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Cain in early nineteenth-century literature: Traditional biblical stories revised to encompass contemporary advances in science

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**Cain in early nineteenth-century literature:
Traditional biblical stories revised to encompass contemporary advances in science**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

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Introduction

During the early nineteenth century, a number of authors sought to revise the traditional story of Cain, frequently using non-canonical sources to complete these revisions. The plethora of texts that work to revise this biblical tradition in Romantic Literature certainly makes the modern day reader wonder what caused this apparently widespread impulse. This issue becomes especially curious when considering the diverse authors who undertook the task of revising the story of Cain. In this critical analysis, I examine three different revisions of Cain by authors George Gordon, Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley to understand what makes the story of Cain so enticing to these authors, and how Cain might hold themes that the authors use to understand the intersections of religion and science in contemporary England.

Religion and science in early nineteenth-century England were not as disparate topics as they might seem to the twenty-first century reader. A long tradition of natural philosophy helped to amalgamate theology and scientific theory. In fact, understanding scientific phenomena as signs or portents of biblical events has been a long standing tradition in Western culture. While natural philosophy has its roots in ancient culture, the strong focus on natural philosophy in England began during the Seventeenth Century. In the Seventeenth Century, there was a rise in scientific activity in England due in part to the rise of commercial power within England and the positive endorsement of natural knowledge by the Anglican and Puritan churches (Olson 83). During the early Seventeenth Century, Richard Hooker, an Anglican theologian, published *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, a defense of Queen Elizabeth's moderate policies and of Anglican

theology. This text emphasized natural philosophy and the role of human reason to support the Anglican theology espoused within his publication. Richard G. Olson outlines Hooker's basic argument within his book *Science and Religion, 1450-1900: From Copernicus to Darwin*, stating:

The rationality of God's actions is what makes natural theology both possible and powerful. The fact that we can be assured that the laws that God imposed upon natural order are subject to reason allows us to approach God through the investigation of his reason as manifested in the creation by using our very own reason. (88)

Hooker argued that the God's creation followed logical, unified rules, which could be examined through the use of human reason. Ultimately, an individual could understand God through His creation by understanding the natural rules that govern the world.

Natural philosophy continued to be a popular theory for understanding the new scientific advances for quite some time in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. Only partway through the nineteenth century was natural philosophy replaced with different philosophical systems. Many Romantic writers, including Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley, suffused their poetry with natural philosophy, making the natural landscape within the poems a way to read God in the environment. In some instances, this theory involved an intertwining of scientific allusion with theological imagery.

Each of the authors held diverse religious beliefs that influenced their treatment of scientific imagery within their work. Shelley was an atheist from an early age, a choice

which ultimately distanced him from his family, leaving him destitute for many years. His writings often dealt with issues concerning freedom and rebellion against authority, which critics such as John R. Greenfield connect to both his religious beliefs and personal lifestyle. As an active hobbyist in scientific fields, Shelley's interests ranged from electricity, astronomy, and chemistry, to philosophy, causing Shelley to imbue his own writings with imagery from these fields (310). Shelley's poem *Adonais* was written as an elegy for John Keats, who died at a young age from tuberculosis, distressing Shelley who was personally connected, though primarily literarily connected, to the poet. In the poem, Shelley calls on Urania, an allusion to the muse as well as nature, to mourn for the lost poet. As the poem concludes, Shelley apotheosizes Keats, moving him to a visionary realm, becoming a star. The star imagery within *Adonais* contains allusions to William Herschel's publications as well as the transit of Venus.

While few publications exist concerning Shelley's use of science in *Adonais*, several scholars have explicated Shelley's use of science more generally as well in conjunction with his poem *Prometheus Unbound*. Carl Grabo, in his book *A Newton Among Poets: Shelley's Use of Science in Prometheus Unbound*, suggests a link between Shelley and Herschel, though he is unable to definitively state that this link exists. In the article "Shelley's Cosmological Sublime: William Herschel, James Lind and 'The Multitudinous Orb'" Christopher Goulding notes that "recent commentary continues to suspect Herschel's influence at work, though no basis for such conjecture has yet emerged" (783). Regardless, Shelley's astronomical metaphors in *Adonais* appear to

have roots in Herschel's theories, as well as Newton's *Optiks*, a connection more firmly established.

In direct contrast to Shelley in his atheism, Coleridge remained an ardent Christian throughout his life, though his later theological writings proved influential for reforming the Church of England. Throughout much of his writing career, Coleridge was concerned with enlightenment. Seeking out opportunities to learn German philosophy, Coleridge read Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. While Coleridge rejected an ultimate acceptance of science supplanting divinity, he did widely read the academic writings of the early nineteenth century. A. C. Goodson characterizes Coleridge's understanding of poetry and science thus: "The logic of science was derived from pure reason; the logic of poetry depended on human understanding, which was anything but pure" (100). Coleridge's binary distinction between pure reason and human understanding echoes his later understandings of imagination, which he defines in *Biographia Literaria*:

The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM... The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is

essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. (304)

An elusively defined element of creation, Coleridge's understanding of imagination indicates that the human experience of creation is problematized by the impossibility of its pure unification. As individuals perceive these fixed objects in reality, their perceptions, or imaginations, work to unify the elements. However, an individual's perceptions of a poetic creation remain an imperfect science that resists unification outside of the individual's mind. This understanding of poetry and Coleridge's wish for enlightenment problematize the critic's understanding of his use of scientific imagery because he incorporates the scientific imagery within his own creations.

Coleridge's project, "The Wanderings of Cain," remains in a fragmented state. The first fragment claims the piece was written in 1798, which provides an initial date for Coleridge's work on the project. J. C. C. Mays dates the fragments as being written in 1797 and 1807. In 1797, Mays proposes that Coleridge created a working plan for the poem. In 1807, Coleridge completed the first canto in the project. Little scholarly research has been published on Coleridge's "The Wanderings," resulting in a lack of scholarship that is at once exciting as it is overwhelming. John Livingstone Lowe's book *The Road to Xanadu* provides the most analysis on the fragments, indicating Bartram's *Travels*, Josephus, and the Christian folklore of 'The Wandering Jew' as possible sources for Coleridge.

George Gordon, Lord Byron, held complex beliefs concerning Christianity. Raised by a Presbyterian nurse, it is clear that Byron developed a love for the Bible. He also adhered to Calvinist doctrines of original sin, innate evil, and predestined salvation.

Self-identified as a citizen of the world, Byron's personal views are more complex in his writings. Often dealing with themes of tyranny and freedom, probably due to his active participation in the Greek war and other contemporary events, Byron began to question the concept of freedom and divine good in his works. In several writings, he problematizes the idea of immortality, showing the limitations of the mortal state of being.

Many of these themes, ranging from his early Presbyterian beliefs to his inverted sense of the state of immortality, come across in Byron's religious poems, such as the drama *Cain: A Mystery*. The subtitle to this poem refers to the mystery plays of the fourteenth century where the Church would put on short dramas to inform their congregation of the tenets of Catholicism. He also noted that the subtitle would refer to "what it probably will remain to the reader" (qtd. in Gatton 59). In *Cain*, Byron challenges beliefs in good, evil, death, and immortality by flipping the reader's perspectives of Lucifer and God, championing Lucifer as good, and God as the bringer of war, death, and disease. In order to tempt Cain, Lucifer uses a dialectic form of dialogue to reveal new scientific principles particularly relating to Cuvier's *Essay on the New Theory of the Earth*, translated by Robert Kerr in 1813. While there have been many scholarly publications on *Cain*, only Dimitri Karkoulis has dealt specifically with the influence of Cuvier's publication. Karkoulis' article, "'They pluck'd the tree of Science/ And sin': Byron's *Cain* and the Science of Sacrilege," examines how the religious sanitation of the English translation of Cuvier's *New Theory* affected Byron's understanding of the science.

George Gordon, Lord Byron's controversial play, *Cain: A Mystery*, most closely follows the storyline of the traditional version of Cain found in Genesis, albeit with many non-canonical adjustments. In this play, Cain and Lucifer discuss the abstract concept of mortality using images from Georges Cuvier's *New Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, a geological publication which proposed the idea of geological catastrophism. Cuvier's theory of geological catastrophism suggested that the earth had undergone large periods of flooding throughout history, of which evidence can be found in the geological strata. The theory had three very important implications: 1.) Cuvier proposed the age of the earth to be much older than people had presupposed (vi-viii); 2.) In older strata, Cuvier found evidence of time periods where earth existed without humans (17-21); 3.) Cuvier also discovered numerous species without modern day ancestors, proving the concept of species extinction (105-113). These three implications allowed Byron to use Cuvier's concept of geological catastrophism as a vehicle for discussing mortality within *Cain*. Chapter one examines how Byron incorporates this early nineteenth century theory of geological catastrophism within the traditional framework of Cain to destabilize Cain, causing him to commit fratricide.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's unfinished fragments "The Wanderings of Cain" somewhat adheres to the canonical version of Cain. In the fragments, Cain must learn to properly use his physical senses to understand God in the environment. Lowes notes the influence of William Bartram's *Travels* on the images of the wilderness in Coleridge's text. As Cain attempts to grow in "The Wanderings," he must learn to accurately read the signs of the landscape, inspired by Bartram's visits to Florida. The odd descriptions of this landscape emphasize the foreignness of the Euphrates River to the reader, placing the

contemporary reader in Cain's situation. Chapter two considers the way Coleridge intertwines the physical nature of sensing with the internal sensibilities of Cain to emphasize the importance of finding unity in nature, ultimately alluding to the theory of natural philosophy.

In the final chapter of this critical analysis, the astronomical imagery in Percy Bysshe Shelley's elegy to Keats, *Adonais*, is examined to understand the way Shelley entwines scientific imagery with mythology to create a new system for understanding deity. Shelley's apotheosis of Keats levels the dichotomies of Christ and Cain to portray Keats as an incarnation of God's mercy. Meanwhile, Shelley employs imagery from the transit of Venus to show Keats eclipse God as Venus eclipses the Sun. This eclipse subverts religious tradition, reverting to a pagan system of deity.

While Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley held vastly diverse religious views, their preoccupation with the story of Cain emphasizes their natural need to understand the meaning of mortality. Each version works to explain mortality, making the prospect of death less frightening to the author and contemporary audience. By examining the intersections between religion and science within these versions of Cain, each author's vision of mortality crystalizes, allowing the modern day reader to understand how these authors navigated the tricky, sometimes conflicting, information presented in the early Nineteenth Century.

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“To know mortal nature’s nothingness”:

Revisions of Immortality in Byron’s *Cain: A Mystery*

In George Gordon, Lord Byron’s dramatic work *Cain: A Mystery*, Lucifer acts as teacher and tempter, explaining the nature of mortality through scientific dialogue. In the final scene of Act II, Lucifer provides a moral for the play, claiming:

And this should be the human sum
of knowledge, to know mortal nature’s nothingness;
Bequeath that science to thy children, and
‘Twill spare them many tortures. (II.ii.421-24)

Lucifer’s claim, that mortal life is empty and fleeting, resonates throughout the late Romantic literature. Due to the explosion of scientific progress, Lucifer’s intentional decision to call Cain’s new knowledge of mortality a science highlights the contemporary culture’s sense of instability concerning the traditional theories of the earth. The shifting meaning of *science* within the early Nineteenth Century encapsulates this instability.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *science* could refer to the knowledge more traditional theological concepts or the knowledge of theoretical, fact based proofs. Lucifer’s intentions in describing mortality as a “science” could refer to the theological concepts of mortality, or possibly allude to the more theoretical understanding of death, a view that was shifting in the early Nineteenth Century.

In his play, Byron highlights the emerging schism between early nineteenth-century scientific dialogue and theology by using the introduction of mortality in the story of Genesis as a vehicle for discussing the mortality of the human race. Within the preface to the play, Byron acknowledges Cuvier’s influence in the second act of *Cain*, in which Lucifer espouses theories of geological catastrophism. Lucifer’s emphasis on

geological catastrophism, which proved that species extinction had occurred on the earth, betrays the Nineteenth Century's preoccupations with envisioning mortality. Byron's revision of the biblical story reveals a need to fit this new scientific theory into older theological schema in order to maintain the centrality of the human race in history. However, the first and third acts prove unable to reconcile the second act's leap into nineteenth-century science as the second act wildly conflicts in setting and tone. Therefore, Cain's culminating action of fratricide serves as a reaction to the instability and ignorance of his worldview rather than an action of malicious intent.

Many scholars have noted the obsession with mortality within Byron's *Cain*. In her article, "The Struggle with Language in Byron's *Cain*," Callaghan notes the importance of language as a medium for communicating the connection between words and actions. By understanding the influence of Cuvier on many of the scientific allusions, the connection between the concept of mortality and the Nineteenth Century becomes clearer. In *Byron's Letters and Journals*, Marchand identifies Cuvier's *New Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, translated by Robert Kerr in 1813, as the source text for Byron's play. Dimitri Karkoulis has already written on the religious sanitation of this version of Cuvier's French publication, which affected the reception of Cuvier's theories in Britain and America quite drastically. The French scientist felt that "geology, if it is to move beyond the speculative systems of the preceding centuries, for which he [Cuvier] had nothing but contempt, must be a rigorous, empirical science wholly separate from theology, and based upon the material evidence afforded through the careful study of fossils" (Karkoulis 275). While Karkoulis correctly notes Cuvier's distaste for science based on speculation, Karkoulis fails to flesh out the ambiguity of Cuvier's religious

beliefs, an ambiguity in part due to the turbulent political setting of late eighteenth-century France. By understanding this ambiguity, Byron's decision to use Cuvier's *New Essay on the Theory of the Earth* as a source text for *Cain* becomes clear, illustrating Byron's emphasis on revising the biblical to unify the religious text with the evolving nineteenth-century understanding of mortality.

Information concerning Cuvier's childhood can be difficult to find, making it hard for researchers to sketch a complete background of his life. Fortunately, Phillippe Taquet provides clear descriptions of Cuvier's formative years based upon archival correspondence. Born in 1769 in Montbéliard, part of a French-German duchy, Cuvier was raised in a Lutheran family. After receiving education at the local secondary school, Cuvier attempted an examination that selected the smartest students to be sent to Tübingen, a school for ministers of religion (Taquet 127). His secondary teachers felt that he was too self-assured to become a minister, so in 1784 Cuvier attended Karlsschule (Reiss 87). At this University, Cuvier specialized in state service, taking a variety of subjects, including law, chemistry, mineralogy, zoology, botany, the science of mines, commerce, finance, practical and theoretical economics, and geometry (Coleman 23). As a strong advocate for the Lutheran religion, Cuvier, along with others, founded the first Parisian Lutheran parish. From 1822 until his death in 1832, Cuvier acted as Grand Master of the Protestant Faculties of Theology of the French University. During the time that Cuvier spent in office, France underwent turbulent revolutions which held religious undertones as well as political, moving between "Enlightenment skepticism, Revolutionary atheism, and Restoration Catholicism" (Larson 10). Due to the political

nature of the religious instability in France, scholars have generally been unable to determine Cuvier's personal beliefs, though Cuvier clearly attended a Protestant church throughout his lifetime. Reiss accounts for the lack of consensus concerning Cuvier's belief system, attributing it to Cuvier's restraint in public speeches (103). Regardless of Cuvier's exact religious beliefs, historical evidence indicates that Cuvier believed in God in some manner, but kept his beliefs personal and removed from his political persona.

Due to his careful distinction between personal and professional beliefs, Cuvier placed a higher emphasis on proven fact than on speculative theory within his scientific publications. In the article "Cuvier and the Biblical Flood," Taquet tracks the value Cuvier placed on factual evidence rather than speculative thought in his scientific writings and letters and describes Cuvier's primary scientific goal to be building "a geohistory to replace the geotheories he disliked strongly" (128). Cuvier's drive to base his theories on factual study grew from his distaste of Georges-Louis Leclerc's, Comte de Buffon, theories which promoted scientific materialism (Larson 14). Buffon espoused various theories through highly speculative evidence; for instance, he proposed that a comet crashed into the sun, fracturing into molten matter which congealed to form the planets. To prove the theory, he would heat iron balls until their surface was molten and observe that the cooled metallic surfaces would contain ripples like the ones found on earth's. Cuvier's primacy of fact over theory held the appeal of more solid evidence for geological theories; factual evidence provided a sound basis for the theories developed in science. Edward Larson also notes a religious impulse in Cuvier's rejection of Buffon. Buffon's theories generally avoided attributing a creator to creation. Some of his theories

even consider evolution as a possible theory for the order and variety of life on earth. Cuvier rejected evolution as it challenged his concept “the conditions for existence,” which ran central to his theories concerning life (Rudwick 84). Through his rejection of evolution, Cuvier inadvertently lets some of his personal feelings concerning religion invade his theories of science.

Many scholars such as Larson and John Reiss have noted Cuvier’s slight tendency to reveal his traditional Protestant background within his scientific theories. Having access to one of the best fossil records in the world, Cuvier composed a theory he coined as *des conditions d’existence*, or conditions for existence. This theory claimed that an organism strives towards one goal, existence, with each part working in harmony to achieve that goal. Since organisms fail to subsist without food, these parts could usually be understood as working to make the process of acquiring food more efficient. Reiss defines Cuvier’s conditions for existence as “conceived of as the principle rationally justifying laws of mutual dependence of form among organ systems” (100). Due to his theory, Cuvier rejected evolution because of the improbability of an organism being able to change all organs in order to achieve the same goal necessary for existence. It would not be possible for one part to change and not cripple the whole in this theory of mutual dependence. This theory of mutual dependence betrays Cuvier’s belief system because of his inability to deny the importance of unity in nature, a concept with theological origins.

The principle of the conditions for existence greatly influenced Cuvier’s understanding of his other studies. In 1812 he published *Recherches sur les Ossements*

Fossiles, which gave scientific data supporting his theory of geological catastrophism based upon evidence found in excavating the geologic column. In his explanation of the data, published along with the data as *Discours preliminaire*, Cuvier explains that through his researches of the fossil record, he can definitively conclude that many of the fossilized species are extinct:

If the species have changed by degrees, as they [evolutionists] assume, we ought to find traces of this gradual modification. Thus, between the *paleotherium* and the species of our own days, we should be able to discover some intermediate forms; and yet no such discovery has ever been made. Since the bowels of the earth have not preserved monuments of this strange genealogy, we have a right to conclude, That the ancient and now extinct species were as permanent in their forms and characters as those which exist at present; or at least, That the catastrophe which destroyed them did not leave sufficient time for the production of the changes that are alleged to have taken place. (Cuvier, trans. Kerr 115)

Cuvier's understanding of the fossil records available enabled him to discredit evolutionary theory and promote his own principle for the conditions of existence. Since the soundness of this principle rested on Cuvier being able to prove that each individual organ adapted to function, it stands to reason that variety in species would appear impossible, unless the variety indicates the form isn't necessary to function, such as blue eyes. Therefore, Cuvier identified species in the fossil records not as ancestors to modern species but as completely new species, which, to be fair, at times he was correct in

assuming. This principle for the conditions of existence, as Reiss notes, allows Cuvier to understand creation as either a possible result of a creator or a randomized scientific outcome (112-113).

The intentionality of Cuvier in leaving the basic belief system behind his theories vague is highlighted by the reception of his work in England. Robert Kerr's translation from Cuvier's title *Discours Preliminaire* to *New Essay on the Theories of the Earth* adds a religious undertone to the title of the work through the addition of the word *theory*. In the preface to the text, Robert Jameson assures the reader that:

Although the Mosaic account of the creation of the world is an inspired writing, and consequently rests on evidence totally independent of human observation and experience, still it is interesting, and in many respects important, to know that it coincides with the various phenomena observable in the mineral kingdom. (Cuvier v)

The emphasis on the Mosaic account in Jameson's preface is clearly his own invention, since Cuvier avoided overlap between his scientific and religious theories in writing. The religious additions to Cuvier's text at once reflect and affect the mindset of the English audience.

The reception of Cuvier's work in England was very different than its reception in France in the original language. Charles Gillispie's article "Catastrophist Geology" details this reception and its effect on the scientists in England. Gillispie claims that Professor William Buckland, the foremost English geologist between 1820 and 1830,

“exploited and extended Cuvier’s methods very ably, and he returned natural history to the explicit service of religious truth” (98). Buckland took Cuvier’s theory of geological catastrophism and used it as way to continue the argument of natural philosophy, that God can be understood through observing creation. In Buckland’s inaugural lecture, *Vindiciae Geologicae; or, The Connexion of Geology with Religion Explained*, his objective, “to shew that the study of geology has a tendency to confirm the evidences of natural religion; and that the facts developed by it are consistent with the accounts of the creation and deluge recorded in the Mosaic writings,” echoes Jameson’s preface to Cuvier’s *New Theories* (qtd. in Gillispie 103). Both texts emphasize a possible connection between Cuvier’s floods and Noah’s flood, reworking scientific theory to fit an older ideological system.

Similarly, Byron’s revision of Genesis in *Cain: A Mystery* betrays the Nineteenth Century’s preoccupation with fitting the newly-professionalized field of geology into traditional narratives concerning the history of the earth. Byron’s preface prepares the reader for the intrusion of Cuvier’s theories within the play, stating:

The reader will perceive that the author has partly adopted in his poem the notion of Cuvier, that the world has been destroyed several times before the creation of man. This speculation, derived from the different strata and the bones of enormous and unknown animals found in them, *is not contrary to the Mosaic account, but rather confirms it*; as no human bones have yet been discovered in those strata, [emphasis mine] (229)

While Karkoulis reads this portion of the preface as an ironic justification for Byron's inclusion of Cuvier, the similarity between Byron's defense of Cuvier and Buckland and Jameson's indicates a possible sincerity on Byron's part. Though Peter Shock notes that some of the preface appears to hold tongue-in-cheek remarks from Byron, England's understanding of Cuvier's theories appeared to confirm the biblical account of creation rather than disprove it, though the continued insistence on the sacredness of the Mosaic account betrays a bit of anxiety on the part of the authors of these defenses.

Byron's letters and journals support an understanding of sincerity regarding the Preface. In a letter to Thomas Moore, Byron writes regarding his use of Cuvier as a source text, stating:

I have gone upon the notion of Cuvier, that the world has been destroyed three or four times, and was inhabited by mammoths, behemoths, and what not; but *not* by man till the Mosaic period, as, indeed, it proved by the strata of bones found; - those of all unknown animals, and known, being dug out, but none of mankind. I have, therefore, supposed Cain to be shown, in the *rational* Preadamites, being endowed with a higher intelligence than man, but totally unlike him in form, and with much greater strength of mind and person. You may suppose the small talk which takes place between him and Lucifer upon these matters is not quite canonical. (Marchand 215-16)

Byron again justifies Cuvier's theories in terms of the Mosaic account, picking up Cuvier's argument concerning fossil evidence. His second paragraph shows how

Cuvier's theory affects the plot of the story, proving that the use of scientific theory motivates Cain's decision to commit murder. Byron's statement "as it is written in Genesis" highlights that his text is a revision of the traditional story. Robert Mortenson's book article indicates new evidence that Byron's play violated the blasphemy laws, which Murray probably never challenged, making Byron's revision one of the most controversial writings during its publication. Though Byron acknowledges that some of the material within *Cain* is "not quite canonical," his repeated emphasis on preserving traditional understandings of the Mosaic period indicates his intentions to revise the story to acknowledge God's existence and unite the story with newer scientific information.

While other Romantic poets were engaging in revisions of theological stories, Byron's direct reference to the biblical text sets his narrative apart from these revisions, something he directly acknowledges within the preface of the play. Aware of the controversial nature of his text, Byron reminds the reader that "the book of Genesis does not state that Eve was tempted by a demon, but by 'the Serpent;'" and that only because he was "the most subtil of all the beasts in the field" (228). Paul Cantor notes that Romantic writers often flipped the roles of characters within their revisions of mythology, making the typical antagonist appear sympathetic to their audience. Byron's purpose, however, in garnering sympathy for Cain remains very specific. In making Cain the Byronic hero of this play, Byron places the reader in position to sympathize with Cain when he learns the meaning of mortality by causing the first death in the world. Cain's lesson mimics the Nineteenth Century's disillusionment as scientists began to understand the true age of the earth and the fact of species extinction. Byron's acknowledgement of

a source text, Cuvier's *New Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, reveals this purpose. The anxiety caused by this scientific theory thus informs the play as Cain realizes the finality of death much like his contemporary reader understood the finality of extinction.

Close examination how Byron incorporates Cuvier's theories indicates his attempt to unify geological catastrophism with the biblical story of Cain. Byron's *Cain* begins in a post-lapsarian, or even post-catastrophic, world, marked by Byron's description of the setting, "*The Land without Paradise.-Time, Sunrise.*" The dialogue during this scene accentuates the sense of loss permeating the scene, reflected in Byron's setting. The time of day, sunrise, provides an appropriate setting to mark the beginning of Cain's destabilization, because of the loss Cain acutely feels. Cain's first soliloquy echoes the landscape:

And this is
 Life!- Toil! And wherefore should I toil?-because
 My father could not keep his place in Eden.
 What had *I* done in this?-I was unborn,
 I sought not to be born; nor love the state
 To which that birth has brought me. Why did he
 Yield to the serpent and the woman? Or,
 Yielding, why suffer? What was there in this?
 The tree was planted, and why not for him?
 If not, why place him near it, where it grew,
 The fairest in the centre? They have but
 One answer to all questions, 'Twas *his* will,
 And *he* is good.' How know I that? Because
 He is all-powerful must all-good, too, follow? (I.i.64-77)

Cain's dismay at his fallen state, contrasting sharply with his family's thankful prayers to God at the beginning of the scene, provides the foundation for Lucifer's influence on Cain. Lucifer's answer to Cain's question – "And wherefore should I toil?" – is what

ultimately destabilizes Cain. The soliloquy is punctuated by questioning statements, indicating Cain's questioning of God. Cain's answer to the questions, that it is God's will, seems inadequate in comparison to the seven questions posed in the beginning of the soliloquy, especially since it is not Cain's own answer to the question, but rather what other people have told him. The question/answer structure to this soliloquy subverts the content of the traditional catechism of faith, beginning a discourse in the play which identifies God as a tyrant. Lucifer later employs this strategy as a way to encourage Cain's questioning.

After this soliloquy, Lucifer enters the scene to tempt Cain. Lucifer's manipulations rely on his ability to diminish Cain's sense of self. Therefore, Lucifer uses logos in order to persuade Cain, cleverly picking up Cain's own dialogue from the soliloquy. During their first exchange, Lucifer hooks Cain by intimating that he has knowledge concerning mortality:

| | |
|----------|--|
| Lucifer: | Mortal! |
| Cain: | Spirit, who art thou? |
| Lucifer: | Master of spirits. |
| Cain: | And being so, canst thou Leave them, and walk with dust? |
| Lucifer: | I know the thoughts Of dust, and feel for it, and with you. |
| Cain: | How! You know my thoughts? |
| Lucifer: | They are the thoughts of all Worthy of thought;- 'tis your immortal part Which speaks within you. (I.i.98-105) |

Lucifer enters the scene boldly defining Cain as a mortal, the very thing that Cain is most upset about. He claims to empathize with Cain, diminishing Cain's sense of self to the

When the traveler passes through those fertile plains where gently flowing streams nourish in their course an abundant vegetation, and where the soil, inhabited by a numerous population, adorned with the flourishing villages, opulent cities, and superb monuments, is never disturbed except by the ravages of war and the oppression of tyrants, he is not led to suspect that nature also has had her intestine wars, and that the surface of the globe has been much convulsed by successive revolutions and various catastrophes.

(Cuvier 6-7)

Cuvier's analogy clearly has been crafted to impress upon the reader the massive effect that these periodic revolutions have on earth's surface. His phrasing recalls the turbulent political times in France, where revolution has pervaded everyday existence for most of Cuvier's lifetime. Equating the revolutions to war clearly emphasizes the devastating effects of the geological catastrophes, especially when considering the contemporary events occurring so close to home.

Cuvier further diminishes humanity's role in the history of the earth as he explains the different level of strata he has excavated in section seven of *New Essay*, entitled "Proofs of the Occurrence of Revolutions before the Existence of Living Beings" (17). In this section of his publication, Cuvier outlines the species found in different strata, proving that certain species did not exist in earlier epochs of earth's history:

As we ascend to higher points of elevation, and advance toward the lofty summit of the mountains, the remains of marine animals, that multitude of shells we have spoken of, begin very soon to grow rare, and at length

soul. In this afterlife, Cain sees the possibility of understanding the workings of the universe, something he craves to create the stability he desperately lacks on earth. However, Cain's response contains a questioning tone in the last ten lines, where he fails to clearly define a single Christian God or creation as purposeful rather than accidental, hearkening back to Lucifer's language in Act I which emphasizes a careless, tyrannical creator. The betwixt and between nature of space allows for Cain's questioning of God, with the possibility of gaining knowledge since Cain is so close to the new Eden he has identified, perhaps falsely, in space. His final statement commands Lucifer to continue sharing his knowledge of the systems of the Universe.

Lucifer next takes Cain on a journey through time to earth prior to human existence. Lucifer again emphasizes Cain's, and subsequently the human species', diminution, describing the older world as "The phantasm of the world; of which thy world/ Is but the wreck" (II.i.152-3). His words indicate the superior nature of the pre-adamite world, setting Cain up to view this past world as greater. Cain's shock at Lucifer's words betrays how deep this barb hits home:

| | |
|----------|--|
| Cain: | What! Is it not then new? |
| Lucifer: | No more than life is; and that was ere thou Or <i>I</i> were, or the things which seem to us Greater than either many things will have No end; and some, which would pretend to have Had no beginning, have had one as mean As thou; and mightier things have been extinct To make way for much meaner than we can Surmise; for <i>moments</i> only and the <i>space</i> Have been and must be all <i>unchangeable</i> . But changes make not death except to clay; But thou art clay – and canst but comprehend |

That which was clay, and such thou shalt behold. (II.i.153-165)

Lucifer twists Cuvier's proposal of species extinction to fit his schema of diminutive language. He claims that the extinct species were "mightier" and that the newer species are lesser. This claim emphasizes the malleability of life, claiming that only time and space remain the same. The last three lines of Lucifer's response drive home the insignificance of Cain as Lucifer twists the language of Genesis, reducing Cain back to his state before birth, that of clay.

In Act II, scene ii, Lucifer and Cain descend into Hades. Here Lucifer teaches the meaning of death by allowing Cain to see the suffering souls. Cain, unable to make sense of the souls, asks Lucifer what they are, to which Lucifer replies:

| | |
|----------|---|
| Lucifer: | <p style="text-align: center;">Living, high, Intelligent, good, great, and glorious things, As much superior unto all thy sire, Adam, could e'er have been in Eden, as The sixty-thousandth generation shall be, In its dull damp degeneracy, to Thee and thy son; - and how weak they are, judge By thy own flesh. (II.ii.67-74)</p> |
|----------|---|

Lucifer first describes the souls using various synonyms for good to elevate the beings. Lucifer's description sets up his comparison between humanity's current fallen state with these elevated beings by equating the pre-lapsarian Adam with the "superior" souls (69). The alliteration of "dull, damp, degeneracy" emphasizes the fallen state of humanity in the early Nineteenth Century, strengthening the reader's tie to Cain as he undergoes disillusionment concerning the centrality of the human race. This passage connects to Cuvier's theories of the conditions of existence in its anti-evolutionary theme which

shows species degrading rather than growing more efficient as time passes. The superior beings are not related to humanity, which emphasizes the smallness of humanity in two ways. First, Lucifer emphasizes the small role that the human species has played on earth by discussing species now extinct. Similarly, the devolution that creation seems to have undergone further highlights the precarious nature of human life.

Upon viewing an animal like Cain's contemporary Mammoth, Lucifer and Cain discuss the theological reason for species extinction. Using polyptoton, Lucifer first hints that species extinction denotes a random act of tyrannical behavior from God, or "him who fells" making God the agent of the fall rather than Adam or Eve (II.ii.79). When Cain again questions Lucifer on the reason for species extinction, Lucifer reminds Cain of the consequences of the fall from God, stating:

Lucifer: You have forgotten the denunciation
 Which drove your race from Eden – war with all things
 And death to all things, and disease to most things,
 And pangs, and bitterness; these were the fruits
 Of the forbidden tree. (II.ii.148-153)

Lucifer indicates that, in the inevitable war between the animals, these ancient Mammoths would win, again hinting at the frailty of humanity. In his response to Cain's query, Lucifer uses epistrophe to emphasize the inevitability of the end of all things, each end resulting in death. His response paints a morose picture of life, further destabilizing Cain, as Lucifer moves into the thesis of his discussion with Cain.

At the close of Act II, Lucifer proposes his thesis to Cain, claiming mortal life is meaningless. In two different instances, Lucifer equates this thesis with science. The first time he states "It may be death leads to the *highest* knowledge;/ And being of all

things the sole thing certain,/ At least leads to the *surest* science” (II.ii.164-66). In this instance, the term science means knowing or understanding, so that the knowledge of death equates achieve the highest point of knowledge. However, since Lucifer has already equated death with the highest knowledge in the previous clause, it also alludes to the branch of knowledge concerning scientific truths, which *the Oxford English Dictionary* defines as:

In a more restricted sense: A branch of study which is concerned either with a connected body of demonstrated truths or with observed facts systematically classified and more or less colligated by being brought under general laws, and which includes trustworthy methods for the discovery of new truth within its own domain. (“science” def. 4a)

This definition had entered the language by the early Eighteenth Century, making Lucifer’s references to Cuvier within this act. Lucifer’s use of the word science emphasizes the way in which science affected the Nineteenth Century’s understanding of previously undisputed theological truths. Due to Cuvier’s theories, mortality has new implications for the nineteenth-century British citizen; mortality carries the ever present threat of the extinction of humanity.

Even though Byron assured Thomas Moore that “With respect to ‘Religion,’ can I never convince you that have no such opinions as the characters in that drama, which seems to have frightened every body,” Byron’s own letters and journals show a preoccupation with mortality that is perhaps indicative of the period (118). In 1811,

Byron wrote to Hodgson concerning immortality. While this letter was written a decade before *Cain*, its content eerily presupposes Lucifer's thesis:

My dear Hodgson, - I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another. If men are to live, why die at all? and if they die, why disturb the sweet and sound sleep that "knows no waking"? "Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque Mors nihil...quaeris quo jaceas post obitum loco? Quo non Nata jacent". (88)

Marchand translates the quote from Seneca's *Troades* as "There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing. You seek the place where one lies after death? Where those unborn lie" (88). The connections between Lucifer's thesis and Byron's letter seem obvious. The quote from Seneca's *Troades* could stand in for Lucifer's thesis, as it emphasizes the nihilistic nature of Lucifer's conception of mortality. Byron's speculations on death, his questioning tone that asks "why die at all" echoes many of Cain's queries to Lucifer in which he questions the purpose of death. Even after committing fratricide, Cain's understanding of death mirrors Byron's letter. Cain even uses a simile to describe death, stating "Death is like sleep; and sleep shuts down our lids" (338). The senseless outcome of Cain's fratricide emphasizes Cain's, Byron's, and ultimately humanity's lack of understanding about death as well as the inability to truly know what death brings. Cuvier's theory of geological catastrophism challenges the Mosaic accounts conception of creation and ultimately death, bringing the issue under scrutiny for the nineteenth-century individual.

Byron's *Cain* uses Cuvier's scientific theories in order to diminish Cain's sense of the centrality of humanity within the universe. Ultimately Cain kills Abel due to his destabilized perspective of the world, or, as Byron terms it within a letter to Thomas Moore, "in a fit of dissatisfaction" (216). Unable to contain the nineteenth-century content within the story of Genesis, Cain self-destructs by causing the first instance of human mortality on earth. As the nineteenth-century reader relates to Cain, the concretization of mortality mimics the fear of humanity's extinction through natural apocalypse.

In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Wanderings of Cain," Cain is also tempted by a spirit to lose faith in God; however, Coleridge's Cain loses faith by failing to use his physical senses to appropriately sense God in nature. This next chapter looks more closely at the role of natural philosophy in the early Nineteenth Century in uniting traditional theological concepts with new information discovered during the advent of travel.

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The Physicality of Faith: Sensing God in Nature in “The Wanderings of Cain”

While George Gordon, Lord Byron’s *Cain: A Mystery* questions the sanctity of Christianity through the theme of a questioning sinner, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s reworking of the traditional biblical tale examines faith through the lens of natural philosophy. Natural philosophy was a movement in the late Eighteenth Century that claimed God could be understood through his creation; since the creation exists, ergo so must God. As scientific practices continued to be professionalized, natural philosophy became a hotly debated topic with religious leaders, scientists, poets, and philosophers falling on all different sides of the question. Romantic poets, such as Coleridge, found natural philosophy a useful technique for examining nature to raise questions concerning faith. Coleridge’s “The Wanderings of Cain” revises the original account in Genesis to use Cain as a vehicle for understanding the importance of using the physical senses correctly to interpret God in nature.

“The Wanderings” consists of unfinished fragments which Coleridge composed in several parts and at different times, complicating any analysis of the text. J.C.C. Mays notes that “The Wanderings” were originally meant to be a collaborative effort between William Wordsworth and Coleridge, but the work eventually fell through and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was written instead. A working plan for Coleridge’s section of the fragments still exists, but any other working plan that may have been in Wordsworth’s possession has been lost. The fragments consist of three different parts organized by date of composition. The first part, Coleridge’s working plan for the

project, outlines the third book of “The Wanderings.” In the second fragment, Coleridge includes a prefatory note explaining the fragmented and incomplete state of the project along with a refined first canto which was to open the final text. The final fragment outlines the second book of the project in prose. N. Santilli has created a reading copy of the fragments that orders them in a way that helps the reader understand the story, and to which I have referred for my own ordering of the manuscript’s pieces, even though Santilli’s ordering goes against the chronological date of creation for each fragment.

Coleridge’s reworking of Cain remains incomplete and fragmentary, making it difficult to make positive assertions as to Coleridge’s intentions for the project. Unfortunately, the Coleridge Notebooks are extremely fragmented during the dates of composition, early Fall of 1797 and 1806, resulting in few journal entries that can be connected with any real confidence to “The Wanderings.” Additionally, little has been published in academia on the fragments, leaving a gap in the scholarship of this often studied period of Coleridge’s career. Current scholarship on the fragments consists solely of Werner W. Beyer’s article “Wieland’s Oberon and The Wanderings of Cain,” which uses “The Wanderings” as a secondary piece to aid in the explication of Wieland’s work. Of the few publications concerning the content of “The Wanderings,” John Livingstone Lowes’ book *The Road to Xanadu* most intimately connects the fragments with Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In Lowes’ quest to explicate *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and “Kublah Khan,” he more fully describes the thematic connections between these two texts and others Coleridge produced, stating:

Now since nobody has any real attention to the Note Book, it is not remarkable that nobody has observed that Coleridge was getting ready to write his 'Cain' by reading Josephus. For in the Note Book stand, in the Greek, two excerpts from the second chapter of Book I of the *Antiquities*, which contains certain uncanonical information about Cain. Cain, and the 'Old Navigator,' and a strange and shadowy third were moving simultaneously towards the light in Coleridge's brain. (237)

The dates of composition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, "The Wanderings," and the first book of "Christabel" are so close that it is unsurprising that Lowes has noted thematic connections between the texts. Ultimately, the ideas present in "The Wanderings" are tightened and finalized in the published editions of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Their common theme of natural philosophy, portrayed through imagery of unity in nature and the appropriate use of physical senses, can be explored more fully by connecting Coleridge's source texts, identified by Lowes and the entries in Coleridge's Notebooks, to "The Wanderings" and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Lowes' identification of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* as a source text for Coleridge's character of Cain provides a starting point for understanding the construction of Cain in Coleridge's compositions. Titus Flavius Josephus lived in first-century Rome, working as a Romano-Jewish historian of Jewish history. His main publications are *Antiquities* and *The Jewish War*. Lowes' analysis focuses on two different entries in Coleridge's Notebook which refer to passages in *Antiquities*. One of the entries directly refers to Cain, translated here from the original Greek present in the entry:

He [Cain] increased his substance with wealth amassed by rapine and violence; he incited to luxury and pillage all whom he met, and became their instructor in wicked practices. He put an end to that simplicity in which men lived before by the invention of weights and measure: the guilelessness and generous existence which they had enjoyed in ignorance of these things he converted into life of craftiness. He was the first to fix boundaries of land and to build a city, fortifying it with walls constraining his clan to congregate in one place. (CN Notes 277)

This entry depicts a Cain who has changed the natural environment, creating the foundations which modern society rests on to operate. These constructions are depicted negatively within the quotation, resulting from Cain's malice. While the Cain figure present in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and "The Wanderings" fails to carry out a scheme as large in scale as Josephus' Cain's, Coleridge's characterization of Cain does show a figure out of sync with the natural environment.

Coleridge's introduction to the fragments highlights the discord between Cain and nature by juxtaposing it with Enos' natural accord with his environment:

Encintur'd with a twine of Leaves,

That leafy Twine his only Dress!

A lovely Boy was plucking fruits

In a moon-light Wilderness. (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, I 1-4)

The boy engages in very natural activities, gathering food from the wilderness. His clothing is also very natural, even entwining around his physical body, as if in acceptance of Enos. There is a heavy emphasis on the fact that his only clothing is comprised of a rope of leaves to maintain modesty, leaving the boy in the most natural state of dress since Adam and Eve were ejected from Eden. Coleridge shows the boy in communion with nature, clearly contrasting Enos with Cain, who only finds chaos in the environment.

In the second section of the working plan, Coleridge focuses his images of chaos within the setting of the story. Multiple times in the two paragraphs that comprise this section, Coleridge refers to the moonlit setting, describing it as “the moonlight wildness” (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 19-20). This description depicts the setting as chaotic, out of order, mirroring the plot of the story since fratricide breaks moral codes of mankind. Cain emphasizes the chaotic order of his universe when he muses on the beings that might live in the wilderness, as he wonders “whether any created since Man or whether this world had any beings rescued from the chaos wandering like shipwrecked beings [?]rescued from the former world” (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 21-23). Cain’s wonderings are significant because the wording alludes to content from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In this future piece, the Mariner wanders through the ocean until he comes to understand the unity of nature that belies the existence of God. Much like Cain, the Mariner breaks social code when he kills the albatross, a bird taken as good luck during a voyage. The Mariner comes to understand that the bird is a piece of nature which represents God, so attacks against the bird symbolize an attack against God. Cain, like the Mariner, breaks moral code when he chooses to kill Abel. His fratricide might

also be viewed as an attack on God, since Cain destroys one of God's creations. By understanding the fratricide as an attack like this, the chaotic nature of Cain's universe might be explained as a reflection of his lack of understanding of God.

This chaos is reflected in other images in the second section. During his musings, Cain is seated on "the ragged rock where is caverns overlooking the Euphrates" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 25). The landscape reflects Cain's internal chaos through geographical elements. The rocks are "ragged" instead of smooth, and Cain is looking at a fairly large and turbulent river as he muses on his wandering fate. Even the animals reflect this chaotic ordering; Cain sees "The Beasts are out on the romp" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 26). This frenetic activity works against the natural association of calmness with moonlight, working to make the setting even more disordered.

The chaos is magnified in Coleridge's next plot choices. Cain, despairing of his current situation, chooses to run among the active beasts hoping "~~to be destroyed~~" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 27). While Coleridge has a strikethrough running through this part of the text, later text within the second section show that he intends for the reader to understand Cain as suicidal at this point. As Cain runs among the beasts, he hears a woman and two children screaming. After deciding to help the woman, "Cain advances wishing Death" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 30). His wish for death is unnatural, and speaks to the despair he feels for his plight. The chaotic universe culminates at this point as Cain realizes he has saved his own wife and children from death.

Cain's chaotic universe emphasizes unnaturalness in the natural order of the environment. While Coleridge's version of Cain has yet to create unnatural structures to emphasize new societal order, his discord with the environment still alludes to Josephus' version of Cain. Within Josephus' story of Cain lies the germ of natural philosophy which Coleridge centers his theme upon; namely, Cain has failed to maintain a natural environment in which he can properly sense God through nature.

And while Josephus' Cain has constructed "boundaries of land... to build a city, fortifying it with walls constraining his clan to congregate in one place" (CN Notes 277), Coleridge's "The Wanderings" alludes to a similar process, though Cain is not necessarily named as the creator of these constructions:

"The pointed & shattered summits of the ridges of <the> rocks made a ~~strange~~ rude mimicry of human concerns & seemed to prophecy mutely of things that then were not: ~~steeple~~ spires, & battlements, & ~~ship~~ ships with naked masts" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, II 68-70)

The similarities between Josephus' description of Cain's acts and the allusion to future Earth are striking; both writers focus on man-made objects which emphasize the existence of empire. Josephus focuses on the creation of divisions between groups of men while Coleridge alludes to instruments of travel, exploration, and most importantly, war. The creation of these objects signals humanity's distance from God, which has grown greater as nature has been altered and destroyed by mankind.

Another connection between Josephus' writings and Cain further complicates Coleridge's characterization of the figure of Cain. In Lowes' analysis of Josephus' writings, Lowes notes Coleridge's growing concern with the idea of a "learned Jew," whom Josephus certainly exemplifies. However, the Cain in "The Wanderings" and the Mariner in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* can hardly be described as confident and learned in their faith. Therefore, this connection fails to satisfy a complete understanding of Coleridge's characterization. Dorothy Bilik's article "Josephus, Mosollamus, and the Ancient Mariner" also identifies the influence of Josephus on Coleridge's characterization of Cain, and finds a way to alleviate the apparent disconnect between the "learned Jew" and the wandering Cain in both texts. She recounts an incident mentioned in Josephus' *Against Apion* in which a "learned Jew," Mosollamus, marched with Alexander the Great along with a seer who helped direct the army's actions. During the journey Mosollamus spied the seer observing a bird to decide whether the army should press forward or retreat. Before the bird could move, indicating the direction the army should move, Mosollamus calmly shot the bird with an arrow, illustrating the folly of relying on the bird for direction when it failed to move to save its own life (Bilik 88-89). Bilik notes the striking similarities between *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the story of Mosollamus, and suggests that Coleridge used this source for material. Bilik accounts for the differences in the characterization of the Mariner and Mosollamus by showing the similarities between the crew's reaction and Mosollamus' fellow soldiers. While Coleridge's Mariner doesn't yet understand the nature that surrounds him, neither do the fellow crew members who view the albatross superstitiously as the cause of their natural calamities on the ship.

Of course, the morality of the Mariner, like the morality of Cain in “The Wanderings,” must be called into question in both texts. The Mariner’s actions are not confident and self-aware like Mosollamus’; so while Mosollamus teaches his fellow soldiers a lesson by shooting the bird, the Mariner’s actions can hardly be considered a lesson. Likewise, Cain in “The Wanderings” fails to act assuredly in his faith. After killing Abel, God punishes Cain for failing to “make proper use of his senses,” which could indicate either his internal sense of morality and rightness or his physical senses through which he understands nature (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 10). Coleridge’s references to Josephus’ writings showing his interest in the character of the “learned Jew,” but this Jew is the outcome of the trials Cain and the Mariner undergo within “The Wanderings” and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, rather than the archetype of Cain with which the stories begin.

Instead of beginning with a “learned Jew,” Coleridge bases his initial characterization of Cain on the figure of the Wandering Jew. The legend of the Wandering Jew comes from Christian Folklore in the thirteenth-century in which a Jew who cruelly taunted Jesus during the crucifixion is condemned to wander the Earth until the Second Coming of Christ (Anderson 16-17). The connection between the Wandering Jew and Cain is clear; both individuals are condemned by God to walk the Earth because of the sins they have committed. Even Coleridge’s title, “The Wanderings of Cain,” alludes to this piece of Christian Folklore. Lowes also establishes a connection between this legend and “The Wanderings,” noting that besides the similarities in the characters’ wanderings:

The Wandering Jew, as Coleridge knew him, also bore a mark... The mark of the Wandering Jew was also the mark of Cain. But in the case of the Wandering Jew the cross was the sign of the crime. And as a similar emblem the albatross was borne about the ancient Mariner's neck. (258-59)

In the canonical version of Cain from Genesis, God marked Cain's forehead with a brand to indicate to the rest of the world his intent to protect of Cain. This brand works in other ways as well, however. The brand identifies an otherness about a Cain that sets him apart from other individuals in the story. The brand can be interpreted either as a curse or a sign of God's mercy, and at times even both of these interpretations are accurate.

In "The Wanderings," Coleridge places little emphasis on God's branding of Cain, perhaps due to Coleridge's intentions to write the concluding portion of the fragments. However, in the liminal space of the moonlit portal which Enos leads his father through, Cain's appearance is described as "wasted as by fire; ~~and~~ his hair was black & matted into loathly curls, and his countenance was dark, and wild, and ~~spake~~ told, in a strange & terrible language, of agonies that had been and ~~still~~ were, and were still to continue to be.-" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, II 52-8). The image of Cain which Coleridge creates interprets this branding as a curse. The brand heavy-handedly tells the reader of Cain's trials, which he must yet undergo in order to become the "learned Jew."

The lesson Cain must learn in order to become this "learned Jew" is indicated in the working plan for the Third Book in fragment one. This working plan emphasizes Cain's need to learn the correct use of the physical senses in order to interpret the natural

environment. In the third book, Cain awakens to “a luminous body... an orb of fire” after falling into a trance (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 1-2). This manifestation is oppressive; the spirit is described as “fire” which persuades Cain to “burn out his [Cain’s] eyes” (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 8). The punishment suggested by the spiritual being already emphasizes the importance of physically understanding God through the senses. However, to follow the spirit’s orders would be a mistake. Burning out his eyes would result in a loss of physical sense for Cain, moving him further from reaching the objective of his lesson.

A brief debate between the spirit and Cain reveals the importance of the senses, wherein Cain claims that his punishment for killing Abel was just for he did not “make proper use of his senses” (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 10). Coleridge’s word choice of “senses” adds ambiguity to the deed that Cain has committed in killing Abel. In the 1800s, “senses” might refer to the five physical senses in which humans interpret their natural world or it might refer more broadly to understanding (OED “sense” def. 1). Surely Cain did not interpret the traditional sense of God’s wishes for humankind correctly when he committed fratricide, so the second, broader, definition of understanding fits the phrasing. However, a continued emphasis on interpreting the natural environment through the physical senses, along with Coleridge’s journal entries concerning natural philosophy, indicate the importance of the five physical senses.

In one of Coleridge’s journal entries during the writing of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, he refers to an argument in Robert South’s sermon “The Certainty of our Saviour’s Resurrection” that discusses understanding deity through the physical senses:

In the same Sermon Hume's argument against miracles is clearly stated & put in Thomas's mouth – But I am told & required &c – p. 171. “Now surely things suitable to the stated course of nature should be believed before such as are quite beside it and for a dead <man> to return to Life, is preternatural; but that those who report this may be mistaken, is very natural & usual.- (CN I 327)

In this entry, Coleridge discusses Thomas' inability to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ which Thomas eventually confirms when he physically touches the holes in Jesus' skin left from the nails on the cross. The argument that Hume makes, which Coleridge refers to in this journal entry, accounts for Thomas' disbelief by claiming that anything which fails to fit within the natural order of the earth *should* be doubted because it is far more likely for the natural process to occur than the preternatural. Thomas' disbelief becomes excusable within Hume's argument because he was just showing good sense.

Clearly these ideas of the physical senses and internal sense are intertwining in Coleridge's mind in 1797. The intersection between physical and mental understanding reflects the concept of natural philosophy, which entailed understanding God through nature. The Scottish philosopher David Hume famously revoked the concept of natural philosophy in his publication *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, stating that:

Whatever exists must have a Cause or Reason of its Existence; it being absolutely impossible for any thing to produce itself, or be the Cause of its own Existence. In mounting up, therefore, from Effects to Causes, we must either go on in tracing an infinite Succession, without any ultimate

Cause at all, or must at last have Recourse to some ultimate Cause, that is necessarily existent. (Hume 215)

Natural philosophers claimed that by observing the natural world, the effect of God's creation, mankind could be assured of the existence of the cause, the existence of God. In this passage, Hume uses his dialogic style to debate the ability to discover causes from effects, claiming that inevitably to attempt to determine cause from effect results in folly, or "an infinite Succession," in which the individual attempting to explain the ultimate cause can never be completely sure of their interpretation.

However, while Coleridge certainly was reading Hume during the composition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and possibly "The Wanderings," his texts show his conflict with the ideas Hume presents in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The intertwining of sense and senses, shown through the understanding of God through nature, is foregrounded in both compositions. The example of Thomas and Jesus must have drawn Coleridge to this idea, for it shows someone coming to an understanding through touch. Thomas, like the Wandering Jew, is neither sure in his faith nor truly faithful during many of the trials of faith he undergoes. It seems that Coleridge pulled the idea from South's sermon, along with Hume's argument, and disproved it in his compositions by emphasizing the importance of sense and sensation.

In his book *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry*, Noel Jackson describes the implications of sense and sensation in Coleridge's writing. In the chapter "Critical Conditions: Coleridge, 'common sense,' and the literature of self-experiment," Jackson states:

the experimental means for acquiring, through practices of self-observation, knowledge about humankind ‘in the midst of society,’ and to focus on the literary form in which [he] believes these practices to be concentrated: namely, the ‘experimental’ lyric of early Romanticism. [He] focus[es] on Coleridge not only because of the range of his experimentation (in philosophy, natural philosophy, and medicine, to name a few fields), but also on his insistence, within and across all of these fields, on *attentive* self-observation. (105)

Jackson’s thesis holds the key for understanding Coleridge’s heavy emphasis on the entwining of the physical sense with the sensibilities of Cain. Only Cain’s careful observation of his surroundings can allow him to interpret God correctly in his natural environment, restoring accord to the setting.

Therefore, in Coleridge’s “The Wanderings,” Cain’s sense, which he uses improperly according to God, is the first of many different images within the fragments that refers to the interpretation of the natural world and the possibility of understanding the ultimate cause of existence, God, from this interpretation. The draft of the Second Book is marked by more passages concerning how the natural world responds to both Cain and his son, Enos. The first natural element that the two come upon is a forest pathway:

Their road was thro’ a forest of fir-trees. At its entrance <the Trees> stood at distances from each other; and the path was broad; and the moonlight and the moonlight shadows reposed upon it, and appeared to quietly

inhabit that solitude. But soon the path winded and became narrow; ~~and~~
 the Sun at high noon sometimes speckled but never illumined it: and now
 it was as dark as a Cavern. (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, II 2-7)

The path morphs as Cain and Enos walk along it. At first the path feels inviting; it is broad and open to the travelers. After Cain and Enos walk for some time on the path, it becomes more narrow and hostile. Since a pathway often symbolizes an internal journey for a character, Cain and Enos are coming upon a challenge or have made a wrong choice in continuing to follow this path. The emphasis on the time of day recalls the unrelenting heat of the sun in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and suggests that the external weather is another element which symbolizes Cain's communion with nature and God.

Enos and Cain are treated differently by the wilderness during this portion of the fragments. Cain notes the way that the wilderness reacts around his son, stating "The fir-branches drip upon thee, my son. Yea, pleasantly, Father" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, II 12-13). The forest is welcoming to Enos, embracing him. Cain recognizes this and asks Enos to lead him. In contrast, Cain is punished by the forest. He tells his son "The Mighty one, that persecuteth me, is on this side and that: he pursueth my soul, like the wind: like the sand-blast, he passeth thro' me: he is around me" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, II 26-28). Here, Cain reads the chaotic elements that surround him as a punishment sent from God for the fratricide he has committed. Other images enhance the connection between nature and God. Cain tells his son that "the Torrent, that roareth far off, hath a voice; and the Clouds in heaven look terribly on me; ...the Might One who is against me, speaketh in the wind of the Cedar-grove" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, II 35-

38). Cain reads God in the natural elements, and he sees God's anger for the fratricide he has committed.

The natural environment of "The Wanderings" must be comprehended with both physical sensation and the internal sensibilities for unity between humanity and the wilderness to exist. However, the strangeness of the natural landscape of "The Wanderings" must be considered when analyzing the setting. In the working plan for Book Three, Coleridge describes various elements of the landscape, creating a picture of Florida, rather than the Euphrates River. First, the setting is described as "Midnight on the Euphrates cedars palms pines" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 24). Clearly, the indigenous trees of the Euphrates River have been incorrectly identified by Coleridge here. Similarly, Cain recounts some of his adventures to his wife, describing a myriad of different land formations:

He [the spirit] is going to offer sacrifices to this being & persuades Cain to follow him, to come to an immense Gulph filled out with water whither they descend followed by Alligators &c. They go till they come to an immense meadow, so surrounded as to be inaccessible & from its depth so vast that you could not see it from above. (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, WP 39-43)

Again, the landscape appears strange, different from what the twenty-first century reader supposes the Middle East looks like.

Lowes indicates a source text for Coleridge's landscape in "The Wanderings" which accounts for the disparity between the wildlife in the Middle East and the setting of Cain's story (513). William Bartram's *Travels* appear to have been recently read by Coleridge, at least as early as April of 1798. The American naturalist William Bartram explored most of the Southern territories in a four year expedition beginning in 1773. He published his observations from one of his journals, entitling it *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, The Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws*. The aforementioned landscape seems much more in tune with Bartram's *Travels* than with the actual landscape of the Middle East.

While the setting to Cain is at odds with the actual natural setting, it does not minimize the effect of the chaotic wilderness and the importance of Cain's senses and sensibilities. Contrarily, the strangeness of the setting emphasizes the foreignness of the environment which Cain must interpret, placing the reader, like Cain, in the position of interpreting the natural phenomena with little experience. Contemporary readers of Coleridge's "The Wanderings" would probably have found any setting exotic due to the proliferation of travel literature at the time.

There is another reason why the source text for the "The Wanderings" setting is important. In Lowes' analysis of the vale in "Kubla Khan," he notes a passage from François Bernier which brings to mind Bartram's travels:

*Thence I went to find out a fountain, which hath something
that's rare enough in it; bubbling up gently, and rising with*

come little impetuosity, and making small bubbles of air, and carrying with it, to the top, some small sand that is very fine, which goeth away again as it came, the water becoming still, a moment after it, without ebullition, and without bringing up sand; and soon after beginning afresh as before, and so continuing its motion by intervals, which are not regular.

That might have come straight out of Bartram. (385)

The account of the bubbling fountain, told to Bernier by two ambassadors of Ethiopia, also appears within “The Wanderings” during the culminating scene of the fragments. While the fountain of sand initially appears cryptic, its significance can be decoded through a closer look at the images of bubbling fountains presented in travel literature during the late Eighteenth Century.

Bernier certainly wrote about a bubbling fountain, but Bartram’s *Travels* also holds a description of a similar phenomenon which holds more authority since Bartram not only witnessed the event, his journal has also already been identified as a source text for Coleridge by Lowes. Bartram describes the fountain at Six Mile Springs in Florida, stating:

About twenty yards from the upper edge of the bason, and directly opposite to the mouth or outlet of the creek, is a continual and amazing ebullition, where the waters are thrown up in such abundance and amazing

force, as to jet and swell up two or three feet above the common surface: white sand and small particles of shells are thrown up with the waters, near to the top, when they diverge from the centre, subside with the expanding flood, and gently sink again, forming a large rim or funnel round about the aperture or mouth of the fountain, which is a vast perforation through a bed of rocks, the ragged points of which are projected out on every side. (150)

Bartram's description of the bubbling fountain goes into some detail, indicating the strangeness of this phenomenon to the explorer. The passage emphasizes the randomness and force of the eruption of water, almost as if the fountain was shooting higher than a few feet. Bartram's paragraph concludes with his commentary on the amazing nature of this natural phenomenon, emphasizing yet again the strangeness of this natural event.

Coleridge's fountain in "The Wanderings" bears a striking resemblance to Bartram's fountain:

Sands at night roar'd & whitened like a burst of waters/ O that indeed they were! Then the full of enthusiastic faith kneels & prays, & in holy frenzy covers the child with sand. In the name of the Father &c &c/ -Twas done/ the Infant died/ the blessed Sand retired, each particle to itself, conglomerating, & shrinking from the profane sand/ the Sands shrank away from it, & let a pit/ still hardening & hardening, at length shot up a fountain large & mighty/ (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Dr 4-10)

The image of the fountain is virtually identical to the phenomenon that Bartram describes in his *Travels*. The initial eruption of sand recalls the motion of the fountain, especially since Coleridge entwines the image of sand with water through the use of a simile.

Coleridge's precise language to describe the retraction of the sand mimics Bartram's language in the use of the word "particle," strengthening the connection between the two passages (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Dr 8, Bartram 150). However, Coleridge evokes Bartram's description most when he describes the hardening pit left by the collecting sand, which eventually results again in "a fountain large & mighty" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Dr 10). This possible repetition of the event is also accounted for in Bartram's *Travels*, as he notes that the fountain is "a continual and amazing ebullition" (150).

While the source text for the fountain can be clearly identified, the significance of the fountain in "The Wanderings" is more difficult to ascertain. Like the rest of nature within the fragments, the sand becomes a vehicle for understanding God in this final part of the fragments. Almost a perversion of the baptism ceremony, Cain murders his child by burying Enos in the sand. The sand begins in a chaotic state, emphasized by the word choice of "roar'd" and "whitened," mimicking the chaos of the earlier beasts (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Dr 4). Cain's intentions are given a negative connotation in the second line when he is described as being "in holy frenzy" (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Dr 6). The hurried meter of this line along with the repetition of "&" emphasizes Cain's unthinking frenzy (Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Dr 6). The next few lines are short and periodic, emphasizing their importance and the periodic nature of death. The imagery of the sand as it recedes from the fountain supports a reading which places culpability with

Cain for his actions; once again he has failed to correctly interpret nature. The sands reject Cain's decision to murder Enos particle by particle, moving away from the sin in a uniform fashion much different from their chaotic behavior before Cain kills his son. The final image of the fountain of sand signifies an apotheosis of the child, as the child is moved closer to heaven.

Nature continues to emphasize the holiness of the child in the final lines of the draft in manuscript three. Coleridge uses the sand as a vehicle to continue this interpretation:

How wide around its Spray, the rain-bow played upon the Stream & the
 Spray – but lo! Another brighter, O far far more bright/ it hangs over the
 head of a glorious Child like a floating veil (vide Raphael's God) – the
 Soul arises/ they drink, & fill their Skins, & depart rejoicing – O Blessed
 the day when that good man & all his Company came to Heaven Gate &
 the Child – then an angel – rushed out to receive them – (Coleridge,
Collected Works, Dr 11-15)

The sand particles continue to act like water, reflecting light to create a rainbow, providing a positive connotation to the apotheosis of the child. This rainbow is juxtaposed against the even brighter image of the child as he ascends to heaven, further glorifying the apotheosis. The next lines signal an end to misery, wherein different individuals, unspecified, are quenching their thirst. It is as if the baptism of the child has quenched the thirst of the individuals. While Cain has failed to redeem himself and

become the “learned Jew,” the child has affected the redemption of men, again recalling the resurrection of Christ.

Throughout “The Wanderings of Cain,” Cain fails to correctly read his environment with his physical senses, which results in his inability to redeem himself, illustrating the tenets of natural philosophy. Due to Cain’s inability to sense God in nature, the natural environment fails to become a unified entity for Cain, and it is only through Enos that resolution is reached.

This resolution, brought on by the apotheosis of Enos, mirrors the resolution of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s work, *Adonais*, in which John Keats gains poetic immortality through a similar apotheosis, which will be explicated in the following chapter.

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“Third among the Sons of Light”:

The Intersection of Astronomical Metaphors and the Apotheosis of John

Keats in Shelley’s *Adonais*

The apotheosis of characters in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Wanderings” and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Adonais* naturally fits within the theme of mortality that pervades the Romantic tradition’s revision of traditional theological texts. By apotheosizing Enos and Adonais in each of the respective texts, the authors provide the characters with immortality, resolving the quandary of death with the promise of a hopeful end to life. However, *Adonais*’ focus on what happens after death separates Shelley’s poem from George Gordon, Lord Byron’s *Cain: A Mystery* and Coleridge’s fragments “The Wanderings.” While Shelley’s apotheosis of Adonais is similar to Coleridge’s attempt in “The Wanderings,” Shelley’s poem begins as an elegy for the deceased poet John Keats, allowing Shelley to focus on the immortality of Adonais, or Keats, from the very beginning of the poem. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem *Adonais* uses astronomical metaphors to apotheosize the deceased poet John Keats, ultimately subverting the traditional religious framework by allowing Keats to eclipse the sun, a mythological representation of God.

In order to examine the full implications of Shelley’s immortalizing of Keats, I will first look at Shelley’s connections to Keats and the possible personal connections between Shelley and the poem. These connections between Keats and Shelley will then be linked to the thematic content of the poem, specifically the astronomical metaphors being used within the poem to apotheosize authors generally and Keats specifically.

Meanwhile I will discuss the dichotomous language that suffuses these metaphors and examine how these images intertwine to form a concept of immortal man that ultimately subverts traditional religious authority in England.

Shelley indicates his intentions to commemorate Keats in his full title of the poem: *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc.* The preface reinforces his intentions by vehemently chastising the contemporary critics for their tough reviews of Keat's work. Interestingly, however, the cancelled passages of the preface emphasize Shelley's feelings toward his own reviewers, perhaps indicating Shelley's empathy with Keats. Shelley writes in one cancelled passage:

As an author I have dared and invited censure. If I understand myself, I have written neither for profit nor for fame. I have employed my poetical compositions and publications simply as the instruments of that sympathy between myself and others which the ardent and unbounded love I cherished for my kind incited me to acquire. (444)

The emphasis on Shelley's own feelings found in this cancelled passage is missing from the actual preface, which focuses much more intensely on the cause of Keats' death and poor reviews. This passage defines Shelley's concept of poetry, which should be free from concerns of money or fame, a definition possibly born of Shelley's own troubles with reviewers. Shelley claims to be a composer of human feeling by using his inner qualities of empathy and love of humankind. Shelley's emphasis on himself, shown through the six personal pronouns that designate Shelley within the cancelled passage, shows an intense connection between the ideas being presented in *Adonais* concerning

Keats and Shelley's own concerns about his work. His clear preoccupation with Keats' health, supposedly arrested by poor reviews, is perhaps an empathetic response considering Shelley's own poor reviews. In this self-emphasis, therefore, Shelley opens the poem up to interpretations that include Shelley as an apotheosized, and therefore immortalized, poet.

Further evidence of Shelley's egotistical preoccupation exists in other cancelled passages to the preface. He mentions his concern with reviewers in another passage, stating:

These compositions (excepting the tragedy of *The Cenci*, which was written rather to try my powers than to unburthen my full heart) are insufficiently... commendation than perhaps they deserve, even from their bitterest enemies; but they have not attained any corresponding popularity. As a man, I shrink from notice and regard; the ebb and flow of the world vexes me; I desire to be left in peace. Persecution, contumely, and calumny have been heaped upon me in profuse measure; and domestic conspiracy and legal oppression have violated in my person the most sacred rights of nature and humanity. (444)

Shelley's claim that he "shrink[s] from notice and regard" falls flat when considering his poem's preoccupation with the power of reviewers (444). Perhaps the passage is better understood as commentary on his controversial lifestyle, which endured much attention from the media. He alludes to his lifestyle in the second half of the cancelled passage, claiming to be oppressed by the legal system of England in which he struggled to

maintain a polyamorous and atheistic lifestyle. This media attention that focused on his personal beliefs more than his poetry must have frustrated the poet who was seeking to commune with humankind through his empathy and love. His frustrations link Shelley intimately to themes within *Adonais* of glorifying poets for their creations.

Shelley's vitriol toward reviewers is further reinforced in an additional cancelled passage. This passage illustrates Shelley's concern for the regard of his reviewers along with his apparent wish to disregard their power over a poet's life:

Reviewers, with some rare exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race... a young spirit panting for fame, doubtful of its powers, and certain only of its aspirations, is ill qualified to assign its true value to the sneer of the world. He knows not that such stuff as this is of the abortive and monstrous births which time consumes as fast as it produces. He sees the truth and falsehood, the merits and demerits, of his case inextricably entangled... No personal offence should have drawn from me this public comment upon such stuff... (444)

Clearly, Shelley defines reviewers as a set inferior to true writers; he describes these reviewers as failed poets. The final statement Shelley makes in this passage claims that his comments towards reviewers stem from genuine feeling rather than personal offence. The tone of the passage is so acerbic that it is hard to believe it *doesn't* stem from personal feelings, further linking Shelley to the themes in *Adonais*.

In the book *Shelley and His Readers: Beyond Paranoid Politics*, Kim Wheatly identifies through archival research the way that Shelley's reviewers affected his self-conception throughout his poetic career. Wheatly claims that early reception of Shelley's poetry increased Shelley's his need for idealistic reform:

I see the vituperative rhetoric of the poet's hostile contemporary reviewers as a historically specific version of the "paranoid style," a heightened language of defensiveness and persecution. I use the phrase "paranoid style" – taken from Richard Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (1965) – to characterize not only the violent attacks that Shelley himself inspired, but also the aggressive language of elitist reviewers' attacks on reformist writers in general in early-nineteenth-century England. (1)

Wheatly's research highlights the effect of the critical reviews on Shelley by tracing Shelley's preoccupations throughout his poetic career. Clearly, these reviews bothered Shelley on some level, and have been known to affect the content of his poetry. Wheatly even notes that while "Shelley professed not to care about reviews... he often asked about the public reception of his works, especially *Prometheus Unbound* and *Adonais*" (5). Wheatly even goes so far as to suggest that Shelley grew more concerned with the reactions of his reviewers rather than his readers, which may be why he addresses so many remarks in the Preface of *Adonais* to his audience concerning reviewers. Wheatly's critical analysis of Shelley's early reception clearly indicates his own concern with reviews, further linking Shelley intimately to the content of *Adonais*.

Anthony D. Knerr identifies an even more personal connection between Shelley and the content of *Adonais* in his critical analysis of the poem. He notes that:

In view of the long self-description in the poem and John Taaffe's efforts to persuade Shelley to exclude the more highly personal sections of the Preface and to modify some of the personal allusions in the poem itself, there may have been more drafts in which Shelley directly vented his anger, humiliation, and grief. (Knerr 15)

The "long self-description" which Knerr refers to is Shelley's use of his incomplete poem, "My Lost William." Shelley wrote the poem in reaction to his son's death in 1819. Knerr and other critics have noted that the final stanza in the poem anticipates *Adonais*, linking the elegy even more personally to Shelley and his family.

Further evidence of Shelley's personal connections to *Adonais* exists in a final cancelled passage, where he claims to barely know Keats: "I knew personally but little of Keats; but on the news of his situation I wrote to him, suggesting the propriety of trying the Italian climate, and inviting him to join me. Unfortunately he did not allow me" (444). The apparent weakness of Shelley's connection to Keats makes the poem's topic strange. Already claiming to be a poet of empathy, Shelley's theme of immortalizing the poet can easily be read as an allusion to his own concerns of mortality, spurred by the death of his son and his anxieties concerning poetic immortality.

While the cancelled passages to Shelley's preface indicate his intimate concerns with the content of *Adonais*, the content of the poem and the continued astronomical

references show Shelley's deep concern for the immortality of a poet's works. The poem is written in Spenserian stanzas, with each stanza containing a completed thought that can be read alone. Knerr notes the similarity of *Adonais*' structure to Spenser's *Astrophel* and *The Lay of Clorinda*, stating that both poems "contain a pastoral lament of thirty-seven stanzas and a philosophical consolation of seventeen stanzas... In addition, Urania owes to Spenser's Venus much of her characterization as the goddess of love and her subsequent incarnation" (8). These similarities provide a key for understanding some of Shelley's effect when dissecting *Adonais*. Knerr's connection between Shelley's muse, Urania, and Spenser's Venus provides interesting possibilities for understanding the astronomical references within the poem which hint at a deliberate connection to the transit of Venus.

Further evidence of a possible connection with Venus exists in Shelley's quote in the Preface from Plato. Shelley translated Plato's "Epigram on Aster" to be:

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
 'Ere thy fair light had fled; -
 Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
 New splendor to the dead. (Knerr 56)

Hesperus is the evening star in Greek mythology, its brother being Eosphorus (also called Phosphorus or Lucifer), the morning star. Understanding this, Shelley's allusion to Plato becomes more complex. The allusion describes a life cycle since it refers to both the passing of a day, from morning to night, as well as to two different stages in Venus' planetary movement. The lifecycle imagery is rich for the content of an elegy while the

star imagery allows Shelley to apotheosize Keats and other authors later in the poem. With this lifecycle imagery, Shelley is able to subvert traditional religious schema, creating a neo-pagan religion which emphasizes the immortality of certain, special individuals over others.

The astronomical imagery Shelley alludes to within *Adonais* most probably refers to the transit of Venus. During the year 1769, scientists collaborated on an international level to map the transit of Venus, in which Venus eclipsed the Sun. The connection to Venus in this Epigram and Shelley's continued references to stars and eclipses suggest that this scientific event fuels the imagery of *Adonais*. Prior to this critical analysis, many of Shelley's scientific allusions have been dismissed by critics who claim that Shelley allegorizes them, twisting the images to fit his own system so as to lose the scientific significance of the allusions. Ted Underwood suggests this is a mistake, stating that while "skeptical idealism of most of Shelley's works is beyond dispute... it need not imply an inversion of contemporary scientific ideas" (299). Scholars who dismiss Shelley's use of astronomical images also forget that scientific ideas were not actually divorced from traditional theological concepts in the eighteenth and Nineteenth Century. In the book *The Transit of Venus: The Brief, Brilliant Life of Jeremiah Horrocks, Father of British Astronomy*, Peter Aughton notes this, stating:

At this time, the main reason for observing an event such as the transit of Venus was astrological rather than astronomical. Conjunctions of the Sun and the planets were seen as signs, rather like a new comet or the star of

Bethlehem, which were supposed to indicate that a great event was about to happen on Earth. (106)

Shelley's use of these references, therefore, is not incorrect simply because he uses them allegorically. In fact, his usage might be more in keeping with the way his contemporary readers understood the astronomical allusions. By carefully examining the astronomical references within the poem, the implication of these allusions as theological or mythological signs becomes clearer.

Throughout *Adonais*, Shelley addresses Urania, the muse of astronomy. In images, she wears a cloak embroidered with stars and fixes her eyes towards the heavens. Shelley's conscious choice of this muse is appropriate for an elegy because Urania concerns herself with the heavens. Furthermore, Shelley's choice begins the astronomical metaphors which eventually apotheosize Keats. Urania symbolizes an intertwining of science and Greek mythology, which allows Shelley to use Urania as an intersection between fact and myth. Keats' corporeal death is a fact, but the immortality he maintains as a respected poet is rather an ethereal concept.

The other scientific allusions within the poem can be read much like the allusion to Urania, as an image which connects astronomy to mortality figuratively. When describing the death of Keats, the persona states "he went, unterrified,/ Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite/ Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light" (34-6). Like Shelley's use of the muse Urania, these lines distinguish between the death of Keats' body and the immortal life of his internal being. Shelley apotheosizes the poetic "spirit" of Keats by describing its ascension. The bright description of the Sprite is

reminiscent of star in this passage, alluding to this apotheosis. The final line of this passage, which describes Keats as “the third among the sons of light,” categorizes Keats in his apotheosis as the third star of a triad. Combining Greek mythology with the concept of the Christian Trinity, Shelley describes Keats as the third star in the triad that composed the Greek pagan Trinity of the Sun, Moon, and Venus. This image nicely intertwines Shelley’s imagery of the transit of Venus, which describes the movement of Venus across earth’s sky as it travels in front of the sun, and the religious and mythological imagery Shelley invokes to subvert traditional views of Christianity.

The next stanza differentiates between Keats’ internal being and others, making Keats more special than other humans on Earth:

Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
 And happier they their happiness who know,
 Whose tapers yet burn through the night of time
 In which suns perished; others more sublime,
 Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
 Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime; (38-43)

According to this passage, not every individual is blessed with the ability to transcend the bounds of time and have an immortal life like Keats. The last three lines of the passage discuss the extinction of stars, a relatively new scientific concept in the early Nineteenth Century. The traditional view of a static, unchanging universe was typically connected with the existence of God through the concept of natural philosophy. William Herschel and other contemporary scientists discovered information about double stars which led

them to believe that the universe was in motion rather than a static entity. Herschel published *On the Construction of the Heavens* in 1785, where he discussed calculating changing distances between two stars close together, which he defined as double stars, to prove that the stars were not fixed in the universe, instead they were consistently in motion, perhaps due to a gravitational pull (Armitage 95-8). This stellar movement proves that the star clusters which comprise the Milky Way are breaking apart, indicating a definitive beginning and end of the Milky Way (Herschel 283-4). Shelley makes use of Herschel's discoveries in this passage when he discusses the stars moving through a lifecycle. In Shelley's allusion, however, the stars' lifecycles are linked to divinity rather than scientific causes, which allow Shelley to intersect the divine with the natural in *Adonais*. The last line in the passage refers to the concept of a supernova, which had been observed by scientists prior to the early Nineteenth Century. Stellar collision had been suggested by Herschel through his observations of double stars (Hoskin 38). The cause of the supernova, indicated by the persona as "the envious wrath of man or god" (Shelley 42), suggests that stars composed of the internal spiritual matter of man wander through the universe unbound by time until they are ended by collision with another star, an apotheosized man, or ended by God. This metaphor links space with heaven by creating a celestial realm that acts as a liminal space.

Images from the transit of Venus linked to the lifecycle also pervade Shelley's poem. The persona describes the last breath of life in Keats, stating "And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath/ Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,/ It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse" (106-8). The first image compares the

breath of life to a meteor using a simile, giving an image of a meteor falling through a cloudy night sky, illuminating and piercing the clouds around it. This image mimics some of the other bright imagery that has been used to describe Keats, creating a sense of unity concerning his apotheosis. In the final line of the stanza, Shelley describes the conclusion of the falling meteor as an eclipse to show the light ending. When eclipses occur, their darkening affect is temporary rather than perpetual. Since Keats' light is momentarily eclipsed when he dies, yet not extinguished, his life must be more stable and everlasting than a normal mortal life.

This sense of immortality is built upon in subsequent passages within the poem. The immortality of Keats is expounded upon in stanza thirty-eight, when the speaker states:

...but the pure spirit shall flow
 Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
 Through time and change, unquenchably the same, (338-41)

Shelley's word choice links Keats to the stars once more by describing his spirit as "burning" and "glow[ing]" through time. This star, which Keats has become, will never change, remaining untouched by time. Keats has moved to a higher level of existence because he has left his corporeal, decaying body behind him for a new existence that removes him from the effects of time.

Shelley further modifies the power of time in a subsequent stanza, stating:

The splendours of the firmament of time
 May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
 Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
 And death is a low mist which cannot blot
 The brightness it may veil. (388-92)

The stanza has a hopeful tone, as it describes the strength of time and death yet celebrates the life which cannot be taken away from these elements. Shelley again employs the image of an eclipse, claiming that Keats' spirit, which has become a part of nature, can only be eclipsed rather than ended, again making a portion of Keats immortal. The simile describes the process of apotheosis again, as the "splendours" climb into the sky (388). Death's power is diminished in this stanza as Shelley describes it as a "veil" which hides rather than extinguishes light. Death is also likened to "a low mist" which is notable because Shelley describes death in celestial terms, making it an element of the sky, but again diminishes the power of death by making it lower than the heavens, and describing it as an atmosphere to break free from.

Shelley's descriptions of an immortal Keats work to subvert a traditionally religious or mythological topic of ascension by making Keats take the place of God. In several different instances, Shelley's word choice makes his intention to subvert traditional religion apparent. Most notable, of course, is Shelley's decision to call Keats Adonais. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Adonai* is "a name of God, esp. used in the Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures" ("Adonai" def. 1). Shelley's use of

this pseudonym for Keats places Keats in this role of God which is further emphasized when Shelley describes Keats as immortal and above other humans within the poem.

Shelley also explicitly describes Keats as God within the poem's content. In the first astronomical reference, Shelley describes Keats' star as "the third among the sons of light" (36). The reference to three parts of light seems to allude to the division of God into three entities, God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ. While it is unclear what part Keats has become, his godlike nature is undeniable when looking at other allusions to the figurehead of God throughout the poem. In stanza twenty-nine, Shelley describes Keats' mind as "godlike" as it apotheosizes (258). Keats takes over the role of an absent God throughout most of the rest of the poem.

The importance of Keats as a figurehead of God is emphasized when Urania laments on the cycle of corporeal life:

'The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
 He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
 Is gathered into death without a dawn,
 So is it in the world of living men:
 A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
 Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
 It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
 Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.' (253-261)

The personification of the sun gives the sun agency over the lifecycle that Urania describes in this stanza. The sun has the power to create life and, after it sets, life dies. This example is likened to the world of men, where Adonais, or Keats, becomes the agent of life on earth, which will end when the light is extinguished. However, since a portion of Adonais is immortal, the world of men has no need to fear this fate.

When Urania meets the wounded body of Adonais, she is surprised by the image of his brow. Adonais reveals “his branded and ensanguined brow,/ Which was like Cain’s or Christ’s-” (305-6). The supposed interchangeability of Christ and Cain delineated by Shelley’s use of “or” makes this image very strange. Prior to this image, Shelley describes the people who wish to harm Keats/Adonais, wishing them to have “the curse of Cain” (151). His use of the allusion to Cain makes perfect sense here because it likens the reviewers whom Shelley blames in the Preface to the poem for murdering Keats. However, Shelley’s description of Adonais as Cain or Christ seems strange in light of the prior allusions to Keats as God. The mark on Adonais’ brow is described as both a brand and a bloodstain, which would have been on both Cain’s and Christ’s foreheads. In the first instance, Cain was marked by God for protection from other beings, though some critics have interpreted this branding as an image of Cain’s sin. Christ’s forehead was marked by a wreath of thorns when he was crucified on the cross. The blood on Christ’s forehead represents his sacrifice for the people for redemption of sin and is a sign of God’s mercy. The connection of these two images in Shelley’s controversial line suggests that Adonais represents an intersection between humanity and God in which a sign of mercy is given to the people through an incarnation of Keats.

This mercy manifests itself as the possibility of immortality or apotheosis, wherein certain individuals might be made godlike.

In a cancelled passage of the poem, another allusion is made to Adonais' forehead:

: a Paradise

Of happy truth upon his forehead low

Lay, making wisdom lovely, in the guise

Of earth-awakening morn upon the brow

Of star-deserted heaven, while ocean gleams below. (22-6)

According to this cancelled material, the brand on Adonais' forehead has a positive connotation because it is connected with Paradise and truth, perhaps signifying the promise of possible immortality. This brand is a sign of truth and wisdom, again creating an intersection between divinity and mortality. The last line of the stanza especially supports this connection as it describes both the celestial and the earthly that exists below the heavens.

Further emphasis on Adonais' interconnectedness with the realms of mortality and immortality manifests itself in the poem. The persona describes Adonais, stating:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard

His voice in all her music, from the moan

Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;

He is a presence to be felt and known

In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
 Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above. (370-8)

The imagery in this stanza reinforces Adonais as a godlike figurehead, using concepts from natural philosophy which identifies God in his natural creations. However, by recognizing Adonais in the mortal elements as well as the celestial, this stanza also reinforces Adonais as a liminal space where the mortal and immortal realms connect. This is further reinforced when Adonais' presence is felt in the dichotomies of dark and light as well as herb and stone. This dichotomous imagery shows an intersection between unlike things in which Adonais is all-pervasive. In the final lines of the stanza, the power of Adonais is described as supporting the world with love from above and below, further uniting the terrestrial with the celestial.

Adonais also has the power to guide the earth and mankind. In stanza forty-six, other immortal stars tell the spirit of Adonais the extent of his power, stating:

'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
 Swung blind in unascended majesty,
 Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
 Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!' (411-14)

Adonais' power extends to directing the orbit of the earth according to the stars. Since typically Newton's law of gravity was understood to direct the elliptical orbits of the planets, Shelley's replacement of this force with a divinity places Adonais above scientific laws. These lines again refer to theories of natural philosophy which see God within nature. The final line in this stanza reconnects Adonais with the quotation from Plato at the beginning of the Preface. Vesper as a proper noun refers to Hesperus, the evening star, which refers to the planetary movement of Venus. Adonais, or Keats, has apotheosized as a very important star in the sky, one with mythological and astronomical value during the early Nineteenth Century. Not only does this image portray another intersection of the poetic and the scientific, but it apotheosizes Keats as a very important part of the celestial universe, further cementing his position as a godlike figurehead.

Another image of intersection between the divine and the terrestrial occurs in the fifty-second stanza:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments. (460-4)

The emphasis on "One" created by the capitalization portrays Adonais as most important and godlike, especially since this one remains unchanging while everything else moves through time. The second line of the stanza emphasizes the fixedness of the celestial

world as compared to the fleeting reality of life on Earth by describing Heaven in positive connotations with an image of perpetual light while Earth's atmosphere is shadowy and moving. The simile of this stanza acts like the image of death as a veiling mist which hides the world from Heaven. Since this dome has been destroyed, revealing Heaven, enlightenment has occurred on Earth. Death has caused this epiphany; it appears that Keats' death has been origin of the enlightenment.

The description of the dome veiling Heaven also refers to Newton's *Optiks*, which describes the reason for the existence of color on Earth. In the book *A Newton Among Poets: Shelley's Use of Science in Prometheus Unbound*, Carl Grabo describes the importance of Newton's theory on Shelley's poetry:

That color resides not in the object but in its ability to absorb and to reflect certain of the air-refracted rays of light was, it may be recalled, one of the discoveries of Newton. Perhaps it will not be amiss to quote again briefly a few sentences expressive of the idea, for it is clear that it is a fact which made a great impression on Shelley: 'If the sun's light consisted of but one sort of rays, there would be but one colour in the whole world...' 'All the productions and appearances of colours in the world are derived not from any physical change caused in light by refraction or reflection, but only from the various mixtures or separation of rays, by virtue of their different refrangibility or reflexivity.' (153)

Newton's concept of light clearly interested Shelley, which shows in the image's continued emergence in Shelley's poetry. The dome of colored glass which veils heaven,

Shelley's metaphor for life, acts as a barrier marred with imperfections between earth and heaven. The collapse of this barrier reveals the white light of the stars, which are white because their supposed lack of atmosphere means "there will be no bending of the light rays" to create color (Grabo 154). The lack of a color spectrum creates an image of purity which cannot be found on earth's imperfect surface. By cracking the dome surrounding earth, humanity can reach for this purity.

By describing this enlightenment, Keats has shown that death can be a positive thing. As the poem comes to a conclusion, the intersections between the terrestrial and celestial are once more divided to show the positive qualities of death over life and ultimately, the power of life over death. The persona of the poem asks that "No more let Life divide what Death can join together" (477). This line gives a positive connotation to death as it claims that death can bring together those who have been separated during life. The idea seems contrary because death pulled the people apart, yet the persona reminds the reader that death also soothes those separated by bringing them together in the end. This line also provides hope for people who have lost their loved ones, reminding the reader of possible apotheosis after death, creating a life in death which transcends mortal existence.

The final two stanzas of *Adonais* give different positive qualities to Keats as a godlike figurehead to provide hope for humankind in death:

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
 That Beauty in which all things work and move,
 That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse

Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
 Which through the web of being blindly wove
 By man and beast and earth and air and sea (478-83)

Each of the descriptions given to Keats is descriptions commonly given to describe a traditional God. Notably, the qualities also are making different parts of the world function, such as when the Light is heating the universe and beauty is animating objects. The quality of love is reminiscent of an earlier line which describes Adonais as supporting the world from the terrestrial and celestial with love (377). This love is what binds together all of the terrestrial objects that exist beneath the stars.

The final lines of the poem sum the apotheosis of Keats with an optimistic tone. The persona states “burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,/ The soul of Adonais, like a star,/ Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are” (493-95). These final lines complete the astronomical references by assuring the reader of the existence of eternal life by describing Adonais’ star like a guiding beacon. Shelley emphasizes Adonais as a guide to others, like a God figurehead, which should give the mortal hope for the future of death.

Within *Adonais*, Shelley apotheosizes John Keats using astronomical imagery from scientific documents of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries in order to subvert traditional religious systems to create a new, nearly pantheistic system, providing a hopeful conception of immortality in death. This poem uses allusions to traditional religion along with the transit of Venus and Herschel’s astronomical studies in order to ground this new system in rich imagery. The strange allusion to Cain within the

poem reinforces Shelley's subversion of traditional systems by emphasizing the aspect of Cain's brand which denotes God's mercy. Through his strong grasp of science in the early Nineteenth Century, Percy Bysshe Shelley is able to slightly modify the astronomical and optical imagery he has studied to intertwine with religious and mythological concepts, creating an intersection between science and religion.

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Conclusion

The early Nineteenth Century provided authors like Byron, Shelley, and Coleridge an environment rich with information in the sciences. The professionalization of the sciences made this information vogue, meaning that the general populace could read and catch these metaphors within the poetry, though they are often missed by scholars today. It is a mistake to overlook the vast influence of the sciences on these authors. By overlooking this interdisciplinary aspect of their work, scholars miss an important piece of the story that helps us understand the themes a contemporary reader might pick up in an instant.

Without understanding the theory of geological catastrophism, scholars like Peter Shock and Madeline Callaghan are right to call the language of Byron's *Cain: A Mystery* bungled. Upon examining the second act more carefully, it becomes clear that Byron was attempting, perhaps less successfully than he hoped, to incorporate ideas that were very unorthodox. Ultimately, Byron was unable to align his scientific content within the traditional religious setting. The second act's setting, the abyss of space, provides Byron with a liminal space to discuss these nineteenth-century theories that just do not appear to fit within Cain's post-lapsarian desert. Byron's bungled language, rather than being a sign of his ineptitude as a writer, signals his inability to compromise the concept of geological catastrophism within theological terms. The destabilization of Cain, much like the chaos in Byron's poem "Darkness," presupposes the arguments between theology and science that will occur in the later Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century.

Coleridge's "The Wanderings of Cain" might appear disjointed and fragmentary, but upon acknowledging the source of the mysterious bubbling fountain in Bartram's *Travels*, this mysterious sign can be read as a reference to the importance of natural philosophy. After fleshing out the natural event Coleridge describes in his fragmented text, the apotheosis of Enos becomes the clear outcome of this sign. Coleridge's piece becomes much more intentional, indicating the existence of a clear, working theme running throughout the piece, despite the multiple fragments and their widely disparate dates of composition. Clearly, Coleridge's text merges the arguments of science and religion through the theme of natural philosophy.

Shelley's *Adonais* similarly integrates science and religion within a unified system through a subtle intertwining of astronomical metaphors with mythological content, revising of the traditional system of Christianity. Shelley's innovative use of the transit of Venus and Herschel's astronomical theories allows him to link the content of these modern scientific advances to ancient Greek and Roman astrology. This revision of Christianity culminates with his subversion of the traditional trinity for the pagan trinity of the Sun, Moon, and Venus, which allows Adonais, as Venus, to eclipse God, as the Sun. Shelley's use of astronomy opens *Adonais* up to new possibilities concerning mortality through the creation of a new system for understanding life and death. Immortality may be achieved for the exemplary poet.

While this critical analysis has examined the implications of these scientific allusions to some extent, there is much room for further scholarship in the interdisciplinary field of science and literature. For, as important as these concepts were

to the poets of the early Nineteenth Century, the lack of scholarship concerning the intersections between science and literature is stunning. Clearly, more can be discussed concerning Byron's concerns with geological data in *Cain: A Mystery*, opening the conversation to consider other contemporary sources Byron may have used within his writing. Coleridge's "The Wanderings of Cain" has only been targeted in the slightest manner within the trajectory of scholarship, with very few current publications concerning the fragments. John Livingstone Lowes provides many different avenues which need to be more deeply explored, from further inspiration for the setting of "The Wanderings" to the strong ties between the fragments and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. While I have discussed the implications of Shelley's astronomical metaphors within *Adonais*, his use of Greek mythology certainly needs to be addressed more fully in conjunction with these newly identified scientific sources.

By more fully examining these intersections between science and literature, modern scholars can examine how authors such as Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley navigated the tricky terrain of science and religion in the early Nineteenth Century. Clearly, further analysis of these canonical authors' poetry and prose needs to be completed with an interdisciplinary lens in order to illuminate their sentiments towards these swiftly changing topics. Through careful study of their source texts, it is clear that the modern day contrasting categorical assumptions of science and religion do not hold true in the early Nineteenth Century, making the study of these intersections both complicated and rewarding for scholars willing to challenge themselves.