

The Betrayal of Romantic Utopia

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Dedicated to my wife, Kyungjin Ko, whose love and tireless support led to the completion of this project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- E Blake, William. *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake*. Edited by David V. Erdman. New York: Anchor Books, 1988.
- J *Jerusalem*.
- PU *Prometheus Unbound*
- SPP Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. Edited by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 2002.

SUMMARY

The Betrayal of Romantic Utopia argues that the vulnerability of the Romantic form of utopia originates from the complicity between the vision of unity and the social contradictions it seeks to critique and overcome. On the one hand, I demonstrate the ways in which some apparently positive notions of organic unity betray their own promises of a better world by inherently siding with their opposites. Against the anticipation of unity that also respects and accommodates multiplicities and differences, the politically appropriated organic unity begins to expose its political limits and impossibilities to turn into a more absolute form of unity that defies the dynamic role of the many. The Romantic utopia's act of betrayal strikes not only itself, but also the readers of the text and even the authors who genuinely hope for the coming of the utopia they propose. On the other hand, however, such betrayal leads to a possibly more productive mode of betrayal—the revelation of the political conditions of possibility and impossibility. The Romantic texts that I analyze resist utopian desires and challenge our critical habits of producing teleological meanings of a literary text.

The examples of Romantic utopia include William Blake's post-apocalyptic utopia of regeneration as opposed to the eighteenth-century demonstrative rationalism and self-centered logic of homogeneous unity, Percy Bysshe Shelley's utopia of love that supposedly resists Enlightenment rationalism, Charlotte Smith's cosmopolitanism against the unequal propertied system in Europe, and Lord Byron's individual romantic utopia in contrast to state nationalism. In each case, the text is fraught with symptoms that indicate the proposed utopia in fact imbibes the logic of the ideology it wants to destroy. Due to these signs of complicity, the text becomes the site where the authors grapple with their own optimism. Also, a more skeptical mode of interpretation in the face of utopian imagination is demanded, especially when our utopian dream

SUMMARY (continued)

points to a kind of unified society that is predicated upon our familiar and seemingly ideal notions such as love and cosmopolitanism.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: UTOPIA STRIKES BACK

[Poets] are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations, for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, . . . the words which express what they understand not.

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*

The model of utopia we discover in the works produced in the Romantic period is, simply put, conceptual. Whereas the tradition of utopia—the emblematic Thomas More through various eighteenth-century imaginary political attempts to the modern variants of the science fiction—tends to posit its idealized *telos* either in a specific space and/or time, the Romantics do not heed either to space or to time when it comes to the imagining of utopias. It is true that there are exceptions; Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey’s Pantisocracy located on the eastern shore of America in a small community setting is an obvious example of such exception, and even some authors I investigate in this dissertation, such as Charlotte Smith and Lord Byron, are understood to be having in mind at least some specific space for their utopia to blossom in.¹ The majority of the utopias the Romantics construct, however, essentially have nothing to do with material conditions. Rather, the aesthetic and philosophical idea of organic unity, developed by German Romantics and fully elaborated by Coleridge, provides the conceptual framework from which they experimentally imagine societies or communities which ideally unify different and dissonant individuals in them. In short, the Romantic utopia is a political appropriation of the aesthetics of organic unity.

The Betrayal of Romantic Utopia argues that the vulnerability of this immaterial and rather conceptual form of utopia originates from the complicity between the vision of unity and

the social contradictions it seeks to critique and overcome. On the one hand, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which some apparently positive notions of organic unity, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley's love and Charlotte Smith's cosmopolitan vision of universal benevolence, betray their own promises of a better world by inherently siding with their opposites—rationalist oppression and discriminatory classism, in Shelley and Smith's cases respectively. The Romantic utopia's act of betrayal strikes not only itself, but also the readers of the text and even the authors who genuinely hope for the coming of the utopia they propose. On the other hand, however, such betrayal leads to a possibly more productive mode of betrayal—the revelation of the political conditions of possibility and impossibility. The acts of writing and reading a utopian text tend to participate in the optimistic perspective seemingly made possible by the utopian imagination, but the Romantic texts that I analyze in this dissertation resist utopian desires and challenge our critical habits of producing teleological meanings of a literary text.

While the fact that the Romantic authors are naïve and rather unaware of the problem of complicity in their utopian vision seems to be exactly the phenomena Jerome J. McGann has defined as Romantic Ideology,² my interest lies rather in the ways in which the text betrays its own ideological vision and even its author. As the explicit meaning of the text is often in accordance with the author's intended vision of utopia, I turn to textual symptoms that demand our attention by indicating there is something deeply wrong with where the text is going. It is impossible, however, to separate those moments of textual aberrations from the author; instead, they are the very marks of the author's fierce struggle with his or her self as symptoms are also of their own writing. As I demonstrate in the case of Charlotte Smith in chapter 3, the betrayal performed by the text can lead to the author's self-doubt and further will to refine and renovate one's vision, although it is virtually impossible to break free from the grasp of the existent

ideologies when the author's self is also a part of such ideologies. Perhaps Shelley is vaguely aware of such a literary and poetic process in a poet's consciousness, when the puzzling conclusion of his *Defence of Poetry* admits the crisis of an author's autonomy in the ways that texts work: "[poets] are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations, for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, . . . the words which express what they understand not."³ While Shelley is clearly in the mood of celebrating the inspirational power of poetic imagination, this passage can also be read as a textual symptom, where there is an anxiety not only about the risk of losing control of the text the poet creates, but also about the possibility that "the spirit of the age" represented through the text is none other than what the poet is fervently against in his making of utopia. That the utopian "inspiration" is unapprehended, and that the poet does not "understand" what "the words . . . express" add to the author's anxiety, which in turn promotes the Romantic author to further explore political possibilities, subsequently to create even more symptoms within the text.

I. Organic Unity Without "Multeity"

Although *The Betrayal of Romantic Utopia*'s theme of Romantic utopia is heavily relevant with the idea of organic unity, I do not intend to pursue the formalist line of inquiry that has much to do with the debate on the aesthetic principles in Romanticism. This study is rather concerned with the political repercussions of indulging in the utopian vision of the one and the whole which is based off of the philosophical and aesthetic notion of organic unity. But it is necessary to briefly review Coleridge's theory of organic unity based in symbol and the subsequent debates around it coming from New Criticism and Deconstruction. My aims in doing

this are twofold. First, I want to confine the potentially complex and broad meaning of organic unity to what I refer to in this dissertation, namely the principle of unity that appreciates individual multiplicities as well. Second, I differentiate my line of argument from those coming from deconstruction, although my ultimate resistance to the idea of an organic whole is unquestionably indebted to and inspired by the post-structuralist claims about Romanticism. While the deconstructionists such as Paul de Man refuse the whole Coleridgean regime of symbol in favor of the ever-disruptive mode of allegory, I argue that the mode of symbol is exactly what builds up and breaks down the political potentiality of organic unity by correlating it with the existent principle of totalizing ideology and degrading it as such.

The well-known and much-discussed passage of Coleridge on the symbol and the organic whole appears in *The Statesman's Manual* (1816): “a symbol . . . is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual or of the general in the especial or of the universal in the general. . . . and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative.”⁴ It is important to remark the sense of growth from the specialized “individual” into “the universal,” which culminates in the balanced appreciation of the whole and “a living part” together. Likewise, in *Biographia Literaria* (1815-17), Coleridge’s theory of imagination as the contrary of fancy emphasizes the “living power” under the influence of the eternal and infinite subjectivity (“I AM”). While he clearly recognizes the finiteness of our existence, he believes that the subject’s “vital” process involves the organic procedures of dissolutions and re-creations, all to the purpose of “idealiz[ing] and . . . unify[ing]” its own perceptions.⁵ The simultaneous rendering of attentions both to the whole and the part is later summarized in a succinct axiom of “unity in multeity” that he uses to describe “the most comprehensive formula” of life in his *Theory of Life* (1818). His definition of life as “the

principle of individuation, or the power which unites a given all into a whole that is presupposed by all its parts” shows that the notion of organic unity he conceives in the field of aesthetics and life science is not the unity itself, but the weaving process that combines the divided parts (a part of a work, or a body part) into the whole.⁶

When we transfer this idea of organic unity that accommodates both the whole and the parts to the political context, an ideally democratic model of governance comes to our mind situated at the beginning of the twenty-first century, as the people of diverse opinions and identities come together to establish a democratic community that in turn reconciles the differences among individuals into harmony. However, the Romantic utopia in question does not conceive the relation between the whole and the individuals as such; rather, the utopian models we find in, for example, William Blake’s post-apocalyptic state of regeneration and Lord Byron’s isolated romantic community consisting of only two loving individuals, are surprisingly negligent of the role of the many in the building of an ideal community. In Coleridge’s philosophical system, the organic unity represented through the mode of symbol is in and by itself complete, as the parts are always already in accordance with the whole, and the whole adapts itself in accordance with the ways in which parts change themselves. In the context of the Romantic political narrativity, however, we see less the parts or multiplicities than the image of the one and the whole. Blake’s apocalypse that is supposed to lead to his utopian status is represented in the form of Albion’s self-annihilation, and Shelley’s Prometheus is supposedly the one to renovate the world and lead the revolution, and both Albion and Prometheus are mythologically formulated to represent both the individual one and the whole of humanity. By relying on the figure of one hero or a unified community, the Romantic utopia is exposed to dangers of becoming like the state it tries to overcome. Blake’s new world of regeneration is not

incommensurate with the corrupt world of generation, and Promethean revolution bears his name not because he really does anything specific to overthrow Jupiter, but because those who we could call revolutionary ideologues in the drama label the revolution to be Promethean, reflecting the urge to present one hero that begins and ends the whole historical process.

In this sense, the problem of the utopian politics of organic unity originates from the symbolic mode's inability to configure "unity in multitude" in a political context. New Critics and early Romanticist scholars such as M. H. Abrams were invested in overcoming the sense of crisis that the whole and the multiplicity may not go well with each other, but only on the philosophical and aesthetic planes. New Critics such as Cleanth Brooks term the possible inconsistencies (within a text) as paradox or irony, and recognize them as a part of the organic process the text undergoes in order to reach an organic whole, just as in Brooks's analysis of John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."⁷ The subsequent development of the notion of unified romanticism by Abrams suppresses the role of the parts even more, and hides them under the surface notion of the organic "growth." Borrowing heavily from Hegel, Abrams reorganizes the Romantic idea of an organic unity under the sense of "self," somewhat resonant with Hegel's World Spirit. "Self-moving and self-sustaining system" becomes the slogan of Romanticism,⁸ as Abrams develops his expressive theory that values the poets' creative faculty. What was once a dynamic interaction between the whole and the parts is, under the influence of philosophy and criticism, reduced down to a simplistic formula that the self is constructing and imagining the world. The sort of hesitation as we see at the end of Shelley's *Defence* is rather disregarded in this development of the periodization of Romanticism.

Deconstructionists were reacting against this tide of stipulating Romanticism into a unitary "spirit of the age,"⁹ but they remained in the same playground of philosophy and

aesthetics. Especially, de Man chooses to challenge symbol and elevate allegory to demystify Romanticism's ideological monumentalization of one truthful meaning. Allegory is indeed more congenial to deconstructionists' needs to destabilize the system of meaning, as it has to do with the relation between signs rather than a stable and truthful relation between sign and substance established by symbol. De Man is interested in the continual semiotic substitutions among signs that can constantly defer, delay, and thus unsay the definite relations around the subject, letting the linguistic signs play among themselves in his deconstructive agenda.¹⁰ However, he refuses to move beyond language toward any political consideration, leaving allegory as an alternative mode of linguistic thought rather than as a subversive principle that pinpoints what is gone wrong with symbol and its idea of the whole consisting of parts.

My point is that reading the Romantic utopia demands a bold look into the heart of how the symbol has come to corrupt the organic unity's virtue of embracing particularities and has found comfort in the ideologies it wants to overcome, such as Enlightenment, subjective rationalism, or nationalism. What is embedded in the utopian desire toward a form of unity is exactly the symbolic mode reduced down to the static process of endorsing the movement of the one in organizing the whole. Perhaps, it is inevitable that once the symbol has moved from aesthetics to politics, it has to adapt itself in the face of the already-ideologically-constructed material universe. Therefore, only a decade later after Coleridge's elaboration on his theory of vital principle in symbol and organic unity, Coleridge's own political discourse on the body politics has no regard for the multitude nor for its dynamism with the whole nation. The mass are, to him, an unenlightened mob who are easily swayed by "temporary hallucinations and the influences of party passion," and they are "brutal" and "ignorant," merely appropriated by Jacobins in the French Revolution. Almost reminiscent of Edmund Burke's critique of "swinish

multitude”¹¹ forty years before and of William Wordsworth’s lamentation over “a state of almost savage torpor”¹² some thirty years before, Coleridge’s disgust with the uneducated and insensitive multitude reveals exactly the social condition that renders the Romantic utopia of organic unity impossible. Without the vibrant and organic parts, and only with the drearily homogenous multitude, the symbol’s political work is crippled to the point where it has to rely upon what it despises.

II. From Aesthetic Philosophy to Political History

Although I turn from de Man’s language play between symbol and allegory in critiquing Romanticism’s political appropriation of organic unity, allegory indeed finds much more political potentials in the modern Marxist/dialectical criticism, especially in Fredric Jameson. He takes cue from de Man’s favorable views on allegory and turns it into an interpretive mode that liberates suppressed meanings in the social context: “allegory is here the opening up of the text to multiple meanings, to successive rewritings and overwritings which are generated as so many levels and as so many supplementary interpretations.”¹³ Allegory, in this way, becomes a useful tool for disrupting the narrative fraught with repression: “[Althusser’s expressive causality] will thus prove to be a vast interpretive allegory in which a sequence of historical events or texts and artifacts is rewritten in terms of some deeper, underlying, and more ‘fundamental’ narrative, of a hidden master narrative which is the allegorical key or figural content of the first sequence of empirical materials.”¹⁴ Jameson deems allegory as a crucial step toward the final horizon of interpretation that involves representing History in the form of totality, which, much like Romantic organic unity, has to recognize History as a whole, understanding it not as a linear progress toward a certain point in time, but as the overdetermined record of the painful struggles

between different modes of production. Although my objective in *The Betrayal* is to reveal the historical impossibilities embedded in the Romantic utopian narratives, I am perhaps making use of the “interpretive allegory” while attempting to uncover “deeper, underlying, and ‘more’ fundamental narrative” beneath the textual symptoms. My ambition is not as great as Jameson, however, partly because this project is too localized and limited to reach the point of even daring to imagine the cognitive totality Jameson aspires to so much, and also partly because my aim is to lay bare not so much social contradictions literary narratives are claimed to provide imaginary solutions to, but actually the antinomies where the revolutionary politics, despite itself, turns into reactionary conformism.

The idea that we should find the problem of Romantic utopia from within its central principle of organic unity is far from being original. Even some post-structuralist critics find deconstructive possibilities within organicism itself, reviving and magnifying the sense of crisis and anxiety about the organic process in which fragmentation and incompleteness always nudge at the idea of the whole. Of course, there are indeed angry responses to Abrams’s homogeneous idea of organicism, such as that from Eric Rothstein, who argues that organicism’s “proper place” is “a museum of the decorative arts or a museum of advertising,”¹⁵ and that the evil of organicism exactly lies in our everyday academic practice of educating and learning ideas based upon rigorous periodization that such version of organicism demands.¹⁶ But others, such as Murray Krieger, Tilottama Rajan, and Charles I. Armstrong, seek a different possibility within the unifying principle of organicism itself. Krieger, for example, argues that the closure that organicism seems to historically aspire in its pursuit of unity is an illusion, and pays attention to organicism’s own unworking of the concept of closed system of unity.¹⁷ Rajan presents similar views with various concepts such as “fragment,” “textual abject,”¹⁸ and “asystasy,”¹⁹ that both

accommodate and contest organic principles inherent in Romanticism. Much in the same spirit as Rajan's, Armstrong detects self-contradictions of organicism within its own system, arguing that organicism is a "wandering spectre," which constantly transforms itself and evades idealist desire of establishing the Absolute. For Armstrong, although organicism has lost its original power due to its impossibility of adhering to the Absolute, "the rumor of [organicism's] demise (as the saying goes) are very exaggerated." He claims that organicism is alive and well, with its spectre-like status allowing itself to be attached to various kinds of "large-scale schematics."²⁰

If their works are the products of philosophical ruminations on the state of organicism either in the Romantic context or as the institutional ideology, my chapters are rather case studies on some individual Romantic texts that guide us into the historical, political, and cultural conundrums around their configuration of utopia in terms of organicism. The themes and areas I cover are as diverse as the characters of the authors and their texts I read, but such diversity all the more confirms that the utopian aspiration for unity may be ubiquitous. Most of the works analyzed in this project are written in 1810s and 1820s, the same period when Coleridge began to build up the theory of organic unity, except for Smith's works in chapter 4. I present Blake and Shelley in the next two chapters, as their investments in the idea of the whole—Blake's organic regeneration of the wholeness in the form of City of Golgonooza and Shelley's strong yearning for unity in the form of Love and Life in his prose works—strike the central cord of the ideology of organicism. Also, the ideological stake created through Romanticism's troubling relationship with Enlightenment in their works represents my overarching argument, especially as Enlightenment and its rationalist claims have taken up an ambiguous place in the cultural ideology of the last two centuries, with their positivity seeming congenial even to their opposing values. Smith's cosmopolitan desire and Byron's anti-nationalist utopia based in the mode of

romance are, in this respect, more localized and individualized cases which still do show Romanticism's strong urge toward unity. Their modes of complicity, however, take more complex forms. It is especially so in the case of Charlotte Smith, who sits in between the eighteenth-century class consciousness based on manners and virtue on the one hand, and the new wave of Romantic desire to resolve the social and political contradictions that ruined her life as a whole on the other hand. Her inter-periodical identity urges that she herself become complicit with the old class distinction system in spite of her own cosmopolitan aspiration. Lord Byron's vision of utopia is, on the contrary, very limited in its scope and boundary, as it consists merely of one romantic couple. But this almost escapist utopia is presented as the seed of another nationalist community, by way of romance's always already established relationship with nationalism.

Chapter 2, "Blake's (a)po(ca)lyps(e)," presents a focused reading on the role of the polyp symbolism in Blake's imagination of apocalypse and utopia in *Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Great Albion* (1804-20). The obvious problem of Albion's fallen state is aligned with demonstrative rationalism Blake critiques to be the mode of knowledge that does not appreciate differences among "Minute Particulars," as Albion represents the pre-apocalyptic state of unity as homogeneity. The polyp symbolism prevalent through the work has great affinity to Albion's regime of homogeneous unity, so it is easy to assume that the subsequent apocalypse brought to existence by Albion's self-annihilation may signal the demise of the polyp-esque Albion's body and the opening of a new political possibility of unity that appreciates and accommodates multiplicities. The monstrous figure of polyp, however, proves to be much more flexible and versatile as an ideological concept. Addressing the polyp's ambivalent state of existence as a hybrid tree/rhizome form in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, I suggest that the polyp symbolism

rides with the eighteenth-century fascination with itself to transcend the boundaries of apocalypse and predominate even in the post-apocalyptic world. Thus, while Blake's regenerative utopian vision of Jerusalem's reincarnation in every particular individual may be sincere, it is ultimately unable to accomplish the impossible political objective of harmonizing the whole and the "Minute Particulars."

In chapter 3, "Shelley's Spell of Love and the Curse of Enlightenment," I place love—the undisputed main theme of *Prometheus Unbound* (1818) and one of Shelley's most endeared metaphysical concepts—under scrutiny to make sense of why the narrative trajectory leading from love to revolution does not flow well. While Prometheus's love—possibly its ideal form Shelley intended for the work—is invested with virtues of forgiveness and tolerance, thus resisting Enlightenment ideology of consolidated rational subjectivity, I argue that the actual progress of history into apocalypse is consistent with what is deemed ideal in Enlightenment rationalism, repeating the violent and cursory history sugarcoated as Kantian universal history of endless progress. This linear historical process is made possible exactly by the magical force of love that mesmerizes and enchants literally everyone—every character in the drama, every reader, every critic, and even the poet himself. It is this spell of Enlightenment called love that reduces the utopian visions toward the end of the work down to the self-centered regime of unity that would only heed to the voices of unified "Man" and not "men."

Some of Charlotte Smith's last works—the last one among her long novels, and the very last work of poetry before her death—will be considered, in chapter 4, "Charlotte Smith's Precarious Cosmopolitanism," to look into the process of Smith's own struggle with her cosmopolitan ideals. With the reading of *The Young Philosopher* (1798), I argue that while Smith wants to envision a cosmopolitan society based on an active praxis of universal

benevolence, her idealism is shackled by her own middle-class ideology, when it is revealed that cosmopolitanism ironically demands more stringent distinctions among people. Recognizing this fatal contradiction in her idealism, Smith educates herself on botany more rigorously to find a better version of cosmopolitan society that could be more inclusive of displaced and impoverished people, but this process of education leading to *Beachy Head* (1806) only amplifies the sense of distinction as defined by the difference of cultural habitus, rendering her cosmopolitan ideals rather incomplete.

Chapter 5, “Lord Byron’s Romance and the Logic of Nationalism,” analyzes the ways in which Byron’s works subdue romance both as an affective facet of nationalist sentiment and as the seed of politically genealogical justification of building a nation. In my very limited perusal of *The Two Foscari* (1821), I pay attention to the relatively unacknowledged—albeit eponymous—character, Jacopo Foscari, to uncover Byron’s discontent with essentialist thoughts found in romantic nationalism. Jacopo’s absurdity is, however, not merely one farcical event in Byron’s works. I point out that Byron’s seeming utopia in *The Island* (1823) is in fact based on the mode of romance, which ultimately turns into a saga of a legendary romantic couple that feed the nationalist sentiment of their community, instead of actively resisting the British nationalist and imperial ideology that suppresses the individuals’ desire toward liberty.

My argument may seem to share a kind of skepticism on Romantic utopia with the recent work by Anahid Nersessian, in that we find a moment of compromise in the Romantics’ literary pursuit of utopia depending upon material conditions. While she is interested in the ways in which physically or materially quantitative boundaries define limits on how far such utopia can expand,²¹ however, I am rather interested in the ideological state of betrayal and antinomy created by the symbolic unity. Therefore, if I take the liberty to characterize what Nersessian

modulates between utopian thoughts and material limits rather as a reconciliatory compromise, I intend to push the compromise thus created to the point where the suggested utopia is none other than a deceptive variant of the existent cultural ideology which weighs upon the multitude's shoulders and conscripts them into the logic of totalizing unity. The cases I present in the chapters, to a lesser degree, remind us of one of the two forms of utopias Jacques Rancière equivocally presents—"the mad delusions that lead to totalitarian catastrophe."²² Certainly, the utopias under review in this dissertation are not quite totalitarian as he characterizes they may possibly be, but the texts, in their own way of discrediting their own utopias, mildly chide us into looking back upon our own cognitive habits in imagining utopias, as embodied in, for example, the constantly used and believed maxim from the Beatles, "all you need is love."

Notes

¹ As Fredric Jameson points out, over the course of the genealogical development of utopia, there has been a shift from space to time, from the historical novel to the science fiction to take up a generic example, although the eighteenth-century also saw time-based utopia such as Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'An 2440*. Therefore, it is not surprising that we do not see any sign of time elements in these Romantic examples of tradition-friendly utopias. See Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), 1-2; and Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*, trans. William Hooper (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974).

² Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

³ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 535.

⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Major Works*, ed. H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 661.

⁵ Coleridge, 313.

⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Theory of Life*, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol. 11.1. ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 510. Coleridge emphasizes many words in the passage, such as "all" and "whole," but as it is so frequent, I do not reflect his italicization in this quote.

⁷ Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947), 151-66.

⁸ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971) 172.

⁹ I am using this term in the way Abrams use it, not the ways Shelley or William Hazlitt do. See M. H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), 91-119. I wouldn't be doing justice to Abrams if I say he is not recognizing any

diversity among Romantic writers, as he admits that “Romanticism is not one thing” (93). The overall premise of “the spirit of the age,” however, is based on the emphasis on the shared qualities that make us call Romanticism as Romanticism.

¹⁰ Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *Blind and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 187-228.

¹¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Issac Kramnick (New York: Penguin, 1999), 449.

¹² William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and Alun R. Jones (London: Routledge, 2005), 294.

¹³ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 29-30.

¹⁴ Jameson, 28.

¹⁵ Eric Rothstein, “‘Organicism,’ Rupturalism, and Ism-ism,” *Modern Philology* 85 (1988): 609.

¹⁶ Rothstein, 608-09.

¹⁷ Murray Krieger, *A Reopening of Closure: Organicism Against Itself* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

¹⁸ Tilottama Rajan, “Organicism,” *English Studies in Canada* 30, no. 4 (2004): 48. She here distinguishes New Critics’ version of organicism from that of hers, pointing out that these notions “are unacceptable according to the criteria of the New Criticism.” The notion of “fragment” is borrowed from Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy’s seminal work, *The Literary Absolute*, where “fragment” is said to be the most absolute and complete form of organic unity for German Romantics, since fragment is in the status of constant growth. See their *Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). “Textual abject” is, by definition, “a form in which the speaker becomes submerged in some trauma or affect from which she will not separate so as to construct an objective correlative for it in what Lacan calls the Symbolic order,” and results in Wordsworth’s dejection or Coleridge’s self-rejection that will continuously redo its rejection. See Tilottama Rajan, “Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Textual Abject,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 95, no. 3 (1996): 801, 818.

¹⁹ For this concept, see Tilottama Rajan, “In the Wake of Cultural Studies: Globalization, Theory and the University,” *Diacritics* 31 (2001): 67-88. Briefly defined, “asystasy” means “an organization of knowledge whose logic consists in self-disruption,” and rejects any kind of systematic thought. She borrows this idea from Schelling and Hegel, who were using this concept to describe the diversity of the materials for philosophy, that necessarily leads to severe conflict between faculties (80). She further points out that this concept is even more radical than Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s, in that it even rejects the idea of systematic thoughts that they believed to be in German Romanticism.

²⁰ Charles I. Armstrong, *Romantic Organicism: From Idealist Origins to Ambivalent Afterlife* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) 184-86.

²¹ Anahid Nersessian, *Utopia, Limited: Romanticism and Adjustment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 16.

²² Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2004), 40.

CHAPTER 2

BLAKE'S (A)PO(CA)LYPS(E)

What is particularly significant . . . is the fact that the polyp became involved in speculations on matters ranging from the nature of the soul to the teleology of organic forms.

– Aram Vartanian, “Trembley’s Polyp, La Mettrie, and Eighteenth-Century French Materialism”

a mighty Polypus growing / From Albion over the whole Earth: such is my awful Vision.

– William Blake, *Jerusalem* (J 15:4-5, E159)¹

Reading William Blake’s *Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Great Albion* (1804-20) is certainly not good for (both physical and mental) health, but the central line of its narrative is surprisingly simple. Albion, representing as various entities as one individual, England, or the whole humanity, goes corrupt and abandons his own emanation, Jerusalem. While his also corrupt sons such as Hand and Hyle dominate the earth, Jerusalem hides from the view, and meanwhile Los builds the Furnaces of affliction with his own oppressed spectre in anticipation of the coming of the City of Golgonooza, the ideal place in Blake’s mythological system. Albion is moved by Jesus Christ’s offering of kindness and friendship, and annihilates himself by throwing his body into the Furnaces of affliction. Contrary to his expectation, by virtue of his sacrifice for his friend, the narrowed and closed human sensations are reopened, and Jerusalem is restored in every individual.

The awful existence of the “mighty Polypus” in the epic has been understandably regarded as a monster of generation—a term Blake used usually to denote a negative form of material, purposeless reproduction that has nothing to do with the spiritual renewal achieved by regeneration. Paul Miner, the first critic ever to point out the pervasiveness of Blake’s polyp symbolism in his oeuvre, specifies it as “Blake’s most terrifying symbolic creation”²; to be more

specific, “a mass of growing, endless, unpurposeful life” and “a veiny death in the generative world.”³ This understanding of the polyp is faithful to Blake’s own textual representation of the creature. E. J. Rose quotes Blake’s own words, “the Great Polypus of Generation covered the Earth” (*J* 67:34, E220), to confirm Miner’s view, regarding the polyp as a symbol that combines the sexual organization (womb) and death (tomb).⁴ Dennis Welch demonstrates a similar line of thought about the polyp; for him, it represents the vegetative state of Albion which gets to “encompass mankind and the fallen world.”⁵ He goes on to say the polyp is the “most gruesome vegetative image” and “a demonic parody of the outline and definiteness of circumference,”⁶ which corresponds to “John Locke’s quantitative understanding of eternity, infinity, and substance.”⁷

The early Blake criticism unanimously hostile to the polyp’s generative monstrosity, however, fails to account for the striking similarity between the two images laid out in figure 2.1. Among the 100 plates equally divided into four chapters, 25 plates in each, plate 76 is located at the very beginning of the final chapter of *Jerusalem*, but what it depicts is the text’s apocalyptic moment which appears later in the same chapter. In this picture, Albion is about to perform self-annihilation by imitating the Savior on the verge of sacrificing himself for mankind, thus reaching a pivotal awakening that symbolizes the revolutionary renewal of humanity. Christ seems crucified in a conventionally Christian way, shedding light from behind to every direction, and Albion is spreading his arms while looking up to the unconscious Savior. Those figures in this fundamentally redemptive moment, however, bear some enigmatic resemblance to a creature when we compare this plate side by side with Henry Baker’s cover page of *An Attempt Towards a Natural History of Polype* (1743)—the very first British account of this newly-discovered life form. The polyp’s tentacles are

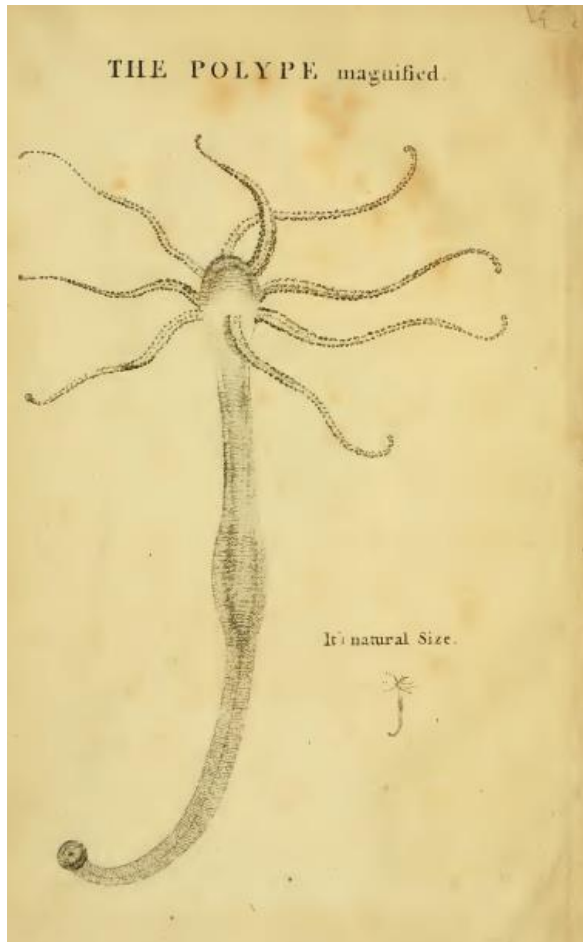


Figure 2.1. Left: The Cover Illustration of Henry Baker, *An Attempt Towards a Natural History of Polype* (1743), Right: William Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 76, Copy E. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Arts

spread just as Christ's arms and aureole are, and the angle of its tail is not much different from that of Albion's left leg.

I am, however, not pointing out this similarity between the figure of the polyp and the redemptive divine and human forms in *Jerusalem* in order to call for an attention to the possible intertextuality that may be analyzed between Baker and Blake, or, in a broader context, between natural history and Romantic poetry. Not only is it impossible to find any evidence that Blake was interested in the contemporary discourses on the polyp, including Baker's contribution to them, but his consistent use of the archaic form of "polypus" instead



of the more contemporary “polyp” or “polype” seems to make such an intertextual correlation unjustifiable. Even without the striking resemblances I have pointed out in figure 2.1, however, *Jerusalem* already establishes the correlation between the polyp and the human bodies throughout the text. In figure 2.2, I present three exemplary plates that feature human bodies in the form or function of the polyp. In plate 35, it is explained that there are “Two Limits, Satan and Adam, / In Albions bosom: for in every Human bosom those Limits stand” (*J* 35:1-2, E177), and at the bottom of the plate is Albion, whose bosom is open to generate another human form—either Satan or Adam—, and this grotesque image seems to replicate one of the ways in which the polyp reproduces itself—asexual reproduction. Above them, in the upper-half of the plate, there is a mysterious figure floating in the air, imitating the polyp’s form by spreading the arms just as Albion and Jesus in plate 76. Plate 50 also features multiple figures of “Giants” and “Spectres” that “groan[], living on Death” (*J* 50:1-5, E199), and those generative forms represent a chain of reproductions, again in accordance with the polyp’s endless survival of vivisections to reproduce a whole entity with every divided part. The corporeal monstrosity transferred from the polyp to the human body reprises itself as spiritual monstrosity in plate 26, as Hand, the eldest son of Albion, takes the form of the polyp and casts a menacing look toward Jerusalem, whose face expresses an extreme degree of horror, showing she does not want to come any closer to him. Hand is, in plate 19, described to have devoured all of Albion’s sons and to be shooting out “a mighty Polypus” (*J* 18:40, E163) from his bosom.

Due to its peculiar way of reproducing itself, the polyp inspired many eighteenth-century natural historians and philosophers to consider the meaning of a completely unified society, as exemplified in Denis Diderot’s dreamy imagination of “human polyps.” When

Blake makes use of the polyp symbolism, he does it to represent Albion's corrupted way of enforcing a unity to the whole world. With the moment of apocalypse, Blake wants to achieve a different kind of unity that accommodates and appreciates multiplicities within itself. But as the majority of the text depends upon the imagery of the polyp, which provides a model of unity merely as homogeneity, the apocalyptic moment cannot escape its overarching presence, failing to reach an ideal state where the whole does not suppress the particularities.

I. Fantastic or Horrifying?: The Polyp's Ambivalence

In his book *The Coral Reef Era* (2015), James Bowen details the history of the development of scientific studies on microscopic life forms.⁸ As he explains, even before the discovery of the polyp in 1741, the seventeenth century already saw a group of researchers, such as Robert Hooke, Antony van Leeuwenhoek, and Marsilius, who found that some of the life forms they observed through the microscope were hard to categorize either into a plant or into an animal. Those life forms, called zoophytes,⁹ were the source of confusion and intrigue across Europe; however, they somehow attributed the complexity in their findings to the "Divine Design" beyond the mortals' understanding. Abraham Trembley's discovery of the polyp is an event in which their status as an animal has been more or less confirmed, and accordingly garnered much more interest from the public, although it still remained within the category of the zoophyte due to the resistance from the eighteenth-century contemporaries such as Voltaire.

What was truly jarring about the polyp, however, was not so much its classification problem as its way of reproduction. Its predominantly asexual reproduction was certainly a

factor that further problematized whether it should still be categorized as an animal, but the biggest wonder underlying such way of reproduction was that the polyp can survive vivisection and division of the body, as well as grow each divided part into a whole organism. The main body of experimental work done by early pioneers such as Trembley and Baker was exactly this practice of dividing the polyp in different directions and situations, and the embarrassment this caused to the communities ranging from life science to philosophy is well-demonstrated in Julien Offray de La Mettrie's work. In his book *Machine Man* (1748), La Mettrie provides the results of ten experiments of separating diverse animals' heads from their bodies, to prove his materialist claim that the soul (as represented through brain/head/heart in the anatomical sense) has no claim upon the life mechanism of the body. The last of this list is none other than the polyp; while other cases focus on the animals showing residual signs of life after losing their heads, the polyp presents an anomalous outcome that seriously contests the very assumptions his contemporary naturalists had about life: "Polyps do more than move after being cut up: within a week each piece generates a new animal. I am sorry for the way this affects the naturalists' theory of reproduction; or rather I am pleased, because this discovery teaches us never to draw general conclusions, even from all the most decisive experiments ever known."¹⁰ While La Mettrie is "pleased" to have triumphed against anti-materialists who firmly believed the soul is inseparable from the body, both in animals and in men, accompanying his elation is a sense of fear, as "the most decisive experiments" he did generated the most indecisive kind of result when it comes to the polyp. Regardless of his opinion that the soul has nothing to do with the bodily life, the polyp's (almost vegetative) multiplication of itself leaves him where there is no possible explication.

In other words, the sense of wonder the polyp brought to the various establishments consists of two opposing sensations of consternation and excitement. Its existence was embarrassing in destroying the conventional notions around reproduction and life, but it was at the same time fascinating, especially in the sense that its multiplication provides an opportunity to imagine a version of idealized human communities, where even though human bodies are divided from each other, their souls could be seamlessly united. An example of this kind of political imagination is found in Denis Diderot's *D'Alembert's Dream* (1769), where he proposes a figment of imagination of "human polyps" through D'Alembert's conversation during his sleep:

Human polyps in Jupiter or Saturn! . . . Man splitting up into myriads of men the size of atoms which could be kept between sheets of paper like insect-eggs, which spin their own cocoons, stay for some time in the chrysalis stage, then cut through their cocoons and emerge like butterflies, in fact a ready-made human society, a whole province populated by the fragments of one individual . . . All things considered, however, I prefer our present method of renewing the population.¹¹

Diderot's human polyps reproduce themselves not as the actual polyps do but rather as insects do ("insect-eggs," "cocoons," "chrysalis"), and it may be that his imprecise account of their reproduction is an effort to mitigate the shock that could possibly accompany when a human body is imagined through the body of a polyp. Despite such diversion from the scientific findings, however, Diderot's purpose here is to introduce the symbol of polyp into political thoughts that concern human communities. "A ready-made human society," where one individual's mind is spread everywhere in each body of the human polyps, is presented as an idealized human organization. It is ideal precisely because there is no need of organizing; by

reimagining the human bodies as polyps, Diderot depicts a social status of complete unity in which social conflicts or differences are always already impossible.

This imagined ideal society, however, remains in the realm of pure imagination and dream. Diderot may have succeeded in masking the monstrosity of the polyps' asexual reproduction by substituting the insects' for it to elevate the mood of celebration, but its unity (an element in the utopian vision) is exactly the most prominent residue of the polyp's monstrous reproduction. Furthermore, when the notion of unity is translated into totality or totalitarianism (naturally when polyps are contextualized into human entities), the initial utopian vision loses its luster.¹² Hence, the stark need to imprison that vision within D'Alembert's dream: "All things considered, however, I prefer our present method of renewing the population." Later in the work, Diderot denigrates his vision of human polyps through the voices of the other two characters, Bordeu and Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, who regard D'Alembert's possibly interesting babblings as "sheer raving" in his delusory state. Subsequently, after he wakes up, D'Alembert quickly transfers his dreamy imagination of the "sentient being on Saturn" onto a more familiar eighteenth-century version of an organic unity—namely, the Great Chain of Being.¹³

Diderot's combination of the human and the polyp falls short of a concrete political idea, as any fantastic thoughts about the polyp are strictly relegated into dreamy imagination and the rest of the work is governed by the fear of this creature and what it symbolizes. The way Blake's text uses the polyp is, on the other hand, more straightforward in the sense that it is relentlessly a horrifying monster. Regardless of Blake's intention to define the polyp as such a monster, however, the symbol of polyp already carries with it the contemporary discourse on it, and its peculiar features that Diderot takes advantage of in imagining an ideal

unified society are still there, ready to complicate Blake's system of meaning and thus to steer the interpretation of the later apocalypse into an unexpected direction. But before we read into the polyp's bizarre character, it is necessary to establish the seemingly varying political positions laid out in the text. As it is found in the next section, those positions are in essence almost identical in the sense that they all are participants in the movement toward unity. After some elaborations on the conflict between those positions as taken by Albion and Jesus, I return to the polyp and consider the political meaning of its symbolism.

II. The Ideology of Unity

Due to the severe opposition between Albion and Jesus in the work, it is easy to assume that *Jerusalem* may be understood to be dialectical in its narrative structure. Jesus the Savior, Albion, and Los seem to represent various political registers such as the one, the many, and the whole, respectively. The dialectical sublation, then, would be completed by Los, who would synthesize Jesus's system of "the one" and Albion's "many" to produce the idea of the whole that appreciates "Minute Particulars" (*J* 91:20-21, E251). The problem is that while Albion does represent "the many," it is far from being "Minute Particulars" that give vitality to Los's idea of the whole. Just as the divided and generated polyps, Albion represents a unity that is divided, each divided element being absolutely identical to each other. In this sense, *Jerusalem* is a work predominated by the ideology of unity, and the struggle between Jesus and Albion is merely a battle between two different ideas of unity—Jesus's seemingly egalitarian but deeply hierarchical idea of unity and Albion's unity consisting of separate but identical clones.

The opposition between Jesus's idea of "the one" and Albion's idea of "the many" is established at the beginning of the text, as their opinions are fiercely juxtaposed. Jesus says:

I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine:

Fibres of love from man to man thro Albions pleasant land.

.....

I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;

Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me:

Lo! we are One; forgiving all Evil; Not seeking recompense!

Ye are my members O ye sleepers of Beulah, land of shades! (J 4:7-21, E146)

The Savior's claim of unity is strongly based on an essentially egalitarian gesture of stepping from the superior status of divinity down to the level of man, Christ himself becoming "a brother and friend." His main statement, "we are One," is an emphasis of complete identification between Jesus and man (or Albion), which is a rather mathematical outcome of the mutual inclusions ("I am in you and you in me," which in turn comes to mean "I am you"). The last line of this speech, however, contradicts his previous efforts to be on the same level as man, as men are denominated as his "members," some bodily organs that ultimately constitute Christ's whole body. Underlying his idealist statement of unity and equality, in this sense, is the horror of subjugation and totalization, wherein the very idea of unity acts as the ideological constraints for the sake of the maintenance of "the One."

Albion immediately reacts against Jesus's proposition, presenting an opposite argument:

But the perturbed Man[Albion] away turns down the valleys dark;

[Saying. We are not One: we are Many, thou most simulative]

Phantom of the over heated brain! shadow of immortality!

Seeking to keep my soul a victim to thy Love! which binds
 Man the enemy of man into deceitful friendships:
 Jerusalem is not! her daughters are indefinite:
 By demonstration, man alone can live, and not by faith.
 My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself!
 The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds Plinlimmon & Snowdon
 Are mine. here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtue!
 Humanity shall be no more: but war & pryncedom & victory!

(J 4:22-32, E146-47, bracket and italicization in line 23 not mine)

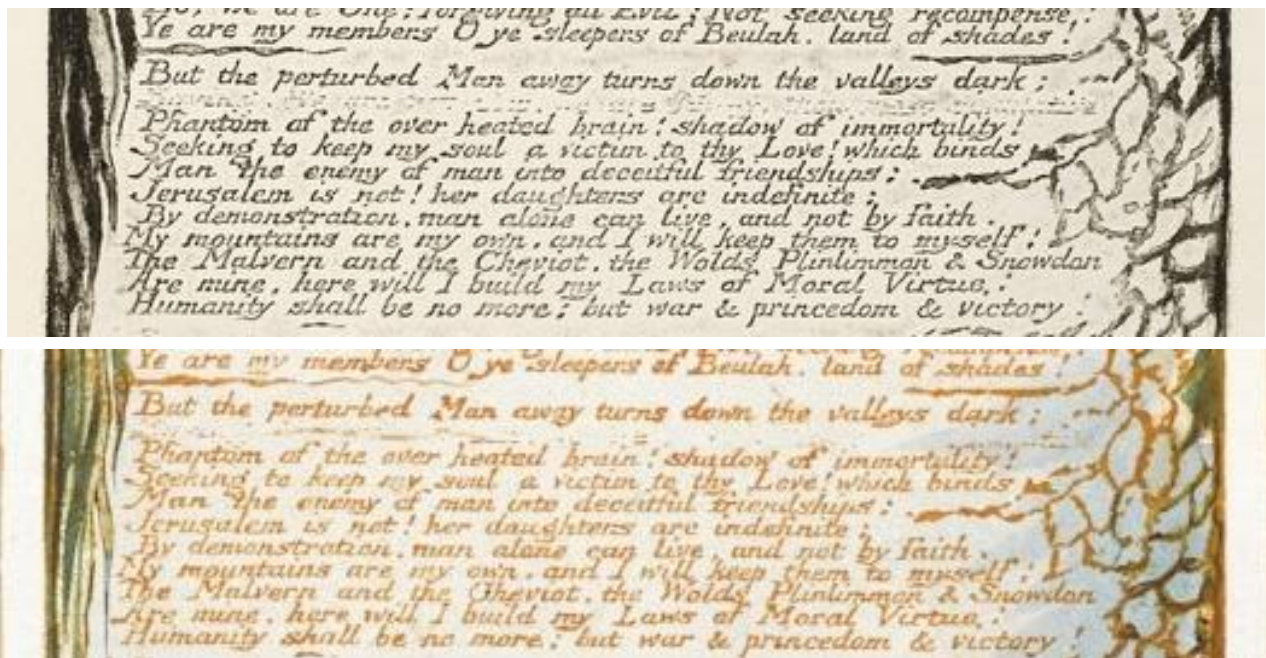


Figure 2.3. Top: Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 4, Copy F. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Arts, Bottom: Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 4, Copy E. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Arts

Some of the terms Albion uses here clearly indicate that he is in what Blake defines as a fallen state, especially “demonstration” and “Laws of Moral Virtue.” Demonstration denotes the logical approach to truth based in rationalism heralded by Locke and Newton (J 15:14-29, E159), and the “Moral Virtue” is later symbolized by “a deadly Tree” of Tyburn (J 28:14-15, E174).

Thus, it is not surprising that this speech culminates in the celebration of “war & pryncedom & victory,” and Albion is also shown to be greedy as he constantly claims his rights to possession on many things.

But the perfect juxtaposition between Jesus and Albion is found rather in Albion’s italicized and square-bracketed line, where Albion refutes Jesus’s claim of unity in the simplest yet impressive way: “We are not One: we are Many, thou most simulative.” Plate 4 is a kind of palimpsest, as Blake erases this line with white paint while it ostensibly survives in the original copper plate (fig. 2.3). The poet possibly had to erase it as the word “many” may be misunderstood to mean multiplicity, which is incompatible with Albion’s own self-centered penchant for pride and destruction. As this claim of multiplicity cannot be contained in Albion’s corrupt voice, it is later developed into the idea of “Minute Particulars” and is represented by Albion’s emanation, Jerusalem:

In Great Eternity, every particular Form gives forth or Emanates

Its own peculiar Light, & the Form is the Divine Vision

And the Light is his Garment This is Jerusalem in every Man

A Tent & Tabernacle of Mutual Forgiveness Male & Female Clothings.

And Jerusalem is called Liberty among the Children of Albion (*J* 54:1-5, E203)

Jerusalem remains in the realm of the ideal, representing each and every man’s emanation with “Its own peculiar Light,” reserving the beauty of Minute Particulars. Albion’s fall from Eternity, in contrast, is depicted through the reign of “his own Spectre,” “the Reasoning Power in every Man” (*J* 54:7, E203). But throughout *Jerusalem*, Jerusalem herself meets the same fate as the erased line, when she remains essentially an outcast, disgraced from her own counterpart Albion and subsequently hidden from view.

As a result, the presence of “Minute Particulars” remains minimal and inconspicuous throughout the epic. In the absence of “Minute Particulars,” which are rendered as unclear and abstract as Jerusalem’s presence, all Los can do is take sides. His choice is, of course, Jesus Christ as Albion inexorably represents all the negative qualities that constitute the current fallen state of the world. Therefore, while Los seems to stress the importance of appreciating the multiplicities in order to recognize the whole, what he critiques is only Albion’s mode of material generation, so his apparent synthetic vision is not much different from Jesus’s vision of union after all:

I have tried to make friends by corporeal gifts but have only
Made enemies: I never made friends but by spiritual gifts;
By severe contentions of friendship & the burning fire of thought.
He who would see the Divinity must see him in his Children
One first, in friendship & love; then a Divine Family, & in the midst
Jesus will appear; so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole
Must see it in its Minute Particulars;
You accumulate Particulars, & murder by analyzing, that you
May take the aggregate; & you call the aggregate Moral Law:
And you call that Swelld & bloated Form; a Minute Particular.
But General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every
Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus. (*J* 91:15-30, E251)

In this speech to his own fallen spectre, Los consistently critiques Albion’s mode of material generation, arguing the superiority of the “spiritual” over the “corporeal,” and condemning the rational understanding of Minute Particulars as an aggregate in the general form of Moral Law.

In his celebration of particularity, however, Los in fact endorses Jesus's views on unity. He claims that "Divinity" is better recognized on the individual level of "Children" and "Family," and the ultimate claim that "he who wishes to see . . . a perfect Whole / Must see it in its Minute Particulars" is based on exactly the same rhetorical structure. The problem is that there is no way we can guarantee the particularity of those "Children" and "Family," when they are already labeled to be possessed by the "Divinity" itself. Just as Jesus has claimed that Albion (and thus the whole humanity) should be his members, they are bound in the genealogical chain in the divine hierarchy, in which the lowest order of "Children" is first presented, then "Divine Family," then ultimately Jesus himself at the highest, all-governing position. The constraint inherent in this divine system (established by Jesus himself at the beginning of the work) is confirmed toward the end of the passage, where "every / Particular" is defined to be "a Man," which proves to be coterminous with "a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus." The relation between the whole and the particulars, then, can be inferred from that between "Divine Jesus" and its "Member," in that Minute Particulars praised to be the organic components of the whole may not be especially particular themselves. In this sense, Los's overarching proposition that "a perfect Whole" is recognized in its "Minute Particulars" can be re-interpreted; by simply looking at the particular elements, we can make sense of what the whole looks like, as the particular is already conditioned by the whole and features the essence of the whole at the same time.

When Jesus pushes his ideology of unity to its limits and Los endorses it without the system that may appreciate the differences among particularities, the model of unity that excludes multiplicities comes close to the symbolic dynamism of the polyp. The text leans toward the ideology of unity so much, not because Blake would want to neglect the value of Minute Particulars, but because the organic whole in which such particular elements live in

harmony and peace is in effect almost impossible. The asexual reproduction of the polyp may be a temporary, imperfect, but wonderful breakthrough in that concern. Each of the divided segments of the polyp becomes a whole entity, seemingly securing its own individuality. But this imaginary solution comes at the expense of the eradication of differences per se. The dream of this complete organic unity is exactly what was fascinating to Diderot in his imagination of the human polyps' society, but this kind of organicism fails to be organic as there is no dynamism between the whole and the parts, let alone among the parts. The text of *Jerusalem* also lives off of the same kind of fantastic utopian aspirations based in the almost obsessively compulsive idea of unity.¹⁴

III. Polyp as Tree/Rhizome

While defining *Jerusalem* as a site where two different versions of unity compete with each other, I find that the figure of polyp somehow represents both modes, if we are given Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical concepts of tree and rhizome. The text of *Jerusalem* seems to confirm that Albion, in his strictly tree-like imagery, embodies the tree aspect of polyp, almost constricting the polyp as what operates within the arborescent structure that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari critique. In this section, not only do I argue that the polyp is versatile enough to represent both tree and rhizome, but I further contend that Jesus ultimately represents the polyp's tree-like characteristics, while Albion's way of spreading himself represents rhizomatic free-floating rearrangement of the components. This is why the polyp has no problem with seeping into the apocalypse that is in accordance with Jesus's agenda of unity; the repetitive correlations between trees and the polyp throughout the text (mainly in connection with Albion) begins to make sense for Jesus's

case, as his way of organizing the whole is exactly hierarchical, genealogical, and organ-ic (as opposed to the rhizome's body without organs).

Even though the polyp's extraordinary features in its reproduction and astounding survival from dissection inspire an implicit optimism in the political context, it remains steadfast that Blake embeds the symbol of polyp exclusively with negative connotations. In *Jerusalem* alone, the "mighty Polypus" is the medium through which the fallen Albion spreads his own body onto the whole Earth (*J* 15:4-5, E159); "Polypus of Death" (*J* 49:24, E198) and "the Great Polypus of Generation" (*J* 67:34, E220) are the representations of the corrupted human form whose sensory perceptions have been narrowed.

As the polyp is correlated with Albion or his son Hand's body as "Polypus of Death" (*J* 49:24, E198) or "the Great Polypus of Generation" (*J* 67:34, E220), it is also unmistakably likened to a tree imagery. At the beginning of chapter 2, Albion shows confidence in his belief in "demonstrative truth" (*J* 28:11, E174), and after "plant[ing] [his] seat" near "Tyburns brook," he shoots "A deadly Tree" named "Moral Virtue" (*J* 28:12-15, E174). The metonymic figure of Tyburn (and its tree from which convicts used to be hung), representing the legal oppression, creates a coherent symbolic network among trees, corrupt human forms, Tyburn, and polyps, all of which are in the mode of generation that endorses demonstrative rationalism and the moral law. Later in the work, this "Albions Tree" turns out to be just another name of "A mighty Polypus," a shriveled human form with minimized perceptions (*J* 66:46-48, E219). Nerves and fibers are shot from Albion's body as if they were roots and stems, and what "Polypus" extends is "Roots of Reasoning Doubt Despair & Death" (*J* 69:3, E223). Also, in the *Book of Los*, the correlation between bodily organs and roots extends to "Polypus," when Los's lungs are likened to "white Polypus" (4:57, E93) and

his falling organs are described as “roots / Shooting out from the seed” (4:64-65, E93).

Human’s “finite inflexible organs” grow as “Branchy forms” (4:44, E92), confirming the idea that trees and roots are imagery that represents the static and opaque state of human bodies and thoughts.

Blake consistently labels a tree imagery with negativity throughout his oeuvre. In *Songs of Experience*, several poems such as “The Garden of Love,” “A Poison Tree,” and “The Human Abstract” present trees as symbols necessarily connected to the ideas of deception and oppression. In “The Human Abstract,” more specifically, the tree of deception is connected to a human organ, when it is hidden with mystery only to “grow[] . . . in the Human Brain” (24, E27). His illuminated books are no exceptions, as I have showcased an example from the *Book of Los*. Another example is found in the *First Book of Urizen*, where the process of creating the first female in “the dark visions of Los” is depicted in terms of growing a tree: “The globe of life blood trembled / Branching out into roots; / Fib’rous, writhing upon the winds; / Fibres of blood, milk and tears” (18:1-4, E78). *The Book of Ahania* is also entirely dominated by this tree metaphor, when Urizen shoots out “the pained root / Of Mystery, under his heel” (3:61-62, E86) while at the same time writing “his book of iron” (3:64, E86). The tree formed out of Urizen’s body of law and reason spreads into “many a tree” (3:65-67), subsequently to become “An endless labyrinth of woe” (4:4, E87). This vegetative proliferation of Urizen’s body is translated into that of Albion’s body, and those exact phrases Blake uses for Urizen are also transplanted into *Jerusalem* (*J* 28:19, E174).

Despite Blake’s rigorous systematic establishment of polyp as a generative monster, however, the relation between the polyp and the tree is rather arbitrary. It may be argued

that Blake is attentive to the fact that the polyp as an animal also has been understood to be possessing vegetative qualities, but when generative mode has much to do with the way of reproduction, the polyp has its own unique feature incomparable to plants or trees. There is something in the polyp that evades a simple static relation to trees, and I argue that it can be elucidated as what Deleuze and Guattari call a rhizome. This does not mean, however, that the polyp may embody the redemptive and subversive qualities of rhizome that they pit against the tree. Rather, it is exactly the mode in which the demonstrative and rationalistic Albion operates with his body. What Deleuze and Guattari call a rhizome, Blake calls a tree.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari presents the notion of rhizome as a dialectical negation of the tree/root structure. Their critique of “root-foundation” is aimed at the Western tradition of philosophy, whose structure is compared to the arborescent figure of system and hierarchy:

It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnosiology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy . . . : the root-foundation, Grund, racine, fondement. The West has a special relation to the forest, and deforestation; the fields carved from the forest are populated with seed plants produced by cultivation based on species lineages of the arborescent type; animal raising, carried out on fallow fields, selects lineages forming an entire animal arborescence.¹⁵

Deleuze and Guattari see the Western progress as an act of (sup)planting nature with a specially genealogical set of species (both plant and animal), thus containing the objects within various cognitive tools of studies that have the mechanism of selection, filtering only what conforms to the lineages and genealogies human consciousness wants to generate. Their diagnosis of the

West is, as a result, quite similar to Blake's critique of the generative human form: "Here in the West, the tree has implanted itself in our bodies, rigidifying and stratifying even the sexes."¹⁶ Likewise, Blake views demonstrative truth and rational Enlightenment not merely as problems specific to his contemporaries, but as the fundamental problems that have been persistent since Greek philosophical tradition down to natural religion and natural philosophy (*J* 52, E200-01). Coincidentally or not, Blake's poetic approach to the tree symbolism has a certain resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical approach to the structural problem the tree represents.

Their source of discontent in the arborescent structure of the West is precisely that it is organized for a certain purpose. Thus, their endorsement of the opposite kind of structure, rhizome, hinges on its inorganic quality, and when we read their account of the inorganic life, it becomes clear that the polyp is rather closer to a rhizome than to a tree:

Heads (even a human being's when it is not a face) unravel and coil into ribbons in a continuous process; mouths curl in spirals. Hair, clothes . . . This streaming, spiraling, zigzagging, snaking, feverish line of variation liberates a power of life that human beings had rectified and organisms had confined, and which matter now expresses as the trait, flow, or impulse traversing it. If everything is alive, it is not because everything is organic or organized but, on the contrary, because the organism is a diversion of life. In short, the life in question is inorganic, germinal, and intensive, a powerful life without organs, a Body that is all the more alive for having no organs, everything that passes between organisms.¹⁷

There is a sense of unbounded freedom in the way this body without organs operates, and the polyp shares exactly the same quality with it. Though it may be said that the polyp is not without organs, tentacles being called hands, and the main body the stomach, its magical growth from a

part to the whole connotes that those organs are merely there to function, not to be subordinated to a center of an arborescent structure. In its almost “germinal” form of life, the polyp has no genealogical hierarchy between its organs, and there is an astonishingly lenient interchangeability between its whole body and its parts. If “organisms” are what are defined into species in the Western “tree” system of biology, the polyp has refused such taxonomic categorization ever since its first discovery. The polyp was fascinating to some exactly because it has a tendency to evade the established system that aims to incorporate the natural objects into itself. It can be said, then, that the polyp is one of real-life embodiments of Deleuze and Guattari’s “body without organs,” which in turn is correlative to the way a “rhizome” works as opposed to a “tree.” In this respect, Deleuze and Guattari’s delight in a rhizomatic structure is not much different from the natural historians’ amazement when they experimented on the polyp, nor from Diderot’s momentary indulgence in the human polyp.¹⁸

The polyp’s potentially emancipatory figure of the rhizomatic body, however, is never transferred into an emancipatory politics about human conditions. The polyp’s rhizomatic quality contributes not so much to a subversive rearrangement of Albion’s tree structure, as to its free-floating expansion into the whole world. While the demonstrative rationalism Albion spreads out to the world may be a tree-like content, his almost contagious, disease-like way of promulgation is attributed to the “power of life” the polyp symbolizes with its “germinal” and “inorganic” body. Blake constantly calls Albion’s tree-like body “a mighty Polypus,” not necessarily because polyps are like trees, but because the way it reproduces itself is too prolific (thus too monstrous) for an organized entity like trees, needing an added vehicle to represent such productivity.

IV. (A)po(ca)lyps(e): the Uncomfortable Triumph of Unity

What, then, can we make out of the apocalypse toward the end of *Jerusalem*, when we have the polyp as the ever-disruptive and even destructive interpretive tool ready to bring down the utopian establishment the complicated epic so carefully has built? If I pay attention only to the polyp's disruptive quality, I may be in line with the critical trend moving from the utopian interpretation of the apocalypse into skeptical readings of this crux of the text. Since around 1990, critics have variously reacted against the early Blake scholars' presupposition that the poet's works are replete with transcendence and unity realized through the moment of apocalypse.¹⁹ Steven Goldsmith's historicist reading of the work, for instance, devalues the apocalypse as an ahistorical and apolitical source of millenarianism that ultimately suppresses social conflicts.²⁰ Laura Quinney, while emphasizing that Albion's self-sacrifice is of communal nature in the sense that he throws his body to the furnaces for the other, has to conclude that Albion's act should be understood as willed alienation,²¹ and that "in *Jerusalem*, the stubborn Selfhood remains; the potential for self-trickery, and the will to solitude."²² Karen Swann touches upon the complex issue of how the individual bodies open up into the social body, and argues that the "reconfigured social body" enabled by Jerusalem is only "schooled in the ways of impossible friendship,"²³ frequently under the danger of reverting back to closure and "absolute isolat[ion],"²⁴ as opposed to the openness and communication that are supposed to constitute the communal utopia. A more politicized and subversive reading is found in Julia M. Wright's intriguing approach that intersects the medical theory of vaccination with the political discourses of nationalism and imperialism. She argues that the vital/viral workings of the text erase differences between different social groups, thus creating vaccination in the name of "harmony," but this is only achieved through Blake's own framing of "his own political solution in terms that

are similar to those of the systems that he is resisting.”²⁵ Thus, Wright observes that propagation characterizes such viral infection that creates both “destructive forms of social hybridity” and “ideological vaccination as a means of establishing the proper social order,”²⁶ at the center of which presides the deathly “Polypus.”

For some of these scholars, the issue of alienation is problematic, since one of the major elements of Albion’s corruption is generally understood to be his separation from his own emanation (Jerusalem) and alienation or impossible communications originating from the degraded senses in the human form. Although I also believe there is ultimately a sense of discontent in where Albion ends up, I argue that what’s at stake at the moment of apocalypse is rather the problem of assimilation. Through the endless process of assimilation, Albion is inculcated into Christ’s idea of the one by imitating his sacrifice. The end result is, however, even more bizarre, as every figure, even including Jerusalem, is assimilated into the form of the polyp. Albion is alienated not because he relapses back into his corrupt form, but because the logic of homogeneity embedded in the polyp symbolism has become globalized. With everyone having become like his own self, Albion becomes the world horribly homogenized.

The palimpsest in plate 4, where Albion’s direct opposition with Jesus is erased, contains Albion’s characterization of Jesus, “most simulative.” Although it is clear that Albion intends to condemn Jesus to be dissimulative, judging from his repudiation of “deceitful friendships,” the word “simulative” may also denote imitative quality, which is necessary for Jesus to form bonds between disparate subjects. In this sense, the “simulative” Jesus performs the act of assimilation from the outset, when he abandons his status as a God and becomes an equal friend to man, or makes it seem so. Later in the poem, Los comes to embody Jesus’s principle of the One right after he emphatically claims the significance of “Minute Particulars.” In the same plate 91, Los

finally succeeds in driving away his own spectre, who, like Albion against Jesus, has been disobeying Los by subjugating himself to the logic of demonstration and pride. Once his constant and coercive request that the spectre obey is realized, Los unifies himself and his spectre but ironically drives him away “into a separate space” (*J* 91:52, E252). Right afterwards, his confident address to his emanation Enitharmon is filled with his own pride that he has achieved an identitarian connection with the Savior: “Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. he[Christ] is become One with me / Behold him here! We shall not Die! We shall be united in Jesus” (*J* 93:18-19, E253). With Los on his side, Jesus appears before the distressed Albion “in the likeness & similitude of Los” (*J* 96:7, E255) and this process of assimilation is necessary for him to step down to man’s level for Albion to recognize him as his friend.

This line of narrative toward the end of the work draws everyone closer to each other, Los imbibing Jesus’s ideology and Jesus becoming like Los in appearance, and it culminates in Albion’s final act of self-annihilation which is another case of imitation of what Albion beholds in Los-like Jesus. Jesus says that he will die for man and explains that sacrificing oneself for another is crucial for true brotherhood. At the sight of Jesus’s imminent self-annihilation, Albion’s “Self [is] lost in the contemplation of faith” (*J* 96:31, E256) and he sacrifices himself instead: “So Albion spoke & threw himself into the Furnaces of affliction / All was a Vision, all a Dream: the Furnaces became / Fountains of Living Waters flowing from the Humanity Divine” (*J* 96:35-37, E256). This watershed moment of apocalypse seems meaningful as it is not so much dependent on the traditional passive acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice but is constituted by Albion’s (thus humanity’s) active participation in the praxis of benevolent self-sacrifice.

With Albion’s imitation of Jesus’s intention to build brotherhood and friendship, however, any potentiality of resistance against the ideology of unity hidden in Albion becomes

unavailable. Or, to be more exact, even before the apocalypse there was already no place for Albion's inaugural claim of "We are not One: We are Many," as Jerusalem constantly remains obscure and Los ultimately takes side with Jesus. But the final stage of assimilation is performed by Albion in order to make his subjugation to Jesus more complete by merging Albion's own drive for unity with Jesus's. Symbolically, I suggest that Albion's self-annihilation is comparable to the natural historians' experiment on the polyp, in which analogy the Furnaces of affliction are the test tubes the chopped fragments of the polyp are thrown into. In this sense, Albion is able to fully become "a mighty Polypus" through the ritual of self-annihilation, spreading his body and soul to the world not as a tree but as a rhizomatic, purposeless body without organs. Inside the test tube is literally "Living Waters," the condition the polyp needs to regenerate itself.

Consequently, among its completely utopic conditions, the post-apocalyptic reality—as opposed to the pre-apocalyptic state Blake calls "a Vision" and "a Dream"—contains Albion's image as a polyp, and that image converges with Jesus's desired formation that men become his "members." As Albion "stretchd his hand into Infinitude. / And took his Bow" (*J* 97:6-7, E256), the four Zoas also emerge, each taking different bows (Gold, Silver, Brass, and Iron) from the four different directions. Urizen, Luvah, Tharmas, and Urthona thus become the members of the One Albion, killing off "The Druid Spectre" (*J* 98:6, E257), the incarnate of demonstrative rationalism. Likewise, every man has his own liberated four senses facing each of the four directions, and the eye, the nostrils, the tongue, and the ear are, on the individual level of each man, his own members. Every human form, in this way, comes to represent the ideal City of Golgonooza, the four senses representing the four gates of the city. But while Blake apparently suggests that these human forms achieve their own autonomy with fully-functioning and wide-

open senses, each of them is in fact without its own particularities, and the form itself is the replica of the way Jesus imagines his divinity controlling over men. The human forms are in effect identical, when “they walked / To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in each & clearly seen / And seeing” (J 98:38-40, E258). Their varying “Organs of Perception” (J 98:38) is of little significance; just the possibility that human forms may be merged into “One Man” matters, and beneath this miracle of ultimate union is the figure of the polyp. Each piece of a divided polyp may have different organs, but it subsequently grows into a whole and erases those differences, “reflecting each in each.”

The post-apocalyptic world, looked in this way, is a chaotic mash-up of both generation and regeneration, assembled and coordinated under Jesus’s ideological flag of unity. Albion’s



Figure 2.4. Left: William Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 96, Copy E., Right: William Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 99, Copy E. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Arts

well-intentioned self-sacrifice does not cure his own body's disease of generation nor does it positively renovate the human form. Instead, the structure of oppression and corruption lives on, evidently demonstrated in the last drawings in the work (fig 2.4). In plate 96, where Albion annihilates himself, the aged Albion seems to be benign and protective to Jerusalem long-forgotten and just found again. However, the drawing in plate 99, the very last one finalizing the work, is rather comparable to plate 26 (fig. 2.2) both in the use of colors and Jerusalem's reaction. While Jerusalem's expression in plate 99 is not as obvious as in plate 26 (where Hand's polypus-like figure apparently horrifies her), Albion's embrace almost seems forced upon Jerusalem, and she, bent backwards and spreading her arms (as if lamenting her own situation), suddenly becomes like what she beholds—the mighty Polypus persisting in the body of Albion.

Notes

¹ All quotes from Blake's text are from David V. Erdman's edition, *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), and "E" will be used to refer to this edition. *J* stands for *Jerusalem*.

² Paul Miner, "The Polyp as a Symbol in the Poetry of William Blake," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 2 (1960): 198.

³ Miner, 202.

⁴ E. J. Rose, "The Symbolism of the Opened Center and Poetic Theory in Blake's *Jerusalem*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 5, no. 4 (1965): 596.

⁵ Dennis M. Welch, "Center, Circumference, and Vegetative Symbolism in the Writings of William Blake," *Studies in Philology* 75, no. 2 (1978): 238.

⁶ Welch, 238.

⁷ Welch, 224.

⁸ Robert Bowen, *The Coral Reef Era: From Discovery to Decline: A History of Scientific Investigation from 1600 to the Anthropocene Epoch* (New York: Springer, 2015), 21-31.

⁹ Bowen provides the etymological origin of the word, which was introduced by Gyllius in 1535: "That word, in the absence of any demonstrative proof, was a useful hybrid because its Greek provenance from *zōon* (animal) and *phytos* (plant) dealt conveniently with the ambiguity that was unresolvable then." See Bowen, 26.

¹⁰ The original French title of *Machine Man* is *L'Homme Machine*. Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27.

¹¹ The original French Title of the work is *Le Rêve de d'Alembert*. Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream*, trans. Leonard Tancock (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 172-73.

¹² Even today, there are some critics who are mesmerized by the idea of human polyp. One such example is Brian Domino, who seriously digresses from Diderot's one sentence "If there is a place where man can divide himself up into myriads of microscopic men, people there should be less reluctant to die" (172) to correlate it to the current anthropological account of r-strategy and K-strategy. This trail of thought results in a rather ridiculous sort of argument that we may spot in some corners of newspapers: that human polyps assume the logic of r-strategy, thus reducing our moral sense of altruism. Brian Domino, "Looking at the Meaning of Life Hydra-Scopically: Diderot and the Value of the Human," *Philosophy and Literature* 36 (2012): 363-77.

¹³ Diderot, 180-81.

¹⁴ Denise Gigante, in her monograph *Life*, attempts to establish the polyp as the core imagery of Blake's epigenesist poetics, as part of her larger commitment to revive Romanticism's Zeitgeist through the self-formulating principle of epigenesis, as opposed to the theory of preformation, where life form is already determined at its very start in the egg. Her positive view on the polyp as the epigenetic symbol, however, seems to participate in Blake's contemporary fascination that has evolved, as I explained, into a transitory form of political optimism. See Denise Gigante, *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 108.

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 18.

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, 18.

¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, 498-99.

¹⁸ Tillotama Rajan is perhaps the only critic who also characterizes the polyp as rhizome. While she is focused not so much on the content of the Blake's text as on its linguistic texture that incites readers' rhizomatic participation in the process of reading, she makes a brief note on the role of the polyp in his later works as follows: "This notion of the text as transmitting intensities is in fact the key to understanding how Blake preserves the prophetic function in a world of power: a rhizomatic world that he will later associate more darkly with the polypus." See Tillotama Rajan, "(Dis)figuring the System: Vision, History, and Trauma in Blake's Lambeth Books," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58, no. 3/4 (1995): 396.

¹⁹ Most of the critics that I refer to are those who worked until the 1970s to realize Northrop Frye's self-imposed injunction to make sense of Blake, and their efforts are valuable in that they salvaged Blake from blames of obscurity and mysticism. David V. Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) exemplifies Frye's influence to early Blake criticism, and demonstrates such an interpretive power to read into Blake's social engagement even in his most mysterious prophecies. The paradox here is that while they claim to be veering away from transcendentalism with Frye's anti-mystic agenda, their effort to determine and produce meanings in Blake's text results in an almost compulsory belief that Blake is unequivocal in the process of signification. As a result, while they occasionally reveal insights into Blake's complexities, they are suppressed by the rhetoric of transcendence. See, for example, Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); E. J. Rose, "The Structure of Blake's *Jerusalem*," *Bucknell Review* 11, no. 3 (1963): 35-54; Anne K. Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Thomas R. Frosch, *The Awakening of Albion: The Renovation of the Body in the Poetry of William Blake* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); and Welch, "Center, Circumference, and Vegetation Symbolism," 223-42.

²⁰ Steven Goldsmith, *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1-24.

²¹ Laura Quinney, *William Blake on Self and Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 156.

²² Quinney, 177.

²³ Karen Swann, "Blake's *Jerusalem*: Friendship with Albion," in *A Companion to Romantic Poetry*, ed. Charles Mahoney (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 541.

²⁴ Swann, 552.

²⁵ Julia M. Wright, *Blake, Nationalism, and the Politics of Alienation* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 136-37.

²⁶ Wright, 137.

CHAPTER 3

SHELLEY'S SPELL OF LOVE AND THE CURSE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*

Until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness.

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*

Percy Bysshe Shelley's celebrated *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama* (1820) is the poet's own imagined sequel to Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. As I will lay out in this chapter, the narrative is deceptively structured around a principle that promotes Promethean love. If we follow this structure, the tale goes as follows: Prometheus repents on his earlier curse on Jupiter and realizes the importance of forgiveness and love, and this awakening initiates the process of Asia, Prometheus's lover, reaching out to Demogorgon, the dark power that resides in the underworld. Demogorgon fulfills Prometheus's prophecy by overthrowing Jupiter by force, and the Earth and the Moon are reborn into a cosmological sublime, representing the unified one man. Appropriately enough, the drama concludes with Demogorgon's powerful speech of triumph. He begins his final speech by addressing his own violent work of dragging down Jupiter the tyrant to the Earth's deep abyss (*PU*, 4.554-56)¹, but soon turns the subject to Prometheus's work of love, which overcomes the dreadful hours of endurance and agony, and spreads "its healing wings" over the renovated world (4.557-61). Love, along with the virtues of forgiveness and endurance, is suggested as the Promethean ideal that can "bar[] the pit over Destruction's strength" (4.562-65), and this remark leads to the drama's ending sentence, which

announces that everything Prometheus has undergone before and in this text—including his sufferings, forgiveness, and love—“is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory” (4.578). It is perhaps natural to regard his speech as the just reflection of the drama’s overarching narrative theme that love is the only ultimate political potential that can bring positive changes to the world and even refine the revolutionary vision into a utopian telos called “Life.”

Countless Shelley critics have generally followed Demogorgon’s guidelines in this speech, arguing that Prometheus’s enlightened self-consciousness in terms of love enables revolution that unbinds him from his chains and symbolically attains humanity’s freedom from tyranny and oppression.² Perhaps this is also the way Shelley wants the drama to be read. In Act 1, Prometheus indeed provides a model of love that departs from the logic of revolutionary revenge, by renouncing his own curse against Jupiter. Given that Prometheus is the emblem of enlightened subjectivity, his renewed love that acknowledges mercy and forgiveness possibly indicates a better political model of reform. In this regard, Prometheus’s enlightened self-consciousness is, rather ironically, a significant gesture of profound resistance against the rationalist idealism inherent in the whole movement of Enlightenment.

While acknowledging that Shelley attempts to present love as the utopian force against Enlightenment ideology, however, I argue that love in *Prometheus Unbound* endorses the ideology that it criticizes. All of the Promethean virtues of love and forgiveness that Demogorgon lauds toward the end of the text are virtually lost and forgotten for the majority of the drama, and what we see instead is a different model of love essentially complicit with Enlightenment ideology. In his essay “On Love,” Shelley emphasizes love’s strong tendency toward unity by defining it to be “the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with every thing which exists” (*SPP* 504). This pursuit for a vision of unity immanent

in Shelley's notion of love comes to be associated with a rationalist desire to unify the subjective consciousness and aim for the universal good in the form of endless progress. In this way, love becomes the driving force of Kant's universal history, or the moral compass of Hegel's World-Spirit.

Seemingly a force against Enlightenment ideology with its affective and emotional quality, love becomes a part of Enlightenment ideology by way of its magical, spell-binding quality, enchanting characters, readers, and even Shelley himself into believing in the unified vision supplied from Enlightenment rationalism.³ Both love and the curse, the seemingly opposite ideas that contest each other at the beginning of the drama, become spells for the revolution that befits what Enlightenment and its rational subjects want as a proper step of historical progress. My analysis of the drama hinges on textual symptoms that belie the overarching ideological effects of those spells, which may originate from Shelley's own skeptical mode about his own beloved metaphysical notions of love and life. Such symptoms, I argue, encourage us to look into the deceptive nature of those spells, thus to avoid reading the work as a causality-based linear narrative flowing from love to reform. Shelley emphatically argues, in *A Defence of Poetry*, that "poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted" (*SPP* 515), but this statement may imply that poetry is merely a fantastic cover-up of the ugly reality, without actually healing the world of the distortion. Likewise, love may fashion the drama as a work of "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence" (*SPP* 209), but it is necessary not to ignore the reality of the unified subject's self-centeredness fabricated by Enlightenment ideology and intensified by the spell of love.

I. Love and Enlightenment Ideology

Although it is obvious that my argument is generally indebted to the tradition of deconstructive criticism on Shelley,⁴ my take on *Prometheus Unbound* is essentially different in its perspective on love, as love is hardly brought into question even among those who are invested in finding self-questioning moments in Shelley's texts.⁵ Tilottama Rajan, in her early work on the Romantic dark voices underlying the idealistic impulses, mildly suggests that the too concrete representation of the kingdom of love in the last Act of the play may indicate the poet's own disbelief in such a utopian kingdom.⁶ But her nudge at love as a potential problem is drowned by the deconstructive investigations on Shelley's idealism as a whole, and her followers have tended rather to discredit Prometheus himself as the hero than to raise doubts about love. John Rieder astutely suspects the idea of the "One" in the drama and effectively refutes Earl R. Wasserman's formalist reading of Prometheus as the unified "One Mind,"⁷ but his celebration of what he calls communist utopia in Act 4 leads to an endorsement of love which, he claims, "liberate[s] mankind by an ecstatic overflow of desire."⁸ Theresa M. Kelley maintains a keen attention to the dialogue between Asia and Demogorgon, interpreting Asia's long list of questions and Demogorgon's reluctant and ambiguous answers as the complication for justice and law, as Demogorgon's implied culprit in the ruining of the human world is rather Prometheus than Jupiter.⁹ While Prometheus loses his credibility as the hero, however, Kelley revives Asia as the one who enables a Derridian mode of destabilization of the text, standing detached "from the ideological clutches of Shelley's play."¹⁰

By positing love and its embodiment (Asia) as the utopian principle of the work, Rieder and Kelley in fact muffle the suspicion of love which Rajan has initially raised. My point is that as much as Asia has true faith in Prometheus's agenda of love so as to embody, symbolize, and

even fulfill it, she actually does not understand Prometheus's intent at all (as I explain in the next section), and becomes the most apt character to expose problems with what she understands as love. She performs this task precisely when she attempts to defend Prometheus, in response to Demogorgon's equivocal and reserved answers to her demanding questions about who created and ruined the world. Although her intent is to clear Prometheus's name from Demogorgon's vague yet poignant indictment (as suggested by Kelley), Asia's lengthy speech of seventy eight lines reveals to us that Prometheus's love and goodwill toward humanity may not simply be blessings, but the origins of human civilization itself which subsequently follows the trail of historical progress that ends with imperial oppression.

During the initial part of the speech, Asia has no problem in redeeming Prometheus and concentrating blame on Jupiter. In her account of history before Prometheus bestowed fire on man, Prometheus overthrows Saturn's pre-historic and chaotic rule of earth and grants Jupiter heavenly power to govern the world. Although Prometheus may be to blame for his indiscretion in choosing the wrong monarch for the world, Asia maintains Jove, not Prometheus, is responsible for man's suffering. It is Jupiter who does not know love and neglects the one law ("Let man be free" [2.3.45]) Prometheus ordains, and his "reign" inevitably brings forth "famine," "toil," "disease" (2.3.50), and subsequently "mad disquietudes" and "mutual war" (2.3.56-57) upon humanity. In the latter half of the speech, Asia moves on to "the alleviations of [man's] state" (2.3.98) Prometheus has conferred on humanity to redeem man from Jupiter's dictatorship. In the manner of a legal representative of a defendant in a court of law, Asia elaborates extensively to vigorously shed positive lights on Prometheus's gifts of civilization. His mythical gift of fire, an obvious symbol of civilization, is given substance in tangible

categories such as speech, science, music, sculpture, herbal knowledge, astrology, and navigational skills, as if projecting light through a prism to spread it out into a wide spectrum.

Despite her intention to salvage Prometheus through the demonstration of his achievements, however, Asia's fervent elaboration conversely emphasizes dark elements in human culture and history. Fire, for instance, represents both the sublime and the beautiful ("Most terrible, but lovely [2.3.67]), and it is accordingly used ambivalently by humans:

[fire] played beneath

The frown of man, and tortured to his will

Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,

And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms

Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves. (2.3.67-71)

Fire helps men to extract "Iron and gold," assumedly to their benefit, but Asia (or rather Shelley) appropriately calls them "the slaves and signs of power" respectively; iron turns into weapons for conquest, while gold is extensively used to represent exchange value. The rise of the iron age and the accumulation of wealth may be distinguished moments in history, but these elements of progress are concurrent with the formation of power, inequality, and violence. In this sense, "gems and poisons" may not be necessarily items of opposing values; instead, gems—as signs of luxury—may be simultaneously poisons for man. It should also be noted that the extraction of all of these materials are described as torture by frowning men, indicating that violence is not only the content of human civilization, but its very form itself.

The complicity between civilization and violence is further illumined when Asia talks of the benefits of navigational skills:

He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen . . . (2.4.92-97)

The advanced navigation that can “rule . . . / The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,” being likened to the free motion of human body, seems to grant man the sense of liberation, allowing him to travel through the world. Through this skill, the Celt (the West) meets the Indian (the East), but it should be remarked that the flow of knowledge is unidirectional. Asia’s statement that “the Celt knew the Indian” rigorously places the West and the East into the positions of the subject and the object, revealing that her perspective is, ironically, not that of Asia but of Europe.¹¹ Cities and their “snow-like columns,” then, are the symbols of cosmopolitan ideals, aided by the pastoral imageries of “warm winds,” “azure æther,” “blue sea,” and “shadowy hills,” but as the cities are built exactly upon the knowledge about the other, these symbols become mere façades behind which the logic of oppression and exploitation is stringently at work.

Along with the beginning and the end of this gift list—fire and navigation—that represent power dynamics in human civilization, some other items are also not without dubious moments. Symptoms of despair are found in science which tries but fails to subvert political and religious powers (“thrones of Earth and Heaven” [2.3.74]), in sculpture which creates vain idealism while imitating the human form (2.3.80-83), or in herbalogy which simply suspends disease and delays death (2.3.86) rather than making man as immortal as Prometheus himself. Music and poetry

struggle with their harmonious, “all-prophetic song,” reaching out to the divine level otherwise unreachable (2.3.76-79), only to be pushed aside by the overarching doom implied in other gifts of civilization.

If some of these limitations do reflect man’s fundamental imperfections and flaws, they are corroborated by the epistemological limits imposed upon man’s mind by speech: “He gave man speech, and speech created thought, / Which is the measure of the Universe” (2.3.72-73). While it may seem that the power of reason expands man’s capacity to understand the world, it also defines the way in which the world needs to be understood, thus confining the scope of reality down to the subjective recognition. This limitation is confirmed when speech/thought category is closely followed by the instance of science’s failure at subversion, when science should be the apogee of the rational power of understanding nature and the universe.

Although Asia does not seem to be in any degree sensitive to the elements of violence and domination embedded in Prometheus’s gifts, she does recognize Prometheus’s design as a project of Enlightenment; it is only that she is not specifically against such aspects when they are enwrapped in rationalism. While criticizing the way in which Saturn treats “the earth’s primal spirits” (2.3.35), assumedly humans, Asia is able to place “knowledge” and “power” in a positive light:

[Saturn] refused

The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim Universe like light,
Self-empire and the majesty of love,
For thirst of which they fainted. (2.3.38-43)

Asia's positive view of Enlightenment thinking reflects Shelley's own endorsement of it found in many of his works, including *Queen Mab* (1813) and *The Revolt of Islam* (1818). According to Asia, Prometheus is discontented with Saturn's rule exactly in its lack of Enlightenment elements such as "knowledge" and "power," which are consistent with the Imperialist dynamics between the Celt and the Indian.¹² By letting Asia call them "birthright" of humans, Shelley characterizes them both as the natural rights of man proclaimed by many revolutionary preachers on both sides of the Atlantic, and as an exclusive right for man over other beings (as birthright often denotes the inherited rights of nobility in the revolutionary discourse). Knowledge and power, which Asia and Prometheus deem indispensable in bringing about a better world, are equated with "the thought / Which pierces this dim Universe like light," somewhat resonant with what speech creates: "thought, / Which is the measure of the Universe." Accordingly, Jupiter is exactly a product of such an Enlightenment formula of knowledge and power, as Prometheus gives Jupiter "wisdom, which is strength" (2.3.44).

My understanding of Promethean knowledge and power as the Enlightenment project of the West resonates with Jerrold E. Hogle's interpretation of the speech which unearths human desire for power and rational order through Nietzschean and Foucauldian lenses.¹³ His analysis, however, is shifted to a frame of gender politics, in which Jupiter and Prometheus's masculine system is effectively countered by Asia's feminine qualities as she represents the Titan's ideal-ego.¹⁴ By idealizing Asia's femininity as the radical principle that may counter systemic oppression, however, Hogle acquits her from the charge of complicity with Enlightenment ideology. My point is that Asia is exactly an endorser of Enlightenment reason, and instead of creating a resistance to the violent and oppressive machine of Enlightenment and Imperialism, she incorporates love as a part of that machine. The "majesty of love" is inserted to further

elaborate on “thought,” as if knowledge’s “pierc[ing]” motion may be compatible and even identical to love’s supposedly sympathetic movement, as the pairing of “Light and Love” (2.3.33) is already rendered as natural as that of “Heaven and Earth” at the outset of the speech. Prometheus’s motive for helping man suffering under Jupiter is also love. The “alleviations,” not ultimate solutions, originate from Prometheus’s Love: “Love he sent to bind / The disunited tendrils of that vine / Which bears the wine of life, the human heart” (2.3.63-65). Recalling the Blakean bloody imageries of the vineyard which grows human bodies and also echoing the ever-popular political rhetoric of unity, this passage reveals that Prometheus’s love is not so much a desire for spreading benevolence but his will to knowledge and power, binding the human consciousness into the one that represents Kantian rational subjectivity, the state of “self-Empire” that the text seems to approve repeatedly.¹⁵

Asia’s speech, in this sense, does not simply feature a heroic narrative of Prometheus saving humanity from Jupiter with his gifts of civilization; rather, it demonstrates that what seems to be a historical progress from tyranny to alleviation is nothing more than the repetition of the same historical mode of Enlightenment based in knowledge and power. While Jupiter’s catastrophic reign and Prometheus’s reform against it are set in contrast, they are in fact two consecutive reforms done by Prometheus; it is Prometheus who replaced Saturn with Jupiter, and now his reform is aimed at Jupiter. Jupiter is suggested by Asia as an aberration in Prometheus’s Enlightenment project, but he is in essence the bare face of the ideology of rationalism hidden under the guise of love.

In this sense, Jupiter may symbolize the post-revolutionary state in France, where the rationalist ideal of Enlightenment spiraled down to violent massacres and new dictatorships. The drama’s clearest reference to the French Revolution in Act 1 confirms this symbolic

representation, by elaborating on the rise and fall of Enlightenment reason. Although Shelley borrows the voices of the Furies to avoid direct contradiction against the play's explicit agenda in favor of Enlightenment, it is shown that Enlightenment has something to do with Prometheus's sense of guilt. In a scene where they mentally torture Prometheus, the Furies first scorn at "the clear knowledge [Prometheus] waken'dst for man" (1.542), arguing that this knowledge has become the source of thirst and desire that have subsequently consumed humans (1.543-45). With a cunning gesture to "[g]rant a little respite" (1.566) for the harrowed hero, they exchange a dialogue between themselves to intensify the despair coming from the deadly consequences of Promethean knowledge:

SEMICHORUS I

See! a disenchanted Nation
Springs like day from desolation;
To truth its state, is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legioned band of linked brothers
Whom Love calls children—

SEMICHORUS II

'Tis another's—
See how kindred murder kin!
'Tis the vintage-time for Death and Sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within
Till Despair smothers
The struggling World—which slaves and tyrants win. (*PU*, 1.567-77)

Enlightened knowledge seems to free France from enchantment, but the revolutionary values such as truth, freedom, and brotherhood inevitably assume an abstract character, possibly becoming another set of enchantments empowered by “Love.” Under these spells that seem to promise progress through revolution, the nation in unity turns itself into a site of bloodbath. It is remarkable to see the Furies put the most blame on love by drawing in the metaphor of the vineyard. The apparently positive imagery of Promethean Love binding “The disunited tendrils of . . . the human heart” (2.3.64-65) is utterly condemned when the vineyard faces “the vintage-time for Death and Sin” to represent massacres during the Reign of Terror. What puts Prometheus to extreme pain is the idea the Furies force-feed him, that his idealized notion of love is the principle of unity appropriated to become a spell that motivates and solidifies Enlightenment ideology. Love, thus conceived, rather ruins revolution than enables or refines it.

Their mental torture using love’s historical failure leaves a mark on Prometheus’s “woe-illumed mind” (1.637), and his response indicates a clear acknowledgement that love, once conscripted into Enlightenment ideology proclaiming historical progress, may degenerate into tyranny and violence:

The nations thronged around, and cried aloud
As with one voice, “Truth, liberty and love!”
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from Heaven
Among them—there was strife, deceit and fear;
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.

This was the shadow of the truth I saw. (1.650-56)

Prometheus reiterates the Furies’ depiction of the downfall of the revolution almost word for word, including the tripartite slogan of truth, liberty/freedom, and love/brotherhood, articulated

by the nation's "one voice" that reflects love's power to unite human hearts. The Heaven's abrupt interruption with "fierce confusion" may mirror the Titan's desire to personify the shameful part of the revolution into Jupiter/Heaven, but the pure arbitrariness of Heaven's involvement conversely corroborates the inevitability that love, in the form of desire for unity, subsequently turns into tyranny.¹⁶

II. Revolution by Curse, Spells by Love

If Prometheus should properly play the role of a hero who will induce fundamental political changes, then, he should be able to resuscitate his own sense of love, and stay away from the distorted love that only limits and binds humanity under the Enlightenment ideology. As can be seen in his acceptance of the Furies' excoriation of the revolution, Prometheus already senses that his well-intentioned love in the past has become merely a part of the dominant ideology that repeats itself again and again through history. As a step to defy the repetition of history, the Titan renounces his curse against Jupiter in Act 1, which is believed to make it possible for him to re-imagine love as a renewed political hope.¹⁷ As his rejection of the curse is not merely an awakening into the virtue of forgiveness but a symbolic abandonment of his dependence upon spells, his decision not to inflict violence to any living being (including Jupiter) would have had significant political repercussions if it had managed to be shared with other characters and thrived throughout the text.

I would like to contest the almost unquestioned belief that his repudiation of the curse is a watershed moment in the play, however, because his decision to drive out any ideological elements that enchant the mind is exactly what dissociates him from all the other characters. As Shelley invests the whole first half of Act 1 in detailing his revocation of the curse, it is easy to

believe that the revolutionary spirit of the text is nurtured exactly through this process of Prometheus's own self-critique and self-assessment. The act of revocation itself, however, is far from important, because he has already done it long before he verifies every word in his curse. In his very first speech in the work, Prometheus already prophesies Jupiter's tragic end as if cursing him, but immediately denies spirit of revenge ("Disdain? Ah no! I pity thee" [1.53]) and announces that he is already changed: "I am changed so that aught evil wish / Is dead within" (1.70-71). What Shelley is interested in demonstrating to us is exactly how his renunciation completely isolates himself and renders this new-found political possibility utterly unrealistic and futile. Along the line of his constant inquiry of "What was that curse?" (1.73), one of the prominent features of the dialogue between Prometheus and the Earth (his mother) is the radically different attitudes toward the curse. While the curse seems to be almost traumatically dreary for Prometheus, so much so that he wouldn't even repeat the words himself, the Earth—and actually everyone and everything in the world—revels in it:

aye, I heard

Thy curse, the which if thou rememberest not
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains and caves and winds, and yon wide Air
And the inarticulate people of the dead
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words
But dare not speak them. (1.179-86)

All the inanimate things on Earth do not only remember the curse, but they "[p]reserve" it as "a treasured spell," hoping "[i]n secret joy" that it will come true someday. The Earth does not

divulge the curse to Prometheus not because she also dreads the words like Prometheus, but because she is afraid of Jupiter's punishment: "I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King / Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain / More torturing than the one whereon I roll" (1.140-42). The distinction is confirmed after Prometheus establishes his own moral value of forgiveness ("I wish no living thing to suffer pain" [1.305]), when the Earth shows deep frustration, thinking that his abandonment of the curse should bar them forever from political liberation: "Misery, O misery to me, / That Jove at length should vanquish thee" (1.306-07). Though the Earth definitely grieves over Prometheus's pain, her difference from Prometheus is softly foregrounded with the division of "me" and "thee" across these lines, the idea of peaceful forgiveness belonging to Prometheus alone.

It is necessary to recognize Prometheus's alienation from others, because the curse retains its form as a spell while Asia tries to impose it upon Demogorgon's act of violence. Rieder does not make a clear distinction between Prometheus and others in interpreting his renunciation of the curse, arguing that the curse is "a form of historical necessity" whose power Prometheus cannot deny; for him, Prometheus does not deny or break the power and desire of the curse, but instead goes through purification by cutting it from Jupiter's involvement and letting Asia take it.¹⁸ His analysis, however, comes from his effort to make sense of why Prometheus's renunciation never takes effect afterwards and the curse lives on. Until Asia meets Demogorgon and announces that "curses shall drag [the culprit] down" (2.4.30), then, there is a consistent thrust within the text that begins with the Earth's cherishing of Prometheus's curse as "a treasured spell" and ends with Asia's full endorsement of the curse and of Prometheus's contribution to the civilization. As Rieder argues, the curse does present itself in the form of historical necessity, as we can confirm from the statement of spirits guiding the Oceanides down

to Demogorgon, “a spell is treasured but for [Demogorgon] alone” (2.3.88), but this historical necessity is exactly what Prometheus has already denied and banished from his own identity as the savior.

Prometheus isolates himself, however, not only from the rest of the world, but also from his own past self. In fact, the whole process in which Prometheus identifies the content of the curse (through Jovian voice) and renounces it is a rite of passage through which Prometheus departs from his past self deeply associated with Jupiter and launches a new brand of love that truly bears Prometheus’s own name with the virtue of forgiveness. When given a chance to choose who will recite the curse, Prometheus refuses to recall his own ghost (which is the Earth’s first recommendation), saying, “let not aught / Of that which may be evil, pass again / My lips, or those of aught resembling me” (1.218-20). When it comes to who will repeat the curse, it is less of a matter of whether Prometheus remembers it; it is rather of his desire to start anew, free from the curse whose revengeful spirit represents his scheme of revolutionary progress. The curse, belonging to the region of death and told only in the language of the dead, is an aggregate of “all that faith creates, or love desires” (1.201), and Prometheus separates himself from such revolutionary desire and love he once symbolized, by selecting Phantasm of Jupiter to utter the curse. The deep connection between Prometheus and Jupiter¹⁹ is confirmed by the curse itself as the way in which it portrays rationalist ideology through the imagery of calmness. The mode of Prometheus’s defiance against Jupiter is that of cold rationalism “with a calm, fixed mind” (1.262), but toward the end of the curse where he casts a devastating prophesy for Jupiter, the tyrant is said to be occupying “An awful Image of calm power” (1.296). Prometheus tries to escape from this shared value of rationalism by redefining his own seeming

noble posture of revolutionary will with cold rationalism as “calm hate” (1.259), and his negation of his own past seems absolute.

As soon as he officially renounces his curse, however, Prometheus loses the initiative in refining what he has gained into a morally and politically valid point. As his voice is quickly replaced by the voices of spirits that represent human thoughts throughout history, it is no longer possible to define exactly what the Titan has tried to achieve through the rejection of the curse. The spirits’ role in the narrative is rather simple; after they elaborate on desolation and ruins prevalent in human history, they confirm Prometheus to be the alpha and omega of the prophecy in bringing forth the soul of love to overcome destructions and ruins. When Prometheus is sucked into this prophecy and recognizes himself as the savior of humanity, his earlier resistance to the curse is entirely lost. Instead, he has to choose universal love that would emancipate man over his own erotic love for Asia, perhaps because universal love with a political valence is possibly free from the desire and violence his erotic love is liable to fall into. In other words, Prometheus suppresses Asia’s erotic possibilities and frames her within the universal context of love, so that her love toward Prometheus becomes merely a tool for the grander purpose of human salvation.

His choice of universal love is certainly at a remove from his original vision of mercy and forgiveness, and also elides the inevitable problem between the Kierkegaardian categories of love—romantic love and universal love.²⁰ But from even this degraded vision of love through Demogorgon’s revolutionary overthrow of Jupiter, the narrative connection is fractured when none of the subjects that are supposed to be delivering his message of love share the same vision of love with Prometheus. Already toward the end of Act 1, Panthea exhibits a deep discontent with Prometheus’s decision to become man’s savior rather than Asia’s erotic lover, asking “Hast

thou forgotten [Asia] . . . ?” (1.821-23). As a result of Prometheus’s dissatisfactory response, Panthea at once leaves the scene and Act 1 is abruptly concluded. Contrary to what many believe,²¹ Act 1 and Act 2 are seriously disjoined as Panthea does not come directly from Prometheus despite her urgent claim that Prometheus should immediately remember Asia. In this entirely new setting at the beginning of Act 2 that doesn’t seem to have much to do with Act 1, Panthea unravels one of her dreams that reflects her own desire that transforms the bodiless, Christ-like figure of a liberated Prometheus as her own erotic, bodily counterpart (2.1.71-82). Asia does not understand this dream, and reconstructs Panthea’s another forgotten dream by looking into her eyes. Constructing an immaterial and airy “shade” that swiftly passes inside her eyes into “a shape” (2.1.120), Asia defines this shape to be Prometheus by name-calling it: “Prometheus, it is thou” (2.1.123). The shaping of idealism based in love that bears the name of Prometheus is Asia’s desire, as the last conveyor whose duty is to face Demogorgon and deliver the goods.

Through this topsy-turvy progress of the text in Act 2, the causality-based narrative logic, embedded in the simplistic formula that love crafts revolution, is undermined. Instead of intersubjective communications about the nature of love that they are supposed to transfer, each of them constructs one’s own idea of love out of the ruins of the previous subject’s thoughts. Therefore, while the text seems to entertain those who would seek love’s triumph in the course of the universal history of causality, love breaks itself apart by letting each subject play one’s desire fully—probably except for the ever-passive Prometheus.

The fundamental differences between these subjects are radically dramatized between Panthea and Asia when they reach Demogorgon’s portal to the underworld. The differences in their perspectives create an inevitable contrast between them, from which it is made clear that

Asia is intoxicated by the revolutionary power of the curse (which she believes is the power of love). At the sight of the destructive power of nature that harbors prophecies on Demogorgon's revolutionary deeds, their responses differ. Panthea is able to detect the deceptiveness of "the oracular vapour" (2.3.4) which alienated subjects deem "truth, virtue, love, genius or joy" (2.3.6), and views its violent force as "maddening wine of life" (2.3.7),²² which would be spreading fast among people like a disease (2.3.8-10). On the contrary, Asia describes this power "Magnificent" (2.1.11) and "glorious" (2.1.12), and is overjoyed to find revolutionary energy within the sublime nature of "cataracts" (2.3.34) and snow "avalanche" (2.3.37). The imagery of avalanche represents an inevitable event of revolution for Asia, and the idea of "the nations echo[ing] round / Shaken to their roots" is definitely a sweet thought, whereas the same idea has been a woeful despair to Prometheus in Act 1.

But the paramount blow to Prometheus, or the drama's central theme in the former half of Act 1, is that the "curse" he openly rejects is alive and well in the form of the spell that will destroy Jupiter. Most obviously, Asia meets Demogorgon and announces that "curses shall drag [the culprit] down" (2.4.30), but the process has already begun when the Earth has cherished Prometheus's curse as "a treasured spell" in Act 1. Ever since, each stage of the whole process of love's move toward revolution is in fact haunted by some kind of spell. Prometheus's indeterminate resolution in Act 1 is a product of the spell wielded by the spirits from human thoughts, Panthea's sensual love is delivered through the medium of dreams while Ione in real life construes it as "some enchantment old" (2.1.100), and finally Asia is in full agreement with the Earth in that the curse should be used to dethrone Jupiter and regain liberty for humans. That Jupiter's downfall is done in a violent manner makes sense, because no matter what Prometheus may have realized as his own historical errors, he has no power to right his wrong. Back in

Asia's long speech to Demogorgon, she firmly believes in the subversive power of the curse that will turn a master into a slave: "when / His adversary[Prometheus] from adamantine chains / Cursed him, he trembled like a slave" (2.3.106-08). Even before Asia reveals her full intent to take advantage of the curse, it flows through the text in the form of historical necessity, when the spirits guiding the Oceanides down to Demogorgon already utter, "a spell is treasured but for [Demogorgon] alone" (2.3.88). In short, while Prometheus renounces the curse as a potential source of revenge, Shelley de-personalizes it by transforming it into an indispensable factor in the historical progress, somewhat similar to "the spirit of the age."

Therefore, while the drama has begun with a strong message of resistance against the curse, some major characters, such as Asia and the Earth, endorse the curse as the "treasured spell" in the process of delivering the message of love in the name of Prometheus. I argue that at the crux of this hegemony of "spells" is love, which ideologically creates blind faith in the historical progress the curse will necessarily push forward. While Prometheus is bound to a rock and is unable to effect revolution on his own, love regains its enchanting power over the revolutionaries who are in turn enchanted by the power of curse. Regardless of the Titan's repudiation of the curse, Demogorgon's violent revolution repeats Prometheus's dethronement of Saturn in the name of love for humanity. Perhaps without Shelley's knowing, Shelley's text is full of symptoms that undermine its own propensity for rationalist idealism of unified history, and they invite subversive interpretations about love's deceptiveness when it is a part of Enlightenment project. Love is presented to be the greatest spell of utopian literature, but the utopia it seems to achieve is not quite what it initially imagined it to be, when there is no break from the repetition of violent history. *Prometheus Unbound* is not about Prometheus, Asia, or

Demogorgon's success story; rather, its achievement lies in its full disclosure of the spells that make us believe it is a success story.

Prometheus's abrupt descent into the cave in Act 3 after Jupiter has fallen is an indication that he is possibly aware that he has failed the drama's intended beautiful idealisms. In essence, with his retirement arranged so suddenly after his release, he is keeping his own words. When he ineffectively announces his intent to become a savior, he adds some elaborations on the conditions of his failure as follows: "or sink into the original gulph of things. . . . / There is no agony and no solace left; / Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more." (1.818-20). By entering the cave, he positions himself where "Earth can console" him and "Heaven" is invisible, but more to my point, he calls this place "the original gulph of things," not only abysmal but stripped of ideological spells. The passage literally signifies the act of going into grave, so Prometheus's disappearance in Act 3 could very well be understood as his symbolic demise, which in turn quickly transforms Prometheus and Asia into ahistorical entities—free from agony and "[them]selves unchanged" (3.3.24)—,²³ when all Prometheus can expect to appreciate is an extremely aestheticized experience provided by "the progeny immortal / Of Painting, Sculpture and rapt Poesy / And arts" (3.3.54-56).

We are left to question whether his escape from history has succeeded, however, as the Earth uncovers this cavern's history of sufferings and spells in her supplementary account:

There is a Cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a Temple there
And spoke and were oracular, and lured

The erring nations round to mutual war

And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee. (3.3.124-30)

What the Earth's mad anguish produces is correspondent with the "oracular vapour" (2.3.4) Panthea and Asia observe at the portal to Demogorgon, and the false religion's consequences resonate with Asia's depiction of Jupiter's curse on humanity, such as "mad disquietudes" and "mutual war" (2.4.56-57). Though an idealized pastoral view covers up the place in the present, she later adds that a temple of love bearing his name urges some "emulous youths" to imitate his glory of love only to "bear the untransmitted torch of hope / Into the grave across the night of life" (2.3.172-73), and confirms this temple is exactly located beside the cave. Perhaps resisting and evading the universal history of progress and suffering is not as conveniently done as Prometheus may wish, as his entering into the cave is suggested in the form of historical necessity fabricated by the text's ideology toward love: "Beside that Temple is the *destined* Cave" (3.3.175, my emphasis).

III. The Fiction of Organic Unity

Despite Prometheus's destined disappearance, Act 3 has a good structural reason to be the climactic pinnacle of the drama's idealism. Accordingly, it is concluded with two reports of the reform of the world, one from the Spirit of the Hour who runs an errand for Prometheus, the other from the Spirit of the Earth which has emanated from the Earth. I wouldn't presume to provide a close analysis on these reports; however, there are bizzare moments of anticlimax inherent in both Spirits' accounts. The Spirit of the Hour's famous final speech has generated diverse critical responses, which view it either as a finalized utopian vision, as a preparation for

the cosmic idealism in Act 4, or as a dangerous suspension between reality and utopia.²⁴ But the Spirit of the Earth's depiction, less popular among critics, features a more blunt insertion of anticlimax, which V. A. de Luca defines as "the slackening of intensity"²⁵: "and all / Were somewhat changed—and after brief surprise / And greetings of delighted wonder, all / Went to their sleep again" (3.4.70-73). Both accounts of the utopian state, then, reiterate the text's dual structure around love; both Spirits exert themselves to construct an ideal vision that may perfectly work as the utopian *telos* of the universal history's scheme of human progress, but they also inadvertently inscribe moments of instability of such vision into their reports. The Spirit of the Earth is less discreet in revealing that the change they describe is not as fantastic as it seems in the reports, only because of his childish attitude that enables both observations without mediation and an intimate/informal tone which is extremely rare to see in this play.

These symptoms of instability in the text's ideal vision account for its necessary transition into Act 4, through which Prometheus and Asia's lead roles in the play are occupied by a new cosmological couple, the Earth and the Moon. While this substitution represents the text's desire to maintain love as the quintessential core of its utopianism by expanding its radius from the mythological to the cosmological, the planetary couple's relationship demonstrates an even worse kind of love, when the Earth is intoxicated by the joy of his own birth and refuses to commune with the Moon. If Prometheus's failure originates in part from the unbearable weight of history and its ideology despite his own benignity, the new-born Earth's solipsistic self-love demonstrates a dreary force toward totality by way of violent, centripetal compelling of elements into the unified image of Man.

Consequently, the relation between the new Earth and the Moon becomes implicitly strained, when all the masculine Earth can do is consolidate and confirm his sense of

subjectivity, unable to form intersubjective connections not only with his romantic love (the Moon) but with the rest of the world. Since their rebirth, the Earth and the Moon indeed exchange words extensively, but they are hardly conversations, as the Earth rarely reciprocates back to the Moon and is rather busy with celebrating the triumph at hand. The Moon constantly tries to connect with the Earth by attributing the thawing of her “frozen frame” (4.329) to the effect of the Earth’s warm love, and her words are almost always directed toward him, with various appellations and pronouns such as “Brother mine” (4.325), “Happy globe of land and air” (4.326), “thine” (4.361), “thee” (4.363), “Thy” (4.430), and “Thou” (4.437). The Earth, however, until he calls her “O gentle Moon” (4.495) in his final passage in the conversation, does not once address her.²⁶ Instead, his speech mostly consists of exuberant expressions of delight in the triumphant changes inside himself:

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness
The boundless, overflowing bursting gladness,
The vapourous 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! (4.319-24)

Although the last three lines’ figurative language reminds us that the Earth is still a planet that we know, the overflow of feeling in the first three is that of the misguided humans who had falsely celebrated “maddening wine of life” (2.3.7) and had “inhale[d]” the Mother Earth’s anguish to “Bec[o]me mad” and believe in deceptive oracles (3.3.125-30). His sense of joy and triumph drearily consists of “the madness” and “the vapourous exultation,” which implies that

this Earth as an energetic youth is unable to reflect upon the past wrongs before the revolution just as Prometheus did in Act 1.

In this sense, the Earth in Act 4 is an epitome of a Kantian self with its drive toward unity and positive progress, which, as I have suggested, the text has implicitly undermined until Act 3. Thus, a ruthless vision of unity, which was impossible up until Act 3, becomes available through the Earth's masculine voice of totality:

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress—
As the Sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet Republic of the maze
Of Planets, struggling fierce towards Heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious Soul of many a soul
Whose nature is its own divine controul
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour and Pain and Grief in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts—none knew how gentle they could be! (4.394-405)

The Earth obliterates the plural “men” in favor of “man,” with its centripetal “Compelling” of “the elements,” and the trope of the Sun's reign over the unruly planets further intensifies the tyrannical nuance to it, although the planets' fierce struggles seem to counterbalance such strong gravitational pull of oppression. In the following stanza, it seems that “one harmonious Soul” of

“man” is again prioritized over “many a soul” of “men.” The representation of the idea of organic unity that “all things flow to all” may contribute to the rendering of “divine controul” as “harmonious,” and the vision that “Familiar acts are beautiful through love” may be resonant with Shelley’s faith in poetry’s role of “lift[ing] the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and mak[ing] familiar objects be as if they were not familiar” (*A Defence of Poetry*, *SPP* 517). This speech, however, essentially subjugates those ideal visions around unity and poetry under the hegemonic logic of the one—one life, one mind, one man, one world. Thus, the union of “love” and “might,” which has hitherto been ventriloquized as the nature of human progress, is announced as an ideal necessity, and the elements of past sufferings—“Labour and Pain and Grief”—are easily tamed, so tamed that the Earth himself is astonished with their unexpected gentleness.²⁷

Not only does the Earth’s solipsism lead to his own subjugation to the madness of Enlightenment, but it also affects the Moon to imitate his mad intoxication. In the last turn of their non-conversation, the desperate Moon pours out her desire to be appreciated, and finds herself participating in the madness of the many youths before the apocalypse:

I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love—
Maniac-like around thee move,
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad round the cup
Which Agave lifted up

In the weird Cadmæ an forest.— (4.467-75)

The Moon is no longer a virgin who simply receives the Earth's reflected light of life (4.441) and nurtures within herself "living shapes" (4.365), but an "enamoured maiden," who stalks on her lover and tries to quench the thirst for love by drinking up his form with her eyes, "like a Mænad." Her passionate desire to "Drink[], from thy[the Earth's] sense and sight / Beauty, majesty, and might" (4.481-82) is reminiscent of, again, the lonely men who have breathed the "oracular vapour" and cried like "Mænads" (2.3.4-9), and with the mythical symbol of Agave at hand, her desire's potential to become under the spell of intoxication and violence remains strong. Now she does not really care "wheresoe'er" (4.476) the Earth may direct himself to, and declares that her drinking of his soul will make her identical to him, "As a lover or chameleon / Grows like what it looks upon" (4.483-84), just as the Mænads' cry of "Evoe" (2.3.9) was "contagion to the world" (2.3.10).

Near the end of the text, *Prometheus Unbound* presents a moment of sobriety in the midst of the masque of Act 4, a sobriety brought to the Earth by the Moon's erratic behavior identical to his own,²⁸ and this moment of surprise cries out to us that the utopian vision professed by the Earth is not necessarily trustworthy. Perhaps all too late, the Moon's sudden turn to Mænads' madness urges the Earth to reflect upon his subjective adrenaline rush, finally appreciating the influence of the Moon's love and hinting at his repentance on his self-pride:

O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night
Through isles forever calm;
O gentle Moon, thy chrystal accents pierce

The caverns of my Pride's deep Universe,
Charming the tiger Joy, whose trappings fierce
Made wounds, which need thy balm. (4.495-502)

The Earth repeatedly modifies the name of the Moon with “gentle,” and seems at first to recognize the Moon’s tone as delightful and “tender,” but the moonlight’s clarity is, in the next four lines, redefined as “chrystal accents” whose sharpness cannot be reconciled with the quality of gentleness he attaches to her. The Moon’s linguistic power of “pierc[ing],” the Earth observes, tames his own violent madness “the tiger” represents, and also heals the scars it has already left on himself, but the rhyming counterparts “pierce” and “fierce” imply that the Moon’s almost stalker-like obsessive love is as violent and fatal as the tiger’s claws. If the act of “Charming the tiger Joy” does not mean channeling the violent energy into a positive one of pleasure and beauty as the Earth seems to understand, but enchanting and even encouraging it to rave more with joy, the Earth may be lamenting the failure incurred by the Moon’s disastrous relapse into the same mistake as his own. But the Earth is equally aware that it has been brought upon by himself, recognizing that the Moon’s voice has the effect of chiding his own “Pride,” and this self-reflection is even more hurtful because what is pierced is “The caverns of [the Earth’s] Pride’s deep Universe,” one of which would have to be the cave where Prometheus now resides in.

With the Earth’s own acknowledgement of his own fault of self-centered pride, the whole utopian vision which has been articulated under his self-love comes under suspicion. The Earth is never given a chance to right his wrong, as his conversation with the Moon is now cut short by the interference of Demogorgon’s authorial voice. He can only answer humbly—which is

unimaginable when considering how prideful he was when he was born—to Demogorgon’s call: “I am as a drop of dew that dies!” (4.523).

IV. Can We Break the Spell?

At the beginning of this chapter, I rendered Demogorgon’s final speech as the field manual for critics, in the sense that the text wants to be read as the victory of the enlightened subject. Because Demogorgon does expect another return of “Destruction” (4.564) and “disentangled Doom” (4.569), and even acknowledges that Hope’s creation of itself is not straightforward but involves antithetical interactions with “its own wreck” (4.574), there is indeed room for interpretation about the nature of this final vision Shelley provides through Demogorgon’s voice, but it still maintains its principle of hope in the name of Prometheus.

This passage’s idealist quality, however, needs to be reassessed, if we recognize how it is, after the pattern shown in the text, constructed around “spells.” Demogorgon clarifies, at the outset of this speech, that what dragged down Jupiter is not Prometheus’s feat, but “the Earth-born’s spell” (4.555), i.e. Prometheus’s curse he had rejected, and love is featured merely as the healer, only with Prometheus’s quality of endurance. But the more significant turn in the speech is when he catalogues what could be deemed Promethean values: “Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom and Endurance” (4.562). According to Demogorgon, these are preventive “seals” against “Destruction’s strength” (4.563-64), and also “the spells by which to reassume / An empire o’er the disentangled Doom” (4.568-69). In other words, Prometheus himself is reified into spells and enchantments that will plant hope in human minds, in the absence of himself.

Therefore, although I highly doubt Shelley meant a national sovereignty governed by an emperor or an absolute ruler when he repeats “empire” twice in this passage (4.569, 578) as the

utopian destination, the empire here can definitely connote self-empire, the state in which a subject becomes king over oneself, which would very well be the emblem of what Adorno criticizes as a constructive subjectivity.²⁹ In other words, Demogorgon's vision is none other than an enchantment, which constantly affirms and justifies the subject in its belief in the history of positive dialectics. When the personified "Hope" constantly creates itself through a synthesis process, ("to hope, till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates" [4.573-74]), it comes to represent this "self" that is able to master oneself, to the point that its process of self-creation becomes an enchanting confirmation that the principle of optimism will incur progress. This self-destructive and self-evolving maneuver is perhaps what Coleridge would be endorsing as the ideal model of organic unity, but in order for it to work in the political context, we need those spells that craft our blind faith in such a progress in history.³⁰

The Act 4 of *Prometheus Unbound*, then, poses some questions for us in terms of what kind of political future may be available or unavailable. Is it ever possible to imagine an alternative form of political reform outside of positive history? Would it have been different if Prometheus had not been absent and proposed to step out of this overarching rule of the spells? Despite the textual resistance we have spotted in the first three Acts, I am prone to answer "no" to these questions, especially when I take into consideration how miserably Prometheus's virtue of mercy and forgiveness has been presented as utterly unproductive and ignorable. Perhaps Adorno felt the same kind of despair when he admitted the power of Hegel's philosophy: "If you concede even an inch to this [Hegelian] principle, then there is in fact no escape from it."³¹ Still, Shelley's work exhorts us to a critical thought over the political options available to us, especially about whether they are based on false but self-assuring belief and faith, even though

we may be always without a completely ground-breaking alternative available within our political and philosophical scope.

Notes

¹ All parenthetical citations of Shelley's work refer to *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat. 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2002) (henceforth *SPP*, when his prose works are cited). *PU* stands for *Prometheus Unbound*.

² This was the heart of mainstream Shelley criticism up until the early 1980s, a few representative examples of which include Harold Bloom, *Shelley's Mythmaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), and Earl R. Wasserman, *Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). But even after the tide of deconstruction has changed the critical terrains in Shelley studies, some critics retain their effort in locating centralized, definite meanings in Shelley's works. One of the boldest resistance against deconstructive criticism is Edward T. Duffy, *The Constitution of Shelley's Poetry: The Argument of Language in Prometheus Unbound* (London: Anthem Press, 2009). Conversely, a critical view on the very notion of unity in Romantic poetry is still found even in the 1970s; L. J. Swingle claims that searching for an affirmation of unity may lead to serious misreadings of the texts, from which *Prometheus Unbound* is not an exception. See his "Romantic Unity and English Romantic Poetry," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 74, no. 3 (1975): 366-68.

³ The correlation between Enlightenment and magical spells has been explored in Theodor W. Adorno's critique of Enlightenment, through which he claims the permeability between myth and Enlightenment. "Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth." See Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 8. Adorno also characterizes, in his elaboration on the idea of negative dialectics that resists Kantian and Hegelian model of positive dialectics, the absolute totality demanded by Enlightenment's universal history as a spell that somehow formulates itself into an idea. Though his theory of negative dialectics is not always useful in expounding Shelley's texts, the text's inherent resistance against totalized system has a certain degree of resonance with Adorno's discontent with Kant and Hegel. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York, Continuum, 1973).

⁴ Major examples of this line of criticism include Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Continuum, 1979), 39-73; Tilottama Rajan, *Romantic Narrative: Shelley, Hays, Godwin, Wollstonecraft* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), xv-xx; Karen Weisman, *Imageless Truths: Shelley's Poetic Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Christopher R. Miller, "Shelley's Uncertain Heaven," *ELH* 72, no. 3 (2005): 577-603.

⁵ Of course, it is not hard to find some post-deconstruction studies that still celebrate love. For example, Richard Isomaki and David Bromwich provide revised readings on love to foreground its political and reformative force; Isomaki argues that Prometheus and Asia's reciprocity model of love substitutes Shelley's immature vision of love in solitude (as he observes in *Alastor*), while Bromwich views love as a proper moral substitution for self-pity (as showcased as widely as in *Alastor*, *The Cenci*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) that has strong relevance to the violent spirit of revenge. See Richard Isomaki, "Love as Cause in *Prometheus Unbound*," *SEL* 29, no. 4 (1989): 655-73, and David Bromwich, "Love Against Revenge in Shelley's Prometheus," *Philosophy and Literature* 26, no. 2 (2002): 239-59. Another stereotypical reading of love worth mentioning is Sandro Jung, "Overcoming Tyranny: Love, Truth, and Meaning in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*," *The Keats-Shelley Review* 20, no. 1 (2006): 89-101.

⁶ Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1980), 92.

⁷ John Rieder, "The 'One' in *Prometheus Unbound*," *SEL* 25, no. 4 (1985): 775-800.

⁸ Rieder, 800.

⁹ Theresa Kelley, "Reading Justice: From Derrida to Shelley and Back," *Studies in Romanticism* 46, no. 3 (2007): 270-75.

¹⁰ Kelley, 284. I am aware that Kelley is not entirely convinced about exactly how Asia can distance herself from the drama's ideology; however, it is also clear that she at least wishes to salvage Asia as the symbol of "eternal Love."

¹¹ In this sense, Asia is already trapped inside what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines as German "authoritative 'universal' narratives where the subject remained unmistakably European," which are attributed to Kant, Hegel, and Marx. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 8.

¹² The ways in which knowledge and wisdom create power and strength are very well noted in Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*. Asia's consistent application of the knowledge-power formula resonates with Said's point, as the products of the knowledge Asia demonstrates are often rather "cultural strength" than physical one. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 31-49; especially 40 where Said stipulates Orientalism "as an exercise of cultural strength."

¹³ Jerrold E. Hogle, *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 103-12.

¹⁴ Hogle, 110.

¹⁵ I am referring to the text's frequent idealist nods at the idea of the subject becoming "king over" oneself, which I discuss later in the chapter.

¹⁶ Susan Hawk Brisman renders a different approach to this passage, while her overarching claim that Prometheus attempts to nay-say the language the external world pressures on him is to a certain degree resonant with my observations. She believes Prometheus reduces the significance and authority of the Furies by turning their emblems into rumor, oral report, or myth, but I beg to differ because, however antagonistic he may be against the Furies, he finds "the shadow of the truth" in what they have to say about the consequences of revolution. This passage is rather prophetic, as Prometheus relates the woeful imageries he already internalizes in his own mind. See Susan Hawk Brisman, "'Unsay[ing] His High Language': The Problem of Voice in *Prometheus Unbound*," *Studies in Romanticism* 16, no. 1 (1977): 56.

¹⁷ This is how the text wants to be understood, and Bromwich (whose argument stands opposed to mine) builds his argument entirely upon this suggested structure: "Prometheus retracts his curse out of love, and [] love itself carries the germ of a revolution." My view is different in that I find the text as the failure of its own design. See Bromwich, "Love Against Revenge," 253.

¹⁸ Rieder, "The 'One' in *Prometheus Unbound*," 782.

¹⁹ This is also the kernel of Kelley's argument. See Kelley, "Reading Justice," 273.

²⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New York: HarperPerennial, 1962). Kierkegaard's notion of universal love has a religious overtone, and he prioritizes universal love over partial, romantic love. The necessary conflict between the two, however, seems to present a similar texture of problem when it is applied in the political context.

²¹ This is a widely unsuspected belief about the work. Representative examples include Simon Haines's decisive comment that "Panthea has come from Prometheus," as "a message rather than [as] a messenger." See Haines, *Shelley's Poetry: The Divided Self* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 179.

²² This phrase nods simultaneously at the Furies' description of "Blood" as "new wine" (1.575), and at Asia's reference to love's unifying principle relating to "the wine of life, the human heart" (2.4.65).

²³ Perhaps this is the only way to truly escape from the grasp of universal history. Fredric Jameson's famous axiom on History as totality first comes to mind: "History is what hurts," but Adorno, of course from a different perspective, elaborates on the fate of universal history as follows: "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb. . . . If [Hegel] transfigured the totality of historic suffering into the positivity of the self-realizing absolute, the One and All that keeps rolling on to this day—with occasional breathing spells—would teleologically be the absolute of suffering." History as the history of bloodshed and conquest is made clear here again, but the last sentence's doomed vision of endless

suffering with some anaesthetics from belief that we are doing fine may account for Prometheus's inevitable choice. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 102; Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 320.

²⁴ The first of these views includes Anne K. Mellor, "Romanticism, Difference, and the Aesthetic," *Pacific Coast Philology* 34, no. 2, Convention Program Issue (1999): 132, and Gary Farnell, "Rereading Shelley," *ELH* 60, no. 3 (1993): 639-40. The second group's representative example is James B. Twitchell, "Shelley's Metapsychological System in Act IV of *Prometheus Unbound*," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 24 (1975): 42-48. For the last one, which resonates the most with my view of Act 3 as anticlimax, see William A. Ulmer, *Shelleyan Eros* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 100, Hugh Roberts, "Chaos and Evolution: A Quantum Leap in Shelley's Process," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 45 (1996): 183, and Kir Kuiken, *Imagined Sovereignities: Toward a New Political Romanticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 205-06.

²⁵ V. A. de Luca, "The Style of Millennial Announcement in *Prometheus Unbound*," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 28 (1979): 83.

²⁶ Apart from my argument on the flaws of the Earth, his neglect of the Moon's love seems to reflect Shelley's escalating tension with Mary Shelley at the time. In *Epipsychidion*, written shortly after the publication of *Prometheus Unbound*, the poet compares Mary Shelley to the "cold chaste Moon" (281) and himself to Endymion, lamenting that his identity was not free and rather under control of the Moon's whims: "And all my being became bright or dim / As the Moon's image in a summer sea, According as she smiled or frowned on me; / And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed; / Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead:— / For at her silver voice came Death and Life" (296-301).

²⁷ It is hard to find a critic who defines this passage as representing centripetal force as I have done here. For Mildred Sloan McGill, the Earth "symbolizes the centrifugal radiation" of what Prometheus represents as One Mind, thus expanding the Promethean value into the "wider sphere" (127). V. A. de Luca renders a more cautious approach, arguing that Shelley is balancing his view between the centrifugal of "tyranny" and the centripetal of "wilderness." Nancy Moore Goslee, on the other hand, with her careful study on both Shelley's text and sketches in his manuscripts, finds the "difficult paradox" in which "freedom . . . is patterned in a tyranny" (243), although she does not clearly dictate how the enmeshment of freedom and tyranny may transform the meaning of each. See Mildred Sloan McGill, "The Role of Earth in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*," *Studies in Romanticism* 7, no. 2 (1968): 127-28; V. A. de Luca, "The Style of Millennial Announcement," 100-01; and Nancy Moore Goslee, "Shelley at Play: A Study of Sketch and Text in His 'Prometheus' Notebooks," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (1985): 237-43.

²⁸ I borrow this terminology from Orrin N. C. Wang in a similar context, although my use of the term "sobriety" is much less complex than his. See Orrin N. C. Wang, *Romantic Sobriety: Sensation, Revolution, Commodification, History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

²⁹ For example, during his fierce confrontation against the Furies, he claims himself to be "king over myself[himself]" (1.492), which Shelley draws from Plato's notion of man of first degree of justice and happiness with his royal nature. This idea of self-rule which P. M. S. Dawson pits against governmental tyranny is, however, the ultimate form of constructive subjectivity that Adorno critiques as the illusory product of the Western tradition of dialectics. See P. M. S. Dawson, "'King Over Himself': Shelley's Philosophical Anarchism," *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin* 30 (1979): 16-35; Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, xix-xx, 43, 131.

³⁰ I find that the principle of hope laid out in *Prometheus Unbound* strongly resonates with what Lauren Berlant defines as "cruel optimism": "Any object of optimism promises to guarantee the endurance of something, the survival of something, the flourishing of something, and above all the protection of the desire that made this object or scene powerful enough to have magnetized an attachment to it. . . . But so many of the normative and singular objects made available for investing in the world are themselves threats to both the energy and the fantasy of ongoingness, . . . In scenarios of cruel optimism we are forced to suspend ordinary notions of repair and flourishing to ask whether the survival scenarios we attach to those affects weren't the problem in the first place." Love is indeed such a fit object for cruel optimism, with its quality of endurance, attachment, and even our belief—whether false or not—that it will remain to be our ongoing beacon of hope. If the act of suspending and suspecting such utopian principle is the job of the critics for Berlant, however, *Prometheus Unbound* inscribes this process of critique already within itself, and as such, its resistance to the familiarized faith in love and hope is all the more effective. See Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 48-49.

³¹ Theodor Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 21.

CHAPTER 4

CHARLOTTE SMITH'S PRECARIOUS COSMOPOLITANISM

There are two aspects of the utopian counterpart to this ontology. The first is seen in God's annihilation of empirical reality in the Apocalypse. . . . The second lies in the utopian view of man as a 'saint' who can achieve as inner mastery over the external reality that cannot be eliminated. . . its claims to offer a 'humanistic' solution to man's problems are self-refuting. For it is forced to deny humanity to the vast majority of mankind and to exclude them from the 'redemption' In so doing it reproduces the inhumanity of class society on a metaphysical and religious plane, in the next world, in eternity.

- George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*¹

While Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806) is often characterized as a poet of dejection and melancholia primarily due to the overarching gloom in her sonnets,² a number of critics have detected in her a utopian desire in the form of a cosmopolitan impulse which was persistent through her literary career, more remarkably in her novels. Most notably, Adriana Craciun has consistently traced the development of Smith's "cosmopolitan feminism" in her post-revolutionary novels to delineate its political and feminist potentials.³ Some scholars such as Anne K. Mellor and Fuson Wang take a politico-philosophical approach to Smith's cosmopolitanism in terms of Immanuel Kant's "cosmopolitan right,"⁴ while others locate her cosmopolitan ideals geographically, mainly in the American continent.⁵ Smith's cosmopolitanism, however, does not automatically translate into political optimism. While Mellor, Wang, and Leanne Maunu presuppose her cosmopolitan idea to be the basis of her utopianism, William Brewer and Craciun recognize her anxiety over cosmopolitan ideals. Brewer, who argues that Smith has moved her utopian vision from the revolutionary politics of France to the agrarian cosmopolitanism she locates in America, briefly notes that this "American

Utopia” is not rendered as complete, and “remains a blurry, pantisocratic ideal.”⁶ Whereas Brewer’s suspicion is short-lived and he attributes Smith’s hesitation to the lack of her direct knowledge of America,⁷ Craciun explores Smith’s cosmopolitanism exactly to define its limits. Finding germs of anxiety over her cosmopolitanism in her novel *Montalbert* (1795), Craciun locates, through the reading of her later novella “The Story of Henrietta” (1800), Smith’s limits around the “thorny intersection of Enlightenment feminism, transnational romance and racial difference” wherein her ever-expanding cosmopolitan vision crosses the borderlands of Europe and finally faces the colonial and racial Other.⁸

This chapter is also invested in exploring Smith’s anxiety in producing cosmopolitan ideals, but if Craciun’s analysis is involved in the post-colonial discourse around the distinction of different zones of Europe, Africa, and the Orient, mine investigates the ways in which Smith’s own middle-class moralism undermines the very root of her cosmopolitanism—the idea of universal benevolence. As Smith condemns both the vicious luxury and greed of upper-class society and the detestable vulgarity of the uneducated lower-class people to be unfit for her vision of universal benevolence, her sense of class distinction becomes an insurmountable threat to the cosmopolitan ideal she has initially conceived. Her class ideology not only urges her to seriously reduce the size of the community that may embody cosmopolitan values, but also contradicts the very basic premise of the idea of universal benevolence, namely that the benevolent will of human beings should apply to everyone universally without considerations of various conditions of existence. While geographical or racial differences are dominant factors in Craciun’s analysis of Smith’s cosmopolitanism, I believe Smith’s concern is rather on the moral quality of a certain race of people than on the biological differences between different races. So while George Boulukos argues that Smith’s critique of slavery is based on her racist views on

African slaves,⁹ he also insightfully points out that Smith is specifically afraid of the moral and cultural degradations that the unenlightened slaves may convey to the “virtuous and rational white womanhood” of Europe.¹⁰ In this sense, her racial disgust Boulukos identifies in “The Story of Henrietta” is merely a part of her larger commitment to the class ideology that foregrounds the moral superiority of the middle-class.¹¹

I am interested in elucidating the tensions between Smith’s cosmopolitanism and moralism, in light of her special attention to natural history and scientific education in the last decade of her literary career. Although I believe Smith is very much conscious of her own limits as a moralist in her political pursuit of cosmopolitan ideals, I argue that she fails to break free from the class ideology that is corroborated exactly through her own erudition in natural history. By looking into the ways in which botany, natural history, and education in such fields address Smith’s political questions in two of her works—her last novel *The Young Philosopher* (1798) and her posthumous poem *Beachy Head* (1807), I demonstrate the process in which she copes with the contradiction of her utopian thoughts. While she recognizes her own problem of classism in the pursuit of cosmopolitan ideals in *The Young Philosopher* and even tirelessly exerts to overcome it by proving the possibility of universal moral education, the very education that she prescribes for herself drags her down back to an argument against egalitarian principles. *Beachy Head* is a poetic space in which her efforts to disregard class distinctions clash with the inexorable distinction preconditioned by what Pierre Bourdieu calls *habitus*.¹² Smith’s cosmopolitanism, thus, remains precarious and uncanny, and as Lukács had once said of the problem of utopian configuration by the few, “the inhumanity” is bound to be reproduced “in eternity.”

I. Charlotte Smith's Sympathetic Universal Benevolence

As Evan Radcliffe explicates, there was a vibrant debate on universal benevolence in the eighteenth century, to be bipolarized and radicalized later in 1790s in the backdrop of Revolution.¹³ Of particular interest to Radcliffe is William Godwin, whose support for universal benevolence was so robust that his idea of justice was outright incompatible with any form of partial affections, while, as he explains, even his eighteenth-century precursors such as Earl of Shaftsbury and Francis Hutcheson (both the strongest proponents of universal benevolence in their time) thought that “universal benevolence and local attachments could support each other.”¹⁴ Of course, before Godwin set up his stance on universal benevolence, the fierce debate between Edmund Burke and Price already had universal benevolence as one of the central elements of conflict, preparing the criteria by which a person's political position could be identified; those who were in favor of universal benevolence would inevitably be sympathetic to the Revolution (or at least to its causes), while the other side prioritized local and patriotic attachment after the manner of Burke.¹⁵

In this sense, there is nothing strange about counting Charlotte Smith among the radical group that endorsed the principles of Revolution and critiqued narrow-minded patriotism supported by the British conservatives. Chris Jones, while detecting in Smith's novels the “conflict between the ‘partial passions’ towards kindred and close connections and an active universal benevolence,”¹⁶ affiliates her with Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Williams, and Godwin by foregrounding her works’ “affirm[ation] [of] the capacity of the individual to act from motives of an extensive benevolence . . . in pursuit of what Godwin defined as ‘political justice’.”¹⁷ Tone Brekke aligns the epistolary form of Smith's *Desmond* (1792) with that of Helen Williams' *Letters Written in France* (1790), to argue that Smith's work also embodies and

experiments on the egalitarian principle of Revolution based on the “radical collectivity” which departs from “Lockean, individualist and contractual understanding of society.”¹⁸ In her effort to reevaluate radicalism in Smith’s *The Banished Man* (1794)—which work Jones deems to be “fully exploring [the] conflict [between universalism and particularism]”¹⁹—, Antje Blank maintains that even this novel, which seems politically ambiguous in the aftermath of the Reign of Terror, is in effect a trenchant critique of Burkean doctrines of local affection.²⁰

While Smith is undoubtedly antagonistic against the localist and particularist thread of political conservatism, however, her endorsement of universal benevolence is not based on a clear-cut distinction between universal benevolence and local affection as posited by Godwin. Rather, her cosmopolitan ideal in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution incorporates both of these virtues by embodying Price’s mode of praxis in realizing universal benevolence through loving one’s neighbor, a point he corroborates with the biblical parable of the good Samaritan.²¹ Smith’s narrative moments that feature virtuous characters helping strangers manifest her belief that an intimate act of helping someone individually is not incommensurate with the good for the whole humanity. *Desmond*, written and published right after the Revolution and before the Reign of Terror, showcases just such intermixture of the principle of universal good and the affective praxis of sympathy and philanthropy, without regard to the conflict between them that she later realizes as Jones notes. Instead of the stock expression of universal benevolence, Smith uses terms such as “universal philanthropy”²² or “universal charity”²³ in describing the protagonist’s virtue of willful benevolence to other human beings. These phrases are impossible in Godwin’s philosophical system. Due to his strict distinction between justice for all based on reason and individual benevolence rooted in sentimental attachment, there is no way for him to reconcile these two different moral perspectives.

“Philanthropy,” in *Political Justice*, “is rather an unreflecting feeling, than a rational principle,” which “leads to blind partiality, inflicting calamity without remorse upon many perhaps, in order to promote the imagined interest of a few.”²⁴ While Godwin is concerned that the immediacy of sympathetic emotion is in direct conflict with the benefit of the whole, Smith, through the voice of Mr Bethel, delivers her idea that the “universal philanthropy” Desmond possesses “involves the freedom, and, . . . the happiness, not merely of this great people[French], but of the universe.”²⁵ Thus, “the philosopher, the philanthropist, the citizen of the *world*” represent, for Smith, a seamless formula of cosmopolitanism; as of 1792, Smith’s ideal was formed from the implicit dialectical process which, perhaps without her knowing, involves the Godwinian opposition between the philosopher’s rational aspiration for the universal and the philanthropist’s affective attention to the individual, which are sublated into the cosmopolitan man who “hails his fellow man, disencumbered of those paltry distinctions that debased and disguised him.”²⁶

In addition to the refutation of Godwinian separation of philanthropy and justice, her idealism demands an intimate kind of sympathy, far more intimate and proactive than what Adam Smith have defined it to be in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Dismissing the notion of universal benevolence as a practically impossible, pseudo-religious concept of “the business of God and not of man,”²⁷ Adam Smith fashions sympathy to be the firm basis of his idealized commercial civil society, for which purpose sympathy should remain as an impersonal mode of human connection that filters out the immediate effect of sentimental engagements through the objective mediation of the impartial spectator.²⁸ As Nancy Armstrong points out, Adam Smith’s sympathy is “something that one feels rather than something that one does,” as he maintains the distance “between the viewer and the scene of human suffering . . . with the self-enclosure of the individual mind” that results in a rigorous fracturing of the subject into the

spectator and the agent.²⁹ With the form of the narrative, however, Charlotte Smith represents sympathy as something that one does rather than simply feels. In the scene where Desmond undertakes to help an impoverished French woman, what he does most of the time is to listen to her narration of misfortunate incidents. When she finishes her long account, Desmond does not bother to speculate about her situation with generalized reason or to recall the impartial spectator inside him. Rather, assuming that her explanation is by itself heart-rending and sure to move the reader's sympathy—Mr Bethel's for Desmond, and the novel reader's for Charlotte Smith—he simply concludes the scene with a firm and expedited decision: "I hope it is unnecessary to say, that I immediately set the widow's heart at ease on this score; and undertook to pay for her's and her children's conveyance [to France]."³⁰ The immediacy of the sympathetic imagination is emphasized, along with the importance of immediate action to alleviate the suffering.

Narrative experimentations on universal benevolence and sympathy, however, are not an exclusively patented theme for Charlotte Smith; Godwin also reveals his possibly conflicted views on those values in such works as *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799),³¹ albeit with a quite different agenda than Smith's. Especially in *St. Leon*, written after he experienced a brief period of happiness from his short-lived marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft,³² Godwin acknowledges the moral benefit of domestic affections and even the possibility that "domestic and private affections" may be reconciled with "a profound and active sense of justice."³³ Godwin's narrative, however, does not actually show such reconciliation. While domestic affections are suggested as what may possibly reform the protagonist's misdirected sense of honor and deplorable habit of gambling, *St. Leon*'s inadvertent choice to possess the supernatural powers of endless wealth and life urges him to abandon and be abandoned by his family. These powers not only isolate him from domestic or personal affections, but also put an

“immeasurable distance . . . between [him] and the rest of the world.”³⁴ The novel seems to suggest that this kind of solitude is the necessary prerequisite for a universal benefactor, as he dreams as follows: “I might spend a life, in a manner, in every country that was fortunate enough to allure my stay, spreading improvements, dispensing blessings, and causing all distress and calamity to vanish from before me.”³⁵ As it is later found out, his idea of universal benevolence is experimented in a purely materialistic context, and the possibility that his benevolent acts are from any form of private sympathy is completely excluded. Not surprisingly, the failure of this model of universal benevolence has nothing to do with elements of private or partial feelings but with material conditions in the macro-scale economy.³⁶

On the contrary, Charlotte Smith’s notion of universal benevolence is strongly rooted in the sympathetic dynamics between individuals, which are enabled through their shared moral refinement. Its problem, therefore, does not originate from material conditions as Godwin has imagined, nor does it come from what Geoffrey Hartman detects as “the sympathy paradox” in the cultural historiography of moral sentiments: “The paradox of the sympathetic imagination is that the more successful an expanding sensibility becomes, the more evidence we find of actual insensibility.”³⁷ Rather, it is the inevitable link between one’s class status and the degree to which that person is endowed with moral education that ultimately puts her cosmopolitan ideals in crisis. Charlotte Smith may not distinguish persons based on their moneyed capital, as she herself was born into a wealthy middle-class family later to be impoverished due to her dissipated husband. But what she cannot but value is the cultural capital that defines moral virtue and manners of the individual, and with that standard, it becomes possible that certain individuals may be disqualified as a recipient of universal benevolence. With this fatal restraint on the scope of her notion of universal benevolence, her ideals are seriously undermined in that

they are unable to realize universality, a tragic point she has to explore in *The Young Philosopher*.

II. Cosmopolitanism in Crisis

The Young Philosopher recounts the tumultuous adventures of George Delmont and the Glenmorrises—Mr. Glenmorris, his wife Laura, and their daughter Medora. Although Delmont is the titular character, the majority of the novel consists of the disturbing experiences of the Glenmorrises, including Laura's escape from her mother's gothic imprisonment and risky elopement with Mr. Glenmorris, the kidnapping of Medora and her escapes from the hands of self-interested villains. Although Laura brings Medora from America to England to claim a portion of her mother's property to guarantee her daughter a financially secure life, the family reaches the conclusion that they should abandon the luxury their natural connection with the British system may provide and resume their peaceful abode in America, faced with the distressing calamities incurred by the monstrous individuals in British society.

Judging from some explicit political opinions voiced by Mr. Glenmorris, it is understandable that many critics view this novel as a manifestation of Smith's firm belief in a cosmopolitan society centered in America. Besides the critical last moment where he strongly argues against his friend Mr. Armitage, his correlation of the American continent with a cosmopolitan ideal is seen earlier in the novel, in his letter to Laura where he gladly accepts Delmont as his potential son-in-law:

Of an ordinary character . . . of one of those men who cannot exist without the accommodations, the luxuries, the frivolous amusements of London or Paris, I know this would be asking a great sacrifice: but it is not to the fastidious fine man

of the day I give my child; it is to a citizen of the world; to one divested not only of local prejudice, but I hope of all prejudices; to him, who can live wherever his fellow men can live; to him who can enjoy the spectacle of a new continent rising into a great state by its cultivators—*fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, bridges; where an hundred years ago, all was wild, woody, and uncultivated.*—Such a man, I know from his letters, and from your account of him, Delmont is. (169, italic by the author)³⁸

The description of an American ideal, which she borrows from St. Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782),³⁹ is conjoined with the vision of an ideal man, "a citizen of the world"; this correlation renders the American continent as a political clean slate where the cosmopolitan man can build up a new utopian society. This specific placement of cosmopolitan imagination in America is apparently rooted in Thomas Paine's influential ruminations upon the political impact of American nature. As he argues that American independence is a world-historical event in the sense that it has been "accompanied by a revolution in the principles and practice of governments,"⁴⁰ he deems America's natural scene of magnitude to be the symbol of freedom from European prejudices and vices, accordingly resonant with the political development of "the principles of universal reformation" by which human mind is encouraged to "see his species, not [as] a natural enemy, but as kindred."⁴¹ The vastness of American nature, in other words, nurtures a universal mind that promotes cosmopolitan thoughts that disregard boundaries between people, with its imagery of immense boundlessness.

The way in which Smith imagines nature's role in educating human mind, however, is not as straightforward as Paine's model wherein the natural sublime almost immediately

engenders political principles. Nature by itself is not of great significance to Smith; rather, it is the sense of solidarity a person shares with others through the progressive will to cultivate nature that counts. As is obvious from the passage in Mr. Glenmorris's letter, "wild, woody, uncultivated" land is rendered valueless, while the cultivators' development of such land into cities and fertile fields are suggested as the visions of the agrarian ideal. But Mr. Glenmorris's purpose of appropriating Crèvecoeur's agrarian vision is to give a moral appraisal of persons that participate in the development of the lands, and the emphasis is placed on the compatibility among "the fellow men" whose status of moral refinement is implicitly assumed. Their works of progress are viewed not as a local act of promoting the surrounding environment, but as a global desire and project to be "benevolen[t] to the whole human race" (352) as Mr. Glenmorris later specifies. In this way, the act of cultivation in the agrarian and civilizational sense becomes commensurate with the idea of cultivating mind.

As the moral refinement as "the citizens of the world" is assumed to be universally and equally available to anyone, confining it as what pertains only to a select group with specific moral qualities does not necessarily undermine the overarching cosmopolitan vision. Underlying Smith's formulation of a cosmopolitan man as someone devoid of the existent prejudices of the world is Paine's idea that nature does the work of education that fundamentally transforms the way in which human mind operates in the political context. Theoretically, nature is open to everyone, so if a cosmopolitan vision can be conceived under the influence of nature's grandeur, it is also possible that the ring of morally-refined, cosmopolitan-minded people may expand until it encompasses everybody on earth.

In *The Young Philosopher*, however, Smith's distinction between good characters and bad ones does not rely on whether they are exposed to nature, but on what kind of educational

process they have undergone in conceiving nature. Thus, whether a character is interested in the study of botany looms as the significant criteria by which we can evaluate him or her. My first point about the novel is that by taking this step of narrowing the way nature affects human morals down to botanical education, Smith loses the necessary connection formed by Paine between the natural sublime and the aspiration for universality. Instead, she moves away from the macro-scopic view of nature Paine presents from the American continent to engage in a microscopic observation of the details of nature through botanical science. The second point I suggest is that once botanical education counts as the indispensable curriculum leading to moral superiority, the vision of cosmopolitanism and the right to be in company with “the fellow men” are no longer available to everyone. Accordingly, lower-class people, whose economic status would not allow them to pay attention to the Linnaean denomination of plants, are in effect excluded from the cosmopolitan utopia she seems to envision. Thus, the group of citizens of the world never grows in size but is reduced down to just a few characters, contradicting the very principle of cosmopolitan ideals such as universal benevolence and egalitarianism.

From the first volume of the novel, Smith begins to distinguish good characters from evil ones based on the way they are educated. While Adolphus Delmont, George Delmont’s elder brother, “obtain[s] the character of a sullen cold-blooded fellow” (19) with his own sense of self-importance combined with the preceptor Mr. Jeans’s unfeeling education, George Delmont develops quite a different character by refusing the same education and being taught by her mother to become “the benefactor instead of the successful destroyer of his fellow men” (30). From his childhood, Delmont tries to help impoverished people, lending his ear to their “piteous story” (21) and distributing his little allowances to them, against Mr. Jeans’s remonstrances originating from his “unfeeling apathy and systematic callousness” (22). An embodiment of an

ideal student formed by Rousseauian romantic education,⁴² Delmont is nurtured to be a near-perfect figure for Smith to explore the possibility of a citizen of the world, when his benevolent character cannot suffer any sense of discrimination against the poor people who are, in Delmont's view, suffering from the systematic flaws and corruptions of the society.

There is not as much description of how other virtuous characters in the novel are educated, but Smith consistently makes sure that they have studied botany in some way. Delmont himself benefits from his mother's considerate establishment of "a little conservatory," the plants and flowers in which serve not only as an ideal surroundings for his own study, but as an educational place for Delmont to teach his youngest sister Louisa "to draw scientifically the blossoms which perfumed the air" (32). The heroines of the novel, Laura Glenmorris and Medora, also prove to have been educated in botany; one of the prominent activities George and Medora do together at his lodging of Upwood is to collect, name, and draw various plants.⁴³

With the prevalent presence of botanical education among the major good characters, botany begins to function as the evaluative criteria for the characters, and Smith subtly but firmly draws a line between those who have knowledge of botanical science and those who don't. Smith has already set up an organic connection between a certain person's moral/political quality and his/her capability to cultivate nature in some of her previous novels; in *Desmond*, the protagonist's French aristocratic friend, Montfleuri, represents his virtue through his prosperous vineyard, which is a result of his great management of the peasants without oppression, while the neighboring vineyard assumes "the appearance of a languid and reluctant cultivation" under a different, possibly corrupt and oppressive master.⁴⁴ Likewise, the lack of botanical knowledge and gardening skill corresponds to maliciousness in character in *The Young Philosopher*. Mrs. Crewkherne, the aunt of George Delmont and a reactionary hypocrite, is definitely unfriendly

with plants: “[The path] then led them into a copse, where, as autumn was now very far advanced, the fallen leaves, loaded with moisture, augured but ill to the shoes of Mrs. Crewkherne, while the briars and underwood every moment committed hostilities on her nice gown and elegant cloak” (55). Her vanity and desire for luxury are satirized, and the physical vitiation of her luxurious garments by the plants extends the satire onto any social subjects that would pursue their own self-interests, including lawyers and merchants in London who end up harassing the Glenmorris family and George Delmont. Lady Mary, Laura’s tyrannical mother, has “paled plantations” (101), as “most of the trees” in her new plantations “had absolutely refused to grow” (92). The family of Darnell, who kidnaps Medora for the purpose of marrying her and stealing her potential inheritance, also poorly manages their green house, virtually growing no plants inside and letting its door disintegrate with decay (316).

In contrast, the “good” characters take advantage of their botanical knowledge to save themselves from those who imprison or hurt them. Laura, when escaping from Lady Mary and eloping with Mr. Glenmorris, remembers the barrenness of her mother’s plantations, whose emptiness represents her mother’s moral inferiority and becomes an open exit from the gothic imprisonment in Sandthwaite castle (101). Later in Scotland where Mr. Glenmorris is a laird, he is unfortunately kidnapped by American pirates, and Laura is again plunged into another oppressive hands of his distant relatives, the malignant Kilbrodies. After managing to escape from them, she is introduced to a temporary shelter among rocks, and here Laura finds plants that properly provide her with both effective concealment from the pursuers and strength to “endure life” despite her “heart’s deep wounds” (128) made from the loss of her husband and new-born baby. As the narration is delivered from Laura Glenmorris to George Delmont, her vivid description about the “vegetable ornaments” (128) in and around the cavern strengthens the

sense of connection Laura makes between herself and Delmont, through the medium of shared keen attention to nature. Smith highlights this moment, which is a turning point for Laura's recovery and subsequent successful escape, by providing a cascade of footnotes with Linnaean scientific names of the plants Laura recognizes. Presenting the Latinate names of the plants for the first time in her novel, Smith begins to participate in the small league of botanists Laura establishes within the fiction.⁴⁵ Her daughter also benefits from her intimate knowledge about plants while escaping from her kidnappers. Medora makes a courageous escape from Mr. Darnell's house by descending from her cell's window down the wall "by the help of the vine" which seems to her "capable of supporting a greater weight than [hers]" (316), and her calculated maneuver is attributed to her detailed observations on the plants that surround the house even when she is hastily ushered in (312). Subsequently, she escapes through the very green house which has decayed in the hands of the Darnells (which, again, symbolizes the state of moral corruption they are in), breaking down the locked door with a simple tool of a "broken iron rake" (318-19).

As botanical education might appear to open the world to universal understanding, the character evaluation based on botanical education by itself seems sensible. But since botanical education, along with other kinds of education of science and manners available to middle and upper class, is not available to the poor, botanical education as a qualification criteria for a cosmopolitan community turns into a source of sour contempt against the vulgarity possessed by the uneducated lower-class. In the latter half of the novel, therefore, in his search for Medora, George Delmont shows quite a different character than the one we see at the beginning of the work, where he intensely sympathizes with people in a "variety of wretchedness" (21). As the cultivated state of mind becomes ever more important in formulating cosmopolitan visions,

Delmont loses temper as a calm philosopher and reveals his antipathy to the uncultivated. When he first converses with a servant of the hotel where Medora has been kidnapped, Delmont shows an extreme degree of impatience with the servant's obscure babbling, with angry exclamations such as "You distract me" or "This is insupportable," while "stamping impatiently" when his "patience wholly fail[s] him" (228). In fact, although the servant is obviously not equipped with the best communication skills, it is rather Delmont's hasty interventions that fragment the whole dialogue, but Delmont constantly blames him for unclear articulations or blurry references. The servant seems rather a nice person when he tries to fetch him "a little something" (228) as soon as he recognizes Delmont's pale face, but his willingness to help him—one of the crucial virtues that constitute a citizen of the world—is simply ignored by Delmont.⁴⁶ He is rather suspicious that this servant might be collaborating in the crime, judging from the seeming signs of lack of education.

Perhaps George Delmont may be excused for his rudeness since he is desperately in search of his lover. However, a similar event occurs between him and his own servant Clement, when they are about to find out Medora is in the territory of Sir Harry Richmond, who is said to collect girls and women to fill up his own harem. When Clement relates to him what he has heard from a passer-by, Delmont again shows his impatience, with rather imperious injunctions: "make thy story as short as thou canst"; "Don't make thy narrative more tedious by imitating his dialect . . . tell me only what he spoke"; "if you explain yourself no faster you will drive me mad" (279-80). Again, the manner of speech of those less educated people irritates him, while he earlier recognizes Clement as "his old and faithful servant, from whom he concealed nothing" (278). That the servant's name is Clement—meaning "mercy"—adds further symbolic darkness

to Delmont's character; his chiding of Clement signifies that his sympathetic and merciful character is disfigured by now.

Along with these two incidents that are symptomatic of Delmont's class consciousness that would not truly appreciate those who are without manners or proper language, Smith clearly articulates Delmont's—or rather Smith's own—attitude toward “the inferior ranks of people,” with a strong distaste for their uncultivated state: “Exposed, in the disguise [Medora] had assumed, to the familiarity of the inferior ranks of people, whose grossness must shock her, whose licentious freedoms terrify her, he thought with apprehension of all she might have endured” (278). Since Medora has donned clothes of a chamber maid for disguise (277), Delmont is afraid that “grossness” and “licentious freedoms” that belong to those of lower class may have done harm to her, while these vices are not exclusively theirs and are also shared by some greedy aristocrats or vulturous upper middle-class individuals.

Delmont's discriminatory views on lower-class people do not remain solely his own individual flaw; with her narrative depiction of Medora's itinerary from Mr. Darnell to Sir Harry Richmond's estate, Smith herself seems to question the moral integrity of those vulgar characters. Immediately after her escape through the dilapidated green house, she encounters a group of beggars and passes through them. A boy from the group follows her and “demand[s] [her] charity,” but she simply disengages herself to catch a passing cart. There is nothing strange about Medora's neglect of the beggars, as she is on the run from the pursuers dispatched by Mr. Darnell, but Smith portrays these beggars' appearances in unsavory terms, and Medora herself does not see any difference between them and Darnell's brutal pursuers. She later comes across Adolphus Delmont and tries to escape from him as well, and genuinely wishes to be helped by the peasants passing her by: “Had they known the sickness of heart, the weariness I felt, I am

persuaded, however, that they would have acted like the good Samaritan” (324). Her anticipation of “good Samaritan” sort of help is, however, betrayed by a deceitful scheme of a network of deplorable individuals, whose vulgarity merges with Sir Harry Richmond’s aristocratic lasciviousness. A peasant woman directs her to take the wagon to London, “driven by a very honest man” (325), but a “very decent looking woman” in the same wagon (326) lures her into Sir Richmond’s place. While it is unclear if the peasant woman and the “honest” coachman are a part of Sir Richmond’s routine scheme of abducting women, Smith’s own idealism of a good Samaritan comes under scrutiny. She exemplifies through Medora’s tale that the act of helping a stranger is possibly problematic not only because the stranger may not be worthy of such help, but also because the helper may not be trustworthy either.

Then what is the message of the novel Smith intends in terms of cosmopolitanism? The last pages of the novel provide us, in an emphatic manner, with a prolonged debate over whether the Glenmorris family, along with Delmont, should remove to the American continent or not, with Delmont and Mr. Armitage trying to persuade Mr. Glenmorris to remain in England to instigate reforms from inside, and Mr. Glenmorris persisting in cosmopolitan views decorated with hopes in America. Glenmorris’s view is exactly what Smith must have maintained for the whole decade of 1790s:

You[Armitage, his friend] agree with me, that true philanthropy does not consist in loving John, and Thomas, and George, and James, because they are our brothers, our cousins, our neighbours, our countrymen, but in benevolence to the whole human race; if that be true, let me ask you whether I can be thoroughly contented here, where I see that the miseries inflicted by the social compact greatly exceed the happiness derived from it . . . we will once more cross the

Atlantic, and I will try to teach him[George], that wherever a thinking man enjoys the most uninterrupted domestic felicity, and sees his species the most content, that is his country. (352)

Glenmorris certainly reiterates Smith's cosmopolitanism of universal philanthropy as found in *Desmond*, by arguing "true philanthropy" consists in "benevolence to the whole human race." This claim is, for Smith, entirely untenable at this juncture. Thus, toward the end of this speech, Glenmorris subtly narrows the boundary of benevolence, first to the domestic sphere, then to "his species." The vision of turning everyone into a citizen of the world is gone, and now "his species" may mean only the same sort of persons who are of the same degree of cultivation.

Ultimately, however, Smith does not seem to be interested in this debate about whether to remain in Britain or depart for America. In the Preface to the novel, Smith steps off the grid of opinions, distancing herself from any characters: "There may be many traits, many ideas, even many prejudices, which may be necessary to support or render these characters natural, that are by no means those of the composer of the book; I declare therefore against the conclusion, that *I* think either like Glenmorris or Armitage, or any other of my personages" (5, Smith's italic). The author attributes all of the philosophical observations and meditations she has possibly gone through to the characters themselves, almost as if she wants to excuse herself from any possible prejudices she may be blamed for. Her sense of failure is clearly pronounced in the Preface, as she admits that "[her] original plan differed materially from that [she] ha[s] executed" (5). The beginning of the novel right after the Preface suggests that her original design was to continue with the cosmopolitan ideal she had been dreaming over the decade since *Desmond*. The work starts with a relatively insignificant scene, where the obviously selfish and morally bankrupt Dr. Winslow's group is saved by George Delmont from the danger of being detained on the road

when the storm is approaching. Smith's intention to establish the character of Delmont as an unwavering philosopher who does not hesitate in helping strangers—even when they are not of his species—is, thus, denied as the novel progresses. Smith blames him for “forget[ting] his pretensions” and losing “equality of temper,” and observes that he “has no claim to the character of a Philosopher” (5). Maybe she is right to note that *The Young Philosopher* is “a misnomer” (5) for the novel, but I believe it may represent Smith's immature (young) philosophical status, from which she struggles onward to adjust her idealism around universal benevolence and sympathy.

III. Cosmopolitanism in Suspension

If, as I have interpreted, the botanical studies and education produce a political dead-end for Smith by revealing the essentially discriminatory design of her cosmopolitanism, it is natural to expect her to abandon anything related to botany. The last eight years of her life from 1798 through 1806, however, see her assiduous effort to educate herself not only on the subject of botany but on other areas of natural history, including ornithology, ichthyology, and entomology. Through a series of works such as *Rural Walks* (1795), *Minor Morals* (1798), *Conversations Introducing Poetry* (1804), and *The Natural History of Birds* (1807), Smith produces educational books for children as well as educates herself so as to be able to provide acute observations and revisions to the existent system of natural history.

By deepening her study of natural history in the harshest and most impoverished period of her life, Smith may have wanted to prove to herself that such an education is not necessarily a privilege to those with property (though if that were the case, Smith would be missing the point that she is already with an abundance of cultural capital, no matter how little money she has

now). But I believe her mastery of the Linnaean system of taxonomy establishes an important symbolization for her revised political vision. In this section, I first explore the ways in which Smith's approach to the classification system of natural history leads to a version of cosmopolitanism that embraces an egalitarian view of the people in *Beachy Head*. While the sheer amount of Linnaean footnotes attached to various natural objects seems to indicate Smith's conformity to the taxonomic system that encourages cognitive divisions in identifying things (and thus metaphorically humans), she does not simply remain in the boundaries made by rigorous classifications, but seeks to reimagine the boundaries between disparate entities to transcend them. This insight she attains is in turn applied to the way in which she views persons, and now she is able to regard a person's vice not as one's own innate quality, but as the structural necessity originating from social surroundings. Thus, the presence of Parson Darby at the end of the poem symbolizes the resuscitation of universal benevolence that no longer discriminates between people, which leads to an implication that everyone still has a potential to be reformed into a citizen of the world as long as the conditions are met and that person has the will to reform oneself. Toward the end of this section, however, I suggest that she is ultimately unable to overcome the original limitation posed by the conflict between cosmopolitan universalism and moral particularism, as she emphasizes the superstitious tendency of the uneducated to be a sign of inferiority and ends up distancing herself from them.

Around 1797, she initiated her contact with the natural history establishment, when she began to be in correspondence with Dr. James Edward Smith, the founding member and president of the Linnaean Society in England. Dr. Smith encouraged her to use botanical nomenclature in *The Young Philosopher*,⁴⁷ and despite her botanical capability of drawing and coloring plants, Charlotte Smith posits herself as a pretender to botanical science in her first

letter to him: “But from the masters towards the humblest pretenders to science, there is a degree of indulgence generally found, on which I fearlessly rely when that claim is strengthened by my conviction of Dr. Smith’s enlarged philanthropy.”⁴⁸ In this rather obsequious statement calling for help (to get herself employed in the work of drawing plants), Smith deems that there is a necessary connection between science and the moral capability to harbor philanthropy, which idea may have affected the underlying theme of *The Young Philosopher* about botanical education and morality. In the Preface to *The Young Philosopher*, Smith admits that her botanical knowledge in terms of the Linnaean system is far too underdeveloped and limited, describing the few footnotes she adds as “such ornaments as a very slight knowledge of natural history” (6).

In the next decade, however, Smith tries to make a leap from the level of “humblest pretenders” to that of “masters.” On the one hand, she teaches herself by referring to the existing books: “In writing these pages of prose, simple as they are, I have in more than one instance been mortified to discover, that my own information was very defective, and that it was necessary to go continually to books.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, however, she utilizes her own visual and tactile experiences to supplement her Linnaean knowledge,⁵⁰ to the degree that she revises what is written in the scholarly works she has been referencing. What were once simple imitations of others’ Linnaean notes in *The Young Philosopher* begin to take a more complex form that occasionally combines Linnaean names of plants and animals with Smith’s own commentary. For example, in a footnote to “missel thrush” in *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, she writes: “Missel Thrush. *Turdus visivorous*. Mr. White, in his account of singing birds [in the *Natural History of Selborne*], puts this among those whose song ceases before Midsummer. It is certainly an error. This remarkable bird, which cannot be mistaken for any other, began to sing

so early as the second week of January; and now I hear him uttering a more clamorous song, the 8th of July, between the flying showers.”⁵¹ Also, in her final letter to Dr. Smith, we no longer see a “pretender” to science in her. While the main purpose of the letter is to introduce him a youth named Mr. Geary and get permission for him to peruse Joseph Banks’s botanical collections,⁵² she adds a piece of empirical information that would challenge what Dr. Smith has published: “I observe that the *Flora Britannica* says the *Oxalis corniculata*, is found about Exeter & in different places in Devonshire; without naming any other county—and I have seen (I know not where) mention of this plant, as a proof of the mildness of the air in that part of England. I was therefore surprised to see it in the garden of a Mr. Fearon of Cuckfield, who is a botanist, & told me he found it growing certainly wild, in a field two or three miles from the town of Cuckfield in Sussex”⁵³ Charlotte Smith here challenges the information in Dr. Smith’s *Flora Britannica*, and tries to repudiate the local pride (“a proof of the mildness of the air in that part of England”) by providing a piece of empirical evidence she gathers from Mr. Fearon’s garden. No longer can we detect her humbleness as a student in her first letter: “my passion for plants—I was going to say botany, but that I feel my ignorance too strongly to pretend to any knowledge of the science beyond what I have casually gathered from drawing plants,”⁵⁴

How, then, does her mild rebellion against the Linnaean taxonomy contribute to the nurturing of egalitarian thoughts in *Beachy Head*? For one, with the example of various forms of orchid flowers, Smith demonstrates the importance of appreciating differences and varieties within one species. She meticulously distinguishes the one resembling bees (“*Ophrys apifera*”) from the other resembling flies (“*Ophrys muscifera*”), and critiques Carl Linnaeus’s rash judgment in categorizing them all under one name: “Linnæus, misled by the variations to which some of this tribe are really subject, has perhaps too rashly esteemed all those which resemble

insects, as forming only one species, which he terms *Ophrys insectifera*. See *English Botany*.” (p. 236).⁵⁵ Although she is informed by *English Botany*, a periodical published by Dr. Smith and his Linnaean Society, her emphasis is on the importance of recognizing differences between the bee-shaped orchid and the fly-shaped one. They are different, but not hierarchized; instead, Linnaeus’s clumsy abstraction of those different kinds into one denomination of “*Ophrys insectifera*” could possibly ignore the value of each and every object in nature. Appropriated in the identification of human subjects, her attention to details may open up the possibility of respecting people’s own individual characters.

Smith goes on to use more radical examples that disrupt taxonomic distinctions, and she does this not merely to “disable[] or help[] to disable rigid binomialism”⁵⁶ as Theresa Kelley argues; rather, the main point she makes is that a stereotypical moral character of one entity can easily transfer into a disparate figure that previously had no such trait. By undermining the taxonomic boundaries in a way that hybridizes moral assumptions allotted to specific species, Smith metaphorically develops possibilities of avoiding a kind of essentialism in evaluating people. For example, take a look at how Smith traces the imagery of cuckoo in various plants, testing how the bird’s moral insensitivity can be imbued into them. Smith corrects, for one, Shakespeare’s unprofessional botanical practice in the case of “cuckoo-flowers” (591): “cuckoo-flowers. *Lychnis dioica*. Shakespeare describes the Cuckoo buds as being yellow [in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* V.ii.894]. He probably meant the numerous Ranunculi, or March marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) which so gild the meadows in Spring; but poets have never been botanists. The Cuckoo flower is the *Lychnis flos-cuculi*” (p. 242). Perhaps with an ambition to establish herself as someone adept at both poetry and botany, she starts off with a Latinate name of “*Lychnis dioica*” in which “*dioica*” is a purely sexual description typical of Linnaean

nomenclature,⁵⁷ pointing to the fact that male and female flowers are separated. But then, Smith gives it another Linnaean name of “*Lychnis flos-cuculi*,” this time to specify that this Latin name featuring cuculus/cuculi (cuckoo) is properly correlative to the cuckoo flower that she is observing.⁵⁸ Returning to the name that includes the bird’s figure, Smith transfers the moral degenerations of the cuckoos onto the flowers. Due to the cuckoo’s parasitic nature of laying its eggs in other birds’ nests, the bird’s name is associated with negative connotations in terms of sexuality and domesticity. Smith is also aware of the cuckoo’s disruptive habit; in one of the poems in her *Fables* (1807), “The Dictatorial Owl,” the titular bird takes an “orphan cuckoo” as an example of a bird in trouble who needs to be advised never to be wed. Smith uses cuckoo-flower in the context of the solitary hermit’s fragmentary “rhapsodies” (576), in which the flower becomes an objective correlative for the hermit’s self-alienation from society and nature with the cuckoo’s anti-domestic and anti-social trait. While the name of cuckoo flower may simply denote the coming of Spring, as its seasonal time of blossom converges with that of cuckoos’ migratory arrival, Smith intentionally delays its arrival in the poem till the Spring’s decline, “Retiring May to lovely June” (589), to be consistent in her use of hybrid imagery embedded in the hybrid name. Another possible example explored by Mark Fulk is the owl in “The Dictatorial Owl,” whose name is “Strixaline.” Fulk believes that this name may have been derived from the Linnaean classification of the nightshade (*strychnos*)—which is used to describe the bird’s beady eyes—, as the plant is poisonous and the owl also spreads verbal poison.⁵⁹ Although it is more plausible to think that Smith is merely using the Linnaean name of one genus of the owl, “*Strix*,” Fulk’s observation suggests a possibility that Smith considers a case of an animal reflecting a plant’s toxic trait.

These ideas garnered from the hybrid names—both in common language and in Latin—resonate with the way in which Smith regards the good and the bad in the poem, especially in the case of smugglers and honest farmers. While Smith denounces the “contraband trade” as what is “carried on for the coarsest and most destructive spirits,” she also acknowledges that they are not necessarily criminals by birth: “The shepherds and labourers of this tract of country, a hardy and athletic race of men, are almost universally engaged in the contraband trade” (p. 225). In accordance with the fashion of naming in the case of “cuckoo-flower,” the smuggler who used to be an honest laborer may be properly called “smuggler-laborer”—a laborer who has come to don the smuggler’s vicious character. As such, Smith does not blame their dishonest occupation as originating from their own personal dishonesty; rather, she suggests that the problem is structural, as it is virtually impossible to live only on the so-called honest labor. The contraband business is described as a survival tactics, not as an ambition for luxury, although both the smuggling and the ambition are categorized as dishonest pursuits in opposition to the agricultural/stockbreeding labor:

from some ridged point

That overlooks the sea, his eager eye

Watches the bark that for his signal waits

To land its merchandize:—Quitting for this

Clandestine traffic his more honest toil,

The crook abandoning, he braves himself

The heaviest snow-storm of December’s night,

When with conflicting winds the ocean raves,

And on the tossing boat, unfearing mounts

To meet the partners of the perilous trade,
And share their hazard. Well it were for him,
If no such commerce of destruction known,
He were content with what the earth affords
To human labour; even where she seems
Reluctant most. (179-93)

Despite her consistent bias toward “more honest toil” whose practitioner is supposed to be “content with what the earth affords / To human labour,” Smith concedes that what the earth yields as a result of such labor could possibly be minimal by describing the consequences a poor honest hind may meet when not participating in the smuggling business (193-258). The smuggler, to Smith’s view, does not quit his honest toil simply because he is in pursuit of fortune; he has to withstand the “heaviest snow-storm” and endanger himself “on the tossing boat” to complete this “perilous trade,” and her repetitive emphasis on “hazard” renders the transaction more or less heroic.⁶⁰ “Commerce of destruction,” in this sense, may denote not so much smuggling’s moral degradation as its practical danger in performance. As if to show her sympathy for them in a symbolic way, Smith aligns the smuggler’s overwatching position (“some ridged point / That overlooks the sea”) with the poetic speaker’s own observatory post, sharing the same perspective over the Beachy Head area.⁶¹

The figure of Parson Darby, a hermit appearing at the end of the poem, embodies Smith’s revised view on human vice, stepping closer to an ideal form of cosmopolitanism. Using a real historical figure who actually resided in a cave in Beachy Head and made it his duty to save those who were drowning at sea, Smith revives the virtue of helping strangers, this time universally indeed. As if he were one of the good characters in *The Young Philosopher* who

underwent excessive pain from inhumanity, Parson Darby is “outraged . . . , in sanguine youth, / By human crimes” (689-90) but “still acutely fe[els] / For human misery” (690-91), as “his heart / Was feelingly alive to *all* that breath’d” (697-98, my italic). Having to plunge himself into the water without considering who it is that he has to save, the hermit is always already conditioned to disregard the identity of the person in trouble. In fact, considering the heroic and dangerous exploits of the smugglers explained above, it is more likely that he is rescuing smugglers than honest fishermen.

While Smith’s egalitarian drive in *Beachy Head* is made possible by her own mastery of natural history, however, it is that same mastery of natural history that creates a sense of pride, elevating her over the uneducated people. The distinction between the honest laborers and the smugglers—in other words, within the lower-class—is now made meaningless for Smith, which is indeed a step forward for her. But she subsequently distances herself from the lower-class people altogether, when she regards them to be under the hazardous influence of superstition, still far from the truth induced from Enlightenment. One such textual moment is found in her lamentation over the limits of geological science, when she is frustrated with her inability to go on with a valid guessing of what the fossils around Beachy Head signify. At first glance, it is easy to read this passage as Smith’s disappointment in “Science’ proudest boast” (390) and also her envy for the peasant who, “Unheeding such [geological] inquiry” (396), just tends to “his daily task” (395). Underneath her critique of human pride and claim to know all, however, Smith is in fact busy with unraveling historical conjectures, writing of various invasions and conquests around the locale. In addition, she devotes a separate footnote to elaborate on how the peasants wrongfully conceive the elephant fossil: “The peasants believe that the large bones sometimes found belonged to giants, who formerly lived on the hills. The devil also has a great

deal to do with the remarkable forms of hill and vale: Devil's Punch Bowl, the Devil's Leaps, and the Devil's Dyke, are names given to deep hollows, or high and abrupt ridges, in this and the neighbouring county" (p. 234). Smith does not merely point at their simple misconception about the identity of the bones, but goes further to characterize them as beings of unreason who are deeply invested in superstition.

In another case, she elaborates on the background of the folk naming of Fern Owl. In her note to "fern-flies" (514), she writes of a misunderstanding this bird has gained and still retains: "It is called Goatsucker (*Caprimulgus*), from a strange prejudice taken against it by the Italians, who assert that it sucks their goats; and the peasants of England still believe that a disease in the backs of their cattle, occasioned by a fly, which deposits its egg under the skin, and raises a boil, sometimes fatal to calves, is the work of this bird, which they call a Puckeridge. Nothing can convince them that their beasts are not injured by this bird, which they therefore hold in abhorrence" (p. 239). Though not as superstitious as in the case of the elephant fossil, Smith critiques the "strange prejudice" that is unable to tell if the culprit is an insect or a bird, as well as the English peasant's unquestioning, unscientific mind that is unable to think by itself. The phrase "Nothing can convince them" visualizes the unconquerable distance Smith feels between herself and those unenlightened peasants.

Smith herself is, however, also subject to some form of prejudice, when she comments on the forest hermit's supposed imaginary destination of "some island of the southern sea" (663), and her error, combined with her reverence for honest labor, foments racial disgust against the colonial other, proving that her sense of discrimination is more deep-seated than we may expect. Her note on this "Polynesia, particularly Tahiti" place is as follows: "it was at first believed men lived in a state of simplicity and happiness; but where, as later enquiries have ascertained, that

exemption from toil, which the fertility of their country gives them, produces the grossest vices; and a degree of corruption that late navigators think will end in the extirpation of the whole people in a few years” (p. 245). If the peasants’ prejudice is formed by an undoubting mind about the verbally transmitted belief or faith, her negative view on Tahiti’s moral status is purely based on various travelogues she has read from the archive. The former part about “exemption from toil” due to the abundance of food such as from “bread-fruit” (665) is derived from Joseph Banks’s journal which he wrote in 1769 visiting Tahiti for the first time: “In the article of food these happy people may almost be said to be exempt from the curse of our forefather . . . The great facility with which these people have always procurd the nescessaries of life may very reasonably be thought to have originaly sunk them into a kind of indolence which has as it were benumbnd their inventions.”⁶² The corruption that is said to lead to extirpation, however, has nothing to do with their industrial laziness, because the introduction of sexual diseases from the British sailors, especially syphilis, proved to be the reason for near-extinction,⁶³ as the Tahitian population dropped down to 5,000 at the time Smith was writing *Beachy Head*.⁶⁴

Therefore, while Smith’s revisionary approach to cosmopolitanism and Parson Darby’s investment in the realization of universal benevolence seem to pave the road for Smith’s political idealism, her cosmopolitan thoughts are bound to remain unstable. Unfortunately, such instability that may end up neglecting a good portion of humanity is already shared by Darby, who is disgusted with the world and lives in the cave alone, subsisting solely on some shell-fish (p. 245). Parson Darby is not a perfect figure for a cosmopolitan vision; while he has so many strangers around him he needs to help and rescue, there is no one who would care about him, even when he passes away “in the cause of charity” (729). Parson’s “drowned cor’sse” (724) symbolizes Smith’s anxiety over whether an ideal cosmopolitan society is ever possible on earth,

and even while feeling her own upcoming death, all she can do is to suspend her vision, freeing Darby from the “earthly bondage” (730) and sending him “to some better region” (731), thus having her political thoughts on cosmopolitanism scattered, suspended in the air and drift aimlessly among the sea.

IV. Equality and Cosmopolitanism as Fictions

Regardless of the disastrous outcome of her cosmopolitan desire, I am fascinated by her tenacity in not losing grip of the intimate intersubjective relation in imagining the extremely vague and abstract notion of universal benevolence. Even with her limitation as a very well-educated individual from the wealthy middle-class, her obsessive attention to the idea of unconditional charity is an element that distinguishes her failed cosmopolitanism from other kinds of cosmopolitanism that have conformed to the social ideology of capitalism and imperialism.⁶⁵ Perhaps Smith has been after a ghost called egalitarianism, that fantastic idea that has boosted her cosmopolitanism as well as frustrated it. Or, if anything, the very notion of cosmopolitanism is a fiction that has haunted Smith and kept her groping for a political utopia.

Notes

¹ George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), 191.

² While the affect of sadness is the trademark of her *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784-97), there are productive feminist approaches to Smith’s use of melancholia, though they are sadly irrelevant to my interests in this chapter. Examples include Elizabeth A. Dolan, “British Romantic Melancholia: Charlotte Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets*, Medical Discourse and the Problem of Sensibility,” *Journal of European Studies* 33, no. 4 (2003): 237-53, and Deborah Kennedy, “Thorns and Roses: the Sonnets of Charlotte Smith,” *Women’s Writing* 2, no. 1 (1995): 43-53.

³ See Adriana Craciun, *British Women Writers and the French Revolution: Citizens of the World* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 138-78; “Citizens of the World: Émigrés, Romantic Cosmopolitanism, and Charlotte Smith,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 29, nos. 2-3 (2007): 169-85; and “‘Empire Without End’: Charlotte Smith at the Limits of Cosmopolitanism,” *Women’s Writing* 16, no. 1 (2009): 39-59.

⁴ Mellor’s notion of “embodied cosmopolitanism” is also based upon a gender-driven approach, although she is interested in the way in which this materialized form of cosmopolitanism gives substance to Kant’s otherwise

abstract notion of universal rights. Wang limits his discussion only to Smith's *Desmond*, to align her idealism more neatly with that of Kant's. See Anne K. Mellor, "Embodied Cosmopolitanism and the British Romantic Woman Writer," *European Romantic Review* 17, no. 3 (2006): 289-300, and Fuson Wang, "Cosmopolitanism and the Radical Politics of Exile in Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 25, no. 1 (2012): 37-59.

⁵ William D. Brewer, "Charlotte Smith and the American Agrarian Ideal," *English Language Notes* 40, no. 4 (2003): 51-61; Leanne Maunu, "Home is Where the Heart Is: National Identity and Expatriation in Charlotte Smith's *The Young Philosopher*," *European Romantic Review* 15, no. 1 (2004): 51-71.

⁶ Brewer, "Charlotte Smith and the American Agrarian Ideal," 59.

⁷ Brewer, 52.

⁸ Craciun, "'Empire Without End'," 40.

⁹ George Boulukos, "The Horror of Hybridity: Enlightenment, Anti-slavery and Racial Disgust in Charlotte Smith's *Story of Henrietta* (1800)," in *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807*, ed. Brycchan Carey and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007): 88.

¹⁰ Boulukos, 106.

¹¹ Smith's exclusion of upper and lower classes in her cosmopolitan ideal is resonant with some of the important lines of discussion on cosmopolitanism in later periods, of which the middle-class is at the center. In elaborating on the sprawling branches of definitions and modes of cosmopolitanism, David Simpson briefly touches upon the dissension between Marx and Franz Fanon, as the former's belief in "the positive function of middle-class cosmopolitanism" is countered by the latter's negative view on "the cosmopolitanism of the new national middle class" that is detrimental to the self-sufficient development of national culture and economy. See David Simpson, "The Limits of Cosmopolitanism and the Case for Translation," *European Romantic Review* 16, no. 2 (2005): 142.

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹³ Evan Radcliffe, "Revolutionary Writing, Moral Philosophy, and Universal Benevolence in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54, no. 2 (1993): 221-40.

¹⁴ Radcliffe, 231.

¹⁵ Radcliffe, 228-29.

¹⁶ Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1970s* (London: Routledge, 1993), 162.

¹⁷ Jones, 160.

¹⁸ Tone Brekke, "'Citizen of the World': Feminist Cosmopolitanism and Collective and Affective Languages of Citizenship in the 1790s," in *Beyond Citizenship?: Feminism and the Transformation of Belonging*, ed. Sasha Roseneil (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 60.

¹⁹ Jones, *Radical Sensibility*, 162.

²⁰ Antje Blank, "Things as They Were: The Gothic of Real Life in Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants* and *The Banished Man*," *Women's Writing* 16, no. 1 (2009): 86.

²¹ Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, in *Richard Price: Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 180.

²² Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, ed. Antje Blank and Janet Todd (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), 87.

²³ Smith, 83. This term is not applied to the virtuous Desmond, but to a doctor who condescends to help a French woman in trouble. He wrongfully presupposes that the woman is morally condemnable in her conduct, but prides himself in "hav[ing] so much universal charity," only to give her sixpence. Desmond immediately engages himself in the situation to genuinely help her, and this contrast between the doctor (representing British conservatives on the matter of Revolution) and Desmond (representing the other side) emphasizes the importance of the role of genuine sympathy, which Desmond obviously demonstrates to deserve the name of "universal philanthropist" from his older, wiser correspondent, Mr Bethel.

²⁴ William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 143 [IV.iv. Appendix, No. 1].

²⁵ Smith, *Desmond*, 87.

²⁶ Smith, 89.

²⁷ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley (New York: Penguin, 2009), 276-77 [VI.ii.3].

²⁸ Nancy Armstrong and Ian Duncan both claim that Adam Smith's sympathy is indispensable for the maintenance of civil society, as what is emphasized is differences between individuals rather than similarities, thus foregrounding the identifiable individuality of a subject. While they believe Adam Smith's notion of sympathy is in huge contrast to David Hume's theory which presents it as an "involuntary, contagious emotional force," James Chandler deems that his idea of the impartial spectator is a progressive development out of Hume's emphasis on "general point of view." In any case, the dissension between Adam Smith and Godwin in their views on sympathy is obvious. See Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 13-14; Ian Duncan, "Fanaticism and Civil Society: Hogg's *Justified Sinner*," *Novel: a Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 2 (2009): 345-46; and James Chandler, *An Archaeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode in Literature and Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 172.

²⁹ Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, 14.

³⁰ Smith, *Desmond*, 83-85.

³¹ For a claim that Godwin revises Adam Smith's schema of sympathy to reach a rather ambivalent view on sympathy in *Caleb Williams*, see Monika Fludernik, "Spectacle, Theatre, and Sympathy in *Caleb Williams*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14, no. 1 (2001): 1-30. On Godwin's ambivalence toward domestic affection in *St. Leon*, see Louise Joy, "St. Leon and the Culture of the Heart," *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007): 40-53.

³² William Godwin to Charlotte Smith, October 24, 1797, in *The Letters of William Godwin*, vol. 1, ed. Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 262-63.

³³ William Godwin, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. William D. Brewer (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2006), 52.

³⁴ Godwin, *St. Leon*, 188.

³⁵ Godwin, 191-92.

³⁶ Ellen Malenas Ledoux regards this experiment, performed upon the starving population of the town of Badu where Christian Hungarians are under Turkish rule after the war, as a parody of Malthus and other political economists through which Godwin critiques the harm of social hierarchy in realizing political and economic justice, in anticipation of Marx later in the next century. See Ellen Malenas Ledoux, *Social Reform in Gothic Writing: Fantastic Forms of Change, 1764-1834* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 119-25.

³⁷ Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 144.

³⁸ I use parenthetical citations for passages from *The Young Philosopher*, and they are from Charlotte Smith, *The Young Philosopher*, ed. Elizabeth Kraft (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

³⁹ Smith cites this work, and Kraft has provided the full title in the note.

⁴⁰ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, in *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 210.

⁴¹ Paine, 210-11.

⁴² Elizabeth Kraft, in her introduction to the novel, defines George Delmont as "the Rousseauesque character" (xxiv). Loraine Fletcher also points out that the project of education Smith lays out on her children's books is influenced by Rousseau's *Emile*, and the purpose of such education is to cultivate sensibility, which, she argues, "alone distinguishes good and bad characters in her novels." See Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: a Critical Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 228.

⁴³ Medora's botanical education and its beneficial effects are elaborated in detail in Chapter 2, Volume 3 of the work. The epigraph to this chapter also explains why Smith chose her name as Medora. Though Kraft failed to identify the passage, it is clear that it comes from Pietro Metastasio's opera *Angelica*, which treats the story of Angelica and Medoro adapted from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The epigraph also sings of happiness amidst plants and flowers, but Smith decides to incur gender inversion by feminizing the name of Medoro into Medora.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Desmond*, 112-13.

⁴⁵ *The Young Philosopher* is the only novel in which Smith utilizes notes with scientific names of plants in accordance with Linnaean system. *Marchmont* (1796) also contains Linnaean notes, but they are not attached to the novel itself but to an inserted poem. Smith's use of Linnaean system here is rather rudimentary; the author herself admits in the introduction of her "very slight knowledge of natural history" (6), and Fletcher notes that the information she uses here are from James Lightfoot's *Flora Scotica*. Perhaps for these reasons, few comments have been made on these notes, despite their seeming importance and obvious intrigue in their placement in the novel. Critics are generally interested in the radicality of women's employment of Linnaean system, but I wonder if such considerations fit into the instances of Smith's notes in *The Young Philosopher*. Fletcher suggests that they obviously demonstrate "nature alone offers protection to Laura, and botany is worth her serious study," and "Laura's academic detachment . . . from the familiar Gothic world" unsettles the reader. I believe, however, that these notes are to a certain degree Smith's own indulgence rather than a product of her authorial intention to involve Laura into Linnaean botany, so I think they are either her practical run as a novice at Linnaean system, or a survival strategy in the literary marketplace where "botany and natural history were fashionable," as Ann Shteir points out. See Charlotte Smith, *Marchmont*, vol. 9 of *The Works of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Kate Davies and Harriet Guest (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 335; Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: a Critical Biography*, 269; and Ann B. Shteir, "Flora Primavera or Flora Meretrix?: Iconography, Gender, and Science," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 36 (2007): 162.

⁴⁶ George's neglect of the servant's good will is very much in contrast to his attitude toward Miss Richmond later in the novel. When George is still anxious and impatient to search for Medora, Miss Richmond provides a sandwich and gives him the tour of Sir Harry Richmond's magnificent garden, and George accepts her hospitality since he finds her invitation "at once so good natured and so accommodating" (292).

⁴⁷ Charlotte Smith to Dr. James Edward Smith, March 15, 1798, in *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Judith Phillips Stanton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 314-15.

⁴⁸ Charlotte Smith to Dr. James Edward Smith, February 19, 1797, in The Linnean Collections, The Linnean Society of London, accessed February 20, 2018, <http://linnean-online.org/62380>. All quotes from this online collection are transcribed from the manuscript by myself.

⁴⁹ An excerpt from the Preface to *Conversations Introducing Poetry*. Charlotte Smith, *The Works of Charlotte Smith*, Vol. 13, ed. Judith Pascoe (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), 62.

⁵⁰ For a useful comment on the fundamentally empirical (and tactile) nature of botanical study, see Kristin M. Girtten, "Charlotte Smith's Tactile Poetics," *The Eighteenth Century* 54, no. 2 (2013): 215-30. I, however, beg to differ from Girtten in assessing the aesthetic meaning of tactility. She argues that Smith's tactile poetics "enable[s] a profound interconnection between self and environment," while I view this empirical mode as the basis of Smith's skeptical engagement with botany, as I soon explain.

⁵¹ Charlotte Smith, *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 200.

⁵² Smith's reverence for Sir Joseph Banks is implied in her view on Tahiti in one of the notes in *Beachy Head*, about which I give further elaboration later. See note 67.

⁵³ Charlotte Smith to Dr. James Edward Smith, November 2, 1803, in The Linnean Collections, The Linnean Society of London, accessed February 20, 2018, <http://linnean-online.org/62382>. The emphatic underline is by the author.

⁵⁴ Charlotte Smith to Dr. James Edward Smith, February 19, 1797, in The Linnean Collections, The Linnean Society of London, accessed February 20, 2018, <http://linnean-online.org/62380>.

⁵⁵ Parenthetical citations are for *Beachy Head*, and the primary source is Charlotte Smith, *The Poems*. For quotes from footnotes, I use page number of this edition.

⁵⁶ This is Kelley's account of what kind of political ramification those "hybrid common names" may engender, and some examples of binomialism she argues Smith resists include "French versus English, beggars versus the reader." Most of the plant names I explore here are in fact categorized as such hybrid names, which I do not think is no coincidence. See Theresa M. Kelley, "Romantic Exemplarity: Botany and 'Material' Culture," in *Romantic Science: The Literary Forms of Natural History*, ed. Noah Heringman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 238-39.

⁵⁷ Many critics have elaborated on the sexual nature of Linnaean system, which in turn made the scientific pursuit of Linnaean botany as unfit for women, but my political reading of Smith's use of Linnaean taxonomy has nothing to do with the gendered subversion they explore. See, for an example of such study, Sam George, "'Not Strictly Proper for a Female Pen': Eighteenth-Century Poetry and the Sexuality of Botany," *Comparative Critical Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005): 191-210.

⁵⁸ Curiously enough, our current English name for "*Lychnis flos-cuculi*" is Ragged Robin, not Cuckoo flower, though the name still retains a bird in it. I am not qualified to say whether there was a historical change in the naming system or Smith was simply mistaken, but it could be granted that Smith had good reason to believe it to be the cuckoo flower based on "cuculi," to say the least.

⁵⁹ Mark K. Fulk, "'I'll Contrive a Sylvan Room': Certainty and Indeterminacy in Charlotte Smith's *Beachy Head*, *The Fables*, and *Other Poems* (1807)," in *Romanticism and the Object*, ed. Larry H. Peer (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 60-61.

⁶⁰ Smith's representation of the smugglers may be at odds with how they are generally and historically understood. For a historical elucidation on their status as well-organized criminal gangs and the political implication of contraband business that points to conservative commercialism and Jacobitism, see Paul Monod, "Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism, and Commercial Culture in Southeast England, 1690-1760," *Journal of British Studies* 30, no. 2 (1991): 150-82.

⁶¹ A similar point has been made by John M. Anderson, who also detects "The speaker's implicit sympathy" for the smugglers. He even points out the shared vision over the sea between them and the poet/Contemplation as my analysis also indicates. However, unlike Anderson, I do not believe Smith's attitude toward the smugglers is not merely sympathetic; it is her ambivalent, or balanced, view on them which creates tensions that extends to Smith's political oscillations. See his "'Beachy Head': The Romantic Fragment Poem as Mosaic," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2000): 567-68.

⁶² Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks, 1768-1771*, Vol. 1, ed. J. C. Beaglehole (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1962), 341-52.

⁶³ It was generally argued that all sorts of European crews were to blame, but Howard Smith claims that the British are the real culprit. See Howard M. Smith, "The Introduction of Venereal Disease into Tahiti: A Re-examination," *Journal of Pacific History* 10, no. 1 (1975): 38-45.

⁶⁴ Theodor Waitz, *Introduction to Anthropology*, trans. J. Frederick Collingwood (London: Longman, 1863), 158.

⁶⁵ I have in mind some skeptical readings about Smith's contemporary culture of cosmopolitanism. See Alan Bewell, "Erasmus Darwin's Cosmopolitan Nature," *ELH* 76 (2009): 19-48; and Siraj Ahmed, "'The Pure Soil of Universal Benevolence': The Rule of Property and the Rise of an Imperial Ideology in the 1790s," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr* 15 (2000): 139-57.

CHAPTER 5

LORD BYRON'S ROMANCE AND THE LOGIC OF NATIONALISM

George Gordon, Lord Byron's ambivalent stance toward heroism, militantism, and nationalism has been marked and confirmed by many Byron scholars.¹ Certainly, there are studies that highlight Byron's nationalistic tendencies represented in his literary works concerning heroic wars and struggles as well as in his letters,² and there are also others which accentuate his skepticism on any nation-based ideology around history and civilization.³ One way to regard Byron's views on nationalism has been cogently suggested by Timothy Webb, as he argues that the poet's career and thoughts can be characterized as consisting of conflicts between opposing values. Put in another way, Byron's "opposing pulls" such as "the critic of war and the revolutionary fighter"⁴ may be coexistent yet contrasting positions in his mind, while he is apparently not disturbed by their conflicts.

Both his nationalist and anti-nationalist dispositions are usually considered to be signs of his political struggle for a better future, in relation to noble notions such as liberty, independence, and freedom. Paul Stock argues, for example, that Byron's pursuit of state independence as well as his endorsement of the more generalized notion of European freedom is closely in line with his aspiration for political liberty, just as in the case of other poets and thinkers in the radical Shelley-Byron circle.⁵ The same can be said about his views on wars and heroism. Whereas he believed the "inequities and violence and selfishness" of the oppressive political system "could only be eliminated by war,"⁶ he was also opposed to any military establishments that would "infringe[] [*sic*] the freedom of the individual."⁷ Also, as Philip Martin suggests, Byron's questioning of "the notion of the heroic in his verse" that "repudiate[s] teleological, imperial

accounts of the progress of liberty” is in fact based upon “a late-Enlightenment skepticism that is liberal, cosmopolitan and representative of a new freedom of thought.”⁸ Byronism, in this context, features a utopian aspiration for political and personal liberties, whether it may be congenial to heroic nationalism or antithetical to them.

While acknowledging that Byron’s attitude toward nationalism is possibly complex, I argue that some of Byron’s later works indicate his serious discontent with nationalist ideologies. In the works I read in this chapter—*The Two Foscari* (1821) and *The Island, or Christian and His Comrades* (1823)—, Byron does not simply conduct a test run of his anti-nationalist point of view, but gestures toward fundamental and systematic resistance to nationalist ideology rooted in the mode of romance. I attempt to trace the ways in which Byron problematizes the transference of romantic elements—feelings, affects, and narratives—into nationalistic sentiments, to suggest that Byron’s anti-nationalist line of thought is more profound than we may have noticed so far. Both texts feature individuals whose personalized romantic feelings are conscripted into the myth-making process of nationalistic culture and passion, but the ways in which Byron approaches and critiques them are enabled by the genre of each work. In *The Two Foscari*, Byron seems to lambaste essentialist nationalism as represented through a character whose societal and familial inadequacies are intensified by his obsessive sense of unity with the nation, but his essentialism is, I argue, shown to be rooted in the workings of romance. While Jacopo Foscari’s romantic configuration of patriotism is shrouded by his tragic death not unfit for the generic demand of tragedy, the text still implicitly points to romance as the origin of nationalistic passion embedded in the consciousness of the modern human mind. *The Island*, on the contrary, presents a utopian narrative strongly based on the mode of romance, but while the unsuspecting narrator is simply happy with the happy ending the romantic couple apparently reaches, the text

urges us to consider the nationalist potential of romance. I am interested in exploring the ways in which Byron transforms romance from a rebellious force against the nationalist coercion into the narrative source for the nation-building saga. Ultimately, my contention is that both texts explore the surprisingly strong affinity between romance and nationalism, as the romance's will to unite two romantic persons is, on a different scale, comparable to the nation's will to unite people with the identity it provides.

I. *The Two Foscari*: Romantic Nationalism and the Fable of Essentialism

As one of Byron's historical tragedies that ruminate over political themes such as governance, law, state, and family, *The Two Foscari* has naturally attracted critics who are interested in exploring the relationships and conflicts between those categories.⁹ From this viewpoint, the most prominent character available for such meaningful analyses is Francis Foscari, the Doge of the state of Venice and father of Jacopo Foscari. The typical conflict between the state and the individual is well-established in his persona, as he is to be faithful to his duty as the Doge in leading the torture and trial of his own biological son. Along with the older Foscari, Marina (Jacopo's wife) has also deservedly garnered critical attention. Her relentless imprecations of the state's tyrannical system and her father-in-law's abandonment of his familial duty make her voice the most consistent and the strongest in the play, rendering her as an empowered female who may gladly take the role of hero¹⁰ when no one else seems to be operating effectively except for the avenger Loredano (who wreaks revenge upon the family of Foscari by taking advantage of the state's justice system).

My brief reading of the text pours its whole attention into one of the titular characters who has yet been justifiably dismissed in criticism—Jacopo Foscari. Represented as an

incompetent, womanish,¹¹ and even disastrous¹² character, Jacopo is hard to be considered as a hero, let alone as one of the possibly significant characters of the work. He is virtually dislodged from the overall context of the drama when he constantly lapses into patriotic attachment to Venice; by being so, he transcends all the legal and political concerns that dominate this tragedy. The only moment when Jacopo assumes anything remotely heroic in terms of politics is in what Jerome J. McGann calls “dungeon ruminations,”¹³ when he asks Marina to tell his tale to posterity in hopes that his stories of injustice would not be forgotten and will someday cry out against tyranny (III.i.75-81);¹⁴ however, he, in essence, never steps outside of the confines Byron has designed for his inferior character.

Despite his obvious shortcomings as a proper character, however, I choose Jacopo Foscari to be the center of my analysis of the tragedy, as those problems are the ruptures through which we can look into what Byron believes to be the emotional structure of nationalism. Initially sentenced to exile for a crime of murdering one of the Council members (which he didn't), Jacopo voluntarily comes back to Venice because he has a peculiar patriotic feelings for his mother-nation, and the play is set with the legally implemented tortures on him, and the sentence that he is again to be exiled. Jacopo's weaknesses are in essence crafted by his tenacious clinging to Venice which is beyond anyone's understanding, and as much as he is the victim of state violence Byron obviously castigates, he is at the same time Byron's object of satire. Therefore, one important didactic message of the text is that essentialist nationalism as exemplified by Jacopo is futile, and Byron indeed seems to attempt to disenchant readers from the all too common idea that one's nationality is the natural essence of one's identity. Underlying that superficial critique of nationalism, however, is a critique of the formula of such enthused attachment to one's country—i.e. romance. Jacopo's patriotism takes the form of

private love for a close individual rather than that of public duty, good, or justice, and with his rather extreme example where romantic and personal feelings are transplanted into the public domain, Byron aims to reveal that the texture of unreasoned nationalist enthusiasm is exactly woven into romance.

While “motherland” is a common trope that denotes one’s nation,¹⁵ Jacopo’s way of imagining Venice as his motherland (or, actually, as his mother) goes beyond that linguistic cliché, as the relation between himself and the country is conceived to be purely individual and personal. Thus reimagined, his relationship to Venice is not only just as absolute as that between mother and son, but has almost an erotic touch that further binds him to his motherland in an affective, romantic manner. As he reminisces over his boyhood memory, it is shown that his strong bond with the nation originates from an experience of isolation, by which Jacopo comes to transcend any social or political interests in thinking about one’s nation. At first, Jacopo as a boy seems to enjoy racing with his friends while the people of Venice applaud them (I.i.94-104), but soon his social and public relation to Venice and its people is replaced by his private experience of Venetian nature. His “arm still lustier” and “breast more daring” (I.i.105) plunge themselves into the Venetian sea, and he interacts with the waves and explores the deep in the sea almost as if he were building a romantic relationship with his lover, “kiss[ing] [the sea-water] like a wine-cup” (I.i.109) and “search[ing] the deep” (I.i.117) inside her. The sense of isolation in this process is apparent, when “shells and sea-weed” (I.i.114), the objects of Jacopo’s pursuit in the water, are “all unseen / By those above” (I.i.114-15); Jacopo’s contact with Venice and its nature is rendered personal, and even secretive.

His deeply personalized inter-relationship with his country is further made absolute and irreplaceable as Byron substitutes Venice for his real, biological mother. While there is no

dispute that the real Jacopo in history had an immense love for Venice and despised the punishment of exile, Byron renders his patriotic passion so much more intense that he conceives himself to be almost literally the son of mother-Venice, and he does so by ousting the existence of his biological mother from the play. According to the historical accounts which the poet attaches to the text as appendices, Jacopo's love of country is overshadowed by, or at best parallel to, his desire to see his family: "he had risked all in order to have the consolation of seeing his wife, his father, and his mother again."¹⁶ While in prison after the torture, he is even allowed to see not only his wife and father as the play demonstrates, but also his mother and children as well,¹⁷ although Francis Foscari's harshness in sending his son away is taken seriously also in the historical account. In the drama, however, nowhere is Jacopo's mother found or even mentioned, and Byron, with this possibly intentional erasure of her character, enables Venice to effectively take the role of Jacopo's mother almost in the literal sense. What seems an erotic energy in Jacopo's diving scene is recast into the form of motherly love, and Venice's deep ocean becomes the womb from which Jacopo is reborn into a passionate patriot. Venetian government and people are, in this sense, not taken into consideration when Jacopo thinks of Venice as a nation. The guard does not understand Jacopo's loyalty to the nation when he asks, "can you so much love the soil which hates you?" (I.i.140), and Jacopo's answer makes it clear that Venice is indeed personified into the figure of a mother, separate from all other people in Venice (his actual family included) and superior to them all in the quality of relationship to himself: "Oh no, it is the seed of the soil / Which persecutes me; but my native earth / Will take me as a mother to her arms" (I.i.141-43).

His rather innocent and apolitical approach to nationalism is fundamentally essentialist, and even goes beyond what Marlon B. Ross has defined to be romantic nationalism. Ross

characterizes romantic nationalism as a belief in a nation-state's organic growth into itself, and the crucial components of this organic growth involve the ways in which individuals conceive their relation to the place. On the one hand, the nation could be a "nurturing place, the motherland" which provides a certain sense of identity to the folk residing there; on the other hand, it is "the place of dissemination, the fatherland," whose outward growth necessarily assumes imperialist conquests, which appears in the form of bloodless expansion of industrialization and capitalism in the context of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ While Jacopo indeed feels an organic tie to Venice as if the state were the "motherland," he robustly refuses to accept it as the "fatherland," embodying only half of Ross's formula of romantic nationalism and thus representing a very static model of imagining one's relation to the nation. Jacopo is so exclusively hostile to foreign soil, which is why, both in real history and in drama, he desperately returns from his life-long exile, even knowing it could lead to a death penalty. Marina attempts to persuade him into accepting deportation by pointing out that Venice itself has been established by exiles from Rome, to suggest that Venice is perhaps only one of the stages in its organic growth and to entreat Jacopo to participate in the process by becoming a constructive exile just like the "millions" out there (III.i.147-55; 167-68).¹⁹ For Jacopo, Venice's decision to evict him is not so much a fatherland's bidding to expand the republic as "a mother's curse" (III.i.186), and he constantly refuses to accept the possibility that he would become a productive builder in foreign lands. In fact, Jacopo goes as far as to prefer death in Venice to a life in exile: "better / Be ashes here than aught that lives elsewhere" (I.i.138-39). In this context, while Venice's motherly embrace of Jacopo which he contrasts with the people's misdeeds is indeed a source of comfort for him, this comfort comes in the form of death—"a Venetian grave" (I.i.144).

Byron actually gives Jacopo what he wants—dying in the territory of Venice—by shifting the time and situation of his death. According to the historical accounts in the addendum, Jacopo is sentenced to be transported to a prison in Crete and remain an exile as a free man after a year, but he dies in that foreign prison before he is eventually found innocent of the murder of a Council member.²⁰ In the drama, however, Byron lets Jacopo die a sudden, anti-climactic, even almost inexplicable death right before getting aboard the boat (IV.i.188-95). His strange death corroborates Jacopo's status as an essentialist nationalist, and dramatically shows that his ideological urge for unity predominates not only his self-consciousness but even his physical life. From the moment his father denies his last plea that he arrange his return in some distant future (IV.1.99-107), Jacopo already visualizes his fantasy and desire to be ultimately buried in the Venetian soil, hoping the ship that delivers him from Venice meet a storm so that it “dash [him] back on [his] own shore” as “A broken corse” (IV.1.131-32). By killing Jacopo at such an awkward juncture, Byron does more than realize his dream; he does not even have to leave Venice in a ship as his death seems almost natural and guaranteed in the situation where he has to leave.

It is important to note that the perversity of his patriotism—ending up not so much with the desire to heroically die *for* one's country as with the desire to die *in* the motherly bosom of one's country—comes from the discrepancy between patriotism's innately public aspect and Jacopo's extremely personal/romantic commitment to his nation. While he claims, after an experience of total darkness and isolation in the dungeon, that his mind “sinks in solitude: [his] soul is social” (III.i.109), and also admits that “leaving Venice without beholding [his father] or [wife]” (III.i.231-32) adds to the pain and sorrow already allotted to himself, his love for the country stands absolutely prioritized over his other concerns. Hence, his bizzare statement that

patriotism should be the basis of all kinds of love: “He who loves not his country, can love nothing” (III.i.184). Along with this bold inversion of the personal and the public, he is not even interested in pointing out that Venice is politically rotting within as demonstrated through the injustices done to himself, and chooses to be silent about it. He cannot even bear to hear his wife call the nation “abhor’d, / Unjust” (III.i.238-39), temporarily becoming an assertive character to cut her words and place a strong injunction: “Curse it not. If I am silent, / Who dares accuse my country?” (III.i.239-40). Marina’s constant effort to be granted to accompany Jacopo in the exile is felt utterly useless, especially when he wishes to and does die in the prospect of leaving the country. Contrary to John W. Ehrstine’s assessment that Byron endorsed “Jacopo’s intense love of country as typically Venetian,”²¹ I claim that Byron presents it as the most atypical of patriotism, as Jacopo pushes its essentialism to the limits through the romantic mode that renders any political and public struggles completely obsolete. This is why Marina deems Jacopo’s patriotism no longer as patriotism per se, but as the “passion” that Jacopo should supposedly feel for his family members (III.i.143).

However estranged and isolated from the society Jacopo Foscari may be, however, Byron tries to demonstrate through his extreme example that our own nationalistic desire to identify ourselves as part of a certain country or community is founded upon romantic thoughts. In a sense, our romantic idealism about national identities is even worse than Jacopo’s in that such shared desire oftentimes involve desire for the country’s power expansion or elevation of status, which Ross diagnoses to be a crucial element of romantic nationalism. The poet achieves this through Marina’s subtle awakenings about the relation between individuals and their nation. In Act 1, Marina is a proud mother who believes that she produces good citizens for the country. She talks of the child-bearing torture allotted to herself, but regards her pain as “joyful pangs,”

“for [her] hope was to bring forth / Heroes, and would not welcome them with tears” (I.1.244-47). At this point, Marina understands the individuals’ heroic contributions to be always already public; the children cannot afford to be made soft with their mother’s tears as it may lead to the weakening of the nation. Jacopo’s death, however, challenges her notions about nationalism and heroism: “I must live / To bring them up to serve the state, and die / As died their father” (IV.1.208-10). While this statement is consistent with Marina’s long-standing critique of the state’s legal and administrative oppressions, I argue that it is rather a cry of horror at discovering the true nature of nationalism, represented through the archetype provided in the figure of Jacopo. Marina has also found that beneath the public surface of nationalism, there is a romantic demand that pulls individuals into the center of the state’s causes and ideology. The following conversation between Jacopo, Loredano, and Marina indicates that Jacopo’s disease of patriotism is to be imposed to everyone, albeit to a different and much less obvious degree:

JACOPO FOSCARI. And must I leave them[the children] *all*?

LOREDANO. You must.

JACOPO FOSCARI. Not one?

LOREDANO. They are the state’s.

MARINA. I thought they had been mine.

LOREDANO. They are, in all material things. (III.i.386-88)

Even when Marina is allowed to follow Jacopo in his path of exile, their children are not allowed, because “They are the state’s.” Marina wants to confirm her place as their mother, but Loredano narrowly qualifies her role as merely that of a material/corporeal mother. If Jacopo’s substitution of Venice for his real mother were more or less voluntary and even joyful, his children is symbolically robbed of their real mother and the state takes her place as the mother

that governs their heroic consciousness. While Jacopo's essentialist form of romantic nationalism doesn't seem to be shared by anyone, romantic nationalism itself is not exclusively owned by Jacopo, but is possibly the very mode of patriotism that we are always engaged in.

II. *The Island*: Romance as National Monument

While I have explored the relation between romance and nationalism in *The Two Foscari*, Byron does not express a sustained interest in it through the rest of the text, and we do not see much development about the idea that one of the essential parts of national ideology is precisely romantic idealism about the wholeness of identity that encompasses both the individual and the nation. Likewise, Byron's last narrative poem, *The Island*, does not seem to address the issue of romance's complicity with nationalist ideology, despite the fact that at first the text's main driving power is romance. On the contrary, romance in this work has been usually interpreted to be the principle that resists British nationalism and imperialism, setting up the basis for the escapist utopia that seems to follow the survival of the main romantic couple. Thus, there has been general consensus among Byron scholars that *The Island* is an essentially utopian work. Robert F. Gleckner views the poem as a narrative of "hope for a resumption of prelapsarian life" enabled by love, and P. D. Fleck also regards "the romantic treatment of Torquil and Neuha" to be central to the poem, deeming other major characters such as Captain Bligh and Christian rather as peripheral elements.²² Feminist readings, not surprisingly, also participate in this trend, as critics such as Caroline Franklin and Catherine Addison celebrate Neuha in embodying the romantic utopia with her feminine principle that combines peace and proactive confidence.²³ The triumph of romance in the form of Torquil and Neuha's ideal union, in short, seems to

warrant a political fruition that effectively repudiates the European, masculine, heroic sort of nationalism and promises sound retention of peaceful and ideal communities.

My argument about *The Island* departs from such shared belief in the work's political optimism. I find that the discovery of romance's participation in the making of nationalist passion in *The Two Foscari* sheds light on how to make sense of the way romance works in *The Island*. If Jacopo's appropriation of romance has occurred on the register of feelings, transferring personal emotions into patriotic passion, however, *The Island* depicts a process in which purely personal and isolated romantic love is transformed into a saga that contributes to the building of a nation and its value-system. In other words, what seems to be resistant to the established ideology that celebrates and prioritizes one's nation or community over an individual becomes reinscribed into the process of nation-building, as romance gains narrative power and is reappropriated into the process of myth-making indispensable for binding human minds around the nation they belong to.

The Island draws its materials from one of Byron's contemporary incidents of the Mutiny of the Bounty in the South Sea, led by Fletcher Christian who expels Captain William Bligh from the ship Bounty and returns to the Polynesian Toobonai with the rest of the crew. The poem features three different kinds of heroes: Captain Bligh, who represents a traditional nationalistic British hero dreaming of "Old England's welcome shore" (I.19); Christian, who counts as a traditional Byronic hero with all its sense of guilt, recklessness, and resistance against authority; Torquil, who seems to be a sub-Byronic hero only retaining the elements of romance.²⁴ At the beginning of the poem, the three heroes are of the same sort before the mutiny. Captain Bligh wants to be of great value to the Empire by helping the Royal Society to research breadfruits of Tahiti and by transporting them to the Caribbean to provide slaves with easily

grown food. Christian is also said to have wanted to fulfill his ambition “to see his name aspire” by “blazon[ing] Britain’s thousand glories higher” (I.161-62),²⁵ and Torquil—who is not even mentioned at the time of mutiny—is later assessed by the narrator to have been “A patriot hero or despotic chief, / To form a nation’s glory or its grief” (II.204-05). The event of mutiny is, therefore, what comes to separate Christian and Torquil from the traditional British nationalism and imperialism. While Captain Bligh remains unchanged to be persistent in his patriotism, they abandon the honor and wealth they can possibly earn by serving the Empire, inspired by “The gentle island, and the genial soil, / The friendly hearts, the feasts without a toil, / The courteous manners but from nature caught, / The wealth unhoarded, and the love unbought” (I.107-10). However, the more significant bifurcation takes place between Christian and Torquil, as the former remains as a militant rebel laden with gloom and guilt while the latter is reborn into a romantic hero with Neuha’s crucial aid. To sum, the narrative line of the poem depends on constant differentiating of these three main characters, and the way in which Byron separates and re-categorizes them can be demonstrated as follows:

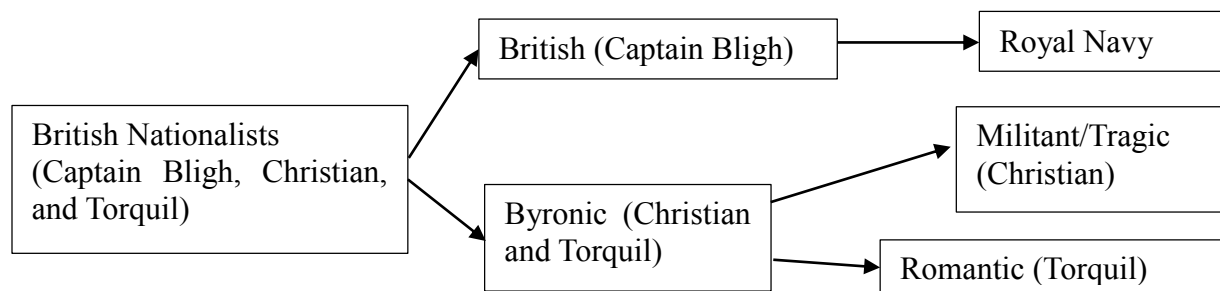


Figure 5.1. Categorization of Heroes in *The Island*

British nationalism represented by Captain Bligh disappears from the scenes for a while, later to reappear in the form of state violence when the Royal Navy arrives either to arrest and execute the mutineers or to vanquish them. On the other hand, Christian maintains the militant quality of Byronic hero subsequently to meet a tragic end, while Torquil lands in a happy ending,

effectively avoiding both the deathly grasp of conventional nationalism and the militant dead-end of conventional heroism.

The separation between Christian and Torquil is anticipated by the narrator at the end of Canto 1 when the mutineers are represented to be somewhat torn between nostalgic memory of England and erotic desire to find love to “tame their fiery spirits” (I.234). Despite the inspiration of love that seems to have motivated the mutiny, Christian in effect has no chance to tame his spirit, finding no love and alienating himself from others just as a typical Byronic hero would do. Thus, in Canto 2 where Torquil develops an erotic connection with Neuha, Christian is virtually absent, merely driven by the cause of militant resistance. On the other hand, Torquil is dissociated not only from the ever gloomy Christian but also from all the other belligerent mutineers, exactly through his communion with Neuha. Even in her less civilized community, there are military struggles against other communities, and Toobonai has rituals of visiting heroes’ graves and sharing their stories through songs (II.1-52). Neuha’s sensuousness expressed in her “voluptuous state” (II.312) is not only “effeminate” but “Elysian” (II.313), and in her erotic stance there is no room for communal rituals of commemoration: “no laurels o’er the hero’s urn” (II.314).

By achieving romantic unity “in one absorbing soul” (II.305) with Neuha, Torquil naturally imbibes her pro-romantic and anti-communal (or anti-nationalist by expansion) tendencies. Neuha believes that all the rituals respecting and remembering the bygone heroes are essentially futile, and almost inculcates Torquil with the lesson of love so that he may also distance himself from the patriotic pursuits of glory and fame. The narrator, temporarily in agreement with Neuha’s feminine and erotic mood, laments that the Western history has seen enough of heroism that leads to blind nationalism. With such a striking injunction of “Strip off

this fond and false identity” (II. 392) constructed by heroism, the narrator urges the readers to stop being “mere mock-birds” who will simply repeat “the despot’s song.” (II.326). Neuha is, however, not as conscious of the ideological nature of heroism and nationalism as the narrator, and her resistance to communalism is rather in the form of retreat from the public. Thus she neglects the social rituals that affect individuals’ identities and cuts their identitarian chains to liberating them. Her constant effort to drag Torquil further into a private space of “their cottage” (II.403), “Rapt in the fond forgetfulness of life” (II.333) is, in this sense, a part of the educational process through which she wants to transform Torquil into a non-citizen.

But Neuha’s romantic alienation loses its influence as the Royal Navy’s “loud, long, and naval whistle” (II.428) operates somewhat in the manner of an Althusserian interpellation, poignantly reminding Torquil of his position as a British subject.²⁶ Disenchanted from Neuha’s magic of erotic love, Torquil is at this moment reunited with Christian with these heroic remarks: “We’ll make no running fight, for that were base; / We will die at our quarters, like true men” (II.518).²⁷ More importantly, Torquil resists Neuha’s “effeminate” influences and asks her to “Unman me not” (II.529), indicating that Neuha’s education is incomplete, at least in this round.

But Torquil’s resistance against Neuha’s feminizing effect is nowhere to be found from then on, and there is no indication about his bravery or agility during the battle, especially as Byron refuses to give us the details of this battle between the Royal Navy and the mutineers. If Canto 2 reserves no place for Christian and concentrates on detailing Torquil’s education in romance, Canto 3 completely ignores Torquil and devotes itself to presenting Christian as the proper Byronic hero: “stern, and aloof a little from the rest” (III.85), “of an higher order” (III.139) than his colleagues, and “silent, and sad, and savage” (III.141). By starting Canto 3 with a dry statement of “the fight was o’er” (III.1), however, Byron deprives Christian of his

rebellious spirit, and he is made into a tragic hero who is very well aware of the destined defeat in the impending battle. This sense of frustration and vulnerability is reflected in Christian's character; "the ruddy, reckless, dauntless hue once spread / Along his cheek" (III.87-88), so characteristic of a Byronic hero, turns "livid . . . as lead" (III.88), and his hairs are "like startled vipers" (III.90), exuding his sense of consternation in front of the Royal Navy's invincible embodiment of the nation's power over the individuals.

If we regard Jacopo as a tragic hero, Christian may be the kind of hero most akin to him, in that his position as a Byronic hero demands his inevitable death. The correlation between these two characters makes more sense when Christian is denigrated as a pointless, meaningless, cause-less hero. Earlier in Canto 3, the mutineers' struggle against the powerful Royal Navy is rendered comparable to the battle at Thermopylae, and this comparison somehow implies that Christian, as the leader of this small band of rebels, is as brave and determined as King Leonidas of Sparta. As they are nearing death, however, the narrator reprises the comparison, only to break its validity and emphasize how Christian and others are different from the example of Thermopylae:

But, ah! how different! 'tis the *cause* makes all,
Degrades or hallows courage in its fall.
O'er them no fame, eternal and intense,
Blazed through the clouds of death and beckoned hence;
.....
And this they knew and felt, at least the one,
The leader of the band he had undone; (IV.261-70)

At this moment, the ever flexible—or gullible—narrator shifts back into Captain Bligh’s perspective and argues that a seemingly heroic act is nothing but a meaningless deed unless it is given the proper cause. Earlier in Canto 1, the betrayed Captain Bligh “demand[s]” Christian “the cause,” to which “a curse / Is all the answer” (I.69-70), and the narrator forms an emotional tie with Bligh as he is only called with “thee” or “thy” and all the others are called as third persons for the entire two verse paragraphs (I.51-80). Ultimately, the narrator emphasizes that it is Christian himself who always already knows that his courage will be degraded and his name will be forgotten, as he could not and cannot explain the grounds for his heroic rebellion.

The affinity between Jacopo and Christian is established, however, only when Jacopo is indeed feeling tragic about his misfortunes and death, and we have already seen that in his own perspective, his death is rather a blessing as he is forever united with Venetian soil. In this sense, it is more plausible to link Jacopo to Torquil the romantic hero, and not surprisingly, Canto 4 shows the drastic way in which Torquil and Neuha’s personal romance is given public value, subsequently to contribute to the cause of the rising community or nation. As Christian draws the Navy’s attention to himself, Neuha appears in order to rescue wounded Torquil; however, her purpose is not only to spare his life, but to complete the education of romance so that he can entirely lose grip of the ideological ties to the British Empire. Neuha achieves this by diving into the ocean and pressing Torquil to follow her, and their submergence is replete with images of death. Torquil, unsure about Neuha’s intents, suspects if she has “brought [him] here to die” (IV.54), and begins to imagine that he is going into “a grave,” (IV.55), while the overhanging rock may pass for his “tombstone” (IV.56). All that is left after their dive is the momentary “white . . . sepulcher” made of white foam on the surface of water. Torquil’s pseudo-death has two reference points in the character of Jacopo. On the one hand, both disappear from the world

through the medium of death; what the world believes to have seen before Torquil's jump is "the dead hue of eternity" "in his cheek and eye" (IV.89-90), just like Jacopo's symptoms of being attracted to death. On the other hand, however, Torquil's entrance into the water is symbolically the same activity as Jacopo's search of Venice's deep ocean, where he has built up a more personal and physical contact with the nation.

For both Torquil and Jacopo, death and erotic attachment become inseparable, and while Torquil does not have quite the same level of autonomy as Jacopo in choosing the act of diving, the whole process of diving after Neuha and reaching a secret underwater refuge could be understood as a ritual through which personal romance is given public meanings, just as Jacopo channels his personal affection into the public figure of nation fully retaining its emotional power. Byron completes this process by rendering the refuge cavern as if it were a Gothic cathedral. Even in darkness, "a sobered ray" slides in, "As in some old cathedral's glimmering aisle" (IV.132-33), and Torquil discovers, after igniting fire, "Wide . . . and high" space under "a self-born Gothic canopy" (IV.145-46). Images such as "fretted pinnacle, the aisle, the nave" (IV.153), and "crucifix" (IV.158) are unmistakably those of a Gothic church, while this "chapel of the Seas" (IV.160) is obviously wrought by nature. The once-secluded romantic couple seems at once transported to a European orthodox space for marriage and death (with graveyards usually attached to it), and going through those stages of death, survival, love, and marriage, they quickly become the living grave to be commemorated. Appropriately enough for such Gothic surroundings, love and death go hand in hand to be elevated into a myth: "all within that cave / Was Love, though buried strong as in the grave" (IV.221-22). The narrator presents the case of Abelard and Eloisa as an example, in which "Their nuptial vault" (IV.225) is none other than

their grave, and the already dead Abelard has been waiting for Eloisa's ashes to join him,
“pres[sing] / The kindling ashes to his kindled breast” (IV.225-26).²⁸

When they return to Neuha's community alive, they come to take up a special place in the local community, with the power of romantic tale they have just woven together. The tale about their escape and resurrection is not kept to themselves but is told to the community both of them now belong to (IV.411), and the “new tradition” crafted from this tale enshrines the “sanctuary” with “the name of ‘Neuha's Cave’” (IV.414). By transforming the whole process of Neuha's brilliant rescue into a communal legendary story of death and redemption along with the aid of the Gothic elements, Byron reinscribes the previously private romantic pursuit of the couple into the public sphere where it comes to provide materials for nationalist consciousness. Friederike Wolfrum claims that their return to Toobonai is a completion of “myth-making” as the different mythical elements are united to represent universal human nature,²⁹ but I argue that such “myth-making” is there as a cornerstone for future development of essentialist/romantic nationalism which endorses identity-building based on the sense of community as the universal good. The fate of this newly-born “nation” does not seem to be all that good, when the very last lines of the poem seem to be subtly incorporating Byron's sinister premonition about what is to come:

The feast in honour of the guest, returned
To Peace and Pleasure, perilously earned;
A night succeeded by such happy days
As only the yet infant world displays. (IV.417-20)

The personified “Peace and Pleasure” are presented merely as guests, not as permanent residents, and nobody knows how much more perilous it would be to invite them over again. While the

last line may signify that their world may produce many more happy days that are beyond what the infant stage can afford, another possible reading may be that those happy days are made available exactly because this Polynesian world they occupy is still underdeveloped. As they grow, mature, and expand as a nation, there may come a time when their nation demands each individual to be conscripted to its cause, under the flag of the romantic heroes of Torquil and Neuha.

Notes

¹ Timothy Webb, "Byron and the Heroic Syllables," *Keats-Shelley Review* 5 (1990): 41-74; Maryhelen C. Harmon, "'Born for Opposition': Lord Byron's Irresistible Tug-of-War," in *War and Words: Horror and Heroism in the Literature of Warfare*, ed. Sara Munson Deats, Lagretta Tallent Lenker, and Merry G. Perry (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 103-24; Paul Stock, "Liberty and Independence: The Shelley-Byron Circle and the State(s) of Europe," *Romanticism* 15, no. 2 (2009): 121-30; and Bernard Beatty, "Byron and the Paradoxes of Nationalism," in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), 152-62.

² For Byron's political influence on Italy's subsequent unification and independence, see Arnold Anthony Schmidt, *Byron and the Rhetoric of Italian Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For a view that Byron transforms himself from an English-centered imperialist-nationalist into a liberal nationalist who comes to endorse Italy and Greece's independence, see Daryl S. Ogden, "Byron, Italy, and the Poetics of Liberal Imperialism," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 49 (2000): 114-37. Outside of Italian context, Murray Pittock's argument about Byron's involvement in the Scottish network does shed light on his antagonism against all-inclusive states, but leads to a conclusion that his preference for smaller communities originates from his affective affiliation with Scottish nationhood. Simon Bainbridge, in yet another approach to Byron's sense of nationalism, presents Byron's view on history to be domineered by the destructiveness of war and siege invoked by recurrent wars, the most recent of which was the Napoleonic one. See Murray Pittock, "Byron's Networks and Scottish Romanticism," *The Byron Journal* 37, no. 1 (2009): 5-14, and Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³ Philip W. Martin, "Heroism and History: *Childe Harold* I and II and the Tales," in *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*, ed. Drummond Bone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77-98; Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1987).

⁴ Timothy Webb, "Byron and the Heroic Syllables," 42.

⁵ Stock, "Liberty and Independence," 123-24.

⁶ Webb, "Byron and the Heroic Syllables," 48.

⁷ Webb, 44.

⁸ Martin, "Heroism and History," 96-97.

⁹ Examples abound, and many sources I use shortly after are also generally interested in these obvious political conflicts of the drama. Some works that are of value but I won't have chance to return to in this chapter include Gordon Spencer, "Natural Law and the State in *The Two Foscari*," *The Byron Journal* 29 (2001): 27-35; and Daniel P. Watkins, "Violence, Class Consciousness, and Ideology in Byron's History Plays," *ELH* 48, no. 4 (1981): 799-816.

¹⁰ Caroline Franklin, for example, argues that Marina's masculinized feat of struggling against the system is made available because she initially occupies the feminine sphere. See Caroline Franklin, *Byron's Heroines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 191-204.

¹¹ As Peter Manning points out, this characterization is by Jacopo's father, and is apparent in the text. See Peter J. Manning, *Byron and His Fictions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 138.

¹² Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 220.

¹³ McGann, 220.

¹⁴ All quotes of Byron's poetic works are from George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, Vol I-VII, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980-93), and parenthetical in-text citations will be employed for the two main works in question in this chapter. *The Two Foscari* is in Vol VI, and *The Island* is in Vol VII. This specific scene is regarded, by many critics, as Jacopo's only redeemable moment throughout the work. See, for example, Franklin, *Byron's Heroines*, 200; Cristina Ceron, "'Who Shall Oppose That Law?': Rhetoric Versus Ethics in *The Two Foscari*," in *Byron at the Theater*, ed. Peter Cochran (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 92; Nat Leach, "Historical Bodies in a 'Mental Theatre': Byron's Ethics of History," *Studies in Romanticism* 46, no. 1 (2007): 17; and McGann, *Fiery Dust*, 220. It should be, however, also noted that both Ceron and Leach do not believe his effort (if it ever deserves to be called "effort" at all) leads to any meaningful consequences. Ceron claims that Marina's voice is so hollow and ghostly that it cannot leave any mark, and Leach considers the apparent political optimism is undermined as he imagines his own political possibility only as a dead corpse, thus losing the power to transcend the history that oppresses the subjects.

¹⁵ The practice of calling one's country as "motherland" is and has been common enough, so that it thrives even today. But in the appendices to the work in which Byron presents actual historical accounts on the events, it is found that Loredano and Francis Foscari have also called Venice as "motherland" I am relying on the translation of the appendices provided in the online full-text of *The Two Foscari*, invaluable edited by Peter Cochran. Lord Byron, *The Two Foscari*, ed. Peter Cochran, March 2009, 79-80, https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/the_two_foscari.pdf.

¹⁶ Byron, *The Two Foscari*, ed. Cochran, 77.

¹⁷ Byron, 77; 88.

¹⁸ Marlon B. Ross, "Romancing the Nation-State: The Poetics of Romantic Nationalism," in *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, ed. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 56-57.

¹⁹ This argument bears a striking resemblance to a trite pro-immigration claim of the twenty-first-century that "America is a nation built by immigrants."

²⁰ Lord Byron, *The Two Foscari*, ed. Peter Cochran, 77-78; 88.

²¹ John W. Ehrstine, *The Metaphysics of Byron: A Reading of the Plays* (Hague: Mouton, 1976), 72. Ehrstine bases this passing thought off of Ernest Hartley Coleridge's introduction to the tragedy, but it should be noted that even in Coleridge's account, Byron, while claiming that he depicted Jacopo as he saw him in history, believes his affection for Venice to be "sickly." See E. H. Coleridge ed., *The Works of Lord Byron Poetry*, Vol. 5 (London: John Murray, 1901), 119.

²² See Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 350-51, and P. D. Fleck, "Romance in Byron's *The Island*," in *Byron: A Symposium*, ed. John D. Jump (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 178.

²³ Franklin, *Byron's Heroines*, 89-98; Catherine Addison, "'Elysian and Effeminate': Byron's *The Island* as a Revisionary Text," *SEL* 35 (1995): 687.

²⁴ The categorization I use here is rather obvious, and is shared with some other critics who are interested in the changing perspectives within the poem. A representative example of such study may be Arnold A. Schmidt, "Bligh, Christian, Murray, and Napoleon: Byronic Mutiny from London to the South Sea," *The Byron Journal* 32, no. 1 (2004): 21-30. The historical situation in Byron's time around the fluctuations in Bligh and Christian's public imagery—in which Torquil is certainly not an object of study, as he is a fictional character—is explored very well in Maike Oergel, "Changing Authorities on HMS *Bounty*: The Public Images of William Bligh and Fletcher Christian

in the Context of Late Eighteenth-Century Political and Intellectual Conditions,” in *(Re-)Writing the Radical: Enlightenment, Revolution and Cultural Transfer in 1790s Germany, Britain and France*, ed. Maïke Oergel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 120-41.

²⁵ Captain Bligh thus reminds Christian of his former nationalistic desires, to which he responds with embarrassment: “I am in Hell! in Hell!” (I.164). According to Bligh’s account, Christian indeed said those words, but he never uttered a word on Christian’s nationalistic ambitions; instead, he was chiding Christian for betraying the friendship between themselves. It seems, therefore, that Byron was in need of emphasizing that the mutineers have been safely in the influence of British Empire and its causes. See William Bligh, *A Narrative of the Mutiny, on Board His Majesty’s Ship Bounty* (London: George Nicol, 1790), 8.

²⁶ It is hard to miss the similarity between the willed isolation of Torquil-Neuha couple and the seclusion of Lycius-Lamia couple in John Keats’s *Lamia*. The males are, in a similar fashion, awakened to the call from the society.

²⁷ An irony is obviously intended here when Byron lets Torquil utter these words, when he is the only one who does not fight till the end and ultimately survives—a “base” act according to himself.

²⁸ Marilyn Butler conjectures on the possible correlation between the Gothic literary practice of speaking to the dead and the sense of belonging in terms of identity and place, and my idea here that Gothicized romance produces tales for public remembrance loosely converges with her suggestion. “We should perhaps reconsider the Gothic not as an isolated fashion but as related to a whole cluster of specialised enquiries into the rituals of death and the ongoing role of the dead in our lives, for example as the guarantee of our identity and the source of our claim to belong to one soil rather than another.” See Marilyn Butler, “Romanticism and Nationalism: Talking to the Dead,” *La questione romantica, rivista interdisciplinare di studi romantici* 2, no. 1 (1996): 43.

²⁹ Friederike Wolfrum, “Neuha’s Cave and Noah’s Ark: Myth-Making and Religion in Byron’s *The Island*,” in *Byron’s Religions*, ed. Peter Cochran (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 311-15.

CHAPTER 6

CODA: UTOPIA AS THE MIRROR OF REAL CONTRADICTIONS

Although I have tried to differentiate my line of argument from the deconstructive approaches to Romanticism, both deconstructionists and I are obliged and unable to answer the inevitable question: so what's the meaning of all that? For the post-structuralists who are invested in emptying out the existent meanings, it is certainly an impossible question to answer. My situation is no better. What could be the meaning I can suggest when I have been busy shattering the utopian dreams, some of which are even universally endorsed by the public? Am I arguing that all forms of utopia are, at least in part, ideological, fake, or even reactionary?

Perhaps I am, and it is customary for studies on utopia to deal with impossibilities. As much as utopia is a product of wishful thinking, it presupposes that there will follow disappointments, disenchantments, and disillusionments. With a positive turn of ideas, some people may suggest that utopia may provide us with a futuristic *telos*, whose guiding light promotes and motivates us into reaching for that ideal state.

I won't deny that such cases existed or will exist, but I believe the way I read utopia has its own productive merits. As I suggested in the Introduction, my perspective almost immediately lets us check ourselves whether anything we take for granted to be good may have ulterior connection with the social contradictions we face in reality. But it is more important to note that the Romantic utopian texts help us better understand the detailed texture of what we are up against. This is made possible exactly by their utopian formulations become succumbed to that ideology, almost to the effect of infiltration, and we get acquainted with the specific form of desire within that existent ideology. Therefore, instead of despairing at the failures of utopia, I

suggest that utopia be used as an interpretive tool that investigates not so much the optimistic vision as what our reality desires us to be. Thus, in addition to offering us a temporary escapist refuge of desire, utopia can conversely act as a mirror that reflects the raw nature of the contradictions we experience. Perhaps when we know such difficulty based on the awareness that utopia may at any time betray us, we can then begin to think of the real conditions of political possibilities.

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