

**Rethinking the Collaborative Literary Relationship of  
Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley**

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## Abstract

This thesis offers a reassessment of the literary relationship and instances of creative collaboration between Percy Bysshe Shelley (PBS) and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (MWS). Rather than focusing on biography, I study the textual connections between the Shelleys' works - though I have drawn on biographical information to put their collaboration into a historical context. I establish that their written works are profoundly influenced by and constructed through their intellectual exchange. Spoken discussions can never be recovered, but the evidence provided in the Shelleys' writings, manuscripts, and non-fiction allows informed inferences to be made about how their compositions are inter-related. The study begins with the Shelleys' meeting and their subsequent elopement in 1814, and continues on to PBS's death in 1822, and beyond. It includes several case studies examined in detail.

I give due attention to the work of existing scholars that have recognised the Shelleys' collaboration, but emphasise that a comprehensive study of the Shelleys' texts in light of their status as a literary couple has been lacking. More recent studies in Romanticism have shown a marked interest in the significance of collective creativity: PBS and MWS have the potential to provide one of the most intriguing examples of this paradigm, and critics have called for a 'major study of this collaboration'.<sup>1</sup> I demonstrate MWS's involvement in the production of PBS's writings, and I identify shared working spaces. My analysis reveals the reciprocity of a relationship that in popular culture - including much of the discourse surrounding the *Frankenstein* manuscript - is often misrepresented as that of a patriarchal husband exerting intellectual dominance over his wife.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 10-11.

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## Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Material - primarily from the Introduction and Chapter 3 - has been published in *The Keats-Shelley Review* in the following articles:

Anna Mercer, 'Beyond *Frankenstein*: The Collaborative Literary Relationship of Percy Bysshe and Mary Shelley', *The Keats-Shelley Review* 30:1 (2016), 80-85.

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Mercer, "All of great and glorious which that country contains": Mary Shelley's Italian Scenes' in *Mary Shelley in/and Europe; Essays in Honour of Jean de Palacio*, ed. Antonella Braidia Laplace.

## Introduction

### Beginnings

Mary love – we must be united. [...] Your thoughts alone can waken mine to energy  
 [...] How divinely sweet a task it is to imitate each other's excellencies - & each  
 moment to become wiser in this surpassing love - so that constituting but one  
 being, all real knowledge may be comprised in the maxim 'know thyself' with  
 infinitely more justice than in its narrow & common application.<sup>1</sup>

So Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (then Godwin) in 1814, the year that they met, eloped to the continent, and committed to a shared existence of reading, writing and a radical philosophy that would challenge the values of the society in which they lived. In this intimate note, PBS searches for unity, insisting the two lovers should become 'one being', emphasising the importance of personal intricacies ('*your* thoughts alone can waken *mine*') and championing the 'divinely sweet [...] task' of 'imitating' one another's strengths. PBS suggests that he and MWS remain reactive to one another, implying the creative benefits of this exchange. Yet their minds must not be strictly polarised, as through 'imitating' each other they can also become 'wiser': any opposition is also part of a shared determination and dedication to their lifestyle and literary creed.

A full-length study of the Shelleys' collaborative literary relationship is long overdue. Charles E. Robinson in particular has described the Shelleys' literary exchange as a feature of their lives and works that goes beyond the collaboration on MWS's *Frankenstein* (1818), the draft of which PBS famously altered and added to:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley (hereafter PBS), *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* Vol I, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 414.

<sup>2</sup> See Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (hereafter MWS), *The Frankenstein Notebooks*, ed. Charles E. Robinson, 2 Parts (London: Garland, 1996).

That PBS collaborated on [*Frankenstein*] should come as no surprise to anyone, because the Shelleys left a long history of their shared activities as creative artists. They transcribed and they edited each other's works; they encouraged each other to undertake or to modify major works; and they even collaborated in the publication of *History of a Six Week's Tour* at a time when *Frankenstein* was being readied for the press.

Robinson writes that he hopes his editorial work on the *Frankenstein* manuscripts 'will encourage someone to undertake a major study of this collaboration'.<sup>3</sup> This is exactly the kind of research that I have undertaken, identifying some of the most intriguing details of the Shelleys' 'shared activities as creative artists', and rethinking how we perceive them as a literary couple and how we read the textual connections between their writings.

The strength of the Shelleys' individual works must be, in part, a testament to the stimulating environment created by a relationship shaped by literary pursuits. We cannot disregard the intensity of PBS and MWS's life together, during which they were frequently in conversation about their compositions, and about literature in general - something that is evident from MWS's journals as well as the echoes of these discussions in the works themselves.<sup>4</sup> I have adopted Robinson's use of PBS and MWS as shorthand to distinguish between the two authors.<sup>5</sup> The critical use of 'Shelley and Mary' is also valid, because as Jerrold Hogle explains that is how MWS herself 'referred to them in her journal and letters'.<sup>6</sup> However the frequency of my use of 'the Shelleys' as a collective proper noun necessitates the use of the authors' initials for clarity.

The Shelleys' ability to contribute to and respond to one another's reading, writing and intellectual ideas, includes - but is certainly not limited to - 'imitation' of each other's 'excellencies'. PBS and MWS write about shared themes, and adopt

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<sup>3</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* Part I, ed. Robinson, lxvii.

<sup>4</sup> MWS, *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), passim. Pre-1822, and for example see 21 August 1816: 'Shelley & I talk about my story', 130.

<sup>5</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, xxv.

<sup>6</sup> Jerrold Hogle, 'Romantic Contexts' in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, ed. Andrew Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 41.

similar idioms, and his identification of these shared ideas as excellencies suggests their understanding of the calibre of one another's minds. The Shelleys' engagement with one another's writing was marked by a determination to make literary productions the best they could be: a task which succeeded, as is evident in the status of both authors' works today, 200 years after the texts were written. The nature of their relationship fluctuated and shifted over time with varying levels of creative intensity and/or (dis)agreement, but overall PBS's and MWS's oeuvres owe much to their relationship, which provided an environment in which ideas could germinate, expand and diversify.

Writing in the 1990s, Timothy Morton commented that 'it is a lamentable fact of Shelley studies that the collaboration of these two writers has not been fully discussed'. Morton's study reads MWS's *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* alongside PBS's work, and it is concerned with how PBS and MWS were 'collaborating in re-imagining the body'.<sup>7</sup> He explains his view of their work together:

I have not sought to demonstrate that "collaboration" was an idiosyncrasy in which Percy Shelley "helped" to write *Frankenstein*, as a debatable reading of the manuscript evidence might show. Rather, I have tried to reveal a *shared intellectual climate* between these two writers. This is especially significant insofar as Mary Shelley's work critiques the work of Percy Shelley, by putting the "intellectual climate" into novelistic question [my emphasis].<sup>8</sup>

My thesis explores how the Shelleys' collaboration goes beyond *Frankenstein* – something that has been acknowledged in studies published after Morton's. That novel *and* other works by the Shelleys were a result of the 'shared intellectual climate'; *Frankenstein* was not a unique and isolated incident of close and collaborative working. I also emphasise the reciprocity of the Shelleys' literary relationship, by further establishing how MWS was able to contribute ideas to (and as Morton implies, critique) PBS's works, both during his lifetime and as his widow.

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, 10.



Archival and intertextual study enables a voyage through the corpus of the Shelleys, finding evidence of their textual practices of reading, writing, and copying. I suggest that by reading PBS's and MWS's works in parallel, and examining their extant manuscripts, we can make informed suppositions; this method crucially pays attention to biographical details in order to gauge how their shared lives (and specifically, their shared travels) influence their texts, as opposed to the texts revealing truths about their lives. Another focus of my research is to reconsider the period 'after *Frankenstein*', that time following the novel's publication on 1 January 1818 and before PBS's death in July 1822. Works from this period that show MWS commenting upon PBS's writings suggest continued reciprocity in the Shelleys' relationship - for example, the preface to *The Witch of Atlas* was written in 1820, and addressed 'To Mary (on her objecting to the following poem, upon the score of its containing no human interest)'.<sup>9</sup> These dedicatory verses imply much about how MWS's company could influence PBS's compositions. I demonstrate that the Shelleys were not merely working independently, despite what many critics have argued regarding the period when they lived and worked in Italy from 1818-22. Overall, some kind of collaboration, taking various forms, continues well beyond *Frankenstein* and PBS's contributions to that manuscript in 1816-18. What can actually be traced is a series of 'shifts' in the Shelleys' literary relationship across time, and thus a chronological study is required. There are identifiable variations in collaborative activity in the Shelleys' writing in which the level of engagement between the two authors changes as the years progress. Such fluctuations are fascinating, and in this thesis a series of focused case studies allows me to develop a nuanced understanding of the Shelleys' literary relationship.

My account of the alternative types of collaboration across the Shelleys' relationship is based on two key assumptions. If we know for certain the Shelleys definitely undertook a process which we can label 'A', meaning one form of

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<sup>9</sup> PBS, *The Witch of Atlas* in *The Poems of Shelley Vol III*, ed. Jack Donovan, Cian Duffy, Kelvin Everest and Michael Rossington (Harlow: Longman/Pearson, 2011), 552-618. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

collaboration, such as PBS referring to MWS as the inspiration for *The Witch of Atlas* preface in the text itself, we can gauge that it was highly likely that they did 'B': discussed the poem either before, during or after its composition (or a combination of two or three of these options). Therefore we can subsequently infer, from evidence in the texts and manuscripts, that they also did 'C', which is to make acute observations on each other's working style, either with the aim of exerting influence, or meditating on and developing their own writing. Secondly, it is crucial for any reader of their works to challenge the assumption that MWS was simply the subordinate partner in this collaboration. My innovative research using textual evidence reveals the importance of MWS's contribution to PBS's works; she invariably informs his thinking, and influences his writing.

### **What is collaboration?**

The practice of analysing the solitary author in Romantic period literature has long been criticised. Collaboration has become a key term in the study of Romanticism, although so far such research has only accommodated the Shelleys in a fairly minimal way, focusing primarily on *Frankenstein*. It is regrettable that as the attention to artistic communities, coteries, marriages, siblings and friendships has become increasingly influential in Romantic-period scholarship, the Shelleys remain largely neglected as a literary couple.<sup>10</sup> Morton's discussion of the Shelleys' 'shared intellectual climate' integrates an understanding of the two authors at work alongside each other, and the wider literary and philosophical landscape with which they both engaged.

'Collaboration' in this thesis is understood as creativity based on 'united labour, co-operation; *esp.* in literary, artistic, or scientific work', as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it,<sup>11</sup> and such activity can manifest itself in manuscript.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Jeffrey Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> 'collaboration, n.'. OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/36197?redirectedFrom=collaboration> (accessed 13 March 2017).

For example: two hands at work on one page and/or within one manuscript notebook. The Shelleys' closeness resulted in an atmosphere that was conducive to creativity and diverse methods of literary composition. We must expand our understanding of the Shelleys' various approaches to writing, as these informed and defined their texts. The Shelleys' works are a *product* of their 'shared intellectual climate', something which can be ascertained through thematic studies and comparisons of the oeuvres of PBS and MWS, and their explicit and implicit allusions to one another's ideas. George Dekker describes a 'collaborative spirit and nonpossessive attitude toward intellectual property' during the summer of 1816 which the Shelleys spent in Geneva with Lord Byron.<sup>12</sup> PBS and MWS were united as a couple from 1814, and as I will show, their closeness generated a free exchange of ideas.

Reading the Shelleys' works in parallel demonstrates that it is difficult to characterise their collaboration in a straightforward way; as Robinson argues, the Shelleys 'competed with and challenged each other in and by their separate works'.<sup>13</sup> Tilottama Rajan similarly describes the Shelleys as working 'with and against each other';<sup>14</sup> her statement emphasises that collaboration can be unifying *and* may also result in creative friction. Theresa Kelley acknowledges that 'reading and writing along parallel as well as distinct lines were key constants in their joined existence'.<sup>15</sup> My research promotes an understanding of the Shelleys as supportive to one another, and also recognises that they would have found faults in their own and each other's writings. If collaboration is united labour, both authors should be aware of the input of the other, but conscious of their own individual voice. Collaborators welcome feedback but do not always agree with it, and are unlikely to be working in strict competition; constructive criticism may be compatible with a shared ideal of mutual improvement. Collaboration can be

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<sup>12</sup> George G. Dekker, *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism: Radcliffe, Scott, and Mary Shelley* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 202.

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts* (hereafter *BSM*) Vol X, ed. Robinson (London: Garland, 1992), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Tilottama Rajan, 'Introduction' in MWS, *Valperga*, ed. Rajan (Letchworth: Broadview, 1998), 16.

<sup>15</sup> Theresa Kelley, 'Life and Biographies' in *The Cambridge Companion to Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24-25.

generative even when there is opposition involved, as one partner is motivated to assist the other.

The collaborative process is characterised in the Shelleys' relationship through an intimacy, a literary and intellectual openness, evidenced by their use of the same notebooks and their reading aloud to each other - Robinson suggests that the *Frankenstein* manuscripts show that PBS and MWS were 'at work on the Notebooks at the same time, possibly sitting side by side and using the same pen and ink to draft the novel and at the same time to enter corrections'.<sup>16</sup> Collaboration for the Shelleys is also a joint commitment to being authors, strengthened by their romantic union and eventual marriage. This sense of scholarly purpose returns us to my discussion of the term 'excellencies' in PBS's 1814 letter: the Shelleys had a shared aim to create powerful literature, and they were aware that this meant subjecting their writing to one another's scrutiny. Unlike generational familial relationships (such as between, for example, Coleridge and his poet-children),<sup>17</sup> the Shelleys chose to associate themselves with one another. Alan Weinberg has identified PBS's diverse creative relations:

Shelley [...] engaged adventurously, through not always successfully, in a range of initiatives and ventures – among them, many collaborative relationships with almost all his companions, ranging from co-authorship/co-publication to looser forms of creative exchange.<sup>18</sup>

Marilyn Butler similarly argues that PBS in 1815-16 was 'one of the most thorough-going, self-conscious and intriguing of Romantic property-sharers', but she also suggests that it is not clear 'which writer's interests will be served, if either's', by 'teaming' PBS and MWS.<sup>19</sup> It is my contention, however, that the works

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<sup>16</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxx.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, my essay on the poetical dialogue between Sara Coleridge and her father. Anna Mercer, 'Sara Coleridge and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Poetical Connections, and the Image of Childhood', *The Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 41 (Summer 2013), 85-96.

<sup>18</sup> Alan M. Weinberg, 'Shelley's Diversity', *Journal of the English Association* (2017) efw066. doi: 10.1093/english/efw066, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Butler, 'Shelley and the Question of Joint Authorship' in *Evaluating Shelley*, ed. Timothy Clark and Hogle (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 42-43.

of the Shelleys are creatively entangled, and that PBS and MWS should therefore be regarded as one of the greatest literary partnerships of the Romantic period.

In the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, MWS invites attention to her relationship with PBS and the impact of that relationship on her writing. But she then rapidly dismisses this interest:

And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart. Its several passages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more. But this is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations.<sup>20</sup>

The memory of the composition of *Frankenstein* evokes the intimate and personal recollection of her ‘companion’ (PBS), and ‘happy days’, but she concludes by directing her readers away from the personal as she introduces her novel: ‘my readers have nothing to do with these associations’. This now infamous introduction to MWS’s most enduring text gives a carefully constructed retrospective account of the ‘waking dream’ that inspired her to write in 1816. The nightmare allows MWS to downplay her own imagination but at the same time implies the conception of *Frankenstein* can be credited to a psychological mystery, awakened – as she writes in the introduction – by PBS and Byron’s discussions on ‘the nature of the principle of life’ to which she ‘was a devout but nearly silent listener’.<sup>21</sup> Despite PBS’s presence, it was *her* mind that was prompted to write a timeless story. MWS’s introduction also encourages us to consider precisely how PBS contributed to the novel:

At first I thought but of a few pages – of a short tale; but Shelley urged me to develope [sic] the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his

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<sup>20</sup> MWS, ‘Introduction to the 1831 *Frankenstein*’ in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, 8 Vols (Hereafter *NSWMS*) Vol I, ed. Nora Crook (London: Pickering, 1996), 180.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

incitement, it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him.<sup>22</sup>

In order to construct the myth that *Frankenstein* was inspired by a vision of horror, MWS defends the content as her own, emphasising her self-sufficiency as a writer. MWS does not disavow her indebtedness to PBS, but insists on the importance of the workings of her own mind, and her imaginative recital of her dream (recalling a tradition of waking dream narratives prominent in the literature of that time). MWS acknowledges PBS's influence, and also increases the drama surrounding the novel's conception and composition. She is claiming the significance of her own work, too. This example shows one form of exchange as we can see a particular closeness in the Shelleys' working and their complex approach to creativity. At certain episodes in their relationship they would generously share ideas and assist one another, but not without identifying – or claiming - their distinctly personal voices.

As Butler explains, MWS's narrative in the introduction is 'self-promoting and novel-promoting', but is also an attempt to deflect attention 'from the historical sources and implications of her original text by introducing an exaggerated, sensationalised diversion concerning its psychic origins'. MWS would also significantly alter the text of the novel itself for the third edition in 1831, emphasising the religious morality and antiscientific allegories that can *potentially* be read in the original version.<sup>23</sup> MWS recalls 1816 in 1831, and implies the difficulty of ascribing an author to those texts synthesised in the 'shared intellectual climate' described by Morton, influenced by the 'nonpossessive attitude toward intellectual property' described by Dekker. Butler explains that the group at Lake Geneva in 1816 (Byron, PBS, MWS, Claire Clairmont and John W. Polidori) produced a 'genuinely collaborative', sociable event, 'in that the four stories we have [...] represent variations on the same two themes'.<sup>24</sup> Besides her

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>23</sup> Butler, 'Introduction' and 'Note on the Text' in MWS, *Frankenstein*, ed. Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xxiii, lli.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

early light verses published by Godwin in his *Juvenile Library*,<sup>25</sup> MWS's first publication was a jointly authored text with PBS, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817); in this thesis I explain how difficult it is to determine exactly which sections of that volume can be assigned to PBS or MWS. In their early works the Shelleys' method of composition was collaborative and sociable. So elsewhere in their corpus, a fluent interchange of ideas created an ambiguity surrounding the original authorship of particular words, phrases, or ideas in their texts. This shift to another mode of collaboration was an identifiable feature of the Shelleys' literary relationship that intermittently resurfaced.

Lucy Newlyn's study of another collaborative literary relationship between two authors in the Romantic period – William and Dorothy Wordsworth – emphasises 'an intense period of collaborative activity centered on friendship and conversation'.<sup>26</sup> This dynamic is recorded in Dorothy's *Alfoxden Journal*, a document of literary significance comparable to MWS's journals. Newlyn emphasises the 'communal nature of [William and Dorothy's] creative process',<sup>27</sup> demonstrating the importance of an intimate working environment and how texts are shaped by the social atmosphere in which they are created. The Shelleys' relationship does not build on the same kind of pre-existing relationship that Wordsworth and Dorothy had as siblings, but nonetheless provides the basis for literary cooperation. The Shelleys jointly engage in practical working and literariness in their life as a couple, which developed after their elopement in 1814.

Newlyn's study elevates Dorothy's position in the Wordsworth circle without isolating her from her brother and his literary co-author S T Coleridge, but rather by emphasising her unique importance within the context of the group. Newlyn draws out key instances in which Dorothy may have directly influenced William Wordsworth, for example by suggesting that the *Alfoxden Journal* 'may well have sharpened William's awareness of the poetic possibilities of prose'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>26</sup> Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: 'All in each other'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

While they generally wrote in different genres from each other, PBS and MWS also demonstrated a mutual stylistic mimicry whereby she experimented in verse, and he developed a prose style which can be distinguished from the unsuccessful novels of his youth. They also encouraged one another to write dramas.<sup>29</sup> This mimicry was the result of close proximity during composition. Newlyn elevates Dorothy to the status of co-author with Wordsworth and Coleridge: '*Lyrical Ballads* (1798) was an anonymous publication – the names of Coleridge, Dorothy, and William are missing from the title page – but all three writers were involved in collaboration, and there was no competition for ownership'.<sup>30</sup> We now have published editions of *Frankenstein* with the title page proclaiming 'Mary Shelley (with Percy Shelley)'.<sup>31</sup> Although it may be excessive to suggest that the same practice be adopted for PBS's works such as *The Cenci* on which MWS collaborated (see Chapter 2), the reader should be made aware of the presence of that extra voice.

Mary-Jane Corbett has explored how in reading Dorothy Wordsworth's journals 'we should attempt to imagine the community that provides the context for writing'. The 'pleasure and power of journal writing' for MWS 'both proceed from and depend on the participation of another reader and writer' (PBS).<sup>32</sup> The Shelleys' individual works repeatedly function in relation to each other. As evidence of collaborative engagement, my study examines both pen-on-paper evidence from the Shelleys' manuscripts and the relationship between the writings of the Shelleys as two distinct authors. This intertextuality is in part the result of a shared writing life. For example, as Rajan explains in *Romantic Narrative*, PBS's poem *Alastor* functions as 'the autonarration of [PB] Shelley projecting himself as the Poet, the Preface writer [...] and the Narrator', rather than an insight to the psyche of PBS the individual. Subsequently this version of 'The Poet' is

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<sup>29</sup> PBS contributed verses to MWS's dramas 'Proserpine' and 'Midas', and they encouraged one another to write dramas on the subject of the history of the Cenci family, and Charles I. In the end PBS composed both works. See Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

<sup>30</sup> Newlyn, 66.

<sup>31</sup> Robinson (ed.), *The Original Frankenstein* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Mary Jean Corbett, 'Reading Mary Shelley's *Journals*: Romantic Subjectivity and Feminist Criticism' in *The Other Mary Shelley*, ed. Audrey A. Fisch, Mellor and Schor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 77.



transfigured by MWS, as this 'is certainly how Mary Shelley projects Percy both in her editing and in her bitterly idealized de-jection of him as Woodville' in *Matilda*.<sup>33</sup> One interpretation of this projection provided in MWS's works is the appearance of multiple figures that are a version of PBS or contain his characteristics. It occurs not only in *Matilda* but also, for example, in the novels *Valperga*, *The Last Man*, *Falkner* and *Lodore*, and there has been a wealth of study on the similarities between PBS and Victor Frankenstein. MWS's somewhat-critical images of PBS are rarer than her idealisations of him. However, in contrast to Rajan's interest in appropriation of real life experiences in novels, my interest in MWS's presentation of PBS-like characters focuses on her comment on her husband as a writer. MWS in fiction can challenge his philosophy, his poetry, his subject matter, and his form; in doing so, she does not necessarily disclose her view of PBS as a person, a father to her children, or even as a lover.

The Shelleys work closely together and assist in constructing each other's writing voluntarily, with a tacit acceptance from their partner. Collaboration infiltrates their whole corpus and the nuances of this can be explored in the shifts that demonstrate the Shelleys' regular literary engagement with each other, both positive and negative. Projection provides one aspect of the Shelleys' collaboration, and MWS is often a figure or addressee in PBS's poems. The Shelleys' collaboration produces abstract effects (those not necessarily substantiated by manuscript evidence); they elicit echoes, challenges and responses to one another in their autonomous writings. Their creativity is also pervaded by the presence of the other author even when either of them is working alone, and thus their writings repeatedly interconnect in ways that create a powerful and traceable dialogue. The dramatisation of their personal lives is an aspect of this conversation, but it is not exclusively limited to that mode.

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<sup>33</sup> Rajan, *Romantic Narrative: Shelley, Hays, Godwin, Wollstonecraft* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 3.

Susan Wolfson discusses literary interaction as ‘distinctive instances where a Romantic “author” gets created, as a literary consciousness’;<sup>34</sup> the author is shaped by how they perceive themselves and other artists. Interaction is different from influence (as in Bloom’s definition in *The Anxiety of Influence*)<sup>35</sup> because of this relative reciprocity, and yet the Shelleys’ collaboration is even deeper and more unique than Wolfson’s definition of interaction. Their works are uniquely and pervasively interconnected, and the shifts and variations in their literary exchange are extraordinarily complex. Beth Lau has considered how the ‘recovery and analysis of long-neglected women writers’ of the Romantic period - a revival from which MWS has benefited - has affected the critical analysis of relationships between women writers and their male counterparts: ‘this has been the trend in Romantic studies; the pendulum has swung predominantly in the direction of viewing women writers separately from the men and emphasizing differences and antagonisms between the sexes.’<sup>36</sup> As Lau considers, both genders of Romantic writers ‘inhabited the same or overlapping literary and cultural milieus and [their] works employ similar motifs and express many shared aspirations, convictions, anxieties, and conflicts’<sup>37</sup> – therefore writers should not be separated purely because of gender in modern criticism. The Shelleys’ absence (as a couple) in critical discourse might be related to a former preference for studies of male literary collaborations, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, PBS and Byron.<sup>38</sup>

Lau also discusses how the ‘literary traditions and experiments’ of the British Romantic period create a unified reference point for these writers.<sup>39</sup> Therefore it can be argued that similarities in diction between two authors of the same age and literary movement, presented with the same stimulus, and bound by a similar reading list and predilection for radical ideas, are no surprise. In the final lines of *A Defence of Poetry* PBS confesses that the power of the ‘most celebrated

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<sup>34</sup> Susan J. Wolfson, *Romantic Interactions: Social Being & the Turns of Literary Action* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>36</sup> Beth Lau, ‘Introduction’ in *Fellow Romantics: Male and Female British Writers, 1790-1835*, ed. Lau (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> For a study of PBS and Byron, see Robinson, *Shelley and Byron: The Snake and Eagle Wreathed in Fight* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

<sup>39</sup> Lau, 1.

writers of the present day [...] the electric life which burns within their words [...] is less their spirit than the spirit of the age'.<sup>40</sup> How, then, can we distinguish what links the Shelleys, in order to define their collaboration as distinct from what is simply a trait of writing from that period? In their tangible interaction with one another, on the page and in person, the relationship between the Shelleys is a two-way and exploratory discussion, and as such we can recognise their mutual influence on one another as more significant. The dialogue is one that can also be detected with regards to other pairs of writers, including PBS and Byron. It is apparent that the literary or creative relationship existing between married couples has been historically rendered insignificant in comparison to the plaudits awarded to any two famous men. Perhaps it is the relationships existing between a man and a woman that have been neglected; for example the interest in Dorothy Wordsworth and her collaboration with her brother is relatively recent.

The significance of text-based study is worth qualifying again here. Robinson explains that in the case of PBS and Byron, if we cannot listen to the two authors actually talking, 'sufficient evidence can be employed to distinguish the reciprocal influences of the two poets from the "endowment of the age"'.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, if we cannot hear the inevitable spoken discussions between PBS and MWS during the composition of *Frankenstein* and their other collaboratively constructed works, we can experience their dialogue on the written page and infer their influence as more significant because of their close working.

The volumes by Rajan, Wolfson and Lau all lack a chapter devoted to the Shelleys. Jack Stillinger's seminal text *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* alludes to the Shelleys merely in an Appendix.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, the recent book by Julie A. Carlson dedicated solely to discussing the Shelley-Godwin family as *England's First Family of Writers* strangely excludes PBS because of his ability to

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<sup>40</sup> PBS, *A Defence of Poetry* in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (London: Norton, 2002), 535.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, *Shelley and Byron*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

eclipse the other authors of the group in terms of fame and eminence.<sup>43</sup> Studies that approach PBS and MWS in parallel tend to be biographical rather than critical (Daisy Hay's *Young Romantics* and William St. Clair's *The Godwins and the Shelleys*).<sup>44</sup> As Robinson notes, existing comparative studies of PBS and Byron 'have emphasised the biographical friendship between the men rather than the artistic and philosophical interaction',<sup>45</sup> and the Shelleys, too, tend to be linked only by biography.

Criticism on the Wordsworths considers the 'dialogic interaction' of their poetry, exposing the critical failure to recognise what Erinc Ozdemir describes as 'that aspect of [Dorothy's] writing in positive dialogue with Wordsworth's work and with Romantic literature at large'.<sup>46</sup> As Ozdemir continues:

[...] critics such as Susan Wolfson, Anne Mellor and James Soderholm have drawn attention to that quality of [Dorothy's] poetry in relation to Wordsworth's poetry which, I would suggest, can be properly termed dialogic because it involves a dialogization, in oblique and subtle ways, of Wordsworth's imaginative values and discursive practices.<sup>47</sup>

The 'oblique and subtle' nature of this conversation necessitates further study of these celebrated authors, and a comparable exchange is manifest in the works of the Shelleys, too. MWS and PBS are also involved in a conversation with the other authors in their circle, and previous writers of literary eminence, perhaps most importantly William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. The writings of MWS's radical parents were among the works they were both reading – occasionally aloud together – in 1814. These texts included *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* by Wollstonecraft and *Caleb Williams* by Godwin.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Julie A. Carlson, *England's First Family of Writers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 258.

<sup>44</sup> Daisy Hay, *Young Romantics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010 repr. 2011), and William St. Clair, *The Godwins and The Shelleys* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989).

<sup>45</sup> Robinson, *Shelley and Byron*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Erinc Ozdemir, "Two Poems by Dorothy Wordsworth in Dialogic Interaction with "Tintern Abbey", *Studies in Romanticism* 44 (2005) no. 4 (Boston Graduate School), 551.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 551.

<sup>48</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 22, 26, 649-50, 684.

Godwin proclaimed of *Letters Written During a Short Residence*, 'if there ever was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book'.<sup>49</sup> Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker describe how as the intimacy between Godwin and Wollstonecraft developed, so did

the basis for a [...] successful revolutionary domesticity [...] While she and Godwin worked apart, reading and criticizing each other's works in progress, *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) and *The Enquirer*, they "woo[ed] philosophy" together in their conversations and letters.<sup>50</sup>

Godwin's admiration for Wollstonecraft was embodied via the medium of her writing, prefiguring the Shelleys' early correspondence which indicates how they too fell in love through a powerful uniting of their intellects as well as other forms of mutual attraction. Incidentally, as Clemit has explored in her account of their 'literary association', MWS also had an important 'creative literary partnership' with her father on her return to England after PBS's death and before Godwin's passing (from 1823-36).<sup>51</sup>

PBS's poem of 1821, 'The Aziola' (written during the Shelleys' seventh year together),<sup>52</sup> depicts an intimate, domestic moment. PBS and MWS hear the Aziola, 'a little downy owl' (l. 12), and their conversation provides a touching idiosyncrasy in its humorous tone, when PBS imagines that MWS is at first referring to a 'tedious woman' (l. 6).<sup>53</sup> Although I am wary of identifying personal feeling in PBS's verses, MWS's character and closeness to her husband as a figure in the poem is evoked in the line 'Mary saw my soul' (l. 10).<sup>54</sup> Donald H. Reiman, in editing the

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<sup>49</sup> William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker (Letchworth: Broadview, 2001), 95.

<sup>50</sup> Clemit and Walker, 'Introduction' in Godwin, *Memoirs*, ed. Clemit and Walker, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Clemit, 'Mary Shelley and William Godwin: a literary-political partnership, 1823-36', *Women's Writing*, 6:3 (1999), 286.

<sup>52</sup> Written sometime between 8 May and 4 August 1821. Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley Vol IV*, ed. Rossington, Donovan and Everest (London: Routledge, 2014), 348.

<sup>53</sup> PBS, 'The Aziola' in *The Poems of Shelley IV*, 349.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

manuscript of 'The Aziola', emphasises its importance as documenting a private connection, stimulating composition:

PBS shows here (what we also know from MWS's Journals) that he enjoyed many days of *domestic harmony* with Mary, his closest friend and confidante, who understood him far better than the world did. In this poem he portrays her treating his foibles kindly, with love and affectionate amusement [...] MWS, like Dorothy Wordsworth, is seen enlightening her poet-companion about one of the slighter forms of nature that he learned to appreciate because of her awareness of both the bird's qualities and his own. [my emphasis]<sup>55</sup>

Editorial work in manuscript study reveals the Shelleys' more reciprocal collaborative spirit combined with a 'domestic harmony', similar in some ways to that of the Wordsworths, and of Godwin and Wollstonecraft. The texts under study in this thesis include poetry, drama, prose fiction and non-fiction, including letters and journals. Betty T. Bennett has acknowledged the value of the latter category: 'the Shelleys' journals and letters also indicate the collaborative nature of their intellectual relationship'.<sup>56</sup> Initially, I will explore the critical treatment of the Shelleys to gauge why they have been neglected as a collaborative literary couple despite their high profiles as individuals in the canon of Romantic literature.

## The critical history of the Shelleys

In leaving his first wife Harriet for MWS, PBS explained to Peacock that 'every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy'.<sup>57</sup> Muriel Spark has argued that as a 'woman with a mind', 'Mary should be properly credited with the integrating influence she exerted over Shelley, to which he himself admitted'. The discernible effect she had

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<sup>55</sup> Reiman, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics* (hereafter *MYR*) Vol VIII, ed. Michael O'Neill and Reiman (London: Garland, 1997), 322.

<sup>56</sup> Betty T. Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 23.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Love Peacock, 'Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley' in *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* Vol II (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1933), 336.

on PBS's work, writes Spark, sprang from the 'wonderful spirit of understanding which existed at the outset of their life together [...] students of the creative mind might do well to consider Shelley in this light'.<sup>58</sup> Claire Clairmont claimed that MWS was the only person PBS had ever really loved, and that this was 'because of her intellect'.<sup>59</sup> In 1822 however, PBS confessed 'I only feel the want of those who can feel, and understand me. Whether from proximity and the continuity of domestic intercourse, Mary does not'.<sup>60</sup> PBS's works including *Epipsychidion* (1821) have been read as explicitly discussing his feelings of isolation, and the very process of this poem's composition (PBS hid *Epipsychidion* from MWS, and it arrived at the publishers in his own hand) implies the breakdown of an intellectual relationship between the two authors.<sup>61</sup> It was, as James Bieri explains, 'Shelley's only major poem upon which she failed to comment except by her silence';<sup>62</sup> MWS did not compose notes for this poem after her husband's death, despite having done so for all the other major works. Biographical critics have seized upon *Epipsychidion* as being exemplary of a pattern, but it is evident from further research that the poem is an exception to the rule of collaborative working.

Historically, when academic study has elevated the significance of either PBS or MWS, the reputation of the other has been downgraded, reminding us of Butler's anxiety surrounding the pairing of the two authors: PBS is '*de facto* challenged [...] by the greater classroom popularity of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*'.<sup>63</sup> Before this division, however, the legacy of PBS needed to be re-established after a dismissal of his talents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Critics who work primarily on PBS have accentuated the differences between the Shelleys. Reiman claims that 'what usually inspired PBS to write poetry, it seems, was some unhappy event or unfulfilled desire',<sup>64</sup> and critical

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<sup>58</sup> Muriel Spark, *Mary Shelley* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1988 repr. 2013), 27.

<sup>59</sup> Hay, *Young Romantics*, 222.

<sup>60</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 435.

<sup>61</sup> It does not appear that MWS was aware of *Epipsychidion* until after PBS's death. See MWS, *Journals*, 353 n. 1 and 561 n. 1. See also James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography 1816-1822* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 222, and Newman Ivey White, *Shelley* Vol II (London: Secker and Warburg, 1947), 255.

<sup>62</sup> Bieri, 222.

<sup>63</sup> Butler, 'Shelley and the Question of Joint Authorship', 42.

<sup>64</sup> Reiman, Headnote to 'The Aziola' in *MYR* VIII, 322.

analysis of MWS's influence on him often assumes that there was an underlying emotional friction between them.

Biographers of PBS frequently seize upon those moments in his work that appear to present MWS as insensitive towards his philosophy of life and his character. Famous instances include the maniac's lament in *Julian and Maddalo*,<sup>65</sup> and the reading of MWS as 'The cold chaste Moon' in *Epipsychidion* (ll. 281-300),<sup>66</sup> in an allegorical interpretation of this poem put forward by Newman Ivey White and expanded by K. N. Cameron in the mid twentieth century.<sup>67</sup> MWS revelled in her own sadness by appropriating this imagery for herself, identifying herself as 'cold moonshine',<sup>68</sup> but study of her writings more broadly reveals complex and varied attitudes to her husband and his works. Emphasis on multiple moments of apparent misunderstanding and even antagonism between PBS and MWS has skewed some accounts of their relationship.

PBS's reputation through the ages, and the reception of PBS by literary critics, are complicated matters that cannot be discussed in the detail they deserve here.<sup>69</sup> In summary, PBS was etherealised by the Victorians as a beautiful but inoffensive lyricist, despite radicals circulating unauthorised copies of his political works in the nineteenth century. As Morton explains, 'thus began the entirely false division between Shelley the poet, who didn't care about politics, and Shelley the

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<sup>65</sup> White, see chapter XX 'Mysteries of Death and Birth', 31-84, including a section on '*Julian and Maddalo* as a Record of Domestic Misery'. Also see K. N. Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 262. See also Richard Holmes, *Shelley on Love* (London: Flamingo, 1980 repr. 1996), 160-61 and Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *Julian and Maddalo* in PBS, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. Reiman and Fraistat, 119.

<sup>66</sup> PBS, *Epipsychidion* in *The Poems of Shelley* IV, 131. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

<sup>67</sup> White, 255-69 and Cameron, 'The Planet-Tempest Passage in *Epipsychidion*', *PMLA* 63:3 (September 1948), 950-72.

<sup>68</sup> MWS, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (3 Vols.), ed. Bennett, Vol I, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 284. See also MWS, *Journals*, 434, 436.

<sup>69</sup> For more detail: Morton, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Morton, 1-16 or Reiman and Fraistat, 'Shelley's Reputation Before 1960: A Sketch' in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. Reiman and Fraistat, 539-49. Also see Jane Stabler, 'Shelley Criticism from Romanticism to Modernism' in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. O'Neill, Anthony Howe and with the assistance of Madeleine Callaghan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 657-72.



activist, who couldn't write a good line of verse if his life depended on it'.<sup>70</sup> Modernism was hostile to PBS, although by the 1940s and 1950s his work was more positively received, particularly in the USA. By the second half of the twentieth century PBS's power as a poet and essayist was far more widely recognised, and this was confirmed by G. M. Matthews's projected full edition of the poetry in the 1960s and 1970s, which is now on the verge of completion.<sup>71</sup> PBS's political interests are now also an important part of studies in Romantic literature.

As critics sought to promote PBS as a significant Romantic author in the twentieth century, MWS was marginalised; her importance and talent were not only denied, but she was attacked, even on a personal level.<sup>72</sup> PBS's revival preceded MWS's, so by the time of his resurgence she was not being read with the attention she deserved, and many of her novels were not readily obtainable.<sup>73</sup> However, Esther Schor, writing in 2003, argues that 'now that virtually all her published works are widely available, Mary Shelley can at last speak for herself.'<sup>74</sup> MWS is now an established Romantic and Victorian author in her own right, although for some her reputation remains closely associated to *Frankenstein* alone.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, critical studies exploring the literary relationship of the Shelleys have focused on the two authors working in opposition. The resurgence of interest in *Frankenstein* was marked by a scepticism surrounding PBS's collaboration on

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<sup>70</sup> Morton, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> *The Poems of Shelley*, ed. Everest, G. M. Matthews, Rossington and Donovan (London: Longman. 4 vols to date. 1989, 2000, 2011, 2013). Also progressing is *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Reiman, Fraistat and Crook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 3 vols to date. 2000, 2004, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Cameron wrote in 1974: 'Mary, although clearly in love with Shelley, was sexually cold, domestically slovenly, and nagging'. *Shelley: The Golden Years*, 310. This whole chapter, entitled 'Shelley and Mary', demonstrates this particular attitude.

<sup>73</sup> For example, *Matilda* was not published until 1959. Robinson, 'Matilda as Dramatic Actress' in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. Stuart Curran and Bennett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 76.

<sup>74</sup> Esther Schor, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>75</sup> For example, Bloom asserts that none of her texts other than *Frankenstein* 'sustain rereading'. 'Introduction' in Amy Watkin, *Bloom's How to Write About Mary Shelley* (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2012), vii.

the novel. In one notable example, Anne K. Mellor argued that PBS's alterations to MWS's manuscript draft 'distorted the meaning of his wife's text'. PBS's adjustment of MWS's term 'wretch' to 'devil' shows that he 'tended to see the creature as more monstrous' than MWS originally intended.<sup>76</sup> Despite her balanced observation that PBS's changes to *Frankenstein* 'both improved and damaged the text and [...] must be analysed with care',<sup>77</sup> Mellor nonetheless suggests that the Shelleys' creative differences define the production of that novel.

This thesis will draw attention to MWS's contributions to PBS's writing, further re-establishing her as part of a collaborative and reciprocal literary relationship with her husband, not just an amanuensis, (mis)interpreter and editor in a typically subordinated female role. Neither the problems that they may have sometimes experienced in their marriage, nor their very different creative styles, define how they responded to and shaped each other's writings. Recent articles by Jennifer Wallace and Nora Crook have explored intricate readings of the Shelleys' relationship in writing, and I build upon their work by producing a broad and yet detailed study that covers the many years the Shelleys spent together as well as MWS's influence over PBS's writings after his death.<sup>78</sup> Crook especially has championed the reciprocity of the Shelleys' relationship, arguing that 'Shelley's promotion of women as published writers through patronage, encouragement, and collaboration awaits a contextualized reassessment', and reminding us that 'his chief collaboration was, of course, with Mary Shelley'.<sup>79</sup> Crook acknowledges that critics have often seen the relationship between PBS and MWS as hierarchical, and challenges that view: 'neither was a victim. Mary Shelley and P. B. Shelley had their difficult periods – they were both strong characters – but their relationship was a symbiotic one and the tension creative'.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Anne K. Mellor, 'Making a "monster": an introduction to *Frankenstein*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1989), 58.

<sup>78</sup> Jennifer Wallace, "'Copying Shelley's Letters": Mary Shelley and the Uncanny Erotics of Greek', *Women's Studies*, 40: 4 (2011), 404-28. Also see Crook, 'Pecksie and The Elf: Did the Shelleys Couple Romantically?', *Romanticism on the Net* 18 (May 2000).

<sup>79</sup> Crook, 'Shelley and Women' in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 79.

<sup>80</sup> Crook, 'Pecksie and the Elf'.

Crook also defends cautiously allegorical interpretations of PBS's poetry: losing such readings 'would skew the experience of reading Shelley, who often admits that he "idealises" his personal history'. Crook's careful attention to 'allowing the biographical to have its due place here – not, of course, exclusive rights – may, among other things [...] lead towards the making more visible of the invisible Mary Shelley in Shelley's work'.<sup>81</sup> Thus knowledge of the Shelleys' lives and especially their reading and writing practices allows us to understand them as a literary couple without producing unnecessarily speculative commentaries. MWS's presence as a figure in PBS's poems, and the potential for finding allusions to lived experiences in both of their texts, crucially tells us about the texts, rather than about actual occurrences beyond the page. Crook's observation on biographical allegory chimes with Rajan's point regarding authorial projection as discussed above. Like Crook and Rajan, my interest in the Shelleys' biography is subordinated to my interest in their writings.

Another article by Crook on MWS's journals suggests that studying her documentation of her literary activities should assist in our 'understanding of Mary Shelley's methods of composition, and our reckoning of the time she spent on authorial work'.<sup>82</sup> The work of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar is controversial; however, their iconic study identified the idea that reading for MWS was an 'emotional as well as an intellectual event of considerable magnitude', and her 'principal mode of self-definition – certainly in the early years of her life with [P B] Shelley, when she was writing *Frankenstein* – was through reading, and to a lesser extent through writing'.<sup>83</sup> As a piece of pioneering feminist criticism, their work focused on bringing MWS's domestic life and literary genius to the forefront of discussion.

MWS's reading and writing was often undertaken in PBS's company, and so to develop Gilbert and Gubar's observation, I emphasise that the reverse was true

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<sup>81</sup> Crook, "The Enigma of "A Vision of the Sea", or "Who Sees the Waterspouts?" in *Evaluating Shelley*, 159.

<sup>82</sup> Crook, "'Work" in Mary Shelley's Journals', *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 18:1 (2004), 123.

<sup>83</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New Haven: Yale University Press 1979 repr. 2000), 223.

as well: that PBS's reading and writing was undertaken in the company of MWS. My thesis acknowledges explicitly that both Shelleys were often present when engaged in authorial work, underscoring the mutual importance of each partner to the other. Similarly, MWS's 'literary inheritance [i.e. her parents' writings] was obviously involved in her very literary romance and marriage'.<sup>84</sup> My work owes much to the past success of those who have uncovered previously overlooked women writers. I can now accentuate that PBS's literary destiny and his relationship with MWS were significantly entangled.

The combination of emotion, lived experience and literary destiny is the hallmark of the Shelleys' literary relationship and it had a huge - and intriguingly discernible - effect on their work and their identities as authors. Seeking a self-definition was a shared pursuit; MWS did not just 'join in' with PBS but rather they together refined and developed their literariness in a unique and fascinating way. The premature death of PBS gave MWS a power over his extant papers; MWS's posthumous editing of her husband's writings was, as Jane Stabler explains, 'designed to lift Shelley out of the gutter into which the rabidly biased journals of his day had cast him'.<sup>85</sup> Yet MWS attributed PBS's style to nervous susceptibility, and even depicted him as a perpetual child. Thus 'Mary's youthful Shelley persisted into the twentieth century',<sup>86</sup> although it was falsely ascribed to her alone, and unfairly exaggerated by later writers. Critics now acknowledge that MWS's curatorial role in the presentation of PBS to a Victorian audience was enacted 'for the best possible reasons';<sup>87</sup> to disseminate his work to a wider and more engaged readership.

The elevation of PBS has often gone hand in hand with an underestimation of MWS's talent. This illusion is suggested by his position as editor of *Frankenstein* and his poetical achievements (one of the six 'big' Romantics along with Blake, Byron, Coleridge, Keats and Wordsworth). The recognition of her actual intellectual achievement has necessitated a kind of critical reclamation. As Schor

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>85</sup> Stabler, 'Shelley Criticism', 658.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 663-64.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 658.

writes, ‘all of us who write about Mary Shelley have sought to free her from possession, both by her poet husband and by her “hideous progeny” [*Frankenstein*].’<sup>88</sup> This attempt to reclaim MWS has sometimes led feminist critics such as Mellor to read PBS’s influence and collaboration on MWS’s work as sabotage. In relation to *Frankenstein*, Mellor argues that PBS ‘imposed’ his ideas, ‘distorted’ hers, and added things that were ‘irrelevant.’<sup>89</sup> No doubt it was necessary to reinstate MWS as an important writer, but the marginalisation or rejection of PBS in MWS scholarship is restrictive. It is an inversion of those attempts earlier in the twentieth century to establish PBS without her.

We have progressed from the idea that PBS and MWS are only linked by biography. Conversely, it is PBS that now struggles to be appreciated on the same level as MWS, as Carlson, for example, separates him from his literary wife and parents-in-law. The ‘pre-eminence of poetry, lyricism, and imagination in canonical romanticism’ means PBS ‘eclipsed the life/writings and reputations of all his surrounding family members’ – for this reason he is a ‘nightmare’ in his ability to overshadow others, and separated from the Godwin/Shelley family in Carlson’s study.<sup>90</sup> This criticism is part of a specific feminist response to the Shelleys’ relationship. Leaving aside the argument as to whether PBS was a feminist (he did write, ‘Can man be free if woman be a slave?’),<sup>91</sup> it is evident that a collaborative literary endeavour was a feature of the Shelleys’ relationship.

Manuscript studies bring collaboration to the forefront of Shelley criticism. Editions of manuscript facsimiles, comprehensively published from the mid-twentieth century onwards, repeatedly acknowledge in their editorial material the potential for evidence of collaboration being found in the manuscripts themselves. As well as *The Frankenstein Notebooks*, editors and scholars of *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*, *The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics* and *Shelley and His Circle*

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<sup>88</sup> Schor, ‘Introduction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, 5-6.

<sup>89</sup> Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 59-69.

<sup>90</sup> Carlson, 258.

<sup>91</sup> PBS, *Laon and Cythna*, II: XLIII, in *The Poems of Shelley Vol II*, ed. Everest and Matthews (London: Longman, 2000), 108.

have acknowledged collaboration as a rich topic for further discussion. Reiman and Doucet Devin Fischer establish that:

Whether the suggestions made by [PB] Shelley and adopted by Mary Shelley were improvements or not, they join Mary's suggestions in her transcriptions of Shelley's and Byron's poems as examples of the interplay between nominal authors and the forces of socialization that ultimately render most works, by the time they reach print, the creation of a collective "authorship" (in Jack Stillinger's term), rather than that of a unitary "author".<sup>92</sup>

Thus deciding which alterations are 'improvements' is not the essential role of the scholar; what is important is that these alterations happened. This type of study reflects a focus on the ever-apparent interactions between authors prominent in the Romantic period in general.

My re-evaluation of existing Shelley criticism indicates why a focus on 'improvements' should be put to one side. Arguments over whether one Shelley enhanced or corrupted the other's work are futile; what is important in critical terms is that both authors examined and suggested changes. Moreover, as Neil Fraistat has indicated, the 'collaborative role Mary Shelley played in the production of Shelley's works' is somewhat elusive as criticism currently stands.<sup>93</sup> Although much attention has been paid to PBS's hand in MWS's *Frankenstein* manuscript, I break new ground in producing a study that shows the frequency and significance of MWS's hand in PBS's manuscripts.

In his review of Zachary Leader's essay 'Parenting *Frankenstein*', Morton considers Leader's argument that 'feminist scholarship that condemns [Percy Shelley's revisions of the text] distorts contemporary pictures of [Mary] Shelley as a powerful intellect in her own right'. Morton suggests Leader's case would be a more persuasive one had he provided evidence that 'Percy also allowed Mary to do

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<sup>92</sup> Reiman and Doucet Devin Fischer, *Shelley and his Circle* Vol IX, ed. Reiman and Fischer (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 302.

<sup>93</sup> Fraistat, 'Introduction' in *BSM* Vol IX, ed. Fraistat (London: Garland, 1991), lxxv.

likewise [i.e. edit or contribute] to his writing'.<sup>94</sup> This idea of PBS 'allowing' MWS to comment on his writings is problematic, however, not only because of its gendered assumptions but also because we know that MWS was valued as an interlocutor by Byron as well as Shelley. Byron requested that she transcribe *Don Juan* and other poems, and he also 'expected' and 'welcomed' her suggested changes:

[...] we know that she often introduced small changes into Byron's text. We also know that Byron expected and even welcomed such minor interventions in his texts by friends who supplied him with editorial and copying help [...] The surviving Mary Shelley transcripts of *DJ* show that when Byron corrected her copy he would sometimes allow her minor revisions to stand uncorrected.<sup>95</sup>

### **Existing criticism on the Shelleys' collaboration and *Frankenstein***

The *Frankenstein* manuscript provides some of the best evidence for collaborative working, showing the various stages of the Shelleys' drafting and copying. One of the issues facing scholars of MWS's writings – and her relationship with PBS – is the domination this text has over the rest of her corpus, and often his body of work, too (the word 'Shelley' is probably more likely to conjure up an image of MWS over PBS in those not working in the field of literary criticism – precisely because of her first novel's cultural status). Critical and popular attention to *Frankenstein* and the surviving manuscript drafts of that novel have provided a rich source for observations on the 'two-way collaboration' (as described by Fraistat) between PBS and MWS.<sup>96</sup> Such discussions are by now familiar; in this thesis I do not want to focus on *Frankenstein*, as that would detract from the more

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<sup>94</sup> Morton, 'Introduction' to Zachary Leader 'Parenting Frankenstein' in *Frankenstein: A Literary Sourcebook*, ed. Morton (London: Routledge, 2002), 104.

<sup>95</sup> Jerome J. McGann, 'Introduction' in Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works Vol V: Don Juan*, ed. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), xxi-xxii. For a list of other poems MWS copied for Byron, see Peter Cochran, 'Mary Shelley's Copying of *Don Juan*', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 10 (Spring 1996), 222-41.

<sup>96</sup> Fraistat, cited in Jennifer Schuessler, 'Frankenstein Manuscript Comes Alive in Online Shelley Archive'. NY Times Online. 30 October 2013. [http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/frankenstein-manuscript-comes-alive-in-online-shelley-archive/?\\_r=3](http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/frankenstein-manuscript-comes-alive-in-online-shelley-archive/?_r=3)

innovative and wider study of the Shelleys' relationship across time. However, a brief discussion of that novel and collaboration is necessary, and below I will contextualise my study in relation to existing criticism. By doing so I will demonstrate how modern critical approaches to a reciprocal collaboration between the two Shelleys - those without a preference or bias for either author - might be applied to other collaboratively produced works. I predominantly use the 1818 *Frankenstein* in this thesis; the version PBS had a hand in constructing. I also use the 1831 Introduction to *Frankenstein*, and allude to MWS's alterations to the later revised edition to discuss her more strictly autonomous writings.

The *Frankenstein* notebooks show PBS altering and adding to MWS's writing. Because of this, previous critics have elevated his role almost to that of co-author: James Rieger states that 'we know that he was more than an editor. [...] Do we or do we not owe him a measure of "final authority"?'<sup>97</sup> Robinson's facsimile of the manuscript distinguishes (although this is partly dependent on some conjecture) MWS's hand from that of PBS's.<sup>98</sup> He insists that 'much more research remains to be done on the collaboration between the two Shelleys'.<sup>99</sup> PBS transcribed the final section of the draft,<sup>100</sup> and made some substantial alterations to the novel's narrative as well as language. There are examples of pages that both Shelleys worked on at the same time, and 'as these notebooks were passed back and forth between MWS and PBS, so also were ideas and phrases that went into the making of *Frankenstein*'.<sup>101</sup> These ideas and phrases would also have appeared in the Shelleys' other texts.

Robinson's '*Frankenstein* Chronology' is a fascinatingly detailed resource producing a 'narrative about the conception, draft, fair copy, publication and reception of MWS's novel', the provenance of the notebooks, and the literary

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<sup>97</sup> James Rieger, 'Introduction' in *Frankenstein*, ed. Rieger (London: University of Chicago Press, 1974 repr. 1982), xlv.

<sup>98</sup> Robinson has also since published the Bodleian Manuscripts of *Frankenstein* in novel form: two versions, one with Shelley's alterations, one without. *The Original Frankenstein*, ed. Robinson.

<sup>99</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxx.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, lxviii.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, lxvii, lxx.



history of the author as a studious talented young woman who incorporated her experiences, and those of PBS, into that text.<sup>102</sup> The surrounding works and holographs, as well as the manuscript of the novel itself, provide evidence of the Shelleys' intertwined method of working during the period of its composition.

Most significantly, Robinson reminds us that we can never know what MWS 'thought' of PBS's alterations to her work, and that it seems fair to assume that PBS's alterations were 'for the purpose of improving an already excellent narrative' with MWS 'accept[ing] the suggestions and alterations that she agreed with'.<sup>103</sup> Leader also claims that '[MWS] consciously, willingly welcomed Percy Shelley's contributions [...] Mary Shelley would be offended – it would violate her principles – were the text to be returned to its pre-Percy form'.<sup>104</sup> Robinson's recent article in *The Neglected Shelley* (2015) provides a comprehensive account of PBS's contribution of 4,000-5,000 words to the novel, and demonstrates 'the extent and the nature of his involvement'.<sup>105</sup> He identifies the different kinds of changes PBS made, from minor corrections of punctuation to substantial additions. As Robinson has also argued, 'no novel is born directly from the brain of its author', and *Frankenstein* is significantly modified by 'the collaborative and editorial publishing and commercial processes that ultimately led to the production and advertising and reviewing and reading of her novel'. The Shelleys as a pair 'mathematically calculated how they might restructure the Draft', and significantly, PBS 'undertook writing the last 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  pages of the Fair Copy', introducing alterations.<sup>106</sup> PBS then acted 'as Mary Shelley's agent', at the same time as he was arranging the publication of his epic poem *Laon and Cythna*. A complex system of corrections and copying passed between the Shelleys before the novel went to press.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Robinson, 'Frankenstein Chronology' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks I*, lxxvi-cx.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, lxvii.

<sup>104</sup> Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 171.

<sup>105</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s) in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein*' in *The Neglected Shelley*, ed. Weinberg and Timothy Webb (London: Ashgate, 2015), 121.

<sup>106</sup> Robinson, 'Frankenstein: Its Composition and Publication' in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, 13, 16.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-19.

The idea that PBS *imposes* his words onto his wife's manuscript creates a simple narrative to divide the two authors. There is, for example, a notorious four-word pencil scrawl in the manuscript of *Frankenstein*, and it continues to inform the way PBS and MWS are understood. In what is now Draft Notebook A (c.57, fol.9r), PBS rectifies MWS's incorrect spelling of 'enigmatic', and concludes this correction with the words 'o you pretty Pecksie!'<sup>108</sup> This inconspicuous feature of the manuscript was recently brought to mainstream attention in the television programme *The Secret Life of Books*, broadcast on BBC4.<sup>109</sup> The presenter deemed this phrase wholly 'patronising' on PBS's part,<sup>110</sup> demonstrating a distorted understanding in which the female writer is defined and dominated by her male counterpart.

The 'Pecksie' comment could be construed as mocking because the word may derive from a famous eighteenth-century children's volume.<sup>111</sup> The nickname appears twice in the *Frankenstein* manuscript, and a fragment of verse dated 1815 addresses MWS as 'the Dormouse', 'In a wild and mingled mood / Of Maieishness [sic] and Pecksietude'.<sup>112</sup> Mellor's understanding of the nickname is particularly telling, indicating the critical origins of this misconstrued perception of the Shelleys: '[PBS] did not regard his wife altogether seriously as an author [...] her deference to his superior mind was intrinsic to the dynamics of their marriage, a marriage in which the husband played the dominant role'.<sup>113</sup> Conversely, in correspondence with her lover in 1815, MWS writes 'I shall think it un-Pecksie of

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<sup>108</sup> MWS, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, Notebook A. Dep. c. 534/1, folio 9 recto. Draft: Vol II, Ch. 2, page 16, 300-301.

<sup>109</sup> *The Secret Life of Books: Frankenstein*, BBC4, 2 Nov 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p024rzj>.

<sup>110</sup> Alice Roberts, cited on *The Secret Life of Books*. See also Mercer, 'Beyond *Frankenstein*: The Collaborative Literary Relationship of Percy Bysshe and Mary Shelley', *The Keats-Shelley Review* 30:1 (2016), 80-85.

<sup>111</sup> Matthews and Everest, Headnote to PBS, 'On her hind paws the Dormouse stood' in *The Poems of Shelley* Vol I, ed. Matthews and Everest (London: Longman, 1989), 446.

<sup>112</sup> Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* II, 460-61. Dep. c. 534/1, folio 48 verso (page 112 in original MS). PBS writes, '*no sweet Pecksie – 'twas friar Bacon the discoverer of gunpowder*'. See also Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 69. MWS had originally referred to Lord Chancellor Bacon instead. PBS, 'On her hind paws the Dormouse stood' in *The Poems of Shelley* I, 446.

<sup>113</sup> Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 69.

you’;<sup>114</sup> in referring to PBS as ‘Pecksie’, MWS’s letter indicates that the nickname can function for either of the couple, and is therefore used in an endearing sense, in an equal way, to imply amusement and understanding, rather than condescension. PBS did not treat MWS as a child, and even if we could prove he was mocking her, this does not mean she could not respond in the same way. Crook has commented on the two-way traffic in pet-names between PBS and MWS:

Whether [...] a young woman who at nineteen could read Tacitus in the original would have felt intimidated by this may be doubted, especially one who called her spouse her “Sweet Elf”. [...] We do not know [...] whether “Pecksie” and “Elf” were pleasant banterings or counters in underground hostilities. It would seem wise to suspend judgement and use them as evidence neither of an unproblematically equal relationship nor of one in which Mary Shelley was subordinated.<sup>115</sup>

Crook here draws attention to the complexity of the Shelleys’ relationship, suggesting that their challenges to one another are as significant as the mutual intellectual support the relationship also offered. The misunderstanding originates from the Shelleys’ individual complicated legacies, and Mellor’s comments, for example, derive from the feminist unearthing of lost women writers that was necessary in order to establish women writers such as MWS. A hostile attitude towards PBS is no longer useful when attempting to glean insights into how MWS should be understood as a writer, a woman, or a collaborator.

While we cannot make definitive claims about the Shelleys’ relationship, we do know what they read, and that they read together. As Lisa Vargo has shown, the first edition of *Frankenstein* ‘provides a working list of Mary Shelley’s reading up to the age of 19, along with the sense that reading involves a sense of dialogue with individuals and one’s society’. Reading is a ‘key aspect of personal and social improvement’ for MWS, a belief she shared with Godwin, and reading is also a communal activity.<sup>116</sup> For PBS and MWS this would lead on to communal writing, a

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<sup>114</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 15-16.

<sup>115</sup> Crook, ‘Pecksie and The Elf’.

<sup>116</sup> Lisa Vargo, ‘Contextualizing Sources’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, 26-28.

process involving each author responding to the other in an intellectually stimulating interchange.

### Contents of the chapters

This research was initially inspired by my reading of the writings composed in 1816, the summer of which was a peak in the Shelleys' collaborative working. These texts trigger literary interest in the correlation between the experiences of the two writers and the resulting great works of literature we read today. This period included the conception and initial production of the 'hideous progeny' *Frankenstein*,<sup>117</sup> and also PBS's 'Mont Blanc' and the 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'. Occasionally, the Shelleys' individual dictions converge. Robinson explains that PBS's words and phrases in the novel are 'contextualised' by his other compositions from the period during which *Frankenstein* was written and then printed (mid-June 1816 – November/December 1817).<sup>118</sup>

In Chapter 1 I will show the other ways in which the Shelleys collaborated in 1814-18. My extension of Robinson's astute work on defining PBS's involvement in MWS's novel is to explore the complex strands that led to the collaborative work on *Frankenstein* and how these are contextualised by both of the Shelleys' writings. There are 'echoes'<sup>119</sup> of PBS's other writings in *Frankenstein*, and then PBS's work lexically and thematically retells and reflects on aspects of MWS's writings, too. Beyond identifying PBS's hand in the novel we can see two distinct voices emerging but with a shared aim to develop *Frankenstein* (and other creative compositions) into a successful text. This argument shows the web of ideas that is prominent in their other works, what Robinson describes as 'the complex interrelations of the collaborative texts produced by the two Shelleys at this time'.<sup>120</sup> During this highly collaborative moment in their relationship, a whole

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<sup>117</sup> MWS, 'Introduction to the 1831 *Frankenstein*' in *NSWMS I*, 180.

<sup>118</sup> Robinson, 'PBS's Text(s) in MWS's *Frankenstein*', 117.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

wealth of writings - interconnecting strands of fiction, non-fiction and poetry - are entangled in a variety of ways.

The writings addressed include the shared journal and the Shelleys' letters, texts documenting their reading, writing and copying, which are invaluable throughout the whole study. I include an examination of MWS's involvement in the composition of *The Assassins* in the Shelleys' first year together and a detailed case study of MSS. 13, 290 in the Library of Congress, one notebook used by both authors from 1814-18, of which there is currently no facsimile available. I also discuss how the composition of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* involved MWS editing PBS's prose for publication, and I explore the similarities between the Shelleys' language in *Frankenstein* and 'Mont Blanc'.

Chapters 2 and 3 are concerned with the post-*Frankenstein* period 1818-22, when the Shelleys lived in Italy before PBS's death. Despite biographical accounts of the Shelleys' intermittent alienation from one another, evidence from their works and manuscripts indicates that they continued to collaborate. Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between PBS's *The Cenci* and MWS's *Matilda*, 'sister-works' which share similar themes and influences, and contain the Shelleys' responses to one another within the texts. The chapter opens, however, with a detailed discussion of PBS's verse preface to *The Witch of Atlas*. This poem has a particular quality - later described as PBS's 'huntings after the obscure' by MWS. Her alternative preference for his *sermo pedestris* style of writing shaped his creative output. PBS used the Latin phrase in a letter of 1820, where he refers to *Julian and Maddalo* – discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis – as 'a *sermo pedestris* way of treating human nature quite opposed to the idealism of [*Prometheus Unbound*]'.<sup>121</sup> In my work, this expression is used to refer to MWS's partiality for PBS's creative works that do indeed focus on human nature (*The Cenci*) rather than lofty idealism (*The Witch of Atlas*). Furthermore, this chapter also shows that the manuscript of *The Witch of Atlas* and MWS's translation of the original *Cenci* story also provides evidence of MWS's palpable presence during the composition of PBS's works.

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<sup>121</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to PBS, *Poetical Works* (1839) in *NSWMS* II, 257. PBS, *Letters* II, 196.

Chapter 3 further considers the rich evidence for collaboration provided by manuscript study, firstly by reviewing examples other than the *Frankenstein* manuscript in which PBS contributes to MWS's work in draft ('Proserpine' and 'Midas' are two dramas composed by MWS with four lyrics by PBS). I then examine MWS's discernible presence in the surviving manuscripts of PBS's final years, both as an amanuensis and in a more autonomous way. A study of the Shelleys' various stages of drafting and copying *The Mask of Anarchy* shows MWS's influence on PBS's work as his copyist and her involvement with, and access to, his notebooks. Elsewhere there is also evidence to suggest that PBS might have welcomed and accepted suggestions from MWS on his drafts. The potential for this understanding is drawn from examples of her handwriting in the manuscript drafts of *Prometheus Unbound*, 'Lines Written among the Euganean Hills' and the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*. PBS's poem *Julian and Maddalo* is also readdressed here through the lens of collaboration, as in previous critical studies the work has often been read as solely presenting biographical or emotional understandings of the Shelleys' relationship.

My final chapter considers how a different kind of collaboration emerged after PBS's death, one in which MWS was instrumental and influential in establishing her late husband's work and reputation. MWS assembled a version of PBS for Victorian audiences in a way that provides the basis for how we still read him today. The distinction between editing and creative composition is blurred, since by providing notes for and editing PBS's works - occasionally transforming fragments into wholes - MWS produced original work for these posthumous volumes. This section includes a discussion of her notes to *Poetical Works*, the short poem 'To \_\_\_' which begins 'Music, when soft voices die', and *The Triumph of Life*, PBS's last major work, which was left unfinished.

MWS's independent creative works composed after 1822 also demonstrate her continued responses to PBS, and this chapter includes a discussion of the later novels *The Last Man*, *Lodore* and *Falkner*. I also examine the critically neglected short story 'The Bride of Modern Italy', which reveals MWS's ability to write

satirical, witty prose in a style that counteracts the idealised portraits of PBS in her other works. I conclude with a consideration of MWS's poetry as her attempt to formulate a poetical dialogue with PBS after his death. MWS's self-dramatisation of her lived experience in her writing is significant. However, rather than simply observing biographical parallels, I show how personal experience is reinvented in her fiction. PBS's continuing presence in MWS's later works can tell us more about her voice as an author and the development of her personal idiom, instead of substantiating a one-dimensional view of her as forever attempting to imitate or recall her lost partner. In this way collaboration is still alive in the Shelleys' relationship from 1822 to MWS's death in 1851, as she applies her profound knowledge of PBS in order to enhance her own creative vision. MWS produces innovative writings and stimulating challenges to his ideas, as well as invariably showing her respect for his genius.

Overall, it is continually surprising that criticism has neglected the Shelleys as a writing relationship despite the overwhelming interest in the thriving collaborations between authors in the Romantic period. As Spark has charmingly described, the Shelleys were almost the epitome of a literary couple:

It was characteristic of Mary and Shelley in their life together that in the midst of domestic or financial distractions they never neglected their reading, sometimes together, sometimes separately; or they would discuss literature as fervently as if no other immediate problem confronted them. [...] She, as well as Shelley, could lose her sense of external things in any subject that called her mind into action; and from Shelley she derived the habit of following several lines of study at a time.<sup>122</sup>

Although the Shelleys often divided the labour of literary tasks, this is not always an *equal* division of labour, because as Robinson stresses, collaboration means 'to work with'.<sup>123</sup> Careful study of the genesis of the texts themselves - considering what the process of composition means for these authors, whether it includes manuscripts or not - provides the grounds for a reading of the Shelleys'

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<sup>122</sup> Spark, 24-25.

<sup>123</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxvii.

compositions from 1814 onwards. Detailed manuscript research enables more informed speculations and commentary on the Shelleys' relationship. The Shelleys' experiences as a literary couple reflect their artistic intimacy, and therefore their texts provide a beguiling example of how creativity flourishes and develops when provided with the support of an emotional and literary partner. As MWS recollected in 1824, when she was engaged in composition, her 'loved Shelley' would 'criticise and encourage me as I advanced'.<sup>124</sup> The basis for this relationship, although complicated and constantly fluctuating, emerges from 'a confidence and affection' that, as MWS claimed in a defence of their union in 1821, 'has encreased daily and knows no bounds'.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 475.

<sup>125</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 207.



## Chapter 1, 1814-18: Collaborations on *Frankenstein* and other works

### Journals and travels

'Our house is very political as well as poetical and I hope you will acquire a fresh spirit for both when you come here', MWS wrote to Hunt on 2 March 1817.<sup>1</sup> The close proximity in which the Shelleys worked as companions in a 'political' and 'poetical' household open to noteworthy intellectual visitors becomes apparent the more we examine their relationship and creative output. I suggest that 1814-18, especially the period of the composition of *Frankenstein* in 1816-18, can be understood as a peak in the Shelleys' collaboration. Here the Shelleys' writings consider similar themes, have a significant unity in tone and language, and provide evidence of their cooperative working to produce publishable texts. The aim of this chapter is to establish how else the Shelleys collaborated in the years leading up to the composition of *Frankenstein*, as well as considering their shared labour on that novel. I also present observations on *Frankenstein* and its origins, particularly in relation to the Shelleys' depictions of the mountainous European landscape, thus emphasising the significance of the authors' shared travels. The chapter addresses the texts composed during the time in which *Frankenstein* was written, and the writings of the period of its publication and reception in 1818; by considering a larger corpus of works, I build on the significant attention MWS's masterpiece has already received.

As we isolate and study this period, it becomes evident that the Shelleys engaged in a reciprocal process of creative idea-sharing, drafting, reading, and copying, which had an important influence on the works they produced. The Shelleys' individual voices show that they challenged each other's ideas, and this aspect of the relationship would become more overt in the years after 1818. Dekker has argued that the exchange between the Shelleys and other members of the Geneva circle (Lord Byron, Claire Clairmont and John W. Polidori) show 'the

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<sup>1</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 29.

collaborative spirit and nonpossessive attitude toward intellectual property that prevailed between these writers during their happiest years together’.

Furthermore, this creative openness:

mainly broadened and enriched their work and can be partly attributed to the experiences they shared as tourists. They spent long hours together not just as fellow writers and political liberals but likewise as companionable tourists for whom the activity was inherently collaborative.<sup>2</sup>

The Shelleys first experienced exciting European landscapes – and recorded their impressions of them – as a couple travelling together. As this chapter will show, the Alpine landscapes of *Frankenstein* and their correspondence to PBS’s ‘Mont Blanc’ help us to think about forms of collaboration across the Shelleys’ respective canons.

In May 1814, the 16-year-old Mary Godwin (later MWS) met PBS in her father’s - William Godwin’s - house in London. Although this meeting was not their first (they also probably would have both been present in Godwin’s home in Skinner Street in November 1812),<sup>3</sup> the events that unfolded in May-July 1814 would culminate in MWS and PBS eloping to the continent on 28 July 1814 in a passionate declaration of love. PBS would leave behind an estranged wife, pregnant with his second child and caring for his first. Godwin strongly disapproved of their actions despite his previous unconventional relationship with MWS’s mother, and the elopers’ insistence that the radical writings of MWS’s parents supported their decision to leave together. MWS’s step-sister Claire also travelled with the Shelleys; her presence is evident in some of the Shelley manuscripts, but creating works with a view for publication was apparently peculiar to PBS and MWS as a couple. The drama of the Shelleys’ lives has been frequently documented in literary biographies both academic and popular, and the

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<sup>2</sup> Dekker, 202

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, ‘*Frankenstein* Chronology’ in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxxvi, cvi.

details of their often troubled experiences will not be recounted here.<sup>4</sup> It is, however, useful to trace the movements of the young couple in the 1814-18 period, to illustrate how the Shelleys' writings were shaped by their experiences of travel as well as each other's presence.

After their elopement journey (in which they visited France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland) the Shelleys returned to England in September 1814. What followed was an unsettled phase, accompanied by financial worries, in London until May 1815. In June and July they toured the south coast of England, finally making their home for a time at Bishopsgate in Windsor Great Park (August 1815 – early May 1816). In the summer of 1816, one of the most celebrated periods in the history of Romantic literature, the Shelleys and Claire famously travelled to Lake Geneva to live near Byron, and during their residence there they would visit the Alps. They returned to England in September 1816; PBS and MWS married on 30 December. By February 1817 the Shelleys were established in Marlow, but would move back to London by January 1818. On the 11 March (the end of the period which this chapter covers) the Shelleys would leave for Italy and spend the remainder of their lives together in that country, until PBS's death in 1822.<sup>5</sup> Throughout their initial years as a couple, the Shelleys' existence was one of continuous exploration as they sought new landscapes abroad, and as they considered how and where they wanted to settle as a family.

When the Shelleys eloped in the summer of 1814, the spirit of collaboration blossomed between them as they toured Europe. Bennett states that: 'as they travelled, the couple continued with their own writing [...] The Shelleys [...] had the same kind of dual relationship Godwin and Wollstonecraft shared, a passion for each other and a passion for writing'. MWS began her journal in 1814, and this document is 'the first of the Shelleys' many collaborations'.<sup>6</sup> The 1814-15 journal has 'Shelley and Mary's journal book' inscribed on the title page by MWS, and the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London: Harper Perennial, 1974 repr. 2005), Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley* (London: John Murray, 2000 repr. 2001), St. Clair, Spark, Bieri.

<sup>5</sup> Bennett (General Ed.), 'General Introduction' and 'Chronology of Life and Works' in *NSWMS I*, ed. Crook, xiii-lxx, lxxv-lxxxvii.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett, 'Introduction' in *NSWMS I*, xxi.

first entries are in PBS's hand. This record of their lives would remain a shared project throughout these travels and the Shelleys' second expedition to the continent in 1816, although PBS's most extensive contribution was in the first few months of the 1814 book. Mary Jean Corbett has shown how PBS's opening entry 'safely traces the coming together of the pair, the transformation of "I" and "she" into a united "we"'.<sup>7</sup> MWS makes her first contribution to the journal by completing one of PBS's sentences: '*Mary was there. S.helley was also with me*' (Figure 1) (n.b. italics show PBS's holograph in MWS's/the shared journal, unless stated otherwise).<sup>8</sup> This combination of two different hands in one sentence embodies

both voices, each marking the presence of the other [...] this first segment of the [...] *Journals* devotes itself not to the history of a single individual, but to the "pleasure and security", in Shelley's words, that two lovers – who are also two readers and two writers – seek and find in each other.<sup>9</sup>

The comfort offered by the presence of a literary partner, as Corbett suggests, is expressed within a communal writing space, and indicates the Shelleys' openness in sharing paper and ideas, and (in Dekker's terms), their 'nonpossessive attitude toward intellectual property'. As time progressed, the journals, along with the Shelley' letters, demonstrate an intertextual connection with the Shelleys' creative writings, including published works.

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<sup>7</sup> Corbett, 77.

<sup>8</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 7. Feldman and Scott-Kilvert suggest MWS's handwriting starts from 'S.helley'; the Bodleian Library transcript online at *Shelley's Ghost* suggests MWS's hand begins at 'with'. Stephen Hebron (Curator), <http://shelleysghost.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>.

<sup>9</sup> Corbett, 77-78.

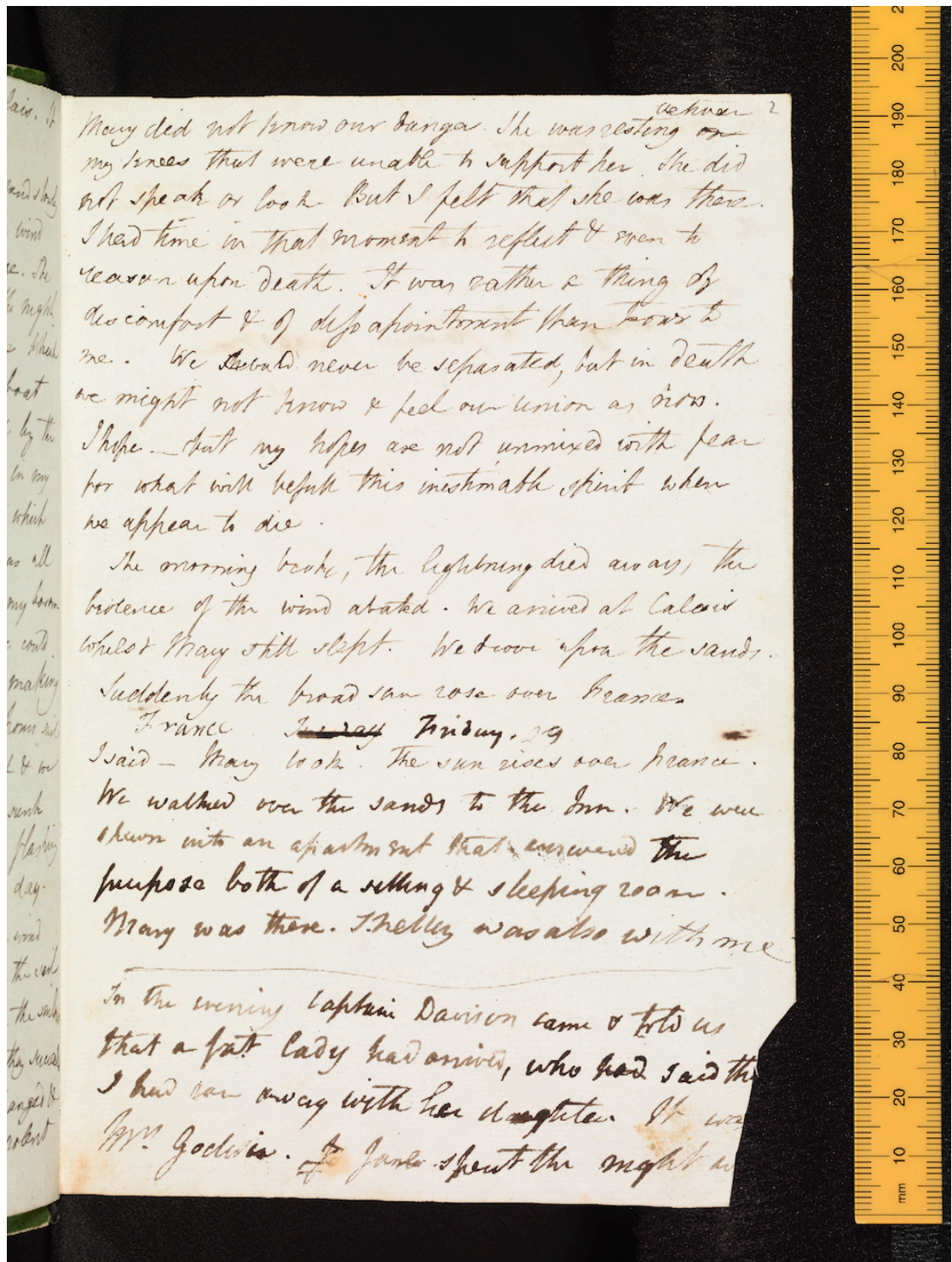


Figure 1. The Shelleys' Journal, 1814.

Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Abinger d. 27, fol 2r.

## Percy Shelley's poems to Mary

The 'Geneva Notebook' from the 1816 period shows part of an early draft of 'Mont Blanc' that also appears in MWS's journal.<sup>10</sup> Above the pencil scrawl of the five unused lines are six draft lines of another poem in PBS's hand, 'evidently addressed to Mary S. for the second anniversary of their elopement on 28 July 1814, almost indecipherable and with a huge blot in the middle':

I can not but [ ] there is no bourn  
 Where [ ] my thoughts return  
 From all my [ ] brief state & we [ ]  
 To steep in [ ]- not to mourn  
 Aught in ourselves or in the tie  
 That makes thee mine unchangeably<sup>11</sup>

These lines show how PBS's mind depicts his writing partner and lover in verse. The phrase 'in the tie / That makes thee mine unchangeably' emphasises the 'tie' as being unchangeable, not the possessiveness that is indicated by the word 'mine', as this is where the line break appears. PBS's writings from the period 1814-18 underscore MWS's presence as an influence on her literary partner's creativity.

On 28 September 1817 MWS wrote as a postscript to her letter to PBS: 'What of Frankenstein? and your own poem have you fixed on a name',<sup>12</sup> showing a concern not only with her own text but also with PBS's progress in his work. PBS's 'Dedication' to the poem alluded to in this letter - *Laon and Cythna* (composed 1817)<sup>13</sup> - is addressed to MWS as literary partner and lover. PBS wanted to publish this work in 1817, but it was repressed on account of its subject matter.<sup>14</sup> It is PBS's longest poem and a work of 'violence & revolution [...] relieved by milder

<sup>10</sup> Michael Erkelenz, 'Introduction' in *BSM* Vol XI, ed. Erkelenz (London: Garland, 1992), xxvi.

<sup>11</sup> PBS, fragment to MWS 1816, in *The Poems of Shelley* I, 516. Manuscript: *BSM* Vol XI, 150-51.

<sup>12</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 47-48.

<sup>13</sup> Donovan, *The Poems of Shelley* II, 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Following specific editorial word changes, it was published as *The Revolt of Islam*.

pictures of friendship & love & natural affections'.<sup>15</sup> In the 'Dedication', PBS considers MWS as a kindred spirit:

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart  
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain;  
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert  
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain  
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,  
And walked as free as light the clouds among,  
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain  
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung  
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

('Dedication to Mary -- ', *Laon and Cythna*, ll. 55-63)<sup>16</sup>

PBS praises MWS's ability to fuel his creativity by her 'wisdom', and he pays tribute to her freedom, her integrity, her ability to 'burst and rend' the 'mortal chain / Of Custom'. MWS is intellectually open and liberal; she is in essence 'free', and therefore rejecting the tyranny in society that PBS loathed. A commitment to radical beliefs was emerging in MWS's own writings by 1817, and had always been present in her upbringing (in the shadow of her parents), as well as in her brave decision to elope with PBS to the continent when he was married to someone else.

The image of 'Spring' falling on PBS's 'wintry heart' introduces MWS as a source of renewal for the poet's mind: this transformation is her effect on his ability to write and his creative talent. PBS also describes returning to MWS, 'mine own heart's home', after the 'summer task' (ll. 1-2) of writing the poem has ended: 'As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry, /Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome' (ll. 3-4). PBS's allusion to Spenser places both himself and MWS in a line of literary tradition. PBS joins himself with MWS in the verse, declaring his desire to 'unite / With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light' (ll. 8-9). Further fragments from this period similarly show PBS's appreciation of MWS and

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<sup>15</sup> Reiman and Sharon B. Powers, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 1<sup>st</sup> edn, ed. Reiman and Powers, (London: Norton, 1977) n. 1, 96. PBS, *Letters* I, 563.

<sup>16</sup> PBS, *Laon and Cythna* in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 10-260. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

how his writing transforms her into a poetic figure. Earlier, circa 1814-15, PBS translated lines from Dante's *Vita nuova*, replacing the original pronoun with 'Mary': 'What Mary is when she a little smiles / I cannot even tell or call to mind / It is a miracle, so new, so rare'.<sup>17</sup> However, it is clear that MWS was not content to be Dante's Beatrice, a passive muse; her responses to PBS's work, and vice-versa, are integral to the relationship. The Shelleys provided each other with professional assistance as well as inspiration.

Towards the end of the 1814-18 period, PBS was still composing idiosyncratic rhymes addressed to MWS. The poem 'O Mary dear, that you were here' was composed in August/September 1818. The verse marks the crossover to the next time period of this thesis, after *Frankenstein* has been published, and when the Shelleys are older and living in Italy. The 'O Mary dear' fragment retains PBS's enthusiasm for MWS as a literary partner and lover. As he awaits her arrival in Este, he misses her 'sweet voice, like a bird / Singing love to its lone mate' (ll. 3-4). The words of this poem present the Shelleys living as two united outcasts, a voice recalled in the 1814 love letters (discussed below), in which they declared their dependence on one another in a hostile world. Like the 'Dedication' to *Laon and Cythna*, and as we shall see in the 1814 letters, the poem also emphasises that PBS is depleted by MWS's absence: 'Mary dear, come to me soon, / I am not well whilst thou art far' (ll. 10-11).<sup>18</sup>

These poetic fragments are not only beguiling but revealing; MWS is just one of the women PBS would address as a muse, but her appearance is more noteworthy because she was an author in her own right and a collaborator in his literary activities. She was a constant presence in his life from 1814 onwards. These verses by PBS addressed to MWS display intimacy, love, affection and praise, which when placed alongside the examples of the Shelleys' collaboration on other works, provide further evidence of a mutually respectful creative exchange.

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<sup>17</sup> PBS, 'What Mary is' in *The Poems of Shelley* I, 447.

<sup>18</sup> PBS, 'Oh Mary dear, that you were here' in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 419-20.



### ***The Assassins* and early letters**

During the 1814 elopement journey PBS began *The Assassins*, a prose romance, for which MWS was amanuensis; this work was left unfinished. As David Clark summarises, the fragment tells us the story of ‘a devout band of Christians [...] who fled from Jerusalem when the Romans besieged that city’. They were ‘bent upon establishing their Utopian, communistic society upon the moral principles of Jesus’.<sup>19</sup> The Shelleys refer to the composition of this fiction in the shared journal; in August MWS describes how ‘we [...] write part of Shelley’s romance’.<sup>20</sup> On subsequent days, PBS records that they ‘write the romance until three o’clock’, and MWS also notes ‘then we write a part of the romance’.<sup>21</sup> They do not disclose any further details, only that the act of writing has been a shared experience. Beyond MWS’s journal itself, this is the earliest evidence of a collaborative effort by the Shelleys on one piece of writing. MWS refers to the composition of *The Assassins* by noting ‘we’ write - it is a collective activity. The manuscript is written in the hand of PBS and MWS, and we know they went on to collaborate further - on *Frankenstein*, and other works.<sup>22</sup>

We can assume PBS to be the author, as MWS indicated in 1840 that she ‘wrote [*The Assassins*] to [Shelley’s] dictation’.<sup>23</sup> But identifying the Shelleys’ individual contributions to the piece is a complex task; as early as 1814, PBS’s authorship is not quite as self-sufficient as one might first assume. The pages in MWS’s hand were, as the editor Weinberg explains, ‘probably taken down in dictation as there are several ungrammatical full stops and misspellings; in addition the spelling is [MWS’s] own, not PBS’s’.<sup>24</sup> PBS’s corrections appear throughout the manuscript (modifying his own and MWS’s hand). E. B. Murray explains how there is evidence for a ‘division of labour’ in the manuscript, suggesting MWS is ‘a copyist and/or creative editor’. Furthermore, ‘certain

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<sup>19</sup> David Lee Clark, Introductory note to *The Assassins* in *Shelley’s Prose*, ed. Clark (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), 144.

<sup>20</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> MWS (and PBS), *Journals*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Weinberg, *BSM* Vol XXII (2 parts), ed. Weinberg (London: Garland, 1997), Part II, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Weinberg, *BSM* XXII Part II, footnote 5, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Weinberg, *BSM* XXII Part II, 19.

deletions in context may even suggest Mary's original composition rather than S's second thoughts'. In his detailed account of stylistic, grammatical and syntactical differences in the manuscript between the two hands, Murray provides evidence - that goes beyond the use of the word 'we' in the journal - of MWS having a more significant role in the construction of *The Assassins* than that of just amanuensis. Such evidence 'may be used to counter [MWS's] later recollection that the creative share of the work was entirely her husband's'.<sup>25</sup> In 1840, MWS as PBS's widow published an edited version of *The Assassins* and her preface declares: 'I do not know what story he had in view',<sup>26</sup> indicating a characteristically modest self-presentation on MWS's part. This humble attitude adopted by MWS will become more pronounced as we proceed to examine a carefully chosen selection of the Shelleys' works, selected in order to shed light on the most intriguing aspects of their collaboration, and the shifts in their creative methods as a couple.

Murray's editorial work on *The Assassins* indicates a wealth of possibilities regarding exactly how the Shelleys were working on the fragment in 1814. These methods do not just include MWS writing to PBS's dictation but also PBS making a transcription from a draft, and MWS transcribing from the same draft, then subsequently requiring clarification from PBS when she could not read his hand clearly.<sup>27</sup> The edition of PBS's prose used here - edited by Murray, along with the manuscript edited by Weinberg - represents the state in which MWS and PBS first left the text.<sup>28</sup>

*The Assassins* shows the Shelleys' growing interest in similar ideas. Murray describes the fragment as 'a characteristic species of morally instructive myth-making' by PBS, pre-empting the moral lessons of *Frankenstein*, and presenting a

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<sup>25</sup> E. B. Murray, Editorial Commentary on PBS, *The Assassins* in *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* Vol I, ed. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 386-87.

<sup>26</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to PBS, *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* in *NSWMS* II, 335.

<sup>27</sup> Murray, Textual Notes to *The Assassins* in *Prose I*, ed. Murray, 542.

<sup>28</sup> MWS later edited *The Assassins* for the posthumous publication of PBS's *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*. The way she altered the MS is interesting and another feature of the Shelleys' collaboration (discussed in Chapter 4). See Weinberg, *BSM* XXII Part II, 21-22.

‘reasonable facsimile of Godwinian Utopianism’,<sup>29</sup> reflecting the shared study by PBS and MWS of her father’s work, as demonstrated in their reading list for the year that MWS kept in her journal.<sup>30</sup> Weinberg explains how collaboration extended beyond practicalities and illustrates the Shelleys’ joint commitment to *The Assassins* (a text that has ‘received little critical attention’):<sup>31</sup>

The text reveals the extremely close co-operation that existed between MWS and PBS at the time of their elopement in the autumn of 1814. Composition, dictation, transcription, and revision interact in a fluid process that indicates the Shelleys’ mutual interest in the narrative.<sup>32</sup>

The manuscript displays an early form of the Shelleys’ collaborative working on paper that would be replicated during the composition and editing of *Frankenstein*. For example folio 41R clearly shows both PBS and MWS’s hands.<sup>33</sup> MWS takes down PBS’s dictation, and PBS edits her transcript; his alterations to MWS’s hand appear in a similar way to how he would eventually edit drafts of *Frankenstein*. PBS’s occasional word changes make a significant impact on the tone; some of the modifications he makes on folio 41R heighten the language to a more ornate style. For example, ‘became’ is altered to ‘formed’; ‘to be the cause’ becomes ‘germinate’. These kinds of revisions are some of the most significant in PBS’s editing of *Frankenstein*, as Mellor describes: ‘by far the greatest number of Percy Shelley’s revisions attempt to elevate his wife’s prose style into a more Latinate idiom. [...] Percy Shelley consistently preferred more learned, polysyllabic terms’.<sup>34</sup> We can see PBS altering MWS’s writing in *The Assassins*, and he makes corrections to the text even though her hand in this manuscript was instructed by his own dictation. Alternatively, MWS transcribed directly from a draft by PBS – either way, PBS alters the text in MWS’s hand.<sup>35</sup> This manuscript is fascinating because the composition of *The Assassins* took place well before the writing of *Frankenstein*,

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<sup>29</sup> Murray, Editorial Commentary on *The Assassins* in *Prose I*, 385.

<sup>30</sup> See the (shared) reading list for PBS and MWS in 1814, including Godwin’s *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*. MWS, *Journals*, 85-86.

<sup>31</sup> Weinberg, *BSM XXII* Part II, 22.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167. Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. c. 5, folio 41R.

<sup>34</sup> Mellor, ‘Making a “monster”’, 14-15.

<sup>35</sup> Murray, Editorial Commentary on *The Assassins*, 386.

and indicates the early stages of a collaborative relationship. Careful manuscript study can provide an indicator of the kind of literary relationship the Shelleys had; the manner in which they collaborated during close working can be seen on the page.

Imagery akin to the 'eternal springs' (127)<sup>36</sup> in *The Assassins* would appear in PBS's 'Mont Blanc', a poem written at the same time as *Frankenstein* in 1816: 'from secret springs / The source of human thought its tribute brings / Of waters', 'a vast river / Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves' (ll. 4-6, 10-11).<sup>37</sup> The suffering Wandering Jew figure is presented as 'desolated humanity' (134), and PBS uses the word 'desolate' to describe the wild landscape in the valley of Bethzatanai (126). Rome, now fallen, shows the 'ruins of the human mind', and such destruction affects the 'mighty' even more than the 'desolation of the most solemn temples' (126). As I will explore below, this word 'desolate(d)' reoccurs throughout the 1816 travel writing that would inform 'Mont Blanc' and *Frankenstein*. It is the descriptions of the mountains in *The Assassins* that most anticipate those works begun in Geneva in 1816. PBS describes the 'immensity of those precipitous mountains with their starry pyramids of snow', and how 'on every side their icy summits darted their white pinnacles into the clear blue sky' (127).

The accounts of the landscape also explore the human mind's reaction to what is perceived: 'The immediate effect of such a scene suddenly presented to the contemplation of mortal eyes is seldom the subject of authentic record' (128). The Shelleys were questioning whether their reaction to the scenery as surreal and unsettling is a quality possessed by the landscape itself, or if the effect of the sublime is shaped more fully by the power of the mind. PBS's prose implies the beholder imagines a supernatural force: 'Nature undisturbed had become an enchantress in these solitudes' (127). A preoccupation with human perception of the natural world would reappear in the Shelleys' writings following their return

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<sup>36</sup> PBS, *The Assassins* in *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* I, 124-39. All further references to this text will be from this edition.

<sup>37</sup> PBS, 'Mont Blanc' (B Text – as published in 1817) in *The Poems of Shelley* I, 542-49. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

to the continent in 1816, in poems like 'Mont Blanc', in the 1814 and 1816 journal/letters, in the joint publication *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), and in the scenes of *Frankenstein* set amongst the mountains. Such intertextuality may be regarded as a product of the close working environment and the shared commitment to intellectual development shown in the journal. PBS writes in the opening pages:

*Mary read to me some passages from Ld Byron's poems. I was not before so clearly aware [of] how much of the colouring our own feelings throw upon the liveliest delineations of other minds. Our own perceptions are the world to us.*<sup>38</sup>

Following a note of shared reading - poems by their future companion, Byron - PBS muses: 'Our own perceptions are the world to us': the 'our' is highly significant, as these are 'perceptions' shared which would go on to provide a point of departure for their respective literary works. If 'our' refers to humankind more generally, PBS's own experience is unique partly because of MWS's presence in the preceding sentences - her reading aloud inspires his contemplation. The Shelleys' mountain descriptions would blend more thoroughly especially in the build-up to the writing of *Frankenstein*; the similarity in 'perceptions', and then in diction, would become all the more striking. Their individual voices deviate from shared reflections at times, but not without indicating the origin of these mutual influences and the social elements that may have shaped them, too, such as partaking in discussions, and reading or writing together. The 1814 journal also includes an entry by PBS that explains MWS had begun writing her own creative effort entitled 'Hate'; this piece was apparently discarded and no manuscript has been found. MWS's composition of this mysterious and ominously titled work is recorded as giving 'S. the greater pleasure' as he 'writes part of his Romance'.<sup>39</sup>

The Shelleys' letters and journal entries provide detailed accounts of literary activity and therefore remain invaluable sources for considering the foundations of their intellectual partnership. From their initial meeting, the

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<sup>38</sup> PBS in MWS, *Journals*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> PBS in MWS, *Journals*, 24. See also Spark, 25.

Shelleys' relationship was more than simply a romantic connection but an extraordinary merging of their souls and intellects; this union is how they describe it to one another, and to others. The quotation below is exemplary of how they understood their relationship: from the outset, they saw it as a fusing of their beings; gradually their subsequent literary works would reflect the influence they had on one another's minds. PBS wrote to Hogg about MWS in 1814:

and so intimately are our natures now united, that I feel whilst I describe her excellencies as if I were an egoist expatiating upon his own perfections.<sup>40</sup>

This is a sharp contrast to how PBS infamously described his then-wife Harriet in the same letter: 'my rash & heartless union with Harriet: an union over whose entrance might justly be in[s]cribed *Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate!*' (from Dante's *Inferno* III. 9: 'Abandon every hope, you who enter').<sup>41</sup> For PBS, this new relationship is an immediate transition from the loneliness and melancholy he felt with Harriet ('I wandered in the fields alone'), enabling him to consider himself a 'whole accurately united', rather than 'an assemblage of inconsistent & discordant portions'. And thus in gaining the love of MWS, PBS recognises that he can become 'a more useful lover of mankind, a more ardent asserter of truth & virtue'.<sup>42</sup> This statement may derive from initial lust and youthful love, yet PBS and MWS would indeed go on to intellectually inspire and influence one another because of their 'united natures', from 1814 onwards. PBS had previously written that Harriet delivered similar inspiration in the dedication of *Queen Mab*: 'Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on, / And loved mankind the more?'<sup>43</sup> However, MWS offered him intellectual equality, with her radical Godwinian upbringing, and her growing determination to write. Inspiration for the Shelleys becomes a reciprocal interchange, rather than one-sided, as with an artist and their muse.

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<sup>40</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 402.

<sup>41</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 402. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy I: Inferno*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 55.

<sup>42</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 402-403.

<sup>43</sup> PBS, *Queen Mab* in *The Poems of Shelley* I, ll. 7-8, 270.

MWS's letters to PBS in 1814 also indicate the intensity of their connection. In some ways their relationship isolated them from others; they were allied intellectually and emotionally, bringing them together as a joint force against an unsympathetic society. The Shelleys faced hostility (not least from MWS's family) following their elopement to the continent in 1814. When they returned to England, they were obliged to live apart in order for PBS to elude bailiffs. This period of forced separation generated outpourings of devotion in forlorn love letters. These surviving documents record how painful it was to be divided, and their shared belief that facing the world as a pair supplied the means for combating their plight. MWS writes to PBS in October 1814:

dearest Shelley you are solitary and uncomfortable why cannot I be with you to cheer you and to press you to my heart oh my love you have no friends why then should you be torn from the only one who has affection for you [...] I know how tenderly you love me and how you repine at this absence from me – when shall we be free from fear of treachery?<sup>44</sup>

Even the line between friend and foe would become blurred; the only exception would be the union of PBS and MWS, one force against this 'treachery':

I shall meet you tomorrow love & if you do but get money love which indeed you must we will defy our enemies & our friends (for aught I see they are all as bad as one another) and we will not part again.<sup>45</sup>

PBS writes to MWS in 1814 that without her he cannot focus his mind: 'I wander restlessly about I cannot read – or even write'.<sup>46</sup> Thus PBS speaks of how his intellectual being is compromised by their separation:

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<sup>44</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 1.

<sup>45</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 5.

<sup>46</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 411.

Mary love – we must be united. I will not part from you again after Saturday night. We must devise some scheme. I must return. Your thoughts alone can waken mine to energy. My mind without yours is dead & cold as the dark midnight river when the moon is down. It seems as if you alone could shield me from impurity & vice. If I were absent from you long I should shudder with horror at myself. My understanding becomes undisciplined without you.<sup>47</sup>

PBS again uses the word ‘united’, and his use of the word ‘undisciplined’ suggests how highly he regarded MWS as a creative interlocutor. Intriguingly here MWS is equated to the ‘moon’, illuminating the river (PBS’s mind); in later years PBS’s apparent depiction of MWS as the moon in *Epipsychidion* would go on to haunt her grief long after his death.

In their first few years together, PBS and MWS were reading the same works, as is evident from MWS’s journals; until 1819 MWS kept reading lists for the both of them. These lists are extensive, and include poetry (Wordsworth, Milton), novels (such as those by Godwin and Wollstonecraft), and classics (Ovid, Virgil).<sup>48</sup> Even after 1819, MWS’s journals up to 1822 indicate *passim* that the Shelleys were always reading. During the 1814-18 period their joint intellectual activities were particularly intense: on the 1814-17 reading lists for MWS those texts marked ‘x’ would indicate that ‘[PB]S. has read also’.<sup>49</sup>

One year on from their elopement in 1815, MWS writes to PBS on the day before their anniversary:

We ought not to be absent any longer indeed we ought not – I am not happy at it – when I retire to my room no sweet Love – after dinner no Shelley – though I have heaps of things very particular to say –<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 414.

<sup>48</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 85-97, 631-84.

<sup>49</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 85.

<sup>50</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 15-16.



MWS emphasises the things that she has ‘to say’, which implies conversations of a personal nature, and, given what we know of the Shelleys’ lifestyle, scholarly conversations too. PBS’s letter above similarly exclaims that ‘my mind without yours is dead’; absence from the intellectual partner leaves a feeling of mental weakness. This is the letter in which MWS uses the pet names ‘Pecksie’ and ‘Maie’, as alluded to in my introduction. Bennett has discussed the ‘dedication’ both individuals had ‘to the development of two literary careers’, a determination that forms the basis for the Shelleys’ lives thereafter.<sup>51</sup> Even in the years following PBS’s death, MWS would return to that period of separation in 1814 as inspiration for the narrative in her novel *Lodore* (1835).<sup>52</sup> The Shelleys’ union was dependent on philosophical dialogue and a powerful intellectual connection, which would deliver one of the most important Romantic partnerships of the age.

### **MSS. 13,290: The Library of Congress notebook**

Looking at the Shelleys’ other extant manuscripts reminds us that they were sharing writing spaces before, during and after the composition of *Frankenstein*, and previously overlooked connections between the Shelleys’ works can be found by examining the way in which they used communal notebooks. There is a notebook in the Library of Congress - marked MSS. 13,290 - that was used by PBS and MWS from 1814-18. This book does not appear in facsimile in any of the Garland editions of the Shelley manuscripts. Critics (Frederick L. Jones, A. A. Markley and E. B. Murray) editing and publishing the texts from MSS. 13, 290 have included brief commentaries on its contents and provenance within the Shelley canons;<sup>53</sup> Jean de Palacio also wrote a commentary on Mary Shelley’s Latin work,

<sup>51</sup> Bennett, ‘Introduction’ in MWS, *Letters I*, ed. Bennett, xvi.

<sup>52</sup> See Vargo, ‘Introduction’ in MWS, *Lodore*, ed. Vargo (Hadleigh: Broadview Press, 1997), 24: ‘In his 1889 *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* Ernest Dowden states that he was the first to notice “that some important passages of biography, transmuted for the purposes of fiction” appear in *Lodore*. These include “an almost literal transcript from her life and that of Shelley during the weeks of distress and separation in London, which followed soon after their return from the Continent in 1814”’.

<sup>53</sup> A. A. Markley, ‘Introduction’ and notes in *Mary Shelley’s Literary Lives and Other Writings* Vol IV, ed. Markley and Clemit (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), lxii-lxv, 281-95. Murray, notes in PBS, *Prose I*, ed. Murray, 487-92. Frederick L. Jones, ‘Unpublished

which considers the notebook as a context for her studies;<sup>54</sup> otherwise, the notebook has been neglected as a text in its own right. By studying MSS. 13,290 as a physical object we can identify traits of the Shelleys' close working and use of a shared workspace during the period 1814-18.

It could be argued that the most prominent writings in MSS. 13, 290 have been analysed individually and that is sufficient; however, the notebook itself documents just how closely the Shelleys were working, using the same paper to compose writings intended for an audience alongside more idiosyncratic exercises. It is possible to infer from this that they would have encountered each other's compositions either deliberately or accidentally as a by-product of their own working. Such evidence in the form of MSS. 13, 290 challenges those critics who argue that there was an antagonism between the two authors, separating them in the manuscript of *Frankenstein*, viewing them as two individuals solely functioning in opposition to one another (see Mellor as discussed above, who argues he 'imposed' his ideas, 'distorted' hers, added things that were 'irrelevant').<sup>55</sup> Seminal texts by PBS and MWS may show obvious differences, but they originate from a confluence of ideas, forming and mutating during composition.

MSS. 13,290 contains 68 pages (only 1-33 are numbered). The notebook is small, heavily worn, and features only one blank page. The most prominent works in the notebook are PBS's review of *Frankenstein* and his work *On the Game Laws*, and MWS's translation of 'Cupid and Psyche' from Apuleius. Murray (PBS) and Markley (MWS) edited these three works for publication. Jones also published *On The Game Laws* with a short commentary in 1948. The contents of the notebook - as documented by the more recent work of Murray and Markley (1993, 2002) - are shown below. These details emphasise the different hands apparent to the reader, and how the notebook was shared between PBS, MWS, and Claire Clairmont.

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Fragments by Shelley and Mary', *Studies in Philology* Vol 45, No. 3 (Jul., 1948), University of North Carolina Press, 472-76.

<sup>54</sup> Juan de Palacio, 'Mary Shelley's Latin Studies: Her Unpublished Translation of Apuleius', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 38.4 (October-December 1964), 564-71.

<sup>55</sup> Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 59-69.

Page Numbers (<> indicates unnumbered in notebook)	Contents
1-10	Latin exercises - Virgil's <i>Aeneid</i> (MWS)
11, 13, 15, 17	<i>On The Game Laws</i> (PBS)
12, 14, 16	<i>On 'Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus'</i> (conclusion) (PBS)
18-31	Italian transcription (Claire Clairmont)
32-33	Latin exercises (Claire Clairmont)
<34>	Blank
<35>-<65>	Apuleius translation 'Cupid and Psyche' (MWS)
<66>-<68>	<i>On 'Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus'</i> (beginning) (PBS)

Table 1. The contents of MSS. 13, 290: The Library of Congress notebook.

There is also a holograph in the hand of PBS glued into the front of MSS. 13, 290, but this piece - 'An Answer to Leslie's "A Short and Easy Method with the Deists"' (also known as 'Essay on Miracles and Christian Doctrine', published by Jones in 1948) – does not belong to the notebook. A stray leaf is also missing from MSS. 13, 290 that contains two pages of MWS's Apuleius translation. This manuscript is now held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.<sup>56</sup>

The notebook was acquired by MWS in 1814, and this is evident from the writing inside the back cover: 'Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin | May 16<sup>th</sup> | 1814'. Below this inscription, the 16-year-old MWS additionally writes: 'Shall I write a poem on receiving a | cordial shake of the hand at parting from | an esteemed and excellent person | [?alas] I cannot write poetry' (Figure 2).<sup>57</sup> This musing has been explained as describing MWS's feelings on her early relationship with PBS. Someone (not one of the Shelleys themselves) has written in pencil on the manuscript page: 'Mary's – believed to refer to Shelley – their meeting'. MWS's apparent self-criticism might indicate why she found it necessary to invite

<sup>56</sup> Markley, lxxv.

<sup>57</sup> Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MSS. 13,290. Also Markley, lxxv.

comments on her work from her more experienced partner. This display of modesty as an author demonstrates her self-fashioning as an inferior writer to PBS, something which is evident throughout her personal reflections in writing, particularly after PBS's death in 1822, where for example she records in her journal: 'As I write I feel intimately my deficienc[i]es, and how his mind is as superior to mine as excellence to frailty'.<sup>58</sup> MWS's presentation of herself as an amateur in MSS 13,290 in 1814 also recalls the composition of her first novel and how she placed herself under the instruction of the more mature and practised PBS; MWS wrote to him regarding *Frankenstein*, 'I give you carte blanche to make what alterations you please'.<sup>59</sup> It is fair to say that female authors at this time were culturally conditioned to expect forceful and substantial advice from male counterparts, who generally had more formal education and experience. Thus in this notebook (which MWS acquired in the year in which she met and eloped with PBS) she ponders: '[?alas] I cannot write poetry', apparently demonstrating her anxiety about her talents. Alternatively, we might read 'I cannot write poetry' as MWS saying that she would rather not/prefer not to write poetry, prefiguring her production of one of the greatest prose works of the period. Later in this chapter we will see how in editing PBS's writings for *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, MWS styles his poetical turns into a more prosaic idiom, accentuating her preference for a different form.

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<sup>58</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 463.

<sup>59</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 42.

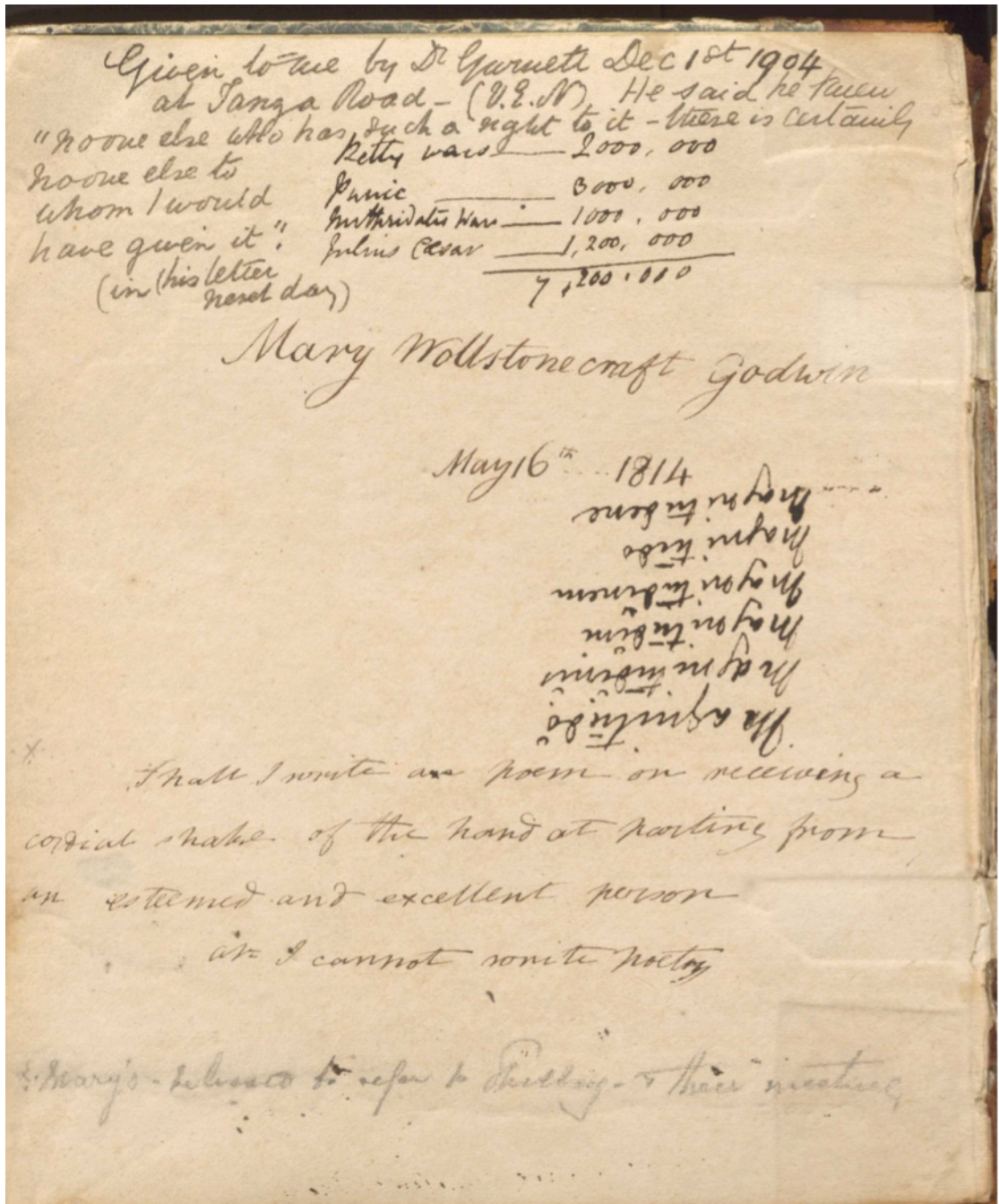


Figure 2. '[?alas] I cannot write poetry' from the 1814-18 notebook used by PBS and MWS.

Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MSS. 13,290, Collection 1814-22, inside back cover.

MWS's potential display of modesty regarding poetry is indicative of her pursuing her own creative voice. The critical-yet-supportive nature of the Shelleys' relationship strongly implies that any genuine insecurity on the part of MWS would not have originated from PBS's denunciation of her; rather, he would have encouraged her, and even championed her talent. As she notes in the 1831 introduction to *Frankenstein*, even before the conception of her masterpiece, PBS was keen for her to write:

My husband, however, was from the first, very anxious that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage, and enrol myself on the page of fame. He was for ever inciting me to obtain literary reputation [...] he desired that I should write, not so much with the idea that I could produce any thing worthy of notice, but that he might himself judge how far I possessed the promise of better things hereafter.<sup>60</sup>

PBS's continual support of MWS's writing implies he acknowledged her success in obtaining this 'literary reputation', a talent of which he wanted to be the initial judge of. MWS's self-deprecating tone is evident but although she inscribes 'I cannot write poetry' in 1814, by the time this notebook was in regular use, she was translating Apuleius, penning her own novel (*Frankenstein*) and a travel-book (*History of a Six Weeks' Tour*). Her literary career was not exclusively defined by her relationship with PBS but it was influenced by his encouragement and their general lifestyle, which included supportive creative communities, such as in Geneva in 1816. Prose was MWS's forte but a poetical ability steadily emerged as she grew older (in verse-dramas such as 'Proserpine' and her elegiac poems after PBS's death), and she was instrumental in bringing many of PBS's great verse pieces to press, before and after he passed away. MWS was also an important amanuensis for Byron, as she copied works such as *The Prison of Chillon* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III.<sup>61</sup>

The inscription in MSS. 13, 290 portrays MWS's teenage anxiety in 1814 prior to any formal literary endeavours. However, the notebook was not used in

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<sup>60</sup> MWS, 'Introduction to the 1831 *Frankenstein*', 176.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of MWS's role as Byron's amanuensis, see Cochran, 'Mary Shelley's Fair Copying of *Don Juan*', 221-41.

earnest until 1816. Markley's work identifies that it 'appears to have been used by Mary Shelley, P. B. Shelley, and Claire Clairmont during their travels in Europe in 1816, and their residence at Albion House in Marlow, where they lived from March 1817 until March 1818'.<sup>62</sup> Jones also identifies that 'the contents of the Notebook belong to May 1814 - early 1818'.<sup>63</sup> This time period includes a particularly fruitful phase in the Shelleys' literary relationship, including the collaborative working that produced *Frankenstein*. The notebook shows that intimacy during writing and composition also existed independent of the *Frankenstein* manuscript.

Murray's discussion of the notebook is concerned with dating the prose holographs by PBS. Different assumptions depend 'on how one interprets the spatial and chronological relationships among the three hands at work in the notebook'.<sup>64</sup> Murray's narrative describes the Shelleys passing the notebook between each other and Claire. An individual may 'take over' the notebook for a period of time but the ownership of the notebook was collective.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Jones has argued that although the fragments in MSS. 13, 290 'add nothing to the reputation of Shelley or Mary [...] they do tend to round out the history of their literary activities'.<sup>66</sup> We can estimate the details of the Shelleys' 'literary activities' from 1814-18 in evidence available in this particular notebook.

PBS's *Frankenstein* review is not placed chronologically in the notebook, showing that the Shelleys would have picked up spare bits of paper here and there where they could (including during their travels in Europe in 1816, which may explain why the notebook is damaged). There are numerous corrections and alterations throughout. Overall, the notebook contains experimental prose works that are perhaps not the Shelleys' primary literary projects, but show their deliberate attention to developing skills in different genres. The Shelleys' choices of subject matter in these holographs indicate connections between the pieces of writing within MSS. 13, 290, and therefore evidence for close working and

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<sup>62</sup> Markley, lxxv.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, 'Unpublished Fragments', 473.

<sup>64</sup> Murray, *Prose I*, 487.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>66</sup> Jones, 'Unpublished Fragments', 472.

influence is not just based on the fact that two authors happen to use the same notebook (although, as I have suggested above, this fact is significant in itself). Considering how and why these particular texts appear in MSS. 13, 290 provides an insight into the Shelleys' works and working methods, and demonstrates why Shelley manuscripts have become so valuable to academics, and why they must continue to be consulted.

In *The Unfamiliar Shelley* (2009), Timothy Webb and Weinberg discuss contemporary scholars' use of the Garland facsimiles and original manuscripts. The editions of the manuscript notebooks 'have provided material evidence' for the timely 'reassessment' of PBS.<sup>67</sup> As I have already stated, I want to further emphasise that they also allow for a similar reassessment of MWS, and the Shelleys' relationship. Previously, contact with the Shelley manuscript collections was severely restricted, but now the vast majority are accessible in facsimile with scholarly notes and introductions; the Garland editions offer clarity and the potential for new understandings in Shelley studies. Bringing manuscript study to the mainstream results in:

many new readings for the Shelley text, a much richer sense of the writing process both in poetry and in prose, and an enlarged understanding of the intense, highly pressured and diverse intellectual world which informs the notebooks and the creative texts which they contain.<sup>68</sup>

Webb and Weinberg use Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 9. as an example. The introduction to Volume XIV of *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts* (by P.M.S. Dawson and Webb) identifies connections between the different poems in the contents of that notebook, such as the portraits of literary contemporaries in the draft of *Adonais* echoing the 'gallery of portraits' in the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, and even the reoccurring theme of 'magic' across the whole contents of the notebook. As Webb and Weinberg summarise:

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<sup>67</sup> Webb and Weinberg, 'Introduction' in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, ed. Webb and Weinberg (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 8.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7. See also P. M. S. Dawson and Webb, 'Introduction' in *BSM Vol XIV*, ed. Dawson and Webb (London: Garland, 1993), xxv-xxvi.



In the absence of the notebook, these connections may sometimes be a little difficult to follow, but they illustrate that vivid nexus of relationship so particularly marked in Shelley which can only be revealed by access to the evidence of the notebooks themselves [...].<sup>69</sup>

Such a method of reading can be applied to MSS. 13, 290. An elaboration is that this theory applies to MWS's works within the notebook as well, suggesting that the study of manuscript notebooks as an incidental 'collection' might reveal more about literary relationships and the literary communities PBS worked in, as well as the internal reflections of the solitary poet.

MWS's translation of Apuleius in MSS. 13, 290 enables us to reflect on her development as a writer. Markley's transcription of the manuscript indicates that MWS 'worked on the piece in bursts'. She 'characteristically left spaces in her translation at places in the text where she evidently had trouble with the Latin, or wished to come back to it at a later time'.<sup>70</sup> This drafting style is similar to the way PBS worked in composing his poetry. See, for example, the first draft of 'To a Skylark', which as Bruce Barker-Benfield explains, 'illustrates [P. B.] Shelley's method of leaving spaces blank for later completion'.<sup>71</sup> MWS might also have discussed her translation work with PBS. His hand does not appear here, but it is not unlikely that he would have overseen her Latin jottings, and her corrections of her own writing could be a result of his advice. In particular Jones suggests the Apuleius translation is 'illustrative of [MWS's] progress in Latin and of her intense study and literary activity at Marlow in 1817 while so much else was going on', notably the writing of *Frankenstein* and preparing *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* for the press, as well as social and familial events including the birth of Clara Shelley: 'The latter part of the MS shows the haste with which she worked in London amid various distractions: there are spaces left for untranslated phrases, and some disorderly sentences'.<sup>72</sup> Again, these spaces represent a working style reminiscent

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<sup>69</sup> Webb and Weinberg, 'Introduction' in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Markley, lxiv

<sup>71</sup> Bruce Barker-Benfield, *Shelley's Guitar* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1992), 139.

<sup>72</sup> Jones, 'Unpublished Fragments', 472

of PBS's method of constructing verse. The 'disorderly sentences' and the fact that the translation is unfinished and unrevised reminds us that the notebook provides a valuable document of works-in-progress at this time, akin to the earlier drafts of *Frankenstein*, showing the Shelleys' initial workings.

Significantly, MWS's decision to embark on this Latin task was a result of the Shelleys' continued literary discussions. On 8 May 1817 PBS wrote in a letter to Hogg that Apuleius had overtaken his mind:

I am in the midst of Apuleius – I never read a fictitious composition of such miraculous interest & beauty. – I think generally, it even surpasses Lucian, & the story of Cupid & Psyche any imagination ever clothed in the lan[g]uage of men. [...] the splendour of Apuleius eclipses all that I have read for the last year. This light will pass away, & when I am at a sufficient distance from this new planet, the constellations of literature will reappear in their natural groupes.<sup>73</sup>

PBS communicated this enthusiasm for 'Cupid and Psyche' to MWS, and then, as we can see in her journal, she began translating between 24 October and 3 November 1817. She worked on it further on the 4, 6, 7 November at Marlow, and again on 13-16 of the same month in London.<sup>74</sup> The Shelleys were moving between these two locations at this time, thus sometimes MWS was working alone on the translation when PBS was not present. When he was there, MWS's journal documents a buzzing hive of literary activities:

Shelley comes down Friday [...] remains until the next Sunday writing reading & walking. write the trans. of Spinoza from S.'s dictation; translate Cupid & Psyche – read Tacitus & Rousseaus confessions.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 542

<sup>74</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, footnote 2, 542. See MWS, *Journals*, 182-84.

<sup>75</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 182.

The translation was created, and the notebook was used, amid a schedule of 'writing reading & walking', which although it is attributed to PBS here, was clearly not a solitary activity, as MWS writes to PBS's dictation, and it is implied she was 'writing reading & walking' too.

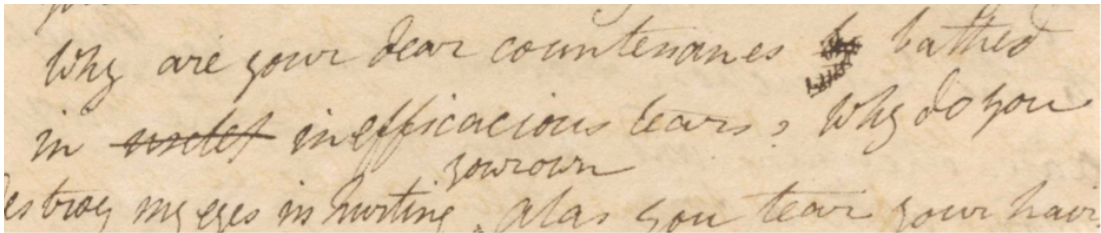


Figure 3. MWS's translation of 'Cupid and Psyche' in Library of Congress, MSS. 13, 290, 45.

Looking at the 'Cupid and Pysche' manuscript, one of MWS's minor word alterations indicates her growing preference for a more formal style. Her initial choice of 'useless' is struck through and replaced with 'inefficacious' in the sentence 'Why are your dear countenances bathed in inefficacious tears?' (Figure 3).<sup>76</sup> This might imply that MWS was taking on PBS's suggestions regarding her language. The work of Mellor (previously cited) shows PBS's preference for Latinate, polysyllabic terms. As Robinson also explains 'Some of the most significant changes that PBS made to the text [of *Frankenstein*] were his removing of MWS's colloquial phrasings, which he made more formal and/or more Latinate – and, in the process, usually more specific and/or intense'.<sup>77</sup> MWS's increased use of polysyllabic terms shows her development as a writer under PBS's tuition, although the fact that she was working on this translation when he was away also potentially demonstrates that she was willing to adopt a more ornate style and develop her prose in such a way. Similarly, Robinson has also shown how in correcting the proofs for her short stories written after PBS's death, MWS would 'revise to make her prose less wordy and more precise', altering 'worn out' to

<sup>76</sup> Markley, 287. MSS. Library of Congress, 45.

<sup>77</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s) in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein*', 124.

'exhausted', for example, and 'being unchanged' to 'constancy'.<sup>78</sup> This diction is more elaborate and we can see in MSS. 13,290 the germination of MWS's favoured style.

Most of MWS's other changes to the manuscript for 'Cupid and Psyche' show her working hard to ensure correctness in her translation. These alterations include rectifying general errors (for example, 'father' corrected to 'parents').<sup>79</sup> She also makes amendments that alter the implication or mood of particular sentences. Thus she changes 'deadly' to 'cruel' in the sentence: 'I entreat that you will neither see or hear those infamous women who after the cruel hatred they express & the bloody compact they have made I cannot call your sisters'.<sup>80</sup> MWS's edits shows the value she places on tone; 'deadly' is an unsophisticated term lacking any implication of psychological motive, whereas 'cruel' makes for a more intriguing and malevolent description. This kind of editorial work is analogous to the work carried out by PBS on the *Frankenstein* manuscript, where, for example, he altered her description of Mont Blanc from 'beautiful' to '*supreme and magnificent*'.<sup>81</sup> MWS also changes 'beautiful' to 'handsome' in the opening sentence of her translation in MSS. 13, 290. This rejection of 'beautiful' may reflect her sense that this term is lighter or less forceful, associated with the picturesque rather than the sublime.<sup>82</sup> MWS's determination - her striving for accuracy - is evident here in a work that sprang from the Shelleys' shared interest in the original text.

Another critical discussion of MWS's translation by de Palacio champions her 'thorough mastery of [Latin], together with [her] considerable insight into Latin literature'.<sup>83</sup> Here de Palacio compares MWS's version of Apuleius with the original, explaining that her translation is 'generally faithful and reliable, but by no means literal'. She makes excisions (either 'aesthetic and stylistic, or moral' due to content - she removes things she judges to be 'over-realistic and offensive'), yet

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<sup>78</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xvii.

<sup>79</sup> Markley, 293.

<sup>80</sup> Markley, 295.

<sup>81</sup> MWS, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, 241.

<sup>82</sup> Markley, 282.

<sup>83</sup> Juan de Palacio, 564.

she also sometimes ‘expands a clause or idea in the original into something more elaborately particularized’.<sup>84</sup> Her excisions, argues de Palacio, ‘aimed at nothing less than restoring to the tale its ideal poetic quality’; he also makes a reference to PBS’s ‘enthusiasm [which was] no doubt instrumental in forcibly drawing her attention to the tale, and he may have urged her towards attempting the translation’.<sup>85</sup> The practical exercise of the translation demonstrates the Shelleys attempting new literary projects that might reflect one another’s interests as well as their own. PBS, in MWS’s narrative recollection in 1839, supposedly admitted to his wife that he was ‘too fond of the theoretical and the ideal’.<sup>86</sup> MWS’s adoption of a more formal style and then de Palacio’s suggestion that her translation seeks to represent the original’s ‘ideal poetic quality’ might show MWS applying PBS’s inclination towards using more ornate language, as she labours on the translation alone. MWS’s appreciation of Latin studies continued and she soon became proficient in the language, ‘and no longer needed [PBS’s] tutorship in 1818, while working her way through the forty-five books of Livy’s *Decades*’.<sup>87</sup> The Shelleys’ shared study, including PBS teaching MWS languages, then led on to independent learning and composition produced within the ‘shared intellectual climate’ peculiar to these authors.

The notebook not only shows MWS’s intellectual development as a translator but PBS’s development as a prose writer. The significance of PBS’s review of *Frankenstein* in relation to this period is clear; composed early January-early March 1818, the text of the review itself establishes PBS’s role in the construction of the novel’s backstory or myth.<sup>88</sup> He writes of MWS as the ‘author’, but does not name her, and gives male pronouns. He compares the novel to Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* without indicating that the formidable literary figure is the author’s father (citations are taken from the original manuscript as transcribed by Murray, unless stated otherwise):

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 567, 570.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 570-71.

<sup>86</sup> MWS, ‘Note on *The Cenci*’ in *NSWMS* II, 282.

<sup>87</sup> De Palacio, 564.

<sup>88</sup> Murray, Editorial Commentary on PBS, ‘On “*Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*”’ in *Prose* I, 489.

The encounter and argument between Frankenstein and the Being on the sea of ice almost approaches in effect to the expostulations of Caleb Williams with Falkland. It reminds us indeed somewhat of the style and character of that admirable writer to whom the Author has dedicated his work, and whose productions he seems to have studied.<sup>89</sup>

The review was written in MSS. 13, 290, indicating that MWS may have overseen its composition. The Shelleys were fascinated by classical mythology, and the Promethean theme runs through both of their works; PBS and MWS may have enjoyed colluding here to conceal MWS's authorship, thus conjuring an air of mystery and constructing a 'myth' (*Frankenstein* was initially published anonymously). They collaborate in their construction of the novel's background before others outside of their intimate literary circle could learn of its true origins. PBS also wrote the original preface to the novel in the voice of MWS, and the preface places the novel's conception in context, explaining how the author 'passed the summer of 1816 in the environs of Geneva'. Inspired by 'some German stories of ghosts', the speaker agrees to write a story 'founded on some supernatural occurrence'.<sup>90</sup>

In PBS's review of *Frankenstein* written in MSS. 13, 290, there are phrases that could be interpreted as PBS asserting his literary authority (for example, 'There are perhaps some points of subordinate importance which prove that it is the Author's first attempt').<sup>91</sup> However, that this review was composed in a shared notebook also used for jotting down translations, makes it probable that MWS was involved in constructing the ideas presented in the review - or at the very least, she was aware of them. MSS. 13, 290 was MWS's book originally, with her ambiguous statement regarding poetry on the inside cover. PBS's casual mention of the novel as MWS's first work implies the Shelleys' understanding of one another as two distinct entities with regards to authorship, but also announces her success; by indicating that this is the author's 'first attempt' - all the while writing in the guise

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<sup>89</sup> PBS, 'On "*Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*"' (manuscript transcript) in *Prose I* ed. Murray, 283.

<sup>90</sup> PBS, 'Preface' to MWS, *Frankenstein* in *NSWMS I*, 8.

<sup>91</sup> PBS, 'On "*Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*"' (manuscript transcript) in *Prose I* 282.

of someone unknown to the author at all - PBS adds weight to his opening statement of praise: 'The novel of "Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus," is undoubtedly, as a mere story, one of the most original and complete productions of the age'.<sup>92</sup> The review of and the preface to *Frankenstein* show PBS as a supportive editor, implying the Shelleys' abilities to critique each other's works, and also their shared enjoyment in presenting veiled allusions to their real identities.

In the preface to *Frankenstein*, PBS creates intrigue regarding the novel's conception, and MWS's approval of this is evident in her introduction to the 1831 edition of the text. Here she provided the now notorious story of her 'waking dream': 'I saw - with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, - I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together'.<sup>93</sup> The 1831 introduction offers a new narrative for the genesis of her work. The revised edition was a less politicised text, and as Butler explains, MWS's waking dream narrative focused interest on the psychological curiosity of the novel, putting 'a palpably more subjective, interpretative gloss on what she herself did by way of her creative imagination'. Subsequently, and perhaps deliberately, the tale of the author's night-vision deflected attention from the novel's - and the group at Diodati's - concerns with the potential of radical science. As with Coleridge in his 1816 presentation of 'Kubla Khan', the dream-origins of *Frankenstein* are only revealed many years after the events they claim to describe, making them all the more elusive.<sup>94</sup> MWS's tale also recalls the waking dream at the centre of the genesis of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (generally known as the first Gothic novel, published 1764):<sup>95</sup> 'I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour'.<sup>96</sup> PBS had previously explored

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>93</sup> MWS, 'Introduction to the 1831 *Frankenstein*', 179.

<sup>94</sup> Butler, 'Introduction' in *Frankenstein*, xxiii.

<sup>95</sup> E. J. Clery, 'The genesis of "Gothic" fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>96</sup> Horace Walpole to William Cole, 9 March 1765 cited in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave 1764-1840*, ed. Rictor Norton (London: Continuum, 2000 repr. 2006), 4. See also Christine

the Gothic genre in his melodramatic novels *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St Irvyne* (1811). Angela Wright has discussed the differences between PBS's and MWS's introductory remarks to *Frankenstein* by establishing that PBS's preface 'sought to distance [the novel] from the Gothic tradition', perhaps due to his anxiety about his early Gothic writings. *Frankenstein* (1818) is also heavily influenced by Godwin, and lacks a heroine-centric narrative (the heroine is a typical feature of Gothic works). PBS's preface emphasises *Frankenstein* as a philosophical novel: 'my chief concern [...] has been limited to the avoiding the enervating effects of the novels of the present day'.<sup>97</sup> Conversely MWS's 1831 version 'sharpens the Gothic themes of the novel [...] Mary Shelley capitalised upon terror'. Writing alone, introducing the waking dream and other significant changes to the revised text, we can see MWS's 'increasing ease with the tradition of the female Gothic' as read and reviewed by her mother Wollstonecraft.<sup>98</sup> Yet in 1818, when both PBS and MWS were contributing to the story, these features were far less overt.

There are some interesting changes in the manuscript of the *Frankenstein* review from MSS. 13, 290 that show PBS and possibly MWS's reconsideration of particular terms and phrases. The opening sentence, for example, when published in *The Athenæum* on 10 November 1832, reads: "The novel of "Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus," is undoubtedly, as a mere story, one of the most original and complete productions of the day".<sup>99</sup> In manuscript the word 'complete' was originally 'striking' (Figure 4).<sup>100</sup> PBS emphasised his championing of MWS's genius here: 'complete' implies longevity, especially in comparison to the previous word 'striking' which might connote impact of a less lasting kind. Also, the word 'day' in this sentence has been changed to 'age' in the manuscript.<sup>101</sup> Although 'day'

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Berthin, 'Dreams' in *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, ed. William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 204.

<sup>97</sup> PBS, 'Preface' to MWS, *Frankenstein* in *NSWMS* I, 8.

<sup>98</sup> Angela Wright, 'The Female Gothic' in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, 105, 110-11.

<sup>99</sup> PBS, 'On *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*' in *The Athenæum Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts* 10 November 1832, London. British Library Online. (accessed 15 November 2016). <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/review-of-frankenstein-from-the-athenaeum#>, 730.

<sup>100</sup> MSS. Library of Congress, 66.

<sup>101</sup> MSS. Library of Congress, 66. See also PBS, 'On *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*' in *Prose* I, 282.



and 'age' are sometimes interchangeable in meaning, 'age' signals the range of competitors with which the reviewer believes this novel competes. Age connotes the historical period – this fiction will continue to resonate, PBS is implying; its significance will last. However, as cited above, when the review finally appeared in print in *The Athenæum* that word 'day' has been chosen over 'age'.<sup>102</sup> The review was published by Thomas Medwin, but we can see from Murray's description of the manuscript's provenance that MSS. 13, 290 remained the property of MWS.<sup>103</sup> She may have advised that Medwin change the word, preferring 'day' in the manuscript rather than 'age', or it could have been his own decision. The text's transition from manuscript to print is interesting, as Medwin uses PBS's manuscript to publish the work 14 years after the appearance of the original *Frankenstein* in 1818. The holograph in MSS. 13, 290 and the *Athenæum* publication are the only copy-texts we have for PBS's *Frankenstein* review.<sup>104</sup>

Another of PBS's original edits in the manuscript shows the removal of the word 'human': 'the astonishing combination of motives and incidents and the startling catastrophe which compose this tale'<sup>105</sup> originally read 'to the astonishing combination of the relations of human motives and actions' (Figure 5).<sup>106</sup> Ensuring that 'human' does not appear here reminds us that the creature is not human, another careful intervention by PBS that shows a keen investment in the novel's themes and aims, and his decision to follow (and therefore implicitly praise) them. Medwin, and possibly MWS, would retain this change in the 1832 publication, the only alteration being the added commas after 'incidents' and 'catastrophe'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> PBS, 'On *Frankenstein*' in *The Athenæum*, 730.

<sup>103</sup> Murray, Editorial Commentary on PBS, 'On "*Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*"' in *Prose I*, 489.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 489.

<sup>105</sup> PBS, 'On "*Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*"' in *Prose I*, 282

<sup>106</sup> MSS. Library of Congress, 66.

<sup>107</sup> PBS, 'On *Frankenstein*' in *The Athenæum*, 730.

The novel of "Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus," is undoubtedly ~~one~~ as a mere story, one of the most original & striking productions of the present day age. We wonder when we read it a debate with our

Figure 4. PBS's review of *Frankenstein* in Library of Congress, MSS. 13, 290, 66.

Conducted, in the authors mind, to the astonishing combination of mysteries & incidents of the relations of human matters & actions, & the startling catastrophe which compose this tale. There are perhaps few more

Figure 5. PBS's review of *Frankenstein* in Library of Congress, MSS. 13, 290, 66.

Robinson determines that PBS's pieces of critical prose (the preface and the review) 'frame the novel and influence our interpretation of it'.<sup>108</sup> He explains how self-interest is evident in the review of *Frankenstein*; although PBS's praise for MWS is 'heartfelt and merited', there are sections of the novel he compliments that were actually 'heavily rewritten by PBS himself', for example the final scene in Volume III, Chapter 7 where the creature laments the death of his creator, described in the review as 'an exhibition of intellectual and imaginative power'.<sup>109</sup> Robinson suggests that PBS was consciously 'praising not only his wife's accomplishments but also his own "intellectual and imaginative power" that contributed to the collaborative achievement known as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*'.<sup>110</sup> The review serves as a work of collective self-promotion provided for an anonymously published text. In endorsing one another the Shelleys also elevated their own talents, highlighting the complexity of collaboration in this

<sup>108</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s)', 118.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s)', 134-35. PBS, 'On *Frankenstein*' in *The Athenæum*, 730.

<sup>110</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s)', 135.

context. As a male author, PBS especially could assert his role in the construction of *Frankenstein* with confidence; MWS was less likely to be so singularly self-assured regarding her individual productions and contributions, but the close and stimulating working style that she developed with PBS benefitted her creatively as she became a prolific novelist.

That PBS composed the review in 1818 indicates much about the Shelleys' aims to construct a myth surrounding MWS's first work, despite the fact that the review was not published until fourteen years after *Frankenstein*, by which point contemporary readers would have been well aware of MWS's authorship. The review and the preface may have been written at the same time, further supporting the idea that the Shelleys collaborated on promoting the novel, as PBS provides prose accompaniments to endorse MWS's publication.<sup>111</sup> The appearance of the *Frankenstein* review in a notebook like MSS. 13, 290 should influence our understanding of it as a printed text, by reminding us that the Shelleys were working together on this seminal novel in a way that integrated their individual voices. The Shelleys' manuscripts can be understood far more comprehensively when seen as documents of a collaboration, and in the case of those found in MSS. 13, 290, when examined in consideration of their history as holographs found in a jointly-owned notebook.

### ***History of a Six Weeks' Tour***

Alongside use of the important notebook MSS. 13, 290, the Shelleys were also preparing a joint publication for the press: *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817). This work was MWS's first foray into print as an adult, and it was published anonymously eight weeks before *Frankenstein*.<sup>112</sup> The significance of this text for our understanding of the Shelleys' collaboration is twofold: the qualities of the text themselves demonstrate how both authors contribute to the same publication, but not without emphasising their own individual styles, and the construction of *HSWT*

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>112</sup> Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein*, n. 84, 250.

exemplifies a similar collaborative working style to that which created *Frankenstein*.

The full title is *History of A Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland: With Letters Descriptive of a Sail Round the Lake of Geneva, and the Glaciers of Chamouni*. The text primarily referenced here is the version as it appeared in 1817. The main section of the volume, referred to in this thesis as 'The 1814 Tour', is constructed from the Shelleys' shared journal entries of their elopement travels through France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland from 28 July-13 September 1814, compiled for publication as if the narrator's voice is that of MWS.<sup>113</sup> MWS also contributed two 1816 letters purported to be written from Geneva, and PBS wrote the book's preface, two more 1816 letters from Geneva and Chamonix, and the philosophical poem 'Mont Blanc'. The complete volume is referred to *HSWT* and includes these 1816 letters and 'Mont Blanc'.

Each section, apart from the preface and 'Mont Blanc', is end-stopped with either 'M.' or 'S.' to identify the author. However, the original sources for *HSWT* (edited letters/journal entries) have an intriguing and complicated provenance. The authorship of 'The 1814 Tour' is fluid and contains both of the Shelleys' entries from the 1814 journal. Much of this journal was reworked in 1817, as is evident from MWS's journal entries for August of that year.<sup>114</sup> *HSWT* is not only an example of a volume to which both authors contribute, but is also one in which MWS edited PBS's writing, just as he edited her *Frankenstein* draft.

The preface (written by PBS) describes *HSWT* as an 'unpresuming [...] little volume'. PBS acknowledges that the 'scenes' described are 'now so familiar to our countrymen', but that these authors, in the 'enthusiasm of youth', cause the 'feelings' described to be representative of that youthful 'curiosity'. This preface demonstrates the Shelleys' mutual concern with the synthesis of fresh insights, an indicator of their conscious roles as young radicals in a post-revolutionary world. *HSWT* concludes with PBS's poem 'Mont Blanc', 'an attempt to imitate the

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<sup>113</sup> For the original journal text see MWS, *Journals*, 6-25.

<sup>114</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 178. See also Murray, *Prose I*, 432.

untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang'.<sup>115</sup> PBS explains in his second 1816 letter that he is aware of the prescribed 'raptures of travellers',<sup>116</sup> thus he tried to deliver his impressions as original, simple and true: 'I will simply detail to you all that I can relate';<sup>117</sup> the Shelleys' present fresh and innovative empirical reflections. These images reveal their curiosity, which is then combined with a fixation on the landscape (including Alpine scenes) and the effect it has on the mind:

Mont Blanc was before us, but it was covered in cloud [...] I never knew – I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of extatic [sic] wonder, not unallied to madness.<sup>118</sup>

This letter by PBS is part of a wider discourse on the mental frisson generated by sublime objects and/or experiences. Elsewhere, in a private letter to Thomas Moore in December 1817, PBS emphasises the Shelleys' youthful attitude and 'curiosity' in *HSWT*:

I ought to say that the Journal was written some years ago – the style of it is almost infantine, & it was published in the idea that the author would never be recognised. [...] Mrs. Shelley, tho' sorry that her secret is discovered, is exceedingly delighted to hear that you have derived any amusement from our book. – Let me say in her defence that the Journal of the Six Weeks Tour was written before she was seventeen, & that she has another literary secret [*Frankenstein*, soon to be published] which I will in a short time ask you to *keep* in return for having *discovered* this.<sup>119</sup>

*HSWT* is presented as a feature for 'amusement'; it is 'infantine' but nonetheless PBS acknowledges MWS's talents and hints at the 'literary secret' in the making (*Frankenstein*) that would become her greatest work, and the Shelleys' most

<sup>115</sup> MWS and PBS, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817) (Oxford: Woodstock, 1989), iii-vi. Hereafter *HSWT*.

<sup>116</sup> *HSWT*, 141. PBS, *Letters*, 495.

<sup>117</sup> *HSWT*, 141.

<sup>118</sup> PBS and MWS, *HSWT*, 151-52. See also PBS, *Letters* I, 497.

<sup>119</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 582-83.

significant collaborative effort. Initially the letter reads as PBS projecting a juvenile style onto MWS. As we will see in later chapters, PBS's description of MWS's differing stylistic values as a cause for altercation represents a playful battle between the two authors' individual literary preferences (such as when PBS titles his prefatory verses to *The Witch of Atlas* as an address to MWS in 1820). Rather than disavowing his involvement in the collaboration, PBS is actually playing the literary agent in the letter to Moore by building up intrigue regarding *Frankenstein*, and implying the development of MWS's style. He is delivering a critical commentary that MWS would no doubt have provided for him also.

*HSWT* is truly a co-edited text, a collaborative publication. The editorial work of Jeanne Moskal has carefully identified the web of sources for each section of the final printed version of 'The 1814 Tour'. PBS's words are sometimes included in the sections signed 'M.', including her letters from Geneva. MWS ostensibly compiled the full text of 'The 1814 Tour', with PBS as copy-editor; MWS was in charge of editing and fair-copying the letters and then PBS would copy-edit and make proof-corrections.<sup>120</sup> As Moskal explains, 1817 was a highly productive period, as PBS was 'arranging for the publication of *Loan and Cynthia*, and receiving *Frankenstein* proofs', and also 'undertaking to place the travel book'.<sup>121</sup> Finished texts were a shared aim.

With regards to 'The 1814 Tour', the main body of the volume, Moskal suggests PBS's contributions account for 14% of the printed text (1150 words of a total of around 8,500 were selectively taken from PBS's original journal entries).<sup>122</sup> This narrative of the 1814 travels, the history of the six' weeks tour proper, is most often placed in the canon of MWS. That MWS was ostensibly the principal creator of the work explains why, in PBS's letter above, the authorship is 'her [MWS's] secret', yet within the same sentence the publication is also referred to as 'our book'; the volume is shared but MWS's document of the 1814 tour is her own. As Moskal emphasises, the Shelleys made a 'distinction [...] between the co-authored

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<sup>120</sup> Jeanne Moskal, Introductory note to *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* in *NSWMS* Vol VIII, ed. Moskal (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1996), 2, see also Murray, *Prose* I, 434.

<sup>121</sup> Moskal, 2.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, and note 12, 7.

volume and its single-authored constituent parts'.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, MWS was to - in Dekker's phrase - 'stake her claim' to the authorship of *Frankenstein* by writing in her 1831 Introduction, 'I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband'.<sup>124</sup>

However, 'The 1814 Tour' contains PBS's journal entries edited by MWS and then copy-edited by him. It is also possible that MWS's Geneva letters were taken from a lost journal notebook that contained both Shelleys' hands.<sup>125</sup> MWS's first letter from Geneva also includes 'four short passages found almost verbatim in P. B. Shelley's letter of 15 May to T. L. Peacock'; as Moskal explains, it is likely she 'selected' these passages from entries made by PBS in the lost journal or from a copy of the letter. She was known to have transcribed letters by PBS, for example, one addressed to Peacock on 23 July.<sup>126</sup> The Shelleys are apparently unafraid of claiming their individual writings even as they work in a collaborative environment. Moskal concludes:

That the volume and the lead item share a title has indeed been a source of confusion, but not to the Shelleys themselves. They consistently, both explicitly and implicitly, identify Mary Shelley as *one of the authors* of the volume [HSWT], and as *the author* of the work ['The 1814 Tour'].<sup>127</sup>

The Shelleys' identification of authorship as supplied by Moskal is not definitive, however, as PBS's words appeared in MWS's sections of the volume including 'The 1814 Tour', and both Shelleys were apparently working as editor.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>124</sup> Dekker, 202. See also MWS, "Introduction to the 1831 *Frankenstein*", 180.

<sup>125</sup> Moskal, 3. 'A lost journal notebook kept by Mary Shelley is known to have covered the period May-June 1816, the same period to which Letters I and II belong. It is extremely likely that this notebook contained the same kind of mix of entries made by both Shelleys that the surviving first (July 1814-May 1815) and second (July 1816-June 1819) journal notebooks exhibit. That is played a part in the shaping of Letters I and II is a proposition that cannot be dismissed, though there is no way of verifying it'.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 3. See also MWS, *Journals*, 117: 'in the evening I copy S.'s letter to Peacock'.

<sup>127</sup> Moskal, 7, note 12.

E. B. Murray's earlier editorial discussion of 'The 1814 Tour' and its sources call into question MWS's authorship; he emphasises that 'about 70 per cent of the *History* ['The 1814 Tour'] does not appear in the *Journals* [...] there is little evidence in the text itself for identifying one or other as the principal author'.<sup>128</sup> In her 1817 revisions MWS expanded passages from PBS's journal entries and added completely new sections; this could have been MWS's own work, but it is possible PBS may have also composed some of the added material in 1817.<sup>129</sup> This ambiguity implies that sometimes the Shelleys were content for their words to be incorporated as if they were their partner's. Elsewhere they are keen to emphasise their individual authorship, but in this jointly authored volume their writings are entangled. The environment in which *HSWT* was created was one in which ideas passed between the Shelleys freely, and in which they also attended to each other's manuscripts. It would have become too complicated for even the Shelleys themselves to assert their ownership of specific aspects of the original journal (containing both of their hands), once it had been recast, enlarged and collated for this volume.

In the letter to Moore, PBS may also be building on a received image of the author's voice in *HSWT*. The decision to publish the work anonymously produces a sense of mystery, and the only surviving review of *HSWT* (possibly by Walter Scott) praises the 'modesty' of the author: 'It is the simplest and most unambitious journal imaginable of a Continental Tour: and probably in that simplicity consists its principal attraction'. The reviewer also amusingly describes 'Mont Blanc' as 'a little poem by the husband [...] rather too ambitious'.<sup>130</sup> As Murray argues, 'a reasonable supposition is that originally the two Shelleys had agreed implicitly to assign the "unpresuming" and anonymously published work to Mary', perhaps to give her a first publication, and because PBS was focusing on political and epic works written in a different vein.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Murray, *Prose* I, 431. See also Moskal, 6-7, note 10.

<sup>129</sup> Murray, *Prose* I, 430.

<sup>130</sup> *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, III (April-September 1818), 412-16. See also Moskal, 3, and 7 note 17.

<sup>131</sup> Murray, *Prose* I, 432.



PBS assists in constructing a particular story about the authorship of *HSWT*. In the Preface he describes 'the author' (*not* himself) travelling 'with her husband and sister'. He emphasises the 'enthusiasm of youth', but not without implying he is one of the 'party of young people', and he contributed his own writings to the volume, some of which are end-marked 'S'.<sup>132</sup> He ensures that his own voice is distinguished from that of MWS's in his explanation for 'Mont Blanc'. His preface reads:

The Poem, entitled "Mont Blanc," is written by the author of the two letters from Chamouni and Vevai. It was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang.<sup>133</sup>

Space does not permit me to discuss the fascinating role of prefaces in PBS's works more generally.<sup>134</sup> However what is significant with regards to the Shelleys' collaboration is PBS's careful emphasis on *his* purpose in the jointly authored *HSWT*. Overall, the preface to *HSWT* and PBS's comment to Moore can be interpreted as either the Shelleys conspiring together to produce a 'myth' surrounding the authorship of the text, or a critical evaluation of each other's strengths. There is no singular narrative of collaboration: united labour and cooperation are just as important as the Shelleys asserting their individual voices in order to produce one text.

It is therefore fascinating that *HSWT* provides examples of both Shelleys exerting their authority. They trusted each other as editors, but also supervised one another's proofreading, providing a latent potential for conflict. Disagreement was potentially a source of stimulation, as the Shelleys worked 'with and against' each other. What I especially want to emphasise here is that MWS edits PBS's

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<sup>132</sup> *HSWT*, iii-v.

<sup>133</sup> *HSWT*, vi.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, Hugh Roberts, 'Noises On: The Communicative Strategies of Shelley's Prefaces' in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, 183-98.

words for inclusion in *HSWT*. MWS's changes to PBS's original script are minor in comparison to how she 'excised, amplified and completely re-wrote' her own journal entries, but they were meaningful changes nonetheless.<sup>135</sup>

Although published anonymously, it was clear the text had two authors (emphasised by the preface), and PBS would have given MWS his permission to use his original writings and edit them in the way that she did. It is interesting that for the main body of the text the Shelleys chose to weave their voices, and only clearly delineate the apparent sections of individual authorship in the letters that conclude *HSWT*, and 'Mont Blanc' (the sources for MWS's letters are questionable however, and I will show below how the verses of 'Mont Blanc' are derived from a moment of heightened collaboration for the Shelleys in which travel notes correspond to their final published productions). Perhaps in these more mature works of 1816, they were keener to announce their individual roles. In their constant reliance on each other to provide the responsibility of copy-editor or amanuensis, it is possible PBS would have looked over MWS's changes to his writings and approved them. Even if he did not, MWS's ability to weave PBS's words into her own prose shows her dedication to modify PBS's voice to produce a successful, unified text, and implies that PBS trusted her to do so.

Within the opening paragraphs of 'The 1814 Tour' are sections originally from the journal entry of 28 July 1814 in PBS's hand. Some descriptions are copied verbatim (with grammatical changes), for example: 'we were still far distant, when the moon sunk in the red and stormy horizon, and the fast-flashing lightning became pale in the breaking day'.<sup>136</sup> However the sections removed and altered by MWS do not just change the perspective from PBS's to MWS's, but remove intimate moments shared by the young couple. PBS writes: '*Mary was much affected by the sea [...] She lay in my arms thro the night, the little strength which remained to my own exhausted frame was all expended in keeping her head in rest on my bosom*'.<sup>137</sup> In the published version edited by MWS, this becomes: 'I was dreadfully seasick,

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<sup>135</sup> Moskal, 3.

<sup>136</sup> *HSWT*, 3, Moskal, 15.

<sup>137</sup> PBS in MWS, *Journals*, 6.

and as is usually my custom when thus affected, I slept during the greater part of the night, awaking only from time to time to ask where we were'.<sup>138</sup> MWS's changes protect the Shelleys' privacy. This decision could be due to the Shelleys' awareness of their audience; they were conscious that their lives were already surrounded by scandal. MWS's characteristic reserve - or presented reserve - was evident in the functional nature of her journal entries during PBS's lifetime, which are largely recordings of daily occurrences rather than outpourings of emotion. Her entries even use symbols to mark drama or discontent rather than explicitly stating the issue.<sup>139</sup> As Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert explain, this was due in part to MWS's 'bitter experience':

Mary Shelley was, her contemporaries agreed, a reserved woman [...] As the child of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, who had achieved fame and notoriety both by their writings and in their personal lives, and as the mistress and later wife of a man whose private life was exposed to a good deal of public comment, she was acutely aware of the perils of indiscretion.<sup>140</sup>

Godwin had published *The Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) not long after Wollstonecraft's death when MWS was a very young child. The intensely personal memoir, which discussed Wollstonecraft's suicide attempts and her love affair with Gilbert Imlay, 'gave the conservative press the occasion to scathingly attack both author and subject'.<sup>141</sup> MWS was instinctively cautious about revealing too much. Her mother's emotive *Letters Written During A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) was 'an ever-present prototype' of travel writing for MWS,<sup>142</sup> a travelogue in which the author sought 'to let my remarks and reflections flow unrestrained'.<sup>143</sup> However, contemporary readers of *A Short Residence* were 'unaware of the exact nature of

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<sup>138</sup> HSWT, 8.

<sup>139</sup> Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 'Mary Shelley's Use of Symbols' in MWS, *Journals*, ed. Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 579-81

<sup>140</sup> Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 'Introduction' in MWS, *Journals*, xv-xvi.

<sup>141</sup> Bennett, 'General Introduction' in *NSWMS I*, xvii.

<sup>142</sup> Moskal, 1.

<sup>143</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, 'Advertisement' to *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, ed. Tony Brekke and Jon Mee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

[Wollstonecraft's] relationship to Imlay, which was at the centre of the general outcry against Wollstonecraft after the revelations in Godwin's *Memoir*.<sup>144</sup> MWS was aware of her mother's decision to censor her personal affairs, and of the upsetting repercussions that occurred when her father did not.

PBS must have agreed with MWS to some extent; in 1818 he wrote to Leigh Hunt: '[...] I never will be a party in making my private affairs or those of others topics of general discussion; who can know them but the actors?'<sup>145</sup> PBS's Preface to *HSWT* presents the Shelleys as a married couple although they were not yet married during either the 1814 or the 1816 travels. However the removal of the intimacy in the opening of 'The 1814 Tour' shows how discretion tends to be a stronger characteristic of MWS's writing, showing her independent view of how she could tailor PBS's writings for the volume. Her conservative instinct with regards to publishing is shown in her decision to censor the horrific details of incest and rape in the Italian manuscript translation that would inform PBS's *The Cenci* in 1819 (another significant collaboration between the Shelleys, discussed in Chapter 2).<sup>146</sup> PBS was far more likely to express outbursts of physical passion in his works (*Alastor* and *Epipsychidion* contain erotic scenes), another indication that MWS's editing in *HSWT* is a testament to her own voice emerging as dominant here. MWS may have let PBS edit her own work at times - we recall how she told PBS 'I give you carte blanche to make what alterations you please' regarding *Frankenstein* - but she would not leave *his* words untouched if she was editing them for publication. This exchange between the two authors indicates yet again a trust and understanding that edits of either of their works were for the purpose of improving clarity, tone and purpose; this conversation cannot occur without the occasional disparity as PBS's and MWS's voices emerge in their contributions.

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<sup>144</sup> Brekke and Mee, 'Introduction' in Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence*, ed. Brekke and Mee, xxiv.

<sup>145</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 66.

<sup>146</sup> In the section that describes Francesco's rape of his daughter Beatrice, MWS's translation reads: 'The details here are horrible, and unfit for publication'. MWS, 'Relation of the Death of the Family of The Cenci' in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives Vol IV*, ed. Markley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), 297.

It is notable that in 'The 1814 Tour', PBS's words 'account for most, but not all, of the passages of "sublime" description'.<sup>147</sup> This might indicate MWS's sincere admiration for PBS's ability to create arresting depictions of landscapes, and her own development of this style as partly learned from PBS as a more experienced writer, and which she put to use in her composition of *Frankenstein* during this period. The decision to lose the moments of personal intimacy, and emphasise PBS's descriptions of the sublime surroundings, implies MWS's ability to edit PBS's work to her own liking. Cooperation on the one work incorporates expression of personal preferences, and accepting changes to one's own writing as well as introducing them to others' words. When we carefully decipher their collaborative activity, it is clear that both Shelleys do this.

MWS also occasionally added to PBS's entries from the journal as she was incorporating them into the flow of her own text. For example, take PBS's journal entry for the 14 August 1814: '*We rest at vandavres two hours. We walk in a wood belonging to a neighbouring chateau & sleep under its shade. The moss was so soft, the murmur of the wind in the leaves was sweeter than aeolian music.. we forgot that we were in France or in the world for a time*'.<sup>148</sup> This entry, under MWS's editing for *HSWT*, became 'Vandeuvres is a pleasant town, at which we rested during the hours of noon. We walked in the grounds of a nobleman, laid out in the English taste, and terminated in a pretty wood; it was a scene that reminded us of our native country'.<sup>149</sup> This comparison provides evidence of MWS editing PBS's prose to improve coherence and unify tone, in the same way that he might alter her draft of *Frankenstein*. MWS had an attuned technique in editing the work for a nineteenth-century travel book audience, demonstrated in the addition of a comment on 'English taste' (informal landscaping)<sup>150</sup> and the suggestion that the place reminded them of England as home, rather than made them feel disconnected from the world as a whole. Her alterations also make PBS's original prose less poetical; MWS's creative genius was undoubtedly marked by her predilection for writing prose, a contrast to her poet-husband. The original phrases

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<sup>147</sup> Moskal, 3.

<sup>148</sup> PBS in MWS, *Journals*, 14.

<sup>149</sup> *HSWT*, 28.

<sup>150</sup> Moskal, footnote e, 23.

PBS uses are poetic: for example, 'the murmur of the wind in the leaves' and the reference to 'aeolian music', an evocative metaphor used regularly by PBS as well as other Romantic writers such as S T Coleridge.

Within *HSWT* there are reoccurring themes that also demonstrate the Shelleys viewing the same scenes, reading together, writing together and contemplating new ideas. It is important to note the context of the other members of their community being present (including Byron and Claire), and the significant influence of those writers who came before them, not least Wollstonecraft. However, similarities between the Shelleys' individual writings, combined with biographical information, can show just how closely PBS and MWS were working. For example, the following phrase is clearly associated with the Alpine descriptions in *Frankenstein* and 'Mont Blanc', but originates in the 1814 travels. It was reworked by MWS from PBS's entry in her journal from 19 August 1814: 'Their immensity staggers the imagination, and so far surpasses all conception, that it requires an effort of the understanding to believe that they indeed form a part of this earth'.<sup>151</sup> In *Frankenstein* MWS was to write of the Alps 'as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings' (71),<sup>152</sup> and in PBS's 1816 letter (reproduced in *HSWT*) he writes: 'They pierce the clouds like things not belonging to this earth'.<sup>153</sup> Lines from 'Mont Blanc' depict the mountain as similarly incomprehensible: 'I look on high; / Has some unknown omnipotence unfurl'd / The veil of life and death?' (ll. 52-54). It is impossible to determine exactly who this image originated with. It was possibly PBS's idea at first but the focus on alienation became a shared image for both authors. Even if the phrase originated with PBS it was constantly mutating and developing and found its way into *Frankenstein* as a result of the Shelleys' literary relationship. Overall the Shelleys' jointly authored *HSWT* gives an impression of intellectual stimulation from both the surroundings and the company. Mary writes in 'The 1814 Tour' of Lake Lucerne:

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<sup>151</sup> *HSWT*, 44.

<sup>152</sup> MWS, *Frankenstein* (1818) in *NSWMS* I, ed. Crook. All further references to this text will be from this edition.

<sup>153</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 500. *HSWT*, 165-66.

[...] this lovely lake, these sublime mountains, and wild forests, seemed a fit cradle for a mind aspiring to high adventure and heroic deeds [...] Such were our reflections, and we remained until late in the evening on the shores of the lake conversing, enjoying the rising breeze, and contemplating with feelings of exquisite delight the divine objects that surrounded us.<sup>154</sup>

The 'sublime' surroundings are a 'fit cradle for a mind aspiring to high adventure and heroic deeds', gesturing towards the utilisation of other European scenes in *Frankenstein* and 'Mont Blanc', for both the anti-hero Victor and PBS's philosophical meditation in verse.

### ***Frankenstein* and 'Mont Blanc'**

During the 22-27 July 1816, PBS and MWS visited Chamonix, the Mer de Glace, and the foot of Mont Blanc. The landscape they encountered together was to become the inspiration for the poem 'Mont Blanc' and the setting of Chapters 1 and 2 in Volume II of *Frankenstein* (1818). Compared to the hectic journeying of 1814, the Shelleys' second expedition to the Continent and the summer spent near Lake Geneva with Byron was more tranquil. 1816 was almost an *annus mirabilis*; the literary relationship was at a peak and PBS and MWS were both engaged in composition.<sup>155</sup>

Robinson describes how the anonymously published *Frankenstein* by MWS, coupled with PBS's review of and preface to the novel, provide a 'set of voices that needs to be disentangled as we attempt to understand not only the novel but also the circumstances of the Shelleys' collaboration that led to its publication'.<sup>156</sup> I argue that this need for extrication in order to understand the collaboration extends to the greater corpus of writings (both creative and personal) in the Shelleys' canon from 1816 and other years. *Frankenstein*, as Robinson argues, is a

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<sup>154</sup> *HSWT*, 50-51.

<sup>155</sup> For example: MWS, *Journals*, note 2-3, 118 in which the editors suggest both PBS and MWS were writing ('Mont Blanc' and *Frankenstein*) on this day.

<sup>156</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s)', 134.

'novel that in many ways benefited from PBS's editing and a novel that evidences their collaborative and sometimes blended voices'.<sup>157</sup> The 'blended' voices cannot be fully 'disentangled' but acknowledging the complexity of the Shelleys' exchange as it affected composition is important. Here, a brief consideration of some of the indelible and intriguing connections between PBS's 'Mont Blanc' and MWS's *Frankenstein* provides further evidence of the Shelleys' wider collaboration in 1814-18.

This discussion does not imply that the Shelleys' collaboration is marked solely by imitation, or a creative unity between them. I am not suggesting that the prominence of certain words or phrases - often language popularised in literature of the period more generally, such as the discourse on the sublime - can only be attributed to the influence of the other Shelley.<sup>158</sup> But in tracing the similarities between the Shelleys' writings in 1816 we are first struck by the concordance in their language. Thus the 'sometimes blended voices' of PBS and MWS - combined with study of their shared workspaces and their letters, reading lists and journals - allow for appropriate speculations that consider the Shelleys at work at the same time in close proximity, and discussing the content of their individual writings. The presence of both hands on the *Frankenstein* manuscript was organic and coordinated, a result of their literary exchange - a remarkable and fascinating method of composition for a pair of authors that experienced creative intimacy since 1814, and who would continue to do so, in varying degrees, until 1822.

The similar diction is not just apparent in the Shelleys' final texts but also in their immediate recorded impressions of the Alps in the journals and letters. Initially, both PBS and MWS describe the Alpine scenes as 'desolate'. MWS writes, 'nothing can be more desolate than the ascent of this mountain [...] the appearance of vast & dreadful desolation',<sup>159</sup> 'never was a scene more awfully desolate'.<sup>160</sup> Musing on the same scenery, PBS writes: 'The verge of a glacier [...] presents the

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>158</sup> See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>159</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 117.

<sup>160</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 18.



most vivid image of desolation that it is possible to conceive.<sup>161</sup> Claire Clairmont's revised journal documenting the 1814 journey also opens with an account describing PBS using this word: 'S- said, Look there how the Sun in parting, has bequeathed a lingering look to the Heaven, he has left desolate'.<sup>162</sup> Claire's journal here reminds us of the frequent conversations between the travellers, unrecovered but contributing to the 'blended voices' (as described by Robinson) in the texts they produced.

The immensity of the mountains produces a similar image of alienation in the Shelleys' individual notes: 'The summits of the highest were hid in Clouds but they sometimes peeped out into the blue sky higher one would think than the safety of God would permit' (MWS);<sup>163</sup> 'They pierce the clouds like things not belonging to this earth' (PBS).<sup>164</sup> Even scenes that lack the grandeur of the sublime still induce feelings of admiration: 'there is something so divine in all this scenery that you love & admire it even where its features are less magnificent than usual' (MWS);<sup>165</sup> 'there is a grandeur in the very shapes and colours which could not fail to impress, even on a smaller scale' (PBS).<sup>166</sup> These written notes are almost interchangeable in their sentiments, and strongly imply a spoken conversation with the scenery as the stimulus.

There are critical difficulties in ascertaining the differences between PBS's voice in *Frankenstein* (as editor/contributor) and MWS's (as author). Any formal distinction of PBS's words from MWS's in the manuscript notebook drafts is tentative, even where their different hands are ostensibly distinguishable; there may have been verbal exchanges that we can never recover. Robinson notes the possibility of the Shelleys being 'at work on the Notebooks at the same time, possibly sitting side by side and using the same pen and ink to draft the novel and

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<sup>161</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 499.

<sup>162</sup> Claire Clairmont, 'The Journal of Claire Clairmont, August 14-22, 1814' or MS marked SC 264 in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, *Shelley and His Circle* Vol III, ed. Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 342-43.

<sup>163</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 114.

<sup>164</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 500.

<sup>165</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 114.

<sup>166</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 494.

at the same time to enter corrections'.<sup>167</sup> However, all the phrases or passages I refer to below from the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein* appear in the Notebook draft in MWS's hand (according to Robinson's facsimile edition), unless stated otherwise (as above, any words/phrases by PBS will appear in italics). For the purposes of the following observations I assume that text appearing in the draft manuscript in MWS's hand - text which then reappears in the final published 1818 edition - represents her voice.

Ascending to the Mer de Glace in Vol II of *Frankenstein*, Victor describes this as 'a scene terrifically desolate' (72), recalling the emphasis on desolation in the journal and letters. In 'Mont Blanc', 'a vast river / Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves' (ll. 10-11). We can find a similar image in MWS's journal, on the same day that PBS began his poem:<sup>168</sup> 'the white & foamy river broke proudly through the rocks that opposed its progress'.<sup>169</sup> In the *Frankenstein* manuscript for Vol II, Chapter I, PBS edits MWS's river image: 'the sound of mountain streams, and the dashing of the waterfalls' becomes 'the sound of *the river raging among rocks*, and the dashing of the waterfalls *around*'. The published sentence (1818) follows PBS's suggestion.<sup>170</sup> PBS's version gives a more explicit image of thundering water, and he also recalls MWS's journal entry of a river breaking through rocks. PBS's reading of MWS's previous writings might have influenced his alterations to MWS's novel, demonstrating that ideas moved from PBS to MWS and vice-versa. MWS's river image in the journal is from the 23 July 1816, and in this entry she also notes that 'in the evening I copy S.'s letter to Peacock'. This letter is PBS's account of the trip to the source of the Arvéron and his visit to the Glacier des Bossons.<sup>171</sup> The following day (24 July) shows the Shelleys at work on their literary endeavours at the same time; MWS's journal entry reads 'write my story – Shelley writes part of letter' (the former referring to the *Frankenstein* draft and the latter to 'Mont

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<sup>167</sup> Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxx.

<sup>168</sup> 'The poem was almost certainly begun on 22 July 1816'. Matthews and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley* I, 532.

<sup>169</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 115.

<sup>170</sup> Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, 239.

<sup>171</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 117.

Blanc').<sup>172</sup> The Shelleys were immersed in the same landscape, and in their own and each other's writings.

The words 'solitude' and 'sublime' recur in both 'Mont Blanc' and these chapters of *Frankenstein*: 'Silence and solitude', 'sublime and strange' ('Mont Blanc', ll. 144, 35) 'a sublime ecstasy [...] solitary grandeur' 'wonderful and sublime' (*Frankenstein*, 72, 71). The sense of the alien in the landscape is implied in 'Mont Blanc', as the source of the 'power' (ll. 16, 127) in nature appears unfamiliar, disconnected, and otherworldly to the speaker. The landscape's threatening qualities are also evident in both works: in 'Mont Blanc', the 'glaciers creep / Like snakes that watch their prey' (ll. 100-101), while in *Frankenstein* 'the slightest sound [...] produces [altered by PBS] a concussion of air sufficient to draw destruction upon the head of the speaker' (72).<sup>173</sup> The lightning around the summit of Mont Blanc is a repeated image: PBS describes 'The voiceless lightning in these solitudes' (l. 137), and as Victor contends with sleeplessness at the end of Chapter I, Vol II, he watches (in solitude) 'the *pallid* lightning that played above Mont Blanc' and he listens 'to the rushing of the Arve, which ran below my window' (71), the same Arve that sounds as 'commotion' in PBS's poem, 'A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame' (ll. 30-31). The word 'pallid' in the phrase 'pallid lightning' is added to the manuscript draft in PBS's hand; the insertion of the evocative adjective 'pallid' demonstrates PBS's contribution to an image of lightning already cited by both authors in both works. MWS noted in a letter at the time 'we enjoyed a finer storm than I had ever before beheld',<sup>174</sup> specifying a mutual interest in the dramatic weather at Lake Geneva in 1816.<sup>175</sup>

In 'Mont Blanc' and *Frankenstein*, PBS and MWS both contemplate the sublime in order to consider qualities of vastness and/or vacancy in nature; this leads them both to consider the significance or the subtleties of human perception in relation to the external world. Vacancy or emptiness especially is a quality

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<sup>172</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 118.

<sup>173</sup> MWS, *The Frankenstein Notebooks I*, ed. Robinson, 249.

<sup>174</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 20.

<sup>175</sup> For more on the Shelleys' experiences of the weather in Geneva in 1816 and how it influenced *Frankenstein*, see John Clubbe, 'The Tempest-toss'd Summer of 1816: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*', *The Byron Journal*, 19 (1991), 26-40.

present in both texts that fluctuates in meaning as the speaker's voice contemplates the mind's reaction to it. For PBS the perceived 'vacancy' at the end of 'Mont Blanc' and the uncertainty surrounding the qualities of 'power' in nature reveal a liberating state of possibility, of freedom for new interpretations. The mind is not dominant, but its conscious ability to interpret, unhindered by set doctrines, delivers freedom: 'Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal / Large codes of fraud and woe' (ll. 80-81).

In *Frankenstein*, as Victor wanders through the landscape, he recognises that his feelings are increasingly tranquillised by the scenes around him. Thus MWS writes of how he begins by finding minimal comfort from his surroundings. Her original words in the draft read:

The weather was beautiful and if mine had been a sorrow to be chased away by any fleeting circumstance this voyage would certainly have had the effect which my father intended. As it was I was interested and sometimes amused.<sup>176</sup>

PBS changes MWS's phrase 'as it was I was interested and sometimes amused', to 'as it was, I was *somewhat* interested *in the scene: it sometimes lulled, it could not extinguish my grief*'.<sup>177</sup> Later in the same chapter MWS explores Victor's expectation that solitude would ensure a diminishing of the perception of his own problems when presented with the sublime intensity of the landscape (the following appears in MWS's hand only):

The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnising my mind, and causing me to forget the passing cares of life. I determined to go [to Montanvert] alone, for I was well acquainted with the path, and the presence of another would destroy the solitary grandeur of the scene. (72)

In its desolation the surrounding landscape makes Victor begin to forget his troubles, by 'solemnising' his mind in their awe-producing capacity. The scene is

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<sup>176</sup> Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, 239.

<sup>177</sup> See Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein*, 313, 118. See also Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, 238-39.

not beautiful, but ‘melancholy’ (72) and sublime, causing his heart to become ‘swelled with something like joy’ (73). This emotive reaction implies that objectively the sublime in its ‘awful majesty’ (73), in corresponding to Victor’s personal pain in its threatening nature (‘the ascent is precipitous’, 72), relieves grief because of its characteristic grandeur. Victor says that he has visited ‘Montanvert’ before, and he remembers ‘the effect that the view of the tremendous and ever-moving glacier had *produced* [added by PBS] upon my mind when I first saw it. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy’ (72). However, this emphasis on the sublime and its ability to induce an ecstatically overwhelming feeling of almost religious awe, a sublime intensity and transcendence that results in ‘something like joy’, is then subverted by the narrative sequence. This is the scene where Victor must inescapably re-encounter his creation, and thus confront his plight. The landscape’s ability to create an amnesia based on awe is futile when the creature actually comes bounding across the ice towards the protagonist; ‘I trembled with rage and horror’ (73). Sublime nature provides a terrifying scene but one that can be solemnizing in its distant grandeur; the creature is purely terrifying in its physicality as a miscreation and the threat it presents to Victor. The creature can only destroy, not transcend.

Both PBS and MWS seek a Promethean solution to the plight of humanity. As MWS described it, PBS believed that ‘mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none.’<sup>178</sup> Thus ‘Mont Blanc’ sees the possibility of a vacancy in nature as a potential for human good, if humanity can project onto supposed reality with progressive imagination, or intellectual beauty, harnessing its power:

And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea  
 If to the human mind’s imaginings  
 Silence and solitude were vacancy? (ll. 142-4)

PBS achieves this through a meditative verse form. Victor Frankenstein (or ‘the modern Prometheus’) fails in his task of potentiality and renewal, but he also

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<sup>178</sup> MWS, ‘Note on the *Prometheus Unbound*’ in *NSWMS* II, 277.

claims that 'yet another may succeed' (166), reminding us that MWS's narrative is not as pessimistic as her character's failings might initially suggest. The different genres allow PBS to explore philosophical, metaphysical and abstract ideas in poetry, and for MWS to focus on Victor's narrative (although the novel does have wider relevance in its potential for metaphor). The Shelleys took their ideas from shared inspirations and travels, and conversations about their work. The influence of shared ideas also extended to other members of their circle in 1816. Such inspiration is traceable when, for example, MWS describes the Alps as 'palaces of Nature' in *Frankenstein* (53), which is a phrase borrowed from Byron's *Childe Harold* III, l. 62., and used by PBS in a letter to the poet in July 1816. From MWS's journal, we know that PBS read the third canto aloud to MWS 'One evening after returning from Diodati'.<sup>179</sup>

Ironically, the landscape in *Frankenstein* functions briefly as Victor's one source of comfort, becomes something that the creature claims as his own: 'These bleak skies I hail' (75).<sup>180</sup> Preparing for an interview with the creature, the rain is no longer a pleasing reflection of melancholy accompanied with a tinge of joy, which functions in parallel to the mind's disregard for grief, but an example of pathetic fallacy, a reflection of Victor's overwhelming anguish: 'The air was cold, and the rain began to descend: we entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart, and depressed spirits' (76). The depiction of the reactions of the human mind as mutable and fluctuating is evident in *Frankenstein*, as MWS quotes Shelley's 'Mutability' (inserted into the manuscript by MWS with a minor letter correction by PBS):

Man's yesterday may ne'er be like *his* morrow;  
Nought may endure but mutability! (73)<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* III. 62 in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986 repr. 2000), 123. PBS, *Letters* I, 495. MWS, *Journals*, 171. Robinson, 'Frankenstein Chronology', lxxix – lxxx.

<sup>180</sup> 'The monster had [...] seized the Arve glacier for his domain'. James Rieger, *The Mutiny Within* (New York: George Braziller, 1967), 85.

<sup>181</sup> For evidence of PBS's alteration here see Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein*, 121.

Sir Walter Scott's favourable review of *Frankenstein* in 1818, when the novel was published anonymously, assumes this poetical insert to be the same authorial voice as its surrounding prose: 'The following lines [...] mark, we think, that the author possesses the same facility in expressing himself in verse as in prose.'<sup>182</sup> But instead, his comment implies that MWS's prose seamlessly leads into PBS's verse; that the same person who penned the novel could well have written these lines of poetry. The Shelleys' voices echo and channel each other in a successful collaborative project.

These observations do not seek to suggest that the Shelleys wrote with one voice. There have been numerous critical studies that compare and contrast the philosophical explorations of *Frankenstein* with PBS's poetical musings in 1816 and elsewhere.<sup>183</sup> Certainly, within the manuscript of *Frankenstein* itself, we can see the difference between MWS's initial composition and PBS's amendments and contributions (as discussed by Mellor and Robinson). In the manuscript pages that include the Alpine descriptions there are significant alterations by PBS to MWS's original words. He inserts a descriptive passage on the Mer de Glace: '*the sea or rather the vast river of ice wound among its dependant mountains whose aerial summits hung over its recesses. Thier [sic] icy & glittering peaks shone in sunlight over the clouds*'.<sup>184</sup> This addition has been identified by Robinson as one of the four substantial insertions made by PBS throughout the entire novel; PBS's amendment recalls 'Mont Blanc'.<sup>185</sup> PBS is also careful to clarify the opposition in MWS's allusions, changing 'I am thy creature – Thy Adam – or rather the fallen angel' to 'I am thy creature – *I ought to be Thy Adam – but I am rather the fallen angel whom thou driven [sic, error for drivest or for hast driven] from joy for no misdeed*'.<sup>186</sup> PBS's edits reassert an interest in the sublime in nature as some kind of 'Power' (as

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<sup>182</sup> Walter Scott, 'Remarks on *Frankenstein*' in *Mary Shelley: Bloom's Classic Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom and Janyce Marson (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2008), 93.

<sup>183</sup> Dekker, 202. 'The debate over [PBS's] contributions to [...] *Frankenstein* has been ongoing since [the book] first appeared [...] there are various ways that *Frankenstein* is subtly anti-"Shelleyan" in tenor, and it is striking how firmly Mary staked her claim to its authorship after the anonymously published novel was well received but assumed by many to be her husband's work'.

<sup>184</sup> Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, 253.

<sup>185</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s)', 125.

<sup>186</sup> MWS, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I ed. Robinson, 259.

in 'Mont Blanc', 'The power is there', l. 127) and more emphatically anticipate Victor's failure to become a Promethean hero than MWS's original version.

PBS's preference for the word 'Being' (as a neutral word)<sup>187</sup> for naming the creature increases the sympathy we feel for Frankenstein's progeny (a stark contrast to Mellor's argument about PBS's use of 'devil' as discussed in my introduction). Robinson has argued that PBS's alterations can 'deepen the novel's inquiry into the metaphysical (and physical) causes of life and death',<sup>188</sup> indicating PBS's interest in philosophical enquiries relating to the issues presented by the narrative. For example, Robinson identifies the following change as PBS's decision to emphasise the finality of death: 'in speaking of his mother's death, MWS's Victor lamented that "the brightness of a loved eye can have faded". The final words are changed by PBS to "can have *been extinguished*".<sup>189</sup> This recalls PBS's decision to alter MWS's 'interested and sometimes amused', to 'I was *somewhat* interested *in the scene: it sometimes lulled, it could not extinguish my grief*'; PBS's intervention here ensures that the narrative does not imply that the sublime landscape is a comfort but rather it is solemnising in its grandeur. In his revisions, PBS 'focused or extended these psychological and moral and metaphysical elements in the novel'.<sup>190</sup> Robinson is careful to emphasise that PBS 'focused' and 'extended', as opposed to disrupted or irrevocably altered. Therefore Robinson suggests that although PBS may have developed and deepened MWS's ideas, careful unpacking of these additions and revisions 'reveal[s] that PBS could preserve and add to MWS's narrative (rather than replace it with something of his own liking)'.<sup>191</sup> His motive was not to distort the novel's originality and energy, but to improve it: he was preserving and adding, not necessarily replacing.

Collaborations in manuscript, collusions to construct a story of the authorship of anonymously published texts, shared interests, and sometimes-divisive opinions, all combine in a complex literary relationship. PBS presents an

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<sup>187</sup> Robinson, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley's Text(s)', 129.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.



image of MWS in his poetry and elsewhere; MWS would go on to provide portraits of PBS in her prose works, too. The Shelleys came together in person and on the page. The evidence of such intertwined creativity can now indicate the wealth of continuities between their works, as well as important differences as both authors construct and mould their individual voices as writers. As we progress into the Shelleys' later years, we will see how these differences become more pronounced.

## Chapter 2, 1818-22: *The Cenci* and *Matilda*

### *The Witch of Atlas*

*Frankenstein* was published on the 1 January 1818. Critical attention to this novel has established its reputation as the Shelleys' most significant literary collaboration. Thus far I have argued that despite the importance of *Frankenstein* as a collaborative text - written by MWS but produced with input from PBS - the way in which this literary couple collaborated on other projects before and during its composition also merits specific attention. The next two chapters consider the Shelleys' collaborative activity in the post-*Frankenstein* period from 1818-22, referred to by Michael Rossington as PBS's 'last four, richly productive years' before his death.<sup>1</sup>

The main body of this chapter discusses the relationship between PBS's *The Cenci* and MWS's *Matilda*, which share similar themes and influences, and also demonstrate the Shelleys responding to one another. Paul Magnuson has commented that the dialogue of Coleridge and Wordsworth 'begins with shared themes and voices',<sup>2</sup> and in the case of the Shelleys we can discern something similar in the summer of 1816, when PBS's 'Mont Blanc' and MWS's *Frankenstein* were conceived and begun. I argue that such an exchange also occurs more generally in the post-1818 period, as for example in the production of *The Cenci* and *Matilda*. After March 1818 the Shelleys lived and worked in Italy, and as Dekker has asserted, the 'intellectual companionship' enjoyed by PBS, MWS, Byron and other members of their circle at Lake Geneva during the summer of 1816 also occurred 'intermittently in Italy in 1818-22', producing 'complex and far-reaching [...] interchanges'.<sup>3</sup> Selected works composed in the Italian period are discussed below, and I seek to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the literary relationship between PBS and MWS in these years.

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<sup>1</sup> Rossington, 'Editing Shelley' in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 646.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Magnuson, *Coleridge and Wordsworth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), x.

<sup>3</sup> Dekker, 202.

Critics have repeatedly emphasised the Shelleys' personal difficulties, suggesting they became isolated from one another, especially in the four years preceding PBS's death. There certainly were traumatic episodes: for example, 1818-19 saw the death of the Shelleys' two children, William and Clara.<sup>4</sup> Biographers have documented the depression that was felt by both parents; Holmes suggests that at this time PBS 'took a deliberate decision to remain beyond the radius of [MWS's] misery [...] and took certain practical measures to establish his routine independently of hers'.<sup>5</sup> In 1820-22 these personal disturbances appear to be reflected by PBS writing poems to other women (such as Jane Williams), and in the emergence of works such as *Epipsychidion*, traditionally understood to be semi-autobiographical, including criticisms directed at MWS.<sup>6</sup> Biographers have also speculated on other marital difficulties; biographical study, some of it psychoanalytical, presents the Shelleys experiencing alienation and loneliness.<sup>7</sup> By appearing to favour one Shelley over another, however, critics in the past have sometimes been too ready to give credence to such a narrative of discord. In what follows, I present evidence from the Shelleys' works and manuscripts to indicate that PBS and MWS continued to collaborate in 1818-22.

Biographical criticism sympathetic to the Shelleys' ongoing collaboration has suggested that producing literature was a means to reconciliation.<sup>8</sup> It is more important to gauge the Shelleys' intellectual interest in each other's writings - and their ability to influence those compositions - rather than trying to estimate how they actually 'felt' about each other. To begin this discussion, we can turn to a verse-preface by PBS written in 1820 that presents an explicit address to MWS,

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<sup>4</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Chronology' in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 771-72.

<sup>5</sup> Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, 520.

<sup>6</sup> White, 255. Cameron, 'The Planet-Tempest Passage in *Epipsychidion*', 950-72.

<sup>7</sup> Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years*, 309-310. Cameron is renowned in spite of his bias and outdated views. For example, Hogle cites Cameron as a crucial source for the basis of Shelley scholarship in Hogle, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley' in *Literature of the Romantic Period: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 118-42.

<sup>8</sup> As discussed below, Bennett describes *The Cenci* collaboration by suggesting: 'Writing about the same theme at the same time, therefore, may well have been an act towards reconciliation' Bennett, 'Introduction' in PBS and MWS, *BSM* Vol X, ed. Robinson and Bennett (London: Garland, 1992), 163.

and furthermore, is composed as a response to MWS voicing her opinion on his work. *The Witch of Atlas* is a 'visionary rhyme' (l. 8) written in *ottava rima*, and PBS wrote the piece in August over just three days, after he returned from a solitary walking trip to San Pellegrino in Tuscany. The poem's first 48 lines are an apology, or a justification, for the metaphysical fancy of the piece, addressed: 'To Mary (on her objecting to the following poem, upon the score of its containing no human interest)'. MWS's journal records the circumstances of the poem's composition; she writes that 'S. goes to Monte San Pelegrino [sic]' on Saturday 12, returning on Sunday 13, and then PBS's hand adds 'W. W. A' to the entries on the 14/15 August, which as the editors explain stands for 'W.[rite] W.[itch of] A.[tlas]'. On the following day PBS writes: 'Do - Finished'.<sup>9</sup> MWS then transcribed the poem later that year.<sup>10</sup>

It is apparent from the preface to *The Witch of Atlas* that MWS's opinion of the poem's subject matter affected her husband's perception of his own work. In her preface to his *Poetical Works* - the posthumous collection she published in 1839 - she defines the 'more popular' poetical compositions in her husband's oeuvre 'as appealing at once to emotions common to us all', such as love, grief, and the 'sentiments inspired by natural objects [...] Yet he was usually averse to expressing these feelings, except when highly idealised'. In contrast, there are the idealised 'purely imaginative' writings, and MWS identifies *The Witch of Atlas* as an example:

In [*The Witch of Atlas*] particularly, he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose; in all, there is that sense of mystery which formed an essential portion of his perception of life - a clinging to the subtler inner spirit, rather than to the outward form - a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 328-29.

<sup>10</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 342.

<sup>11</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1839), *NSWMS* II, 256.

She describes PBS as ‘particularly attached’ to the ‘metaphysical strain that characterises much of what he has written [...] these huntings after the obscure’.<sup>12</sup> MWS’s critique shows a complex appreciation despite the poem not being written in the style she preferred. The phrase ‘he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose’ demonstrates that MWS understood that her husband’s work contained a fantastical element, somewhat divergent from her own prose writings. Just as MWS requested that PBS ‘dismiss’ his fanciful style, Leigh Hunt would similarly argue that the poet was more successful when he had ‘laid aside his wings’; ‘when he is obliged to give up these peculiarities, and to identify his feelings and experience with those of other people, as in his dramatic poems, the fault no longer exists’.<sup>13</sup> PBS explored the identity of the solitary lonely poet-wanderer, as is epitomised in the protagonist of *Alastor* (composed 1815, published 1816), and idealised in *A Defence of Poetry* (composed 1821): ‘A Poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness, and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds’.<sup>14</sup> MWS’s word ‘huntings’ is suggestive of a masculine pursuit, musing on PBS’s solitary literary endeavour. She admired his work, but MWS also knew such a world would be difficult for her to inhabit. This notion does not imply MWS’s subordination, however, since as a self-proclaimed ‘part of the Elect’,<sup>15</sup> her role was distinctive from this particular poetic tradition, and she demonstrated her talents in a different sphere of writing.

Although MWS wrote the notes to *Poetical Works* retrospectively, the preface to *The Witch of Atlas* (composed by PBS in 1820) proves that she was able to assert her literary opinions as the poem was being written. PBS’s mature works are informed by a Romantic idealism that originated in the works of Kant and Coleridge, viewing a living ‘whole’ as more than just the sum of its various parts, rejecting a focus on sense-impressions alone.<sup>16</sup> Thus MWS’s presence appears to

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<sup>12</sup> MWS, ‘Preface’ to PBS, *Poetical Works* (1839), 257.

<sup>13</sup> Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* Vol I (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), 210.

<sup>14</sup> PBS, *A Defence of Poetry* in *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 516.

<sup>15</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 451.

<sup>16</sup> Chris Baldick, ‘Assembling *Frankenstein*’ in MWS, *Frankenstein*, ed. J. Paul Hunter (London: Norton, 1996 repr. 2012), 173-74.

challenge his adherence to such a position, and an act of creativity - PBS's poetry - emerges from their interchange.

PBS felt the need to rebuke his wife's sentiments about the substance of the poem, questioning if MWS is 'critic-bitten'. Why else must she 'condemn these verses I have written / Because they tell no story, false or true?' (ll. 1, 3-4). He encourages MWS to 'content' (l. 8) herself with the Witch's idealistic tale, and by doing so, asks his audience to do the same. PBS may have had in mind the unfavourable critical reception of his previous visionary epic, *Laon and Cythna*, which he alludes to in the third verse (ll. 17-24), and for which PBS also wrote a 'Dedication' addressed to MWS in 1817;<sup>17</sup> it is to MWS again that he addresses not a dedication, but a defence of this new poem. I have discussed how in the dedication to *Laon and Cythna*, MWS is a poetical guide for PBS, 'whose presence on my wintry heart / Fell' (ll. 55-56), stimulating a renewal of creative and emotional impulses.

In *The Witch of Atlas*, MWS is similarly an inspirational force, but instead of praising her 'wisdom' (l. 58, *Laon and Cythna*) explicitly, PBS defends his fanciful verses. In feeling compelled to formally respond to her criticism, PBS again demonstrates his profound respect for her knowledge, represented in the need to prove the worth of the work to a creative partner. An awareness of her critique introduces *The Witch of Atlas*, and is affecting to the author and reader. There is a hint of a mocking tone in PBS's rebuttal of MWS's disapproval,<sup>18</sup> but he accepts that she has made a valid point; and his consideration of her attitude concerning the poem becomes an important part of the work itself. Like the reference to Spenser in the dedication to *Laon and Cythna*, PBS's allusion to Wordsworth in the opening lines of *The Witch of Atlas* places the Shelleys within a literary tradition. Here, in a further development, PBS diffuses the tension between himself and MWS with an attack on Wordsworth:

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<sup>17</sup> Details of composition in Donovan, notes to PBS's *Laon and Cythna* in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 10-11. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

<sup>18</sup> The editors to *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* suggest that in the introductory stanzas 'Shelley mocks Mary'. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 1<sup>st</sup> edn., ed. Reiman and Powers, 348.

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years  
 Considering and retouching Peter Bell;  
 Watering his laurels with the killing tears  
 Of slow, dull care, (ll. 25-28)

A distaste for the conservative turn taken by Wordsworth was something the Shelleys had in common; on 14 September 1814 MWS recorded in her journal 'Shelley [...] brings home Wordsworth's Excursion of which we read a part – much disappointed [sic] – He is a slave'.<sup>19</sup>

PBS's engagement with his literary partner is brought to life in the author's holograph manuscript. Carlene Adamson edited MS. Shelley adds. e. 6, which contains *The Witch of Atlas*, and found that in this notebook 'Mary Shelley's presence positively manifests itself in Shelley's work [...] she is at the centre of the web of personalities one usually finds associated with a particular notebook'. As well as the address to MWS in the preface to *The Witch of Atlas*, there are also works that 'might have initially been written with her in mind as the primary audience', specifically the 'introduction and preface to "A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks"' (a first entry in the notebook from the 1818 summer when the Shelleys found themselves happily settled in Italy)', and some lyrics PBS contributed to her dramas 'Proserpine' and 'Midas', 'demonstrating the fruitful collaboration of husband and wife'.<sup>20</sup> Adamson's study explains that both MWS and PBS have implied that the preface to *The Witch of Atlas* was composed *after* the poem was written; however, in the draft, the preface appears on the pages just before the beginning of the poem. PBS's composition was usually erratic, and Adamson explains that it is unlikely PBS would have left several blank pages before beginning the poem proper, and then return to these blank pages 'to enter the six prefatory stanzas. Such a sequence of composition does not make sense'. Conversely, according to Adamson's narrative:

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<sup>19</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Carlene A. Adamson, 'Introduction' in *BSM Vol V*, ed. Adamson (London: Garland, 1997), xvii-xviii.

What may have happened is that on his return from the trip to Monte San Pellegrino, in his *enthusiasm to write*, he may have first told her of his plans for the poem which then prompted her comments. This exchange, then, formed the heart of those first six stanzas [my emphasis].<sup>21</sup>

Such was the centrality of literary activity in the Shelleys' lives that stanzas can be seen to follow from dialogue and 'exchange'. When PBS was away on his walking trip, MWS was carrying out research for *Valperga*, her historical novel set in fourteenth-century Italy; both Shelleys were seeking subjects for their work.<sup>22</sup> As far as space will permit me to consider the most relevant works here, I will now show how between 1818-22 the Shelleys provided both supportive, enthusiastic contributions and stimulating challenges to each other's writings.

### ***The Cenci***

'I have nearly finished my *Cenci* – which Mary likes', wrote PBS to Amelia Curran on 5 August 1819.<sup>23</sup> PBS's tragedy of the incestuous and malicious Count *Cenci* and the plight of his children is, after *Frankenstein*, arguably the second major collaboration in the Shelleys' canon. Written and published in 1819, the play was based on a source translated by MWS, and thus existing study acknowledges that there is 'valuable evidence that [MWS] collaborated with PBS on his drama; he used her notes and consulted with her during its composition'.<sup>24</sup> MWS's *Matilda* (also known as *Mathilda*) is a novella that responds to PBS's play in its incest narrative. Bennett emphasises that 'Mary Shelley's translation of *The Cenci* represents an act of collaboration', due to the 'Shelleys' joint involvement' in the creation of *The Cenci* and *Matilda*, including their 'documented close interaction while they wrote their incest stories'.<sup>25</sup> Bennett's statement is taken from her introduction to MWS's manuscript translation of the original *Cenci* story, the

<sup>21</sup> Adamson, 'Introduction' in *BSM V*, xl-xli.

<sup>22</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 328-29.

<sup>23</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 107.

<sup>24</sup> Feldman, Lucy Morrison and Staci L. Stone, *A Mary Shelley Encyclopedia*, ed. Feldman, Morrison and Stone (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 364.

<sup>25</sup> Bennett, 'Introduction' in *BSM X*, 163.



shocking history of a sixteenth-century Italian family. Unfortunately, no manuscript of PBS's drama *The Cenci* is known to have survived.<sup>26</sup> However, we do have access to the manuscript of MWS's translation,<sup>27</sup> and the letters, journals and biographical information from the period, as well as evidence of collaboration from the text of the finished poem, one of the few works to be published in PBS's lifetime.

The Shelleys received 'the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci'<sup>28</sup> in Italy in 1818, and MWS copied this manuscript from 23-25 May.<sup>29</sup> A year later at Rome in 1819, PBS reread MWS's copy of the manuscript and on 14 May MWS's journal notes that 'S. writes his tragedy'.<sup>30</sup> On the same day Claire Clairmont records in her journal: 'Read Manuscript of the Cenci Family',<sup>31</sup> which as Rossington observes, 'could suggest that the MS was read aloud'.<sup>32</sup> PBS was compelled to write a drama based on the 'fearful and monstrous'<sup>33</sup> narrative of the Cenci family, who found notoriety when in 1599 the abused children murdered their tyrannical father. As explained in his preface, PBS was inspired by the 'monuments' of the story in Rome, including the supposed Guido Reni portrait of Beatrice Cenci. Discussion of the legend also moved him:

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, introductory note to *The Cenci* in PBS, *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 repr. 1991), 274.

<sup>27</sup> Bennett has shown clearly that this was MWS's original translation from the Italian. *BSM* X, 167-68. The final pages of the MS are in Italian, page 73 recto, 269.

<sup>28</sup> MWS, 'Note on *The Cenci*' in *NSWMS* II, 283.

<sup>29</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 211. MWS writes in her note to *Poetical Works* that they received the manuscript in Rome in 1819, however, the it was actually given to the Shelleys by the Gisbornes the previous year in Livorno. Rossington, introductory note to *The Cenci* in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 713.

<sup>30</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 263. Rossington, introductory note to *The Cenci*, 713.

<sup>31</sup> Claire Clairmont, *Journals* ed. Marion Kingston Stocking (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 111.

<sup>32</sup> Rossington, introductory note to *The Cenci*, 713.

<sup>33</sup> PBS 'Preface' to *The Cenci* in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 713-863. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest [...] This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. (Preface to *The Cenci*)

Although not mentioned explicitly in the formal preface, we can see from MWS's journal that she would have been involved in these conversations, as she records their excursions to the Palazzo Colonna - where the portrait could be seen - and the Cenci Palace.<sup>34</sup> PBS worked rapidly throughout the summer, and the play was finished sometime in August (MWS notes on 8 August 1819 that PBS 'finishes his tragedy', although a letter to Hunt on 15 August suggests he was still working on it).<sup>35</sup>

MWS explains her involvement in the composition of the tragedy in her notes to PBS's *Poetical Works* (1839). She describes the Shelleys' visit to see the portrait of Beatrice in 1819, which prompted their imaginative recital of the Cenci story. MWS would later write to Amelia Curran twice to request a copy of the portrait, potentially to use as a frontispiece to PBS's finished drama.<sup>36</sup> MWS's account in *Poetical Works* offers us a direct insight into the Shelleys' encounter with the history of Beatrice in particular, and emphasises the enthusiasm of their conversation on the topic:

When in Rome, in 1819 [...] we visited the Colonna and Doria Palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found, and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence; but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived and gifted with poetic

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<sup>34</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 259, 262.

<sup>35</sup> MWS, *Journals* n. 4, 294, PBS, *Letters* II, 108.

<sup>36</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 105, 159.

language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangements of the scenes together.<sup>37</sup>

MWS refers to her ‘incompetence’ here, and this kind of self-representation helps to explain why many critics have assumed that she was subordinate to her husband. The historical distance (1819 recalled in 1839) and MWS’s characteristic display of humility downplays her role in this moment of the collaboration. A similar diffidence is evident when studying MWS after PBS’s death (Chapter 4), and it was also apparent in her 1814 inscription ‘I cannot write poetry’ (Chapter 1). Overall, however, MWS emphasises the reciprocity in this attempt to incite creativity with a shared source of inspiration. PBS endorses this in an already cited letter to MWS when he refers to ‘how divinely sweet a task it is to imitate each other’s excellencies’;<sup>38</sup> the Shelleys encouraged shared creative development, responding to one another’s artistic strengths.

MWS recollects how PBS’s ‘imagination became strongly excited’ by the potential of a literary source for her writing. She explains in *Poetical Works*: ‘[PBS] conceived I possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations that I should cultivate any talent I possessed, to the utmost’. On the contrary, PBS saw himself as ‘destitute of this talent’ (meaning the ability to construct storyline or plot); ‘he asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract – too fond of the theoretical and the ideal to succeed as a tragedian’.<sup>39</sup> Shared inspiration (the Cenci story, the portrait), and a conversation that led to increased confidence and spurred experimentation (PBS’s suggestion that MWS write a drama, and his anxiety about his talent as a playwright), resulted in PBS tackling the dramatic form, and producing the masterpiece that is *The Cenci* – with MWS’s input. This experiment, MWS argues, resulted in ‘the finest thing he ever wrote’.<sup>40</sup> In 1839 MWS also recalled how PBS entreated her to compose a drama on Charles I: ‘he encouraged me to attempt a play’, a subject which eventually

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<sup>37</sup> MWS, ‘Note on *The Cenci*’, 283.

<sup>38</sup> PBS, *Letters I*, 414.

<sup>39</sup> MWS, ‘Note on *The Cenci*’, 282.

<sup>40</sup> MWS, ‘Note on *The Cenci*’, 286.

became PBS's project.<sup>41</sup> The intellectual climate produced a mutual stylistic mimicry; the Shelleys would experiment in different genres prompted by discussions with an intellectual partner. Drama appealed to them both; they arrived in Italy on the 30 March 1818, and made regular trips to the theatre whenever they lodged in a major city. Such a shared experience would have prompted PBS's attempt to write for a popular audience. They had also frequented the opera and other theatrical shows in the months before leaving London.<sup>42</sup>

*The Cenci* demonstrates an alteration in Shelleyan tone; its historical source, imbued with bleak truths about the failings of humanity, offers a contrast to the idealised Utopian yearning of *Prometheus Unbound*, a poem PBS continued to work on during this period.<sup>43</sup> The poetics of *Prometheus Unbound* are the poetics he most associated with himself; the lyrical drama inspired by Aeschylus is described by MWS as 'metaphysical and abstract', and she suggests the work reflects how PBS saw himself as 'fond of the theoretical and the ideal'. We recall MWS's assertion in her preface to *Poetical Works* that 'the more popular' poems by PBS - *The Cenci* was written to impress a popular audience in a live stage production in London - are those 'appealing at once to emotions common to us all', the pieces which 'appeal to many', very different from the 'metaphysical strain' of works like *The Witch of Atlas*.<sup>44</sup> PBS's opening dedication to *The Cenci*, addressed to Hunt, describes the work as 'sad reality'. The emotional appeal of this play is tied to the Shelleys' interest in tragedy, demonstrated by MWS's attention to her husband's work in this genre, and PBS's perception of his wife's 'dramatic talent'.

It is interesting then that MWS began writing the novella *Matilda*, a dramatic monologue, in 1819. MWS re-interpreted themes from PBS's tragedy in her prose, including familial turmoil and incest. PBS's encouragement of MWS to use what he perceived as her particular talents not only influenced his own work ('we talked over the arrangements of the scenes together'), but also stimulated new writing, as I will go on to discuss. *Matilda* is in many ways a response to *The*

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<sup>41</sup> MWS, 'Note on poems written in 1822' in *NSWMS* II, 324. *PBS Letters* II, 39-40.

<sup>42</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 193-97.

<sup>43</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Chronology', 771-72.

<sup>44</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 256-57.

*Cenci*. He urges her to write: their reaction to *The Cenci* relics in Rome, and the public fascination with the gruesome story in Italian society provided narrative possibilities for both Shelleys. Before looking at *Matilda*, I will consider how MWS's ideas became integral to PBS's poetic version of the Cenci story.

Without a heavily annotated, shared manuscript like that of *Frankenstein* it is difficult to identify where MWS may have suggested words, phrases and ideas for *The Cenci*. The most significant aspect of *The Cenci* collaboration is that the source for PBS's tragedy is MWS's manuscript, copied from the Gisbornes in May 1818: the *Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci*.<sup>45</sup> The original, which details the history of Beatrice (the daughter who is abused by her corrupt father, Count Cenci, and who goes on to plan his murder), was copied from the archives of the Palazzo Cenci at Rome. MWS then translated the Italian, which PBS would have had access to when composing his tragedy. As Robinson explains, as well as discussing the scenes of the drama itself - and MWS copying the drama for publication in August 1819 - 'they would have also talked about her translation of "the old manuscript account" of the Cenci story from Italian to English [...] her translation intended to be prefixed to the published tragedy'.<sup>46</sup> Crook has suggested that the recordings of the word 'work' in MWS's journals in April/May 1819 might relate to her

translating the Italian manuscript on which Shelley based *The Cenci*. This, in turn, would suggest that her translation was made before Shelley's play was complete and may even have been the catalyst that set him off to write it.<sup>47</sup>

The implication in Claire's journal – previously cited - that the story may have been read aloud also suggests that discussions were on-going regarding the dramatic tale.

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<sup>45</sup> Feldman, Morrison and Stone, 364.

<sup>46</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *BSM X*, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Crook, "Work" in *Mary Shelley's Journals*, 124.

*Shelley's Cenci* by Stuart Curran details PBS's departures from MWS's source manuscript.<sup>48</sup> Curran states that whereas previously PBS has been criticised for borrowing from Shakespeare (and others), the evidence from MWS's manuscript actually shows that he was 'following his source with good faith'.<sup>49</sup> The surviving manuscript in English is in Bodleian MS. Shelley Adds. e. 13. MWS's original copy of the manuscript is missing, as is the translation PBS sent to be printed with his play. However, PBS's hand appears in the surviving manuscript in e. 13, providing minor revisions throughout. Such evidence proves it was read and used by him, and demonstrates, as Bennett argues, 'that he approved of the manuscript translation with his emendations'.<sup>50</sup> Within this surviving manuscript there is also evidence to suggest that MWS was translating from the Italian rather than copying from a source already converted to English,<sup>51</sup> and therefore that MWS was the original translator. Rossington has carefully detailed various other possible dates for MWS's manuscript of the *Relation*, and noted that the Shelleys may have had other sources for the story too (multiple Italian manuscripts of the story existed at this time).<sup>52</sup>

Rossington writes that 'it seems almost certain, given the emendations by both S. and Mary, that *Relation* or the version of it sent to Peacock, was intended as an integral part of the tragedy up until August [1819]', and therefore it was the main source for PBS's drama. That the *Relation* did not appear in the published version of *The Cenci* in 1819 appears to be a later decision PBS made in anticipation of the possible public reaction to the graphic and shocking content of the original narrative. He expressly wrote to Peacock in July 1819 that in his play, he had 'touched very delicately' on the 'chief circumstance' of the original manuscript, as the potential success of any production 'hangs entirely on the question as to whether any such a thing as incest [meaning the implied rape of

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<sup>48</sup> Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Cenci: Scorpions Ringed with Fire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 40-46. For another detailed discussion of the differences between the *Relation* and *The Cenci*, see Rossington, 'An Historical Note on the Cenci Story and the Sources of Shelley's Knowledge of it', *The Poems of Shelley II*, 874-75.

<sup>49</sup> Curran, *Shelley's Cenci*, 40.

<sup>50</sup> Bennett, *BSM X*, 261-72. Also Bennett 'Introduction' in *BSM X*, 167.

<sup>51</sup> Bennett, *BSM X*, 265, 269. Also Bennett 'Introduction', *BSM X*, 167-68.

<sup>52</sup> Rossington, 'An Historical Note on the Cenci Story', 869.

Beatrice] in this shape however treated wd. be admitted on the stage'.<sup>53</sup> The *Relation* was finally published by MWS in 1839/40.<sup>54</sup>

When comparing the version in the *Relation* to PBS's drama it is clearly apparent that he used the language and ideas of MWS's translation. A number of correlations substantiate PBS's use of the English manuscript as translated by her. In *The Cenci*, the physical act of incest is only referred to in what Curran describes as 'veiled hints'.<sup>55</sup> In MWS's translation of the story, at the point where there is a description of Cenci's incestuous abuse of his daughter Beatrice in the original Italian, she breaks off and instead writes: 'the details here are horrible. & unfit for publication'.<sup>56</sup> PBS hoped that the play would be performed in London, writing to Peacock: 'What I want you to do is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden'.<sup>57</sup> He may have taken MWS's advice in being indirect about the atrocities suffered by Beatrice. The original does not confirm that Beatrice was raped but certainly that Cenci sexually abused her.<sup>58</sup> As Bennett observes, 'the fact that Shelley saw but did not modify Mary Shelley's manuscript omissions may be taken as evidence of his assent to her editorial decisions'.<sup>59</sup> MWS's influence here notably contrasts with her censoring of Byron's language in *Don Juan* in 1822-23: as a copyist, when she omitted offending words and phrases, Byron would reject her attempt at rewriting, and ink over his original words. Conversely, MWS was able to make decisions on the variants presented by Byron, to which he assented.<sup>60</sup> Peter Cochran describes a Wollstonecraftian revision that rewrites a patronising view of womankind in *Don Juan* Canto VI: the draft reads, 'There is a tide in the affairs of

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<sup>53</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Rossington, 'An Historical Note on the Cenci Story', 865-67.

<sup>55</sup> Curran, *Shelley's Cenci*, 43.

<sup>56</sup> MWS, Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 13 [MS pp. 10-11] in *BSM X*, 182-83. See also 1839 published version: MWS, 'Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci' in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives* IV, 296-308.

<sup>57</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 102.

<sup>58</sup> H. Buxton Forman's translation of the Italian reads: 'He [...] was not ashamed to seek her naked in her bed, shewing himself thus with his coutezans, and making her witness of all that could pass between them and him. [...] Beatrice's resistance of his infamous desires was punished by blows and ill treatment'. Bennett, *BSM X*, 262-63. See also Rossington, 'An Historical Note on the Cenci Story', 875.

<sup>59</sup> Bennett, 'Introduction', *BSM X*, 167, 262. Another omission by MWS includes a reference to menstrual blood, 264.

<sup>60</sup> Cochran, 'Mary Shelley's Copying of *Don Juan*', 10.

Men / [...] There is a tide too in the affairs of Women' – MWS removed all the capitals and rejects 'too', reducing the difference between these two gendered tides.<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere, it was her censorship that Byron probably disliked, and which – intriguingly – PBS accepted.

PBS signalled in his letters that he was anxious both for the play to be a success and for his audience to recognise its historical foundation. He writes, 'If my Play should be accepted don't you think it would excite some interest, & take off the unexpected horror of the story by shewing that the events are real, if it could appear in some Paper in some form'; PBS refers here to the possibility that MWS's prose translation might be included as a supplement to the published version of the play.<sup>62</sup> PBS 'had in mind that the historical veracity of the story be enforced', as Rossington notes,<sup>63</sup> yet he also removed the most shocking details to present a narrative to the public that he hoped would be popular; in particular his omission of the sexual violence experienced by Beatrice (an 'unexpected horror') may have followed MWS's manuscript and editorial advice. The shocking details would be implied but not explicit in both MWS's translation and PBS's play. There are other intriguing textual similarities, too; in MWS's Cenci document, on hearing her family's death sentence Beatrice is described as breaking into 'a piercing lamentation and into passionate gesture'. She exclaims 'How is it possible – oh my God – that I must so suddenly die!'<sup>64</sup> In one of the most haunting speeches by Beatrice in the final act of *The Cenci*, she cries: 'Oh, my God! Can it be possible I have / To die so suddenly?' (V. iv. 48-49). It is evident that sections of speech that MWS translates are reproduced in almost identical phrases in PBS's work.

MWS undervalues her larger role as creative collaborator by writing in 1839, 'this tragedy is the *only one* of his works that he communicated to me during its progress [my emphasis]'. She confesses her contribution to *The Cenci* alone: 'we

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 5, 10.

<sup>62</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 120. See also Rossington, 'An Historical Note on the Cenci Story', 867.

<sup>63</sup> Rossington, 'An Historical Note on the Cenci Story', 867.

<sup>64</sup> MWS, Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 13 (MS pp. 46), *BSM* X, 220-1. See also 1839 published version in MWS, 'Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci' in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives* IV, 304.



talked over the arrangements of the scenes together'.<sup>65</sup> MWS's journals repeatedly demonstrate a close intellectual interaction between herself and PBS, however, for example by referring to PBS reading aloud, or reading with MWS.<sup>66</sup> She produced copies of many of his poems – not just *The Cenci*.<sup>67</sup> Even the poetic inspiration for *Epipsychidion* – Dante's *Vita Nuova* – was a text that the Shelleys read together.<sup>68</sup> They would have, to some extent, 'talked over' the process of composition together in relation to other writings. MWS's letters and journals also show her awareness of PBS's progress in his work.<sup>69</sup> We can assume that MWS was interested (by 1839 at least) in publicly acknowledging her involvement in the works she preferred, those concerning 'human interest', as defined by PBS himself in *The Witch of Atlas*, as opposed to the 'metaphysical strain' of 'the purely imaginative' works (as MWS was to call them elsewhere in her notes in 1839).<sup>70</sup> Evidence from the texts themselves implies that MWS underplayed the full extent of her collaborative involvement; the significance of *The Cenci* collaboration and its emotionally wrought story suggest MWS's decision to document her contribution to this particular mode of writing and that specific genre, as she tells us that PBS 'conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent'.<sup>71</sup> MWS translated the source for PBS's drama in 1819, and Chapter 3 will go on to show there is evidence of her contributing to a wider range of his works. In 1839 MWS offers a limited narrative of her collaboration with PBS, but her earlier journals, and the Shelleys' surviving manuscripts, suggest more far-reaching activity.

*The Cenci* was composed between May-July 1819. The period of composition that produced both *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound* is now

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<sup>65</sup> MWS, 'Note on *The Cenci*', 283.

<sup>66</sup> MWS, *Journals*, passim. An example from 1819: 'S. reads Calderon – Dante with me - & finishes the Sad Shepherd aloud in the evening', 297.

<sup>67</sup> For example see MWS in 1818 'write out Shelley's poem' (editor's note: 'Probably 'Lines written among the Euganean hills'), *Journals*, 244.

<sup>68</sup> Bieri, 222. 'Mary began reading Dante's *Vita Nuova* with Shelley in late January. If she knew he was writing the poem about Emilia as Beatrice, she never mentioned it in her journal or letters.'

<sup>69</sup> For example: 'S. finishes his translation of Homer's hymn to Mercury', MWS, *Journals*, 326. 'Shelley writes an ode to Naples', *Journals*, 329.

<sup>70</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to PBS, *Poetical Works*, 256-57.

<sup>71</sup> MWS, 'Note on *The Cenci*', 282.

referred to as PBS's *annus mirabilis*.<sup>72</sup> MWS, in contrast, felt anxious about her productivity at this time, leading her to write in a letter to Marianne Hunt on the 28 August 1819: 'Shelley has written a good deal and I have done so very little since I have been in Italy'.<sup>73</sup> The impression that one individual consistently overshadows the other in terms of productivity was something PBS also felt when he compared himself to Byron,<sup>74</sup> and a similar anxiety can be found in other significant Romantic friendships. Coleridge's short bursts of 'imaginative intensity' functioned in a different way from Wordsworth's; Coleridge's irregular way of working became a source of 'obsessive anxiety' for the poet, a fretfulness, perhaps, exacerbated by Wordsworth's tepid response to Coleridge's writing, and his more consistent success as a writer.<sup>75</sup> PBS may have been conscious that *Frankenstein* (1818) had the potential to be a far more accessible text than any of his published works thus far (for example, *Queen Mab* in 1813). As such, *The Cenci* was designed to engage a broader public audience - although it was never performed in PBS's or MWS's lifetime. PBS explained his choice of his approach in a letter to Peacock in 1819:

[*The Cenci*] is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterise my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development.<sup>76</sup>

The letter continued by justifying the incest in the play as 'the facts are matter of history', which PBS affirms he has treated with 'peculiar delicacy'.<sup>77</sup> This style may well reflect MWS's interests as a novelist; she writes prose fiction in order to attend to character development and to offer 'human interest' narratives. PBS

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<sup>72</sup> Curran, *Shelley's Cenci*, 13. See also Curran, *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1975).

<sup>73</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 103.

<sup>74</sup> For example: 'Lord Byron is established now, & we are constant companions [...] if you before thought him a great Poet what is your opinion now you have read Cain? The Foscari & Sardanapalus I have not seen [...] I doubt not they are very fine. [...] I have been long idle, - & as far as writing goes, despondent' PBS, *Letters II*, 373.

<sup>75</sup> Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London: Penguin, 1990), 275.

<sup>76</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 102.

<sup>77</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 102.

emphasises in the preface (as in his letter above) his fidelity to the truth: 'I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were'. The characters - Beatrice in particular - allow PBS to meditate on the human condition, with reference to real-life occurrences of immorality and destruction, rather than a more conceptual or allegorical approach (as in *Prometheus Unbound*). In summary, the two texts - *Matilda* and *The Cenci* - are the product of a shared intellectual climate and common creative inspiration, and textual study usefully identifies the similarities and differences between the completed individual works.

### ***The Cenci and Matilda***

PBS's and MWS's decision to compose father-daughter incest stories at around the same time is intriguing, despite incest being a common subject in literature of the Romantic age, especially for the second generation of Romantic writers (Byron's *Manfred* was composed September 1816 – February 1817).<sup>78</sup> In a letter of 1819, PBS glosses the various uses of incest in works of the period: 'Incest is like many other *incorrect* things a very poetical circumstance. It may be the excess of love or of hate'. In contrast to *The Cenci*, in PBS's epic *Laon and Cythna*, sibling incest is an excess of love.<sup>79</sup> But *Matilda* and *The Cenci* are about paternal incest; we return to Bennett's discussion of the composition of works based on this theme as the reawakening of a literary closeness between the pair:

The Shelleys' joint involvement in the creation of Shelley's *Cenci* and Mary Shelley's *Mathilda* – drawing on the transcription of the Gisborne manuscript, the Alfieri drama, the translated text, and the Shelleys' documented close interaction while they wrote their incest stories - may offer some new insight into the couple's relationship at this time [...] the two writers, working at the same time, and

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<sup>78</sup> As shown in contextual studies of the Shelleys' works, for example Graham Allen, *Mary Shelley* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 47. See also Lord Byron, 'Manfred, A Dramatic Poem' in *Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 734-68.

<sup>79</sup> Clemit, 'From *The Fields of Fancy* to *Matilda*: Mary Shelley's Changing Conception of her Novella', *Romanticism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies Vol III: Romanticism and the Margins*, ed. O'Neill and Mark Sandy (London: Routledge, 2006), 224. PBS, *Letters II*, 154.

discussing these works, on a theme that itself represents an unexpected, agonizing twist on one of the couple's shared values – love – may reflect their equally agonising, unexpected loss of the two living emblems of their love [the deaths of their young children]. Writing about the same theme at the same time, therefore, may well have been an act towards reconciliation.<sup>80</sup>

Bennett cites the importance of Alfieri's *Myrrha* (1784), which PBS 'urged Mary Shelley to translate in September 1818'.<sup>81</sup> He wrote to her: 'do you be prepared to bring at least *some* of Mirra translated [...] I have been already imagining how you will conduct some scenes'.<sup>82</sup> This drama about a daughter's incestuous love for her father was another shared inspiration.<sup>83</sup>

Bennett speculates as to the emotional significance of the Shelleys producing *Matilda* and *The Cenci* in 1819 ('may offer insight' 'may reflect' 'may well'). It is undeniable that the Shelleys created two works that are inextricably linked by their inspiration and their content. MWS was writing *Matilda* between August 1819 and February 1820,<sup>84</sup> in the months just after PBS had completed his tragedy. Journal entries reflect the intensity of their literary activities over the course of a single day: on the 12 September MWS notes 'Finish copying my tale – Copy Shelleys Prometheus [...] S. sends his tragedy to Peacock'.<sup>85</sup> The 'tale' is *The Fields of Fancy*, the first version of *Matilda*. As well as writing her own work she was thinking about PBS's recently completed tragedy and copying his *Prometheus Unbound*.

There are moments in *Matilda* and *The Cenci* that directly correspond to one another: for example, in *The Cenci* II. i, Beatrice listens to her father's footsteps on the stairs, 'Ah no! that is his step upon the stairs; / 'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;' (ll. 13-14). In *Matilda*, the protagonist hears her father walk up to her room, 'On a sudden I heard a gentle step ascending the stairs; I paused breathless

<sup>80</sup> Bennett, 'Introduction' in *BSM X*, 163.

<sup>81</sup> Bennett, 'Introduction' in *BSM X*, 163.

<sup>82</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 39-40. MWS notes she is translating in Sep 1818, see *Journals*, 226.

<sup>83</sup> Bennett, 'Introduction' in *BSM X* 163.

<sup>84</sup> Clemit, 'Introductory Note' to *Matilda* in *NSWMS* II, ed. Clemit, 1-3.

<sup>85</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 298. The tragedy is *The Cenci*.

[...] the steps paused at my door' (31).<sup>86</sup> However, the dark theme of father-daughter incest is expressed differently in the characterisation of the father. In PBS's play, Cenci feels no remorse and is a proud figure, a cold-hearted criminal who thrives on his ability to corrupt others:

I will make  
 Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.  
 [...]
 My blood is running up and down my veins;  
 A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:  
 I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;  
 My heart is beating with an expectation  
 Of horrid joy. (IV. i. 94-95, 163-67)

In this scene Cenci contemplates the possibility of a conceiving a child with Beatrice, and his malicious thoughts are inspired by a longing to inflict suffering upon his victim, rather than by a corrupt love or desire: 'she may see / Her image mixed with what she most abhors' (IV. i. 147-48). In *Matilda*, MWS replicates the abhorrence of incest but unlike Cenci, Matilda's father is self-loathing, secretive, and yearns for a redemption he cannot have: 'With every effort to cast it off, this love clings closer, this guilty love more unnatural than hate, that withers your hopes and destroys me for ever' (35). In MWS's tale, the father's desire is a result of passion ('My daughter, I love you!', 28), but it is something he also longs to rid himself of. Cenci is proud; Matilda's father is remorseful. Beatrice resolves the crime committed against her by murdering Cenci; Matilda's father is suicidal.

While they both present incest and human corruption, the Shelleys' works contain strikingly different characters and sentiments. The use of incest as a theme, as Bennett suggests above, produces conflicting portrayals of an immoral or illegitimate love and desire. MWS collaborated on *The Cenci* with her husband, and then went on to write *Matilda*, the narrative of which invites the reader to show compassion for a villain, who, in striking contrast to Cenci, is regretful, ashamed

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<sup>86</sup> MWS, *Matilda* in *NSWMS* II, 1-68. All further reference to this text will be from this edition.

and overcome by a guilt that leads him to take his own life. The first-person narration of MWS's novella promotes sympathy for all the hopeless characters in her story, the novel form providing a confessional tone; PBS's *Cenci* by contrast condemns its villain and encourages the audience to pity Beatrice as victim, to be seen on stage as a defiant tragic heroine. The Shelleys' interest in incest and retribution was awakened by a startling fascination - both their own and the Italian people's - with the *Cenci* relics. Therefore the Shelleys' consideration of human fallibility prompts their literary creativity. MWS's particular appreciation for the 'human interest' in literature is evident if we look forward to *The Witch of Atlas* in 1820; PBS was conscious of his wife's preference for this style.

*The Cenci* is a tragedy, and the final act includes a meditation on the certainty of death and the spectacle of this. Beatrice moves from utter horror ('How fearful! To be nothing!' V. iv. 55), to reconciling herself to her terrible fate:

we must die:

Since such is the reward of innocent lives;  
Such is the alleviation of worst wrongs.  
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,  
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears  
To death as to life's sleep; 'twere just the grave  
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,  
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms! (V. iv. 109-116)

Here death, estrangement and despair must be an 'obscure' place, perhaps considering the inherent isolation of human individuals - we must all die alone - a reminder of our macabre fate, despite our social nature as a species. PBS explains in his preface to *The Cenci*:

Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

This understanding of human nature is integral to PBS's drama. Beatrice's reaction to her own mortality is human, not saintly and calm, and transcends hyperbole in its presentation of the 'sad reality' of the veiled and terrifying mystery of death (and even more gruesomely, execution), something fascinating because of its obscurity. This tone is a striking contrast to the pathos surrounding the protagonist's death in *Matilda*, which is calculated and contrived. Her death (she supposes) will give her redemption, and she approaches her fate with optimism. In a strange aspiration, she romanticises herself as becoming wedded to death in her sacrifice:

I feel death to be near at hand and I am calm. I no longer despair, but look on all around me with placid affection. [...] In truth I am in love with death; no maiden ever took more pleasure in the contemplation of her bridal attire than I in fancying my limbs already enwrapt in their shroud: is it not my marriage dress? Alone it will unite me to my father when in an eternal mental union we shall never part.  
(65)

Matilda longs to reconcile herself with her father in death. Beatrice, however, perceives the finality of death; she asserts that 'worse than the bitterness of death, is hope' (V. iv. 98).

PBS describes the real Beatrice Cenci in his preface by writing that she 'appears to be one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another: her nature was simple and profound'. Despite her conviction as a murderer she can possess these qualities. We are fascinated by her crime because it was marked by a desire to continue living, to conquer her abuser, and death as a punishment for Beatrice's actions is an ideal tragic end. On the contrary, MWS presents us with a self-destructive heroine in *Matilda*, who is seeking her own demise, even celebrating it: 'I was impressed more strongly with the withering fear that I was in truth a marked creature, a pariah, only fit for death' (61). Influenced by the guilt she feels regarding her father, Matilda's death is self-inflicted by her attempt at suicide, and her wandering

that causes her illness and demise at the end of the novella. Matilda's narcissism allows her to rejoice in her own passing, and display a confused and almost stoic reaction to her father's death ('Why is it that I feel no horror?' 40). Beatrice's fatal punishment for the utter despair and revulsion that impelled her to commit murder is problematic - she plotted to kill a corrupt man who was destroying her life and family - and she rages against her unhappy end.

Unlike in *The Cenci*, where PBS aspired to use 'the familiar language of men', having in places 'written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words' (Preface to *The Cenci*), MWS's language in *Matilda* is deliberately strained and hyperbolic. The narrator's emotional recollections are akin to Beatrice's soliloquies of grief in their anguish, but MWS's narrative is marked with heightened displays of sensibility of a kind once favoured but increasingly mocked by Romantic period authors. It reads as far more contrived than Beatrice's laments, and the first-person narrator provides an intensity to MWS's character for the reader:

While life was strong within me I thought indeed that there was a sacred horror in my tale that rendered it unfit for utterance, and now about to die I pollute its mystic terrors. It is as the wood of the Eumenides none but the dying may enter; and Oedipus is about to die. (5)

The marked tragedy here is extreme. In his preface, PBS compares *The Cenci* to Sophocles' Oedipus plays, championing such works as perfect sources for tragic compositions; these stories 'already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest' before the playwright 'made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind'. The Shelleys both employ a similar classical allusion, yet the misfortune presented in *The Cenci* is different from that of *Matilda*. MWS's prose is contemplative and densely ornate, the internal monologue of her narrator implying much about the character of Matilda herself - the prose novella in the first person allows MWS to give Matilda the dominant voice across the whole text, and her idiosyncrasies become recognisable to the reader. In contrast, PBS's *sermo pedestris* writing (a term used by PBS specifically



to describe *Julian and Maddalo* - see Chapter 3), was a 'manner adapted to the familiar idiom of the poetic audience, and as such it was preferred and encouraged by Mary Shelley.'<sup>87</sup> In *The Cenci* PBS chooses an accessible - but still highly literary - style that MWS later identified as 'more popular' in the *Poetical Works*. In *Matilda*, MWS adopts a carefully wrought idiom possibly akin to the 'purely imaginative' tone found in PBS's more metaphysical works.<sup>88</sup> MWS would later write of PBS in her note on *Prometheus Unbound* in the *Poetical Works*:

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real - to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.<sup>89</sup>

Sophocles figures as a mutually important author/text in the Shelleys' literary history, and as MWS's commentary continues, of particular note is PBS's reading and study of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*.<sup>90</sup> In the particular episode of the Shelleys' relationship in which *Matilda* and *The Cenci* were composed, we see each author adopting a way of working that mimics the other partner's preferred style. MWS attempts to 'idealize the real' to some extent, and PBS experiments in the tone of 'more popular poets' - but not without MWS retaining her usual prose form. MWS's choice of genre in particular allows the first-person narration of a character like *Matilda* to add internal meditations and justifications to the reader. This provides a self-consciously excessively ornate tone which can be read as satire of *Matilda* herself (as discussed further below).

PBS's tragedy is interested in taking what is already a gruesome and shocking historical tale and attempting 'to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts'.

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<sup>87</sup> Everest, 'Shelley's Doubles: An Approach to *Julian and Maddalo*' in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2nd edn, 676-77. Originally published in *Shelley Revalued: Essays from the Gregynog Conference*, ed. Everest (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), 63-64, 79-88.

<sup>88</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works*, 256.

<sup>89</sup> MWS, 'Note on the *Prometheus Unbound*' in *NSWMS* II, 278.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-79.

Instead of seeking to remedy human mistakes (as is a concern in *Prometheus Unbound*), *The Cenci* presents humanity in unregenerate form, suggesting PBS was avoiding any authorial comment on the characters involved. In the preface, he writes: 'I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right and wrong, false or true'. However, the preface was a cultivated part of the dramatic instruction for a play intended for the stage in London. Beatrice Cenci is a flawed heroine, but as PBS explains, this is why we are so fascinated by her tragic story:

Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character.

As Graham Allen explains: 'Beatrice could have acted differently [...] but such an ideal character would have been just that, ideal rather than tragic'.<sup>91</sup> By acknowledging that Beatrice makes 'pernicious mistakes', PBS implies that disaster can be transcended by human action. PBS's fascination with Beatrice is due to her faults and her functioning place in 'sad reality'. We are confronted by PBS's veiled moral interest in the horrors associated with the Cenci family and his attempt at presenting a historical story containing shocking human action for the personal judgement of the audience and/or reader.

*Matilda* is a similarly complex story, in that MWS's novella is a somewhat idealised (yet tongue-in-cheek) portrayal of the eponymous narrator. The protagonist can even be read as a flawed version of the already flawed Beatrice Cenci from PBS's play. MWS therefore appears to be making an explicit response to Beatrice Cenci in her creation of *Matilda*, whose dramatic monologue is focused on self-dramatisation; MWS deliberately does not invoke any sympathy for her tragic character. This tone contrasts with PBS's sympathy for Beatrice, a real historical figure, and whom he describes explicitly after seeing her portrait as having 'exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow [...] inexpressibly pathetic' (Preface to *The*

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<sup>91</sup> Allen, *Mary Shelley*, 50.

*Cenci*). Matilda is wholly fictional, MWS's creation, and in her first-person confessional narrative, the reader is confronted with her internal processes and reflections, a contrast to Beatrice's dramatic encounters and eventual destruction at the hands of others. *Matilda*, only published for the first time in 1959, was once read by critics as a confessional, semi-autobiographical work by MWS, in which Matilda stands for MWS, William Godwin is Matilda's unnamed father, and PBS is the poet Woodville.<sup>92</sup> However, recent criticism sees MWS's tone as far more subtle.

Matilda's attempt to depict herself as the ideal heroine has caused Robinson to suggest she is more of a 'dramatic actress' and a 'substantially flawed character'.<sup>93</sup> She is consumed by a grief that is, like Beatrice Cenci's, a result of her own actions, yet the novella's melodrama potentially offers a critique of the protagonist. In his essay, 'Mathilda as Dramatic Actress', Robinson considers that 'although P. B. Shelley used his preface to *The Cenci* to define Beatrice Cenci's character flaws, Mary Shelley had no such overt means to define the flaws of Mathilda'.<sup>94</sup> However, in the first version of the novella, *The Fields of Fancy*, she used a frame narrative, and Robinson describes how later MWS included in the monologue in *Matilda* 'references to life as a tragedy – making Mathilda all the more of a heroine of extreme sensibility who lived art more than life'.<sup>95</sup> Robinson identifies Matilda as 'someone in need of redemptive self-knowledge',<sup>96</sup> a character MWS did not actually 'like'. The most provocative conclusion is that Matilda may well even be the victimiser, not the victim, in her tale. The credibility of the narrator is in doubt, and therefore 'crafty actress' at the heart of *Matilda* might well imply the protagonist 'misrepresents her own sexual desire for her father'. Such an observation is substantiated further by 'the artistry of Mary Shelley, who embedded in Mathilda's narrative a number of allusions to other incest texts

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<sup>92</sup> Robinson, 'Mathilda as Dramatic Actress' in *Mary Shelley in her Times*, ed. Curran and Bennett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 76.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

[potentially Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern*, and *Myrrha* as cited above], some of which emphasise the daughter as the sexual aggressor'.<sup>97</sup>

In allowing Matilda to speak in a monologue, MWS's text could well be ironic. We may not think of MWS as a comic or satirical author, but she was also talented at writing in such a way; this style also notably occurs in 'The Bride of Modern Italy' discussed in Chapter 4. As well as responding to a verse-drama in prose, the attitude of MWS to her story of incest and human suffering in *Matilda* is complex (as is PBS's portrayal of his tragic heroine). MWS's attempt to present her protagonist in neither a straightforwardly favourable or critical light is intriguing; do we feel sympathy for Matilda or not? In their stylistic mimicry the Shelleys exerted influence over one another, as PBS sought the 'popular' (as the details of the *Cenci* inspiration suggest, perhaps explicitly due to MWS's influence in its construction) and MWS attended to a more ornate style, perhaps reflecting the kind of Latinate idiom PBS introduced to her manuscript in *Frankenstein*. MWS presents a critically interrogative rewriting of the incest theme of *The Cenci* in *Matilda*, as historical tragedy becomes a form of satire. The Shelleys' collaboration forced them to react to the work, advice and style of their creative partner, reaping the benefits of having another literary talent to engage with.

The hostile reception in England to *The Cenci*, as Curran notes, exacerbated the Shelleys' feelings of social isolation: 'The pains to make the tragedy popular seemed to have resulted only in a scathing self doubt [...] the ostensible failure of *The Cenci* had a decisive influence on Shelley's life'.<sup>98</sup> MWS also expressed her anxiety over the blighting of PBS's name and the English reaction to *The Cenci*, which was coloured by the scandal surrounding the tragic death of PBS's first wife Harriet, who committed suicide in 1816: 'with S.'s public & private enemies it would certainly fall if known to be his - his sister in law alone would hire enough people to damn it'.<sup>99</sup> Her affinity to PBS's drama is also evident in later years, as MWS would recall *The Cenci* in personal references. She cites Beatrice from PBS's

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 83. As well as Alfieri, MWS invokes 'Myrrha in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* [where] the daughter is the one who desires and confesses her love for her father'.

<sup>98</sup> Curran, *Shelley's Cenci*, 13.

<sup>99</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 106.

play in her journal in 1822, and in her letters post-1822: ‘The Time that was, is, & will be presses upon you & standing [in] the centre of a moving circle you “ – slide giddily as the world reels.”’<sup>100</sup> ‘I thought to die myself – wd that I had & “that the flowers of this departed spring were fading on my grave!”’<sup>101</sup> MWS returns to PBS’s tragedy in times of grief and anxiety, revealing her intimate closeness to that poem, and her feeling a proximity to PBS himself in recounting its words.

In summary, the Shelleys in 1818-22 are constantly developing and synthesising ideas that are dependent on an interchange provided by stimulating literary company; evidence of the Shelleys’ sharing - reading together, copying work, even making suggestions about each other’s works - can be found in their creative productions. *Matilda* was composed immediately after the Shelleys’ work on *The Cenci*, and both works contain similar ideas (enacted differently in terms of mood and genre). This protracted episode in the Shelleys’ literary relationship suggests a supportive creative environment. The significance of the composition of *The Cenci* and *Matilda* might represent particularly intimate collaboration, made possible by the literary closeness that already existed, and continued to exist, as time progressed.

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<sup>100</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 395-396. Cf. PBS, *The Cenci* (III. i. 12).

<sup>101</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 342. Cf. PBS, *The Cenci* (I. iii. 138-39).

## Chapter 3, 1818-22: Exploring manuscripts as evidence of collaboration

### Manuscripts I: 'Proserpine' and *The Mask of Anarchy*

Previous accounts have suggested that the Shelleys experienced increasing emotional - and therefore intellectual and creative - alienation from each other after the collaboration on *Frankenstein*.<sup>1</sup> They did work in greater isolation in the years prior to PBS's death (when, for example, PBS composes *Epipsychidion* without involving MWS). However, the Shelleys continued to write, and to be present in each other's lives, and their antagonism in its own way provided creative stimulation. This chapter examines some of the surviving manuscripts of these later years, including examples of collaboration where PBS edits MWS's work in draft, and where MWS acts as PBS's amanuensis. I develop my discussion by seeking MWS's hand in PBS's work, and reconsidering those poems by PBS that have been overlooked in terms of the Shelleys' literary dialogue, taking *Julian and Maddalo* as an example. In her note to *Prometheus Unbound* in 1839, MWS utilised some 'remarks' found in one of PBS's 'manuscript books', in order to show 'the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind'.<sup>2</sup> The arresting nature of these instances of manuscript jottings provides examples of the artistic mind - or in this case, minds - at work.

As well as identifying the interchange between the texts the Shelleys wrote in parallel (such as *The Cenci* and *Matilda*, as previously discussed), here I explore manuscripts to demonstrate just how often the Shelleys continued to work together after 1818, and moreover, the way in which MWS contributed to PBS's writings. The physical evidence is perhaps never as overt as in *Frankenstein* (two hands in one manuscript, major and minor alterations throughout, with the potential for the Shelleys to be working on revisions at the same time),<sup>3</sup> but it does

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<sup>1</sup> See the treatment of the Shelleys' marriage in Holmes, *Shelley on Love*, ed. Holmes, 159-63.

<sup>2</sup> MWS, 'Note on the *Prometheus Unbound*' in *NSWMS* II, 278.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxx.

confirm that MWS and PBS continued their literary collaboration. For example, 'Proserpine' and 'Midas' are two dramas apparently written for children, composed by MWS in 1820, with four lyrics by PBS.<sup>4</sup> As Bennett has observed, this 'literary project again reflects the Shelleys' literary collaboration as well as their shared interest in Latin and Greek literature, mythology and history'.<sup>5</sup> Clemit and Robinson have also both identified the collaboration evident in the mythological dramas.<sup>6</sup> In her editing of the manuscript of some of PBS's verses for 'Proserpine' and 'Midas' (found in *The Witch of Atlas* notebook), Adamson emphasises the Shelleys' joint involvement in the composition of these poems. Dismissing G. M. Matthews' claim that 'The Pursued and the Pursuer' was an unused lyric never shown to MWS, she asserts: 'Mary Shelley's presence is almost palpable throughout this notebook, and it is hard to imagine her not sharing in [PB] Shelley's obvious pleasure in devising [...] lyrics'.<sup>7</sup>

In the Pforzheimer collection there is a draft of the beginning of Act II of 'Proserpine' that was written by MWS and then added to by PBS,<sup>8</sup> which as Robinson states, 'further evidences the collaboration of the two Shelleys in their dramatic efforts'.<sup>9</sup> A transcript shows that PBS altered MWS's original words and added footnotes; therefore PBS revised MWS's blank verse, in a collaborative effort akin to that which created *Frankenstein*. There are only two surviving pages of this draft with PBS's alterations, showing lines 1-35 of Act II.<sup>10</sup> MWS then fair-copied the drama into the notebook now numbered Bodleian MS. Shelley d. 2.<sup>11</sup> This fair copy shows that although MWS adopted the majority of PBS's changes, there is one particular instance when she did not. The anomaly occurs on line 3 where MWS's

<sup>4</sup> PBS contributed 'Arethusa' and 'Song of Proserpine' to 'Proserpine', and 'Song of Apollo' and 'Song of Pan' to 'Midas'. Reiman and Fischer, *Shelley and his Circle* Vol IX, ed. Reiman and Fischer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 298.

<sup>5</sup> Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> 'Proserpine' and 'Midas' were written in early or mid-1820 and provide an example of literary collaboration between the Shelleys.' Clemit, 'Introductory Note to Mythological Dramas' in *NSWMS* II, 69. 'The two Shelleys, bound by love and circumstance, frequently collaborated'. 'Proserpine' and 'Midas' 'provides another instance of the collaborative relationship that the two Shelleys had' Robinson, 'Introduction' in *BSM* X, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Adamson, 'Introduction' in *BSM* V, xlii.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *BSM* X, 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Reiman and Fischer, *Shelley and his Circle* IX, 289-96.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett and Robinson, *BSM* X, ed. Bennett and Robinson, 58-59.

phrase 'Ere since that fatal' is changed in the first manuscript to 'E'er since that fatal' by PBS. In d. 2 MWS retains her original spelling 'Ere', and this is how we now read the phrase in Clemit's edition in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*.<sup>12</sup> Despite this, the publication of 'Proserpine' in MWS's (but not PBS's) lifetime shows this word as 'E'er'.<sup>13</sup> Such evidence suggests that the text was still developing. MWS is continuously revising her own script in the 'Proserpine' manuscripts, and this sentence 'Ere since that fatal eve' in the first draft, becomes 'Ere since that fatal day' in d. 2. A conversation, on and off the page, must be reciprocal and is not one-sided; the text is malleable during composition and both authors contribute in creating and refining it.

The dramas themselves contain Shelleyan themes, further implying that PBS and MWS would have discussed the works' content. For example, 'Proserpine' has an Italian setting, and there are allusions to the Prometheus myth (I, 27, 48). In MWS's blank verse, the landscape of Italy reflects the grief of Ceres:

Trinacria mourns with her; - its fertile fields  
 Are dry and barren, and all little brooks  
 Struggling scarce creep within their altered banks;  
 The flowers that erst were wont with bended heads,  
 To gaze within the clear and glassy wave,  
 Have died, unwatered by the failing stream. -  
 And yet their hue but mocks the deeper grief  
 Which is the fountain of these bitter tears. (II, 10-17)

This passage ('little brooks / Struggling scarce creep [...]') recalls PBS's musings on the landscape in 'Mont Blanc', where 'glaciers creep / Like snakes that watch their prey' (ll. 100-101). After PBS's death, MWS turned her hand to writing poetry in earnest – and continued to respond to PBS in a poetical dialogue.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> MWS, 'Proserpine' in *NSWMS* II, 72-91. All further references to this text will be from this edition.

<sup>13</sup> *The Winter's Wreath for 1832* (Liverpool: George Smith, 1831) cited in Reiman and Fischer, *Shelley and his Circle* IX, 291.

<sup>14</sup> See MWS's poems in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives* IV, 117-62.



The Shelleys worked together to produce texts such as *HSWT* and sister-works such as *The Cenci* and *Matilda*. More widely than this, manuscript study shows that the Shelleys' involvement with one another's writings exhibits a complementary undertaking in literary productions, revealing associations between texts that have previously been overlooked in terms of the Shelleys' literary relationship. *Frankenstein* is now read as a novel that was the result of collaboration precisely because of the evidence provided by the manuscripts.<sup>15</sup> MWS was frequently an amanuensis for PBS, and it is crucial that we consider the role she had in the production of his works. Here I will take one example to demonstrate the significance of her work as copyist.

The surviving manuscripts of *The Mask of Anarchy* (composed 1819) provide a relatively coherent example of the various different stages of the Shelleys' drafting and copying. The poem's purpose necessitated that this process also occurred within a somewhat short space of time, as PBS's inspiration was proactive and political; he was responding to news of the riot dubbed 'Peterloo' in Manchester in which unarmed men, women and children among crowds staging a peaceful rally were killed or injured by drunken mounted militiamen and cavalrymen.<sup>16</sup> The massacre occurred on 16 August 1819, and PBS learnt of the event on the 5 September in a letter from Peacock.<sup>17</sup> PBS completed *The Mask of Anarchy* and had it copied as soon as possible, with a view to immediate publication by the English press.<sup>18</sup> As an expatriate reflecting on the political woes of his home nation, he begins the poem: 'As I lay asleep in Italy / There came a voice from over the sea' (ll. 1-2).<sup>19</sup> By 23 September the work was completed and sent to England, with PBS hoping it would appear in *The Examiner* (as MWS

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<sup>15</sup> See Robinson, *The Frankenstein Notebooks* and *The Original Frankenstein*.

<sup>16</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *The Mask of Anarchy* in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. Reiman and Fraistat, 315.

<sup>17</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *The Mask of Anarchy*, 315.

<sup>18</sup> However, the poem was never published in PBS's lifetime. 'Hunt – fearful of prosecution because of the volatile temper of the country and the new repressive legislation passed in 1819 and 1820 – refrained from publishing the poem until 1832' Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *The Mask of Anarchy*, 315.

<sup>19</sup> PBS, *The Mask of Anarchy* in *The Poems of Shelley* III, 27-63. All further references to this poem will be from this edition unless stated otherwise.

records in her journal, 'S.'s poem goes to Hunt').<sup>20</sup> MWS's notes to PBS's *Poetical Works* (1839) allude to the collaborative activity of the Shelleys, which is also corroborated by evidence from the text itself and the surviving manuscripts. MWS recalls in these notes her memory of listening to PBS recite lines from *The Mask of Anarchy*: 'I heard him repeat, and admired, those beginning "My Father Time is old and gray" before I knew to what poem they were to belong.'<sup>21</sup>

In the *Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics* we have facsimiles of the draft of the poem in PBS's hand (Vol IV, hereafter cited as *MYR IV*),<sup>22</sup> the intermediate fair copy also in PBS's hand (Vol II, hereafter cited as *MYR II*),<sup>23</sup> and the press copy transcription in MWS's hand with additions and corrections by PBS (also in *MYR II*). These are the manuscript versions of the poem that we know PBS was directly involved in producing, and all three were completed before 23 September when *The Mask of Anarchy* was mailed to Hunt. There is also a copy in MWS's hand in Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. d. 9, a notebook in which she transcribed fair copies of PBS's poems after his death.<sup>24</sup> It is possible a missing fair copy of the poem - to which PBS gave his approval - also existed. This copy would have been made during 1819; Reiman suggests it was probably made in PBS's hand, and that MWS may have later used it as a source.<sup>25</sup> The manuscripts provide a relatively clear example of MWS as a significant partner in PBS's method of composition during this period. We can see a clear transition from draft, to intermediate fair draft, to press copy, to corrections and additions on that copy. MWS's press copy with PBS's alterations is a useful source for critical understanding of the Shelleys working together on one manuscript.

Critics acknowledge that it is not always clear who is responsible for the alterations on the press copy in *MYR II*. PBS supplied the title, subtitle, filled in some lines he had previously left blank in his fair copy, and made minor verbal

<sup>20</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction', *The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics: Percy Bysshe Shelley* (hereafter *MYR*) Vol II, ed. Reiman (London: Garland, 1985), xiii. MWS, *Journals*, 298.

<sup>21</sup> MWS, 'Note on poems of 1819' in PBS, *Poetical Works* (1839), *NSWMS II*, 306.

<sup>22</sup> Mary A. Quinn (ed.), *MYR Vol IV* (London: Garland, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Reiman, *MYR II*.

<sup>24</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction', *MYR II*, xiii.

<sup>25</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction', *MYR II*, xvii.

substitutions or edited the punctuation. The interventions by PBS on MWS's transcription total 'perhaps some three dozen', but his alterations are not always distinguishable from her own.<sup>26</sup> Reiman's editorial notes to *MYR II* similarly note instances in which PBS 'possibly' makes alterations (whether it is MWS's hand or PBS's hand is sometimes uncertain).<sup>27</sup>

The fact that PBS made few alterations to the press copy implies that MWS had a significant measure of authority for copying up the intermediate fair copy; PBS trusted her ability to transcribe his writing accurately. His corrections are minor, and are perhaps not corrections of her, but fresh alterations of his own work. It is likely that the changes made on the press copy by PBS demonstrate a combination of PBS correcting MWS's transcription, and PBS making additional changes to the press copy. For example, consider stanza 4 of *The Mask of Anarchy* on both the intermediate fair copy and the press copy in *MYR II*.<sup>28</sup> On line 2 on the press copy the word 'Lord' is cancelled by PBS, but it was copied accurately by MWS from the intermediate fair copy; PBS may have been contemplating this line and he only decided on this alteration when the poem was in press copy. In contrast, line 4 of stanza 4 on the press copy has the word 'Mill' cancelled by PBS – here because it appears MWS has misread the poem from the intermediate fair copy. It seems possible, from evidence to be detailed below, that MWS would have contributed to such alterations. She may have discussed the need for changes in the press copy with PBS. MWS's journal documents some of the daily activities of the Shelleys, including their reading and writing, as was usual for her entries before PBS's death. From when PBS heard of the Peterloo massacre to when he mailed his poem (from 5-23 September), the Shelleys were often reading together, including several cantos of Dante.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, introductory note to PBS, *The Mask of Anarchy, The Poems of Shelley III 1819-1820*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Reiman, *MYR I*, for example fol 2r stanza 35 line 3 "the" changed to "their" – possibly by PBS', 44-45.

<sup>28</sup> *MYR II* fol.1r and fol.1v, 9-10 intermediate fair copy, fol.1r, 40-41 press copy.

<sup>29</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 298. The tale is *The Fields of Fancy* (an early version of *Matilda*) and the tragedy is *The Cenci*.

Reiman's introduction to *MYR II* considers how the lost copy of the manuscript for the *Mask* might have been in PBS's hand precisely because he was hiding various writings from MWS at this time, such as the 'Maniac' passages in *Julian and Maddalo*. It has been suggested that these verses were kept from MWS, and yet they were also contained in the same notebook as the lost transcript of the *Mask*:<sup>30</sup>

*Julian and Maddalo* contains a series of passages in which Shelley cries out against the despair of his increasingly unsatisfying marriage through the ravings of the Maniac (all these passages added after Mary Shelley had seen and transcribed an earlier version of the poem), it seems to me unlikely that Shelley would have turned the copybook over to Mary Shelley early enough to copy *The Mask of Anarchy*, lest he risk reviving her feelings of guilt and depression that were just beginning to subside in September.<sup>31</sup>

The assertion that the Maniac's speech in *Julian and Maddalo* entirely represents an autobiographical account of the Shelleys' marital difficulties is now contested by various critics,<sup>32</sup> and later in this chapter I will consider how that poem figures in the context of the Shelleys' literary relationship in an entirely different way. However, whether *Julian and Maddalo* was hidden from MWS or not, the journals alone and, as I shall detail further, the extant manuscripts of the *Mask*, provide significant evidence that PBS did not (as Holmes suggested) 'establish his routine independently' from MWS in these years.<sup>33</sup> The Shelleys' literary relationship post-*Frankenstein* may have been affected by occasional estrangement, but it retained much of its previous character. It would be naive to suggest that they were never secretive - MWS uses symbols in her journal to record times of emotional strain, for example.<sup>34</sup> However, even if PBS concealed one particularly personal notebook from MWS, he was otherwise sharing his works with her.

<sup>30</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction', *MYR II*, xiii-xvii.

<sup>31</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction', *MYR II*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>32</sup> For example see Crook, 'Pecksie and the Elf'.

<sup>33</sup> Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, 520.

<sup>34</sup> See Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 'Mary Shelley's Use of Symbols' in MWS, *Journals*, ed. Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 579-81.

It can be argued that an amanuensis is not quite the same as a collaborator. Although there is a manuscript showing the hands of both Shelleys, MWS's participation in PBS's *Mask* manuscript is not exactly comparable to PBS's involvement in MWS's drafts and copies of *Frankenstein*, where he would make suggestions and edit to the extent that he also altered the narrative. A division of labour does not have to be equal, however – we can recall Robinson's assertion that collaboration means 'to work with'.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the manuscript of *The Mask of Anarchy* shows that MWS was more than just a copyist.

In his introduction to *MYR II*, Reiman notes how early editors of the Shelley manuscripts such as H. Buxton Forman suggested that PBS dictated to MWS from his rough notes to create the press copy.<sup>36</sup> As more sources came to light, Forman rejected his own hypothesis, instead visualising MWS 'copying out, as literally as might be, a poem which was practically completed, but required just a few finishing touches', from PBS's intermediate fair copy. The process of copying out is not perhaps as controlled and responsive as dictation, and suggests MWS was left alone with the poem. That MWS would have had more autonomy than simply following supervised verbal directives implies she also could not have had a merely passive relationship to the poem. Such evidence shows her authority as PBS's amanuensis and a creative partner through whom his poetry would be sent to the press, probably with her emendations as well as his own.

PBS's intermediate fair copy is what MWS would have copied from to create her fair press copy. Reiman's headnote to the intermediate fair copy manuscript comments that:

[PBS] made a number of hasty and – to someone less familiar with his handwriting and mannerisms than Mary Shelley – somewhat ambiguous changes and corrections.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks I*, lxvii.

<sup>36</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction' in *MYR II*, xviii-xix.

<sup>37</sup> Reiman, Headnote to Shelley's Holograph Intermediate Fair Copy in *MYR II*, 1.

That the editor suggested PBS was writing his manuscript for MWS's eye shows her as a necessary transitional component in the poem's movement to press - not just a copyist, but more of an advisor. There were certainly written instructions to her on his intermediate fair copy. See, for example, at Fol.9r, note to line 9:

PBS wrote "2" above this stanza and "1" above the following stanza, indicating his desire to transpose the two stanzas (which MWS did in her press-copy transcript, f. 2v).<sup>38</sup>

There is a textual conversation here that can be found within the manuscript, and although this is not a particularly cryptic code, the fact that PBS could give this to MWS for her to reproduce correctly on the press copy shows they had a system of working together. Elsewhere, where his writing tails off, she assumes the last letters of words from the rhyme scheme. This correction relates to stanza 27, which begins 'Till as clouds grow on the blast / Like tower-crowned giants striding fast'. The word MWS assumes is 'fast'.<sup>39</sup> The editorial notes to *MYR II* consider the 'revisions - or even the gaps' in the manuscript pages as offering an insight into 'the workings of a very specific type of creative imagination'.<sup>40</sup> Manuscript study can provide a means of understanding a poet's mind as it works. PBS's swift method(s) of working on paper were benefitted by MWS's excellent work as a copyist (as Reiman explains, 'someone less familiar' than her would have struggled to follow his hasty, ambiguous changes and corrections on the page), and the Shelleys labour together within this framework.

Reiman's notes mark instances in which it could be inferred that MWS suggested alterations, perhaps on PBS's invitation - his request for her advice. Equally MWS could have independently asserted her own opinion. Either way, the Shelleys' collaboration contributed to the final text of *The Mask of Anarchy*. In a note to fol. 3r, line 3, Reiman explains how:

<sup>38</sup> Reiman, note to fol. 9 r, line 9 in *MYR II*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Reiman, note to fol. 4r, last line in *MYR II*, 15: 'the last word lacks its final letter ("t") because the word is crowded too far into the corner; we—like MWS when she transcribed—can infer it from the rhyme scheme and the context', 15. You can see this is the case: *MYR II*, 42. The LoC MS fol. IV (MWS's press-copy transcript) MMC 1399.

<sup>40</sup> Reiman, Headnote to Shelley's Holograph Intermediate Fair Copy in *MYR II*, 2.

PBS left blanks to be filled in later; perhaps he asked MWS to suggest readings for such lacunae, for after his death she did insert words into such blanks in various poems, including 'The Triumph of Life'.<sup>41</sup>

Reiman's informed speculation suggests that PBS may have requested or expected MWS to assist him in filling these blank spaces, which demonstrates MWS's contribution to the poem. Careful examination of the manuscripts allow for further suppositions to be made regarding MWS's collaborative efforts as the poem was being written. On fol. 7r lines 5-8, a whole stanza is removed. Reiman suggests that 'MWS either forgot to copy [the stanza] or else convinced PBS that it was poetically inferior'. The removed stanza read:

Horses, oxen have a home  
 When from daily toil they come  
 Household Dogs, when the wind roars  
 Find a home within warm doors.<sup>42</sup>

PBS may well have instructed MWS verbally to remove these lines. It could be argued that these manuscript changes can ultimately be sourced to PBS, but the likelihood of MWS's potential intervention is also shown in a further example. See the final line of fol. 8v. Reiman explains:

PBS [...] revised this line [...] either he made these changes after MWS had completed the LC press copy (in which case, his changes represent his final intention), or, while copying, MWS convinced him to return to the earlier reading of the line.<sup>43</sup>

PBS's revisions could well have been influenced by advice given by MWS. Elsewhere, PBS left larger blanks in the intermediate fair copy. MWS then left a

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<sup>41</sup> Reiman, note to fol. 3r in *MYR* II, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Reiman, note to fol. 7r in *MYR* II, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Reiman, note to fol. 8v in *MYR* II, 24.

blank on the press copy, which is subsequently completed in PBS's hand.<sup>44</sup> A manuscript always provides room for improvement; even if changes are a result of PBS's instruction, the evidence still shows a working process involving both the Shelleys. Following Reiman's suggestions cited above, it seems likely that occasionally (if not always) MWS would have contributed to and engaged with the composition of the poem, even if by discussing a previous version of a phrase or verse.

Some of the changes on the first manuscript do not appear in MWS's hand on the second manuscript, for example fol. 8v (above). If PBS did not want to discuss his work with MWS, he could have made corrections on the intermediate fair copy manuscript before giving it to her, or made such changes as she copied. Instead, MWS had the opportunity for creative input, and the manuscripts imply exactly what Cameron claims does not happen – PBS discussing his writing with MWS.<sup>45</sup> MWS may have prompted changes in *The Mask of Anarchy* manuscript, as significant as the removal of a whole verse (see fol. 7r above).

The Shelleys also appear to have had a shared responsibility to produce this work for the English press. When they did not get a response from Hunt about the poem, PBS wrote to him on the 14-18 November 1819, and MWS to Hunt's wife a few days later (24 November). MWS's letter confesses that PBS 'is anxious to know whether it has been received'.<sup>46</sup> MWS's work as PBS's posthumous editor would also leave a mark on his text. In her edition of her husband's *Poetical Works* (1839), MWS used Hunt's edition of *The Mask of Anarchy* (finally published in 1832) but also 'drew upon another authority to correct Hunt's text'.<sup>47</sup> In his editorial introduction to *MYR II*, Reiman suggests that MWS masked PBS's radical voice in this political poem, and elsewhere she emphasised it, which might

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<sup>44</sup> Reiman, note to 42-43 fol. IV in *MYR II*, 42-43. 'Stanza 33, last 3 lines: PBS added these lines in blank space left by MWS'; MWS leaves blank spaces, because PBS had left blank spaces in what she was copying from (fol. 5r in the intermediate fair copy), 17.

<sup>45</sup> In *Shelley: The Golden Years*, Cameron suggests that by the time of the composition of PBS's *On Life* (1819-1820), 'Shelley seems to have been discussing his works very little with her [MWS]'. Cameron also dismisses MWS's involvement because he finds (questionable) errors in her interpretation of PBS's philosophy, 151.

<sup>46</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 152. MWS, *Letters I*, 113.

<sup>47</sup> Reiman, 'Introduction' in *MYR II*, xvi.



demonstrate her personal approach as an editor of his works, as instrumental in effecting changes and as critical as Hunt: 'Mary Shelley seemed to tone down Shelley's most radical and anticlerical views even more than Hunt did, but at least once, the opposite is true'.<sup>48</sup> Such apparent discrepancies could occur because, as an editor, MWS was at once interested in disseminating PBS's work to a wider audience, and also in preserving PBS's original, often 'radical', message – her two motivations would occasionally create conflict for her. MWS's editorial role builds on her experience as amanuensis, and this is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

MWS was openly involved in works such as *The Cenci* and *The Mask of Anarchy*, and these poems clearly demonstrate the Shelleys' collaboration after *Frankenstein*. This is significant because these are the works that do not exhibit personal mourning or discontent, and therefore are unlikely to have shades of autobiographical meaning for PBS. However, even in a poem that is typically read as strictly autobiographical - *Julian and Maddalo* - we can see signs of collaborative working practice. That MWS was a collaborative copyist of *The Mask of Anarchy* is an assertion that can be substantiated by manuscript evidence. In contrast she was only possibly the inspiration for the laments of the Maniac in *Julian and Maddalo* - a critical speculation that is intriguing but cannot necessarily be proved. Before exploring further manuscript examples from the Shelleys' works that indicate the nature of their collaboration, I will reconsider MWS's relation to *Julian and Maddalo*. This poem in particular can be analysed to reveal the nature of collaboration as one that was imprecise and fluctuating - but readily present.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

### The case of *Julian and Maddalo*

In 1819, PBS anticipated that *Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation* would become part of an Italian collection, 'the subjects of which will be all drawn from dreadful or beautiful realities'.<sup>49</sup> The poem has been described as 'Shelley's darkest and most tortured reflection on love',<sup>50</sup> and this statement exemplifies the fascination with PBS's inspirations for the piece. In the anguished reflections of the 'Maniac' in *Julian and Maddalo*, the 'realities' of the poem are, as PBS writes in the preface, 'a sufficient comment for the text of every heart',<sup>51</sup> rather than personal laments relating to PBS himself or his marriage to MWS, as previous criticism has suggested.<sup>52</sup> Although the poem has an autobiographical resonance, it offers no direct allegorical reference to the Shelleys' lives. Instead, MWS's presentation of the poem in her notes to *Poetical Works* is far more significant when considering MWS's impact on PBS's canon, and the poem also corresponds to her own creative writings.

*Julian and Maddalo* is a narrative poem, in couplets, told by Julian. He recalls his discussions with the 'Venetian nobleman'<sup>53</sup> Count Maddalo. They ride together on the 'boundless' (l. 17), 'solitary' (l. 15)<sup>54</sup> shores on the Lido near Venice, then watch a beautiful sunset before Maddalo takes Julian to visit the Maniac, who is locked in an asylum and is a man 'disappointed in love'<sup>55</sup> to the point of utter despair. Julian and Maddalo's philosophical discussions frame the poem, but it is

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<sup>49</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 164.

<sup>50</sup> Holmes, *Shelley on Love*, ed. Holmes, 163.

<sup>51</sup> PBS, 'Preface' to *Julian and Maddalo* ed. Ralph Pite in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 663.

<sup>52</sup> White, *Shelley* II. See chapter XX 'Mysteries of Death and Birth', 31-84, including a section on '*Julian and Maddalo* as a Record of Domestic Misery'. White asserts the 'practical certainty that the Madman's story is autobiographical' (43). Also see Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years*, 262, Holmes, *Shelley on Love*, 160-61, Reiman and Neil Fraistat, introductory note to *Julian and Maddalo* in PBS, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 119.

<sup>53</sup> PBS, 'Preface' to *Julian and Maddalo*, 660.

<sup>54</sup> PBS, *Julian and Maddalo* ed. Pite in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 660-94. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

<sup>55</sup> PBS, 'Preface' to *Julian and Maddalo*, 662.

the Maniac's soliloquy that is central to the piece,<sup>56</sup> and which presents the misery, loathing and remorse of a broken heart. Aspects of the narrative are explicitly inspired by PBS's experiences; the dialogue of the eponymous characters may allude to conversations between PBS (Julian) and Byron (Maddalo) at Venice in August 1818,<sup>57</sup> although PBS revives aspects of his own character in the Maniac too. PBS had travelled to Venice to negotiate with Byron about the plans for his daughter, Allegra, whose mother was MWS's step-sister, Claire Clairmont. That Julian embodies Shelleyan characteristics and Maddalo represents a Byronic figure is clear.<sup>58</sup> It is the critical reading of the third figure, the Maniac, which calls into question MWS's relationship to the poem.

Since the 1940s, it has been suggested that MWS is the 'lady' in *Julian and Maddalo* who is ostensibly the cause of the Maniac's breakdown.<sup>59</sup> Contemporary editions of PBS's writings often introduce the poem in this way.<sup>60</sup> James Bieri states that 'the maniac, is clearly Shelley [...] *Julian and Maddalo* is a veiled introspective, autobiographical analysis of a period of marital discord and personal despair'.<sup>61</sup> Although other critics have rejected this view,<sup>62</sup> this is MWS's primary relation to *Julian and Maddalo* in Shelley criticism. Holmes (in a work published in 1980) construes the Maniac as 'Shelley's alter ego [...] a semi-autobiographic projection of his private griefs [...] there can be little doubt that Shelley's difficulties

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<sup>56</sup> 'The draft in Nbk 6 reveals that the poem was conceived as a whole: blank pages were left in the nbk for the Maniac's speeches with the frame-narrative drafted before and after. GM remarks: "the draft shows clear evidence of careful structural planning and of a Soliloquy subordinated to a preconceived overall design"'. Pite, Introductory note to PBS, *Julian and Maddalo* in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 657. See also Matthews, "'Julian and Maddalo': the Draft and the meaning', *Studia Neophilologica* Vol. 35 Issue 1 (1963), 57-84.

<sup>57</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *Julian and Maddalo* in PBS, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. Reiman and Fraistat, 119.

<sup>58</sup> PBS makes clear to Hunt in a letter of 1819 that he will recognise the eponymous characters as himself and Byron: 'two of the characters you will recognise' PBS, *Letters* II, 108. Critics have most recently suggested that the characters are projections of these figures, however, and not wholly realistic presentations. 'Biographical readings of the poem have gradually been replaced by ones that emphasise its conversational aspects, seeing in the characters not identifiable persons but projections of personas or aspects of S. and Byron'. Pite, 658.

<sup>59</sup> See White, 31-84.

<sup>60</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *Julian and Maddalo*, 119. See also Pite, 657-58.

<sup>61</sup> Bieri, 84-85.

<sup>62</sup> For example see Crook, 'Pecksie and the Elf'. See also Pite, 658.

with Mary are reflected in a general way by the Madman'.<sup>63</sup> The second edition of *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* (Norton, 2002) introduces the Maniac's speech as incorporating 'emotional lines that reflect [PBS's] estrangement from Mary Shelley'.<sup>64</sup> Speculation on the state of the Shelleys' emotional relationship, such as these interpretations of the Maniac's lament, and MWS as 'The cold chaste Moon' in *Epipsychidion* (1821),<sup>65</sup> prevail in Shelley biographies. However, close analysis of the evidence found in manuscripts furthers our understanding of how the Shelleys' creative minds worked, and how this produced the poetry and prose we read today. Recent critical study in this vein is beginning to alter perceptions of MWS's appearances in PBS's poems.

In his 1905 edition of PBS's poetry, editor Thomas Hutchinson presents a section of MWS's 'Note on poems written in 1818' from her edition of PBS's *Poetical Works* (1839/1840) as a specific comment on *Julian and Maddalo*, although MWS never explicitly assigned it this purpose. It includes MWS's description of Clara Shelley's death ('We had scarcely arrived at Venice before life fled from the little sufferer, and we returned to Este to weep her loss').<sup>66</sup> This narrative is MWS's recollection of the period in Venice during which PBS met Byron. In her original 1839 'Note on poems written in 1818', MWS does not mention *Julian and Maddalo*, or the death of Clara.<sup>67</sup> In 1840 she makes additions that include the description of the loss of the Shelleys' child as cited above, and a line that notes PBS was composing *Julian and Maddalo* at Este in 1818: 'here also, as he mentions in a letter, he wrote Julian and Maddalo'.<sup>68</sup> Therefore MWS unintentionally influenced readings of the poem by these editorial additions in 1840, so much so that Hutchinson as a twentieth-century editor of PBS's *Poetical Works* assigns a section of the 'Note on poems written in 1818' exclusively to *Julian and Maddalo*. In reality the only poems MWS wrote notes to in which the poem's

<sup>63</sup> Holmes, *Shelley on Love*, 160-61.

<sup>64</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, introductory note to *Julian and Maddalo*, 119.

<sup>65</sup> See White, *Shelley II*, 255-69 and Cameron, 'The Planet-Tempest Passage in *Epipsychidion*', *PMLA* 63:3 (September 1948) Online edn.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/450692>> (accessed: 19 April 2012), 950-72.

<sup>66</sup> MWS, 'Note by Mrs. Shelley' after *Julian and Maddalo* in *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905 repr. 1991), 204.

<sup>67</sup> MWS, Prefaces and Notes, *NSWMS II*, 292-94.

<sup>68</sup> MWS, Appendix 3, *NSWMS II*, 430.

title was referred to specifically in the heading were: *Queen Mab*, *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci* and *Hellas*.

In another section of the 'Note on poems written in 1818', MWS writes of PBS:

[...] yet many hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, became gloomy, and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid for fear of wounding me, poured forth morbid but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness.<sup>69</sup>

White has linked these lines directly to *Julian and Maddalo*.<sup>70</sup> MWS, in describing sadness, isolation and solitary verses, has unintentionally led critics and readers to think that autobiography explains the poem. The date of composition has been contested; when *Julian and Maddalo* was first published in 1824, MWS added the date 'Rome, May, 1819'. In 1839 MWS initially places the poem among 'Poems written in 1820', but when she makes the changes cited above in 1840, she moves it to the poems 'written in 1818'.<sup>71</sup> This movement and her addition to the note for 1818 suggests that MWS's final editorial presentation of the poem has contributed to the critical readings of the text as relating to a breakdown in the relations between PBS and MWS. It must be assumed that editors have taken parts of MWS's editorial notes and related them directly to *Julian and Maddalo*; this interpretation is something she cannot have intended, but has over the course of time affected the poem's reception. Her editorial decision to move the poem from 'written in 1820' to '1818' in PBS's posthumous *Poetical Works* has caused the entire 'Note on poems written in 1818' to be read in relation to *Julian and Maddalo*. In fact, the oft-quoted part of the 'Note [...] 1818' ('verses, which he hid for fear of wounding me [...] discontent and sadness')<sup>72</sup> appeared in the 1839 version and was not one of MWS's additions in 1840; in 1839 *Julian and Maddalo* was still firmly placed in

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<sup>69</sup> MWS, 'Note on poems written in 1818', Prefaces and Notes, *NSWMS* II, 304.

<sup>70</sup> White, 46-47.

<sup>71</sup> Pite, 655.

<sup>72</sup> MWS, 'Note on the poems written in 1818', *NSWMS* II, 304.

'Poems written in 1820'.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, MWS does not treat the poem as a personal affront, unlike *Epipsychidion*, which MWS never commented upon, and chose not to publish until 1839. The poem was kept in a shared notebook,<sup>74</sup> and MWS published *Julian and Maddalo* at the head of her 1824 edition of PBS's *Posthumous Poems*. There is also a manuscript draft of the first 107 lines of *Julian and Maddalo* in MWS's hand.<sup>75</sup>

Kelvin Everest identified that *Julian and Maddalo* is written in a style favoured by MWS, what PBS called his *sermo pedestris* type of writing:<sup>76</sup>

In *Julian and Maddalo*, and in *The Cenci*, it is a style appropriate to a specific poetic intention; to present 'sad reality', as opposed to 'visions which impersonate apprehensions of the beautiful and just', 'dreams of what ought to be, or may be.'<sup>77</sup>

MWS preferred this combination of a familiar style of language with evocative metaphor and passion. Thus MWS described the dramatic final act of *The Cenci* as:

[...] the finest thing he ever wrote [...] the varying feelings of Beatrice are expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of tragedy onto his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too hard or too hideous a picture.<sup>78</sup>

MWS documents in her notes of 1839 her encouragement for PBS to attempt the tragedy of *The Cenci*, and the 'discovery of the new talent brought to light from that

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<sup>73</sup> For more on this, see Crook, 'Pecksie and the Elf'. Crook suggests this quote relates to 'Stanzas, Written in Dejection, Near Naples'. This is because MWS in this section of the 'Note on poems written in 1818' is discussing the winter 'spent at Naples'. MWS, 'Note on poems written in 1818', *NSWMS* II, 304.

<sup>74</sup> Crook, 'Pecksie and the Elf'.

<sup>75</sup> 'Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 12 contains a fair copy in Mary Shelley's hand of the first 107 lines'. Steven E. Jones, *BSM* Vol XV: *The Julian and Maddalo Draft Notebook* Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 11, ed. Jones (London: Garland, 1990), 173.

<sup>76</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 196.

<sup>77</sup> Everest, 'Shelley's Doubles', 676-77.

<sup>78</sup> MWS, 'Note on The Cenci', *NSWMS* II, 286.

mine of wealth' that ensued. He wrote beautifully on 'the sufferings of the human beings whose passions so long cold in the tomb, he revived and gifted with poetic language'.<sup>79</sup> If this more popular type of writing - showing human experience rather than idealised visions - is associated with MWS, then PBS was to a degree embracing her preferred style post-1814, in *The Cenci* and also in *Julian and Maddalo*. We can assume she asserted her regard for this style in their literary discussions.

The Shelleys also had a shared interest in Torquato Tasso, the sixteenth-century poet who fascinated both PBS and Byron, and thus *Julian and Maddalo* is also 'in part a reflection on Tasso's life and achievement'.<sup>80</sup> PBS had begun reading Tasso in 1815, and in 1818 was carrying out a 'more systematic study of him, including his biography'.<sup>81</sup> An abandoned tragedy on Tasso's madness by PBS included a character called Maddalo.<sup>82</sup> Carlos Baker's influential study read the *Maniac* as a 'semifictionalised treatment of the poet Tasso's imprisonment for real or alleged madness in the year 1579',<sup>83</sup> an interpretation that calls into question assertions that the laments of the *Maniac* are exclusively related to PBS's personal affairs. Ralph Pite considers that PBS (and Byron, in his 'The Lament of Tasso') identified with Tasso as 'a figure of the unjustly persecuted poet', and that PBS takes the 'conventional image of Tasso and develops it into something closer to himself'.<sup>84</sup> In 1815, *le Gerusalemme liberata* and *Aminta* appear under the heading 'Shelley' on the shared reading lists in MWS's journal.<sup>85</sup> Thus, PBS's interest in Tasso also corresponds to his reading practices with MWS. In April 1818 MWS notes in her journal that she 'Read Aminta with Shelley' and that he reads a biography of Tasso, too.<sup>86</sup> In July the Shelleys are again reading Tasso together,<sup>87</sup> and MWS writes to Mrs. Gisborne in a letter on the 26<sup>th</sup>: 'We have finished Ariosto,

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<sup>79</sup> MWS, 'Note on The Cenci', *NSWMS* II, 283.

<sup>80</sup> Pite, 659.

<sup>81</sup> Pite, 659.

<sup>82</sup> Pite, 659.

<sup>83</sup> Carlos Baker, *Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 127.

<sup>84</sup> Pite, 659-60.

<sup>85</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 92.

<sup>86</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 203.

<sup>87</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 220.

and are now reading the *Aminta* of Tasso – a correct pastoral! I think I shall like Tasso better than Ariosto'.<sup>88</sup> As with MWS's translation of Apuleius as discussed in Chapter 1, and their fascination with *The Cenci*, the decision to use classical and historical sources originated from both Shelleys reading such works together and discussing their history. On the 7 November 1818 PBS and MWS visited Tasso's cell.<sup>89</sup> As with the Geneva summer and their visits to the Cenci relics in Rome, travel and exploring Europe together would also affect their compositions.

Comparing MWS's creative writings with *Julian and Maddalo* can reveal some of the most intriguing ways in which MWS engages with the poem as an author in her own right. Already we can see MWS's recognition of the difference of form: the poetic language used by PBS generates a distinctive effect to MWS's 'written story' (her translation of *The Cenci* narrative). MWS, like PBS, was inspired by Tasso, and versions of PBS's Maniac figure can be found in MWS's own writings. MWS started her research for her third novel *Valperga* in 1818, and began writing in April 1820. It was completed in 1821 and published in 1823 (MWS described the novel as 'a child of mighty slow growth').<sup>90</sup> PBS wrote to MWS in 1821 to ask about her progression with the text, firstly writing on 5 August 'pray dearest Mary, have some of your Novel prepared for me for my return', and then later on 8 August:

[...] how are you, & how do you get on with your book. Be severe in your corrections & expect severity from me, your sincere admirer. – I flatter myself you have composed something unequalled in its kind, & that not content with the honours of your birth & your hereditary aristocracy, you will add still higher renown to your name.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 76.

<sup>89</sup> MWS *Journals*, 235.

<sup>90</sup> Rajan 'Mary Shelley: A Chronology' in MWS, *Valperga*, ed. Rajan (Letchworth: Broadview, 1998), 43-46. See also MWS, *Letters* I, 203: 'I get on with my occupation & hope to finish the rough transcript this month – I shall then give about a month to corrections & then shall transcribe it [...] It has indeed been a work of some labour since I have read & consulted a great many books'.

<sup>91</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 313, 324.



PBS implies he will critique the work (similar to his editing of *Frankenstein*), yet he is also her 'sincere admirer' and sees her future legacy as something dependent on her own genius and not just her famous literary parents (recalling the dedication to *Laon and Cythna*: 'They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth, / Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child', ll. 100-102).<sup>92</sup> Letters also show PBS in conversation with others about MWS's novel and concerned about its presentation to the public.<sup>93</sup>

Crook has observed that in *Valperga* there is a clear reference to *Julian and Maddalo*. The heroine Euthanasia describes the pains of Beatrice, a beautiful prophetess now imprisoned as a heretic. The novel compares this character to Beatrice Cenci (127),<sup>94</sup> and in a letter of May 1822 PBS explicitly states his affection for MWS's character Beatrice in *Valperga*.<sup>95</sup> Euthanasia describes the sufferings that will befall Beatrice if she remains in her cell:

Fear; the worst of evils, far worse than death [...] moments are years, if they are lengthened out by pain; every minute that she lives in her dungeon is to her a living death of agony [...]. (239)

As Crook writes in her editorial notes, 'From "moments" to "agony" is a free adaptation of P. B. Shelley, *Julian and Maddalo* (1824), ll. 415-19.'<sup>96</sup> It recalls a section of the Maniac's speech in which he laments his solitude ('I am left alone!' 397) and the desertion by the lady who destroyed his heart:

'You say that I am proud – that when I speak  
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break  
The spirit it expresses... Never one  
Humbled himself before, as I have done!

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<sup>92</sup> PBS, 'Dedication' to *Laon and Cythna*, *The Poems of Shelley* II, 48-57.

<sup>93</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 245, 312.

<sup>94</sup> MWS, *Valperga*, *NSWMS* Vol III, ed. Crook (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1996). All further references to this text will be from this edition.

<sup>95</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 428: 'if [Godwin's] objections relate to the character of Beatrice, I shall lament the deference which would be shewn by the sacrifice of any portion of it to feelings & ideas which are but for a day'.

<sup>96</sup> Crook, *NSWMS* III Note (a), 239.

Even the instinctive worm on which we tread  
 Turns, though it wound not – then with prostrate head  
 Sinks in the dust and writhes like me – and dies?  
 No: wears a living death of agonies!  
 As the slow shadows of the pointed grass  
 Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass  
 Slow, ever-moving, - making moments be  
 As mine seem – each an immortality! (ll. 408-419)

Both passages are concerned with the idea of a fate worse than death; both are also concerned with the mentality of a troubled soul locked away after desertion by a lover, and the eternity of pain this presents. Thus the phrase ‘living death of agony’ connects these two texts. MWS’s use of this particular section of the Maniac’s speech in *Valperga* not only further complicates the interpretation that the Maniac is PBS’s alter-ego recounting arguments with MWS, but also demonstrates how she reworks PBS’s interest in the human suffering of the Maniac figure in her novel. In doing so, MWS explores the plight of the abandoned lover (grief-stricken to the point of insanity) in female form. In *Valperga*, Beatrice has a doomed affair with the protagonist, Castruccio, and she must appeal to him to be released from prison. The Maniac cries:

Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast  
 Which, like a serpent, thou envenomest  
 As in repayment of the warmth it lent?  
 Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?  
 Did not thy love awaken mine? (ll. 398-402)

In turn, Beatrice in *Valperga* expresses her despair after love has been lost: ‘I was once happy; but [...] I have suffered beyond human utterance’ (237). Her emotions are unstable and her perception is damaged: ‘I sometimes felt as if I did not know where I was, and madness seemed to fall on me!’ (237). The Maniac deplores his lady’s rejection of a love she once incited (‘Did not thy love awaken mine?’ l. 402), and Beatrice appeals to the relationship she once had with Castruccio to obtain his sympathy, describing herself as ‘one very unfortunate, who earnestly implores him

as he loves his own soul [...] do you not think he would compassionate me?' (236). Beatrice and the Maniac are destroyed by love and it is a 'living death' of madness that pervades their souls: neither can escape. Both the Maniac's confession that he cannot commit suicide ('I refrain / From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain' ll. 498-99) and Beatrice's gradual fall from grace, her helplessness throughout *Valperga* as a wanderer and a prisoner, confine both characters to a life with endless hurt, a 'living death of agonies' in its torments.

A frame narrative in *Julian and Maddalo* allows for the haunting soliloquy of the Maniac to be central to the piece, and Matthews has shown how PBS's drafting of the poem exhibits 'careful structural planning'.<sup>97</sup> MWS's use of the novel form allows for more intricate characterisation: Beatrice in *Valperga* is a more overt depiction of lost love, compared to the story of PBS's Maniac, which is shrouded in mystery. We follow Beatrice from her initial meeting with Castruccio to their affair, and then his abandonment of her. MWS's talent in producing an engaging historical narrative is evident, as she humanises the chronicles of Castruccio's life and presents, in Mellor's words, 'a study of masculine egoism and female self-sacrifice'.<sup>98</sup> MWS reworks and transforms her sources rather than producing something derivative, and as the Shelleys both attend to 'human interest' their influence on one another's developing style becomes explicit.

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<sup>97</sup> Matthews, "'Julian and Maddalo': the Draft and the meaning", 63.

<sup>98</sup> Mellor, 'Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley' in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* Vol IV, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 523.

## Manuscripts II: The Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, 'Lines Written among the Euganean Hills' and the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*

The disarray and dispersion of the Shelleys' manuscripts can make it complicated to trace their composition timelines. However, the quantity and variety of manuscripts available allows us to examine some instances of MWS's hand in PBS's works. Robinson has emphasised that 'collaboration seems to have been the hallmark of the Shelleys' literary relationship'. My argument that the Shelleys' literary collaboration was one was often characterised by mutual encouragement converges with Robinson's claim that 'most but not all of Percy Shelley's changes to Mary Shelley's text [*Frankenstein*] in the Draft are for the better'. Robinson's championing of PBS's involvement emphasises that the presence of a talented and sympathetic literary partner and editor was beneficial for MWS – as opposed to suggesting that PBS improved an otherwise lacking manuscript. PBS's contribution (of 4,000-5,000 words to her 72,000 word novel) of course does not stop that text being authored by MWS, something 'attested not only by others in their circle [...] but by the nature of the manuscript evidence in the surviving pages of the Draft'.<sup>99</sup> The *Frankenstein* notebooks do not show an argument between two writers over content, as PBS delivers suggestions to MWS's - already profound and innovative - work in draft. Robinson prefers 'to give both of them the benefit of the doubt and conjecture that [...] PBS suggested and made alterations to the text of *Frankenstein* for the purpose of improving an already excellent narrative'. Consequently, in view of a reciprocal collaborative working style, MWS would have 'accepted the suggestions and alterations that she agreed with'.<sup>100</sup> Manuscript study allows us to confirm the contribution by an individual to a specific text and also make observations about the nature of the Shelleys' collaboration.

Examples of MWS's hand in PBS's manuscripts (beyond her work as amanuensis) demonstrate the reciprocity of the Shelleys' relationship. MWS assists in her husband's work, akin to his altering and adding to her *Frankenstein* (if a lot

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<sup>99</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Original Frankenstein*, 24-26.

<sup>100</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks I*, lxvii.

less substantially). Such evidence further re-establishes her position in a reciprocal collaborative relationship with her husband. Evidence of MWS's involvement also furthers our understanding of PBS's underlying regard for her, rather than misrepresenting his engagement with her writings as masculine and patronising dominance.<sup>101</sup> Contemporary study of the Shelleys as a literary couple is less likely to privilege one writer over the other, and the work of manuscript scholars such as Barker-Benfield emphasises the reciprocity in the Shelleys' contributions to one another's output: 'Mary Shelley entrusted her draft of *Frankenstein* to the comments of her partner [...] just as Shelley delegated back to her the final fair copying of *A Defence of Poetry*'.<sup>102</sup> Manuscripts are of paramount importance to scholars of PBS's work, and as Rossington explains, 'a consequence of Shelley's abruptly terminated life is that manuscript drafts, often incomplete, and fair copies are the sole authority for a very significant proportion of his works'.<sup>103</sup> Editors of the Shelley manuscript notebooks in the Bodleian and elsewhere frequently consider instances of MWS's hand in PBS's manuscripts. Gathering these examples together can indicate MWS's involvement in PBS's texts, providing a collection of regular examples of (minor) alterations and/or additions across time, the most intriguing of which I will now discuss.

As this chapter aims to show, the Shelleys continued to collaborate closely in the years after *Frankenstein* was published and before PBS's death (1818-22). MWS was PBS's usual copyist and many fair copies of his works are in her hand, but there are some instances in which she adds to a poem still in its draft stage, indicating she was creatively involved. In 1819, MWS transcribed PBS's *Prometheus Unbound* (composed 1818-19) for the press.<sup>104</sup> The last sentence of the draft of PBS's fair copy of the preface to *Prometheus Unbound* in Bodleian MS. Shelley e. 3 is in MWS's hand (Figure 6), which, as the editor of the manuscript Fraistat suggests, could show that MWS 'composed it as a suggested revision to the

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<sup>101</sup> I have discussed this in Mercer, 'Beyond *Frankenstein*'.

<sup>102</sup> Barker-Benfield, xiii.

<sup>103</sup> Rossington, 'Editing Shelley', 646.

<sup>104</sup> Fraistat, 'Introduction' in *BSM* Vol IX, ed. Fraistat, lxiii.

fair copy and Shelley subsequently accepted her suggestion'.<sup>105</sup> The words in MWS's hand are –

(t)he pile they raise will betray ~~the spot~~ his grave | which might otherwise have been unknown<sup>106</sup>

Fraistat acknowledges that MWS may have been writing to PBS's dictation, or she may also have 'wrote it into the safekeeping fair copy *after* it had been added by Shelley to the press copy'. However, the 'most probable' explanation (indicated by Fraistat) is that MWS is composing her own phrase here as a suggestion. That this solution remains the most plausible is 'yet one more piece of evidence suggesting the need for more study of the collaborative role Mary Shelley played in the production of Shelley's works',<sup>107</sup> and MWS's addition to this preface draft has been hitherto 'unnoticed' by previous editors.<sup>108</sup> MWS's involvement here occurs after *Frankenstein*, thus providing useful evidence to challenge the assumption that the Shelleys' later years (1818 and onwards) were marked by disassociation and therefore a lack of collaborative working. MWS suggested the lines above as a conclusion to the preface of what was PBS's most ambitious work to date, and they were accepted and included by him.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., lxxv.

<sup>106</sup> Fraistat, *BSM* Vol IX, F. 30 R, 444-45.

<sup>107</sup> Fraistat, 'Introduction' in *BSM* Vol IX, lxxv.

<sup>108</sup> Fraistat, *BSM* Vol IX, 633.

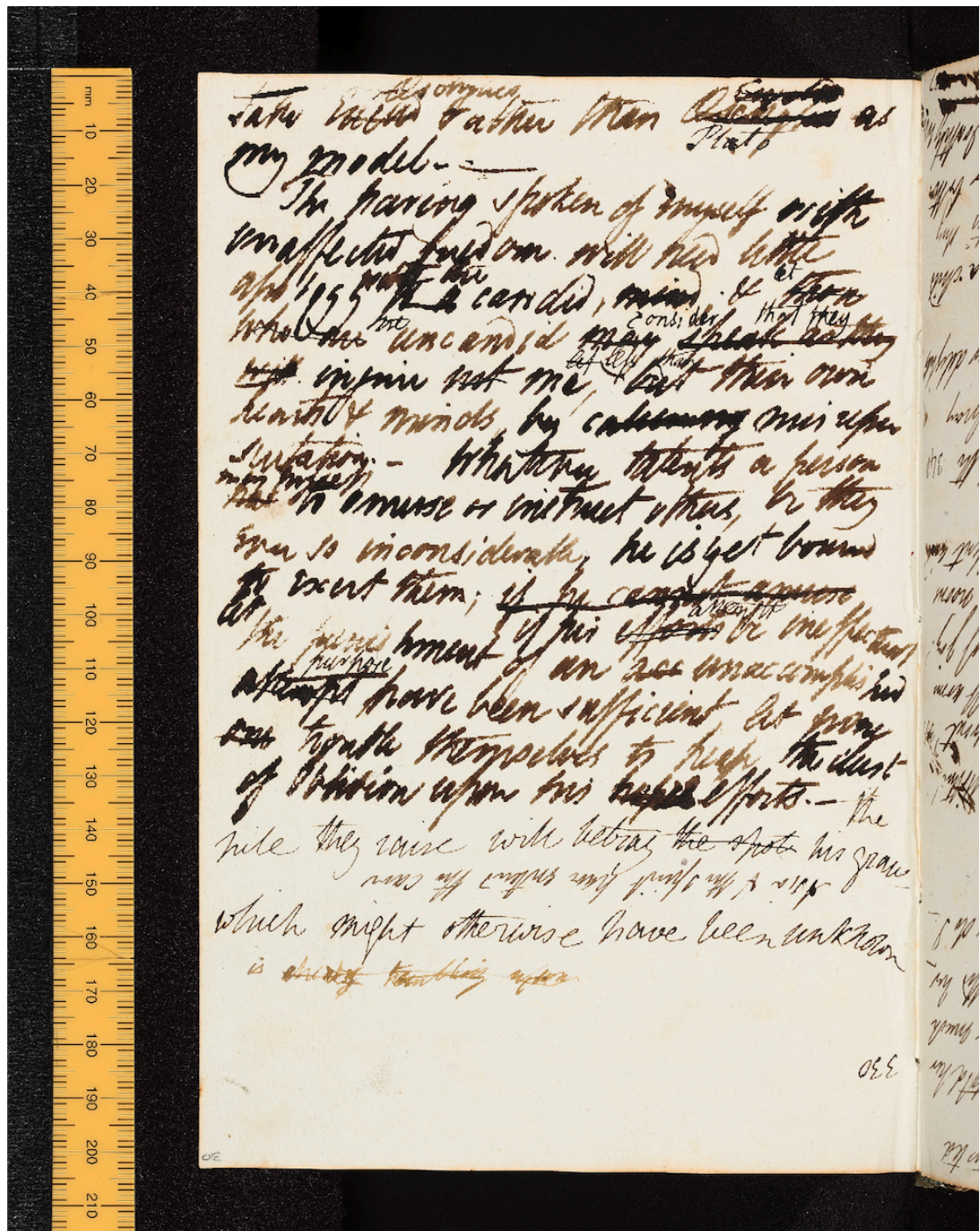


Figure 6. The preface to *Prometheus Unbound*. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Shelley e. 3, fol. 30r.

MWS may not have attested her involvement in *Prometheus Unbound*, despite her clear interest in the themes of the work (the subtitle to *Frankenstein* is 'The Modern Prometheus'). However, in the notes to PBS's *Poetical Works* (1839),



she does recall poems from the period circa 1817-19 that she rescued from obscurity, directly influencing their development:

as for instance 'Rosalind and Helen' and 'Lines written among the Euganean Hills', I found among his papers by chance; and with some difficulty urged him to complete them.<sup>109</sup>

This account is supported by PBS's 'Advertisement' to the *Rosalind and Helen* volume, published in his lifetime, and dated 20 December 1818,<sup>110</sup> which says of 'Lines Written among the Euganean Hills':

If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful mountains, I can only offer as my excuse, that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend, with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain, that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.<sup>111</sup>

PBS defends his poem not only by explaining the occasion of its composition but by emphasising that they were praised by 'a dear friend' (MWS), thus saving them from obscurity. The Shelleys' longstanding relationship offers him an evaluator of his poems in MWS that he trusts completely ('with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value'), and he believes her knowledge and understanding of him and his writing gives her the right to comment. MWS saw truth in these lines, in the expression of how humanity - and the poet himself - can go from a deep despondency to relief at the sight of a sunrise. In her recovery of the poems, MWS is sensitively attuned to this sadness, a sharp contrast to the outdated studies of PBS that see her as uninterested and unhelpful in these post-*Frankenstein* years.

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<sup>109</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to PBS, *Poetical Works* (1839), 256. 'Rosalind and Helen' written Sept 1817-July 1818, 'Euganean Hills' written in late 1818.

<sup>110</sup> Everest and Matthews, *The Poems of Shelley* II, 427.

<sup>111</sup> PBS, Advertisement to *Rosalind and Helen* in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 427.



PBS composed 'Euganean Hills' circa September-October 1818, and at about this time he was also writing Act I of *Prometheus Unbound*.<sup>112</sup> The first edition of *Frankenstein* was published anonymously on 1 January of the same year. PBS had frequently encouraged MWS to write, as we have seen. Similarly, 'Euganean Hills' and the Shelleys' work that produced the *Rosalind and Helen* volume demonstrate that crucially it was also MWS's reciprocal support, and her critical capacity for determining which of PBS's writings were worth considering for publication, that shaped *his* output. The manuscript of 'Euganean Hills' gives indications of MWS's further involvement; the extant transcript is a fragment in her hand now in the Huntington Library.<sup>113</sup> There is evidence here of MWS erasing lines of the poem, as Reiman explains, 'without Shelley's advice'.<sup>114</sup> The lines are heavily cancelled but read something like this:

[?] was overblown  
 [?] wrecked limbs – but there came none  
 [?] Then he laughed in  
 The grey [?hairs/hours] crawled on every limb<sup>115</sup>

MWS copies these words on to the Huntington transcript, and then crosses them out (Figure 7). These lines would have preceded lines 56-57 of the poem: 'Or the whirlwind up and down/ Howling, like a slaughtered town'.<sup>116</sup> Reiman's analysis suggests that 'these lines were incomplete in Shelley's draft, and Mary Shelley, as soon as she realized this, could well have cancelled them'. Overall Reiman infers a shared working style from this manuscript, in which suggestions were made by MWS and rejected or accepted by the original author PBS. MWS encourages PBS to retain words, ideas and lines that she liked, but also edited out incomplete lines not worth saving. This manuscript demonstrates that he welcomed and made use of her influence on his work:

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<sup>112</sup> Reiman *MYR* Vol III, ed. Reiman (London: Garland, 1985), 113.

<sup>113</sup> Reiman *MYR* III, 113-20.

<sup>114</sup> Reiman *MYR* III, 117.

<sup>115</sup> Reiman *MYR* III, 117.

<sup>116</sup> PBS, 'Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills' in *The Poems of Shelley* II, 432.

The evidence [...] suggests that the method she used to persuade Shelley to complete the poem was to present him with a transcript of everything that she deemed possibly worth salvaging from a fairly coherent draft and that he then went over her transcript and corrected a number of lines to improve the metrics or the diction.<sup>117</sup>

In deleting those incomplete lines MWS acts as an editor. But PBS 'did look over and approve the transcript before it was sent to press' and as we can see he also made at least one revision (altering 'weird and lonesome' to 'solitary' on line 89, see Figure 7), implying both authors looked over the final piece.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Reiman, *MYR* III, 117.

<sup>118</sup> Reiman, *MYR* III, 117, 120.

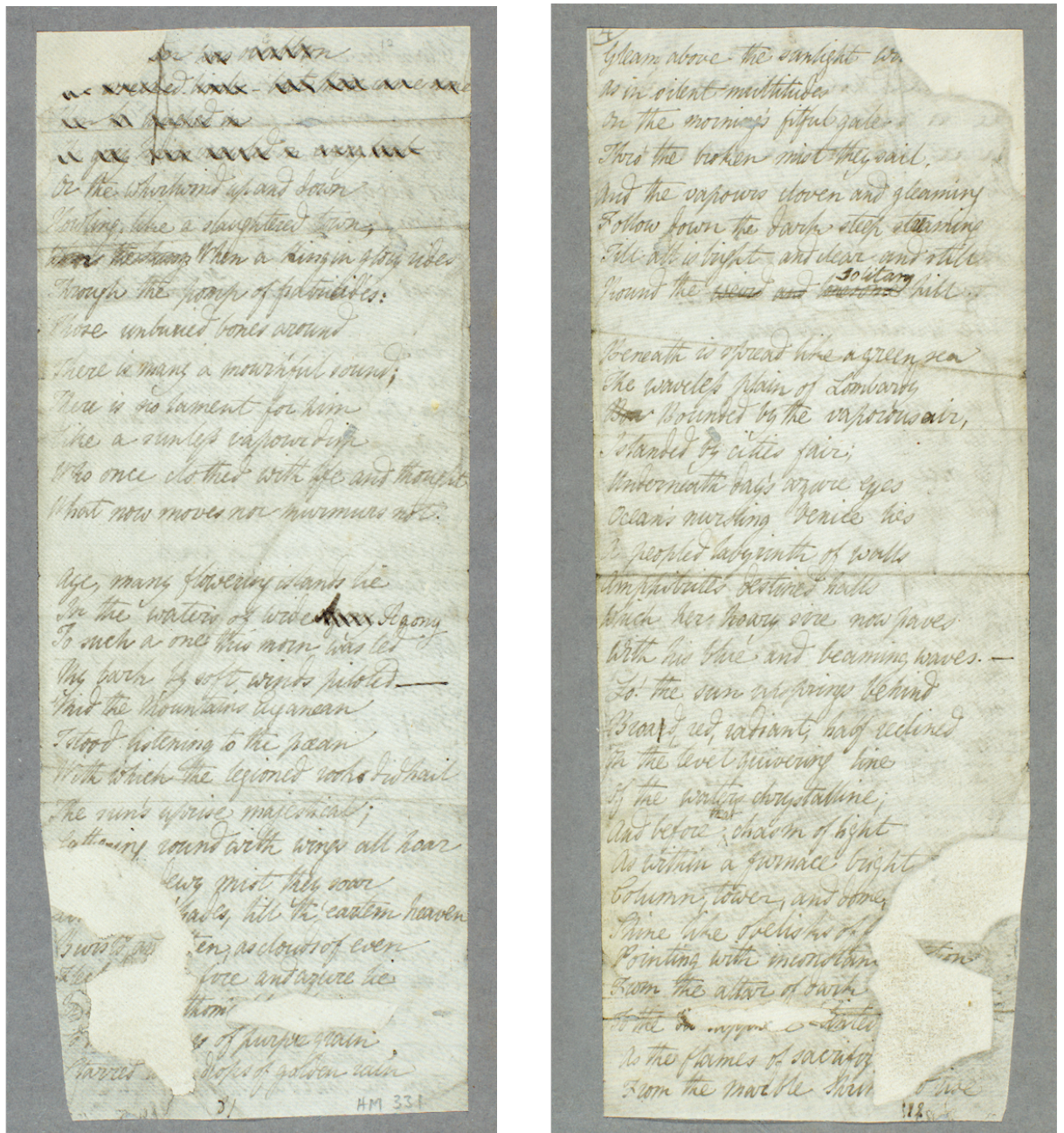


Figure 7. 'Lines written among the Euganean Hills'. San Marino, California, The Huntington Library, HM 331, ms. 2p. 8vo.

MWS also used the image of the Euganean Hills in her own work. In *Valperga* (composed 1820-21 and published 1823) the protagonist Castruccio lives with the character Francesco de Guinigi for a year. He arrives at the town of Este, 'situated nearly at the foot of the Euganean Hills [...] from whose heights you discover the vast plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Appennines of Bologna, and to the east by the sea and the towers of Venice' (24). MWS's recasting

of this Italian landscape as a habitation for the character of Guinigi, who lives in exile, recalls PBS's sadness in his poetical meditation (the speaker seeks an isolated 'windless bower' exclusively for himself and his loved ones, 'Far from passion, pain, and guilt', ll. 342-45).<sup>119</sup> In MWS's short story 'Recollections of Italy' (published in the *London Magazine* in 1824), the character Edmund Malville, an Englishman, contrast the 'gentler beauty' of the Euganean Hills with the 'alpine scenery' of the north; they 'remind one of the hills of our own country'. He suggests to the unnamed narrator of the tale: 'Read Ugo Foscolo's description of them [...] and you will acknowledge the romantic and even sublime sentiments which they are capable of inspiring.'<sup>120</sup> In this story MWS, as Robinson explains, 'fused together a number of elements from her own and her husband's previous writings and experiences',<sup>121</sup> and Elizabeth Nitchie has shown that the speech by Malville's 'lost friend' on the scenery around Pisa is based directly on a prose fragment by PBS, 'with only a few changes to fit them into the narrative'.<sup>122</sup> Here MWS's story emphasises the impact the Euganean Hills have on English expatriates, and although MWS does not directly make reference to PBS's poem, Malville's determination to evidence their ability to inspire 'romantic and even sublime sentiments' in the beholder subtly alludes to PBS's verse.

The examples of MWS's hand in PBS's work already discussed (for example, *The Mask of Anarchy*, the *Prometheus Unbound* preface and 'Euganean Hills') occur after *Frankenstein*, but not significantly later (circa 1818-19). However, this does not suggest that there was a discontinuation of collaboration in the Shelleys' relationship from 1819 onwards. PBS's *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, composed in 1820, presents a significant instance of MWS contributing to PBS's poetry. Two lines of this poem may have been composed by her: 'Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring/To Henry, some unutterable thing' (ll. 272-73 in most versions of the

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<sup>119</sup> PBS, 'Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills', 442.

<sup>120</sup> MWS, 'Recollections of Italy' in *Collected Tales and Stories* 28.

<sup>121</sup> Robinson in MWS, *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. Robinson, 375-76.

<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Nitchie, *Mary Shelley: Author of Frankenstein* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1953 repr. 1970), 64.

poem we read today).<sup>123</sup> ‘Pollonia’ refers to Apollonia Ricci, daughter of the Gisbornes’ landlord in Livorno. Apollonia allegedly had romantic feelings for Henry Reveley, Maria’s son. This rumour of flirtation was something MWS enjoyed teasing Henry about (see her letter of June 1820 to Maria: ‘Whose voice is that? Henry, does not your heart beat? By heaven, ‘tis Miss Appolonia Ricci [sic] [...] if Henry is married present my congratulations to the bride – salted by a few tears from Appolonia’).<sup>124</sup> PBS wrote the *Letter* in late June 1820, when the Shelleys were occupying the Gisbornes’ Livorno home whilst they (and Henry) were in England. The original copy of the poem sent to England, which could have been in the hand of PBS or MWS, has not been found.<sup>125</sup> Critical examination confirms the lines were composed by MWS, and their comment on Apollonia and Henry enhances the meditation on friendship and memory in this affectionate verse letter.

A draft of the poem in PBS’s hand appears in Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 9. On pages 108-109 of the original notebook, the two lines in question are inserted in MWS’s hand (Figure 8).<sup>126</sup> Her handwriting is clearly recognisable here. As Barker-Benfield speculates: ‘Shelley’s draft shows that the two lines about Henry Reveley are added in Mary’s hand with a finer pen [...] Were they composed by Mary?’<sup>127</sup> *The Longman Shelley* considers the possibility that these lines could have been composed by Maria and inserted in MWS’s hand, but it seems unlikely that Maria would contribute to a poem originally composed as a letter to her. The subject matter of the lines strongly suggests that they were originally devised by MWS (the subject of Henry and Apollonia being a part of the Shelley-Gisborne group gossip which she enjoyed), making it unlikely that they were dictated to her by PBS or copied from another (missing) draft. The *Longman* editors do not

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<sup>123</sup> For example see PBS, *Letter to Maria Gisborne* in *Poetical Works*, ed. Hutchinson, 363-70. In some versions of the poem the lines do not appear, such as in *The Poems of Shelley* III, 427.

<sup>124</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 146, 148.

<sup>125</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, Introductory Note and footnote to *Letter to Maria Gisborne* in *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, ed. Reiman and Fraistat, 328-29, 336.

<sup>126</sup> Dawson and Webb, *BSM* XIV, ed. Dawson and Webb, 116-17.

<sup>127</sup> Barker-Benfield, 137.



publish the lines in the main body of the poem on the assumption that they are indeed MWS's, and cannot be attributed to PBS.<sup>128</sup>



Figure 8. Letter to Maria Gisborne draft. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Shelley adds. e. 9, 108-109.

If we accept that MWS composed and inserted the lines independently, the next issue is whether she did so in PBS's lifetime. If so, the lines become significant evidence – previously overlooked – that the Shelleys' collaboration as writers was reciprocal, as they both made original contributions to one another's work, implying that a degree of involvement was both expected and accepted by MWS and PBS. Intriguingly, observations on when these lines were added to the draft have been made, although no definitive answer can be provided. For example Longman states that the writing 'appears to be Mary's later hand', but there is also

<sup>128</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, *The Poems of Shelley III*, 427.

evidence for the lines existing before the printing of *Posthumous Poems* in 1824.<sup>129</sup> The Pforzheimer Collection in the New York Public Library holds a corrected proof copy of MWS's edition of PBS's *Poetical Works* (1840).<sup>130</sup> Under 'Poems written in 1820' is the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*. The lines 'Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring / To Henry, some unutterable thing' were not printed until the 1839/40 one-volume editions of *Poetical Works* and did not appear in the 1824 *Posthumous Poems*, or the four-volume edition of *Poetical Works*.<sup>131</sup> What is remarkable about the corrected proof of *Poetical Works* is MWS's hand on page 268; she adds the two lines she once composed (Figure 9). This proof copy is full of minor emendations (spelling, spacing, editing the headings) and MWS alters her own prose in the notes, but on page 268 she adds those two lines to PBS's poem that are unprinted elsewhere. It is far more likely that MWS would have composed two original lines to add to the *Letter* during PBS's lifetime, than contributed them without his approval afterwards. We can speculate that MWS decided to insert these lines back into the poem, after removing them from *Posthumous Poems* in 1824. As Reiman explains, in first presenting the poem in her four-volume edition of PBS's *Poetical Works* in 1839 MWS 'restored some, but not all, of the passages that she had omitted from the text in 1824'. Some of the passages she did not restore were probably seen as still 'too personal', other lines 'she probably feared would be regarded as blasphemous by certain readers'. Some omissions were then restored for the one-volume edition of *Poetical Works* (1839/40).<sup>132</sup> However, although the couplet in question does not appear in the four-volume edition, MWS does include the lines in the one-volume edition.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 428. Evidence for this is a blank line in between l. 271 and 272 in the transcription of the poem now in the Huntington Library (HM 12338).

<sup>130</sup> PBS, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. MWS (London: Edward Moxon, 1840). Corrected proof copy now in the Pforzheimer Collection, NYPL. Pforz 559L 23 (MWS 0415) [?Oct 1839], 268.

<sup>131</sup> Barker-Benfield, 137. PBS, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. MWS (4 Vols) (London: Edward Moxon, 1839) Vol IV, 286. Also PBS, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* ed. MWS (1840), 268.

<sup>132</sup> Reiman, *MYR* III, 94.

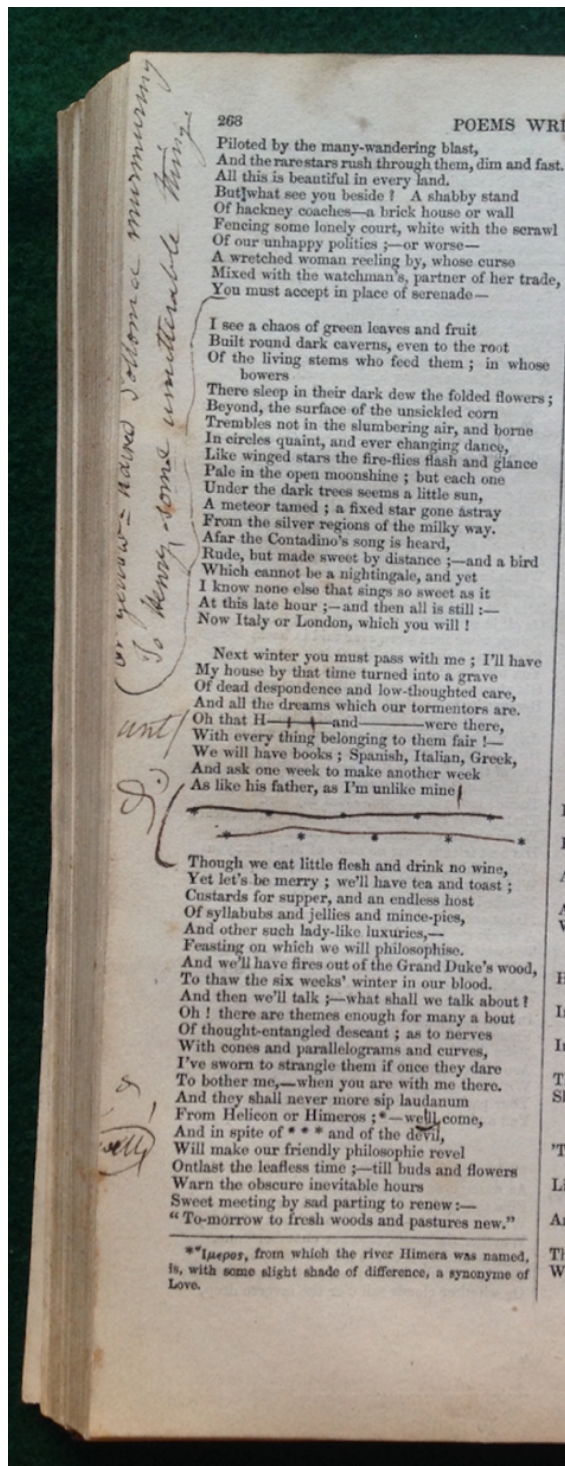


Figure 9. Letter to Maria Gisborne I.

PBS, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. MWS (London: Edward Moxon, 1840). Corrected proof copy, 268.

New York, The Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His

Circle, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Trusts. Pforz 559L 23 (MWS 0415) [?Oct 1839].



The lines themselves existed well before all of these editions, as they were probably composed in 1820 when PBS wrote the original poem. The couplet was removed by MWS in 1824, perhaps to restore the poem to the 'original' PBS draft, since she knew the lines were her own work. The 1824 publication, appearing only two years after PBS's death, may demonstrate MWS's anxiety about including her contribution to his poem here. However, during her revisions to transfer *Poetical Works* from four volumes to one in 1839/40, her handwriting in the proof copy shows her decision to reinsert the lines into the published version of the poem many years later.

MWS was a dedicated editor. She was also self-effacing; after July 1822 she would not add lines she had composed to her late husband's work if the poem read perfectly well without them. MWS sanctified PBS and his work after his death. Her grief seems to have made her characteristically modest temperament even more humble; her journal describes PBS as 'one whose genius far transcending mine, awakened and guided my thoughts'.<sup>133</sup> As PBS's widow, MWS titled his poems and filled in blank spaces in the manuscript of the unfinished *The Triumph of Life*. However, the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* was not unfinished, just unpublished. MWS considered her editing work her 'most sacred duty',<sup>134</sup> and even before PBS's death MWS was unassuming about her own talent. It was partly her admiration for PBS as a genius 'far transcending' her own that caused her to invite his comments on her work, more often than the other way round.

Other sources complicate the narrative surrounding the lines 'Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring/To Henry, some unutterable thing'. John Gisborne's copy of the 1824 *Posthumous Poems* is held in the British Library.<sup>135</sup> This text shows corrections in John's hand, and the insertion of the lines in question on a strip of paper (Figure 10), in a hand that looks different from the other notes by John written directly onto the book (*Longman* identifies this as Maria Gisborne's

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<sup>133</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 429.

<sup>134</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works*, 259.

<sup>135</sup> PBS, *Posthumous Poems*, ed. MWS (London: J. & H. L. Hunt, 1824) w/ MS notes by John Gisborne, 66-67. British Library catalogue reference: General Reference Collection C.61.c.5.

hand).<sup>136</sup> A careful leaf through this text reveals that only in the case of the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* does John Gisborne make significant corrections in ink (there are just five other pencil markings in the book, none of which alter the original lines by more than two words).<sup>137</sup> As the editors of *Longman* argue, PBS 'did not intend [the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*] to be published, at least not immediately. But it does seem to have been S.'s intention that the poem circulate in MS form amongst his London circle'.<sup>138</sup> We can infer that the lines were read by PBS's contemporaries and friends as part of the PBS poem, and their appearance in a copy of the 1824 publication also implies they existed before this text was published, diminishing the time period in which MWS could have composed these lines after PBS's death. So, the Gisborne edition provides further evidence that the lines were written during PBS's lifetime, as the Shelleys' friends may have reinserted them in circa 1824 (depending on when John acquired his copy of the text). The Gisbornes may have recalled the couplet from the original letter.

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<sup>136</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, *The Poems of Shelley*, III, 428.

<sup>137</sup> See the title page, 75-6, 175, 186 in PBS, *Posthumous Poems*, ed. MWS (London: J. & H. L. Hunt, 1824) with MS notes by John Gisborne. For details of Gisborne's corrections to the whole poem, see Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, *The Poems of Shelley* III, 427.

<sup>138</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, *The Poems of Shelley* III, 428.

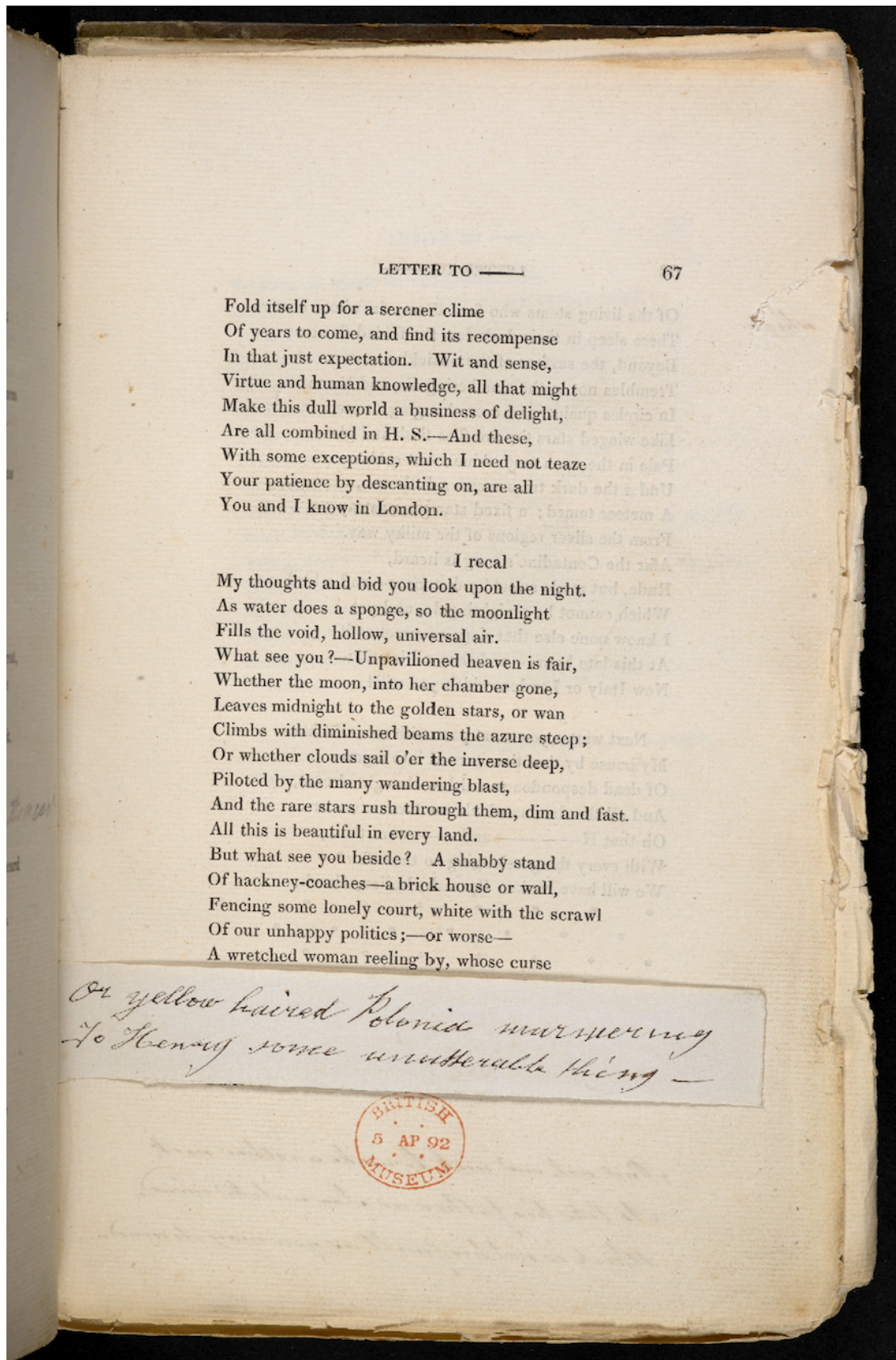


Figure 10. *Letter to Maria Gisborne II*. PBS, *Posthumous Poems*, ed. MWS (London: J. & H. L. Hunt, 1824) with MS notes by John Gisborne. 66-67. London, British Library, (c) British Library Board, General Reference Collection C.61.c.5.

MWS received a transcript of the poem from Maria Gisborne (probably in John's hand) after she requested a copy of 'that letter in verse S. once wrote to you' in September 1822.<sup>139</sup> As explained in *Longman*, 'Mary appears to have either marked up the MS, or transcribed it in such a way as to conceal the identities of the living persons named' (such as Coleridge).<sup>140</sup> In her preparations before publishing the poem in 1824, she may also have censored her own contribution. *Longman* suggests the lines were not present in the transcript from the Gisbornes, but this manuscript is also lost.<sup>141</sup> If the couplet did appear in this (missing) transcript, the editors of the *Longman* edition also imply that 'it may have been presented in such a way' that MWS, Maria and John Gisborne 'knew it was to be differentiated from the rest of the poem'. PBS could have marked this differentiation himself, if the lines had appeared in his original letter as posted to the Gisbornes in 1820.<sup>142</sup> Or, I suggest that in spite of recognising the lines as MWS's, he may have accepted and included them as a contribution to the final text. There is another transcription by John Gisborne from 1831 (in all likelihood copied from PBS's original verse-letter posted to England), and this manuscript does include the lines.<sup>143</sup> This myriad of missing and extant sources is an intricate puzzle, but as I have shown above it is more than likely that the lines were composed by MWS before PBS's death, despite their absence in some printed versions. Overall, if PBS's holograph draft (Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 9) is the primary authority for the text, here we can see MWS's hand contribute the two lines to PBS's draft.

We have an example of MWS adding a suggestion to PBS's work directly to the draft, in a tone that we can associate with her voice and sentiments. We can infer from the textual history of these lines that PBS must have seen them at some point. Such an intervention is similar to PBS's additions and alterations to MWS's *Frankenstein*, albeit far less substantial. The insertion of lines occurred in the manuscript of a poem composed in 1820, during a period when it has been suggested that the Shelleys were less likely to work collaboratively. Female

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<sup>139</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 262.

<sup>140</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, *The Poems of Shelley* III, 426.

<sup>141</sup> *The Poems of Shelley* III, 426.

<sup>142</sup> *The Poems of Shelley* III, 428.

<sup>143</sup> *The Poems of Shelley* III, 428. See also Reiman, *MYR* III, 93.

authors at this time were expected to accept advice from male counterparts, who generally had more formal education and experience. As Robinson writes:

Even though [MWS] grew up in a family of writers and publishers [...], this was her first experience writing and preparing a major work [*Frankenstein*] for publication. The fact that PBS had greater experience, having seen two of his own novels through the press as well as a number of volumes of poetry, might have given him a professional edge in their relationship, but that experience did not make PBS into a better novelist (his own novels, written before he was 20 years old, have little merit).<sup>144</sup>

Therefore the role of the female collaborator was in part defined by an expectation of guidance from a male companion. So MWS's possible, but likely, contribution to PBS's work is relatively minor in comparison to his involvement with her most famous novel - but it exists, and must be recognised.

There is one more manuscript of the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, which is held in the Huntington Library.<sup>145</sup> This is ostensibly in the hand of MWS, but the lines possibly contributed by her are missing.<sup>146</sup> Reiman has determined that 'the Huntington transcript was copied after Shelley's death'.<sup>147</sup> His explanation emphasises the likelihood of collaboration on such works, evidenced in manuscript:

Were Shelley's draft of the "Letter to Maria Gisborne" either incomplete or illegible, either we would have to posit another, intermediate holograph transcript between the draft and Mary Shelley's copy or we would expect to find numerous additions and corrections in Shelley's own hand in the Huntington transcript. (We find one of these circumstances behind Mary Shelley's press-copy transcript of *The Mask of Anarchy* and the other within the press copy of *Peter Bell the Third*).<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Frankenstein Notebooks* I, lxvii.

<sup>145</sup> Reiman, 'HM 12338' in *MYR* III, ed. Reiman, 91-97.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

Reiman alludes to the Shelleys' collaborative methods of composition in his work as manuscript editor. During PBS's lifetime, a manuscript (draft, fair copy, or press copy) typically included both of their hands. The Shelleys were constantly working together in this way.

MWS contributes directly to the 'human interest' of the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* - a feature that she valued. PBS projected a concern with 'human interest' onto MWS in his preface to *The Witch of Atlas* (also written in 1820), and he seemed to understand the idea of human interest in slightly pejorative terms. In effect, MWS stands her ground as far as human interest is concerned, and she almost criticises PBS for a lack of humanity in some of his writings. She saw this quality - those ideas she said that 'sprung from the emotions of his heart' in *Poetical Works* - as lacking in *The Witch*, and in PBS's other 'purely imaginative' works, namely *Adonais* and *The Triumph of Life*. PBS would have expected MWS to criticise those 'huntings after the obscure'. Instead she contributed a playful allusion to a piece of gossip (about Henry and Apollonia) based on human interaction in the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*. In her notes to *Poetical Works* MWS would also define this preferred style as containing 'the gentler or more forcible emotions of the soul'.<sup>149</sup>

Manuscripts can show moments of creativity that were never intended for publication. When such examples include the hands of two different authors they can be then emblematic of a poignant intimacy that is imbued with creative spirit, a conversation between two writers that is visible on the page. In one of PBS's pocket books, shortly after his sonnet on 'England in 1819', the Shelleys engage in a game of *Bouts-Rimés*, in which participants must compose lines to end in rhyme words provided by others. The last word of each line of verse is in MWS's hand, and the rest is in PBS's.<sup>150</sup> Barker-Benfield's commentary on this explains that 'the spacing shows that the rhymes were written first (possibly pair by pair) [...] this

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<sup>149</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works*, 257.

<sup>150</sup> Barker-Benfield, 129 and Nancy Moore Goslee, *BSM* Vol XVIII, ed. Goslee (London: Garland, 1996), 222.

game resembled Shelley's own drafting method' (as cited earlier: the first draft of 'To a Skylark', composed in 1820, illustrates how PBS would leave blank spaces to complete later).<sup>151</sup> Probably composed in Pisa in early 1820,<sup>152</sup> the idiosyncratic rhyme-game shows, as Nancy Moore Goslee comments, 'good communications, or at least good humour', notably at a time when biographers have suggested the Shelleys were emotionally isolated from one another. On the next page in this notebook MWS's hand appears again, scribbling down the same rhyme words with some variations: in place of 'burning / spurning' she originally tried 'Liberty / deity'. Goslee has inferred that these initial rhyme notes 'were probably written before November 1818'.<sup>153</sup> A 'game' of this sort must have been particularly enjoyable for the Shelleys if it was taken up again two years later, in circa March 1820, and provides evidence for their continued creative exchange. The verse itself expresses a disdain for the way that human sorrow remains despite the 'bright lamps [...] / Burning before God in Heaven'; this is characteristically Shelleyan in its criticism of organised religion and a lack of spiritual honesty in the mortal world. That their handwriting is in the same ink strongly indicates that this playful – yet radical – verse was completed with both Shelleys present.

The way in which the Shelleys' literary endeavours coexisted with their everyday lives is repeatedly demonstrated in their letters including the Italian years (1818-22). It is evident that they were concerned with one another's literary projects, as the letters often show the Shelleys enquiring after each other's texts that had been sent to England for publication, and mention their reading of classic and contemporary writers. Furthermore, in a manuscript held in the Bodmer Museum and Library in Geneva, at the end of a letter by MWS to Sophia Stacey in 1820, PBS makes a fair copy of his poem 'On a dead Violet'; both authors' hands appear on the same page and PBS appends a letter by MWS with his poetical composition.<sup>154</sup> Before the poem PBS explains the origins of the verses: 'a few old stanzas [...] which though simple & rude, look as if they were dictated by the

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<sup>151</sup> Barker-Benfield, 129, 139.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>153</sup> Goslee, *BSM XVIII*, 307-308.

<sup>154</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 130-31.



heart'.<sup>155</sup> Replying to a letter received on 5 March 1820, MWS finished her section of the letter (probably on 7 March) and PBS 'added his postscript after his return from Leghorn where he had been visiting the Gisbornes' (he returned on 6 March and the letter was sent by March 10).<sup>156</sup> PBS writes his note, poem and postscript here in the same brown ink as that used by MWS in the main body of the letter.<sup>157</sup> The letter itself contains MWS's descriptions of Rome and Naples, including her experiences with PBS – such prose is reminiscent of travel writing in earlier years.

Studying the Shelleys' manuscripts with a focus on their collaboration can reveal fresh insights into their working methods. While it has long been recognised that PBS revised MWS's writing, manuscript evidence as detailed in this chapter indicates that she in turn revised his work, not just to his dictation, but probably following discussion with him; perhaps on occasion with his agreement, and sometimes through her own determination. MWS's toil as an editor allowed PBS's work to be read and published after his death, and as Wolfson argues, MWS 'virtually produced the basic "Shelley" texts and canon'.<sup>158</sup> But if she contributed to his writing when he was still alive, and he considered and accepted her suggestions, MWS is not just an editor but also a collaborator. Manuscripts may well be the most suitable form of 'proof' of the Shelleys' collaboration. MWS wrote in 1839 that 'I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his [PBS's] private life; except, inasmuch as the passions which they engendered, inspired his poetry',<sup>159</sup> and it is with such a sentiment that we should approach the Shelleys' literary relationship.

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<sup>155</sup> Reiman and O'Neill, *MYR* Vol VIII, ed. Reiman and O'Neill (London: Garland, 1997), 301.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>158</sup> Susan J. Wolfson, 'Editorial Privilege: Mary Shelley and Percy Shelley's Audiences' in *The Other Mary Shelley*, 49.

<sup>159</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works*, 255.



## Chapter 4, 1822 onwards: Mary Shelley alone

### A sea change

Shelley no longer reads & approves of what I write [...] Composition is delightful but if you do not expect the sympathy of your fellow creatures in what you write, the pleasure of writing is of short duration.<sup>1</sup>

- MWS, *Journals* 3 September 1824

On the 8 July 1822, PBS drowned off the Italian coast whilst attempting to return to San Terenzo from Livorno, where he had been meeting with Byron and Leigh Hunt to set up a new periodical, *The Liberal*. He was just 29 years old. MWS awaited his return at their home, Casa Magni. The grief and emotional turmoil she was to encounter following the news of his death affected her for the rest of her life. The details of PBS's tragic end, and the mythology surrounding it, have already been explored in depth by critics and biographers: as Richard Holmes writes, 'the dramatic death of Percy Bysshe Shelley in the Gulf of Spezia was set to become one of the most powerful of all Romantic legends'.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I will suggest that the way in which PBS's writings survived and were published illuminates the Shelleys' literary relationship. As his widow, MWS would take charge of his papers, and therefore she would continue to influence the process by which his work was received.

Instead of PBS and MWS engaging with one another in manuscript and in person, PBS's voice becomes frozen in time, and is no longer part of a reciprocal literary exchange. As Lisa Vargo writes, the Shelleys' 'writings form a complex dialogue', as they 'together created literary [...] offspring', but after PBS's death

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<sup>1</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 483.

<sup>2</sup> Holmes, 'Death and destiny' in *The Guardian Online*. 24 Jan 2004 (accessed 4 March 2016).

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/jan/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview1>.

'this conversation breaks off'.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, PBS's writings continued to permeate MWS's subsequent work, and she shouldered the task of consolidating his disarray of compositions and producing the first projected 'complete' edition of his works. MWS continued drawing on her intimate knowledge of PBS's writing, her understanding of his ideas, and her memories of their conversations; her direct address to PBS is almost habitual. Dialogue was replaced with retrospective reinterpretation and occasionally re-invention, and her editing would change the way readers encountered his poetry and other compositions for years to come. As MWS edits PBS's compositions alone, she continues to work 'with and against' him,<sup>4</sup> at once enacting her authority *and* taking care to do justice to his genius. In her own novels and poetry, however, she is at liberty to adopt a more subjective and exploratory manner.

To understand MWS's editing of PBS's posthumous publications we must also consider her representation of their relationship. She depicts herself as a devoted mediator of PBS's work, seeking to do her 'important duty' of 'giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible'.<sup>5</sup> She also diminishes her own role through denying her abilities ('I am, indeed, incompetent') and insisting on a disinterested stance, ensuring PBS's wishes remain paramount beyond the grave ('I endeavour to fulfil [...] in a manner he would himself approve').<sup>6</sup> She is paradoxically both deeply involved but also distant. MWS emphasises her modest position, and in doing so seems to downplay her influence and creative role in the posthumous publications, and therefore also her role in PBS's creativity when he was still alive. In her apparent self-deprecation, she might also have inadvertently helped to diminish perceptions of the reciprocal collaborative elements in their relationship.

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<sup>3</sup> Vargo, 'Close Your Eyes and Think of Shelley: Versioning Mary Shelley's *Triumph of Life*' in *Evaluating Shelley*, 215.

<sup>4</sup> Rajan, 'Introduction' in MWS, *Valperga*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 255.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

Alongside her aim to provide ‘correctness’ in her presentation of the disarrayed corpus PBS had left behind, MWS also ensured space to include:

[...] the history of those productions, as they sprung, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life; except, inasmuch as the passions which they engendered, inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth.<sup>7</sup>

MWS presents a ‘history’ and strives for neutrality, but her influence as an editor becomes apparent through her praise of PBS, and her moulding and construction of his oeuvre. She hints at another personal story that cannot be expressed (‘This is not the time...’), perhaps a critical decision on her part to focus on the work rather than the man. She also creates a mythology surrounding PBS’s creativity, implying his poetical talents derive from both ‘heart and brain’. These words, coupled with the terms ‘living and warm’, humanise PBS, perhaps reflecting MWS’s attempt to make his collection of writings more accessible to a wider audience. Critics have long been fascinated by MWS’s implicit intentions in collating the Shelley papers. MWS’s account of PBS’s life in the editorial notes is concerned with the passions connected to his creativity; the subtext, identifiable in her interventions and her notes as explored below, is that she allows her creative license to permeate her editing. Therefore an understanding of MWS is necessary for the reader’s comprehension of many of PBS’s poems in these editions, especially those that only appeared in print after PBS’s death. This chapter presents an account of the various dimensions of her ongoing collaboration with PBS.

MWS’s editing of PBS’s works is an example of Romantic joint authorship informed by a close personal and literary relationship. Stillinger cites ‘Mary Shelley’s editing of her husband’s posthumous poems’ in his list of ‘instances of unacknowledged multiple authorship’.<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Davies describes MWS’s editing as a ‘posthumous collaboration [...] an impressive exercise in joint literary creativity’:

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>8</sup> Stillinger, 203-205.

Literary collaboration is perhaps more readily associated with conviviality, good cheer, and mutual encouragement [...] Mary's work, however, stands as a valuable reminder of how broad the affective range of shared artistic labour can be.<sup>9</sup>

The term 'collaboration' still applies to the Shelleys even after PBS's demise because MWS's editing produced the first full edition of PBS's works: both Shelleys' creative input contributed to the posthumous texts, as MWS's role included taking fragmentary, sometimes almost incomprehensible manuscript drafts and providing a version fit for publication. In choosing which poems to include MWS requests the trust of the reader - they must accede to her knowledge of her husband's corpus. She would also edit poems for the volumes, and although many writings have now been restored in scholarly editions to provide PBS's original text without MWS's creative contribution, her initial publications were defining editions, influencing the way PBS has been read for generations. MWS's editing constitutes a work in its own right, sometimes involving creative endeavour. She perceives her role as that of honouring PBS, and there is a tension between her interest in the preservation of PBS's original intentions - that should require no clarification beyond that given by the poet himself - and her efforts to mediate his work so that he may be understood correctly; she attempts to do both, and takes care to explain her rationale for doing so.

MWS saw her own creativity and her relationship to PBS as inextricably linked, and PBS would haunt MWS's original compositions after his death. In this chapter, I will introduce MWS as a solitary figure then show how her editing suggests that she was building on a collaborative format of working that existed when PBS was still alive. Finally, I take evidence from her later novels, short stories and briefly, poetry, to show how she continued to respond to PBS's writings in her own work. In poems like 'The Choice' and short stories like 'The Bride of Modern Italy', MWS more unashamedly provides (in comparison to her editing) *her* 'colouring of the truth' through a creative medium. I argue here that she challenges perceptions of PBS's 'private life' through a thinly veiled response to his

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<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Davies, 'The Shelleys and the Art of Suffering', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (2). 2011. White Rose Research Online (accessed 23 February 2016). <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/78286>. 267.

beliefs and their experiences; in her own fiction and verse she is able to do so more freely than in her work as an editor, just as she would engage in a literary dialogue with her husband in this way (through her original works) when PBS was alive. Her novels show a careful self-dramatisation combined with evidence of her mission to be a successful, often philosophical, writer, and the narratives she composed include reflections on the legacy of her parents and PBS himself. Such readings of her work provide a deeper understanding of how MWS represents her relationship with PBS, and how she built on her experience as autonomous collaborative partner during his lifetime, and continued to show an ability to respond to and develop his ideas.

### **The journals post-1822**

The editors of MWS's journals emphasise that after that fateful day in July 1822 the 'character of the journal changed [...] radically. It ceased to be a day-to-day record of facts, and became instead a form of emotional release'.<sup>10</sup> MWS entitled the fourth book 'The Journal of Sorrow – Begun 1822', and this notebook runs until 1825. The opening entry displays MWS's extreme grief, and also sheds light on MWS's perception of the Shelleys' literary relationship in a private confession of her thoughts:

I have now no friend. For eight years ~~my soul~~ I communicated with unlimited freedom with one whose genius, far transcending mine, awakened & guided my thoughts; I conversed with him; rectified my errors of judgement, obtained new lights from him, & my mind was satisfied. Now I am alone! Oh, how alone! The stars may behold my tears, & the winds drink my sighs – but my thoughts are a sealed treasure which I can confide to none.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 'Introduction' in *MWS, Journals*, ed. Felman and Scott-Kilvert, xviii.

<sup>11</sup> *MWS, Journals*, 429.

MWS considers PBS's ability to 'rectify' her errors, suggesting an appreciation of her husband's role as a (literary) mentor and guide. By emphasising their 'unlimited freedom' in communication, and how she 'obtained new lights from him', MWS shows how she felt her 'mind was satisfied' by the intellectual stimulus that PBS offered, once again demonstrating the egalitarian nature of their relationship.

MWS focuses on a connection based on interaction; by striking out the words 'my soul', she rejects a presentation of her relationship with PBS as unspoken and purely spiritual. 'Now I am alone! Oh, how alone' emphasises the loss of guidance, an assistance she also provided to PBS in return. She dramatically reconciles the absence of her creative partner with an expression of hope that the journal itself will support her emotionally as she reveals her intimate thoughts: 'White paper – wilt thou be my confident?'<sup>12</sup> The whiteness of the paper connotes the emptiness – analogous to solitude – that MWS must now fill. Elsewhere she presents writing as a comfort: 'Literary labours, the improvement of my mind, & the enlargement of my ideas are the only occupations that elevate me from my lethargy'.<sup>13</sup> MWS associates writing with her memories of PBS, and the present act of writing is cathartic precisely because it brings her closer to him.

Within a few weeks of PBS's death, MWS had made plans to support herself through her own compositions and by publishing PBS's poetry and editing his manuscripts.<sup>14</sup> She wrote to Jane Williams: 'it is only in books and literary occupation that I shall ever find alleviation'.<sup>15</sup> In the closing lines of the first entry in the 'Journal of Sorrow' she muses that despite 'the elastic feelings of youth' (she was only 24 years old in 1822), all her prospects are 'blighted', and she 'should be dragged back to the same necessity, of seeking for the food of life in my intellect alone'.<sup>16</sup> Even during the most difficult times of MWS's personal life, there is evidence that writing, reading and composition were a constant. Her resort to

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 431-32.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 2, 431.

<sup>15</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 296.

<sup>16</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 432.

intellectual study was a reliable source of relief, akin to the continuous focus on writing when PBS was alive.

MWS meditates on her role as a partner to PBS, and these musings permeate the journal as she confesses her anxiety about how the relationship was portrayed in his writing. She laments: 'Oh my beloved Shelley – It is not true that this heart was cold to thee', a covert allusion to the coldness PBS apparently ascribed her in his *Epipsychidion*.<sup>17</sup> MWS insists on the inestimable intimacy between herself and PBS, suggesting there was a bond between them that provided a happiness that could never be replicated: 'I had been united to one to whom I could unveil myself & who could understand me'.<sup>18</sup> She stresses that their connection was one that the outside world did not and will not comprehend, and her reappraisal implies that she sought to rectify this misunderstanding. This desire recalls PBS's emphasis on their being two 'united' outcasts in the 1814 love letters as discussed in Chapter 1. In the forlorn entries in the 'Journal of Sorrow' MWS describes herself as being united to PBS: 'Love, youth, fear & fearlessness led me early from the regular routine of life, and I united myself to this being'. She then writes of sharing in his 'miseries & annoyances',<sup>19</sup> in a manner that recalls the earlier 1814 letters in which PBS and MWS signal their shared defiance of a hostile world - 'we will defy our enemies [...] we will not part again'.<sup>20</sup>

The early entries in this journal confirm MWS's dedication to her role as PBS's editor, and her enduring commitment to her work as a writer: 'Well I shall commence my task';<sup>21</sup> 'study is my only hope & refuge';<sup>22</sup> 'I have made my first probation in writing & it has done me great good, & I get more calm'.<sup>23</sup> Her projected 'Life of Shelley' is a source of comfort: 'I shall write his life - & thus occupy myself in the only manner from which I can derive consolation'.<sup>24</sup> There are

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 429-30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>20</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 434.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 444-45.

even heartfelt appeals to PBS that show her extreme loneliness: ‘Shelley, beloved! [...] I would endure ages of pain to hear one tone of your voice strike on my ear? How lost I am!’;<sup>25</sup> ‘Dearest Shelley! Have some compassion on me – give me some force – some hope (not of earthly but spiritual good) [...] fill me, my chosen one, with a part of your energy’.<sup>26</sup> The mention of ‘spiritual good’ recalls PBS’s interest in improvement via the agency of human goodness. MWS would suggest in her notes to PBS’s works that her husband believed that ‘mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none’.<sup>27</sup> MWS’s appeal to PBS to assist her in self-improvement here reminds us that she was still thinking of the power of literature, and the importance of her legacy as a writer and thinker (as well as her husband’s). MWS was to write in her preface to PBS’s *Poetical Works* that his ‘imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle’<sup>28</sup> and in the process of editing she would attempt to guide readers in their understanding of the political and philosophical strands which, as she put it, ‘breathe throughout his poetry’.<sup>29</sup> She would then discuss similar struggles in her original compositions, as her preferred genre of the novel allowed her to invent complex characters encountering the recognisable trials and adversities of human existence.

In spite of the comforts afforded by memories of PBS and by her ongoing projects, MWS’s grief often leaves her in a state of desolation. This tension between hope and despair sometimes occurs even within the same journal entry, where she laments her personal injury (‘All the poetry, all the brilliancy, all the sunshine of my life is gone, and the dreary reality becomes too real’), but she also finds potential hope in PBS’s spirit living on through her literary work and existence: ‘Thus I would endeavour to consider my self a faint continuation of his being’.<sup>30</sup> MWS feels she can compensate for some of the loss to the world by keeping the spirit of PBS alive in posthumous editions, as ‘every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 441.

<sup>27</sup> MWS, ‘Note on the *Prometheus Unbound*’ in *NSWMS* II, 277.

<sup>28</sup> MWS, ‘Preface’ to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 257.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>30</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 436.



statements'.<sup>31</sup> Her commitment becomes all the more explicit when we see how she presented PBS's mass of published, unpublished, and sometimes fragmentary and unfinished works to the public.

MWS's journal tells us how she feels PBS's presence as a creative force: 'You will be with me in all my studies, dearest love! Your voice will no longer applaud me, but in spirit you will visit & encourage me'.<sup>32</sup> Although this notion is a supernatural fancy, the entry is interesting as it indicates that she had learned that PBS would 'applaud' her work; that is, know that the quality of her writing was such that it deserved his constructive criticism. MWS's journal therefore suggests that, as this study has argued throughout, PBS's involvement in her writing was a source of stimulation, despite their differences in opinion. Just as PBS edited and altered MWS's works in order to improve what was already a creative feat, so MWS would do the same with PBS's works after his death. In the journal, MWS refers to PBS as 'My Shelley – my companion in my Daily tasks'.<sup>33</sup> She records imagining PBS call to her while reading, a fantasy that indicates how she saw him as connected with the literature she read. 'Daily tasks' implies a workload, and 'companion' suggests a reliable assistant of equal intellect, engaging in an ongoing process of interaction; she laments these specific qualities of the relationship as lost. She describes him as her 'superior',<sup>34</sup> showing her characteristic modesty, or at least a familiar presentation of humility. Her feeling of inferiority as an author labouring in his shadow without his creative support is tangible here, and she is also weighed down by her grieving state of mind.

MWS persistently calls upon her own and her husband's writings to assist in expressing her sorrow; she alludes to PBS's creative works as a means of support and compensation for her loss. In the earlier entries in the 'Journal of Sorrow', MWS quotes PBS's *The Cenci*, framing her grief by comparing herself to Beatrice, and insisting that her longing for death is far more pronounced than that

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<sup>31</sup> MWS, Preface to *Poetical Works*, NSWMS II, 258.

<sup>32</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 436.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

tragic heroine's.<sup>35</sup> She also alludes to PBS's sonnet which begins 'Lift not the painted veil', and *Adonais*, his elegy on the death of Keats.<sup>36</sup> MWS would go on to cite and allude to PBS's writings in her later novels, implying that she mourned the loss of spontaneous mutual influence that existed when they were writing works alongside one another (as with 'Mont Blanc' / *Frankenstein*). Previously, the act of writing was a source of comfort, strengthened by the presence of a 'beloved' literary companion:

I write - & thou seest not what I write - Oh my own beloved - let me not be so deserted [...] I am indeed alone. [...] Before when I wrote *Matilda*, miserable as I was, the inspiration was sufficient to quell my wretchedness temporarily - but now I have no respite - & shall have none.<sup>37</sup>

MWS refers to her misery due to the death of her son William when writing *Matilda*.<sup>38</sup> A later entry in 1827 written in Italian recalls a more contented period with PBS: 'Then I began *Valperga* [her third novel] - Then alone with my beloved I was happy'.<sup>39</sup>

By 1823 MWS is still immersed in work as a comfort: 'Study had become more necessary to me than the air I breathe'.<sup>40</sup> She constantly 'speaks' to PBS and appeals to his spirit in these entries. By 1824 she muses, 'I cannot write - I can hardly read', recalling PBS's 1814 letter explaining that in her absence he is 'desolate & wretched [...] I wander restlessly about I cannot read - or even write'.<sup>41</sup> In 1824 she laments the 'failure of [her] intellectual powers', citing the absence of PBS as one cause of this:

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 446, 449, 485.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 441-42.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 1, 442.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 2, 505.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 461.

<sup>41</sup> PBS *Letters* I, 411.

Whether I am just in this, or whether the want of Shelleys (oh my loved Shelley – it is some alleviation only to write your name, drowned though I am the while in tears) encouragement – I can hardly tell.<sup>42</sup>

MWS also cites the lack of vision previously provided by sublime scenery as she writes, confined in a 'prison-room' in the 'miserable climate' of England. 'It seems to me as if the lovely and sublime objects of nature had been my best inspirers & wanting these I am lost'. She describes herself as 'drowned' in tears, a tragic allusion to the nature of PBS's passing; MWS reconstructs PBS's death as her own demise.<sup>43</sup> There are too many references to PBS (and his works) throughout the journal to be discussed individually here. The repeated themes include MWS fondly recalling her lifestyle with PBS, with an emphasis on European travels ('I was still in Italy, & my heart and imagination were both gratified by that circumstance'),<sup>44</sup> her praise of his genius and character ('My Shelley [...] was unequalled'),<sup>45</sup> and a continued shift between thinking of writing as a respite from grief and acknowledging the difficulty of literary labours without PBS ('I write – at times that pleases me – tho' double sorrow comes when I feel that Shelley no longer reads & approves of what I write').<sup>46</sup> She mourns the loss of him as a collaborator and advisor, and finds that writing is so inextricably linked to him in her mind that composition (and editing his works) painfully recalls him in her thoughts.

On 26 April 1823 MWS writes in her journal, 'Italy! Beloved Country! – Your Alps are high, but alas! they cannot hold me in'.<sup>47</sup> She returned to England in July 1823, and as the journal shows, MWS re-establishes her creative confidence, and by June 1824 she can write: 'I feel my powers again - & this is of itself happiness [...] I shall again feel the enthusiastic glow of composition'.<sup>48</sup> Eventually MWS is more settled and self-assured in the later journals, both socially and in terms of her writing

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<sup>42</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 476.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 476.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 471.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 473.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 483.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

abilities. Her final journal-book is used for a long period (1826-44) and describes times where she is 'serene – often happy', 'tranquil & content' when studying or with friends and meeting new people,<sup>49</sup> although moments of bleak 'solitude & a thousand cares' remain.<sup>50</sup> Overall, as the editors conclude, MWS's post-1822 journal shows the '[...] the intensity of the emotional crisis into which Mary was plunged when Shelley died and the way in which she gradually, with the help of her journal as confidante, set herself to build a new life'. The journal shows her 'working out within herself the direction her new life was to take, and gradually achieving both self-sufficiency and an identity of her own'.<sup>51</sup> MWS's journal not only provides an insight into how she established herself as an individual, but also how PBS permeated her thoughts and most significantly her creativity. Paradoxically, his dual absence and uncanny presence<sup>52</sup> provide her with an inner voice, drawn from memory and his poetry, through which their literary collaboration continues.

### **Mary Shelley as editor**

In the summer of 1822 *The Courier*, a leading Tory newspaper in London, carried a brief obituary that began: 'Shelley, the writer of some infidel poetry, has been drowned: now he knows whether there is a God or no'.<sup>53</sup> Such a gratuitous observation was probably typical of the prevailing opinion of PBS for many people in England, and MWS's attempts to establish her husband's genius faced hostility both from the public and from members of PBS's own family who continued to disown him. MWS persevered in bringing PBS's texts to publication, which was difficult not least because they were left in such disarray:

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 499, 528, 501, 512-13.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 514, 516-18.

<sup>51</sup> Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, 'Introduction' in MWS, *Journals*, xx.

<sup>52</sup> Jennifer Wallace, "'Copying Shelley's Letters": Mary Shelley and the Uncanny Erotics of Greek', *Women's Studies*, 40: 4 (2011), 420.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in Holmes, 'Death and destiny'.

I almost think that my present occupation will end in a fit of illness. I am editing Shelley's poems & writing notes for them. I desire to do Shelley honour in the notes to the best of my knowledge & ability – for the rest they are or are not well written – it little matters to me which – Would I had more literary vanity – or vanity of anykind – I were happier – as it is I am torn to pieces by Memory – Would that all were mute in the grave!<sup>54</sup>

Her determination is evident in her completion of the colossal task. In wanting to 'do Shelley honour' she must also have believed that it was her sole responsibility as his long-term partner and collaborator, and that she could be successful in this aim. As Rossington has noted, the inescapable duty of commemorating PBS 'may be identified with a tradition of honouring radical writers notably practised by her father', Godwin, when he published the memoirs and posthumous works of Wollstonecraft.<sup>55</sup> MWS's lament, 'Would I had more literary vanity – or vanity of anykind', reflects MWS's self-deprecating attitude to her role in the production of PBS's writings, both during his lifetime and after his death.

The story of MWS's work as an editor will be largely familiar to Shelley scholars; I retell aspects of it here in order to illuminate my larger account of the Shelleys' collaborative literary relationship. MWS has been painted as interfering, but more recently attitudes have been sympathetic towards her incredible feat in collating PBS's papers. These responses occurred at the same time as critics and editors have themselves laboured to restore PBS's texts to the most valid version – the last copy approved by the poet himself. Only about seventy poems by PBS were published in his lifetime. Of those that were, textually authoritative versions are difficult to ascertain, and many (including *Prometheus Unbound*) contained mistakes. As Rossington explains:

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<sup>54</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 559.

<sup>55</sup> Rossington, 'Editing Shelley', 650.

Since the mid-twentieth century, most scholarly editors of English literary works have seen their task as to produce texts which represent as closely as possible their author's final intentions [...] However, this approach is frequently unworkable in Shelley's case particularly because the texts of many poems published in his lifetime manifestly do not represent his intentions.<sup>56</sup>

PBS's publisher Ollier would not send proofs to the poet when he lived in Italy, so the Shelleys relied on Peacock to oversee the corrections. Furthermore, many of the poems written in the final two or so years of PBS's life were 'unfinished and exist solely in the form of rough drafts'; the handwriting is often difficult to decipher, and the relationship between multiple drafts of the same poem is not always apparent.<sup>57</sup>

MWS began planning an edition of PBS's works as early as August 1822,<sup>58</sup> and by November, she had begun to collect his manuscripts, writing to Maria Gisborne with the instruction: 'Pray let all Mss. of whatever kind – letters &c be sent to me immediately'.<sup>59</sup> Eventually, three volumes of PBS's work emerged that were edited by MWS: *Posthumous Poems* (1824), *Poetical Works* (initially in four volumes in 1839, and then one revised volume in 1840, and another 3 volume version in 1847) and *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* (hereafter *ELA*) (1839/40). MWS, with whatever motive, appears to hide her participation, and presents a modest portrayal of her editorial authority that downplays her own scholarly sophistication and success.

The contemporary reviews for *Poetical Works* were hostile to MWS's omissions, and her editing and notes in general, commenting on her 'attempt to soften, and temporise, and explain away, totally at variance with the frank and uncompromising spirit of her husband'.<sup>60</sup> Critics that have read MWS as interfering also suggest she sentimentalized her husband's canon, but more recent work has

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 645, 648.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 648.

<sup>58</sup> Clemit, 'Prefaces and Notes: Introductory Note' in *NSWMS* II, ed. Clemit, 231.

<sup>59</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 292.

<sup>60</sup> From the *Athenaeum*, No. 633 (14 December 1839), 939, cited in Clemit, 'Introductory Note' to 'Prefaces and Notes' in *NSWMS* II, 233.

credited the scale and significance of the editorial task to which MWS committed herself.<sup>61</sup> Clemit has documented the extent of MWS's work as she prepared these posthumous publications; the quantity and size of these volumes alone shows MWS's dedication.<sup>62</sup> As Michael O'Neill writes, '[the] view that Mary Shelley sought such influence by denigrating her husband's work is unpersuasive [...] Mary Shelley's labours represent a heroic attempt to undertake a virtually impossible task to the best of her abilities'.<sup>63</sup>

For *Posthumous Poems*, MWS initially appealed to Leigh Hunt to write a biographical essay on PBS, but she ended up writing a preface instead.<sup>64</sup> In this preface MWS emphasises how 'every page of his poetry is associated in the minds of his friends with the loveliest scenes of the countries which he inhabited', including 'the Alps of Switzerland' which 'became his inspirers'.<sup>65</sup> She also offers a statement about her editorial policy:

Many of the Miscellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never retouched, I found among his manuscript books, and have carefully copied [...] I frankly own, that I have been more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me, than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the fastidious reader.<sup>66</sup>

MWS is aware of her role as consolidator, and the account of her 'fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me' captures the inclusiveness of her strategy. She intended to expand PBS's audience by focusing on publishing those works that only existed in draft.<sup>67</sup> Thus many of PBS's poems that are now well known (such as the verses beginning 'When soft voices die', discussed below) have become ubiquitous in the Shelley canon because MWS established them as worthy of reading. She presented PBS's shorter works as worthy of attention, and

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<sup>61</sup> See, for example: Spark, 117.

<sup>62</sup> Clemit, 'Prefaces and Notes: Introductory Note' in *NSWMS* II, 231-35.

<sup>63</sup> 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*, 186.

<sup>64</sup> Clemit, 'Prefaces and Notes: Introductory Note' in *NSWMS* II, 231.

<sup>65</sup> MWS, Preface to *Posthumous Poems* in *NSWMS* II, 239.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>67</sup> Rossington, 'Editing Shelley', 651.

completed unfinished longer works such as *The Triumph of Life*. Poems available only in fair copy were brought to light; evidence suggests that PBS did not intend to publish the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, and 'its inclusion in [*Posthumous Poems* in 1824] was presumably because Mary judged it, correctly, to be a hitherto unpublished poem of the kind that could win S. a wider audience'.<sup>68</sup> Without MWS, it would have taken much longer for many poems to become publically available. As Susan Wolfson writes: 'by fragments and wholes, [MWS] virtually produced the basic "Shelley" texts and canon'.<sup>69</sup> Thus 'collected editions of [PBS's] poetry include an unusually high percentage of what are usually listed as "fragments"'.<sup>70</sup> In MWS's editorial policy, any composition could be a 'monument' to PBS, and in championing his genius in the volumes she sought to present a *complete* PBS by providing every piece of his work possible. In aiming to present to her audience a completed collection, she was also required by her own conscience - but without PBS's guidance - to consolidate the unfinished and unreadable texts, thereby demonstrating again her collaborative role in bringing these publications to press.

PBS's father Sir Timothy insisted that the 1824 *Posthumous Poems* be withdrawn just two months after its publication. He threatened to terminate any negotiations for support for MWS and her only surviving child Percy, and she was forced to 'promise not to bring dear S.'s name before the public again during Sir. T.'s life'.<sup>71</sup> However, by 1838 he had agreed to MWS publishing an edition of PBS's works with Edward Moxon on the condition that there would be no memoir of PBS attached.<sup>72</sup> These volumes were the *Poetical Works* and *ELA*. MWS's method of providing a context to PBS's work, and giving an indication of the character of the author, was to 'write a few notes appertaining to the history of the poems'.<sup>73</sup> This time, she rejected Hunt's offer for help, explaining that the task 'must rest on

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<sup>68</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, Headnote to 'Letter to Maria Gisborne' in *The Poems of Shelley* III, 426.

<sup>69</sup> Wolfson, 'Editorial Privilege: Mary Shelley and Percy Shelley's Audiences' in *The Other Mary Shelley*, 49.

<sup>70</sup> 'Collected editions of [PBS's] poetry include an unusually high percentage of what are usually listed as "fragments"'. Weinberg and Webb, 'Introduction' in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, ed. Webb and Weinberg (London: Ashgate, 2009), 4.

<sup>71</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 444.

<sup>72</sup> Clemit, 'Prefaces and Notes: Introductory Note' in *NSWMS* II, 231-33.

<sup>73</sup> MWS, *Letters* II, 301.



myself alone. [...] The edition will be mine - & though I feel my incompetency [sic]- yet trying to make it as good as I can, I must hope the best'.<sup>74</sup> She would also write a preface for *ELA*. MWS's comprehensive prefaces and notes include demonstrations in prose of the closeness by which the Shelleys worked, providing further evidence of the collaborative intimacy this thesis has argued for across their works, from manuscripts, to journals, to published texts. MWS would present prose notes in order to structure her recollections of PBS and provide a partial biography. This editorial method was adopted in part due to PBS's father's restrictions, but specific composition periods for major works were associated with particular episodes in the Shelleys' lives, as MWS writes: 'his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances, and especially by his place of abode'.<sup>75</sup> She was able to trace the course of her life with PBS through the milestones of his creative compositions, and her own.

MWS's notes tell us that, for example, PBS's 'Rosalind and Helen was [...] thrown aside - till I found it; and, at my request, it was completed'.<sup>76</sup> She presents her intervention the most positively in her editorial discussion of *The Cenci*: 'we talked over the arrangement of the scenes together'.<sup>77</sup> Davies has emphasised how these notes are 'presented in intimate juxtaposition' with PBS's texts, and are 'interpretative annotations' that MWS 'interwove with the poems', offering a 'substantial and soon highly influential framework for judging his whole achievement'.<sup>78</sup> MWS's method of interweaving her own writing in and amongst the poems in *Poetical Works* gives an especially tangible form to the close connection of the Shelleys' texts during PBS's lifetime, when they were both engaged in composition.

Wolfson explains how MWS 'conceived of two classes of readers' - the 'popular and elite' - for her husband's productions. She imagined the former as the mass audience to whom she would prove PBS's genius, and thus 'diminish the aura

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>75</sup> MWS, 'Note on The Revolt of Islam' in *NSWMS* II, 269.

<sup>76</sup> MWS, 'Notes on Poems Written in 1818' in *NSWMS* II, 303.

<sup>77</sup> MWS, 'Note on The Cenci' in *NSWMS* II, 283.

<sup>78</sup> Davies, 268.

of his unintelligibility, quell the controversies over his conduct and political opinions'.<sup>79</sup> MWS would reveal, as she explained in the preface to *Poetical Works*, 'productions of a sublime genius',<sup>80</sup> but also PBS's 'sufferings, and his virtues'.<sup>81</sup> MWS wanted to pre-empt her critics who suggested that she failed PBS as a spiritual and emotional partner in his final years, which is - as Wolfson details - is why she sought to please the 'elite' audience, a unique, somewhat hermetic readership, those individuals thought to be a part of 'a singular Shelleyan audience, the intimate who is the poet's ideal, best reader'.<sup>82</sup> MWS not only aspired to prove PBS's worth, but to insist on his suffering, which may have contributed to Matthew Arnold's pervading and damaging image of PBS as an 'ineffectual angel'.<sup>83</sup> Despite her formal prose in the editorial notes, she hints strongly at her overwhelming adoration for PBS, and the 'beloved & unequalled Shelley', as is also portrayed more unabashedly in her confessional journals.<sup>84</sup> MWS creates a complex self-fashioning of herself as a consistent and analytical, but also loving, editor.

MWS's input created an issue for those readers of PBS that sought out her husband's radical ideas, and as Bennett explains, '*Posthumous Poems* was a conscious initial act of public persuasion, much as a number of prefaces to their works ambiguously veil the radicalism of the work itself to draw in a resistant audience'. MWS's differentiation between two classes of readers in the *Poetical Works*, the popular and the elite, 'drew fire from some critics, who regarded it as an apology rather than a means to introduce the wary'.<sup>85</sup> MWS was attempting to continue the collaborative relationship despite the loss of her partner, and any alterations to his writings stem from a trust established by the Shelleys' working relationship during PBS's lifetime. As Wolfson writes, 'she acts as mediator, offering herself as a model of perfect sympathy for and understanding of the

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<sup>79</sup> Wolfson, 'Editorial Privilege', 39.

<sup>80</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 255.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>82</sup> Wolfson, 'Editorial Privilege', 39.

<sup>83</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'Byron' and 'Shelley' in *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (London: Macmillan, 1913) 204, 252.

<sup>84</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 461.

<sup>85</sup> Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction*, 68, 111.

poet'.<sup>86</sup> Reciprocity is lost, but MWS's consistent aim to 'honour' PBS, via the way she continues to present her own work and contributions in parallel, implies that she sought to follow PBS's original intentions as best she could, and above all, that she wanted to make the largest possible amount of his writing accessible to willing readers.

Her staging of herself as inferior is disarming: for example, when she describes how PBS encouraged her to cultivate her talent for writing drama, she documents her refusal in her note to *The Cenci*: 'I entertained a truer estimate of my powers'. However she is indeed as Wolfson argues, a mediator. As a talented woman of letters she is able to guide us through PBS's writings. In her commentary on *The Cenci*, MWS even admits her own failing to recognise PBS's ability to write tragedy, and then acknowledges 'I speedily saw the great mistake *we* had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent [my emphasis]'.<sup>87</sup> Although a modest self-portrayal can be fashioned for personal gain, MWS always had a tendency to present herself in this way even while PBS was alive.

MWS's effort to reach two audiences shows her commitment to presenting as wide as possible an understanding of PBS and his writings. Davies has suggested that MWS, although in 'no doubt of her husband's genius', is intensely aware of:

the inherently isolating nature of his creative instinct [...] this is why such active editorial co-creation and explication [which MWS delivers in her prefaces and notes] are needed: because Percy's genius is essentially unsociable, we must depend upon Mary to show us how to read his oeuvre.<sup>88</sup>

The disorder of PBS's works at the time of his unexpected death required MWS to adopt some creative license, for example by producing an order for the poems that she felt allowed the texts to function as a successful volume. The notes (explicitly authored by her) also show her autonomous voice. Spark, in defence of MWS,

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<sup>86</sup> Wolfson, 'Editorial Privilege', 39.

<sup>87</sup> MWS, 'Note on *The Cenci*' in *NSWMS* II, 282-83.

<sup>88</sup> Davies, 269.

wrote of her 'observing and tending to the fluctuations of [PBS's] being' when he was alive, and she was similarly solicitous as his posthumous editor too.<sup>89</sup>

MWS continued in her collaborative efforts (building on her experience of working with PBS), and sought to publish his works in a way 'that would best please him'.<sup>90</sup> Morton suggests that 'Mary Shelley was the first Shelley scholar', and emphasises that the relationship that existed between them in PBS's lifetime shows that 'her collaboration with Shelley is itself a remarkable and powerful contribution to Romantic poetry'. Morton's account also indicates the significance of MWS's attempt to appeal to two audiences:

Mary's prefaces to the earliest editions of her late husband's work are remarkable for their tactful negotiation between politics and poetics. Mary felt that audiences required persuasion that Percy's material was not too inflammatory. On the other hand, there are many points at which she sticks vigorously to the idea that Percy expressed his political ideals through his writings. After all, Mary was often the explicit addressee.<sup>91</sup>

As the 'addressee', PBS would use MWS as a sounding-board for much of his poetry. In terms of the process of moving manuscript to publication, as his primary amanuensis (and often as creative editor, as we have seen in earlier chapters) she also was the 'addressee' of his manuscripts, expected to interpret and fair-copy them, and even comment on their contents.

The Shelley manuscripts - and the Garland facsimiles that include comprehensive editorial comment - display the huge scale of MWS's task.<sup>92</sup> Considering MWS's transcription of various fragments of PBS's works after his death, Irving Massey writes: 'Mary makes easy sense of passages or whole pages in Shelley's hand at which we can only guess'.<sup>93</sup> MWS admitted the difficulty of her task: 'you cannot imagine how confusing & tantalising is the turning over

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<sup>89</sup> Spark, 48, 176.

<sup>90</sup> MWS, *Letters* I, 306.

<sup>91</sup> Morton, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Weinberg and Webb, 'Introduction' in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> Irving Massey, *BSM* II, ed. Massey (London: Garland, 1987), xvi.

Manuscript books – full of scraps of finished or unfinished poems – half illegible’.<sup>94</sup> MWS brought rough drafts or fragments to a finished state, and she also introduced many of the titles by which we now know PBS’s poems.<sup>95</sup> For example, the draft of the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* provides no title for the poem, and thus, as Webb explains, ‘later editors have tended to follow the editorial lead of Mary Shelley’, who provided this formal name.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, poetic fragments by PBS such as the lines beginning ‘And like a dying lady lean and pale’ were first published by MWS under a specific title invented for the purpose of the posthumously published volumes; in this case, the fragment became known as ‘The Waning Moon’ under MWS’s direction.<sup>97</sup> The poem discussed below, beginning ‘Music, when soft voices die’, had no title until MWS gave it the heading ‘Memory’, which then became ‘To \_\_\_’ in 1824.<sup>98</sup>

Manuscript notebooks once used by both Shelleys are used by MWS to create safe-keeping copies of his poems: Harvard MS. Eng. 258.2, otherwise known as the Larger Silsbee Notebook, is one example. The Shelleys used ‘this pristine notebook as a fair-copy book’ from 1819 onwards.<sup>99</sup> The contents appear entirely in MWS’s hand, and the editor Reiman suggests that this list may tell us ‘about her contributions and access to the Notebook’. Reiman’s detailed discussion shows that initially both the Shelleys would use the notebook, but that after 1820, it was used exclusively by PBS. Following PBS’s death, MWS carried out her ‘fourth session’ listing the contents,<sup>100</sup> and copied further poems by PBS into the notebook. The continuation of the contents page by MWS after PBS’s death, and the use of the same notebook for copies for safe-keeping, suggest that MWS tried to replicate in her solitude a working style once embraced by the Shelleys as a pair.

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<sup>94</sup> MWS, *Letters* II, 330.

<sup>95</sup> Weinberg and Webb, ‘Introduction’, in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, ed. Weinberg and Webb, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Webb, ‘Scratching at the Door of Absence: Writing and Reading “Letter to Maria Gisborne”’ in *The Unfamiliar Shelley*, 122. See also *The Poems of Shelley* III, 433.

<sup>97</sup> Donovan, Duffy, Everest and Rossington, Headnote to PBS, ‘The Waning Moon’ in *The Poems of Shelley* III, 19.

<sup>98</sup> Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley* IV, 77.

<sup>99</sup> Reiman, ‘Introduction’ in PBS, *MSYRs* V ed. Reiman (London: Garland, 1991), xviii.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, xix-xxii.

The editorial changes MWS made to PBS's works are numerous; I focus on examples that show how MWS's editorial interventions can be significant in terms of form and meaning. The short poem 'To \_\_\_' which begins 'Music, when soft voices die' was printed by MWS in *Posthumous Poems* (1824) as shown below:

Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory-  
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,  
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;  
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on. (ll. 1-8)<sup>101</sup>

The verses were composed sometime between December 1820 and February 1821.<sup>102</sup> Massey has shown that MWS almost definitely altered the poem. The two surviving manuscripts (one in MWS's hand in MS Shelley adds. d. 9, one in PBS's hand in MS Shelley adds. e. 8) reveal the poem's two verses to be reordered: in both of the Shelleys' respective holographs, it begins with the stanza that opens with 'Rose leaves'. As Massey explains in his detailed reading of the poem(s), 'Mary [...] actually transformed the meaning of the poem by the variant she produced'.<sup>103</sup> Massey argues that this is a poem that the Shelleys did not collaborate on during PBS's lifetime, as evidence from MWS's manuscript suggests she was deciphering PBS's scrawl from paper. Thus MWS could have reordered the stanzas for the posthumous publication in 1824 'with the deliberate intention of improving the text'. Massey sees this as an 'accident', that 'a reversal of stanzas and a change of title could produce a coherent poem with a meaning so far removed from the

<sup>101</sup> PBS, 'To \_\_\_' in *Posthumous Poems* ed. MWS (London: John and Henry L. Hunt, 1824), 214.

<sup>102</sup> Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley IV*, 78.

<sup>103</sup> Massey, 'Shelley's "Music, When Soft Voices Die": Text and Meaning', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Jul., 1960) University of Illinois Press. (accessed 2 February 2016). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27707500>. 436.

meaning of the author's original manuscript version'. MWS's interventions could revise the meaning and therefore, readers' potential interpretations of PBS's verse.

Such revisions have provided a reason for critics to accuse MWS of an interventionist editorial stance: the 1824 published version of the poem is, for Massey, false to the author's intentions in both 'aesthetic form' and 'literal meaning'.<sup>104</sup> MWS produces a published, finished work under PBS's name but without his input, and an often-quoted poem such as this has been defined by her changes. Overall, the 'manuscript evidence on the order and significance of the two stanzas', is, according to Reiman and Fraistat, 'inconclusive and the issues still open for discussion'.<sup>105</sup> Adamson, the editor of the notebook that contains PBS's holograph (MS Shelley adds. e. 8), also notes in her commentary that in the 1824 *Posthumous Poems* MWS 'inexplicably reversed the order of the stanzas, for which there is no holograph authority'. Other poems in this notebook that were published by MWS also show that:

[...] apart from her desire to give readers as much of Shelley's work as possible, she was also apparently motivated by the desire to present texts which were as "finished" as possible, even if it meant that she had to impose her own order on them.<sup>106</sup>

In 'The Tower of Famine', for example, MWS created 'the last complete line, giving a sense of closure to the poem which does not really exist'.<sup>107</sup> MWS also gave names to both of the poems in question.<sup>108</sup> With regards to the ordering of 'To \_\_\_', Adamson suggests MWS 'evidently felt that "And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone, / Love itself shall slumber on.", as the concluding couplet, presented a more finished version'.<sup>109</sup> There is still some uncertainty surrounding this understanding, as Judith Chernaik has contended that MWS had PBS's authority to

<sup>104</sup> Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 436-37.

<sup>105</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, footnote 1, 469.

<sup>106</sup> Adamson, 'Textual Commentary' in *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts Vol VI*, ed. Adamson (London: Garland, 1992), 42.

<sup>107</sup> Adamson, *BSM VI*, 28.

<sup>108</sup> Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 436 and Adamson, *BSM VI*, 28. 'To \_\_\_' was also originally titled 'Memory' by MWS.

<sup>109</sup> Adamson, *BSM VI*, 42.

reverse the two stanzas, arguing that the manuscript indicates the second stanza was begun before the first had been finished.<sup>110</sup> MWS did have information from PBS to reverse the order of certain stanzas in other poetical works during his lifetime, as explored in my discussion of *The Mask of Anarchy* in Chapter 3. The Shelleys' verbal interactions are also irrecoverable, and one can speculate that she may have heard this poem read aloud in either order, although we have no evidence for this.

In the absence of any other manuscript draft indicating that PBS may have reordered the stanzas, it seems reasonable to assume that MWS changed the stanzas independently (as Massey and Adamson suggest). Adamson writes that 'MWS's version is a curiosity; its proper place is in a footnote'.<sup>111</sup> Matthews suggests MWS reversed the stanzas in 'To \_\_\_' for personal reasons, namely jealousy and hurt that PBS wrote this poem to Emilia Viviani, the addressee of *Epipsychidion*.<sup>112</sup> A cancelled line in manuscript, transcribed by MWS from PBS's draft and then removed by her, included the phrase 'Spirit sweet!' strongly recalling the address to Emilia as 'Sweet Spirit!' in the opening line of *Epipsychidion*.<sup>113</sup> By publishing the poem under the title, 'To \_\_\_' (in MWS's manuscript it was entitled 'Memory'; in PBS's draft it was untitled), this is a statement of MWS's 'tacit acknowledgement that Mary knew Teresa Viviani ('Emilia') to be the addressee'.<sup>114</sup> Thus, as Massey argues, MWS chooses 'to emphasise Shelley's attachment to another woman by an editorial device which gives a strongly romantic twist to an innocuous poem'.<sup>115</sup> It appears at first that this complex transition functions in opposition to understandings of MWS as a fair editor, and those critics who acknowledge that she at least wanted to be impartial; she was apparently motivated by personal upset. Yet MWS's acknowledgement of the poem's connection with Emilia and *Epipsychidion* might conversely suggest her

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<sup>110</sup> Adamson, *BSM VI*, 42. See also *The Poems of Shelley IV*, 78.

<sup>111</sup> Adamson, *BSM VI*, 43.

<sup>112</sup> Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley IV*, 77-79. See also Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 435; White also sees the poem as 'openly intended for Emilia'.

<sup>113</sup> Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley IV*, 80. See also Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 434.

<sup>114</sup> Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley IV*, 77-79.

<sup>115</sup> Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 437.



credibility as an editor who wanted to bring correctness to her editorial role, despite her pain: an implicit nod to the Viviani affair (by giving the poem the title 'To \_\_\_') perhaps shows MWS succumbing to what she assumed was PBS's wish that the poem had an implicit addressee.

There is probably no adequate single explanation for MWS's interventions; she aspired to be faithful to PBS's intentions and this could even include using creative license. She has been accused of altering PBS's original meanings.<sup>116</sup> MWS certainly utilised her unique knowledge and experience in an attempt to reconstruct PBS's work for publication. In the manuscript for 'To \_\_\_', the strikethroughs in the verse, and the (typically) untidy handwriting of PBS makes the verses difficult to decipher.<sup>117</sup> It is worth noting also that even if MWS interfered with PBS's original holograph without trying to stay true to PBS's draft, the version she presented 'breathes literary appeal; it has not been enjoyed by so many readers without good reason'.<sup>118</sup> These two arguments, that MWS was either dedicated to fairly representing her husband's original ideas and manuscript draft, *or* that she took it upon herself to edit without his authority, leads us to the same conclusion: she certainly brought a fragment that might otherwise have been lost to completion. She continued her collaborative role. Did the reversal of the stanzas make the poem more successful than it otherwise might have been? Such concerns are merely intriguing rather than scholarly, but it is a fact that MWS's ordering of the poem as published in 1824 has been celebrated, and there are more musical settings recorded for this work than for any other poem by PBS (165 between 1847-1969).<sup>119</sup>

MWS's changes can sometimes be as anonymous as those of an unknown editor, while at other times they can be read as influenced by personal feelings. Elsewhere MWS seeks to portray a rewritten image of PBS for her perceived

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<sup>116</sup> MWS deserves 'great credit' for her 'dedication to an extremely difficult undertaking', but 'must also take the blame for distorting and sometimes misrepresenting Shelley's achievement'. Webb, 'Note on the Text' in *Poems and Prose of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Webb (London: Dent, 1995) xxxiii.

<sup>117</sup> PBS, *BSM* VI, 404-405.

<sup>118</sup> Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 437.

<sup>119</sup> Rossington, Donovan and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley* IV, 79.

audience, or in accordance of her memory of him, and what she believed he would have wanted. In her reflections on the subject in her journal, she again emphasises how she sought to ‘honour’ PBS (similar to her entry cited above which expresses her ‘desire to do Shelley honour in the notes to the best of my knowledge & ability’):<sup>120</sup>

Hogg has written me an insulting letter because I left out the Dedication to Harriet [in *Queen Mab*] [...] When Clarke’s edition of Q. M. came to us at the Baths of Pisa Shelley expressed great pleasure that these verses were omitted – this recollection caused me to do the same – It was to do him honour – What could it be to me? There are other verses I should well like to obliterate forever – but they will be printed.<sup>121</sup>

MWS is insulted as she is accused of removing verses to Harriet Shelley, in an act perceived to be motivated by jealousy and self-interest. She validates the removal of the Dedication to *Queen Mab* by recalling a moment where PBS told her he would omit the verses in future editions. This justification is given in her journal, in a private and sad account of hurt, rather than in a moment of attention-seeking public indignation. MWS was angry and defensive, but accounts like this of the discussion of literary activities remind us that MWS was PBS’s companion and collaborator; her knowledge of the intricacies of his working style, and his reflections on works previously published was unequalled by any other individual. She was the closest person to him throughout his mature years, in spite of some distance and lack of intimacy later on. Her emphasis in the ‘Journal of Sorrow’ on an almost spiritual connection between PBS and herself may be an emotional delusion, but having traced PBS’s involvement with her when he was alive, we can assume a profound sincerity of feeling between them.

This argument does not suggest that MWS could not have misremembered the past. But the fact that the posthumous works of PBS are published and edited by his long-term collaborator indicates a continuation of a collaborative

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<sup>120</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 559.

<sup>121</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 560-61.

intertextuality, as the Shelleys' individual works are repeatedly - almost constantly - shaped by their literary relationship. As I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3, even during periods of emotional turmoil, the Shelleys' literary engagements remained. The 'other verses' that MWS hints that she 'should well like to obliterate forever' in the journal entry above refer to *Epipsychidion*, which did hurt MWS, but which she printed nonetheless in *Poetical Works*. This decision shows her dedication to presenting PBS's voice.

In general, significant changes were rare, and MWS tended to edit PBS's texts for clarity only. Notably, such edits included alterations to his prose. The 1814 fragment *The Assassins* was published in *ELA*, and was revised by MWS in order to produce what Weinberg identifies as 'a clear, readable text which gives the impression that the fragment is a "finished" piece'; again, she even added the title. MWS's influence here is, Weinberg admits, in opposition to 'the innate impetus, vigour and fluency of the author's style'. However, she 'was applying standard procedures of her day'.<sup>122</sup> She probably felt that such an obviously incomplete piece needed work, and she did have a hand in *The Assassins* during its original composition. The changes that appear *passim* in *The Assassins* might suggest MWS's confidence in her own abilities as a prose writer bringing her skills to bear on lending clarity to the fragment.

As well as discussing *The Assassins*, Chapter 1 of this thesis explained how MWS was trusted to edit PBS's prose for the initial publication of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*. MWS wrote to Leigh Hunt in October 1839, concerned whether her republishing of 'The 1814 Tour' section of the volume was appropriate: 'it was printed & corrected by Shelley though written by me - & being once published - as a part of his life might well appear again - what do you say?'<sup>123</sup> We know that although compiled by MWS, parts of this text included PBS's prose from the 1814 journal. MWS as an editor is challenged by the collaborative situation that produced this work and shows a concern about naming its author as either herself

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<sup>122</sup> Weinberg, *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts Vol XXII* (2 parts), ed. Weinberg (London: Garland, 1997). Part II, 21-22.

<sup>123</sup> MWS, *Letters* II, 325.

or her husband – she asserts it is ‘written by me’ but was ‘a part of his life’; study of the text itself further establishes that it was produced at a time when composition was fluid and a product of shared labour (as explained earlier). ‘The 1814 Tour’ did appear revised in *ELA*. On revisiting this text MWS introduced a new observation, explaining that ‘[PBS]S\*\*\* commenced a Romance on the subject of the Assassins, and I wrote to his dictation’, and she also reinserted more text taken from PBS’s original journal entries.<sup>124</sup>

Most significantly MWS developed *The Triumph of Life*, PBS’s final, unfinished poem. This work was probably written in May/June 1822, just before PBS’s death, at his final home Villa Magni.<sup>125</sup> MWS first published it in *Posthumous Poems* in 1824. The only manuscript for the poem is very much a rough working draft; as Reiman writes, ‘Mary Shelley’s efforts to find her way through the tangled thickets of cancellations and revisions, guided only by the prosodic laws of *terza rima*, were truly Herculean’.<sup>126</sup> Missing adjectives in the unfinished manuscript of the poem were supplied by MWS. For example, on line 78: ‘But icy cold, obscured with [ ] light’ becomes ‘obscured with blinding light’.<sup>127</sup> In *Posthumous Poems* this appeared in squared brackets – as ‘[blinding]’ - to emphasise that this word is not present in the manuscript.<sup>128</sup> Elsewhere she left gaps unfilled despite this disrupting the meaning, for example: ‘To seek, to [ ], to strain with limbs decayed’.<sup>129</sup> In one place in the poem, she inserts a note to explain the fragmentary and disarrayed nature of the manuscript:

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<sup>124</sup> Murray *Prose* I, 434, Moskal, *NSWMS* VIII, ed. Moskal, 5, 388.

<sup>125</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 481.

<sup>126</sup> Reiman, ‘Introduction to “The Triumph of Life”’ in *BSM* I, ed. Reiman (London: Garland, 1986), 118.

<sup>127</sup> Reiman and Fraistat, *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, footnote 9, 486.

<sup>128</sup> PBS, *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. MWS (London: John and H. L. Hunt, 1824), 76.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

[There is a chasm here in the MS. which it is impossible to fill up. It appears from the context, that other shapes pass, and that Rousseau still stood beside the dreamer, as]

- he pointed to a company,<sup>130</sup>

The poem then continues following this insertion. MWS presents what appears to be *her conception* of the most probable content for the gap in the narrative, drawing on her creative perception as well as her knowledge of PBS and his writing. In the preface to *Posthumous Poems* she confesses, “‘The Triumph of Life’ was his last work, and was left in so unfinished a state, that I arranged it in its present form with great difficulty’.<sup>131</sup> In *Poetical Works* she edited the poem further, to ‘make the poem seem less fragmentary even though she knew she was departing from the MS’. She added more words: in order to gloss metrically incomplete lines, for example.<sup>132</sup> The preface to *Poetical Works* sees her align the work with *The Witch of Atlas* and *Adonais*, in that class of poems that are ‘purely imaginative’, meaning those that are less appealing to a wider audience, and not written in MWS’s preferred style.<sup>133</sup> She nevertheless gave it pride of place in *Posthumous Poems*.

MWS certainly took ownership of the volumes, writing to Leigh Hunt ‘[t]he edition will be mine’,<sup>134</sup> and to Edward Moxon, regarding copyright issues:

The M.S. from which it was printed consisted of fragments of paper which in the hands of an indifferent person would never have been decyphered [sic] – the labour of putting it together was immense – the papers were in my possession & in no other person’s (for the most part) the volume might be all my writing (except that I could not write it).<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>131</sup> MWS, ‘Preface’ to *Posthumous Poems* in *NSWMS* II, 241.

<sup>132</sup> Reiman, *Shelley’s “The Triumph of Life”: A Critical Study* (New York: Octagon, 1979), 120.

<sup>133</sup> MWS, Preface to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 256.

<sup>134</sup> MWS, *Letters* II, 305.

<sup>135</sup> MWS, *Letters* II, 300.

This combination of ownership and humility defines MWS's consciousness of her interpretative role. There is a discernable tension between MWS seeking to 'honour' her late husband and literary partner, preserving what she can, and the editorial process of interpretation, in the context of which her notes are discursive and personal. Scholarship has sought to provide a larger rationale for MWS's influence in the posthumous publications. Davies emphasises those moments where MWS implies that the labour of editing has given her ownership over the text, suggesting that MWS asserted her authority as editor but saw her connection to PBS as a legitimate reason to do this. Her expertise is not only due to her 'emotional connection to Percy's poetical remains' but also that 'the texts Mary was editing were indeed partly her own creations',<sup>136</sup> as she was involved during their creative development, from conception to transcription and (when it occurred) publication.

As Davies argues, MWS's remarks on PBS's physical health and the grief she records makes it appear that she 'casts herself as a devoted nurse who tends to her husband's painfully fractured corpus, a role that does not reflect her sophisticated practice as intellectual and artistic collaborator'.<sup>137</sup> Work by Vargo similarly presents MWS as driven by emotional needs – 'Mary Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* has an intensely personal aspect that she does not intend to be of concern to the reader'. MWS pursues 'textual pleasure as a method to combat grief and loneliness', and her aim to transform the manuscript into a printed text is 'a significant act of reconstruction and idealisation'.<sup>138</sup> These readings do not downplay the intellectual and creative role of MWS but introduce her varied motives (as we have seen, Davies is careful to emphasise MWS's 'sophisticated practice as [...] collaborator'). My work builds on the work of Davies and Vargo on MWS's editing post-1822 by making claims based on archival sources. The specific alterations she made reveal that MWS could be motivated by her memories and a personal, emotional response, but that elsewhere she strove for objectivity.

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<sup>136</sup> Davies, 268.

<sup>137</sup> Davies, 271.

<sup>138</sup> Vargo, 'Versioning Mary Shelley's *Triumph of Life*', 217-18.

Davies and Vargo complicate the reading that MWS seeks to 'honour' PBS; they show her individual autonomy as contributing to the posthumous publications. The complicated relationship between MWS's version of *The Triumph of Life* and PBS's original draft reminds us that MWS's editorial authority (as with the reversal of stanzas in 'To \_\_\_') could often shape the way a poem would be read for decades. Vargo has shown how readings of *The Triumph of Life* are dependent on MWS's text even as they try to ascertain and analyse PBS's purpose and original authorial intention.<sup>139</sup> As Massey writes of 'To \_\_\_', MWS's published version of PBS's poem has 'a tradition of its own, and cannot simply be dropped from the records of English poetry';<sup>140</sup> likewise MWS's completed *The Triumph of Life* influences all of the understandings of the incomplete PBS manuscript to date.

Vargo emphasises the intimacy in MWS's act of creating her own version of *The Triumph of Life*: 'sexual/textual erotics represent an attempt to keep a collaborative model of textuality alive after her husband's death [...] editing Shelley's works is a means to perpetuate the pleasures of textual intercourse with her husband'. She transforms PBS's abandoned manuscript into a fixed, printed, published and finalised piece that is indeterminate, too, because of its unfinished state:

The textual condition of *The Triumph of Life* poses a significant problem: when we read the poem our authority is not the poet's text, but Mary Shelley's *Triumph of Life* [...] Mary Shelley's version [...] metamorphoses the flux of a work in progress into the fixity of words printed on a page.<sup>141</sup>

Vargo describes the 'indeterminacy' of the draft as it becomes authorised by MWS in print, editorial work that makes the poem both final and incomplete. We can understand MWS's appreciation of the opportunity to 'continue her private poetic dialogue' with PBS here. If MWS views her work as essentially completing a poem, that is a judgement *not* shared by the PBS critics who generally see it as remaining

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<sup>139</sup> Vargo, 'Versioning Mary Shelley's *Triumph of Life*', 215.

<sup>140</sup> Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 438.

<sup>141</sup> Vargo, 'Versioning Mary Shelley's *Triumph of Life*', 215, 218.

incomplete.<sup>142</sup> I have thus far suggested that MWS at least aimed to be faithful to PBS's intentions in her editing, but Vargo claims that the cause for her note cited above – on the 'chasm' in the manuscript, 'impossible to fill' – is motivated by MWS's individual feelings and emotions. In the manuscript notebook, this space is filled with PBS's lyrics to Jane Williams. Many of the 'Jane' poems MWS published without an addressee (for example, 'With a Guitar, to Jane' becomes simply 'With a Guitar').<sup>143</sup> Such verses to another woman, 'disrupt the version of Shelley as man and as poet [MWS] wants to represent'.<sup>144</sup>

This analysis of a web of motives and intent can be drawn from an evaluation of MWS's editing. She proposes a 'clear narrative', suggesting her motivation to make the text coherent, and she does acknowledge the missing material. Vargo suggests that the poems to Jane would 'present a disruption to her textual pleasure'.<sup>145</sup> However, MWS's relationship to the Jane poems is complicated, as her use of editorial devices elsewhere would emphasise PBS's romantic attachments to women other than herself, including Jane and Emilia, as we have seen with the poem 'To \_\_\_' discussed above. Another poem, 'Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed', was composed by PBS soon after the Shelleys first declared their love for one another in 1814, and MWS published it with the same ambiguous title 'To \_\_\_' and placed it among the 'Poems written in 1821'.<sup>146</sup> Vargo's work is useful to refer to when demonstrating that MWS's work as an editor seeks to continue a working style that existed in PBS's lifetime, and it helps to emphasise that a textual intimacy can be coloured by conflicting individual emotions - as well as the aim to present a complete text to the reader. MWS's

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 217-18.

<sup>143</sup> See Contents of *Posthumous Poems* in MWS, *NSWMS* II, 313. See also Reiman and Fraistat, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 470 for MWS's treatment of the poems 'To Jane. The Invitation' and 'To Jane. The Recollection', which in *Posthumous Poems* (1824) became a single poem entitled 'The Pine Forest of the Cascine, near Pisa'.

<sup>144</sup> Vargo, *Versioning Mary Shelley's Triumph of Life*, 222.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 221-22.

<sup>146</sup> Massey, 'Text and Meaning', 437. MWS published ' "Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed" under the date 1821 and with an implied ascription to Jane Williams, when her own copy is corrected dated June, 1814, and correctly dedicated to herself'. See also Matthews and Everest, *The Poems of Shelley* I, 442-43, which suggests MWS saw the poem as addressed to Emilia. She 'would not necessarily have seen a poem written to her in June 1814' but she did initially title and date it 'To MWG [...] June. 1814'.



internal conflicts, her continued 'private poetic dialogue'<sup>147</sup> with PBS and her understanding of him from their relationship would all inform her influence.

Samuel Gladden has shown how by uniting her own voice with PBS's in the volumes, although suggesting her inferiority, MWS actually 'subverts that pose of submission to establish her own subjectivity'.<sup>148</sup> She has multiple roles in the notes, purporting to be 'observer/commentator' but also 'creator/writer' in her discursive explorations of 'the same sorts of ideological critiques and aesthetic explorations found in her husband's poetry'.<sup>149</sup> I argue that there is evidence for this view in the journal, too, as her references to PBS's writings do not just provide a reiteration of his ideas but MWS's creative contribution to their metaphysical and philosophical concerns. The allusions to PBS's writings in MWS's later creative works function in the same way, allowing her to 'create/write' autonomously. Just as the Shelleys positively inspired and influenced each other's works when they were both alive, MWS utilised PBS's voice as a way of stimulating thought and furthering her ideas, often challenging his position. Gladden, like Vargo, also argues that MWS's editorial notes provide a space for her own subjectivity. However, MWS's explicit statements of purpose imply that she sought to be objective, that she was 'giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible'.<sup>150</sup> The majority of alterations to PBS's writings demonstrate her striving to produce a readable and accurate volume. They are in this way similar to PBS's corrections to *Frankenstein*, which may have altered his wife's first draft and ideas, but at the same time suggested ways to clarify and enhance her text.

MWS's editorial work seeks to replicate the working style that existed between the Shelleys pre-July 1822, for example as she places poems in context in the notes to *Poetical Works* and also as she continued copying into the Larger Silsbee Notebook. Wolfson notes that 'the continuation of a poetic being required

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<sup>147</sup> Vargo, 'Versioning Mary Shelley's *Triumph of Life*', 218.

<sup>148</sup> Samuel Lyndon Gladden, 'Mary Shelley's Editions of *The Collected Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Editor as Subject*', *Studies in Romanticism* 44 No. 2 (2005), 205.

<sup>149</sup> Gladden, 183.

<sup>150</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 255.

some intervening resuscitation, however, in the form of editorial labour, and Mary Shelley could draw readily on the resources of her intimacy with the poet during the period of his greatest productivity'.<sup>151</sup> This memory of past intimacy is evident in MWS's preface to the *Poetical Works*, as she explains how her attempt to narrate the 'origin and history' of the poems is dependent on 'the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him'.<sup>152</sup> MWS's notes included in the *Poetical Works* influenced readings of the texts, and in some cases have led to speculation about the lives of the Shelleys (as we saw in Chapter 3 regarding *Julian and Maddalo*). As Davies puts it, 'the impulses behind Mary's annotations are many and various, and we should not reduce them too neatly into alignment with the poetry that they frame'.<sup>153</sup>

MWS's editing might indicate the Shelleys' equality as writers. Gladden argues that 'both individuals emerge as powerful yet independent thinkers who share similar political and aesthetic ideals'.<sup>154</sup> Study of the prefaces and notes indicates 'the importance of Mary Shelley as her husband's equal partner [...] her reputation as an equally creative source'.<sup>155</sup> Despite a loss of explicit reciprocity, this alternative form of collaboration further establishes an understanding of engagement based on exploration, but not consistent unity in creative opinion:

Mary Shelley never establishes her importance at the expense of her husband's, for she is careful to balance her subjectivity with his own, creating, in effect, a textual embodiment of the democratic, feminist pair of lovers so often celebrated in her husband's works, who struggle neither to claim glory selfishly for themselves nor to eclipse the glory of the other.<sup>156</sup>

My previous chapters have established that MWS did have more of an involvement in PBS's works than her biographical notes to the 1839/40 publications suggest. We should approach the significant changes introduced by MWS post-July 1822

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<sup>151</sup> Wolfson, 'Editorial Privilege', 48.

<sup>152</sup> MWS, Preface to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 258.

<sup>153</sup> Davies, 279.

<sup>154</sup> Gladden, 186.

<sup>155</sup> Gladden, 184.

<sup>156</sup> Gladden, 187.

within the context of how she transcribed and offered creative input to PBS's works elsewhere. Studies of the Shelleys' collaboration on the *Posthumous Poems*, *Poetical Works* and *ELA* should be conscious that MWS was not a silent observer of PBS's writings prior to her remarkable feat of bringing the works to press, but that she was building on a previous history of collaboration, something she was predisposed to do, after years of their engagement with each other.

### **Novels and self-dramatisation: *Lodore*, *Falkner*, *The Last Man***

As an author, MWS was first and foremost a novelist and storyteller. After 1822 she expanded her own canon significantly, as well as editing her husband's work. Her full-length fictional writings that appeared in print after his death are *Valperga* (1823 – although composed during PBS's lifetime), *The Last Man* (1826), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). The later novels have been neglected, and have sometimes been regarded as falling away from her previous achievements in *Frankenstein*, but as Bennett inquires: 'was her place in Romanticism insufficiently recognized not because her works lacked a philosophic basis but because we had not noticed or understood it?'<sup>157</sup> Although these texts are currently awarded less critical attention than her debut novel, the work of various Shelley scholars and the appearance of new editions are gradually forcing change by moving the spotlight onto 'the other Mary Shelley'.<sup>158</sup>

MWS's philosophical motivations are sometimes a reaction to PBS's work, a response that forms a continued conversation with her lost partner. Her novels and short stories, although clearly fiction, also draw upon her own memories. MWS engages with PBS's texts before and after his death; for example we can recall how *Matilda* has its origins in the Shelleys' collaboration on *The Cenci*. MWS continues to consider PBS as an author in her published works, demonstrating the approach

<sup>157</sup> Bennett, 'Finding Mary Shelley in her letters' in *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 291.

<sup>158</sup> See, for example, the published paperbacks of MWS's work made available by Broadview Press, and Fisch, Mellor and Schor (eds.) *The Other Mary Shelley*.

to creative composition that she described in her 1831 introduction to *Frankenstein*:

Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. [...] Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it.<sup>159</sup>

This image not only alludes to the frightening assemblage of the creature in that novel, but also reminds the reader of the social nature of the 1816 Geneva summer when *Frankenstein* was conceived. MWS explains how she was inspired by the discussions of PBS and Byron on ‘philosophical doctrines [...] the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated’.<sup>160</sup> Perhaps MWS has been neglected as an important philosophical novelist because many of her ideas in her later work appear to stem from the same concerns as PBS’s poetry and prose. A renewed understanding of the Shelleys as a literary couple reveals a reciprocal relationship, and shared ideas are based on a discussion that evolves over time. Moreover, MWS does not simply echo PBS but challenges and responds to his texts, and introduces complicating factors peculiar to her own concerns (such as women’s rights, as shown below). MWS responds in a different genre, arguably her personal forte and an art form in which PBS did not specialise, thus implying her desire to establish an independent voice.

Here I break chronology to introduce two of MWS’s novels that have received far less attention than *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*. The last novels published by MWS are *Lodore* (1835) and *Falkner* (1837). These works should be championed as comparably subtle and - in their understated way - compelling. They show MWS’s consciousness of PBS as her previous creative collaborator and his continuing influence over her thought, but also her talent as an individual

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<sup>159</sup> MWS, ‘Introduction to 1831 *Frankenstein*’ *NSWMS* I, 178-79.

<sup>160</sup> MWS, ‘Introduction to 1831 *Frankenstein*’ in *NSWMS* I, 179.

author. In *Lodore* there are many explicit citations from PBS's works: quotations open chapters,<sup>161</sup> and are embedded in the text.<sup>162</sup> There are also more subtle allusions to the language of PBS's writings, including MWS's use of the phrase, 'this was but a painted veil', and Lady Lodore is described as 'like a sensitive plant'; these statements suggest PBS's 'Sonnet: Life not the Painted Veil' and 'The Sensitive Plant' respectively.<sup>163</sup> *Falkner* also alludes to PBS's works, for example in reference to the Prometheus myth (also recalling the subtitle to *Frankenstein*).<sup>164</sup>

The novels emphasise the impact of travel and nature on the protagonists. For example, in *Lodore*, MWS describes the 'world of Snow' in Switzerland, and the characters' 'breathless admiration', before they reach 'fair, joyous Italy'. In taking a phrase from *Childe Harold* III here (the mountains as 'palaces of nature', an expression, as noted earlier, that was also utilised in Vol I Chapter VI of *Frankenstein*), MWS recalls the Geneva summer and the creative community that provided her with inspiration.<sup>165</sup> In *Falkner* also, the protagonists 'shared in the pleasures and pains of travel'.<sup>166</sup> These novels additionally revisit PBS's characteristic interest in the inherent goodness of man: in *Lodore*, the Shelleyan character Edward Villiers 'was imprudent from his belief in the goodness of his fellow creatures'.<sup>167</sup> The story of *Falkner* is concerned with morality, duty and 'the manly wish to protect the oppressed, and assist the helpless'.<sup>168</sup> A 'love of knowledge' also exists in MWS's characters, and Elizabeth in *Falkner* has a mind which 'found something congenial in study. The acquirement of new ideas – the sense of order, and afterwards of power – awoke a desire for improvement'.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> See MWS, *Lodore*, ed. Vargo, 90, 126, 149, 173, 186, 363, 369, 387. All further references to this novel will be from this edition.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 248 and 410, 332, 338 ('Sonnet: Lift not the Painted Veil', *Prometheus Unbound, The Cenci*).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 203, 395.

<sup>164</sup> MWS, *Falkner* in *NSWMS* Vol VII, ed. Clemit (London: Pickering, 1996), 243.

<sup>165</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 253. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* III. 62 in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, 123. MWS, *Frankenstein* in *NSWMS* I, 53.

<sup>166</sup> MWS, *Falkner*, 33.

<sup>167</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 182.

<sup>168</sup> MWS, *Falkner*, 23.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 39.

MWS wrote to Maria Gisborne in 1835 to enquire if her friend had noticed that the most explicitly biographical scenes in *Lodore* were between Ethel and Villiers: 'did you recognise any of Shelley's & my early adventures – when we were in danger of being starved in Switzerland - & could get no dinner at an inn in London?'<sup>170</sup> Ethel and Villiers' letters in separation imitate those of the 1814 correspondence,<sup>171</sup> and Villiers even waits in the same London Coffee House where PBS wrote to MWS when he was under arrest for debt in October/November 1814.<sup>172</sup> Besides the factual biographical similarities, the Ethel/Villiers parallel is evident in the effect that separation has on the two young lovers' creative minds: waiting for Villiers, Ethel 'could not write nor read', her 'understanding was wandering'.<sup>173</sup> In 1814 PBS had written to MWS that without her he could not focus: 'I wander restlessly about I cannot read – or even write'.<sup>174</sup> In *Lodore*, when the lovers are united, Villiers exclaims: 'What a transporting change [...] I am again myself – not the miserable dog that has been wandering about all day – a body without a soul!'<sup>175</sup> In 1814, PBS had written to MWS: 'Your thoughts alone can waken mine to energy. [...] If I were absent from you long I should shudder with horror at myself'.<sup>176</sup>

MWS reviews the Shelleys' mutual concerns and weaves them into her later novels, and MWS's philosophical contributions in both *Lodore* and *Falkner* appear in the form of her concern for women's place in society, something unmistakably influenced by the work of her mother and other female authors like Mary Hays.<sup>177</sup> Women's rights as an innovative feature of MWS's work is not the only example that can be drawn from these texts by any means, but a focus on this can show how she takes the existing 'Shelleyan' themes (including those mentioned above) and transforms and develops them. In *Lodore*, MWS introduces an observation on female education while also expressing an interest in social inequality more

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<sup>170</sup> MWS, *Letters* II, 261.

<sup>171</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 287

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 1, 315.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>174</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 411.

<sup>175</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 318-19.

<sup>176</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 414.

<sup>177</sup> See, for example, Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

generally. Thus Ethel and Fanny are both 'kind-hearted, generous, and true' but in very different ways, due to their alternative educations by their respective fathers, and their social status. Their perhaps opposing upbringings encouraged the one to be 'yielding' and the other to be 'independent and self-sufficing'.<sup>178</sup> The character of Fanny in particular represents, as Carlson explains, a 'major innovation' in MWS's text. Carlson also supposes that '*Lodore* and *Falkner* attempt to alter marital despotism from the inside'.<sup>179</sup> Fanny's independence, her 'love for books and a life of the mind', recalls Wollstonecraft and beguiles the reader in what otherwise, like *Falkner*, could be said to be a silver-fork novel; indeed the first reviewers of *Lodore* welcomed her parting from the 'wild fictions' of her earlier works.<sup>180</sup>

Elsewhere in *Lodore* MWS's wry disdain at the social ills affecting female characters is evident: 'Her lover jilted her, and wedded a richer bride. The story is so old, that it is to be wondered that women have not ceased to lament so common an occurrence'.<sup>181</sup> The character Cornelia dismisses her lot by explaining: 'endurance is the fate of woman'.<sup>182</sup> In *Falkner*, MWS's prose considers 'the woman's first and hardest lesson, to bear in silence the advance of an evil, which might be avoided, but for the unconquerable will of another'.<sup>183</sup> The story of Alithea, whose 'very goodness and guarded propriety were against her',<sup>184</sup> is that of a woman who must accept the lot of unhappy wife in order to protect her child. She is 'tyrannised over; wedded to her duty', but she confesses 'a mother is, in my eyes, a more sacred name than wife'.<sup>185</sup> Such binary choices and lack of freedom show a Shelleyan (that is, peculiar to PBS and MWS) concern with the (corrupt) state of society, which is then mediated to fit MWS's social commentary. MWS's meditations on youthful love in *Lodore* however, are crucially nostalgic, allowing her to consider moments of her relationship with PBS. Writing and romantic love are comparable: 'A lover's fancy is as creative as a poet's, and when once it takes

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<sup>178</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 321-22.

<sup>179</sup> Carlson, 119-21.

<sup>180</sup> Fiona Stafford, 'Introductory note' in *Lodore* in *NSWMS* VI, ed. Stafford (London: Pickering, 1996), ix.

<sup>181</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 422.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>183</sup> MWS, *Falkner*, 59.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

hold of any idea, it clings to it tenaciously'.<sup>186</sup> Ethel's love for Edward Villiers, which breaks her away from her father, under the 'enchantments of love', to stand 'on the threshold of womanhood',<sup>187</sup> again recalls 1814 and MWS's adolescent elopement with PBS.

When Ethel and Villiers travel to Rome, they wander and scramble through the 'weed-grown baths of Caracalla' (where PBS wrote *Prometheus Unbound*)<sup>188</sup> and share moments of tenderness at the Coliseum: 'The heartfelt and innocent cares of two united in the sight of Heaven, wedded together for the endurance of the good and ills of life, hallowed the spot and hour'.<sup>189</sup> Eventually Villiers imagines a utopian paradise for Ethel and himself in England or Italy, 'cheered by the presence of friends, unshadowed by any cares'.<sup>190</sup> PBS had discussed and sought in many incarnations, as Holmes argues, an 'enlightened community of friends who retire from the false values of modern society, submit themselves to Nature and Reason, and try to share on equal terms love, labour and the pursuit of happiness',<sup>191</sup> and in 1821 he wrote to MWS: 'My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society. I would retire with you & our child to a solitary island'.<sup>192</sup> The creative set now referred to as 'Shelley and his circle' was eulogized by MWS in 1824 as she remembered 'with fondness [...] having made a part of the Elect'.<sup>193</sup> MWS wrote to Maria Gisborne in 1821 that 'we live in our usual retired way, with few friends, and no acquaintances'.<sup>194</sup> No attempt to find fulfilment on PBS's part, Holmes argues, 'curbed or satisfied his restless spirit'.<sup>195</sup> MWS's later novels traverse multiple landscapes, and her contemplation of a tension between retirement and restlessness is embodied in her characters and narratives. These are works that cannot be straightforwardly paraphrased, and the potential for an in-depth exploration of the rhetorical complexity of MWS's novels reveals further

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<sup>186</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 412.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>188</sup> See PBS, 'Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*' in *The Poems of Shelley II*, 473 and MWS, 'Note on the *Prometheus Unbound*' in *NSWMS II*, 276.

<sup>189</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 267.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>191</sup> Holmes, *Shelley on Love*, ed. Holmes, 26.

<sup>192</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 339.

<sup>193</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 450.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>195</sup> Holmes, *Shelley on Love*, 187.



tensions, for example between nostalgia and regret, as she recalls and reworks her past.

In *Lodore*, a passionate speech by Ethel as she speaks to Villiers considers ‘why it is absolute pleasure to suffer pain for those we love’. Ethel defines love’s philosophy as ‘derived from sympathy – the feeling of union – of unity’. In a pensive moment she realises: ‘when pain comes to awaken us to a true sense of how much we love – when we suffer for one another’s dear sake – the consciousness of attachment swells our hearts’. This speech implies the complexity of the Shelleys’ romantic and creative relationship and allows MWS to generalise in fiction her own specific experience in life, in a way that must connect with others who recognise the emotions she conveys. It also mingles MWS’s recollection of her positive free-spirited youth with PBS and their difficult times, and even looks forward to her loneliness in widowhood. Villiers’ reply emphasises the tie between a philosophy of love and the expansion of sympathy: ‘Encourage this philosophy, dear Ethel [...] you will need it: but it shames me to think that I am your teacher in this mournful truth’.<sup>196</sup> Ethel and Villiers are presented as lovers united against the world, secretive (‘young love is ever cradled in mystery; - to reveal it to the vulgar eye, appears at once to deprive it of its celestial loveliness’)<sup>197</sup> and gaining positive qualities from one another’s affections (‘when away from Ethel, her lover lost half the excellence which her presence bestowed’).<sup>198</sup> The depiction of these characters is reminiscent of both Shelleys’ emphasis on the inspiration and positive qualities they brought to each other, particularly recalling those 1814 love letters, in which PBS writes to MWS, ‘Mary love – we must be united. [...] My understanding becomes undisciplined without you’;<sup>199</sup> Ethel emphasises that love is ‘the feeling of union – of unity’ in *Lodore*.<sup>200</sup>

The novels’ autobiographical qualities provide the basis for a particular understanding of these neglected works. As Vargo explains, in the case of *Lodore*,

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<sup>196</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 343-44.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>199</sup> PBS, *Letters I*, 414.

<sup>200</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 343-34.

'what sympathetic treatment the novel has received is due to interest in the novel's basis in [Mary] Shelley's own experiences'.<sup>201</sup> Villiers is similar to PBS in many ways, such as the qualities shown in his relationship with Ethel. Parallels can also be drawn both in fact (such as his financial difficulties)<sup>202</sup> and in terms of MWS's representation of his character: 'his light and airy spirit was slow to conceive ill, or to resent wrong'.<sup>203</sup> In her preface to *Poetical Works*, MWS writes of PBS: 'The weight of thought and feeling burdened him heavily'.<sup>204</sup> Neville in *Falkner* is similarly described: 'his slim, youthful form appeared half bending with a weight of thought and sorrow'.<sup>205</sup> As Vargo then goes on to emphasise, viewing MWS's creative prose as solely 'rewriting her life in the form of a life relived' is detrimental to its more universal interests. 'Like much of her work [...] *Lodore* contains fictionalized versions of her life', yet 'to read the novel merely through [Mary] Shelley's life is to deflect attention away from the novel's serious concerns'.<sup>206</sup>

My study of the Shelleys' literary relationship seeks to avoid what Vargo has identified as 'the tradition of viewing [Mary] Shelley's work for what it adds to knowledge of Percy'.<sup>207</sup> Rather, by studying the presence of PBS in *Lodore* and *Falkner*, we can understand how MWS in her widowhood furthered her conversation with PBS. Thus attention to his presence in the novels – when approached in this way – is also useful when seeking to understand the works' 'serious concerns'. MWS is free to indulge in fictional reworkings of her experiences and her own imagination, unlike in the rigid format of editing of his poems.

The composition of another of MWS's novels, *Perkin Warbeck*, written with 'historical detail' in mind, shows how her intense study (carried out alone,

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<sup>201</sup> Vargo, 'Introduction' in MWS, *Lodore*, ed. Vargo, 24.

<sup>202</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, footnote 1, 219.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>204</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 258.

<sup>205</sup> MWS, *Falkner*, 74.

<sup>206</sup> Vargo, 'Introduction' in *Lodore*, 24.

<sup>207</sup> Vargo, 'Introduction' in *Lodore*, 24. See also Stafford, 'Introductory note' in *Lodore*, *NSWMS* VI, ed. Stafford, x.

although partially aided by Godwin) would continue to inform her writing, and quotations from PBS open chapters of this novel too.<sup>208</sup> As Fiona Stafford explains, the ‘literary sources of *Lodore*’ are ‘perhaps more important, if less frequently discussed’ than the biographical ones: although literary sources ‘are not always easy to separate from biographical influences, given Mary Shelley’s extraordinary family and circle of friends’.<sup>209</sup> In recalling her experiences with PBS in her later fiction MWS often emphasises the inherently scholarly or literary connection she had with him, and the landscapes that inspired them both. MWS revisited these ideas and reworked them into the distinctive prose of her later years. As one contemporary review of *Falkner* identified, MWS ‘seems [...] to have imbibed much of her husband’s poetic temperament, its singular loveliness and delicacy, but to have shorn it of those extravagant visions and emotions which led him beyond the province of truth’.<sup>210</sup> MWS does not just recreate a character similar to PBS, but addresses themes and interests associated with their corpus of work during his lifetime, and crucially develops them in her own idiom, rejecting that fantastical element she disliked in his oeuvre.

The first novel that MWS wrote entirely after PBS’s death, *The Last Man*, returns to the Alps and Chamonix. The descriptions of Mont Blanc and the Alps recall PBS’s poem (for example ‘dark ravine’)<sup>211</sup> as well as Chapters I and II (Vol II) of *Frankenstein*. MWS’s use of repeated use of negations in *The Last Man* (‘ungoverned winds’, ‘inaccessible mountains’, ‘thawless region’)<sup>212</sup> retraces PBS’s repeated use of negative terms and the abstract undoing of the world in ‘Mont Blanc’ that was characterised by the *indescribable*. A phrase in particular that stands out as reoccurring in *The Last Man* is ‘stony veins’. Here is PBS’s use of the phrase in an 1816 ‘journal-letter’ (which would also be published in *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour*):

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<sup>208</sup> MWS, ‘Preface’ to *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, ed. Doucet Devin Fischer in *NSWMS Vol V* (London: Pickering, 1996), 5, see also introduction, xiii. Godwin provided sources and books from his library, as well as carrying out research for the facts of that the book is based on.

<sup>209</sup> Stafford, ‘Introductory note’ in *Lodore*, *NSWMS VI*, xi.

<sup>210</sup> *The Monthly Review* cited in Clemit, ‘introductory note’ in MWS, *Falkner NSWMS VII*, xi.

<sup>211</sup> MWS, *The Last Man*, ed. Morton D. Paley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 419-24.

<sup>212</sup> MWS, *The Last Man*, 423, 424, 425.

One would think that Mont Blanc was a living being & that the frozen blood forever circulated slowly thro' his stony veins.<sup>213</sup>

In *The Last Man*, by the Arve, by the 'inaccessible mountains', the protagonist Lionel describes the earth's 'stony veins'.<sup>214</sup> Later, the phrase reappears: 'Arise, black Melancholy! [...] bring blight and pestiferous exhalations, which, entering the hollow caverns and breathing places of earth, may fill her stony veins with corruption'.<sup>215</sup> In personifying the earth, as PBS had pondered the presence of a personified power in Mont Blanc in 1816, MWS echoes PBS's symbolic images that attempt to describe *life* or 'power'. This phrase demonstrates the Shelleys' mutual concern with attending to the paradoxical in landscapes, human imaginings, or both; the anthropomorphised mountain/earth exudes life as a part of the natural world, and threatens death in its extreme qualities and hostility to humankind. This form of 'power' is what the Shelleys are both interested in, as it provides the potential for a utopia if it can be harnessed, but it is uncertain whether humanity can contend with such a force successfully.

As Morton D. Paley explains, the character Adrian in *The Last Man* is a 'monument'<sup>216</sup> to PBS. Adrian is inherently good, described as 'sensitive and excellent',<sup>217</sup> 'beloved and heroic',<sup>218</sup> and fragile in his almost angelic presence: 'his slender frame seemed overcharged with the weight of life', 'in person, he hardly appeared of this world'.<sup>219</sup> The protagonist of the novel, Lionel Verney, may be an autobiographical voice for MWS; this is so significant in that Lionel/MWS in *The Last Man* views Adrian/PBS with sincere admiration: 'the best years of my life had been passed with him'.<sup>220</sup> MWS evokes her own feelings of isolation as a source of inspiration for *The Last Man's* tragedy: 'The Last Man! Yes, I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself as the last relic of a beloved race, my

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<sup>213</sup> PBS, *Letters* I, 500.

<sup>214</sup> MWS, *The Last Man*, 424.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>216</sup> Paley, 'Introduction' in MWS, *The Last Man*, ed. Paley, xvii.

<sup>217</sup> MWS, *The Last Man*, 91.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, 26.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

companions extinct before me.’<sup>221</sup> Adrian’s death by shipwreck recalls PBS’s fate, and Lionel’s internal dialogue often reads like MWS’s attempt to relive her life with PBS: seeing Adrian acting dangerously on a boat, Lionel ponders: ‘Are you weary of life, O Adrian, that you thus play with danger?’<sup>222</sup> Carlson has argued that reading *The Last Man* in conjunction with MWS’s ‘Journal of Sorrow’ ‘indicates the precision of the novel’s treatment of the journal’s sorrow’; and thus the novel demonstrates her continued conversation with the illustrious dead, and also her worthiness as a writer, both of which are strikingly reflected in MWS’s determined composition of her novel and her confessional journal. As Carlson explains, MWS’s focus on PBS and her ‘proud assertion of herself as a “reflection” of [PBS] is not as self-effacing as it sounds’, rather, ‘it illuminates an existence that otherwise feels precarious and provides incentive for self improvement’. Even references to that infamous ‘coldness’ ascribed to MWS by her critics is complicated by her acknowledgement of it in the journal, and by her futuristic narrative in *The Last Man*, containing portraits of her companions and characters that reflect aspects of her own being.<sup>223</sup> Overall, MWS presents PBS after his death in such a way as both to eulogise him and to refashion herself as an author.

MWS’s perception of PBS as perfect influenced her novel-writing, as implied in the idealised portrait of PBS in *The Last Man*, and the sympathetic portrayal of her other ‘Shelleyan’ characters in *Lodore* and *Falkner*. Such an effect is also evident in aspects of her editing of PBS’s poetry. But as she writes in the preface to *Poetical Works*, there are hints of scepticism regarding PBS’s all-encompassing idealism and lofty dream-like philosophy, as when she states that ‘His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealise reality; and this is a taste shared by few. [...] In this Shelley resembled Plato; both taking more delight in the abstract and the ideal, than in the special and tangible’.<sup>224</sup> PBS’s ‘delight in the abstract’ and disconnection from reality was something MWS would treat rather differently in other prose works: her short stories.

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<sup>221</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 476-77.

<sup>222</sup> MWS, *The Last Man*, 80.

<sup>223</sup> Carlson, 194-95.

<sup>224</sup> MWS, Preface to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS* II, 257.

### Mary Shelley's comedy and 'The Bride of Modern Italy'

MWS was capable of mocking PBS, and producing a biting, witty prose that we do not normally associate with her. The critically neglected short story 'The Bride of Modern Italy' stands out from her novels as an uncharacteristically humorous piece, although in its whimsical tone, it does resemble *Matilda*, if we follow Robinson's reading of that work as discussed in Chapter 2 (so, essentially mocking of the melodrama it depicts). In shorter prose pieces we can evaluate MWS's changing register; the smaller works provide the opportunity for a more idiosyncratic piece of writing. Short stories lend themselves to comic effect as they accommodate characters that are essentially less complex than the protagonists of a more serious, full-length novel.

MWS was inventive in resorting to this form as something fit for parody and anti-climax; Robinson suggested MWS's use of the genre reveals her ability to 'discipline her art to restrictions of length and, in the process, anticipate the later development of the short story'.<sup>225</sup> 'The Bride' was published anonymously in April 1824 in the *London Magazine*. MWS parodies the relationship her husband had with Teresa 'Emilia' Viviani, a teenage girl confined in a convent that the Shelleys met in Italy in 1821. Emilia would become the addressee of *Epipsychidion*, which is known as PBS's most strikingly autobiographical and erotic work. MWS was injured by PBS's apparent criticism of her, and his erotic appeal to another woman, as the poem concludes by describing the narrator and Emilia as they retreat to a Utopian island paradise: 'We shall become the same, we shall be one / Spirit within two frames, oh!' (ll. 573-74).

'The Bride' appeared less than two years after PBS's death and just three years after the anonymous publication of *Epipsychidion* in May 1821. It is a biting satire, demonstrating that MWS is capable of sincerity, sympathy and elegy, but also of incisive comic wit. In a published short story, she can at once excise her demons, and respond to PBS in writing. Short narratives formerly had the purpose of regaling their reader with a moral fable or lesson. 'The Bride', neither a sombre

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<sup>225</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. Robinson, xiv.

*exempla* or a bawdy *fabliau*, settles between these two origins of the short story in its message and its remarks upon the characters and their whims.<sup>226</sup> The comic element allows MWS to avoid an overtly moralising tone in this genre.

Clorinda, the heroine of MWS's tale, is held in a convent, just as Emilia was, while her parents search for a suitable husband for her. PBS appears as the character Marcott Alleyn, with whom Clorinda falls in love. Following her requests to be taken back to England he subsequently deserts her. Before we even know Alleyn's name we are told he is a 'young English artist', and as he enters the convent he thinks to himself: 'Well [...] I am now in for it; and if I do not lose my heart, I shall at least gain some excellent hints for my picture of the Profession of Eloisa'.<sup>227</sup> MWS playfully ridicules her husband but also implies that an interest in poetry and writing is the overarching motivation of Alleyn's curiosity; the mingling of highbrow and ridiculous traits becomes evident here, as Alleyn could be a serious character (although just seventeen years old he impressive, 'a man of infinitely pleasing manners', and he becomes 'a favourite in the convent'),<sup>228</sup> but the narrative sends up all the individuals involved. MWS does not just mock PBS but all artists and writers casting around for their next subject. Alleyn's intentions are described and we can identify the satirical tone in this story that makes him an insincere character. In implying that his 'delight in the abstract' has left him out of touch with reality, MWS belittles the possibility of PBS's/Alleyn's more clandestine intentions as wayward seducer or potential lover of Clorinda.

PBS himself had distanced himself from *Epipsychidion* in a letter to John Gisborne in 1822:

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<sup>226</sup> R. C. Feddersen, 'Introduction: A Glance at the History of the Short Story in English' in *A Reader's Companion to the Short Story in English*, ed. Erin Fallon, R. C. Feddersen, James Kurtzleben, Maurice A. Lee, and Susan Rochette-Crawley (London: Fitzroy, 2001), xvi-xvii.

<sup>227</sup> MWS, 'The Bride of Modern Italy' in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, 36.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace.<sup>229</sup>

Markley has suggested that the portrait of PBS presented in 'The Bride' could have been created by MWS to 'balance the idealization of Shelley in *The Last Man's* Adrian',<sup>230</sup> as MWS was composing both works at around the same time.<sup>231</sup> 'The Bride' is comic and 'the story is perhaps [...] valuable as proof that Mary Shelley's reputation after her husband's death as a languorous and remorseful widow is based on a substantial underestimation of her mind, her art, and her understanding of the complexities of human relationships'.<sup>232</sup> Although critics have described 'The Bride' as a 'gentle satire', I argue that it is more piercing.<sup>233</sup> I do not suggest that MWS was seeking to be openly critical of PBS, but rather that in responding in this particular publication she makes a bold statement through a close depiction of actual events. Elizabeth Nitchie suggests that the story does not convey bitterness but rather offers an Olympian perspective on the whole of the personal drama that it takes as its subject: 'Here, Mary seems to say, is the whole story for anyone to read; see how shallow and unimportant were the emotions involved'.<sup>234</sup> It is a shame that this story is not read alongside her more serious works to demonstrate her talents in a different tenor. Her decision to compose an amusing tale shows her range as an author, and this work presents an interesting counterpoint to her other more idealised portraits of PBS. In 'The Bride', MWS cleverly calls upon instances from reality for comic effect. An entry in Claire Clairmont's journal in 1821 records: 'Emilia says that she prays always to a Saint, and every time she changes her lover, she changes her Saint, adopting the one of her lover'.<sup>235</sup> In MWS's fiction, the character Teresa says to Clorinda, 'for you

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<sup>229</sup> PBS, *Letters* II, 434.

<sup>230</sup> Markley, "'Laughing That I May Not Weep": Mary Shelley's Short Fiction and Her Novels', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, Vol. 46 (1997), 104.

<sup>231</sup> Markley, 'Mary Shelley's Short Fiction and Her Novels', 103.

<sup>232</sup> Markley, 'Mary Shelley's Short Fiction and Her Novels', 106.

<sup>233</sup> Maria Schoina, *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians': Configurations of Identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 62. See also Robinson, 'Introduction' in *Collected Tales and Stories*, xiv.

<sup>234</sup> Nitchie, 132.

<sup>235</sup> Claire Clairmont, *Journals*, 243.



change your saint as your lover changes name'.<sup>236</sup> This echo demonstrates that the story is based on actual experiences. As Markley states, she 'often reworked her serious themes and conventions [...] in a lighter, more artistically playful vein'.<sup>237</sup>

'The Bride of Modern Italy' concludes with a wry finale. Clorinda marries someone else, and Alleyn goes to 'paint my Profession of Eloisa'.<sup>238</sup> Not only does the end of 'The Bride' mirror the reality of what happened to PBS and Emilia, but MWS's repeated reference to Eloisa is even more telling. Eloisa, lover of Abelard, was committed to a convent where she remained constant to his love. The allusion therefore makes an ironic statement on Clorinda's (and Emilia's) *inconstancy*. In 'The Bride' she makes clear that 'there was neither constancy in Clorinda's love, nor dignity in her conduct'.<sup>239</sup> She wrote a letter to Maria Gisborne on Emilia's marriage in 1822 that mocked Emilia in the same way:

Emilia married Biondi [...] The conclusion of our friendship a la Italiana puts me in mind of a nursery rhyme which runs thus –

As I was going down Cranbourne lane,  
Cranbourne lane was dirty,  
And there I met a pretty maid,  
Who dropt to me a curt'sey;  
I gave her cakes, I gave her wine,  
I gave her sugar candy,  
But oh! the naughty little girl!  
She asked me for some brandy.

Now turn Cranbourne lane into Pisan acquaintances, which I am sure are dirty enough, & brandy into that wherewithall to buy brandy (& that no small sum pero) & you have the whole story of Shelley's Italian platonic.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> MWS, 'The Bride of Modern Italy', 33.

<sup>237</sup> Markley, 'Mary Shelley's Short Fiction and Her Novels', 104, 98.

<sup>238</sup> MWS, 'The Bride of Modern Italy', 42.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>240</sup> MWS, *Letters I*, 223.

Alongside MWS's laments regarding her perceived coldness and references to the sadness that *Epipsyichidion* brought to her, we should remember that she was the one who coined the mocking term 'Shelley's Italian platonics'.

Robinson suggests that like her husband, MWS 'disliked overtly didactic literature and preferred to familiarize her readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence (or, conversely, to teach the human heart by showing the effects of moral weakness)'.<sup>241</sup> The phrase 'beautiful idealisms of moral excellence' is taken from PBS's Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*. In this prose piece Percy denounced 'didactic poetry', calling it 'an abhorrence': he does not purport to present 'a reasoned system on the theory of human life'. His plan is to present several kinds of vignettes, fragments that can depict a complex social picture. He describes his aim to produce a 'systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society'. This moral undertone - the purpose of literature being to show rather than tell - is present in both of the Shelleys' works, and embodies a Shelleyan 'passion for reforming the world'.<sup>242</sup> MWS writes in her preface to *Poetical Works* that:

These characteristics breathe throughout his poetry. The struggle for human weal; the resolution firm to martyrdom; the impetuous pursuit; the glad triumph in good; the determination not to despair. Such were the features that marked those of his works which he regarded with most complacency, as sustained by a lofty subject and useful aim.<sup>243</sup>

In utilising her real experiences and creating fiction, MWS makes new observations in her prose that qualify her reflections on the human condition, which was also a feature of authorship important to PBS. Yet she also does something different, by creating more tangible human stories than PBS's 'lofty' subjects in his verse. Her works interweave with PBS's and respond to their message and now, after his death, reflect on the personality and creed of the poet himself. 'The Bride', as Robinson explains, contains 'sharp delineation of character, economical yet precise

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<sup>241</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *Collected Tales and Stories*, xv.

<sup>242</sup> PBS, 'Preface' to *Prometheus Unbound* in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 208-209.

<sup>243</sup> MWS, 'Preface' to *Poetical Works* in *NSWMS II*, 256.

description, and unity of plot'.<sup>244</sup> Her construction of a short story allows her to transcend serious philosophical topics in comical scenes of melodrama.

*Lodore* also includes a character called Clorinda Saville, daughter of a Neapolitan nobleman, who is based on Emilia Viviani and the history behind the composition of *Epipsychidion*.<sup>245</sup> Nitchie deems MWS's second retelling of the Viviani-Shelley story more mature, with richer portraits of the characters involved, resulting from 'the perspective of years and other writing', as well as by the more complex plot of a novel.<sup>246</sup> The honorable Horatio, after a painful attachment to the Englishwoman Lady Lodore, travels to Naples. He, like Alleyn and PBS, is won over immediately by a beautiful girl in an Italian convent: 'in a fatal moment an English lady said to him, "Come, and I will show you what perfect beauty is:" and those words decided [his] destiny'.<sup>247</sup> MWS's retelling of the Emilia story is imbued with the same critical stance towards both the muse and her lover:

In his younger days Horace had said, 'I am in love with an idea, and therefore women have no power over me.' But the time came when his heart was to be the dupe of his imagination – so was it with his first love [Lady Lodore] – so now, I fear, did he deceive himself with regard to Clorinda. He declared indeed that his love for her was not an absorbing passion like his first, but a mingling of pity, admiration, and that tenderness which his warm heart was ever ready to bestow. He described her as full of genius and sensibility, a creature of fire and power, but dimmed by sorrow, and struggling with her chains.<sup>248</sup>

This second recasting of Emilia's story gives the Clorinda of *Lodore* a tragic fate, one imbued with more sympathy than 'The Bride'. In *Lodore*, jealousy for Horatio's first love, Clorinda's rival, drives her to despair, and she eventually loses her mind. Choosing to apply the veil image often employed by PBS, MWS writes: 'Her

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<sup>244</sup> Robinson, Editorial Note in *Collected Tales and Stories*, 376.

<sup>245</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 205.

<sup>246</sup> Nitchie, 66, 134.

<sup>247</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 254.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

marriage withdrew the veil of life – she imagined that she distinguished the real from the fictitious, but her new sense of discernment was the source of torture'.<sup>249</sup>

Clorinda Saville's descent into insanity as a result of passion is treated delicately, as much of *Lodore's* plot is concerned with the limited opportunities for women in the nineteenth century. However, it is her widower Horatio Saville to whom MWS accords most of her sympathy: Clorinda has a 'chilled heart',<sup>250</sup> providing an interesting reconstruction of the 'coldness' MWS ascribed to herself (and which biographical interpreters of *Epipsychidion* adopted and developed). As Vargo explains, '[Mary] Shelley goes beyond the personal to engage with socio-political concerns'; she 'makes use of her experience as a point of departure for her examination of contemporary debates'.<sup>251</sup> It is possible, as Robinson also argues, to 'read Mary Shelley's fictions as idealizations of her own life', thus recalling PBS's description of *Epipsychidion* as 'an idealised history of my life and feelings'.<sup>252</sup> 'The Bride', although not 'idealised', also redevelops actual events as fiction, as Robinson explains:

She had transformed personal experience into art, in accordance with the principle she explained while reviewing her father's novel *Cloudesley*: "the merely copying from our own hearts will no more form a first-rate work of art, than will the most exquisite representation of mountains, water, wood, and glorious clouds, form a good painting, if none of the rules of grouping or colouring are followed".<sup>253</sup>

MWS is conscious of transforming her personal history, and as Nitchie has argued, MWS's characterisations of Clorinda are 'fitted to the circumstances of the plot'.<sup>254</sup> Throughout her corpus MWS - in a multitude of ways - introduces episodes that appear to derive from her personal experience. These demonstrate her varying concerns as an author, including within that, her responses to PBS and his work.

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<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>250</sup> MWS, *Lodore*, 405.

<sup>251</sup> Vargo, 'Introduction' in MWS, *Lodore*, 26.

<sup>252</sup> PBS, *Letters II*, 434.

<sup>253</sup> Robinson, 'Introduction' in *Collected Tales and Stories*, xv-xvi.

<sup>254</sup> Nitchie, 136.

## Afterword and conclusion: Mary Shelley's poetry

MWS also wrote poetry, some of which responds to PBS's works, and 'The Choice. A Poem on Shelley's Death' is another reply to *Epipsychidion*, and perhaps her most famous literary response to PBS's tragic end. It is strikingly different from 'The Bride of Modern Italy', although it was probably composed at around the same time (May/July 1823,<sup>255</sup> with 'The Bride' being composed sometime before its publication in 1824). The poem is at once a part of a sub-genre of 'Choice' poems (including a work by Hunt) and also the confessional love-epistle from a woman to an absent man, recalling Pope's 'Eloisa to Abelard', another famous love story also alluded to in 'The Bride'.<sup>256</sup> In the sincere words of 'The Choice', which is an elegy to her lost partner, MWS as speaker identifies her 'cold neglect' (l. 33)<sup>257</sup> and asks for redemption:

My heart was all thine own, – but yet a shell  
 Closed in it's core, which seemed impenetrable,  
 [...]  
 Forgive me! let thy love descend in dew  
 Of soft repentance and regret most true; (ll. 35-36, 39-40)

In this poetical dialogue, MWS expresses her 'fierce remorse' (l. 25). 'The Choice' is similar to *Epipsychidion* in both form and mood, in its use of rhyming couplets and its autobiographical tracing of pain and grief (for MWS, the deaths of the Shelleys' children Clara and William, and then PBS himself). MWS wishes PBS's love to descend 'in dew' (l. 39) and muses on 'this hideous storm of misery' (l. 56); again she employs the circumstances of Shelley's passing as metaphors for her own grief (similar to the recording of being 'drowned [...] in tears' in her journal).<sup>258</sup> 'The Choice' also presents PBS as idealised and angelic, as his 'earthly dress / Encompassed still thy soul's rare loveliness' (ll. 29-30). Later the speaker pensively

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<sup>255</sup> Markley, Introductory note to the choice, *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives Vol IV*, ed. Clemit and Markley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), xxx.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, xxx.

<sup>257</sup> MWS, *The Choice* (Hunt/Forman version) in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives Vol IV*, 117-22. All further references to this poem will be from this edition.

<sup>258</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 476.

admits to PBS as the addressee: 'Methought thou wert a spirit from the sky' (l. 109). There are passages of 'The Choice' that Markley has identified as particularly reminiscent of *Epipsychidion* (compare ll. 315-18, 372 with ll. 35-38 'The Choice'),<sup>259</sup> and the two versions of MWS's poem that exist demonstrate that she was reworking and perfecting the piece.<sup>260</sup> The poem shows how MWS played with form and ideas to establish her creative voice after PBS's death; her expression engages with him but also speaks independently. As an elegy it demonstrates one interaction on paper with PBS as a poet and a figure in her life, although - as this chapter has shown - it does not exist in isolation.

In quoting PBS's work in her later novels, MWS also looks to retrace his voice more fully, more directly, but PBS still can only exist through MWS's recollection. He is not in actuality a mind, or a voice, in the text - as he was in *Frankenstein*. Nor does she respond to him in her work in a way that shows she expects his response in turn. In places she deliberately incorporates his voice into her work, and she also presents him as haunting her texts: these somewhat counter-intuitive interferences show both his influence and her reimagining of him. PBS's voice becomes immortal to MWS: 'Thou liv'st in Nature, Love, my Memory, [...] All breathe his spirit which can never die' ('The Choice', l. 119, 133). PBS is 'absent but not lost',<sup>261</sup> as Jennifer Wallace argues, 'uncannily present and yet not present'<sup>262</sup> in MWS's compositions. She is indelibly fused with him in her mind, and consequently in her work and study.

In her amendments to the 1831 *Frankenstein*, as Leader points out, MWS further elevated the text's idiom, which suggests 'that she admired and emulated Percy Shelley's high or formal style - which is partly why she accepted his revisions [to *Frankenstein*] in the first place'.<sup>263</sup> In choosing verse to communicate her grief in 'The Choice', MWS expresses what Constance Walker describes as a

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<sup>259</sup> Markley, *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives IV*, ed. Markley, footnote a, 118.

<sup>260</sup> Markley, Introductory Note to 'The Choice' in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives IV*, ed. Markley, xxx-xxxi.

<sup>261</sup> MWS, *Journals*, 445.

<sup>262</sup> Wallace, 420.

<sup>263</sup> Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 199.

'desperate desire to keep P. B. Shelley alive by incorporating him and becoming a poet herself'.<sup>264</sup> MWS's 'dew' image in 'The Choice' may well be taken from an early love poem from Shelley to Mary in 1814: 'Upon my heart your accents sweet / Of peace and pity fell like dew / On flowers half dead' (ll. 19-21).<sup>265</sup> Thus MWS recasts PBS's poetical voice as her own.

I do not have space to discuss MWS's compositions in verse and her poetical dialogue with PBS in detail here, and her aptitude as a poet pales in comparison to her success as a novelist. Much of her poetry is elegiac, composed in address to her lost-poet husband; 'The Choice' has received significant attention as her most famous piece of verse. The link between her own poetical creativity and her editing of PBS is intriguing; she wrote far more poems after PBS's death than when he was alive. MWS inserts her own poetical composition - a dirge depicting a shipwreck, its fatal consequences and the speaker's lament - at the head of the notes to 'Poems Written in 1822',<sup>266</sup> which, as Wolfson observes, 'integrates it, in effect, into his *Poetical Works*, where it appears untitled and unsigned'.<sup>267</sup> Overall, the posthumous publications of PBS are another example of collaboration that purports to combine two independent voices in one publication. The 'integration' of the Shelleys' voices (as described by Wolfson) suggests MWS was completing PBS by amassing his works.

The climax of the Shelleys' collaborative relationship - MWS's responsibility as her husband's posthumous editor - moved attention away from the reality of their collaboration on various writings when they lived and worked together from 1814-22. MWS's work as editor for a long time shaped perceptions of PBS, and her modesty in her presentation of herself as inferior to his genius had a significant effect on Shelley studies. Her humility combined with the undeniably profound impact she had on his legacy (sometimes read as interfering or misjudged) has contributed to the critical downplaying of the literary collaboration that existed

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<sup>264</sup> Constance Walker, 'Kindertotenlieder: Mary Shelley and the Art of Losing', in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, 143.

<sup>265</sup> PBS, 'Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed' in *The Poems of Shelley I*, 443-44.

<sup>266</sup> MWS, note to 'Poems Written in 1822' in *NSWMS II*, 323.

<sup>267</sup> Wolfson 'Editorial Privilege', 61.

between them during his lifetime. Critics, especially those involved in the revival of PBS in the mid-twentieth century, diminished the validity of the posthumous collaboration and MWS's editorial authority over works by her husband. They neglected to acknowledge the reciprocity and overwhelmingly supportive, constructive nature of the relationship that existed before PBS's death – a relationship, as with all human relationships, that did also include moments of antagonism. MWS's fictional writings post-July 1822 creatively engaged with PBS's work, and as was the case before his death, they (in their own distinctive way) also explored similar themes. Her fictions introduced new ideas to what was a vibrant exchange in PBS's lifetime, and post-1822 we can certainly infer that her memories of their literary discussions, and the writings they informed, continued to inspire MWS.

My work re-establishes and re-evaluates the Shelleys' importance as a pair of writers, individually and collectively. Through their ingenuity and vision, they added passion and exuberance to their compositions, ensuring their status in literary history. Throughout the Shelleys' literary relationship two voices generate a collaborative spark that stimulates creativity. This phenomenon was something MWS contemplated in a letter to Hunt in 1838, when he offered to provide notes to PBS's work to go alongside her own. She qualified: 'but <your> our notes must be independant [sic] of each other – for as no two minds exactly agree [...]'. Despite wanting to separate her words from Hunt's, MWS goes on to muse on the social element of creative stimulation and support that the Shelleys themselves benefitted from; she has to admit that 'in works of imagination two minds may add zest and vivacity'.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> MWS, *Letters II*, 305.



## Abbreviations

All poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley (PBS) are cited from the following volumes, unless stated otherwise:

PBS, *The Poems of Shelley* (4 vols. to date), ed. Kelvin Everest, G. M. Matthews, Michael Rossington and Jack Donovan (London: Longman, 1989, 2000, 2011, 2013).

Such volumes are abbreviated in footnotes as *The Poems of Shelley* (and are also referred to in the text as *The Longman Shelley*) with a vol. number after the first reference.

All texts by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (MWS) are cited from the following volumes, unless stated otherwise.

MWS, *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* (8 vols.), General Editor: Nora Crook (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1996).

Such volumes are abbreviated in footnotes as *NSWMS* with a vol. number after the first reference.

Two facsimile manuscript editions are frequently referred to and shortened as follows:

*The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics: Percy Bysshe Shelley* (9 vols.), General Editor: Donald H. Reiman (London: Garland, 1985-96).

Such volumes are abbreviated in footnotes as *MYR* with a vol. number after the first reference.

*The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts: A Facsimile Edition, with Full Transcriptions and Scholarly Apparatus* (22 vols.), General Editor: Donald H. Reiman (New York and London: Garland, 1996-2002).

Such volumes are abbreviated in footnotes as *BSM* with a vol. number after the first reference.

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