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SHELLEY'S EDITING PROCESS IN THE PREFACE TO EPIPSYCHIDION

by Michael Laplace-Sinatra

Prefaces are often disregarded by readers who, more often than not, start without taking time to peruse them first. Sir Walter Scott knew this perfectly well, and he wrote about it, very wittily, in 'A PostScript Which Should Have Been a Preface', the last chapter of his novel Waverley written in 1814: 'most novel readers, as my own conscience reminds me, are apt to be guilty of the sin of omission respecting the same matter of prefaces'.' Scott refers to novel readers but poetry readers are also 'guilty of the sin of omission', maybe even more so in so far as they may wish, understandably enough, to read only poetry and not a prose introduction. Many critics include prefaces in their analysis, but most of the time only as a means of interpreting the work they precede. Thus critics limit the role of prefaces simply to introductory materials and exclude any other potential interpretation. It is sometimes forgotten that the very presence or absence of a preface is already pregnant with meaning.

I do not intend to trace the history of prefatory materials in English literature, nor even in the period commonly referred to as 'the Romantic Period'. My point is to raise the question of the importance of prefaces for Shelley in his poetical work, and more specifically in the case of his poem *Epipsychidion*. I am particularly interested in the editing process of the preface to this poem. Indeed, a close analysis of the poem in manuscript form shows intriguing changes before the work went to print. They demonstrate how Shelley acted as his own censor, but not so much in response to the actual quality of the prefatory writing but rather in an attempt at concealing the autobiographical aspect of this work. This essay will unveil the editorial revisions of the preface to *Epipsychidion* and endeavour to explain these by commenting on the autobiographical dimension of the poem.

Sir Walter Scott, The Prefaces to the Waverley Novels, ed. Mark A. Weinstein (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 3.

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Writing about autobiographical texts is not an easy task in so far as one is immediately faced with the immense complexity of the concept of 'autobiography' itself. The Oxford English Dictionary provides us with the following definition: 'the story of one's life written by himself'. As noted by Jean Starobinski, this definition acknowledges the intrinsic difficulty of an autobiography, that is to say that 'Every autobiography - even when it limits itself to pure narrative – is a self-interpretation'. Therefore, an element of doubt about the veracity of the story is to be borne in mind whenever one reads an autobiography, the story perhaps being fictionalised. The problem faced by the reader is that s/he cannot know whether the story is autobiographical or fictionalised if s/he does not have a preliminary knowledge of the author's life. The answer cannot be found directly in the text since the use of the personal pronoun 'I' is not in itself a proof of an autobiographical writing. Indeed, even though it is agreed that it is by comparing the past 'I' with the present 'I' that the autobiography can take place,³ Benveniste observes that, linguistically speaking, there is no concept such as 'I' and that the 'I' refers to the one who is speaking, and that we can identify him/her by the very fact that s/he is speaking.4 This remark is crucial in the sense that, for a text to be autobiographical, the 'I' has to refer to the author, and if there is no longer an author, a text cannot be autobiographical; the text being only the text and nothing outside of it. Of course, one is reminded of Roland Barthes's statement that

the author is never more than the instance writing, just as the I is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it.⁵

- ² Jean Starobinski, 'The Style of Autobiography', in Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. James Olney (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 74.
- Starobinski, p. 78.
- ⁴ Benveniste, Problèmes de linguistique générale (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1966) quoted in Philippe Lejeune, Le Pacte Autobiographique, Collection Poétique (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), p. 19.
- ⁵ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader, ed. David Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1988), p. 169.

Interestingly enough, Shelley can be seen as exploring similar territory in his essay On Life when he argues:

The words I, and you and they are grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement and totally devoid of the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them.⁶

Although Shelley's concern is the absence of real differentiation between minds and Barthes is concerned with the referential hiatus between 'I' and some 'real' person, the two authors are close in their interests. One way to defer the question of authorship, if not to consider it as non-existent, is to publish anonymously. The author is not known and consequently cannot be referred to by the reader. This of course has some advantage for the reception of a poem, or its influence on other poems, as Shelley came to realise. But to publish anonymously, or under a pseudonym, also indicates what Angela Leighton calls 'an authorial self-deconstruction', 'that is to say an intentional removal of any links between the poet and the text. By doing so, Shelley lets the work be its self-reference, and thus he emphasises the primordial status of the poem over its author. Shelley also makes use of the prefaces to his poems to distance himself from their content. In fact, Shelley's prefatory writings are very interesting in many ways.

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The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'preface' as: 'the introduction to a literary work, usually containing some explanation of its subject, purpose, and scope, and of the method of treatment' and as 'an introduction or preliminary explanation'. These definitions clearly emphasise the role of a

⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 478; hereafter abbreviated parenthetically as SP&P followed by the page number.

Angela Leighton, 'Love, Writing and Scepticism in Epipsychidion', in The New Shelley: Later Twentieth-Century Views, ed. G. Kim Blank, Macmillan Studies in Romanticism (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 225.

preface as making accessible the meaning of the literary work it precedes. In most cases, Shelley's prefaces conform to these definitions and hence fulfil their role of securing a good reading of the text.⁸ With the help of the prefaces, the reader has his/her task made easier. Consequently, Shelley's prefaces seem to be the perfect tool for a better understanding of his poetry. Writing about *Alastor*, Evan K. Gibson makes a comment of this kind when he claims:

Perhaps recognising the difficulty of the poem for the average reader, Shelley wrote the Preface as a clarification and expected the poem to be read in the light of the Preface. . . . 9

To clarify and to shed some light on the poems would indeed be the expected role of Shelley's prefaces, as in fact of any preface, and yet this is not completely true in Shelley's case.

Like the rest of his work, Shelley's prefaces are not easy and straightforward texts. On the one hand, they may be seen as fulfilling their role of introduction to the poems they precede, acting as a source of light to shed on a poem which could be difficult to understand otherwise. On the other hand, they may be seen as making the reader's task even more difficult by their own complexity, acting in fact as an obstacle. Elise M. Gold has rightly pointed out that 'Shelley's prefaces are as much opaque barriers as revealing guides to the texts'. Of course, this leads us to think about the relation between the prefaces and the poems, about their role as threshold to the poems. According to Jacques Derrida:

Prefaces . . . have always been written, it seems, in view of their own self-effacement. Upon reaching the end of the *pre*- (which presents and precedes, or rather forestalls, the presentative production and in order to put before the reader's eyes what is not

⁸ See Gérard Genette's Seuils, Collection Poétique (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), p. 183.

Evan K. Gibson, 'Alastor: A Reinterpretation', PMLA 62 (1947), reprinted in Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 546.

Elise M. Gold, 'Touring the Inventions: Shelley's Prefatory Writing', in *Keats-Shelley Journal* 36 (1987), p. 86.

yet visible, is obliged to speak, predict, and predicate), the route which has been covered must cancel itself out.¹¹

Expected to engage the reader in the reading of the poems, Shelley's prefaces differ intriguingly from this definition. Not achieving their 'self-effacing task'¹² of solely introducing the poems, the prefaces suddenly engage the reader in a reflection on their own content and become prose texts containing Shelley's thoughts and opinions on various subjects just as his prose essays do. The relationship between prefatory materials and the poems they precede is altered, and they function indeed as independent texts reflecting Shelley's ideas on certain topics, whether political or poetical. Similarly, the 'historical' relation of the prefaces to the poems may be seen as supporting this argument. As it can be expected, a detailed study of Shelley's manuscripts shows that the prefatory materials were usually 'postfaces' as far as the time of composition is concerned, and yet they are introduced as preceding the poems.

Throughout his poetry and his prose, Shelley questions the idea of identity and his relation to the world via the medium of poetry. In his fragmentary essays On Love and On Life, he examines the notion of a self and the constraints imposed by language on that subject. He wonders how individuality can exist in a world described with artificial words. In several of his major poems – that is to say Alastor, Laon and Cythna, Julian and Maddalo, Epipsychidion, and Adonais – Shelley can be seen and understood as developing the same exploration, in imaginative terms. I would argue that Shelley's prefaces examine this philosophical idea, which is so central to his intellectual growth, by combining the plainness of prose writing with the imagery of poetic creation. The development of his reflections on identity is very enticing in the sense that, acknowledging the limitations of language, Shelley uses various styles of writing in his

Jacques Derrida, Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p. 9.

¹² I borrow this term from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of Coleridge's Biographia Literaria [In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 4].

prefaces and subverts the conventions of prefatory writing in order to try and overcome the very same limitations.

In an interesting figure of circularity, Shelley's prefaces deny the reader direct access to the poems and invite him/her to an apparently discursive détour, which in fact will reflect the poems's content and help the reader in his/her understanding of them, once s/he returns to the beginning of the poems. I would claim that this notion of auto-reflection – both formally and intellectually – found in Shelley's prefaces clearly demonstrates their importance regarding the modern critical debate on the mode of existence of literary texts as such, and the never-ending circle of construction and deconstruction of meanings in a literary text. In Shelley's prefatory materials, one can indeed find his reflections – that is, his comments on the poems and also his image in the autobiographical aspect of the prefaces.

iv

As I have stated earlier, the role of a preface is to introduce a literary work and to provide the reader with relevant information about the main body of text s/he is about to read. The definition of preface found in the O.E.D. is very similar to the one found in Dr Johnson's A Dictionary of English Language (1755), the current authority when Shelley was writing. Although I have already said that Shelley's prefaces do not content themselves with this definition, they nevertheless fulfil this task. Indeed, as Elise M. Gold notes:

Shelley's prefaces often reflect their poems in miniature, embodying the psychological, philosophical, and imaginative struggles their speakers or protagonists undergo. Intimately connected to the verse they precede thematically, verbally, even structurally, they bring the reader to their poems' thresholds; engage the reader in their works' creative process.¹⁴

Johnson's definition is the following: 'Something spoken introductory to the main design; introduction; something proemial.'

¹⁴ Gold, p. 68.

On the one hand, this quotation acknowledges the help Shelley's prefaces give to the reader by reflecting 'their poems in miniature' and thus preparing him/her for the reading to follow. By paying attention to the prefaces, the reader learns about the content of the poems they precede and is therefore able to have easier access to their meanings. On the other hand, Gold's comment suggests some of the difficulties the prefaces put before the reader inasmuch as they embody 'the psychological, philosophical, and imaginative struggles their speakers or protagonists undergo'. By integrating some of the issues raised in the poems, Shelley's prefaces do not entirely facilitate the reader's task. Instead of providing a key to these issues, the prefaces leave the reader with an anticipation of them. In fact, the prefaces 'engage the reader in their works' creative process' and hence require an active participation on the part of the reader. Shelley's prefaces are simultaneously an invitation and an obstacle to the reading of the poems; they are indeed a path to the poems, but a long and winding one.

In a way, Shelley's use of prefatory writings may seem to challenge the common conception of the reason for the existence of prefaces. Indeed, it could be argued that a preface should not be written if it cannot fulfil its raison d'être, which is to introduce and to provide some information on the work it precedes. But, as I have said, Shelley's prefaces are not written to be mere introductions to the poems. One of the main aspects of Shelley's prefaces is the way in which he uses them to form a relationship with his audience. In fact, they entitle Shelley to present the purpose of the poems in his own terms, and thus to instruct the reader. Elise M. Gold rightly asserts that Shelley's prefaces are 'instruments to test an audience's sympathetic perceptiveness, to exclude poor or hostile readers from as well as admit the discerning few to Shelley's works." As Shelley came to realise over the years, his poetry is not easily accessible - sometimes on purpose, sometimes not. And Shelley's prefatory writings reflect his preoccupation with the reception of his poetical works and illustrate how he tries to deal with this problem. The question 'how do texts relate to each other?' is relevant to a study on prefatory writings since there appears to be an innate relation of dependence between a preface and the text it precedes.

⁵ Gold, p. 72.

This dependence usually manifests itself with a subject described in the preface and developed in the poem. But one should not forget that there is also a dependence of the poem on the preface. To appreciate this fully, one can turn to the preface to *Epipsychidion*.

٧

Without the help of a prefatory writing, Shelley's readers may not come to the conclusion he wants them to reach in their reading of *Epipsychidion*. Consequently, Shelley writes a preface to the poem which perfectly corresponds to Gérard Genette's description of a *préface crypto-auctorial* in his work on paratext. What Genette refers to as the paratext is what is 'around' a literary text, everything that does not belong directly to the literary text itself and yet can be perceived as a part of the work. In other words, Genette refers to the title page, the name of the author, dedications, prefaces, postfaces, and notes. All these materials constitute a special space surrounding the text which is both a transitional space and a transactional space. The reader has access to the literary text via the preamble of the paratext. She may not pay attention to the elements constituting the paratext but they are nevertheless crucial to the understanding of the work. Here is Genette's definition of a *préface crypto-auctorial*:

This kind of Preface could also be called *crypto-auctorial* since the author pretends not to be the author, or also *pseudo-allographe* since the author introduces himself as the allograph Preface writer, only claiming from the whole work the Preface. The author (onym, anonymous, or pseudonym) can introduce himself as the mere editor of a homodiegetic work for which he naturally attributes the paternity to the narrator.¹⁷

¹⁶ Genette, p. 8.

Genette, p. 172. My translation.

It is very important for Shelley that the reader should consider the author as no longer alive since it allows Shelley to address his readers without the living presence of the poet. As William Ulmer comments:

In the image of this harmless eccentric Shelley recasts his own identity, and then obliquely commits suicide by killing his alter ego, as if the death of the poet were a necessary precondition to reaching and influencing an audience.¹⁸

For Shelley, the content of *Epipsychidion* is not to be read from an autobiographical point of view, hence the writing of the preface as a denial of the poem's author(ship).

Epipsychidion was composed in January and February 1821, and published anonymously in May 1821. The poem is very often seen as describing Shelley's love for Teresa Viviani and, quoting Shelley from a letter addressed to John Gisborne, as 'an idealised history of [his] life and feelings'. We know from two letters addressed to his publisher Charles Ollier that Shelley strongly insisted Epipsychidion be published anonymously. Referring in both letters to Epipsychidion Shelley says: 'The longer poem, I desire, should not be considered as my own', (Letters, vol. ii, p. 262) and 'The piece I last sent you, I wish, as I think I told you, to be printed immediately, and that anonymously' (Letters, vol. ii, p. 269). Shelley explains his wish for anonymity in the first letter by claiming that

it is a production of a portion of me already dead; and in this sense the advertisement is no fiction . . . and I make its author a secret, to avoid the malignity of those who turn sweet food into poison; transforming all they touch into the corruption of their own natures (*Letters*, vol. ii, pp. 262-63).

William A. Ulmer, Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 154.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), vol. ii, p. 434; hereafter abbreviated as Letters followed by the volume number and the page number.

Having been under fierce attack from reviewers, Shelley became very bitter about that particular subject, openly asking in *Peter Bell the Third*: 'Do poets, but to be abhorred / By men of whom they never heard, / Consume their spirits' oil?' (ll. 495–97) Furthermore, in a passage from a letter to John Gisborne referring to the poem, Shelley mentions his disillusionment with Teresa Viviani – the addressee of the poem, referred to as Emily – and emphasises the fact that it belongs to his past life:

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. If you are anxious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof (*Letters*, vol. ii, p. 434).

The last sentence of the quotation clearly acknowledges the autobiographical aspect of the poem and the change in Shelley's life, recalling Lord Byron's line in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: 'but I am not now / That which I have been' (Canto IV, 185), and maybe also hinting ironically at his superiority toward Wordsworth, who declares in 'Tintern Abbey': 'I cannot paint / What then I was' (ll. 75–6). Then, in the same letter, Shelley continues:

I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal (*Letters*, vol. ii, p. 434).

In a manner less ironical than in Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*, Shelley admits that, as others would, he pursued an image in a mortal frame, and that is what the poem is about: it tells of the person with whom Shelley was in love then and how he felt at that time. Therefore, *Epipsychidion* can be seen as an autobiographical poem.

But what about the preface? Contrary to Harold Bloom's opinion,20 I

Bloom states that 'the Advertisement, even in its final version, does not help us to comprehend anything of value in the poem' [Shelley's Mythmaking (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 208].

believe the preface to be very important for a good reading of the poem. More than publishing the poem anonymously, Shelley distances himself from the poem by creating a preface writer and a deceased author. I have mentioned earlier that Shelley chooses to do so in order to reach and influence a certain audience. This desire to limit his audience is already present in the title, a thematic title which indicates the content of the poem – 'About' or 'Toward' the 'Little Soul'21 – and at the same time attracts learned persons able to understand and be interested by this Greek coinage. In a letter to Charles Ollier, Shelley indeed describes the readership he wanted for the poem as

the esoteric few ... those who are capable of judging and feeling rightly with respect to a composition of so abstruse a nature, ... [and] who would ever be excited to read an obscure and anonymous production; and it would give me no pleasure that the vulgar should read it (*Letters*, vol. ii, p. 263).

And the same argument can be found in the 'Advertisement':

The present Poem, like the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats (SP&P, p. 373).

It can be argued that the poem is indeed 'of so abstruse a nature' that very few readers will be able to make sense of it. I would suggest that, having failed to please the general public on previous occasions, Shelley felt the need to limit his audience in anticipation. Shelley's choice not to simplify

In fact, Epipsychidion does not exist in Greek. It is the construct of the Greek preposition epi meaning 'placed', 'on', 'resting upon', or 'in the direction of', and psychidion meaning 'soul' with the diminutive 'little'. For different interpretations of the meaning of Epipsychidion, see Jerrold Hogle's Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

his poetry in order to please the general public but rather to attract only a selected audience is already present in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* when he refers to 'the more select classes of poetical readers' (SP&P, p. 135). I would add that Shelley also tries to escape identification with the author by publishing the poem anonymously and declaring the writer dead in order to impede an autobiographical interpretation. The drafts of the 'Advertisement' – as found in the notebook shelfmarked MS. Shelley Adds. d.1 – show how Shelley carefully removed possible clues for an autobiographical interpretation. Indeed, whereas the published version of the 'Advertisement' is neutral about the relationship between the author of the poem and the preface writer, the first draft is much more personal. The former begins with 'The Writer of the following Lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades' (SP&P, p. 373); the latter begins with

amongst other papers
The following Poem, was found in
the Portfolio of a young Englishman
with whom the Editor had contracted
a transitory intimacy contracted an intimacy
at Florence, brief indeed, but sufficiently
long to render the Catastrophe by which
it terminated one of the most painful events
of his life. -22

The preface-writer of the first draft is indeed a close friend, as the last lines show:

charge

The melancholy task of consigning the body of my poor friend to the grave, devolved on me. His desolated was committed to me by his desolate family. I caused him to

The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts, volume IV, ed. E. B. Murray 2 vols (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988) ii, 29 - f. 102v.

be buried in a spot, in a spot previously selected by himself ²³

There are a few instances where Shelley's personality as the preface-writer is felt more strongly in the first draft, as he came to realise and consequently removed some lines in his revisions. For instance, the lines describing Shelley's criticism of his contemporary publications:

The literary merit of
the verses appeared, sufficient Poem in
question may not be considerable; but
the circumstances worse verses are
printed every day, & it appeared that
the singularity of the circumstances
which to his possession [alone seemed]
?qui to justify the editor in presenting
through the press²⁴

In order not to limit his reader's reception of the poem, Shelley also deletes the lines about the content of the poem:

For the

love of woman which these verses express
the
was but one form of that universal
Love which Plato taught.²⁵

As a result, the final version declares that the poem 'is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates' (SP&P, p. 373). The main changes that take place throughout the three drafts and the published version are

The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts, volume IV, ii, 29 - f. 101r.

²⁴ The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts, volume IV, ii, 35 – f. 102r.

²⁵ The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts, volume IV, ii, 31 – f. 101v.

about the author of the poem himself. Shelley indeed alters the descriptions to prevent any possible identification. For instance, the author is no longer described as 'a young Englishman' in the third draft and the final version. Or Shelley deletes the reference to the author's companions, as found in the second draft:

He was
a lady, who might have been
accompanied by his wife, & an
?was appeared to be his wife,
effeminate looking youth, to whom
excessive

he shewed an attachment so singular an attachment as to give rise to the suspicion,

notion that she wa[s]s a woman – At his death this suspicion was confirmed; & their ill fated and the Poet ill fated object of his anomalous its illfa object speedily found a refuge both from the taunts of \iff the brute multitude, & from the of her grief in the same grave that contained her lover. $^{-26}$

One can easily comprehend why Shelley decided to be much more elusive about the author and his companions. At the time of the composition of *Epipsychidion*, Shelley's reputation was heavily stained with public scandals.²⁷ He had eloped with Mary when he was still married to Harriet and had spent much time with Mary and Jane 'Claire' Clairmont, this leading to some rumours of 'incest', especially with the well-known lines (149–59) in *Epipsychidion* advocating extra-marital relationships. The fact

The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts, volume IV, ii, 33-39 - f. 100ν & f. 100τ.

For a detailed discussion of Shelley's reputation and contemporary reception, see my following article ''I will live forever': Shelley and his Reviewers' (1998).

that Shelley was challenged over the incestuous relationship of the main characters of *Laon and Cythna* certainly led him to alter this relationship.²⁸ In a footnote to Charles Ollier's review of *Epipsychidion*, John Gibson Lockhart makes this clear when he says: 'Percy Bysshe Shelley has now published a long series of poems, the only object of which seems to be the promotion of ATHEISM and INCEST'.²⁹ In any case, Mary Shelley was certainly very sensitive to the potential autobiographical aspect since it is the only major poem she did not comment upon in her edition of her husband's works.

vi

One clearly feels in the various modifications Shelley brought to the preface of *Epipsychidion* what John Slater calls 'the need to conceal his private self from his audience by revealing a more discreet public alternative'.³⁰ However, in an anonymous work the private self should not need to be concealed since the fact of publishing, or intending to publish, the work anonymously makes supposedly impossible the assimilation of this work into what Lejeune calls 'l'espace autobiographique'.³¹ In other words, a work published without any acknowledgement of its authorship cannot be interpreted from an autobiographical point of view by the reader. Denying his authorship of *Epipsychidion*, Shelley seems therefore to refuse its content as autobiographical material.

The analysis of the manuscript of *Epipsychidion* as found in *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts* volume edited by E. B. Murray clearly shows the important changes Shelley made to the preface. These changes reflect Shelley's worries about the reception of his text, as well as the enticing editorial process the poem goes through before publication. Often censored by the government or his publisher Charles Ollier for the political content of some of his poems, as in the case of *Swellfoot the Tyrant* or *Hellas*, Shelley acts also sometimes as his own censor when the subject matter is too personal.

For a discussion of 'incestuous' relationships in the Shelley circle, see John Donovan's 'incest in Laon and Cythna: Nature, Custom, Desire', in Keats-Shelley Review 2 (1987), pp. 69-70.

²⁹ Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 11 (1822), p. 237.

John F. Slater, 'Self-Concealment and Self-Revelation in Shelley's "Epipsychidion", in Papers on Language and Literature 11 (1975), pp. 280-81.

³¹ Lejeune, p. 23.