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**LOVE AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: THE VISIONARY ENTERPRISE IN
SHELLEY'S POETRY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore the structure and workings of Shelley's love-driven visionary enterprise and the ensuing emergence of the Shelleyan self. This exploring will be carried out while that unique kind of selfhood-in-the-making manifests itself during the poet's revealing crises of self-consciousness, as they appear in his verse. The method employed is the tracing of psychological and visual patterns as they evolve in his poems during the rapturous contact of consciousness with the data of external and inner reality. Reflected in the tracing of those patterns are the corresponding broader psycho-physical reactions of the involved subject to the same rapturously encountered stimuli. The above method is, therefore, congenial to the main theme treated in the chapters to follow and related to Shelley's express belief that poetry operates on much the same principle as love. The tense and emotionally laden contact between the poet's consciousness and its objects of contemplation is the result of the combination of two contradictory qualities: unbridled passion of nineteenth-century Enlightenment, monitoring itself with almost scientific precision. This, at first sight, impossible combination ends up in momentary loss-of-consciousness crises as manifested in Shelley's poetry. Those crises, as previous criticism has shown, mark the climax of an erotic process, which closely follows the phases of the sexual event. The Shelleyan crisis constitutes a marginal, yet robust and dynamic expression of selfhood, so glaringly different from the Humean vague and unnerving description of the self as "a bundle of impressions". This fascinating occurrence in the poet's verse is explored through a structural model based on the scientific description of human love, which facilitates the tracing of the Shelleyan idiosyncratic, yet easy to follow, psycho-visual/optical workings. The forming of that structural model (Chapter I) can facilitate the monitoring of the evolving features of the Shelleyan self. After the presentation of the medium and constituting substance (Chapter II), as well as of the typical receptacle and visual representation of that evolving selfhood (Chapter III), some outstanding variants (Chapter IV) and conspicuous examples (Chapter V) will be discussed. Finally, the waning of the enterprise of love and the corresponding alterations in the evolving of the Shelleyan selfhood-in-the-making will be traced (Chapter VI). As a result, a deeper study of the poet's visionary enterprise will be conducted, functionally related to its latent, yet powerful generating source: the Shelleyan kind of love, as dynamic uniting process of the self with its objects of rapt contemplation. At the same time, this thesis will also put together, for the first time, a comprehensive theory of interpreting those problematic lines reflecting the crises of self-consciousness on the poet's verse: those lines, where, supposedly, insurmountable problems in meaning and language can emerge.