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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

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July 1941.

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I have the pleasure to inform you that the Rose Mary
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Century". The award will be announced at the Annual General
Meeting of the Academy on July 9th. There may be some
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Yours faithfully

F. G. Kenyon.

Mrs Julia Pomer.

PREVIEW

SHELLEY IN AMERICA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

His Relation to American Thought and His Influence

by

Julia Power

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska

in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Lincoln, Nebraska
January, 1938.

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PREFACE

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The subject, "Shelley in America in the Nineteenth Century" is of necessity a survey subject. Although it has been limited to "His Relation to American Critical Thought and His Influence," the field covered is still very extensive. Because Shelley was not well known before the publication of his complete works (1839-1840), every mention of him previous to that date becomes important and should be made use of in determining his position in the critical thought of the time. A review of the early periodical criticism in England has been included to show wherein Shelley met with severe criticism during his lifetime and to make clear that, on the whole, it was his theories rather than his poetry that received this censure. It was these same theories that retarded his acceptance in America. This review is followed by an account of the efforts of Mary Shelley and the friends of Shelley to establish his reputation as a poet, a work that brought successful results on both sides of the Atlantic.

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An attempt has been made to show that Shelley's position in the periodical criticism of the last half of the century was enhanced by the removal of much of the prejudice against him as a man. Consideration of his relation to the critical thought of the period is brought to a conclusion with a discussion of the work of the greatest Shelley scholar in nineteenth-century America, George E. Woodberry.

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The influence of Shelley on the poets of America has been found to be greater than was anticipated, the extent of his influence reaching its maximum in the work of America's most musical poet, Edgar Allan Poe.

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Solomon Liptzin discussed Shelley in Germany in a Columbia University dissertation, published in 1924; and Willis Winslow Pratt in 1935, in an unpublished Cornell University dissertation, wrote of Shelley in England, 1810-1890. It would seem, then, that Shelley's influence in America should likewise be considered.

Julia Power

Lincoln, Nebraska
December 16, 1937

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SHELLEY IN AMERICA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley is so closely associated with America that it would seem as though his wandering spirit "mingling with the elements" for almost a century had at last found a haven in a land where he is appreciated not "by the few" but by the many. Time, to which he was willing to consign his fate, has removed all barriers to recognition of the poet and acceptance of the man. He has taken his place as a poet of all time. The number and the quality of the articles and treatises on Shelley in the America of the twentieth century bear ample testimony to the place he holds in the hearts of American critics and lovers of literature.

Shelley was born on August 4, 1792, a day of importance in the national affairs of France, marked by the exodus of large numbers of nobles and by the decree of the National Assembly that all religious houses should be sold for the benefit of the nation. Nineteenth century writers, recognizing Shelley's indebtedness to the Revolution for certain tendencies in his thinking, have been inclined to look upon him as a "child of the Revolution." He is so termed by Alfred E. Hancock¹ and George E. Woodberry² and by Edmund Gosse, who refers to him as a certain type of revolutionist born out of due time and directed to the bloodless field of literature. Gosse believes that Shelley might be considered the incarnation of the hopes of LaFayette: "Like LaFayette, Shelley

¹ "Shelley," The French Revolution and the English Poets, 50-57, 1899.

² "Shelley's Work," Literary Essays, 107, 1892.

was intoxicated with virtue and glory; he was chivalrous, inflammable, and sentimental."¹ Shelley seems to have inherited not only the spirit of revolution but that of universality as well. Although born on English soil, of English parents, Shelley does not belong so much to England as to the world at large. Shelley himself felt no kinship with any country. There is not in his poems a single regret for leaving his native land. His poems to England are in the same universal spirit as are those to France, Spain, or any other country. It is only the oppressed among mankind, regardless of country, who appealed to Shelley. Nor were his affections for family or friends, except as they needed him, strong. He did not interpret filial devotion in terms of family love. He at no time shows any sense of affection towards even the mother who bore him. His feeling of love and kinship is with all mankind. Nor would he have it otherwise. His interests were in the events of the world, in man as a part of the universe. His own wish that his thoughts be scattered over the whole world is expressed in the closing lines of his Ode to the West Wind:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Three countries, however, may justly lay more claim to Shelley than may others: England, the land of his birth, Italy, the land of his adoption, and America, the home of his paternal great-grandmother and the country where his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, was born and spent his early years. For Timothy Shelley, the great-grandfather of the poet, had

¹ "Shelley in 1892," Questions at Issue, 209, 1893.

migrated to America in the early part of the eighteenth century.

The Shelley estate in England probably did not yield much income at that time. Two hundred pounds a year was not a sufficient sum to induce a young man to remain in England while waiting for the inheritance of the ancestral estate, particularly when letters from across the ocean told of fabulous sums that might be acquired in a short time. It was but natural, then, that Timothy Shelley should join the other young men who were migrating to America. His father may have seen thereby an opportunity to replenish the coffers of a country gentleman. Or, he may have felt that a few years in a new country would furnish valuable training for the future lord of an English estate. Timothy Shelley may have been an adventurer, a wayward son. At least he does not seem to have been successful in acquiring money readily, for, in 1735, in order to establish himself in the mercantile business, he gave a note for two hundred pounds, stating therein that he would be the possessor of an estate yielding two hundred pounds sterling and now in the possession of his father, John Shelley of Fenn Place in Great Britain. That he either was unable to pay the note or neglected to pay it seems probable in that although he inherited the estate in 1739 and returned to England, the note was not paid in 1743 when it was placed on record.¹

While in America, Timothy Shelley married a widow, Johanna Plum, a member of a prosperous Newark family. Malone states that the Plum family was large and widely connected and worthy of connection with the Shelleys. Two sons were born of this union, John and Bysshe, the latter being the grandfather of the poet. When Timothy Shelley returned to

¹ John Malone, "A Search for Shelley's American Ancestor," Century Magazine, XXII n.s., 634-636, May, 1892.

England at the death of his father, he was accompanied by his two sons, but not by his wife. What became of Johanna Plum is not known. There may have been an earlier separation, or she may have decided to remain in the colonies with her own people. There is a record of a Johanna Plum who died March 9, 1760, but it is difficult to decide, says Malone, whether she was spinster, wife, or widow. Samuel Plum, who had come from New England, was one of the original settlers of Newark. It may have been from this sturdy New Englander that Shelley inherited some of his ideas of freedom and equality.

Shelley did not seem to have been interested in his close association with America. Only occasionally did he mention America in his writings, as in The Revolt of Islam,¹ and in A Philosophic View of Reform,² and rarely did he refer to his American ancestry. Shelley's earliest association with America is through the novels of Charles Brockden Brown. Writers of the nineteenth century early noticed the influence of Brown on Shelley. Peacock lists Brown among the favorite writers of Shelley and among those who had most influence in molding his character. In giving Shelley's reaction to the novels of Brown, he states that the summer-house in Wieland made a great impression on Shelley, and that Constantia Dudley, the heroine of Ormond, held one of the highest places in Shelley's "ideality of human character." He states that he was captivated by the grave-digging scene in Edgar Huntley and was interested in Arthur Mervyn, but disapproved of the ending.³ Dowden calls attention to Peacock's discussion of Brown's attraction for Shelley

¹ Canto XI, stanzas XXII-XXIV.

² Rolleston edition, 6.

³ T. L. Peacock, Memoirs of Shelley, (Brett-Smith edit.), 35-37, 1909.

and calls Brown "Godwin's disciple in romance."¹ It was, however, for critics of the twentieth century, M. T. Solve and Eleanor Sickels, to determine the exact indebtedness of Shelley to Brown. In "Shelley and the Novels of Charles Brockden Brown," Solve discusses the similarities and the differences in the mental texture of Brown and Shelley.² He finds that each possessed an intense and alert mind housed in an inadequate body, a habit of romantic and visionary speculation, and a morbid and vigorous personality. He states that both were hypersensitive to the defects of the social system and strove to ameliorate the condition of the ignorant and deluded masses, and that the minds of both were formed upon the same reading, the sensibility group, the necessitarians and materialists, and the transcendentalists. The chief difference, he believes, is that Brown was more mature in his thinking as revealed in his Jane Talbot in which he criticises Godwin's doctrines. Solve's conclusions seem to be based upon the immature Shelley, the author of Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam. Miss Sickels quotes from Peacock and discusses at length the parallels in the writings of Brown and Shelley.³ She finds parallels between Zastrozzi and Edgar Huntley; or the Sleep-Walker and between St. Irvyn and Wieland. She believes, however, that there are more definite influences in Shelley's more mature work. She finds parallels to both Arthur Mervyn and Ormond in The Revolt of Islam, and to Ormond and Wieland in Rosalind and Helen. She believes that the name 'Constantia' in the poem To Constantia was suggested by the name of the heroine of Ormond.

¹ Life of Shelley, I, 472-473, 1886.

² Fred Newton Scott Anniversary Papers, 1929.

³ "Shelley and Charles Brockden Brown," Publications of the Modern Language Association, XLV, 1116-1128, September, 1930.

Shelley's relation to the Theological Inquirer or Polemical Magazine, published in New York by Erasmus Perkins, March to September, 1815, still remains a mystery. The magazine and the Shelley material contained therein are discussed fully by Bertram Dobell in an article on Shelleyana in The Athenaeum for March 7, 1885.¹ "This volume, which includes the six numbers of the magazine," says Mr. Dobell, "contains a good deal of reading matter relating to Shelley although his name is not mentioned in the volume." The material includes, according to Mr. Dobell's report, a copy of Shelley's Refutation of Deism, a "long and eulogistic review of Queen Mab," a "poorly written Ode to the Author of 'Queen Mab,' signed F.," and an attempt at an answer to the Refutation of Deism, signed Mary Ann. Mr. Dobell makes no attempt to account for these articles. W. E. Peck refers to this magazine in his biography of Shelley,² and N. I. White suggests an explanation in his article, "Shelley and the Active Radicals of the Early Nineteenth Century."³ Professor White states that there is some slight evidence tending to identify General Sir Roland Cranford Ferguson with the mysterious F. who was the author of most of the extended appreciation of Shelley that was published in the Theological Inquirer between March and August, 1815. He bases his supposition on the evidence that in 1821, the anonymous editor of the so-called New York edition of Queen Mab quoted from both the reviews and the poem as by his friend "R. C. F."

Shelley was scarcely known in America during his lifetime. An occasional notice, a quotation from a poem, or an excerpt from an article taken from an English magazine constituted the full knowledge that

¹ 313.

² I. 337.

³ South Atlantic Quarterly, XXIX, 248-261, July, 1930.

American publications seemed to possess. In the American Athenaeum for September 1, 1821, under "Paragraphs" appeared what was probably the first criticism of Shelley in any American magazine.

The publisher of Shelley's Queen Mab has been indicted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. It is dreadful to think that the chance for a miserable pecuniary profit, any man would become the active agent to disseminate principles so subversive of the happiness of society.¹

In the Literary Gazette or Journal of Criticism, published at Philadelphia, for the year 1821, are several notices of Shelley. Under "Selected Poetry" in the number for May 5, occurs a selection of forty lines from "The Sensitive Plant" by Percy Bysshe (sic) Shelley.² In the number for August 4, in the same column, is given a selection "From Mr. Shelley's new poem Queen Mab,"³ the "new poem" being an indication that Shelley and his work were not well known in America. The notices given Shelley in American magazines from 1822 to 1830 were few. No mention seems to have been made regarding his death. The publication of the Posthumous Poems in 1824 aroused no interest in America. In its September number for 1824, the American Athenaeum published "Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples" as taken from the New Monthly but as written by W. S. (sic) Shelley.⁴ The North American Review made unfavorable mention of Shelley in connection with an article on Byron in 1825 and in a review of Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries in 1829.⁵ Except for knowledge gained from a few pirated editions of Shelley's poems and from an occasional copy of the Posthumous Poems or individual poems

¹477.

³Ibid., 490.

⁵These articles will be discussed in the section on "New England Periodicals and Shelley."

²XVII, 285.

⁴September 15, 480.

that found their way into the United States, American readers before 1830 were compelled to rely for their information about Shelley solely on the English periodicals.

PREVIEW

I

RECOGNITION OF SHELLEY IN ENGLAND
(Before 1840)

Criticism in the Early Reviews

The attitude of the early nineteenth-century reviews towards Shelley always serves as an interesting subject for discussion. In order to appreciate the character of these early reviews, however, one must consider the manner of criticism of the period. The methods of the reviewers were harsh and were based upon the theories developed in the eighteenth century. Because of these methods all writers of the romantic period were severely criticised. Shelley's poetry as poetry received less criticism than did that of many of his contemporaries. There is scarcely a review of his work up to the publication of the piratical edition of Queen Mab in 1821 in which he is not conceded to be a poet. Both praise and encouragement are given him from the beginning.

Even his prose work is given encouragement. His Zastrozzi is called "a short but well-told tale of horror."¹ Then, to lend encouragement to the writer, the reviewer adds, "And, if we do not mistake, not from an ordinary pen." In these few words, "not from an ordinary pen," is struck the keynote of practically all Shelley criticism of the period. The reviewer of St. Irvyn, after a very just but unfavorable criticism of the novel, concludes with, "Would that this gentleman from Oxford had a taste for other and better pursuits, but as we presume

¹ Gentleman's Magazine, LXXX, 258, September, 1810.

him to be a young gentleman, this may in due time happen."¹ This tendency to excuse Shelley's errors persisted in much of the criticism of the period. In 1816 the British Critic assumes a somewhat jocular attitude towards the youthful Shelley whose poem, Alastor, displays the "madness of a poetic mind" rather than inspiration. The writer expresses himself as "delighted with the nonsense which mounts, rises, spurns the earth and all its realities." After jesting about the hair which "sang dirges in the wind" and the "animated boat," he concludes by calling the poem "this ne plus ultra of practical sublimity."² This is a rather interesting criticism on a youthful experiment in writing. In the criticism of Alastor which appears in the Eclectic Review, a sectarian religious organ of the Dissenters, Shelley is condemned because of his attitude towards religion and morals, and the poem is criticised as vague. But even this reviewer praises Shelley's talent for description and quotes a passage from the poem as an example of his ability to write poetry.³ Hunt's publication in the Examiner of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," "Ozymandias," extracts from The Revolt of Islam, and his laudatory reviews of the Revolt are all evidences of his high regard for the writings of Shelley.⁴ It was Shelley the man, however, against whom the reviewers raised their voices. Here was a young man of noble birth, from one of England's staunch and respected country families, who dared to oppose all that England cherished most in her institutions. And most exasperating of all, he was being encouraged in his revolutionary tendencies by members of that obnoxious

¹ British Critic, XXXVII, 70-71, January, 1811.

² Ibid., V n.s., 545, May, 1816.

³ VI n.s., 391, October, 1816.

⁴ January 19, 1817, January 11, 25, February 8, 15, 22, 1818.

group of aspiring writers, the Cockney School. But even John Wilson Croker, in recording his feelings of disgust with Shelley for "the attacking of all that is ancient and venerable in our civil and religious institutions" could not refrain from making a favorable comment on The Revolt of Islam as "the production of a man of some ability and possessing itself some beauty."¹

With the beginning of the year 1819, a new interest was shown in Shelley criticism. Two magazines that were responsible not only for a great deal of the altercation over Shelley during the next few years but for much of the controversy that has been going on ever since, entered the field. The first of these, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, was comparatively new. Established as a Tory magazine in 1817, in opposition to the Whig Edinburgh Review, Blackwood's opposed the Tory Quarterly Review as well. The sentiment of the magazine was best expressed by Lockhart when he wrote of the "blundering and bigoted pedantry of the Quarterly Review." Blackwood's felt that the Quarterly was not able to cope with the Whigs and that a more wide-awake and original periodical was needed by the Tories. Its policy was to attack its enemies but to conciliate those who might be won over. This was the policy adopted towards Shelley. The reviews of Shelley's works constitute one continuous effort at conciliation on the part of Christopher North until in complete discouragement over the writing of Adonais, he allows McGinnis to have full rein in his denunciation of Shelley as a now acknowledged member of the Cockney School.

The first of the Blackwood reviews by Christopher North, The Revolt of Islam, published in the January number, as a whole, is very favorable.

¹ Quarterly Review, XVII, 327, January, 1818, footnote.

The reviewer criticises Shelley's opinions as being those of the Cockney School, but adds that these opinions have not subjected the genius within him. He calls The Revolt of Islam a fine but obscure poem and declares that critics have neglected it. "Mr. Shelley," he writes in his most encouraging manner, "has displayed his possession of a mind intensely poetical and of an exuberance of poetical language, perpetually strong and perpetually varied."¹ He concludes by advising Shelley to dispense with "certain modes of thinking." The notorious review of Shelley's Revolt of Islam in the Quarterly Review,² April, 1819, in which John Taylor Coleridge maligns Shelley is worthy of consideration. A careful analysis of the article will reveal that the first part of Coleridge's criticism is fair and favorable. The acknowledgement that the poem contains beautiful passages, that the language is free from errors in taste, and that the versification is smooth and harmonious cannot be called adverse criticism. And the sarcastic and ironical criticism of Shelley's attempts at reform is rather good. It is only after the mention of Hunt and of Shelley's association with him that the reviewer becomes unruly. Of Shelley's indebtedness to Southey and others, to which he refers, there is now no doubt. The criticism of the poet's lack of consideration for orthodox Christianity is but in keeping with the views of the time. The greatest errors of the reviewer are in misinterpreting Shelley's ideas of love and in accusing him of not knowing the Bible. His greatest offense against Shelley is at the conclusion of the review when he attempts to malign Shelley's character by intimating that he knows more about him than he reveals, and resorts to the scandalmonger's "If we might tell what we know about him."

¹ IV, 475-486, January, 1819.

² XXI, 460-471.

Although the article in the Monthly Review for March, 1819, is unfavorable, it is, on the whole, a fair criticism. The reviewer laments the "waste of so much capability of better things," regrets Shelley's not rendering a just account of his many poetical talents, and criticises his language and rhythm and rhyme. His criticism that Shelley has not made the best use of his education and social position is an indication that the position of the poet's family was ever a matter for consideration.¹ Hunt's replies to the Quarterly in his articles in the Examiner are complete vindications of Shelley which need not be mentioned here.² Blackwood's review of Rosalind and Helen gives a very favorable criticism of his poetry but shows disgust with Shelley's principles even while attempting to excuse him: "While this modern eclogue breathes throughout strong feeling, and strong passion, and strong imagination, it exhibits at the same time a strong perversion of moral principles" and "a sacred scorn of institutions."³ The reviewer praises the poetry for the beauty of certain passages, which he quotes, but regrets Shelley's blindness to Divine beauty.

A review that might well be classed as one in which Shelley was "persecuted" occurs in the Gentlemen's Magazine as taken from the New Times. This criticism, Rosalind and Helen, is directed against Byron as well as against Shelley. It is a harangue against "the works of certain poets who have lately visited the Lake of Geneva."⁴ The Monthly Review contains a favorable criticism of Rosalind and Helen. Shelley's moral view is objected to, but he is credited with "a power

¹ LXXXVIII, 323.

² September 26, October 2, October 9, 1819.

³ V, 268-274, June, 1819.

⁴ LXXXIX, 625-626, June, 1819.

of composition that raises him above many of his fellows."¹ A little known magazine which contained one of the most favorable articles on Shelley published during his lifetime was the Honeycomb. Bertram Dobell states that this article on Shelley was the first in which any sort of justice was done to his powers. He gives extracts to show the tone and spirit of the article:

Man is a gregarious animal, else we would have been at a loss to discover for what possible reason Mr. Shelley could have enrolled himself under the banners of Mr. Leigh Hunt. . . Mr. Shelley is far above his compeers. . . Except on account of some of the principles he professes, we should never have classed Mr. Shelley with Leigh Hunt, or even with Barry Cornwall, as in power and extent of intellect, richness of imagination, and skill in numbers, he is far their superior.

This writer, who believes that Shelley has never been appreciated, attributes this lack to Shelley's writing in a spirit that people do not comprehend. Shelley, he says, "lives in a very remote poetical world, and his feelings will scarcely bear to be shadowed out in earthly light." Then follows a criticism of The Revolt of Islam, in which the writer states that in versification he considers the poem to be a very high effort of genius and praises particularly the use of the Spenserian stanza. He then pays Shelley the following compliment: "It will be instantly perceived that in Mr. Shelley's poetry there are none of the puerilities which disgrace the compositions of the persons with whom he has chosen to confound his name." He then compares Shelley with Cornwall and with Wordsworth in order to prove Shelley's superiority in the use of language.² In Blackwood's belated but very favorable

¹ XC, 207, October, 1819.

² Honeycomb, 65-71, August 12, 1880. Cf. "Shelleyana" by Bertram Dobell, The Athenaeum, 597-598, I, May 9, 1885.

review of Alastor in November, 1819, Christopher North praises Shelley's genius and development as seen in this poem and encourages him to continue this development. He states his approval and disapproval of certain points in the poem and calls attention to the most poetic passages. He shows resentment towards the criticism of The Revolt of Islam by the Quarterly Review and characterises the reviewer as "a dunce rating a man of genius." He refers to the Revolt as a poem "full of music, imagery, intellect, and passion." He encourages Shelley "to walk onward to his bright destiny without turning into dark or doubtful or wicked ways."¹ It is very apparent that North is taking up Shelley's cause in order to oppose the Quarterly as much as to show approval of Shelley. In December of the same year, in a notice of Hunt's The Literary Pocket-Book, Shelley and Keats are compared, to the disparagement of the latter, as "a bird of Paradise and a Friezeland fowl." Shelley's poem, "Marianne's Dream," is quoted in full to illustrate Shelley's "deep voice of inspiration."² The year 1819 closes with Shelley in the ascendancy and with Blackwood's leading the way towards full recognition of the poet.

The Shelley criticism of 1820 was devoted almost exclusively to that of two works, The Cenci and Prometheus Unbound. The former received notices in at least nine leading periodicals of the time and the latter in five. In this year several new magazines that were to be active in Shelley criticism for the next few years entered the field. Among these was the notorious Shelley persecutor, the London Literary Gazette and the scarcely less vicious Scot's Magazine. Of milder tone were the rival London Magazines, Gold's and Baldwin's, and the New Monthly Magazine. The very earliest review of The Cenci, that by Hunt

¹ VI, 148-154.

² Blackwood's, VI, 240.