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About this hypertext

This hypertext volume of essays had its inception at a session on the Early Shelley held at MLA in December 1996. The text is encoded in HTML, with some extensions for HTML 2.0, including a limited use of tables and frames. It will work best with Netscape 2.0 or a comparable browser; earlier browsers may not display everything properly. Although the essays are arranged "linearly" so that following the Introduction are the pieces by Reiman, Keach, Morton, and then the response by Brigham, they can, of course, be accessed through links on the Contents page in whatever order you choose. Because you may enter and exit these files along multiple paths, you may have to use the back-arrow button on your browser to return to your starting point. The full text of the volume, like all hypertexts in the Romantic Circles Praxis Series, is fully searchable. I am grateful to Noel Giffin for allowing us to use the image of the fractal reproduced on the cover page and, especially, to Melissa J. Sites for her careful work in marking up the essays for this volume.

About the contributors

The contributors to this volume are among those doing the most exciting work in Shelley studies today:

Linda Brigham is Assistant Professor of English at Kansas State University, Manhattan. Her essay "*Prometheus Unbound* and the Postmodern Politicial Dilemma," which appears in *Shelley: Poet and Legislator*, edited by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran, is one of the most outstanding pieces in an excellent volume, a standard of excellence maintained in her recent essay on *The Cenci*, which can be found in *Texas Studies in Language and Literature's* special issue on "Romantic Drama." Her manuscript-in-progress, tentatively titled "Defying Gravity: Wordsworth, Shelley, and Structures of Individuation," articulates Lacanian psychoanalysis against the work of Deleuze and Guattari to explore distincutions between a Wordsworthian and Shelleyan approach to Romantic language.

Neil Fraistat is Professor of English at the University of Maryland. Beyond his duties as a General Editor of *Romantic Circles*, he has just completed co-editing with Donald H. Reiman the first volume of *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, which will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1998. Fraistat is also editing with Reiman the Norton Critical Edition of *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, and with Elizabeth B. Loizeaux, a collection of essays to be published by the University of Wisconsin Press, entitled *Reimagining Textuality*. His online editions of Percy Shelley's *The Devil's Walk*, co-edited with Reiman, and *The Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci* can be found on *Romantic Circles*.

William Keach, Professor of English at Brown University, is one of our finest readers of Romanticism, in general, and Percy Shelley, in particular. No one has done more sophisticated thinking about the intersections among Shelley's language, style, and politics. His book *Shelley's Style* remains one of the most important and often cited studies of Shelley in past 15 years and his current manuscript-in-progress on the language and politics of Romanticism is eagerly awaited. Keach has recently completed an edition of Coleridge's poetry for Penguin Press.

Timothy Morton is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Colorado. He is the author of *Shelley and Taste: The Body and the Natural World*, one of the best and most provocative studies of Shelley in recent years. Among his essays are pieces on literary and cultural representations of the spice trade in the long 18th Century (the subject of a book at which he is now at work), to appear in *Essays and Studies*, and an article on the representation of sugar in Southey's works, which appears in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, a collection of essay edited by Peter Kitson and Tim Fulford for Cambridge University Press.

Donald H. Reiman, of *Shelley and His Circle* and the University of Delaware, is recognized as one of the finest Shelley scholars of the 20th Century. He is a General Editor of *Romantic Circles*, and beyond his co-

editing of *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, he is also at work on the next two volumes of *Shelley and His Circle* and on the second edition of the Norton Critical Shelley. His most recent book is an edition of Percy Shelley's Fair Copy Manuscripts that he co-edited with Michael O'Neill for Garland's *Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics* series.

Early Shelley: Vulgarisms, Politics, and Fractals

Introduction: The Return of the "Wild Boy"; or, Reading Early Shelley

by Neil Fraistat

1. **ALMOST** 50 years after the fact, Hellen Shelley recalled a visit her famous older brother made to her school: "He came once with the elders of the family, and Harriet Grove, his early love, was of the party: how fresh and pretty she was! Her assistance was invoked to keep the wild boy quiet, for he was full of pranks, and upset the port wine on the tray cloth, for our schoolmistress was hospitable and had offered refreshments; then we all walked in the garden, and there was much ado to calm the spirits of the wild boy" (Hogg's *Life of PBS* , ed. Wolfe, I, 27). Critics have contrived as well, with perhaps more success, to keep the "wild boy" quiet. The Great Divide in Shelley studies perennially has been between *Alastor* (1816), which is generally viewed as Shelley's first mature poem, and all of his preceding work, which is usually dismissed as the juvenilia of a "wild boy," immature both in craftsmanship and thought. As a result, with the notable exception of Kenneth Neill Cameron's monumental *The Young Shelley*, Shelley's early work either is not seriously engaged, or is engaged in a merely cursory way, to map how Shelley grew beyond it.

2. A careful look at Shelley's early work, however, would show that he is capable, virtually from the start, of writing polished verse in a range of stylistic registers, and that the early verse, even in its most apparently eccentric gestures--perhaps especially in these gestures--is very much a part of its own cultural habitus rather than merely being personally idiosyncratic. In its moments of wildness, then, its more abandoned forays into Sensibility, the Gothic, political satire, and vulgarity, Shelley's early verse offers an aesthetics of excess and a politics of resistance that provides telling access to the fissured byways of early Regency culture, as well as to Shelley's art and thought in general. For far too long, the early Shelley has existed in a state of spectral supplementarity to the "real" Shelley. The essays of this volume, which were originally commissioned for a session on the young Shelley at MLA in 1996, begin to explore what it might mean to give voice to the "wild boy."

3. In the opening essay of the collection, Donald H. Reiman examines Shelley's early textual strategies and practices, revealing several important continuities throughout Shelley's poetic career, some of which vex any attempt to separate cleanly the "early" from the "mature" Shelley. William Keach next considers the political commitments of Shelley's early verse, calling both for the development of critical readings of this verse "rooted in an engaged attentiveness to context and content" and for a pedagogy that focuses classroom attention on the writing Shelley produced between the spring of 1810 and summer of 1813. For Timothy Morton, who, in the following essay, reads the topology of *Queen Mab*, the "sublime, dizzying, spiralling poetics of Shelley, minted as he tries to fit the asymmetrical ideologies of capitalism and ecology together, persist throughout his work" in what Morton describes as a "fractal" poetics that is not simply Utopian in its desires, but "Ecotopian." Finally, Linda Brigham responds to the previous essays, turning our attention to the problematics of authorship, agency, and the continuity of identity that necessarily complicate any return to the "early Shelley." She notes that attempts to chart the continuities in Shelley's canon must be alive to a range of differentials: "the terrain [of the verse from 1813-1820] does not change uniformly; in the case of topoi, for example, or in the way Shelley's language relates to things, it changes less than in the case, of say, the manner in which his work incorporates other texts, or in the rhetorical quality of his poetry, the manner and degree of its didacticism."

4. As Brigham also reminds us, the Shelley we get is a function of our own perspective. The more closely

we look at Shelley's early verse, the less homogeneous and easily dismissable this verse will appear--and the more its wide-ranging and complex engagements will unfold. Taken together, the essays in this volume argue for such a collective change of focus. Let us by all means return, then, to *Queen Mab*--an epic apotheosis of the Jacobin Imaginary that--in its phantasmal structure, in its exploration of the gap between words and things, in its anxieties about revolutionary agency and revolutionary change--is also simultaneously the first great crisis poem of the Jacobin Imaginary. But let us also begin to read with critical attention the nuanced tonalities and craftsmanship of such early lyrics as "To Mary, who died in this opinion," and "Why is it said thou canst but live"; the dizzying Gothic implosions of *The Wandering Jew*; the satiric vulgarities of *The Devil's Walk* and those astonishingly Oedipal verse epistles to Edward Fergus Graham; and the lyrics of (often) overheated Sensibility and (sometimes) overwrought political protest in the *Esdaile Notebook* and the early poetic volumes. In the return of the repressed "wild boy," we stand to gain not just new insights on early Regency culture, nor even a different "early Shelley," but an entire poetic career freshly reimagined.

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Early Shelley: Vulgarisms, Politics, and Fractals

Shelley Comes Of Age: His Early Poems As an Editorial Experience

by Donald H. Reiman

1. **IN SPITE** of George Bernard Shaw's enthusiasm for *Queen Mab* , Kenneth Neill Cameron's admiration for Shelley's youthful radicalism, and a renewed interest in Gothic literature, "the young Shelley" has never received much respect, being treated, rather, as "Shelley the Kid." Most biographers either laughed or frowned at his youthful enthusiasms, and several editors chose to exile his early poetry--including even *Queen Mab* --to the backs of their editions under the damning heading of "Juvenilia." Such condescension (of which I've been guilty at times) parallels that with which T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, and other critics once viewed Shelley's poetry as a whole. They declared that, however much they may have doted on it while they were immature, they could no longer read it when they grew up. As I noted in my first book, those critics' failure to comprehend Shelley's mature poetry grew out of four problems that I labeled: first, "unnatural piety" (the tendency of Shelley's heirs and enthusiasts to claim that everything he did was right, good, and true and that his poetry mirrored his angelic genius)--a stance that led to a strong reaction from those who did not feel themselves to be a part of this magic circle; second, "literary fundamentalism," or the critics' tendency "to transubstantiate mythical truth into fact" and then criticize it as erroneous; third, "critical myopia," or a failure to pursue research on the meanings of Shelley's words and literary conventions beyond the critics' own limited knowledge; and, finally, the lack of accurate texts of Shelley's writings.

2. During the past forty years scholar-critics of Shelley have made progress on all of these fronts, but the weak spot in Shelley studies remains an inadequate knowledge of both the canon and the significance of his early poems, to which few scholars other than the editors have given as much attention as might seem merited for a leading poet of the era which demonstrated that "The Child is father of the Man."

3. Neil Fraistat and I have been aided in our work on the Johns Hopkins edition of *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* by strong institutional support (primarily from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the University of Maryland, and the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation) and some excellent research assistants. In the fall of 1992, as we began work on the first volume, we optimistically assumed that we would be able to finish editing the early poems rather quickly, since they were said to be fairly simple-minded and had been, we supposed, treated thoroughly by previous editors--especially in Volume I of the Longman Edition of *The Poems of Shelley* begun by the late G.M. Matthews and completed in 1989 by Kelvin Everest.

4. At the very outset of our work in 1992, however, Neil and I were confronted by a problem regarding the earliest volume in Shelley's poetic canon that previous scholars had all finessed: at the Shelley Bicentennial Conference at Gregynog, Wales, Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi delivered an interesting paper in which she suggested that none of the poems in *Original Poetry* by "Victor and Cazire" (1810) had been written by Shelley's sister Elizabeth, as Shelleyans had universally believed since the discovery and republication of the first text of that long-lost volume in 1898. Instead, Gelpi argued, Percy Bysshe Shelley himself was ventriloquizing in the persona of a woman the poems attributed to his sister. Though Neil and I believed Gelpi to be mistaken, she had raised an important question that no previous editor had studied in detail: Which poems in the "Victor and Cazire" volume actually were by P.B. Shelley and which, if any, could plausibly be attributed to Elizabeth Shelley, a year younger than he? We began immediately to gather the **external evidence** for dual authorship, which we found on the title page of *Original Poetry* ; in Shelley's contemporary letters; in the journal of Shelley's

cousin Harriet Grove; in John Joseph Stockdale's 1826 account of how he came to publish the volume; and in reminiscences that Hellen Shelley, the younger sister of Percy Bysshe and Elizabeth, sent to Lady Shelley in the 1850s, just before Thomas Jefferson Hogg wrote his *Life* of Shelley. We also scanned the poems for **internal clues**--dissecting their subject-matter, tone, and diction, as well as repetitions and variations in their orthography and phrasing. Our stylistic and orthographic analysis was complicated by the lack of any samples of poetry attributed to Elizabeth Shelley outside of the "Victor and Cazire" volume. To detect the substantive and stylistic signature of a sixteen-year-old girl from a landed family during the Regency, our best guides were the contemporary journals of her Wiltshire cousins Harriet and Charlotte Grove, which included comments on the personality of Elizabeth Shelley, and the novels of such female writers of similar class and background as Jane Austen (whom the Groves read with delight).

5. Readers of the Johns Hopkins edition of *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley* will judge for themselves whether we have succeeded in sorting out the evidence, but at least we have grappled with the question of authorship and concluded that a few poems in the volume--including the first two verse-letters, usually assigned to Elizabeth Shelley--were, indeed, probably written by her, a finding that agreed with the external evidence provided by Shelley and his contemporaries, all of which pointed to *Original Poetry* as being the work of two authors.[1]

6. Our study of the "Victor and Cazire" volume and Percy Bysshe Shelley's subsequent four publication projects that involved poems not only added to our knowledge of repetitive patterns in his composition, arrangement, and publication of them, but we saw that practices that Shelley established at the beginning of his poetic career were echoed in his later writings. Without attempting to exhaust this topic, let me cite just a few literary tendencies present in Shelley's earliest work that persisted in his mature poems. His interest in cooperative or joint authorship, appears not only in the "Victor and Cazire" effort, but also in his joint composition with his sister Elizabeth of a lost comedy that they submitted to the stage anonymously and in his collaboration with his second-cousin Thomas Medwin of the earliest version of *The Wandering Jew* ; this desire for communal composition was repeated when he and Mary Godwin jointly compiled and published *History of a Six Weeks's Tour* . Elizabeth Shelley's long verse-letters lead off the "Victor and Cazire" volume of 1810 to catch the reader's human interest, before concluding with Shelley's own heavier fare--climaxing in a difficult poem of guilt and supernatural judgment involving the Wandering Jew entitled "Ghasta; or the Avenging Demon." Six years later *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* , the joint production of Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin, begins with Mary's travel letters and their joint journal and ends with the cryptic and philosophically challenging "Mont Blanc." (These and other works in the later Shelley canon show also how addicted he was to the construction of Trojan horses within which to smuggle his subversive ideas into the homes of unsuspecting readers.) Percy Bysshe and Mary W. Shelley continued their mutual intellectual and artistic collaboration by reading and editing most of each other's writings until William Shelley's death in 1819 led to Mary's severe depression and a partial distancing in their marriage, but the cooperative habits they had developed early in their life together led them to continue to assist each other in their writing projects at least sporadically till Shelley's death, and Mary Shelley's editorial labors affected Shelley's writings till late in her life.

7. Another pattern that Shelley established early in his career was his tendency to revise and then recycle the same poem in different contexts. For example, he used the poetic fragment found at the end of *Original Poetry* by "Victor and Cazire" as the first poetic attempt in Chapter 1 of *St. Irvyne* . Later in the same romance, he introduced a poem made up with the first four stanzas of a ten-quatrain love poem that he had written to Harriet Grove while they were courting, but there he rounded off the lyric with a revised stanza from a less happy poem, written to Harriet after her family had broken off their engagement, thereby turning the original love lyric into a lament for love thwarted. This pattern of revising and using earlier material in new contexts appeared again when he published revised excerpts

from *Queen Mab* as "The Daemon of the World" in the *Alastor* volume. As Michael Neth and I noted in connection with *The **Hellas** Notebook* , in late 1821 or early 1822 Shelley went so far as to redraft completely in Bodleian MS Shelley adds. e.7 the poem beginning "I arise from dreams of thee"--virtually the same poem that two years earlier he had given to Sophia Stacey. (Two other surviving holograph fair-copies, one entitled "The Indian Serenade" and the other "The Indian Girl's Song, further complicate the story."[2])This simulated composition of a "new" romantic lyric may have been done either to give it to Jane Williams (as Medwin's *Life of Shelley* would have it), or perhaps (as Trelawny testified in a manuscript now at John Murray's) to use in a competition with Byron, in which each was to compose lyrics to be sung to an Indian or Arabic melody. But whether Shelley recomposed from memory--or else pretended to compose for the first time--a poem that he had already used to impress Stacey, either to demonstrate his poetic facility vis-a-vis Byron, or to express his feelings for Jane Williams, we are faced with judgments of his motives.

8. These recyclings, like Shelley's plagiarism of a long poem from Monk Lewis' *Tales of Terror* that led to the suppression of the "Victor and Cazire" volume, cast light on an aspect of his poetic talent that has been almost universally overlooked: Shelley, unlike Byron or even Keats, was *not* a facile or prolific versifier. He invariably struggled to find and arrange words that could articulate his inchoate feelings and subtle ideas. References in his letters to his early Gothic poems and romances express surprise and dismay that he had not written enough to fill the number of pages or volumes that he promised to the printer or publisher.[3] Now, from analysis of malformed type characters found in the "Victor and Cazire" volume, we have determined that the printing was suspended and the type of the first part of the volume was distributed before the last part was typeset. During that hiatus, Shelley was probably scrambling to gather or write enough new material to fill a volume of the size for which he had contracted with the printer, but apparently he and Elizabeth Shelley were unable to provide sufficient poetry to do so. At that point (as the collation indicates), Shelley wrote down from memory--rather than copied--the long poem by Monk Lewis entitled *The Black Canon of Elmham; or, St. Edmond's Eve* so as to swell the volume to its promised size. Since the other poems in it contain smaller plagiarisms from Byron and other contemporary poets, the title *Original Poetry* was (as Kenneth Neill Cameron suggested) almost certainly Shelley's way of disguising his plagiarisms as part of a clever prank. To Cameron's insight, we can now add the more general observation that Shelley was forced into this subterfuge by his inability to write as fluently as he wished to do--and believed others did. (This experience, by the way, may have been in Shelley's mind in 1816, when walking with Keats on Hampstead Heath, he advised the younger man not to scrape together all his occasional poems in order to publish the volume dated 1817 that Keats himself later characterized as his "first blights.")

9. As the foregoing example indicates, Neil and I have tried to take into account the relations between Shelley and his printers and publishers. By exploring his poetry from this perspective, we have noted a number of instances where Shelley's close interest in printing and typography may have influenced the nature of his texts. Philadelphia Phillips, daughter of one of the Phillips brothers who ran the printshop at Worthing, Sussex, where both *Original Poetry* by Victor and Cazire and *The Necessity of Atheism* were typeset, left reminiscences of Shelley that were transmitted through a nephew with whom she later lived: "She said he took great interest in the art of printing, and would often come in and spend hours in the printing office learning to set up types and help" her (Philadelphia Phillips) with her work. [4] Though Neil and I have no evidence that Shelley actually set much type for *Original Poetry*, we do believe that he may have put his knowledge of the craft of printing to practical use in at least two later publications. One was the broadsheet entitled *The Devil's Walk*, which is now mounted in an annotated hypertext edition on the *Romantic Circles* website and which I commend to your exploration. The most *outre* example of Shelley's printing activity appears, however, in *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* , the third published volume containing his poetry. This volume caused a sensation among the students at Oxford when it was issued by J. Munday in Oxford in November 1810. Through typographical analysis, we have uncovered, we believe, a hitherto unnoted reason for its celebrity

among the undergraduates. The second poem, an *Epithalamium* sung by the souls of Francois Ravaillac and Charlotte Corday, contains several lubricious passages in which these two assassins--of Henry IV (Henry of Navarre) and Marat respectively--express their passion for each other and describe their preferred kinds of lovemaking. Toward the end of one passage appear these lines that apparently convey a more political message (lines 109-112):

> Bu t wat is sweeter to revenge's ear
> Than the fell tyrant's last expiring yell?
> Yes! than love's sweetest blisses 'tis more dear
> To drink the floatings of a despot's knell.[5]

The first two words of this quatrain appear in all later editions as "But what"; here they contain an apparent typographical error, in which the **h** of "what" is missing and the **t** of "But" has slipped to the right until it is equidistant between the **Bu** and **wat**. This apparent typo has been silently corrected by all previous editors, presumably on the assumption that the type-characters had worked loose in the chase, the letter **h** had fallen out, and the **t** had shifted slightly toward the neighboring word. But all five copies of *Posthumous Fragments* that we examined contain exactly the same typographical error, with identical spacing between the letters, a uniformity that should not occur in a situation where pressure was applied and released for each page impression, unless lead spaces had been inserted to keep the loose types in the same location. Shelley, it seems to us--perhaps egged on by Hogg and other friends--purposely introduced the typo here to produce a vulgarism very amusing to the sophomoric mind: "But what" has become "Bu **t wat**"-- a sure-fire way to sell a poem at Oxford in 1810. (As the *Oxford English Dictionary* points out, Robert Browning, raised in a much more sheltered environment than Shelley's, employed the word "twat" in the first edition of *Pippa Passes* under the misapprehension that it "denoted some part of a nun's attire.")

10. There are many stories--most originating in the Victorian period--about the "virginal" mind of an angelic Shelley and how he could not abide coarse speech and impure stories. Then why did he enjoy Byron's company so much? He was, Byron said, the finest gentleman ever to walk across a drawing room; what we sometimes forget is that Byron's implicit ideal is a Regency aristocrat, who need be burdened by few restrictions of thought, word, or deed. As has recently come to light, Shelley wrote not one but *two* early verse-letters to his friend Edward Fergus Graham, a music-master a few years older than Shelley who had been raised--or at least sponsored--by Shelley's parents. After hearing rumors that Graham has been carrying on an affair with Mrs. Shelley and had thus cuckolded the father whom Shelley despised, Shelley says in the first verse-letter that he is disinclined to believe the accusation on the grounds that Elizabeth Pilfold Shelley (then forty-eight) was too old to attract a young stud like twenty-five-year-old Graham. In the second verse-letter, however, Shelley not only admits the possibility of a liaison between Graham and Elizabeth Pilfold Shelley, but he positively encourages Graham to cuckold Timothy Shelley by sleeping with Shelley's own mother. The story is more convoluted than there is time to tell here--or even in *The Complete Poetry* --but fortunately this second verse-letter to Graham has recently been purchased for the Pforzheimer Collection and will appear, with a facsimile, in Volume IX of *Shelley and his Circle* , where there is room to explore those complexities more adequately.

11. The paramount implication of the foregoing examples is that Shelley, like Byron, was a scion of the Regency aristocracy and in his youth was influenced by their coarse attitudes and language. Shelley's draft manuscripts abound with drawings and doodlings, and besides his well-known sketches of romantic landscapes, sailboats, and demonic figures, he also did playful sketches of two boys in Eton costume urinating into a stream and (among the drafts of *Adonais*) sketched a small naked male figure with a spear (probably representing John Keats as Adonis) who was being urinated upon by a headless torso (probably representing the anonymous reviewers of the *Quarterly Review*[6]). These late

drawings, like the early typographical vulgarism, remind us that Shelley (unlike some of his Victorian admirers) never put on prudish airs. As he wrote in a note on the sculpture of an athlete at an Italian museum, "Curse these fig leaves; why is a round tin thing more decent than a cylindrical marble one?" [7] As an angry young man, in 1817 he vehemently declared in *Laon and Cythna*, both in its Preface and the poem (VI.xxx.1), that "to the pure all things are pure!" including brother-sister incest, though he added in a footnote to the Preface, "The sentiments connected with and characteristic of this circumstance have no personal reference to the Writer."

12. The foregoing examples merely sample some kinds of research involved on a few of the simpler poems in Volume I of *The Collected Poetry* that I have taken the lead with. Neil Fraistat has thus far centered much of his attention on *Queen Mab* , Shelley's comprehensive articulation of his world view during the period of his strongest affinity for the ideals of the Enlightenment. Much of his time was, therefore, devoted to reading the works of the major French and British writers who influenced Shelley during the period--Holbach, Rousseau, Volney, Erasmus Darwin, Godwin, etc., as well as tracking down the specific sources of Shelley's quotations and references to facts about astronomy, theology, marriage customs around the world, vegetarianism, Eskimos, Hottentots, and so forth.

13. Thanks to the Collate program developed by Peter Robinson at Oxford, our grad-student colleagues have collated and recollated our proposed texts against both the primary authorities and earlier critical editions, and the results have aided us both to weed out errors in our own work and to identify textual cruxes where other editors felt the need to revise the words, pointing, or orthography of Shelley's manuscripts and original editions. While analyzing hundreds of these textual cruxes, Neil and I made it our policy and goal to retain the reading found in Shelley's copy-text, even where all earlier editors had emended it, except where we could convince each other that the original reading cannot not be justified within the contexts of its immediate syntactical unit and the larger structures of stanza, canto, or poem. Our notes note both where and why we finally did emend the text and comment on many cases where we declined to do so--usually because we found concrete evidence that Shelley's text was congruent with literary precedent, contemporary usage, or specific ideas or information in books used by, or at least available to him. During this process of trying to understand his poetry sentence by sentence and word by word, we traced Shelley's unusual diction to the poets who used these words earlier--and comment in our notes upon Shelley's debts and innovations, as well as their significance.

14. The scholarly procedures that I have mentioned are, of course, standard practices of responsible editors everywhere. But simply by using them consistently, we discovered what I wish to leave with you this afternoon: Shelley's earliest, least sophisticated poems, which every critic who has dealt with them has, at some time or other, laughed at as puerile nonsense--have gained credibility from this editorial process. They turn out to be much more interesting psychologically, intellectually, and aesthetically than we would have thought possible when we began. Not that we have discovered new masterpieces but, as some study of *The Devil's Walk* on the Romantic Circles Website may suggest, a scholarly historical edition of Shelley's early poetry can add substantially to the interest of those early poems themselves, as well as to the understanding of one of England's greatest poets and most complex human beings.

Notes

1. The editors of the Longman Edition dealt with the question of authorship in *Original Poetry* in a very strange way, totally omitting the opening two verse-letters from their collective edition as not being the work of Percy Bysshe Shelley, but including all the other poems by "Victor and Cazire" without questioning their authorship. *back*

2. See *The **Hellas** Notebook: Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e.7* (*Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts* , XVI), ed. Donald H. Reiman and Michael Neth (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1994), pp. l-liii (notes on p. lxiv) and 146-55. The study of "I arise from dreams of thee" begun by Reiman and Neth has been extended and complicated by Reiman and Michael O'Neill on pp. 329-49 of their edition of *Fair-Copy Manuscripts of Shelley's Lyrics in European and American Libraries* (*Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics: Shelley* , VIII [Garland, 1997]). *back*

3. See, for example, his reaction to John Joseph Stockdale, the publisher of *St. Irvyne* : "I did not think it possible that the romance would make but one small volume, it will at all events be larger than Zastrozzi" (*Letters* , ed. F. L. Jones [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), I, 21. (*St. Irvyne* is actually less than 90% the length of *Zastrozzi* .) *back*

4. See Roger Ingpen, *Shelley in England* (London: Keagan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1917), 188-89. *back*

5. These lines closely echo both the language and thought of lines in Scott's "Cadyow Castle," in which the hero Bothwellhaugh begins his account of why he assassinated the Regent Murray (whose men had burned Bothwellhaugh's house and murdered his wife) in these words:

> Sternly he spoke-- "'Tis sweet to hear
> "In good greenwood the bugle blown,
> "But sweeter to Revenge's ear,
> "To drink a tyrant's dying groan."

back

6. For a reproduction of this page (folio 34 verso of Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 20), together with discussion of its implications, see *Shelley's `Last Notebook'*: *Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts* , VII, ed. Donald H. Reiman (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), pp. 320-321, 374-375; or Donald H. Reiman, "Shelley's Manuscripts and the Web of Circumstance," esp. pp. 233-35, in *Romantic Revisions* , ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). *back*

7. See Shelley's "Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence," in *Shelley's Prose* , ed. David Lee Clark (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1954), p. 346. *back*

Early Shelley: Vulgarisms, Politics, and Fractals

Young Shelley

by William Keach

1. **"IL BUON** tempo verra"--this was the motto on the older Shelley's Italian ring. It's my belief that the good time will come when students being introduced to Shelley don't begin with the *Alastor* volume of 1816. In our own time the Shelley whose career essentially begins with (and in part comes to be defined by) *Alastor* has been powerful and influential: this is, after all, Earl Wasserman's Shelley, and Harold Bloom's. Unless we're teaching from the Norton Critical edition or some other anthology devoted exclusively to Shelley, we find it difficult even to assign the earlier work. The *Norton Anthology* begins with the *Alastor* volume poems, as do such older established anthologies of British Romanticism as those edited by Russell Noyes and David Perkins. And the habit continues: neither Jerome McGann's *Romantic Period Verse* nor Duncan Wu's *Romanticism: An Anthology* nor Anne Mellor's and Richard Matlack's *British Literature 1780-1830* include *Queen Mab* or anything earlier.

2. We miss a tremendous opportunity if we don't begin with Shelley when he was exactly our students' age, eighteen to twenty-one, experimenting with writing and with sex as many of them do, trying to negotiate new social and financial relations with his family--and throwing himself into a life of serious political activism that most students these days find impossible even to imagine, much less to realize. I missed this opportunity myself as a teacher for too long. My talk is partly an appeal, then, for a revised pedagogical agenda. Those of us who care about Shelley should stop assuming that if we want to talk about *Queen Mab* or "An Address to the Irish People" or even *Zastrozzi*, our only audience will be other Shelleyans or perhaps a captive audience of graduate students. I'm not so naive or disingenuous as to suggest that teaching these or immediately contemporary Shelley texts to undergraduates is a simple, straight-forward matter. But then teaching *Alastor* itself, or "Mont Blanc," or *Prometheus Unbound*, or "The Sensitive Plant," or "The Triumph of Life" to undergraduates is never a simple, straight-forward matter. We have much to gain, I believe, by doing more with the early Shelley than just mentioning his struggles at Eton and Oxford, shaking our heads over his *menage* with Harriet Westbrook and T. J. Hogg, or offering a three-sentence summary of that amazing philosophical and political vision in verse that turned out, as Richard Holmes puts it, to be "the most widely read, the most notorious, and the most influential of all Shelley's works [in the first half of the nineteenth century] . . . and established itself as a basic text in the self-taught working-class culture from which the early trade union movement of the 1820s, and the Chartism of the thirties and forties was to spring."[1]

3. We can begin afresh by asking our students to contemplate the range and extent of writing Shelley produced and got printed between the spring of 1810 (*Zastrozzi*), when he was seventeen, and May of 1813 (*Queen Mab*), when he was still twenty: two gothic novels, two volumes of verse, five political tracts/pamphlets, one satirical ballad, one 2800-line political-philosophical vision. My inventory omits, of course, the *Esdaile Notebook* poems, many of which Shelley wanted to gather into a third volume of political verse, and his project for a novel on the French Revolution, "Hubert Cauvin." The approach I'm sketching out is likely to provoke at least some students to ask the key question: "But is any of this stuff any good?" And here I think we couldn't do better than to return to the great book from which my title is borrowed. In *The Young Shelley,* Kenneth Cameron concedes--too much and too quickly, in my view--that Shelley's pre-*Queen Mab* poems of late 1811-early 1812 "are of no literary value": "In this stage of his career Shelley did not regard himself primarily as a writer or poet but a social thinker using poetry and fiction as propaganda media."[2] But when he comes to *Queen Mab,* a poem with an

enormous impact precisely as propaganda, Cameron constructs the right enabling perspective for much of Shelley's early verse: "That the style of the poem has some weaknesses of immaturity is undeniable and inevitable. . . . But the degree of one's sensitivity to these faults depends largely on one's reaction to the content. The unsympathetic reader, failing to enter into the spirit of the poem, will see mainly faults; the sympathetic reader, catching something of its impassioned flow--'horror and scorn and hate and fear and indignation'--will find passage after passage of power and beauty. *Queen Mab* is a revolutionary poem, not a parlor poem, and must be evaluated in terms of its own genre and not of some other" (242). This is, you may say, special pleading. But it's the right kind of special pleading for encouraging an informed and vital response to much of Shelley early writing. Through his unfashionable and quaint-sounding invitation "to enter the spirit of the poem," Cameron articulates the imperatives concerning genre, historical context, and authorial agency that need to inform all reading, including reading that foregrounds language and stylistic performance.

4. I want to offer three brief instances of what it might mean to follow Cameron's lead in *The Young Shelley* and develop critical readings of the early verse rooted in an engaged attentiveness to context and content. These instances won't include "Zeinab and Kathema" from the *Esdaile Notebook*--valuably included in the Norton Critical edition--though this poem would make a good and possibly even earlier point of departure. It establishes (among other things) how much of the pre-*Queen Mab* verse is overtly political. I suggest instead that we begin a little later, not just with Shelley himself, travelling about the north of England in late 1811 and settling for a time in Keswick to be near Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, but with a broader grasp of what the country was like the first full winter of the Regency. The war with France had grown increasingly unpopular, in part because the country was in the grip of severe economic crisis brought on by the Continental blockage and by wartime inflation. A terrible harvest led to further increases in food prices, as well as shortages. There were local disturbances across the country, the most dramatic of which were the food riots and frame-breakings in Lancashire. In response to these disturbances, the government had sent troops into many areas: according to Holmes, who follows E. P. Thompson's account, "the occupation army stationed at trouble spots in England exceeded the whole of Wellington's force fighting on the Spanish peninsula" (96).[3] What Shelley saw in the north during the winter of 1811-1812 was "the appalling lack of proper housing, savage working hours and factory conditions, and the complete absence of educational or medical facilities among the manufacturing populations. Class antagonisms were sharpened by the indiscriminate use of troops to 'keep the peace' for the local employers and property-owners" (96-7).

5. Shelley's poetry from this winter shows him trying to find a form and an idiom that would register his outrage at the economic and social suffering he was witnessing--and that would connect him with an audience among those segments of British society that, he thought, had both the interest and the power to initiate political change. These impulses are evident in the *Esdaile Notebook* poem called "A Tale of Society As It Is: From Facts, 1811." Actually written in early January 1812, this poem is conspicuously indebted to Wordsworth and--as is the case with all the poems I want to focus on--to Southey, the only one of the famous Lake District writers whom Shelley managed to meet during his time in Keswick. Shelley's conversations with Southey at this time would have major consequences for the rest of his career; imagining the nineteen-year-old radical visiting the author of *Joan of Arc* and *Wat Tyler* two years before Southey's appointment as poet laureate and finding him comfortably settled into Toryism is one of the keys to understanding Shelley's evolving relationship to first-generation romanticism. Southey, for his part, famously wrote that young Shelley "acts upon me as my own ghost would do. . . . the difference between my own opinion and his is--that he is 19 and I am 8 and 30."[4]

6. It's the Southey of "Hannah" and "The Sailor's Mother," along with the Wordsworth of "The Affliction of Margaret" and "The Old Cumberland Beggar," that Shelley is responding to in "A Tale of Society As It Is." But with its unmistakably Godwinian title, this poem goes far beyond anything Southey or Wordsworth ever wrote in condemning the effect of imperialist war on British workers and poor

people. Though cast in an entirely different idiom, the best passages share something "in spirit" (as Cameron might say) with the finest anti-war poem produced at this moment, Anna Barbauld's "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven." Shelley's aged, impoverished mother sees her only son conscripted into canon fodder,

> . . . when the tyrant's bloodhounds forced her child
> For tyrant's power unhallowed arms to wield,
> Bend to another's will, become a thing
> More senseless than the sword of battlefield. (18-21) [5]

7. The image of human beings turned into tools of violence is one that Shelley would use later to elaborate the links between capitalistic economic exploitation and imperialist war. When the son returns seven years later, a wounded "shadow of the lusty child / Who, when the time of summer season smiled, / For her did earn a meal of honesty" (65-7), Shelley emblematizes the lives of thousands compelled to deliver and suffer "the vulgar tyrant's blow," only to come home

> Withered and sapless, miserably poor,
> Relinquished for his wounds to beg from door to door. (103, 107-8)

Whether we agree or not with Holmes's judgment that this is "the first of Shelley's important poems," we should think about giving "A Tale of Society As It Is" a chance in our classrooms, now that Clinton has led the way to ending welfare as we never knew it.

8. My second instance of the young Shelley's experiments in interventionist verse was begun in Keswick around the same time as "A Tale of Society As It Is," though it was revised and expanded during the following summer when the Shelley's were living at Lynmouth, near Barnstaple in Devon. "The Devil's Walk: A Ballad" again addresses, this time much more overtly, the older generation of poetic turncoats: it parodies Southey's and Coleridge's jointly written "The Devil's Thoughts" of 1799 in ways that are quite different from and yet prefigure Shelley's masterpiece in this mode, the brilliant burlesquing of Wordsworth in *Peter Bell the Third*. The complications in this early performance arise from Shelley's playfully subversive identification on occasion with Satan, and from our knowledge of Southey's later contemptible rumor-mongering concerning the "League of Incest" supposedly flourishing in the summer of 1816 on the shores of Lake Geneva. In Shelley's broadside ballad, Beelzebub draws out the corruption of state and church with winning panache:

> . . . to St. James's court he went,
> And St. Paul's Church he took in his way,
> He was mighty thick with every Saint,
> Though they were formal and he was gay. (15-18)

(*Click here* to go to the *Romantic Circles* electronic edition of Shelley's *The Devil's Walk*, which also provides Southey's and Coleridge's Devil poems.)

9. The devil surveys his domain in language that Shelley would recall and recast in "The Mask of Anarchy"; his well-fed minions are as

> Fat as the fiends that feed on blood,
> Fresh and warm from the fields of Spain . . .
> Fat--as the death-birds on Erin's shore,
> That glutted themselves in her dearest gore.
> And flitted round Castlereagh,

When they snatched the Patriot's heart, that HIS grasp
Had torn from its widow's maniac clasp,
And fled at the dawn of day. (51-2, 57-62)

The imagery of corpulence leads, inevitably, to a savagely hilarious portrait of the Prince Regent--itself enough to have the author arrested. But it was Shelley's Irish servant Dan Healy, not Shelley himself, who was caught on 19 August 1812 wheat-pasting copies of "The Devil's Walk" on walls around Barnstaple and imprisoned for six months.[6] Accounts of the incident depict the aristocratic radical having (perhaps by prior agreement) a servant take the rap for him--but nevertheless coming under serious surveillance by the office of the Home Secretary. The text of "The Devil's Walk" in volume one of the Longman edition is based on the copy of the poem forwarded to Lord Sidmouth at the Home Office by his agents.

10. When we read *Queen Mab* from the vantage point of these earlier, much more provisional attempts to use poetry as a political weapon, we put ourselves and our students in a better position to respond to the political content and reception of Shelley's first major poetic project. *Queen Mab* is strikingly different from the two poems I've just looked at, of course--in style, in intellectual ambition and register, in anticipated readership. "Let only 250 Copies be printed," Shelley wrote to Thomas Hookham; "A small neat Quarto, on fine paper & so as to catch the aristocrats: They will not read it, but their sons & daughters may."[7] This seems a long way from postering poetry in the streets of Barnstaple. Yet Shelley first began thinking about *Queen Mab* during the winter of 1811-1812; the project grew out of his interventionist response to the conditions he saw around him then and during the following months as immediately as did the other, less formally and philosophically ambitious political poetry of this period.

11. I have time to indicate only briefly what rethinking *Queen Mab* might mean in the context of our broader effort at rethinking the early Shelley. David Duff has already done some valuable rethinking for us in a chapter called "Romance and revolution in *Queen Mab*" in his 1994 book titled *Romance and Revolution*.[8] Duff's book challenges assumptions that the category "romance," during the cultural period for which it would come to provide the conventional name, necessarily signals a deflection or retreat from material history and politics, emphasizing instead romance's distinctive, though sometimes contradictory, connections with social pressure, conflict, and a belief that the world might be different than it is. He shows that the revival of romance and chivalric ideology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was not an exclusively reactionary development--that the conservative deployment of chivalric romance so important in Burke and Scott must be grasped in dialectical opposition to its progressive and sometimes radical appropriations in Hunt, Peacock, and Shelley. Duff's chapter on *Queen Mab* begins with juxtaposed epigraphs from Barbauld's "An Address to the Opposers of the Corporation and Test Acts" (1790) and Shelley's "Declaration of Rights" (1812), indicating a useful determination to extend Cameron's emphasis on the young Shelley's efforts at "a revival of the revolutionary mood of the early 1790s." Without slighting the poem's indebtedness to Enlightenment republicanism and materialism, Duff shows that Shelley's fierce anti-capitalist attacks on "commerce" have important links to previous deployments of a medievalized chivalric ideology, that Shelley adapts motifs from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* through a perspective decisively shaped by Volney's *Ruins of Empire* and Southey's orientalist epics.

12. Despite an equivocal and hesitant analysis of the idea of "revolution" itself in *Queen Mab,* Duff's work puts Shelley's first major poem at the center of a freshly historicized and politicized debate about the meaning of "romanticism." He helps us see the force of Cameron's judgment: when it comes to imagining a political and historical future fundamentally different from and better than the present, the young nineteen- or twenty-year-old Shelley, and the old Shelley in his late twenties, burned and burn with a continuous, if sometimes flickering, flame.

Notes

1. *Shelley: The Pursuit* (New York: Dutton, 1975), p. 208. Subsequent page-references are given parenthetically in the text. back

2. *The Young Shelley: Genesis Of A Radical* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 116. back

3. See *The Making Of The English Working Class* (New York: Knopf and Random House, 1963), p. 564. back

4. Letter to John Rickman (M.P.), 6 January 1812, quoted in N. I. White, *Shelley* (New York: Knopf, 1940), 1: 618-20. back

5. All quotations are from volume 1 of *The Poems Of Shelley* , ed. Geoffrey Matthews and Kelvin Everest (London and New York: Longman, 1989). back

6. See headnote to "The Devil's Walk" in the Longman edition, 1: 230-1. back

7. *The Letters Of Percy Bysshe Shelley* , ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 1: 361. back

8. *Romance And Revolution: Shelley And The Politics Of A Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 54-114. back

Early Shelley: Vulgarisms, Politics, and Fractals

Queen Mab as Topological Repertoire

by Timothy Morton

Material Supplementary to this Essay:
Topoi of 'Blood and Gold' in Mary and Percy Shelley
'Ecotopia' in Mary and Percy Shelley
Fractal Self-Similarity in Percy Shelley

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1. I **WISH** to focus on the poetics of *Queen Mab*. The well-worn arguments of 'political' readers of Shelley have for too long been pitted against the narrative of his increasing scepticism, poetic sophistication and political disillusionment. Rather than championing an early *apparatchik* or a later poetically masterful sceptic, I would like to demonstrate the poetic sophistication of *Queen Mab* and its continued use in later poems, which will look more 'political' in turn.

2. 'Topological' in the title refers both to the notion of topos and to the idea of shape and space. The topics discussed evoke a proximity to the world 'alongside' poetry and a meditation upon substitution within them.

3. I will be talking about two topoi, which I have chosen to call 'Blood and Gold' and 'Ecotopia'. These topoi, resonating in the early poems and especially in *Queen Mab*, are persistently revised in later works. I will also be commenting upon the anxieties about language-as-metaphor suggested by Blood and Gold, and the poetic sophistication of Ecotopia.

4. The notion of topos is due for a revival, especially if we are to consider seriously the recuperation of sentimental poetry and the many women poets who do not invest in the masculinised rhetorics of anti-rhetoric proffered in the *Lyrical Ballads* model of Romantic-period literary history.

5. 'Topos', as commonplace, micro enough to be portable within and between poems, and macro enough to make sense of the worlds of reference supposedly outside them, makes the topology of poetry and culture Moebius-strip-shaped. Topos metonymically touches the 'inside' and 'outside' of poetry, in a somewhat ordinary, graspable way.

6. By concentrating on topos we are looking closely at that which from a close-reader's point of view, is the most irritating: the same, the habitual. If poetry is to be read in a formalist manner as a systematic deviation from a norm or logos, then topoi are somewhat pesky phenomena.

7. Moreover, by concentrating on topos we are also ignoring the hysterical anxiety of the historicist or cultural analyst to get out of the embarrassing world of the up-close-and-personal literary text. Nevertheless, we are also doing ourselves a favour, for what could be better than topos for conceptualising what Althusser and others have in mind when they say 'ideologeme'? So topoi are useful for a new kind of close reading, a sort of close-ish reading.

8. Let's start with the 'Blood and Gold' topoi, which delineate symbols in the Coleridgean sense of chunks of the Real which have somehow ended up in a textual form. They are also symptoms, marks of social weakness and woe which Shelley is anxious to erase, representing the alienating power which seems in

Shelley to emanate both from the despot and from despotic capital. They are the fluids of the body and of the body politic, and they symbolise the corrosive fluid of language.

9. They are part of the world of poison, and of language as poison, the gush from a traumatic wound in the symbolic order which Shelley desperately wants to suture with the counter-language of Ecotopia. Like the blood of the Alien in Ridley Scott's film, they appear to be more real than reality, corroding the tissue of signs which decorously protect the phallus of patriarchal power. They are the world and word of meat, the social symbolic horrorshow whose aversive qualities are obsessively traced in Shelley's poetry (and in Mary Shelley's prose) even after Shelley the person has stopped trying to eat his way out of it through vegetarianism. Derrida also has a word for it: re-mark. Blood and Gold, and meat, are those marks which establish the social symbolic order as such, as an order of signification. Shelley loathes the pockmarks they leave, those damned spots on the smooth face of meaning which will not come out and which he images in his oft-repeated lines about not killing beings which have a face (and there's an allusion to *Macbeth* in *The Revolt of Islam*). Meat is unnecessary and what is more it has to be cooked, and what is more, it has to be spiced. The efflorescence of supplements of supplements is more than he can stomach. In 1812, the biographical analogue for this form of what Lacan would have called 'extimacy' would have been Shelley's panic about elephantiasis.

10. Shelley reproduces the Paineite and French Revolutionary rhetoric which needs to know through sight: to register truth on the revolted body. He recoils against the notion of language as transubstantiation, in other words, as metaphor, as meat, as re-mark, or what William Keach skillfully calls 'incarnation'. So what he says about the vital metaphoricity of poetic language in *A Defence of Poetry* is as Hogle has shown more to do with transferential agility. This kind of redeemed metaphor does not punctuate the skin of fantasy, but gently glides along it, embodying it with the metonymic richness of an environment that is, in the ecological words of *Queen Mab* viii, 'habitable'. Through the gliding action Shelley hopes to iterate an algorithm, to evoke an effect which is both hyperreal and natural, in an emulsion of fantasy and reality typical of a late eighteenth-century aesthetics that seeks to fit mind and world, poetry and politics together.

11. With the genius of phobia, Shelley is often at his best when at his most gory. The vertiginous traumas of meat and marking often generate spectacular results, like the miasmatic language of Beatrice in *The Cenci*, or the prosopopeia of *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. But if this is 'bad' metaphor, what of 'good' metaphor? Can Shelley, even in the early days of *Queen Mab*, conceive of a language which does not mark? An elaboration of ideological fantasy unpunctuated by the wound of the real?

12. Such a language, for such a poet, would seem to fluctuate endlessly around the margins of trauma, seducing the imageless truth into emancipatory significance by its constantly repeated nuzzling. It would be mantra-like, woven into the poetry with the soothing repetitiveness of pure voice. And whose voice? None other than the voice of an Old Testament prophet, Isaiah (11:6-9). Isaiah is literalised in this mantric repetition. The lion, for instance, does not just lie down with the lamb but acquires the nature of a lamb, so that we are unsure whether he might actually have metamorphosed into one.

13. This is Shelley's poetics of Ecotopia, which, for the sake of compactness, memorability and not much else I call Fractal Self-Similarity. I have been influenced in my discussion of fractals by Tom Stoppard's recent play *Arcadia*, which portrays a young woman understanding the fractal geometry of nature in a house visited by Byron, in a way which slips between the cracks of a non-fractal history of mathematics.

14. 'O Happy Earth! Reality of Heaven': *Queen Mab*, canto ix, line 1. It follows the ecotopian revision of Isaiah 11 in canto viii, where babies sport with basilisks and lions lie mutated into lambs, and 'no longer now / He slays the lamb that looks him in the face / And horribly devours his mangled flesh'

(211). This is the living centre of Shelley's ecologocentric ideology: the place where words seem to emanate directly from things in a symbiotic relationship, like a lichen. And it is the role of likening which is so important, the role of simile. It is ideological language: prescriptions dressed as descriptions, revolutionary wolves dressed as lambs.

15. A fractal is caused by an iterative algorithm mapping itself on a complex plane with a ratio of slightly more than one. Fractal shapes are common in nature: look at a snowflake, it contains a infinite-seeming series of tinier snowflakes upon snowflakes. Shelley often uses fractal similes in descriptions of fluids, which is appropriate, but their use doesn't stop there. Fractals are wonderful if you are a poet of nature but also a poet of desire. You are anxious about the disfigural properties of language, as evidenced by your phobic image of the sign as weapon and language as a butcher's knife, and vegetarianism as a way of eating and signifying without disfiguration. But you do not want to get rid of it entirely. That would be kow-towing to Burke and his resistance to theory. You like the French Revolution, you just get queasy at the sight of all those bleeding heads. So you have to find a way of signifying which appears to dovetail *intellectus* into *res* without a boundary. Fractals might work. Shelley's equation seems to be: Earth=Heaven, only real. They are the same . . . almost. Fractals are also significant in the notion of silent eloquence, which in *Queen Mab* describes the operation of the universe and is part of the ideological structure of vegetarian language (a recent example is the role of silence in *The Silence of the Lambs*). The notion of the universe as a 'wilderness of harmony', a revision of Milton's Eden (ii.79), is fractal: a fractal may be plotted as a line which is both wild and harmonious. The metamorphosis of lion into lamb in canto viii is also fractal: we are unsure whether he is now exactly like a lamb. It is undecidable to what extent he looks physically like a lamb (his claws are pared and so forth) while emulating the lamb's behaviour (he 'now forgets to thirst for blood', viii.124). Through the syntax of the passage the reader loses track of the lion's identity.

16. Now consider the following, from *Adonais* : 'the moving pomp might seem / Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream' (116-7). Another instance of fractal self-similarity: pomps are pageantries, but 'of mist' maps them onto themselves with a ratio of slightly more than one. Shelley was onto this, poetically, from the start.

17. Milton's Neoplatonic cunning in *Paradise Lost* v enables a similar form of dovetailing, where the vegetarian diet of Adam and Eve promises, according to Raphael, a smooth tempering of matter to spirit and a diet of rhetoric which may mediate the acts of God to temporal ears (v.331-505, vii.126-30, 175-79). But Milton's logic is subtractional rather than fractal, suggested by his famous reversed syntax, suggesting events which happen before they are fully told and thus outsmarting the tropological twists of rhetoric. That logic resembles Ficino's model of progressive realisations of the Good through a series of subtractions from the complex world of matter towards an ultimate perfect simplicity. While deft at employing Miltonic syntax himself, Shelley also explores iteration and thus complexity.

18. There are examples of Percy and Mary Shelley using the topos of Ecotopia. The fractal substitutions which Percy employs in and beyond Ecotopia are also present in larger discursive strings. The revoking of the curse in Act I of *Prometheus Unbound* is an example of an iterated algorithm which alters meaning through repetition. 'How did we get here?' is a question most often to be asked, of *Queen Mab*, where a most unsatisfactory image of a temporal purge displays mangled babies being plucked from the jaws of Saturn, of *Prometheus Unbound*, where the economic aesthetics of zero and infinity operate in an image of an anorexic abysm where revolutionary meaning disappears down the plughole of its own desire, or of *Hellas*, where tyranny destroys itself, a self-devouring equation which leaves us high and dry in the Hesperides.

19. So it appears that Percy Shelley developed an oppositional poetics which pitted one kind of topos against another. But this would a) misunderstand his relationship with capitalism and b) misconstrue

his sophisticated poetics, which from the start attempted to weave capitalist ideologemes into its complex geometry rather than ditch them altogether. After all, the positive register of *Queen Mab* includes the notion of variegation, a kind of naturalised complexity.

20. Shelley's use of the poetics of spice in canto viii of *Queen Mab* and the 'Fragment of an Unfinished Drama' is an example of the poetry of ornamentation and sentimentality which spawned Ecotopia, and an acknowledgement that commercial capitalism has its metonymic flows as well. His poetic debt to spice undercuts his ideological aversion to meat, and spiced meat at that, and to language as supplementarity, or spicing. It is a curious iteration of the capitalist ideology which gave eighteenth-century poetry its panegyrics to long-distance trade and its phenomenology of luxury, affecting poets as diverse as Samuel Jackson Pratt, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Keats and Felicia Hemans. There, too, the turbulence and flow of capitalism is treated in ornamental poetry which exploits it in different ways, hyperbolically overdeveloping it like Keats in *The Eve of St Agnes* or showing its contiguity with sensations of contagion, corruption and violence, as in anti-slavery poetry. Shelley's Ecotopia may be said to be anti-capitalist in content but capitalist in form. Just when those cottages and rills seem to be supporting a myth of little England in the desert, a kind of mirror-image orientalism, an 'occidentalism', we are drawn to the odoriferous trade winds whose scent of luxury wafted across the ocean to the Providential nose of the English consumer. Ecotopia and hyperreal capitalism interpenetrate, to use one of Shelley's neologisms. His politics and poetics are local, but international. The best model for this interpenetration would be a fractal. It is hard to know where one stops and the other starts.

21. The term algorithm is derived from the name of the Arabic economist, Al-Khowërazmi, who invented them as a way of performing mathematical operations associated with debt and credit. Algorithms are the stock in trade of capitalist economics and it is thus unsurprising that in the late twentieth century a new form of naturalised capitalist ideology has emerged which maps stock market figures as if they were clouds: with fractals. The wild west wind-like turbulence of stock adjustments and weather patterns may be reduced to an iterating algorithm, where the result is fed back into the equation in a way which tends towards infinity. Infinity and zero are associated with the Kantian mathematical sublime, and also with political economy. The Indian economist Brahmagupta and Al-Khowërazmi coined these notions in order to generate the negative numbers which in the early modern period would help balance the books in double-entry book keeping.

22. The sublime, dizzying, spiralling poetics of Shelley, minted as he tries to fit the asymmetrical ideologies of capitalism and ecology together, persist throughout his work. For such a mind, ecotopia can only exist in a stable equilibrium, a poised shimmering of forces like the paradoxically occidental oases described in *Queen Mab* viii, and it can only be conjured again through repetition, for there is no exact fit between Shelley's ideal future and the pockmarked world in which it is imagined.

23. Perhaps Shelley, heaven forbid, wants to be considered as a new kind of poet of the Thing. As *The Demon of the World* puts it, 'No longer now he slays the beast which sports around his dwelling'. Dwellings and faces are topologically equivalent: signifiers sport and gaze upon them. They are meeting places, commonplaces, topoi, strange attractors. Things are pulled towards them. Dwellings and faces are the Thing in the Old English sense of a meeting place, quotidian not in Weisman's sense of the iceberg on which the Titanic of poetry-as-epistemology sinks, but quotidian as a meeting place in the sense of *oikos*, the root of ecology. Gasp! Could Shelley be a cousin of Wordsworth? But this Thing is not to be found amidst the *cruditäs* of nature: it is to be constructed in the future by those who hate hate so much it turns into love, people who scratch the itch of metaphor so much it begins to look providential.

24. Outside the world of the face is an aleatory chaos of mangled partial objects, money, blood, tropes scuttling hither and thither. But as Hogle has demonstrated, Shelley's Lucretianism allows him to

imagine a moment of *clinamen* during which these random vectors might start to be attracted towards one another to form worlds, even ecotopias. Shelley rails against Adam Smith in *Queen Mab* v, but at the level of the ideologeme is expressed the hope that Adam Smith was right, and that an invisible hand will shape our ends, rough-hew them how we will.

25. Shelley's fractal poetics also demonstrates something about dialectics: how simplicity, reflected into itself, becomes complexity. A triangle, negated by having a process applied to it which adds itself to itself or reflects it into itself, becomes a Koch curve, a dynamic process tending towards triangle-ness without ever simply manifesting it. Thus it is cancelled and preserved, *aufgehoben*: 'O Happy Earth! Reality of Heaven'. The common misunderstanding of *Aufhebung* as synthesis can quite clearly be seen as incorrect here.

Early Shelley: Vulgarisms, Politics, and Fractals

Rethinking the Early Shelley--A Response

by Linda Brigham

1. I **WANT** to discuss the papers here today in terms of what they imply about our object of study. The question of "early Shelley" plops us squarely in the midst of the general poststructural and historicist problematic of authorship, agency, and the continuity of identity. Is the young Shelley a year, say 1813, the year of *Queen Mab* 's private publication? A year we can see at glance in the table of contents of Jerome McGann's *Romantic Period Verse* ? Is the young Shelley a process, something Shelley-**ish**, to take Timothy Morton's approach, a function whose iteration describes an oeuvre? Or is the early Shelley a person, an individual embedded in a historical moment we neglect if we begin our consideration of Shelley, as we so often do, with the *Alastor* volume?

2. McGann's *Romantic Period Verse* has no early Shelley, and judging from the papers we've heard here today, it seems unlikely that such a de-authorization of Romantic literature is imminent, either theoretically or pedagogically, even if we do accord greater respect for *Queen Mab* in its own right. Despite our capacity to acknowledge--by way of Foucault, for example--that Shelley-as-a-time may be just as legitimate as Shelley-as-an-author as an approach to a group of texts, the author-approach is still the one we are most likely to take. It is a matter of economy, as Foucault himself would agree. Assume the simple, assume the local: expel the paranoid complexity of conspiracy theories, wherein agents no longer possess agency, but instead become the ghostly operatives of some prime mover, the subject of *The X-Files* or the object of a *Next Generation* Borg. But it may also be, as I'll suggest towards the end of my response, that the author in "author- function" has already mutated out from under us to facilitate an economy whose sheer complexity veils it in mist.

3. It is no surprise that this panel is dominated by a Shelley-**ish** approach to Shelley. However, it does so in markedly distinct ways that I will distort by arranging in a spectrum: at one end, we have Tim Morton's Shelley-process, a powerfully idiosyncratic utopian machinery. Next, we have Don Reiman's Shelley, inscribed and inscribing, slipping cannily between the demands of the popular press and the demands of his own aesthetic and philosophical agenda. And finally we have Bill Keach's Shelley-the-person, responding to his contemporary scene as we all do to our own, and responding **as** a young man. In short, what constitutes the **-ish** of Bysshe in these three papers moves from an emphasis on texts of an author, through emphasis on the more multiple texts of an author/person, to a person writing and distributing texts.

4. Let's start off with Tim's dazzling paper, "*Queen Mab* as Topological Repertoire." Tim juxtaposes two topoi with two techniques of linguistic generation; in one topos language operates as metaphor, incarnation, sacrifice and substitution, and in the other, language is a process of the iterative generation of self-similarity. The former regards depth, the latter surface. The former pierces the organs of the individuated body; the latter skims the skin, replacing individual with algorithm, and sacrifice with intersection.

5. "Names ... employed as symbols of domination and imposture," as Shelley writes in *A Philosophical View of Reform* , are the force behind the Blood and Gold topos, names in Saul Kripke's sense of rigid designators, in Lacan's sense of Names-of-the-Father, words that deform consciousness into the pockmarked configuration that guarantees the status quo through the repetition of sacrificial violence. The necessity of such psychic quilting renders the job of psychoanalysis and cultural analysis much

more complex than one of mere demystification. It is on the basis of the stickiness of the power of names that Slavoj Zizek attacks the disavowal of language-related affect implicit in a deconstructive emphasis on dissemination, or on mere descriptivism. Yet as I understand it, according to Tim's paper Shelley poses an ingenious alternative to both designation and dissemination in a process likened to "fractal self-similarity." Fractal self-similarity is order in chaos, limits amid indeterminacy. We have a language that is able to have meaning without sacrifice, we have gold that enriches without impoverishing. Yet we're left with a problem, as Tim observes: is this not a description of postmodernism's complicity with late capitalism? Isn't this a troubling second parricide, like Demogorgon's defeat of Jupiter?

6. But back to the issue at hand: we find these topoi in early Shelley as in late, in the literal cosmology of the notes to *Queen Mab* as in the figurative geographies of *Prometheus Unbound* . They are, as Tim suggests, something akin to "strange attractors" in Shelley's oeuvre; these topoi constitute trap doors, holes in space, insults to linearity that bring us hurtling back from the horizons of centrifugal expansion, of development, change, and permutation, back to a singularity: Shelley. We are not talking about 1813, but about the name of a pattern, the generator of a pattern. The author function has literalized itself into something like a Koch curve. This leads me to ask the obvious: what keeps us Romanticists Shelley-**ish**? Of what function is Shelley the *eigenvalue*?

7. Don Reiman's paper provides us with vivid and direct insight on the point. Don suggests that Shelley-as-author is a function of our attention, and close attention transmutes the "early Shelley"--to many, the pre-authorial supplement to Shelley--into Shelley the remarkable poet. Don undermines our evaluative distinction between late and early Shelley on the basis of three pieces of evidence, none of them aesthetic. First, we have Shelley's Trojan Horse approach to publishing his less accessible works; second, his recycling of old works in later works, and third, his manipulation of the material production of his work, the printing process itself. Now what we see here is evidence of Shelley-the-person undermining Shelley-the-author. Particularly in the case of a self (and other)-plagiarism that emulsifies his career, we find developmental schemes of Shelley's intellectual biography undone.

8. And such undoing is a function of keen editorial attention. Many of the anxieties of historicism issue from this implication of the observer in what she observes. The topic brings us back to Tim's fractals, but from another direction: within mathematics, the significance of fractal self-similarity is also a function of perspective. To take a brief example: the drive from LA to San Francisco along the Pacific Coastal Highway is a long, but finite and definite distance. But how long is the coastline itself? The highway cheats; it approximates the coastline by skipping all the small inlets and sand bars that characterize any coast. The coast is longer than the Pacific Coastal Highway; in fact, it is infinitely longer, but in a kind of controlled, patterned infinity whose expansion with respect to the proximity of the observer differs from point to point. The question of coastline becomes, with proximity, the question of coastal composition, a question of many surfaces, not just sea and shore. If we are a quarter-inch tall, we find the coastline measurable if it's made of slate or some other smooth rock. If it's sand, though, we're already too small; sand is bumpier; our measuring stick bogs down in nooks and crannies.

9. Now, so with Shelley: the distance between 1813 and 1820 becomes bumpier as we become more intimate with it; we find that Shelley the person is folded into Shelley the author; close reading becomes close-**ish**. But the terrain does not change uniformly; in the case of the topoi, for example, or in the way Shelley's language relates to things, it changes less than in the case of, say, the manner in which his work incorporates other texts, or in the rhetorical quality of his poetry, the manner and degree of its didacticism. There is the slate coastline in Shelley, and there is the sand coastline.

10. This brings us to William Keach's paper, a paper that has provided one of the still too few occasions of

scholarly attention to pedagogy, to that portion of our activities where we're most likely to have a social impact. Bill's paper sustains a political Shelley for political reasons. In bringing alive the early Shelley of 1811 and 1812, we're bringing alive a time when poetry was political enough to get you arrested (or get your servant arrested). The early Shelley becomes an opportunity to recreate a terrain not unlike the geography of romance itself--a terrain in which both Shelley and his poems move against the foe, are overpowered, are triumphant, or faint within their own equivocations. This is a land in which our students can wander as well, a geography where the interdisciplinary trait called virtue matters, as it so often matters to those we teach. Yet it is an interesting irony that the paper most powerfully attending to Shelley the person is also the paper most stressing Shelley the year, or years rather, 1811-1812, invoking once more the potential for history to pulverize the notion of "author." This strong historicism suggests that Bill's Shelley-the-person is not the product of a presumptive humanism, universalizing and elevating the privileged yet rebellious white male aristocrat for our identification. The break with humanism is made more definitive by the reference to romance. What does it mean to turn to romance in the late twentieth century, and to take Childe Shelley as our guide? If we are now **beyond** humanism, the age of romance lay **beyond** it: it is no accident that interactive videogames began with the cult of *Dungeons and Dragons* . As we turn to the *Romantic Circles Website* , we find ourselves, in a sense, in romance, on enchanted ground.

11. For readers of romance, especially as it's inscribed in the political rhetoric of the 1790s, enchanted ground, like the Bower of Bliss, is not necessarily a good thing; it's highly ambiguous. Nonetheless, as David Duff points out (89), in *Queen Mab* , Shelley eschews the repressive true/false dichotomy that leads to the destruction of the Bower of Bliss and instead reclaims a blissfull regeneration--an ecotopia. But ecotopia only gets us back to Tim's sobering comment on the capitalist form of Shelley's utopian rhetoric. Now, because of this problem, this unease, ecotopia seems to me the ideal term to describe the user-dimension of the internet. Matter, motion, and language become equivalent; language no longer sacrifices things but emanates from things--and in terms of images on the screen, things emanate from language. Let's imagine for the moment a somewhat futuristic *Romantic Circles* project. Let's imagine a detailed account of the young Shelley in the form of a hypertext video game. In order to play the game, we **become** Shelley, in the same way we assume the avatar Dogsbody or Baldrick in the old D&D. As Shelley, we belabor cruxes in life or literature, choosing different paths through the composition of a manuscript or through the mysterious events in Wales, where Shelley either was or was not attacked by an armed assailant. In such a game Shelley becomes an experience. This experience is not quite the experience of becoming familiar with an author, nor is it mere knowledge of a biographical entity. It is more attached to us; it is **our** experience, each user's experience. Insofar as that happens, we assimilate Shelley's agency to our own, perhaps violently. Like the pirates who gave *Queen Mab* its political freedom by wresting it from Shelley's control, the Shelley video game would perhaps wrest Shelley from the control of scholars, from the story that has the scholarly imprimatur. No doubt fast-selling variants would erupt, in which Shelley can fess up to writing "The Devil's Walk" and take Dan Healy's place in prison, in which Shelley could miss Mary altogether, in which Shelley becomes enamoured of a certain kind of athletic shoe: Young Shelley becomes Michael Jordan.