

Percy Bysshe Shelley, the Newspapers of 1819 and the Language of Poetry

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This essay rediscovers the link between the expatriate newspaper *Galignani's Messenger* and Shelley's 1819 political poetry, particularly *The Mask of Anarchy* and *Song, To the Men of England*. It is suggested that a reading of this newspaper helps us to understand Shelley's response to the counter-revolutionary press of his day; previous accounts have tended to solely stress Shelley's allegiance to Leigh Hunt's politics. As well as being a contribution to book history, this essay highlights the future of the nineteenth-century book by exploring the ways the ongoing digitization of nineteenth-century texts can enable new readings of familiar texts. It also covers some theoretical issues raised by these readings, namely the development of the Digital Humanities and intertextual theory.

*I must trespass upon the forgiveness of my readers
for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced.*

Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface to *Hellas*, 1821¹

Shelley's *Hellas* and *The Mask of Anarchy* are thematically, linguistically, and compositionally related, and these resemblances can lead into a close reading of Shelley's 1819 political poetry. Both feature revolutions: an actual Greek revolution that had already occurred, and the putative revolution after the events of the Peterloo Massacre in 1819. Both mythologize historical events. In *Hellas*, the figure of the Jew Ahasuerus, doomed to wander the earth eternally, appears amidst an account of historical events. In *The Mask of Anarchy* Shelley inserts an apocalyptic, ungendered Shape which enacts the downfall of Anarchy. *Hellas* ends pessimistically: "The world is weary of the past, / O might it die or rest at last!" (1100-01).² *The Mask of Anarchy*, on the other hand, ends

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1. The most complete version of this preface, including those parts suppressed by Shelley's publisher, can be found in Thomas Hutchinson's edition of the poetry.
 2. Citations from the poetry and from *A Defence of Poetry* are from *Shelley: The Major Works*. In the notes to *Song, To the Men of England*, Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill comment that the title of this poem in Shelley's notebook was *Men of England: A Song*, and it was retitled *Song, To the men of England* by Mary Shelley on its first publication (*Major Works* 772).

with Shelley's famous rallying cry to action: "Rise like Lions after slumber" (368). *Hellas* echoes the language of the *Mask of Anarchy*. Anarchy is marked with the statement that: "I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW" (37). For Hassan, a character in *Hellas*, "We have one God, one King, one Hope, one Law" (333) and he contrasts this with "many-headed Insurrection" (334). The personification of the Earth is a trope used in *The Mask of Anarchy* to represent the possibility of revolution as a natural process, and "earth" is a significant word in both *Hellas* and *The Mask of Anarchy*. The poems employ the phrase "dead earth upon the earth" (*Hellas* 398, *Mask* 131). In an ironic inversion of Christ's speech from the Beatitudes where the meek shall inherit the earth, Mahmoud compares "the inheritors of the earth" to cowering beasts (356-58). In *The Mask of Anarchy* "paper coin" defrauds those who should have "the inheritance of Earth" (180-83).

It is widely acknowledged that Shelley used newspapers as the source for both *Hellas* and *The Mask of Anarchy*, but *Galignani's Messenger* has not previously been explored in relation to either *The Mask of Anarchy* or *Song, To the Men of England*.³ The reason for this may be that the newspaper was only made available in digitized form by the Bavarian State Library in 2012.⁴ The best-known source for *The Mask of Anarchy* is the *Examiner's* report of the Peterloo Massacre on 16 August, 1819. We know that Shelley read the *Examiner* when he was in Italy because Thomas Love Peacock from July 1818 onwards regularly commented on the fact that he sent complete sets of this newspaper to Shelley.⁵ On 9 September, 1819 Shelley wrote to Peacock, "Many thanks for your attention in sending the papers which contain the terrible and important news of Manchester" (*Letters* II: 119). This suggests that Shelley received the news of the Peterloo Massacre via Peacock and, as a consequence, via the *Examiner*. Shelley again wrote to Peacock in September 1819 that "England seems to be in a very disturbed state, if we may judge by some Paris papers." (*Letters* II: 115) The "Paris papers" almost certainly referred to *Galignani's Messenger*, because it was published in Paris, and was a significant influence on the British expatriate community; Giles Barber commented that it was "the English newspaper available in continental Europe" (276). Shelley would also have received his "Paris papers" independently of his English correspondents via overland mail.

3. For a discussion of *Hellas* and *Galignani's Messenger*, see Michael Rossington, " 'The Destinies of the World': Shelley's Reception and Transmission of European News in 1820-21," *Romanticism* 13:3 (2007): 233-43. James Chandler mentions Shelley's reliance on the news reports in *The Mask of Anarchy in England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 530.

4. *Galignani's Messenger*. 23 Aug. 1819. Web. 13 May 2013. <http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10718031.html>. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.

5. Peacock's correspondence can be found in: Thomas Love Peacock, *The Halliford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, eds. H.F.B Brett-Smith and Jones, 8 vols. (C.E. London: Constable, 1934) 196-221.

Other Galignani publications, such as *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, stated that expatriate buyers had to pay “one franc per quarter” “to receive it free through Italy, Switzerland or Germany” (12).

Shelley’s “newspaper erudition” is an example of what Ed Duffy, in the context of *Prometheus Unbound*’s use of the Bible, has called an “intertextual manoeuvre” (37). Poetry can also be seen as an intratextual mosaic, and Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry* refers thus to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: “Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting” (697). Texts both interact internally and externally. *Galignani’s Messenger* is an example of such an external source, but it is also internally labyrinthine because it consists of competing voices reporting the same events. Shelley’s response via his political poetry is also multi-vocal. As Mark Kipperman has commented, *Hellas* is “a drama of reports” (95); these reports ultimately derive from those contained within the newspaper as read by Shelley. Different narrators appear in *The Mask of Anarchy*, although these do not coincide with the nature of the news reports, but the question of stance and who is speaking is appropriate to a discussion of Shelley’s attitude towards feminism and nationalism, as will be seen. Bakhtinian thought, which refers to the dialogic nature of texts, is relevant to this analysis partly because the period between 1819 to 1821 can be seen as a “distinctive” period in history (Gardner 218); it is distinctive because it is a time of social crisis. V.N. Voloshinov has suggested that:

In actual fact, each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie. This inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crises or revolutionary changes. (23 italics in the original)

Shelley, in the reading to be presented below, was aware of how the same sign, or set of words, can be contested. Hence, in highlighting the intertextual and semiotic nature of texts, theory can inform a reading of Shelley’s poetry.

Another dimension to theory, which is relevant to the future of the nineteenth-century book, is Patricia Cohen’s comment in the *New York Times* that “the next big idea in language, history and the arts” is “data” (qtd. in Manovich 249). Digitized versions of texts enable what Matthew Wilkens describes as “bibliometrics and book historical work, data mining and quantitative analysis” (251) in opposition to the close reading of texts. Wilkens also suggests that the availability of large amounts of data may eventually change our understanding of what constitutes the canon; “the kind of work that undermines rather than reinforces canons” (256). The reading to be presented here does still work with canonical texts, but also partly draws on an electronic textual analysis method typically used with large data sets; a concordance program was used to identify those words used in Shelley’s *Mask of Anarchy* that also appear in the newspapers. However, my approach is mainly congruent with what David M. Berry has called the second “wave” in the evolution of data in the humanities. Berry’s first wave was when computers were used mainly to conduct quantitative research

using large data sets, as described by Wilkens (251). It is further suggested that digital material can be used to conduct traditional close reading and analysis. This is a stage at which computer-generated data is no longer the preserve of specialists in the field wishing to conduct quantitative research, but is accessible to a wider audience who have the tools to access the media but have not necessarily been involved in its production. In Berry's commentary, this is where criticism is based at the present moment in time (3). This approach may also lead to new avenues of empirical research. For example, Diana Cooper-Richet noted in 2000 that the nineteenth-century English press in France, which forms part of the current investigation, was an under-researched area (122); the increased availability of digital texts is likely to encourage studies in this field and other similarly neglected spheres. With this in mind, Berry's insights are additionally helpful in hypothesizing about future directions for the nineteenth-century book. For Berry, the third wave of theory will explore "epistemic changes" (4) that have taken place as a result of humanities' engagement with digital media.

The main focus of this essay, however, is the history of the nineteenth-century book, or more specifically, the history of *Galignani's Messenger* and its influence on Shelley's poetry. Thus, by way of background, largely relying on digitized sources, there will be an account of *Galignani's Messenger*, its audience and its editorial policy and of the Peterloo Massacre as reported by Galignani's newspaper, particularly with regard to the original *Times* report as republished in the *Examiner*. After that, I will argue that *Galignani's Messenger* is significant for a reading of Shelley's 1819 political poetry in three respects. Firstly, a detailed exploration of Shelley's lexical choices in *The Mask of Anarchy* shows that he highlights *Galignani's Messenger's* distortion of three important aspects of the Peterloo Massacre, which are important themes elsewhere in Shelley's poetry: non-violence, abstract ideas such as liberty, and women's role as political agents. Secondly, *The Mask of Anarchy* can be read alongside counter-revolutionary press reports; the *Mask* can be read as a semiotically aware poem that re-reverses the rhetoric of these accounts. Shelley's *Song, To the Men of England* further complicates a reading of gender roles because this poem can be seen as part of a wider discussion about nationalism and gender within Shelley's *oeuvre*. A new reading will be offered here that suggests that *Song, To the Men of England* is an ironic riposte to a "little hand-bill" that appears in *Galignani's Messenger*.

The *Examiner* and *Galignani's Messenger* were both successful and influential newspapers, and aimed to provide neutral and comprehensive press reporting. At one stage the *Examiner* outsold its print run of 8,000 copies; Nicholas Roe has suggested that the *Examiner* was so popular because of its objectivity in news reporting (23). The *Examiner* also carried as its motto "Party is the madness of the many for the gain of a few," a citation attributed to Swift, but which actually comes from Pope. In the same vein, Antonio Galignani stated that his newspaper was non-partisan; in an advertisement in Lord Byron's *Cain* he stated that: "The English News is faithfully extracted from all the London Journals as

well Ministerial as Opposition" (7). In the 23 August 1819 issue there was the stated intention to represent "the ENTIRE spirit of the best British newspapers," and the newspaper did carry reports from the British press which represented differing viewpoints. The newspapers' objectivity was challenged by the febrile political atmosphere of the period 1819-21. For instance, Hunt recalled in later years that "The *Examiner* had begun in 1808 by 'being of no party' but Reform soon gave it one" (156). It was perhaps equally difficult for Galignani's editorial team to remain unbiased; the aristocracy abroad who may have been alarmed by the attempts to achieve universal suffrage in England formed part of his audience. Evidence that the newspaper was aimed at an elite audience can be found in Galignani's pricing policy and the size of the newspaper. Diana Cooper-Richet notes that in 1820 a subscription to the newspaper cost 88 Francs a year, whereas the average subscription to a French daily newspaper cost 80 Francs a year (122). Before 1827 the other French newspapers were usually 36 x 23 cm in size and had two columns; from 1817 to 1823 the *Messenger* was already 37 x 24 cm in size, with three columns.

The two newspaper accounts, however, corroborate the idea that editors were not entirely neutral. Galignani's rendering of the *Times* report includes an account of where the political meeting of 16 August, 1819, at St Peter's Field, Manchester, took place, a brief description of the banners carried by the reformers, a narrative of how Henry Hunt, the chief orator, was greeted by the crowd, and then the approach to the platform by the yeomanry who wished to stop the meeting, which was held illegally, and their subsequent actions, followed by the arrest of Hunt. Editorial practice differs in Galignani's newspaper's reporting because next follows a passage which is missing from the *Examiner*'s reprinting of the *Times* report that stresses the vengefulness of the crowd after the intervention of the yeomanry. An account of various riots which occurred in the Manchester area after the demonstration help to create an impression that the assembly was attended by a hostile mob.

Galignani's additions to the *Times* report are equally interesting to the omissions which are biased against the reformers. These are significant because they both understate the yeomanry's violence *and* exaggerate the crowd's reaction. The *Examiner* reports the crucial moment of the yeomanry's intervention at the hustings as follows: "After a moment's pause, the cavalry drew their swords, and brandished them fiercely in the air" (540).⁶ *Galignani's Messenger* excludes the phrase "and brandished them fiercely in the air." Similarly, the leader of the yeomanry is reported as saying "Sir, I have a warrant against you, and arrest you as my prisoner," whilst "brandishing his sword." The brandishing of the sword is missing from *Galignani's Messenger*. Furthermore, the violence of the yeomanry is understated when a passage where they are described as "cutting most

6. The references to the *Examiner* are from the British Library's digitized version: Leigh Hunt, ed., "Dispersal of the Reform Meeting at Manchester by a Military Force." *Examiner* (23 Aug. 1819): 539-41. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.

indiscriminately to the right and to the left" (540) is removed; in Hunt's version of the text this passage of text is in italics.

Furthermore, Galignani's account fails to fully report the calmness with which the yeomanry were greeted. After the passage where the cavalry first brandish their swords on encountering the crowd, the *Examiner* gives the following narrative, which does not appear in *Galignani's Messenger*: "*Not a brickbat was thrown at them – not a pistol was fired during this period: all was quiet and orderly, as if the cavalry had been the friends of the multitude, and had marched as such into the midst of them.*" The *Examiner* highlights the non-violence of the crowd in italics. In addition, Galignani *does* mention the crowd's banners, but these are decontextualized from the demand for universal suffrage for men and women and the festive and non-violent atmosphere of the meeting, which was clearly delineated in the original *Times* report that described the colours of the banners and the presence of music. This distorts the newspaper's readers understanding of the crowd's reasons for being at St Peter's Field. The passage where the women from the Oldham Female Reform Club are told to "go home to your families" (539) by other working-class women is omitted from Galignani's report. This diminishment of the role of women creates bias.

The verbal echoes in *The Mask of Anarchy*, which reflect these passages, suggest that Shelley is explicitly siding with the politics of the *Examiner*. By analyzing the words that occur once in *The Mask of Anarchy*, *Galignani's Messenger* and the *Examiner* using a Concordance Program, those that are most unusual and thus have most impact can be identified. This selection can be further focused in relation to those themes that were underplayed by *Galignani's Messenger*: the violence of the yeomanry, the calmness of the crowd, the crowd's demands and the presence of women. The words that reflect the differences in the newspaper reports are "fiercely," "cry," "calm," "love," "compassion" and "sons." This reading will show that, on a lexical level at least, Shelley cannot be accused of the "laxity" in language choice identified by Donald Davie, and cited recently by Peter McDonald (12).⁷

The *Times* originally reported that the yeomanry brandished their swords fiercely. The word "fiercely" appears in *The Mask of Anarchy* as follows:

'Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood — and wrong for wrong —
Do not thus when ye are strong. (193-96)

Shelley suggests that the people should not revenge themselves "fiercely." Instead they should be "strong"; this mirrors their calmness as shown in the original *Times* report, but is tellingly omitted from Galignani's edited version. Additionally, Shelley depicts "the tempestuous cry / Of the triumph of Anarchy" (56-7).

7. Peter McDonald, "For Impious Gold," *Times Literary Supplement* 22 Feb. 2013: 12-13.

This mirrors the “cry” “made by the cavalry” when they shouted “have at their flags” (540), as reported in the *Times* report reprinted in the *Examiner*, which stated that after Hunt and Johnson had leaped from the wagon “a cry was made by the cavalry, ‘have at their flags’.” Again, Shelley highlights the phrasing that was missing from the Galignani report.

In the original *Times* report the crowd were portrayed as calm, even when the yeomanry were in their midst. In Shelley’s poem the people are asked to “stand” “calm and resolute”; this is not an idealistic dream, but how they actually behaved. The *Times* reported that the assembly “would indulge him [Henry Hunt] with a calm and patient attention.” This passage appears both in *Galignani’s Messenger* and in the *Examiner*, but the initial lack of retaliation was not reported in Galignani’s newspaper.

The people’s demands are fully represented in *The Mask of Anarchy*. Shelley, through the voice of the Earth, asks twice about the nature of freedom: “What is Freedom?” (156) and “What art thou, Freedom?” (209). Shelley links the ideas of Love and Freedom via the Earth’s answer, which is “Thou art Love” (246). These sentiments appear in *Galignani’s Messenger* as part of a series of “ironic inscriptions” on the reformers’ banners: “on the other side was at the top— ‘Love,’ and beneath, ‘Unite and be free’”(1). Shelley’s trochaic repetition of definitions of “Freedom,” “Thou art Justice,” (230) “Thou art Wisdom,” (234) “Thou art Peace,” (238) and “Thou art Love,” (246) doubly emphasizes those concepts which appeared on the reformers’ banners.

Another ideologically charged idea in 1819 was the presence of women at the demonstration. Shelley portrayed the “female reform groups” who “became a standard feature of the radical landscape” (Haywood 102). The report in *Galignani’s Messenger* downplays the role of women; Shelley, however, highlights the presence of women and elevates them to the status of heroines, capable of withstanding violence non-violently. However, Shelley’s attitude towards gender is more complex than this. As will be seen with regard to his stance towards nationalism, Shelley’s position is to some extent compromised by the multi-voiced quality of his poetry, and we do need to remember that *The Mask of Anarchy* is poetic, rather than simple propaganda. Shelley addresses the men of England through the female figure of the Earth. William Keach, applying Alan Richardson’s terminology to Shelley’s work, has suggested that Shelley was colonizing the feminine (13). In fact, Shelley could be seen as ventriloquizing here. Rather than advocating women’s self-empowerment, Shelley is to some extent promoting men’s agency by placing their weakness in opposition to women’s strength.

Shelley’s lexical choices are consistent with this argument. The word “compassion” is used in his poem as follows:

‘Those prison-halls of wealth and fashion
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail
As must make their brethren pale — (287-90)

Compassion is an emotion felt by those “few” fashionable people for those who suffer; it is seen as desirable, but not often experienced by the wealthy; Shelley uses the term ironically. “Compassion” is additionally used in a passage about women which appears in the *Examiner*, but not *Galignani’s Messenger*. The writer is referring to “a group of the women of Manchester”:

They viewed these Female Reformers for some time with a look in which compassion and disgust were equally blended; and at last burst out into an indignant exclamation – “Go home to your families, and leave sike-like matters as these to your husbands and sons, who better understand them.” The women who thus addressed them were of the lower order in life. (540)

Women not taking part in the demonstration are antagonistic to the movement for reform; they feel that a woman’s place is at home with her “husbands and sons.” This reference to “sons” is echoed by Shelley in these stanzas from the poem:

As if their own indignant Earth
Which gave the sons of England birth
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And shuddering with a mother’s throe

Had turnèd every drop of blood
By which her face had been bedewed
To an accent unwithstood—
As if her heart had cried out aloud:

‘Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another,

‘Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to Earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few. (139-55)

Here the comments of the antagonistic working class women who suggest that women should stay at home are replaced by the words spoken by the Earth. For Shelley, a female figure is shaming the men into taking back their stolen birthright. These stanzas are also thematically similar to the poem *Song, To the Men of England* because they emphasize the idea that it is men’s patriotic duty to be loyal to their mother, the Earth.

Thus, *Galignani’s Messenger* is firstly significant because it helps us to view Shelley’s politics in the *Mask of Anarchy* in a more nuanced way. The poem is not simply a rewriting of liberal or left-wing sources, but is also aware of the bias in counter-revolutionary reporting. A reading of Shelley’s poetry along these lines also highlights Shelley’s awareness of contemporary debates about the role

of women. Next, Shelley's poem will be re-read in the light of the counter-revolutionary press reports in *Galignani's Messenger*. These are essential to fully understand the anger and passion found in Shelley's poetry, and specifically in *The Mask of Anarchy*.

In the 23 August issue of the newspaper, besides the edited version of the *Times* report already mentioned, there are extracts from the *Chronicle*, a "Liverpool paper," "our own correspondents," the *Manchester Mercury*, the *Manchester Herald* and the *Courier*. These reports portrayed England as being in what Shelley had described as a "disturbed state" in his letter to Peacock cited above. Most of these texts veer between apologizing for the Government of the day and casting blame for the events of the massacre on the radical reformists. The *Chronicle* reports that Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, had no hand in ordering the yeomanry of Manchester to kill and wound people because he was on a steam-boat at the time. In general, the newspapers also tend to report the injuries to individual policemen and the military by name. The crowd assembled at the field are generically referred to as "the mob" on several occasions.

Two quotes from *Galignani's Messenger* are relevant to this point. The first is part of a vivid description of the gathering on St Peter's Field:

Two of those detestable emblems of Rebellion and Anarchy, Caps of Liberty, were borne in insulting triumph, as marshalling standards, as if in defiance of every feeling and principle of loyalty and Good Order. (2)

In this passage the reformists are associated negatively with the ideas of rebellion, anarchy and liberty. Opposed to these are loyalty and good order. In Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* the pattern is reversed in a subtle way. In the poem the figure of Anarchy is conflated with "God and Law," possibly emblems of loyalty and good order, but is also contrasted with "liberty," which is associated in the poem with the Earth, and therefore is seen as a natural attribute, not as something to be feared. A second quote, from an anonymous Manchester correspondent, introduces the question of religion. Here it is stated: "Would to heaven the voice of reason and truth were as willingly listened to as the declamations and ravings of sedition and blasphemy" (3). There is a similar linguistic strategy here to the earlier passage. "Reason" and "truth" are opposed to "sedition" and "blasphemy"; the reader has a choice between one or the other. These patterns are again reversed in Shelley's poem; there is an opposition between Sidmouth, who is clothed in the Bible, and with hypocrisy, and the ideas of the New Testament, as embodied in Earth's speech to the people. The counter-revolutionary press and the reformists are contesting the right to own the words of the Bible.

The third way in which *Galignani's Messenger* sheds light on Shelley's poetic practice is via *Song, To the Men of England*. As Matthew Borushko has observed, Shelley's works exhibit a tension between appeals to nationalism and "cosmopolitanism" (n.pag). This awkwardness is reflected in his self-deprecating statement "I am not an Irishman" when addressing the Irish people. He felt the need to agitate, but also was aware of his distance from the people. Therefore, it

may be expected that a poem by Shelley addressing the men of England in patriotic terms would exhibit internal conflict, and it will be seen that this is the case later on. I will also argue, however, that reading Shelley's poem alongside *Galignani's Messenger* helps to cast new light on Shelley's rhetoric, because the poem can also be seen as an intertextual document which responds to a section of *Galignani's Messenger*, one which refers to a "sensible little hand-bill" and contains an address "To the Men of England." This "hand-bill" can be described before analysing its implications for a reading of the poetry.

The handbill appeals to different communities within the English public: "to the men of England"; "to the women of England"; "to the poor of England"; "to the industrious of England"; "to the reformers of England" and "to my countrymen." The section entitled "to the men of England" suggests that if you overthrow religion, then blood will ensue, and that therefore ordinary people need to hold fast to religion. To "the women of England" urges that women concentrate on reforming their families, not the nation. When petitioning the poor the handbill suggests that there is no oppression by the rich of the poor, but instead the latter are recipients of charity. The address to the industrious puts forward the hypothesis that if equality is achieved, then "talent and industry" will suffer. When importuning "my countrymen," the handbill sees the result of following the reformers as being death (3-4).

Each of these different addresses in the handbill also ends with a short quote from the Bible, and a reading of Shelley's poem *Song, To the Men of England* alongside these quotes is appropriate because of Shelley's deep engagement with the Bible elsewhere in his work. *Song, To the Men of England* has similar concerns to *The Mask of Anarchy*.⁸ It would not, therefore, be surprising if we were to find Biblical echoes in *Song, To the Men of England*. Martin Priestman and Bernard Beatty have explored the way that Shelley was often conducting a private argument with the Bible; Priestman sees Shelley as reversing "traditional Christian iconography" (231) and Beatty depicts Shelley as having a love-hate relationship with the Bible (451-61). This engagement with, and ambivalence towards, the Bible is also reflected in Shelley's response to the elements of the "little hand-bill," which can now be listed.

The address "To the men of England" in the little hand-bill ends with a quote from St Paul's letter to the Thessalonians (I.VI.21): "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The address to the women of England ends with another quote from St Paul's epistle to Timothy (II.III.6): "of his sort are they which creep into houses – and lead captive silly women." The address to the poor of England ends with a citation from the Old Testament book of *Proverbs* (XXXI.9): "[Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and] plead the cause of the poor and needy". The original text is slightly changed; it is stated that "England,

8. Morton Paley, Steven Goldsmith (240-50) and Timothy Webb (99-106) have conducted extensive commentaries on *The Mask of Anarchy* and its relationship with Biblical language and iconography.

alone, thus ‘Pleadeth the cause of the poor and needy’.” The address “to the industrious of England” ends with a quote from the Old Testament book of *Joel* (II.17): “Give not thine heritage to such reproach.” The address to the reformers ends with a quotation from the Greek Biblical text *Maccabees* (II.XI.25): “Our mind is, that this Nation shall be in rest.” Finally, there is another quote from St Paul which concludes the address “to my countrymen”: [What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For] “The end of those things is death.” (*Romans* VI.21) (3-4)

William Keach’s account of the poem, which considers the troubling inconsistencies within the text first raised by Kenneth Cameron, can be used as a starting point for a close reading. Keach cites Stephen Behrendt’s suggestion that the poem seems to advocate violence and therefore contradicts the non-violent message to be found elsewhere in Shelley’s poetry, most notably *The Mask of Anarchy* (94). The last two stanzas also seem to ask that the workers should dig their own grave. Keach additionally sees the poem’s real audience as the MPs of England, rather than the working men of England (93). The point at issue here is: who is Shelley addressing and what argument is he making? I would suggest that Shelley is answering the counter-revolutionary components of the little hand-bill.

The first six stanzas of *Song, To the Men of England* are a riposte to the ideas that “Modern Reformers, say, that you are oppressed by the rich” but that England “pleadeth the cause of the poor and needy.” (3) The reformers complain of oppression, but this can be answered by charity. Again, the handbill seeks to counter the arguments of the reformers with regard to industry: “Modern Reformers tell you that none should have more or less than another. Listen to them—and what becomes of talent and industry, which in a free country create and establish wealth and independence?” (4) The reformers are looking for equality, but this will lead to idleness.

In the first six stanzas of the poem Shelley begins with a series of rhetorical questions: “Men of England, wherefore plough / For the lords who lay ye low? / Wherefore weave with toil and care / The rich robes your tyrants wear?” (1-4). These questions can be read ironically with regard to the idea in the hand-bill that if equality is achieved then “talent and industry” will suffer. At present there is no reason for “industry” to take place because both the ploughmen and the weavers do not receive the fruits of their labour. These lines also suggest that the ruling class are not charitable, but, on the other hand, they “lay low” the people and are “tyrants.” The poem continues to ask rhetorical questions for the next three stanzas, with an emphasis on the industriousness of the people, who are “Bees” (9) and contrasted with the “drones” (11) who make up the ruling class. There is a reference to industrial processes in the word “forge.” (9) The poem repeats the ideas to be found in *The Mask of Anarchy*, and “calm” (13) and “shelter” (14) are contrasted with the slavery that the people suffer. There then follow two stanzas which again employ Shelley’s favourite rhetorical device of inversion, which shows his awareness of the contested nature of the sign. The fifth stanza reads:

The seed ye sow, another reaps:
 The wealth ye find, another keeps:
 The robes ye weave, another wears:
 The arms ye forge, another bears. (117-20)

This again repeats the idea that the people are working for nothing, and are effectively slaves. Shelley's answer to this is that the people should keep working (he does not wish to undermine industry) but keep the fruits of their labour for themselves:

Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap:
 Find wealth—let no impostor heap:
 Weave robes —let not the idle wear:
 Forge arms—in your defence to bear. (21-24)

The last line carries a hint of menace. Although the people are to bear arms in 'defence', there is always the possibility that defence can become attack. This stanza would make a logical ending to the poem; Shelley has presented the people as being slave-like, and he suggests a route towards freedom. However, these ideas contradict Shelley's own championing of non-violence. We then have the final two stanzas, which have vexed Shelley's commentators:

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells—
 In halls ye deck, another dwells.
 Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
 The steel ye tempered glance on ye
 With plough and spade and hoe and loom
 Trace your grave and build your tomb
 And weave your winding-sheet — till fair
 England be your Sepulchre. (25-32)

The stanzas comment ironically on the little hand-bill and are, indeed, a reply to the country's rulers. It will be remembered that Maccabees was cited: "Our mind is, that this Nation shall be in rest." Shelley reverses this citation by asking the people to "shrink" away from strife, that is to say, to rest. He also inverts his own ideas in the *Mask of Anarchy* where he has exhorted the people to "Shake your chains to earth like dew" (153 and 370). Here they are not to shake their chains; instead, they are to rest, as requested by the little hand-bill. The final stanza describes the result of such action, mirroring the citation from St Paul that "the end of those things is death." For Shelley, if the people do nothing, this will result in death, whereas for the counter-revolutionary press, reform will end in death.

To conclude, and to return to the concepts from intertextual theory outlined at the beginning of this essay, Charles Bazerman has stated that Julia Kristeva's account of intertextuality "dissolve[s] the autonomous integrity of both author and reader into the ocean of shared cultural experiences of common texts" (58). In this reading of intertextual theory, both author and reader are dazzled by the array of texts available to them and are in danger of losing any sense of direction. However, Shelley in his poetry is consistent in his lexical choices, which reflect

his politics, and puts across a point of view which, although compromised by issues of stance and voice, is clearly opposed to the counter-revolutionary press. Additionally, digitization of texts in the twenty-first century is significant for the future of the nineteenth-century text because it enables researchers to obtain new resources to analyse these old texts using traditional techniques of analysis and close reading. As Berry has hinted, this process may also lead in the future to a point where critics look back and find that a paradigm shift has taken place (10). As I have argued in this context, *Galignani's Messenger* proved to be significant in relation to Shelley's political poetry in three ways. Shelley's engagement with the newspaper firstly demonstrates that Shelley identified his politics closely with that of the *Examiner*, as was previously known, but that he also consciously engaged with, and distanced himself from, the counter-revolutionary press. Secondly, Shelley inverts the ideas of the counter-revolutionary press in the *Mask of Anarchy* and the seemingly puzzling inconsistencies in *Song, To the Men of England* can be read as an ironic, and knowingly intertextual, riposte to the "little hand-bill." *Galignani's Messenger* is also a link between the events in England of 1819 and those in Greece in 1821. In the preface to *Hellas*, Shelley states that "We are all Greeks" (549), emphasizing his cosmopolitanism and empathy with the Greeks as their story was narrated to him by *Galignani's Messenger*. In all three poems, *Hellas*, *The Mask of Anarchy*, and *Song, To the Men of England*, Shelley advocated a sense of solidarity between the oppressed, whatever their nationality or gender, but there was also a complex intratextual conversation about these matters within the poems and an erudite intertextual engagement with these concerns as they existed in the world outside the poems.

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