato

A. Plato Referred to by Name or Work.

1. Ingpen, Roger: The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley;
   Charles Scribner's Sons, N. Y. 1909.
   Letters: *147, 161?, 162?, *204, *298, *299, *300, *302, *313, *348, *389, *386, *393, *426, *431, 453, *472

2. Dowden, Edward: The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley;
   Kegan Paul Trench & Co., London. 1886.
   Vol. II, p. 218 (Letter to Examiner concerning Peacock's Rhododaphne)

3. Shawcross, John: Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism; Henry Froude, London. 1909.
   Page 106 (Essay on Christianity)

4. Shepherd, Richard Herne: The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley; Chatto & Windus, London. 1912.
   Vol.I, p. 296 (A Refutation of Deism)
   *Vol.I, p. 420 (On the Revival of Literature)
   Vol.II, p.*7, *22, *24 (A Defence of Poetry)
   Vol.III, p.*48, *49 (Preface to the Banquet of Plato)

5. Poems
   *Prince Athanase: 224-229
   Charles the First: Sc.II, 388.
   Hellas; Prologue, 94.
   *Notes on Queen Mab: VII, 135-136
   *Preface to Prometheus Unbound. (twice)
   The Triumph of Life: 254

B. Biographical References

1. Hogg, Thomas Jefferson: The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley; E. P. Dutton, N.Y. 1906; pp.*72, *120, *373
2. *Notes on the Poems of 1817 by Mrs. Shelley.
3. Trelawny, Edward John: Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author; E. P. Dutton (The New Universal Library), N.Y. pp. 80, 85, 86

II

Platonic Thoughts to be Found in Shelley's Writings

A. References to the Divinity of the Poet.

Shepherd: Vol.II, pp.*5, *32, *38

Ingpen: 302

B. References to the Theory of Flux and the Reality of the Ideal World.

*Mutability (1816)

*Mutability (1821)

Prometheus Unbound: *Act III, Sc.III -25

Revolt of Islam: XII -4781-4782

The Sensitive Plant: *114-137

The Witch of Atlas:

The Zucca: St. I, IV, V

C. References to Pre-existence of the Soul, and Transmigration of the Soul.

Ingpen: *99,*421

Prince Athanase: *90-93

Peter Bell, the Third: Prologue, 29-30

Epipsychidion: 134-135

Hellas: 84 ff.

Queen Mab: *I, 130-138

D. Reference to Love Connected with Platonic Thought.

1. Garnett, Richard: Relics of Shelley; Edward Moxam & Co., London. 1862.

PP. 62-73 (Una Favola)

2. Ingpen: 309

3. Shepherd: Vol.I, *p.426 ff. (On Love)

Vol.I, *p.399-400 (The Coliseum)

Vol.II,*p.11 (A Defence of Poetry)

Vol.II, p.25-26 (On the Literature and Arts of the Athenians)

Vol.II, p.147-167 (The Assassins)

4. Poems:

Adonais: 12, 30, 194, 261, 302, *338-342, *370-396, 460-495.

Alaster: Preface, 149-161

Fragment, Amor Aeturnus

Prince Athanase: *Mrs. Shelley's Note; lines 95-96, 250-260, *279-294

*Epipsychidion: whole poem

Fragment, Great Spirit

Julian and Maddalo: 174-175

Cancelled Passage of the Ode to Liberty

"One word is too often profaned": St.II.

Prometheus Unbound: *Mrs. Shelley's note; *Act II, Sc.I, 74-106; *Act II, Sc.IV, 118-120; *Act II, Sc.V, 16-71; *Act III, Sc.III, 6-62; Act III Sc.IV, 91-94 (?)and 99-204; Act IV, 321-518.

The Revolt of Islam (advocates free love)

Rosalind and Helen (advocates free love)

The Sensitive Plant: *Conclusion, 114 137

Variation of the Song of the Moon in Prometheus Unbound

The Zucca: St. I, II, III, IV, V

The witch of Atlas (whole poem)

E. Theory that world is a Copy of a World of Ideas

Prometheus Unbound: Act II, Sc.III, 11-16

F. Attitude toward Women and Marriage

1. Ingpen: *81, 83, 85, 91, 99, 97, 98, 106, 117, 119

2. Poems:

Queen Mab: *Dedication to Harriett; *Note V, 189

Prometheus Unbound: Act III, Sc.IV, 153-163

"I can not give what men call love."

Revolt of Islam: *Dedication to Mary; Canto II, St. XXXVII and *XLIII; canto IV, st.XX and *XXI; canto VI, st. *XIX and *XX; canto VIII, st.XV.

G. Simple Life, Community of Possessions

1. Shawcross: p.107 ff.(Essay on Christianity)

2. Shepherd: Vol.I, p.243 (An Address to the Irish People)

Vol.II, p.147 (Assassins)

3. Poems:

The Revolt of Islam: *Canto V, St.XX, 1891-1894

Queen Mab: Notes V: 58

Prometheus Unbound: Notes by Mrs. Shelley

III

Shelley, the Platonist

A. Pre-existence

Hogg: 72, 143, 148

Shepherd: Vol II, P 193

B. Love and Marriage

1. Hogg: P.483-484

2. Ingpen: *425, *431, *466, 158, 175

3. Mrs. Shelley's note to Rosalind and Helen

C. Simplicity of Life and Community of Possessions

1. Garnett: *P.105 (Quotation from the Examiner)

2. Trelawny: *Preface X-XI; p.54-5

3. Ingpen: *108, *213, 70, 69, 85

D. Statesman above Poet

Ingpen: *313, *437

E. Death

*Marshall, Mrs. Julian: The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley; Richard Bentley & Son, London. 1889. P. 367.

Trelawny: *59, 51-2

Note:

Asterisks are used to indicate sources of direct quotations occurring in this thesis.