

# Shelley, Inc.: The Romantic-Victorian Making of Shelley's Corpus

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ABSTRACT: This essay reconsiders the standard account of Percy Bysshe Shelley's reception in the nineteenth century by returning to the early critical writing on Shelley's corpus—both his textual and physical bodies—in the Romantic-Victorian period from 1824 to 1840. Rather than a disembodiment and etherealising of Shelley, as the standard account has it, what the early critical debate over Shelley's corpus reveals is the construction and diagnosis of a very unique body, which I call hypersomatic—a body at the mercy of the senses and emotions. The debate was rooted in associationist psychology, the most advanced mind science of the period, and part of a paradigm shift that occurred in the early nineteenth century. The effect of this critical construction of Shelley's physical body on his textual body was to sever his lyrics from his main corpus: in effect, a depoliticisation of his oeuvre.

KEYWORDS: PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, ROMANTIC-VICTORIANS, ASSOCIATIONISM, LYRICISATION, EMOTIONS, UTILITARIANISM



THE STANDARD ACCOUNT of Shelley's fate in the Victorian period could be said to have Matthew Arnold's famous characterisation of Shelley as a 'beautiful *and ineffectual* angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain' as its terminus.<sup>1</sup> It was a process, in the words of Neil Fraistat, of 'etherealizing and disembodiment' Shelley that began in the years after his death.<sup>2</sup> Frederick Pottle, in his classic essay 'The Case of Shelley', adeptly summarises the poet's transformation over the course of the nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'Shelley', in *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 380, emphasis in the original. For insightful commentary on this line see Clement Dunbar, *Bibliography of Shelley Studies* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), p. xli.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Fraistat, 'Illegitimate Shelley: Radical Piracy and the Textual Edition as Cultural Performance', *PMLA*, 109.3 (1994), 409-423 (p. 410). Cf. the introduction to Karsten Klejs Engelberg, *The Making of the Shelley Myth: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1822-60* (Meckler: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1988), pp. ix-xxii.

century from 'a monster of immorality and impiety' to 'an angel, a pure unearthly spirit', which ends in a 'remarkable paradox': despite a persistent dissatisfaction with the content of Shelley's poetry, 'it is conceded as a matter of course everywhere in England and America [...] that he is one of the greatest English poets'.<sup>3</sup> However, close attention to the critical debate about Shelley in the period of the 'Romantic Victorians' from 1824 to 1840—an often-neglected but important, liminal period that would shape the reception of the Romantics for the rest of the century—reveals that the story is more complicated than the standard account lets on.<sup>4</sup>

In attending closely to the early critical debate about Shelley, and the discourses that were brought to bear, it becomes clear that, rather than a 'disembodying' of Shelley, what one finds is the construction of a very unique body, what John Stuart Mill calls the 'poetic temperament'.<sup>5</sup> Far from being made 'ethereal' or 'spiritual', Shelley is seen by his early critics as hypersomatic, almost diseased: a body that is at the mercy of the senses, much like the Aeolian harp is at the mercy of the winds, and produces poetry almost mechanically. This diagnosis of Shelley's corpus—blurring his physical and textual bodies—was, in the case of the Cambridge Apostles and Mill, rooted in associationist psychology, the most advanced mind science of the period, and part of a paradigm shift that occurred in the early nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The effect of this critical construction of Shelley's physical body on his textual body was to sever his lyrics from his main corpus in order to preserve them as the only part that was culturally valuable, to save them from a diseased and dangerous body of thought: in effect, I argue, it was a depoliticisation of his oeuvre.

This process—the cultural incorporation of Shelley in the Victorian period—must be considered from the standpoint of class struggle in the years leading up to the Reform Bill of 1832. Shelley's work and thought were vital to the development of early socialism in England; by the late 1820s and early 1830s, the chief antagonist of socialist

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<sup>3</sup> Frederick Pottle, 'The Case of Shelley', in *Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by M. H. Abrams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> See Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824–1840* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> J. S. Mill, 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties', in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. by John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, 33 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), I, p. 358. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'TP'.

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

thought was utilitarian liberalism, and the most important figure in this tradition in nineteenth-century England was John Stuart Mill. Mill's own incorporation of poetry into utilitarian thought, central to his transformation of Benthamism, was a result of his confrontation with Shelleyan radicalism, mediated through the Cambridge Apostles. The momentous 'reorientation of criticism' in this period, famously delineated by M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, culminating in Mill's two essays of 1833, 'What Is Poetry?' and 'The Two Kinds of Poetry', is the result of a critical impasse that centred on Wordsworth and Shelley.<sup>7</sup> Mill's solution to the problem was rooted in Wordsworth's understanding of poetry as the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', coupled with contemporary associationist psychology, of which his father, James Mill, was the leading contemporary proponent.<sup>8</sup>

Associationism developed out of the British empiricist tradition, particularly Locke and Hume, but found full expression in David Hartley's *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations* (1749), which developed a materialist psychology based on the association of mental states through their similarity and repetition in experience. The critical debate between the utilitarians and the Apostles over the Romantic poets was largely carried out in this language of associationism, through which poetry was tied back to the body and the nervous system. Drawing on this new mind science in his essays on poetry, Mill argues that Shelley was a poet of nature, while Wordsworth was a poet of culture. This argument, paired with Mill's theory of lyric as 'overheard' eloquence, would have important and lasting effects both for the theory and practice of poetry in the Victorian period and beyond.

Mill's essays, however, as much as they may seem to be products of pure analytical thought, did not arise in a vacuum. They were part of a critical debate over Shelley's poetry, and, centrally, its cultural value, that raged in that strange, liminal period from the publication of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* in 1824—the year of

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<sup>7</sup> M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 23. Mill first encountered and began to think seriously about the two poets through his association with the Cambridge Apostles, especially his personal relationships with F. D. Maurice and John Sterling. See John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), esp. ch. 5, pp. 132–183.

<sup>8</sup> See W. H. Burston, *James Mill on Philosophy and Education* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) and Howard C. Warren, *A History of the Association Psychology from Hartley to Lewes* (Baltimore, MD: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921).

Byron's death and, some would say, the death of British Romanticism—until the Reform Bill in 1832, often seen now as the beginning of the Victorian period.<sup>9</sup> These were formative years for the major Victorian poets and critics: Mill had his mental crisis and found Wordsworth (as others find Jesus) in 1826, the same year that a young Robert Browning got his hands on William Benbow's piracy of Shelley's works, the profound effects of which are well-known; reading Shelley in these years had a similarly transformative effect on the young Cambridge Apostles, prominently Arthur Henry Hallam and Alfred Tennyson, but also F. D. Maurice and John Sterling.<sup>10</sup> A critical debate arose that pitted the Shelleyan Apostles against the utilitarians over the relative value of the work of the Romantics, in particular Wordsworth and Shelley, a debate that was deeply concerned with Shelley's body.<sup>11</sup> But the story begins with what could be called Mary Shelley's public relations campaign in the aftermath of Shelley's death, in particular the *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, published in 1824.

### Ithuriel's Spear

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

– 2 Corinthians 11:14

History has not always looked kindly on Mary Shelley's labours as an editor, biographer, and publicist of Shelley in the years after his death.<sup>12</sup> While it is certainly true that Mary Shelley acted as a kind of public relations agent for Shelley, selling a particular image of him, this activity must be considered from the perspective of different audiences, of various forms of censorship, and of Victorian class politics. Mary Shelley's most

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<sup>9</sup> See Joseph Bristow, 'Reforming Victorian Poetry: Poetics After 1832', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1, where he claims: 'There are good reasons to justify why 1832, rather than 1837, should open the Victorian age'.

<sup>10</sup> See Mill, *Autobiography*; Pottle, *Shelley and Browning: A Myth and Some Facts* (Chicago: The Pembroke Press, 1923); Richard Cronin, 'Shelley, Tennyson, and the Apostles, 1828–1832', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 5 (1990), 14–40.

<sup>11</sup> See Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry 1830–1870* (London: The Athlone Press, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> For a good recent summary, see the late Michael O'Neill, "'Trying to make it as good as I can": Mary Shelley's Editing of P. B. Shelley's Poetry and Prose', in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 185–197.

important work as an editor, as she clearly recognised, was to bring Shelley's body of work before the public—to keep him, and his thoughts alive, to 'scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth, / ashes and sparks' his 'words among mankind'.<sup>13</sup>

Mary Shelley's edition of *The Posthumous Poems* brought most of Shelley's previously unpublished poetry—in particular, his lyric poems—for the first time to the public. That she was concerned with recuperating Shelley's public image is clear from a letter to Hunt prior to the publication of the volume, where she suggests producing 'a specimen of how he could write without shocking any one'.<sup>14</sup> It was Shelley's overtly political verse that was apparently 'too shocking' to be included, in particular what Shelley had planned as 'a little volume of *popular songs* wholly political, & destined to awaken & direct the imagination of the reformers', a series of poems, including 'The Mask of Anarchy', written in the wake of the Peterloo Massacre.<sup>15</sup> The historical importance of the volume is summed up well by Charles Taylor: '*Posthumous Poems* [...] is foremost among the first editions of Shelley's verse' because it contained 'almost all of the lyrics which contributed so much to the steady growth of Shelley's reputation in the nineteenth century'.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, Shelley would come to be regarded as England's greatest lyric poet.<sup>17</sup> It is this lyricised Shelley that was inherited by the modernists, and still informs critical debates about Shelley's work and the lyric genre.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This is, of course, from Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (1820).

<sup>14</sup> *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), I, pp. 396–397.

<sup>15</sup> *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II, p. 191, emphasis in the original.

<sup>16</sup> Charles H. Taylor, Jr., *The Early Collected Editions of Shelley's Poems: A Study in the History and Transmission of the Printed Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> See Karen Weisman, 'The Lyricist', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. by Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 45–66; Michael O'Neill, "'And All Things Seem Only One": The Shelleyan Lyric', *Essays and Studies*, 45 (1992), 115–131; David Duff, 'Lyric Development: Esdaile Notebook to Hymns of 1816', in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Michael O'Neill and Anthony Howe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 240–255. The classic study of Shelley's lyrics is Judith Chernaik, *The Lyrics of Shelley* (Cleveland: Cast Western University Press, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> On lyricisation, see Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005) and *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

Mary Shelley's preface to *Posthumous Poems* strikes several of the keynotes of the Shelley Myth: otherworldliness, idealism and detachment from the practical. She writes:

Hereafter men will lament that his transcendant [sic] powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable [...] He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him: to see him was to love him; and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale, which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.<sup>19</sup>

As revealed in her letters, Mary Shelley's preface was influenced by an unpublished review of the book by Leigh Hunt, which shows a shared set of tropes and themes, that seem to evince a concerted public relations strategy. The most famous part of Hunt's account of Shelley, later published in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828), reveals the shared rhetoric:

He was like a spirit that had darted out of its orb, and found itself in another Planet [...] When we heard of his death, it seemed as if this spirit, not sufficiently constituted like the rest of the world to obtain their sympathy, yet gifted with a double portion of love for all living things, had been found dead on a solitary shore of the earth, its wings stiffened, its warm heart cold; the relics of a misunderstood nature, slain by the ungenial elements.<sup>20</sup>

This is the classic statement of what Neil Fraistat has called a process of 'etherealizing and disembodiment' Shelley.<sup>21</sup> But Fraistat's account—and the critical account of the Shelley Myth more generally—requires qualification. What one finds in the early accounts is no simple disembodiment of Shelley, but rather the complicated construction

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<sup>19</sup> *The Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Mary Shelley (London: John and Henry L. Hunt, 1824), pp. iii-iv. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *PP*.

<sup>20</sup> Leigh Hunt, 'Review of the Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley', unpaginated. The Brewer-Leigh Hunt Collection at the State University of Iowa, fMs H94po. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, I, p. 409. Hunt refused Mary Shelley's invitation to write the preface for *Posthumous Poems*.

<sup>21</sup> Fraistat, 'Illegitimate Shelley', p. 410.

of a particular kind of body—both textual and, post mortem, physiological. This is true not just of Hunt and Shelley's early biographers, but also of Shelley's keenest early critics, such as William Hazlitt, Maurice, Hallam, and Mill.

Mary Shelley's preface and Hunt's review share what might be called a celestialising of Shelley, a tendency to portray him as unearthly, which also has a long life in the Victorian period, and had already prepared the ground for Arnold's ineffectual angel. Hunt makes reference, like Mary Shelley, to Milton: 'When sitting upright and looking at you attentively, his aspect had a certain seraphical character that would have suited for a portrait of [...] one of the angels whom Milton describes as holding a reed "tipt with fire"'.<sup>22</sup> Mary Shelley uses the same Miltonic reference, but develops the theme more fully to counter the distorted public perception of the poet. Previously, in a public spat with Byron, Robert Southey, with an undeniable talent for branding, had called Byron, Shelley, and their circle 'the Satanic school'.<sup>23</sup>

It was this Satanic perception of Shelley that Hunt and Mary Shelley were aiming to dispel by wielding Ithuriel's spear. There are curious transformations and transferences involved in Mary Shelley's allusion in particular. For the passage from *Paradise Lost*—one of the most memorable in the poem—in which Satan sits 'squat like a toad' at the ear of Eve using his 'devilish art' to corrupt her, could be the exact passage that Southey had in mind when forging his brand.<sup>24</sup> Whereas in Milton, Satan is revealed in his true form by the touch of Ithuriel's spear, in Mary Shelley's turning of the image, the Satanic Shelley transforms himself, by his mere bodily presence, into an angel of light in the mind of the perceiver. And it is Shelley's calumniators who are turned into toads—toadies to the Tories—whispering 'in the ear of the ignorant world'. It is a brilliant twist on the Miltonic theme used by Southey.

Of course, Shelley was no longer around to transform public perception himself. This evokes one of the persistent critical problems in dealing with Shelley's corpus, carrying a constituent ambiguity between the poet's physical body and his body of work, identified perhaps most stringently by Paul de Man. 'The final test of reading', de Man writes in 'Shelley Disfigured', 'in *The Triumph of Life*, depends on how one reads

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<sup>22</sup> Hunt, 'Review of the Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley'.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Southey, *A Vision of Judgment* (London: Longman, et. al., 1821), pp. xx–xxi.

<sup>24</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost, The Poetical Works of John Milton* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1857), Book IV, ll. 799–814.

the textuality of this event, how one disposes of Shelley's body'.<sup>25</sup> He goes on to claim that: 'The apparent ease with which readers of *The Triumph of Life* have been able to dispose of this challenge demonstrates the inadequacy of our understanding of Shelley and, beyond him, of romanticism in general'.<sup>26</sup> For de Man, the interruption in the text of *The Triumph of Life*, which inescapably indexes Shelley's death, leaving the poem fragmentary, opens new horizons for literary criticism, horizons that he thinks should transform our understanding of Shelley and of Romanticism. With de Man the problem of Shelley's body becomes explicit; this, however, is just one of the most recent moments in a history of literary critical attempts to dispose of, or rather compose, Frankenstein-style, Shelley's body.

### Hazlitt's Diagnosis

Perhaps the most prominent public response to the *Posthumous Poems* was a long review essay by William Hazlitt. But it is vital to return to Hazlitt's first piece on Shelley from 1820 to start with, because it introduces the major stress points of all subsequent Victorian criticism of Shelley. Hazlitt's first extended critique of Shelley is in the essay 'On Paradox and Common-place', which was clearly occasioned by the publication of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* in 1820.<sup>27</sup> The core of Hazlitt's argument is expressed at the very outset: 'I do not indeed swear by an opinion, because it is old: but neither do I fall in love with every extravagance at first sight, because it is new' ('PC', p. 349). Hazlitt finds these two tendencies, which he labels common-place and paradox respectively, pernicious because both represent an affront to sober reason, which ought to be the sole arbiter of ideas, whether old and venerated or brand new. He finds his example of the latter tendency—novelty for novelty's sake we might call it—in Shelley. Hazlitt proceeds by way of a distinction between originality and singularity: 'Originality implies independence of opinion [...] whereas singularity is only the affectation of saying something to contradict other people, without having any real opinion of one's own upon the matter' ('PC', p. 350). The distinction is an important one, because the

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<sup>25</sup> Paul de Man, 'Shelley Disfigured', in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 121.

<sup>26</sup> De Man, 'Shelley Disfigured', p. 121.

<sup>27</sup> William Hazlitt, *Table-Talk; or, Original Essays* (London: John Warren, 1821). Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'PC'.



consistent crux of Hazlitt's criticism of Shelley's poetry was that he lacked originality. In his 1829 essay 'Poetry', for example, he argues: 'Mr. Shelley, who felt the want of originality without the power to supply it, distorted every thing from what it was, and his pen produced only abortions'.<sup>28</sup> Attention to Hazlitt's critique of Shelley is valuable here, because it would set the terms of the Shelley debate for nineteenth-century criticism. More importantly, for the purposes of this essay, Hazlitt's essay reveals that criticism of Shelley's poetry is constituted ab initio by notions of Shelley's body.

Hazlitt is from the start winding up for his attack on Shelley, the *raison d'être* of the essay. After a virtuosic prelude exhaustively delineating the characteristics of his two types, Hazlitt arrives at his target:

The author of the Prometheus Unbound [...] has a fire in his eye, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic. He is sanguine-complexioned, and shrill-voiced. As is often observable in the case of religious enthusiasts, there is a slenderness of constitutional *stamina*, which renders the flesh no match for the spirit. His bending, flexible form appears to take no strong hold of things, does not grapple with the world about him, but slides from it like a river... ('PC', p. 355)

The nucleus of the Shelley Myth is here—Shelley's unearthliness—but it is attached to a diseased body, perhaps even symptomatic of madness.<sup>29</sup> Many of the core features of accounts of Shelley's physical appearance are also present: the sanguine complexion, the shrill voice, the bent-over body, the gleam in the eye.<sup>30</sup> It is unclear, however, whether this diagnosis of a diseased body is meant to be taken as a literal description or as a kind of allegory for the body of Shelley's text. This blurring of textual and physical bodies is central to nineteenth-century criticism of Shelley's poetry, and is an early

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<sup>28</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons LTD, 1934), XX, p. 211.

<sup>29</sup> As James Whitehead shows, 'Shelley was subjected to the invective of disease or mental disorder from his first appearance in print'. *Madness and the Romantic Poet: A Critical History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 118. See also Ross Woodman, *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2005), esp. chs. 5 and 6.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries; with Recollections of the Author's Life, and of His Visit to Italy* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), I, pp. 294–296.

example of what Paul de Man identified as the problem of 'how one disposes of Shelley's body'.<sup>31</sup>

Hazlitt goes on to criticise Shelley for being untethered from reality, a consistent feature of virtually all Shelley criticism in the nineteenth century, positive or negative: 'He is clogged by no dull system of realities, no earth-bound feelings, no rooted prejudices, by nothing that belongs to the mighty trunk and hard husk of nature and habit' ('PC', pp. 355–356). This critique would later be at the core of the modernist onslaught against Shelley: Leavis and T. S. Eliot led the charge and the New Critics then piled on, indicting Shelley for a 'weak grasp upon the actual'.<sup>32</sup> Detachment from reality, then—a kind of otherworldliness or unearthliness—is at the centre of accounts both of Shelley himself, from his family and closest friends, and of the most strenuous critical objections to his poetry.<sup>33</sup>

Hazlitt's criticism also marks the beginning point of the lyricisation of Shelley, that is, the elevation of Shelley's short lyrics over his major works—the view that his 'genius' was 'essentially lyrical'. According to Virginia Jackson, the 'historical process of lyricization', is defined by 'the gradual collapse of various verse genres that had specific social functions into an idea of poetry as a genre'.<sup>34</sup> The case of Shelley is central to this development in the nineteenth century, and Hazlitt's essay introduces the argument, claiming that 'in his smaller pieces, where he has attempted little he has done most'.<sup>35</sup> Hazlitt offers a formula, which we might call the formula of Shelleyan lyricisation: 'The success of his writings is therefore in general in the inverse ratio of the extent of his undertakings' ('SPP', p. 266). This judgment, I argue, would take on the force of a critical

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<sup>31</sup> De Man, 'Shelley Disfigured', p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> F. R. Leavis, 'Shelley', in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by M. H. Abrams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 268–269; see T.S. Eliot, 'Shelley and Keats', *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England*, in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. by Jason Harding and Ronald Schuchard, vol. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), pp. 641–653.

<sup>33</sup> See Byshe Inigo Coffey, *Shelley's Broken World: Fractured Materiality and Intermittent Song* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), esp. the Introduction for a rereading and reassessment of this famous statement from Leavis.

<sup>34</sup> Virginia Jackson, 'Please Don't Call It History', *nonsite.org*, September 22, 2011 <<http://nonsite.org/the-tank/being-numerous>> [accessed 09/10/2023].

<sup>35</sup> William Hazlitt, 'Shelley's Posthumous Poems', *Complete Works*, XVI, p. 266. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'SPP'.

axiom, and would allow for the dismissal of the main body of Shelley's work, a lyric reading of his corpus that detached his 'lyrical' poems from his body of thought and verse as a whole, and the concomitant political, philosophical, and poetic difficulties contained therein. Here I can offer a formula of my own: the construction and diagnosis of Shelley's physical body authorized the lyricisation of his body of poetry.

The politics of Hazlitt's critique are spelled out further in his 1824 review of *The Posthumous Poems*. 'The worst of it however was', Hazlitt argues, that Shelley 'gave great encouragement to those who believe in all received absurdities, and are wedded to all existing abuses: his extravagance seeming to sanction their grossness and selfishness, as theirs were a full justification of his folly and eccentricity' ('SPP', pp. 497–498). This is a standard liberal critique of the revolutionary left, familiar, for example, from the work of Isaiah Berlin. The early critical reception of Shelley's work was from the beginning a matter of politics, and even where—in the later criticism of the Apostles and Mill, for example—politics seem to be bracketed in favour of aesthetics, psychology or pure philosophical analysis, the construction of Shelley's physical and textual bodies was always already political.

### Shelley's Apostles

The early Cambridge Apostles—F. D. Maurice, John Sterling, Alfred Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, Monckton Milnes, and others—were apostles of Shelley and Wordsworth.<sup>36</sup> Soon after Hallam arrived at Cambridge in 1828, he wrote a letter to his friend William Gladstone claiming that 'at the present day *Shelley* is the idol before which we are to be short by the knees'.<sup>37</sup> He wasn't yet a convert, but a few months later he was elected as a member of the Apostles, and a friend described him as 'a furious Shelleyist'.<sup>38</sup> Hallam made a pilgrimage to Italy to find a copy of *Adonais*, which the Apostles reprinted—the first publication in England of the poem. Peter Allen notes that Hallam 'gave out copies to friends and whatever converts he could make to the new cause'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. vii, 1.

<sup>37</sup> *The Letters of Arthur Henry Hallam*, ed. by Jack Kolb (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1981), pp. 244–245.

<sup>38</sup> See Allen, p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> Allen, p. 46.

The intellectual lodestar of the Apostles was F. D. Maurice, who wrote about Shelley in his influential 'Sketches of Contemporary Authors' for the *Athenaeum*.<sup>40</sup> Maurice's account shares with Hazlitt's diagnosis a slippage between Shelley's physical and textual bodies, but it also differs in its ultimate assessment of the value of Shelley's corpus.

What for Hazlitt was the central weakness and vice of Shelley's verse—his inability to grapple with the real—is turned by Maurice into the central strength and virtue of his work. To Hazlitt's grounded Aristotelian criticism, Maurice counters a Platonic metaphysical vision in which the 'invisible principles within us or without, of which natural appearances are merely the clothing and the shadow' are 'the reason and truth of things' ('SCA', p. 194). For Hazlitt, Leavis, and other prominent critics of Shelley, his inability to stick to the phenomena, to hold an object steadily in view, is a sign of his mental weakness and effeminate sentimentality. For Maurice, this same feature elevates Shelley as a poet who did not seek to present objects in a pleasing light; rather 'his very perceptions seem to have been modified and exalted by his genius, and even his senses were inspired', allowing for 'such perfect unity of feeling' in his poetry ('SCA', p. 194). Shelley's mind, Maurice writes, 'was more fundamentally and uniformly poetical, than that of any other poet, at least in our day', claiming, importantly, that 'he thought and felt poetically' ('SCA', p. 193). As with Hazlitt, then, there is a blurring of physical and textual bodies, but in the service of starkly opposed critical conclusions. What differs between Hazlitt and Maurice is the critical values that are brought to bear upon the work in order to assess it. Hazlitt and Maurice are united in claiming that Shelley had a peculiarly poetic body.

In 'On Paradox and Common-place', Hazlitt had altered—by adopting male pronouns—some famous lines of John Donne's to apply them to Shelley:

She, of whose soul, if we may say, 'twas gold,  
Her body was th'electrum, and did hold  
Many degrees of that; we understood  
Her by her sight; her pure, and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,

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<sup>40</sup> F. D. Maurice, 'Sketches of Contemporary Authors: No. VIII—Percy Bysshe Shelley', *The Athenaeum*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1828, 193–194. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'SCA'.

That one might almost say, her body thought...<sup>41</sup>

In his first critique of Shelley, Hazlitt had attacked the 'fever in his blood' and his 'sanguine-complexion' as features that revealed him to be a 'philosophic fanatic'. In his kinder but sly later treatment, after Shelley's death, this feature of Shelley's physiognomy is made a sign of his feminised, lyricised body. It could be considered Hazlitt's response to Mary Shelley's preface to the *Posthumous Poems*. Donne's poem, written after the death of Dame Elizabeth Drury, contains a reading of the body that, like Mary Shelley's, says all that needs to be said: 'we understood / Her by her sight'. Compare Maurice's impassioned description of Shelley's 'muse' as 'a fair and prophetic priestess, in whom the wild gestures, the fire-flushed cheek, and the electric quiverings of every vein and nerve, accompany the rapture of no feeble song, and the oracles of no mean inspiration' ('SCA', p. 194). And as with Donne's Dame, Shelley, in Maurice's telling, 'thought and felt poetically': 'His whole being seems to have been absorbed and transfigured into poetry' ('SCA', pp. 193–194). Let us pause for a moment here—galvanised by Donne's 'electrum', Hazlitt's 'electrical experiments in morals and philosophy' and Maurice's 'electric quiverings of every vein and nerve'—to consider the early nineteenth century understanding of the nervous system, for diagnosing the peculiarly poetic structure of Shelley's nervous system was a central element in the critical incorporation of the poet.

It might seem that an electrical theory of the nervous system had been worked out by this point in the nineteenth century, but this was not the case. James Mill, in his 1825 *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, a development of David Hartley's associationist psychology, is frank about the contemporary state of ignorance with regard to the operation of the nervous system: 'As the nerves in every part of the body are covered', he writes, 'we know not how any external particles can reach them. We know not whether such particles operate upon the nerves, by their own, or by any other influence; the galvanic, for example, or electrical, influence'.<sup>42</sup> Others in the early nineteenth century still held to the old-fashioned notion that the nerves were little tubes through which the 'animal spirits' passed, allowing the communication between the

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<sup>41</sup> John Donne, 'An Anatomy of the World', *Selected Poetry*, ed. by John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 176, ll. 241–246.

<sup>42</sup> James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, ed. by John Stuart Mill, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869), I, pp. 10–11.

body and the mind (Descartes's *res extensa* and *res cogitans*).<sup>43</sup> What was understood, however, was that it was the nervous system that was responsible for sensation, even if the exact nature of how this worked was a matter of speculation. It was a transitional moment in the history of science, not just of the nervous system, but also of theories of emotion.

Hartley's associationist psychological theory—so influential for the Romantics, including Wordsworth and Shelley himself—is now seen by historians of science as 'the earliest example of a fully worked-out neurophysiology'.<sup>44</sup> Thomas Dixon has also shown how associationist mind science was central in the transition from the terminology of the passions to that of the emotions which occurred in the course of the nineteenth century. 'It was the associationist mental scientists', Dixon writes, 'who provided the most influential early uses of the term "emotions"'.<sup>45</sup> It was, in other words, a kind of paradigm shift in mind science. In the empiricist-materialist tradition, Hartley accounts for all sensation, feeling, thought, and ideas through a theory which links Locke and Hume with Newtonian science. By deducing the basic laws of association between mental phenomena, all the mind's operations can be broken down into their basic elements and understood scientifically through cause and effect. The fundamental tenets of associationist psychology subtend and animate the critical debate under consideration here, and inform the notion of Shelley's 'poetic temperament'. Hallam's intervention into the debate about the relative merits and powers of Shelley and Wordsworth is likewise rooted in the new psychology, and is striking for its use of the term 'emotion' alongside more traditional references to poetic 'feeling'.

Hallam's review essay 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson' (1831) offers a re-evaluation of Shelley and

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<sup>43</sup> See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. by Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and *Passions of the Soul*, trans. by Stephen H. Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989).

<sup>44</sup> C. U. M. Smith, 'David Hartley's Newtonian Neuropsychology', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 23 (April 1987), 123-126 (p. 124).

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 101. Dixon points out 'that the emotions did not exist until just under two hundred years ago', p. 1.

Wordsworth, and presents Tennyson's apolitical lyrics as a way forward for poetry.<sup>46</sup> He begins by praising *Lyrical Ballads* for 'awakening the minds of men, and giving a fresh impulse to art', but quickly goes on to identify what he thinks is the primary flaw of Wordsworth's work: 'Whenever the mind of the artist suffers itself to be occupied, during its periods of creation, by any other predominant motive than the desire of beauty, the result is false in art' ('CMP', p. 184). He then sets up a dichotomy between poets of 'reflection', such as Wordsworth, and poets of 'sensation', with Shelley and Keats as his two exemplars. 'Susceptible of the slightest impulse from external nature', Hallam writes,

their fine organs trembled into emotion at colors, and sounds, and movements, unperceived or unregarded by duller temperaments. Rich and clear were their perceptions of visible forms; full and deep their feelings of music. So vivid was the delight attending the simple exertions of eye and ear, that it became mingled more and more with their trains of active thought, and tended to absorb their whole being into the energy of sense. ('CMP', p. 186)

Hallam is clearly indebted to Maurice here, especially his view that Shelley's 'whole being seems to have been absorbed and transfigured into poetry'. But Hallam brings to his theory the strong influence of contemporary mind science, in particular the psychological associationism of Hartley and the new category of the emotions, to argue for the supremacy of poets of sensation. Hallam's account, in this respect, differs substantially from others: the peculiar poetic temperament of the poets of sensation is a strength rather than a weakness. But again, it is worth stressing here that despite differences in evaluation and conclusions there is critical consensus on a particular diagnosis of Shelley's body as hypersomatic: Shelley's 'whole body' was taken over by his senses and emotions to produce poetry, 'trembling' under the strain.

Hallam turns Wordsworth's own critical theory against him to argue for the supremacy of the poetry of sensation at a historical moment, according to Hallam, in which poetry is alienated from society, and poetic powers are disunited (anticipating Eliot's dissociation of sensibility). The ultimate source of poetic truth in nature requires

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<sup>46</sup> Arthur Henry Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson', *The Writings of Arthur Henry Hallam*, ed. by T. H. Vail Motter (New York: Modern Language Association, 1943). Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'CMP'.

poets whose bodies are most susceptible to the influence of the senses and who follow most closely the mechanical train of associations arising from them without the interference of the intellect in introducing falsehood. Mill would likewise base his critical intervention in the debate over the relative value of the poetry of the Romantics, Shelley and Wordsworth in particular, in cutting-edge associationist philosophy of mind—and, like Hallam, he deploys the new category of emotions—but the conclusions point to Shelley's deficiencies despite rather than because of his poetic temperament.

### J. S. Mill and the Politics of the Poetic Temperament

As with the Apostles, in his 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties' (1860), Mill constructs a theory of Shelley's body—a body that was organised by nature into what might be called a poetry machine. According to Mill, reasoning machines (such as Bentham and his father intended him to become) could only be made by culture, whereas the 'poetic temperament' is a natural phenomenon. Like Hallam before him, Mill distinguishes between two different kinds of poetry exemplified by Shelley and Wordsworth: Shelley is the poet of nature, and Wordsworth the poet of culture. The distinction, as mentioned, is rooted in the associationist psychology that Mill was raised into by his father. He begins by saying that the received wisdom in the phrase *poeta nascitur* must be questioned by modern psychological principles, but that it will be found, as received wisdom often is, 'to contain some truth' ('TP', p. 354). While poets require effort and culture to realise poetic excellence, Mill nonetheless claims that 'there are poetic *natures*. There is a mental and physical constitution or temperament, peculiarly fitted for poetry' ('TP', p. 355). Mill's theory of poetry is grounded in the assumption of a Wordsworthian axiom: 'What is poetry', Mill asks, 'but the thoughts and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself?' ('TP', p. 356).

The distinction between poets of nature and poets of culture is rooted in a kind of competition in the mind between thought and emotion for a central place in the chain of mental association. For the natural poet, emotion is always the central and guiding force, as a result of 'intense sensibility': 'The poet of culture sees his object in prose, and describes it in poetry; the poet of nature actually sees it in poetry' ('TP', p. 356). For the poet of culture, by contrast, thought is dominant in the process of association: 'In the one, feeling waits upon thought; in the other, thought upon feeling'. Mill then presents Wordsworth and Shelley, 'the two English authors of our own day



who have produced the greatest quantity of true and enduring poetry', as illustrative examples of his two kinds of poet ('TP', p. 357). In Wordsworth, thought is always the guiding force of the poem, and insofar as he is a poet, he had to achieve that status through sustained work and study, because he wasn't endowed with the 'poetic temperament' ('TP', p. 358). 'Shelley', however, according to Mill, 'is the very reverse of all this': 'For him, voluntary mental discipline had done little: the vividness of his emotions and of his sensations had done all'. This lack of mental discipline has generic implications, because a long poem requires 'consecutiveness of thought', which Shelley had not 'acquired' ('TP', p. 359). Ideas and images haphazardly appear and disappear in his work, entailing that 'his more ambitious compositions too often resemble the scattered fragments of a mirror; colours brilliant as life, single images without end, but no picture' ('TP', pp. 359–360). Shelley, not in control of sensation and emotion, had to rely upon the emotion itself for the unity required of successful poems. The implication here is clear: Shelley, untrained and unable to maintain a consistent train of thought necessary for long works, can only succeed with short, 'lyric' poems. This conclusion would have a long afterlife. But it is worth reflecting here on the remarkable reversal that has occurred in the critical development that this article has been tracing, and in a period of less than ten years.

For Hazlitt, Shelley's longer works fail because 'he was crushed beneath the weight of thought which he aspired to bear, and was withered in the lightning-glare of a ruthless philosophy' ('SPP', p. 266). There is too much thought in Shelley's main corpus, and he was too apt to get mired in metaphysics. Hence, his lyric poems are his best work. For Mill, on the contrary, Shelley's longer poems suffered from a lack of thought to sustain the work, a lack of philosophical culture, a paucity of sound metaphysics. Maurice and Hallam are intermediate between these two extremes; Maurice had argued that Shelley both 'thought and felt poetically' and, conspicuously among the criticism of these years, did not devalue Shelley's longer works aside from *Queen Mab* (1813). Neither does Hallam explicitly reject Shelley's longer works, though an implication of his argument is that Shelley's work is best when it is not caught up in politics and metaphysics. Constant in all of these critical accounts, however, is the notion of Shelley's poetic temperament, a hypersomatic body, which cannot be controlled by the mind. Like his own favoured image of the lyre, passively producing the music of the wind, Shelley is said to be at the mercy of his senses, producing poetry almost

automatically from the vividness of his perceptions and emotions. To stress the point: it is not a disembodiment and etherealising of Shelley that occurs in these crucial years, but in fact the construction of a very peculiar kind of body, a myth of Shelley as a kind of natural poetry machine.

Mill's 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties' would become a cornerstone of Abrams's inversion of the traditional hierarchy of poetic genres, which makes lyric poetry 'more eminently and peculiarly poetry than any other: it is the poetry most natural to a really poetic temperament, and least capable of being successfully imitated by one not so endowed by nature'.<sup>47</sup> The 'genius' of the author of the *Lyrical Ballads* is, for Mill, 'essentially unlyrical' ('TP', p. 359). Shelley, the embodiment of the poetic temperament, is the lyric poet par excellence:

Thus it is in many of his smaller, and especially his lyrical poems. They are obviously written to exhale, perhaps to relieve, a state of feeling, or of conception of feeling, almost oppressive from its vividness [...] for the poetic temperament is usually, perhaps always, accompanied by exquisite senses. The exciting cause may be either an object or an idea. But whatever of sensation enters into the feeling, must not be local, or consciously organic; it is a condition of the whole frame, not of a part only [...] it pervades the entire nervous system. States of feeling, whether sensuous or spiritual, which thus possess the whole being, are the fountains of that which we have called the poetry of poets; and which is little else than a pouring forth of the thoughts and images that pass across the mind while some permanent state of feeling is occupying it. ('TP', p. 360)

Here, we have come full circle, and as in Hazlitt, Shelley is almost diseased: his lyrics are meant to 'relieve' him from an 'oppressive' condition of feeling. It is not merely the dominance of emotion in the mind's process of association, then, that characterises the lyrical body, but its influence over 'the entire nervous system'; to come back again to the words of Maurice, that Shelley's 'whole being seems to have been absorbed and transfigured into poetry'. The poetic process here is not one of conscious control or thought, but rather a 'pouring forth' produced involuntarily, even mechanically by the

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<sup>47</sup> M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 23.

body. But how is Mill arriving at this diagnosis of Shelley's body? What is the evidence? Where are the symptoms?

Hazlitt knew Shelley, and was known to have known Shelley, hence his description of Shelley's person, as I have suggested, carries with it a constitutive ambiguity: is it the poetry, or is it Shelley being described? Or is it both? In the cases of Hallam and Mill, however, there is a circularity to the argument: a psychological and physiological theory of the poetry is deduced from the poetry itself and then posed as the explanation for the very poetry from which it was derived. To readers of poetry raised on the intentional and biographical fallacies, it seems strange, indeed, to be faced with the physiological fallacy.<sup>48</sup> Mill's description of Shelley's imagery, for example, is rooted in the 'susceptibility of his nervous system' and the 'fineness of organization' of his body, which produced an 'exuberance of imagery' ('TP', p. 360). Shelley's imagery itself can be the only evidence for this argument. But if the poet of culture can through 'skill and study' achieve the status of true poetry, could not a poet achieve the appearance of natural poetry through the same means? Or, more to the point, couldn't 'exuberance of imagery' be a matter of a style cultivated for particular purposes and effects rather than a matter of the nervous system?<sup>49</sup> Mill, it seems, did not consider these possibilities, in his otherwise rigorous analytical argument, which exposes the political tensions subtending his account. E. P. Thompson's magnum opus *The Making of the English Working Class* concludes with the Reform Bill of 1832 as the triumph of utilitarianism (that is, liberalism and capital) over working-class radicalism.<sup>50</sup> Mill's lyricisation and depoliticisation of Shelley's corpus—a body of work kept in print in the 1830s by working-class publishers and radicals like William Benbow, Richard Carlile, James Watson, Henry Hetherington—can be read as one aspect of this triumph.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 54.3 (July-September, 1946): 468–488; on the biographical fallacy, see Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

<sup>49</sup> See William Keach, *Shelley's Style* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), esp. ch. 16, p. 832.

<sup>51</sup> On Shelley and working-class radicalism, see Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980); Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Paul Thomas Murphy, *Toward a Working-Class Canon: Literary Criticism in British Working-Class Periodicals, 1816–1858* (Columbus: Ohio State

### Conclusion: Shelley, Inc.

Why so much ado about Shelley's body? My hypothesis is that the construction of Shelley's body was an ideological manoeuvre against the body of thought that most fully presented in these years a leftist challenge to the liberal and utilitarian Reformists. Of course, the vast majority of Shelley's prose remained unpublished until 1840, and some of it—including, vitally, his *Philosophical View of Reform*, in which he most fully articulates his political philosophy, and does so in dialogue with Bentham—until much later.<sup>52</sup> For the eminent Victorians, the groundwork was laid for Shelley the lyric angel, the eternal child who died too young to realise his potential and see the error of his ways—'poor Shelley', as Coleridge condescendingly put it.<sup>53</sup> *Queen Mab* was banished to his juvenilia, *The Revolt of Islam* and his other major works were rarely read or studied, but his lyrics were celebrated and constantly anthologised—their prominence in *The Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics* (1861), of which Tennyson was the presiding influence and spirit, being only the chief example.<sup>54</sup>

The analysis presented in this piece also leads directly into the next major intervention in the Victorian construction of Shelley's corpus in the form of Mary Shelley's edition of *The Poetical Works* first published in 1839 and the *Prose Works* in 1840. Here, as a matter of necessity due to her inability to publish a biography as she had hoped, Mary Shelley interweaves both biographical details and critical commentary with Shelley's poems. Jeremy Davies has analysed how 'Mary's co-creation of the Victorians' Percy Shelley'—'the collaborative production of a Shelleyan corpus suited to early Victorian audiences'—'is especially, and fruitfully, ambiguous', not least because she 'claims that Percy's poetry was fostered in part by his chronic physical debility', his

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University Press, 1994); and M. Siddiq Kalim, *The Social Orpheus: Shelley and the Owenites* (Lahore: A Research Council Publication, 1973).

<sup>52</sup> On Bentham and the *Philosophical View*, see James Chandler, *England in 1819* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), esp. ch. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Howard Mills, *Peacock: His Circle and His Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 71. The 'eternal child' is from George Gilfillan, *First Gallery of Literary Portraits* (Edinburgh: James Hogg, 1851), p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> See Charlotte W. Hitchcock, *Tennyson, Palgrave and The Golden Treasury* (Baltimore, MD: The University of Maryland Press, 1972).

creative work was 'a function of physiology'.<sup>55</sup> Part of what I hope to have shown in this piece is that this dual construction, analysis, and diagnosis of Shelley's physical and textual bodies has a long history prior to Mary Shelley's decisive intervention in 1839. The groundwork had been laid for almost twenty years, and Mary Shelley was, of course, aware of this line of critical reception—was, indeed, herself a part of it. I hope, too, that my analysis opens possibilities for reconsideration of Mary Shelley's role as an editor and publicist.

Mill's lyric theory has had a deep and lasting impact, both on poetry and criticism. As already mentioned, Abrams identified Mill's theory as the culmination of a momentous shift from mimetic to expressive aesthetic theories during the Romantic period. He also points out that, to a remarkable degree, 'the innovations of the romantics persist as the commonplaces of modern critics', showing the similarity between T. S. Eliot's notion of the objective correlative and a similar passage in Mill's 1835 review of Tennyson.<sup>56</sup> And, indeed, the entire development of New Criticism can be read as a result, or elaboration, of the debate about the Romantics and the lyric genre, as is done, *mutatis mutandis*, in the two most influential contemporary accounts of lyric, Jonathan Culler's *Theory of the Lyric* and Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins's *The Lyric Theory Reader*. The role of Shelley in these developments, including the critical construction of his corpus from 1824–40, is pivotal. I hope that this essay has done some spadework to expose the ongoing problem of Shelley, Inc.—the way that the poet's bodies were culturally incorporated after his death. The case is not closed, we have still not disposed of Shelley's body.



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<sup>55</sup> Jeremy Davies, 'The Shelley's and the Art of Suffering', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34.2 (2011), 267–280 (pp. 267–268).

<sup>56</sup> Abrams, p. 25.