THE PUBLIC SPHERE OF THE HUNT CIRCLE IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY POLITICS AND CULTURE

A Dissertation

by

BYOUNG CHUN MIN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2010

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ABSTRACT

The Public Sphere of the Hunt Circle in Early Nineteenth-Century

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This dissertation examines the Hunt circle's public activities and its historical significance in terms of public-sphere theory proposed by Jürgen Harbermas. Recent studies on Romantic literature have attended to how Romantic writers' literary practices were conditioned upon their contemporary history, as opposed to the traditional notion of Romanticism based on an affirmation of individual creativity. Although these studies meaningfully highlight the historicity inherent in seemingly individualistic Romantic texts, they have frequently failed to assess the way in which this historicity of Romantic texts is connected to Romantic writers' own will to engage with public issues by placing too much emphasis on how history determines individuals' activities. In this sense, the notion of public sphere offers a productive theoretical framework by which to read the historicity of Romantic literature without disavowing an individual writer's role in historical proceedings, since it underscores a historical process in which a communal interaction between individuals constitutes a progress of history. By focusing on this

significance of public-sphere theory, this dissertation suggests that the Hunt circle, whose members' communal literary practices were aimed at achieving the public good in the tumultuous post-Napoleonic era, serves as a model of this process-based historical theorization.

Chapter I examines the significance of public-sphere theory in assessing how the Hunt circle engaged in its contemporary history. Chapter II elucidates the nature of the public sphere that Leigh Hunt's and his circle's activities created and discusses the problems that this public sphere faced in the historical context of the early nineteenth century. Chapter III shows how the Hunt circle exposed a sense of anxiety and instability in the face of the commercialized literary public sphere by examining John Keats's literary practices. Chapter IV highlights Percy Bysshe Shelley's public ideal which aimed for a unified and inclusive public sphere beyond class boundaries and traces how this ideal was frustrated in the ensuing historical proceedings. Chapter V deals with the final phase of the Hunt circle and its disintegration by observing the ways in which Mary Shelley memorialized the Hunt circle for the feminized reading public of the Victorian period. By illuminating the nature of the Hunt circle's activities for the public, this dissertation ultimately aims to reassess how literary intellectuals in the Romantic period struggled to sustain the traditional calling of men of letters in their contemporary public sphere.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Chang-Dong Min and Ok-Ja Kim

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LOCATING THE HUNT CIRCLE IN PUBLIC-

SPHERE THEORY

This dissertation examines the historical significance of the Hunt circle (mostly, writers who belong to the so-called second-generation of Romanticism) by focusing on what kind of public sphere the Hunt circle members pursued and embodied through their activities for contemporary politics and culture and how this public sphere came to be disintegrated in the ensuing historical proceedings. As is well known, the notion of "public sphere" is proposed in Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which historically locates a model of his theory of communicative action, and the basis of this notion is related to his lifelong effort to espouse the validity of Enlightenment Reason.[1] Habermas, by attending to cultural gatherings of the eighteenth-century bourgeois societies in Britain, defines public sphere as a medium for open discussions in which private subjects gathered to practice their critical reason both through collaboration and competition. The proposition of public sphere as an overriding principle of a socio-cultural formation involves theoretical significance in several ways.

This dissertation follows the style of the *MLA Handbook*.

[1] In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas's theory of public sphere is founded upon his study of specific cases of eighteenth-century England's communal associations. For a general account of the principle of communicative action practiced in a society, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984).

First, while this proposition places emphasis on individual actions, it never loses sight of

the public dimension of which these individual actions become constitutive parts.

Second, since it underscores the relational dynamics of communicative action, it does

not preclude individual autonomy (along with individuals' potential to effectuate social

changes) in theorizing how a socio-cultural formation works.[2] Most importantly, the role

of reason in actualizing social justice, which has been downgraded and even annulled by

those who attend to the class-oriented exclusivity and the instrumental reification

generated from reason, can be recuperated by the assumption immanent in the notion of

public sphere that communicative actions between individuals constitute the workings of

[2] Recent social theories in the Marxist vein tend to disregard the role of individual as an agent of socio-cultural formulation by foregrounding a totalizing principle existent outside an individual, even if they commonly criticize the simplistic model of economic determination proposed by old vulgar Marxists. Lukács's "class consciousness" as a totalizing principle of a dominant society (see Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1974) 46-80.), Gramsci's idea of "hegemony" as a falsified representation of general social interests (see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971) 56.), and Althusser's notion of "ideology" as a state apparatus for domesticating people (see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review P, 1971) 85-126.) are all the results of this theoretical attempt to explain the principle of socio-cultural operation by excluding the role of autonomous individual. Foucault's notions of "epistemé" and of "power," though these notions underscore a structural relation of social elements rather than how a dominant class perpetuates its system, disavow the significance of individual activity in a similar way (see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 195-230; and *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1971) xxi-xxiii.).

reason in historical proceedings, and thus continuously modify the historical edifice of reason.[3]

Considering these theoretical assumptions that the notion of public sphere brings to the fore, it is productive, I argue, to examine the Hunt circle members' literary activities in terms of the public sphere that they would achieve and really achieved in the Romantic period (specifically, the post-Napoleonic period), because this critical position provides a theoretical ground of understanding the social, political, and ideological workings of history upon which their literary activities are conditioned without necessarily disavowing their affirmative claim of an individual's potential to make a historical progress. Recent studies on Romantic literature have been focusing on the historicity of Romantic texts (i.e., their socio-political signification in relation to their contemporary history).[4] The exponents of these historical studies set their position against the traditional Romantic affirmation based on a trans-historical poet's mind and

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[3] The first comprehensive critique of Enlightenment Reason is expounded by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and their critical point centers on reified reason's totalitarian compulsion toward instrumentality. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987) 1-34.

[4] This new trend that appeared in Romantic studies is usually called "new historicism" together with other fields of literary study, even if many controversies still exist concerning this terminology and its characterization. For general discussions of Romantic new historicism, see, for example, Marjorie Levinson, "The New Historicism: Back to the Future," *Critical Readings in Romantic History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 18-63; David Simson, "Romanticism, Criticism, and Theory," *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 1-24; and Jon Klancher, "English Romanticism and Cultural Production." *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989) 77-88.

its union with nature, which has been reiterated from the Victorian period. Thus they have tended to regard the celebratory appreciation of an individual mind claimed by major Romantic writers (especially, the first-generation writers represented by Wordsworth and Coleridge) and their subsequent social activity as an ideological displacement resulting from their disillusionment toward contemporary politics.

Despite some cogency found in this critical position, however, several historical factors complicate the way in which Romantic writers confronted history through their practice of writing. For example, Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley never abandoned a critical position against the conservative policies of the Tory government and the cultural hegemony of the ruling class, even if some ideas shown in their writings (usually, those which espouse individuals' creative faculty in generating a historical progress) remained resistant to a direct engagement with political issues and ambivalent toward the popular radical movements by which the working class came to the fore in British history. In addition, their emphasis of the power of individual mind purported not so much to perpetuate the isolation of individual mind from history as to create a foundation of a communal field in which individual actions constitute a historical process.[5] For this reason, the critical position based on the opposition between a

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[5] Byron and Shelley's political affiliation with the post-Napoleonic radical movements has been explored in great detail. For more accounts of this issue, see Jorome J. McGann, *Don Juan in Contexts* (London: Murray, 1976); Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987); Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980); P. M. S. Dawson, *The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); and Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical*

celebration of individuality and a political commitment conduces to a simplified or even misguided understanding of the historicity of Romantic literature. And the initial motive of this dissertation derives from an attempt to resolve this opposition. In fact, the opposition between an internal mind or will of an individual and its external historical context in the critical reception of Romantic literature has constituted such a significant part of Romantic studies that it is worthwhile to survey in more detail how this opposition has been appearing in the history of Romantic studies.

The critical reception of Romantic literature started from the Victorian period, and the traditional image of Romantic poets—founded upon imagination, mind (or feeling) of a man (or a poet), and the universality of nature—has been established since the mid-Victorian period. The central figure of this critical tradition is Matthew Arnold. Arnold attempted to elucidate the value that some Romantic poems provide for the more and more industrialized and secularized Victorian society, and the foundation of this value came from his well-known "touchstone" method. This method states that a test of quality must be acquired not by a theoretical formulation (or a calculated abstraction) but by a well-trained mind/feeling of a man, and this training of mind/feeling can be developed by a habitual contemplation of best writings.[6] From this perspective, Arnold found Wordsworth's poems valuable, in that they give readers refined feelings shaped by

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Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982).

[6] Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (London: Macmillan, 1921) 5-14.

mind's union with nature. But Arnold's valuation of Wordsworth's poems was confined to short poems, and long poems that include intellectual narrations of society were considered to be delusive. Thus Arnold valued Wordsworth as a poet of natural feelings by displacing the socially-oriented intellectual thought that Wordsworth manifested through long "philosophical" poems. This valuation of Wordsworth's poems by Arnold constitutes the main thematic direction of ensuing studies of Romantic literature.

The critical tradition that places feeling over thought came to be faced with a strong challenge from the modernist camp represented by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and T. E. Hulme; therefore, the value of Romantic literature was largely disavowed by their poetic principle that traces good poetry from a proper synthesis of feeling and thought. This modernist position, despite its different valuation of Romantic poems, aligned itself with Arnold's view, in that both understood Romantic poems as expressive of feelings. The modernist devaluation of Romantic literature was reversed in the mid-twentieth century by burgeoning scholarly works on Romanticism, but the traditional characterization of Romantic literature as espousing human natural feelings against callously materialistic society was sustained and even elaborated into a cultural resource resistant to the modern problems.[7] For example, Northrop Frye proposes that

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[7] This rediscovery of the value of Romantic *poems* as resistant to the callous modern technological civilization was conducted by a group of critics whose academic practices are classified as "new criticism." Even in this era, however, long poems that announce a social philosophy were not seriously re-evaluated by this revived concern for Romanticism; rather, these critics' concern, like Arnold's, was directed toward short poems both in an attempt to espouse their formalistic literary theory and to evade the radical element of Romantic poems from their conservative perspective. For critical

Romanticism provides a healing energy through mythopoetic symbolism operated by a

creative mental process, and Lionel Trilling celebrates Romantic literature as

consummating an individual's potential to liberate him/herself from the tyranny of mass

culture.[8] That is, the value of human natural feelings became re-created into redemptive

individual creativity in these critical receptions of Romanticism.

This critical tendency culminated in M. H. Abrams's affirmation of individual

imagination expressed in Romantic literature as a site where a poet's political

disenchantment develops into a new mental vision by transcending his/her trauma

imposed by history. In his study, Abrams neatly established a dichotomy between

repressive historical realities (precipitated by the failure of the French Revolution) and a

regenerative mind of a man (say, creative imagination), and thus championed Romantic

works as paradigmatic models of introversive literature.[9] Although Paul de Man

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practices of new criticism toward Romantic poems, see René Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History" and "Romanticism Re-examined," *Concepts of Criticism*, ed., Stephen Nichols, Jr. (New Haeven: Yale UP, 1963) 128-198, 199-221. For a discussion of the ideological assumption of new criticism, see Jerome J. McGann, *Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1983).

[8] Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Boston: Beacon, 1962) 423-5; and Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Havard UP, 1971) 106-33.

[9] M H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953) 7-29. In contrast to Abrams's critical position, new concerns for radical activities (including literary practices) in the Romantic period appeared in the British intellectual scene of the 1950s and 1960s. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (New York: Harper, 1958); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963); and "Disenchantment or Default: A Lay Sermon," *Power and Consciousness*, ed. C. C. O'Brien and D. Vanech (London: U of London P, 1969) 149-81.

theorized contradiction and discrepancy inherent in the traditional tenets of Romantic works (e.g., the contradictory relation between imagination and nature) as opposed to the felicitous unity assumed in Romantic transcendentalism, his study did not go so far as to problematize the traditional critical framework based on the dichotomy between individual (mind) and society (history).[10]

In this sense, new historical studies that appeared in the early eighties brought about a revolutionary impact on Romantic studies, in which the concept of the power of internal mind that had dominated previous Romantic studies was critiqued and demystified through their extensive research of contemporary history surrounding Romantic literature. Two central proponents of these new historical studies are Marilyn Butler and Jerome McGann. Butler in *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* attempts to complicate the traditional definition of Romantic literature (i.e., literature about a mental liberation achieved through retiring from politics) both by expanding the Romantic period and including more writers in the list of Romantic literature. Thus she re-characterizes Romantic works as a variety of historically-oriented responses to their contemporary contexts. A major critical contribution found in Butler's study can be said to be her assault on the notion of canon, which was an essential element validating the assumptions of previous Romantic studies, and the annihilation of gender and class boundaries; nevertheless, she does not clearly reveal any theoretical assumption that endorses her study. On the other hand, McGann carries out a more polemical project in

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[10] Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight* (London: Methuen, 1983) 187-228.

The Romantic Ideology by declaring that Romantic studies were dominated by "an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations" (137). The chief target of his critical study of tracing back the practitioners of this Romantic ideology is Wordsworth who is presented as losing the world "to gain his own immortal soul" (80). As seen in this phrase, McGann's critical aim is to debunk all the ideological investments practiced under the rubric of Romanticism from his leftist perspective of history, and thereby his study opens a new way of embracing history in Romantic studies (i.e., political and ideological operations in both Romantic texts and criticisms).

Even if these historical studies drastically changed the intellectual topography of Romantic studies with their new thematic direction and critical methodology, it is also true that they exposed some limitation in figuring forth Romantic historicity. As representatively shown in McGann's study, the historicity embodied in Romantic literature (in traditional Romantic criticisms as well) manifests itself by self-displacement caused by traumatic historical experiences (in case of only texts) or ideological mediation of a dominant discourse (in case of both texts and criticisms). As a consequence, this historicity exists as no other than an antithetical axis to the affirmative Romantic discourse endorsing individual potentiality, and thus any intellectual activity practiced by Romantic writers and critics is interpreted as an evasion of political actions which should have been done to their contemporaries. From this antithesis between an engagement in politics and an affirmation of individuality derives a view that sees Romantic writers' cultural undertakings as political apostasy. This view ironically

corresponds to the individual/society dichotomy of traditional Romantic studies,

differing from the latter only in the place of valuation.

Recognizing this problematic manifestation of Romantic historicity in McGann's

study, several critics attempted to relocate Romantic historicity in discursive structures

or material forms of Romantic writings, not in an individual writer's psychological

displacement.[11] For instance, James Chandler identifies the historical narrative of

casuistry found in Romantic texts as a discursive pattern governing post-Waterloo

writings in Britain, and Terence Hoagwood interprets the duplicity inherent in Romantic

works as a product of contemporary historical conditions.[12] These studies, likewise,

attempted to confirm literary texts' historicity by locating socio-political elements that

structure an individual writer's cultural practice. In this sense, it seems possible to say

that the theoretical assumption of these studies more resembles Foucaultian theory which

highlights a dominant epistemic discourse patterned by the working of politically

repressive but ubiquitous power/knowledge (thus, the role of agency in history is

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[11] McGann's historical study based on the psychological displacement of Wordsworth has been complicated by ensuing historical studies focusing on the historicity immanent in Wordsworth's texts. The concern of these studies covers socio-economic conditions, cultural representations, and even epistemic discourses in (re/de)constructing the historicity of Wordsworth's texts. See, for example, Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986); David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (New York: Methuen, 1987); and Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989).

[12] James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998) 39-41; and Terence Hoagwood, *Politics, Philosophy, and the Production of Romantic Texts* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1996) 10-11.

generally doubted in this theory) than Habermasian theory of public sphere which

suggests the active role of agency in processes of social conditioning.[13] Briefly put,

although these historical studies placed literary texts' historicity within communal

practices conditioned upon specific political, social, and cultural contexts (beyond

individual psychology), they disregarded the significance of individual action (or

interaction) in a constitution of these historical contexts.

 With my critical position aligned with these historical studies, the thesis of this

dissertation derives from an attempt to tackle the problem of how to read the historicity

of Romantic literature without depreciating the significance of collective practices of

individuals in the historical process of the Romantic period. In this sense, Habermas's

concept of public sphere can provide a productive theoretical model for a historical

reading that this dissertation intends, because it ascertains the socio-cultural dimension

implicit in literary texts but at the same time never disregards interactive dynamics

among individuals in explaining these texts' representations of historical contexts. Hence,

theoretical models based on the notion of social determination can be alternated with that

which highlights dynamic communications and collaborations between individuals.

Given this significance of communicative and collaborative actions between individuals

implied in Habermas's theory, Jeffrey Cox's study of the Cockney School, which

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[13] In fact, Habermas himself has attempted to critique Foucault's closed epistemic system founded on ubiquitous power/knowledge by suggesting that this sort of theoretical framework that champions a regulated system not only nullifies individuals' productive participation in a making of history but also blocks any possibility of acting for social transformation. See Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1994) 1-13.

foregrounds the notion of "group," also provides many suggestive points for this dissertation, not only because his study presents detailed information of the Hunt circle's literary activities in its meticulous research on them, but because his notion of group displays an emphasis both of individual and society, similar to Habermas's theory.[14] For Cox, the challenging point in historical studies is to shatter abstractions in order to acknowledge the particular and the whole at the same time. In Cox's study, the notion of group serves this purpose. He "propose[s] the group as a dynamic position and project that through its ties to both the individual and the collective, the particular and the whole, stands in for abstraction in order to allow us to stand beyond it" (9). In this dissertation, this notion of group will be reassessed by examining communicative and collaborative actions practiced in the intellectual public sphere that the Hunt circle intended and actually created.

This reading of Romantic texts through a theoretical filter of public sphere, however, does not mean that the notion of public sphere serves as a single encompassing theoretical framework by which the historicity of Romantic literature is reconciled with its affirmation of individuality, nor does it argue for a homologous socio-cultural practice of Romantic writers as implied in Habermas's interpretation of bourgeois public spheres formed in eighteenth-century Britain.[15] In fact, it is true that Romantic texts

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[14] Jeffrey Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).

[15] Habermas does not completely preclude a possibility that this homologous model of bourgeois public sphere can assume some historical limitations within itself. But since this model serves his critical theory as the most relevant solution to the problems

require readers to take into account discrepancies found not only between respective writers but also one writer's different texts. This dissertation, therefore, seeks to assess these discrepancies as seminal elements upon which political, cultural practices of Romantic writers depended. The communal practice of Romantic writers, which led to the formation of their public sphere (or any type of discursive field), was founded not so much upon a static accumulation of each individual's ideas or his/her historically patterned consciousness, but upon a dynamic interaction between individuals' specific practices, whether they are manifested as a reciprocation of literary representations or as a socio-cultural involvement in public issues. That is, this dissertation, by underscoring this mode of communal interaction between individuals, seeks to elucidate how Romantic writers' (specifically, the Hunt circle members') claim that individuals' collective will effects a historical progress was formulated and frustrated in the early nineteenth century by examining the dynamics of their public sphere.[16] Consequently, this dissertation will oppose the more prevalent position in Romantic historicism based either on a Marxian model of class-oriented social determination or on a Foucaultian model of epistemé that presupposes a working of power/knowledge as a basic principle of history.

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immanent in the late-capitalistic society, he has never presented any theoretical modification to this model.

[16] Here, the term "public sphere" refers not so much to a specific site of group activities of the Hunt circle members as to a theoretical framework by which the Hunt circle members' activities are interpreted. Thus, in this dissertation, explanations about "their public sphere" inevitably accompany a generalizing theory about their activities for the public beyond an examination of specific cases of them in empirical terms.

An investigation of the Hunt circle's activities, I argue, can offer a model of this process-based historical theorization. Since Hunt's active engagement with public issues through several publications of periodicals and his subsequent imprisonment for his pungent condemnation of the Prince Regent in the *Examiner*, a group of intellectuals gathered together for common political, cultural aims. Their activities ranged from casual dining parties to periodical writings, through which their interests converged on liberal/radical views of politics and literature, even if their positions were often different from each other. Consequently, their activities came to shape a liberal/radical intellectual community which opposed the hegemonic ideology of the conservative government. But all these practices did not bring about explicitly tendentious political, cultural tenets based on a consensus between group members; rather, interactions within the group were founded upon individuals' distinctiveness and mutual differences. That is, their activities historically embodied communicative and collaborative dynamics of autonomous individuals' practices, which constitute the core of Habermas's public-sphere theory. Most importantly, many texts written by the Hunt circle members and the material conditions surrounding these texts represent and reproduce this communicative and collaborative process of their group activities. And from this communal process inherent in these texts derives the historicity of their writing practice.

It should not be ignored, however, that the socio-political horizon of the Hunt circle members, despite different class statuses among members, did not surpass the limitation of a middle-class intellectual public sphere, because their attitude toward the

increasing impact of plebeian popular culture and mass radical movements by the

working class was never consistently sympathetic and sometimes even severely

critical.[17] This limitation of their class consciousness came to engender a sense of

anxiety and instability in their writings, even when they celebrated intellectually

liberating powers of poetry and art for their promotion of the public good. This sense of

anxiety and instability caused the Hunt circle members to assume an ambivalent attitude

toward the public (especially, the newly emerging mass public and the working-class

public), and this ambivalent attitude foreshadowed divergent critical receptions of

Romantic literature in the Victorian period (for example, the divide between high and

low Romanticism).

Moreover, the Hunt circle's public sphere can be faced with a challenge of

feminist critics, because their activities as a public sphere hardly appreciate or involve

female writers' intellectual and social achievements. Anne Mellor's critique toward the

male-centered interpretation of Romanticism and the exclusion of women in Habermas's

public-sphere theory clearly shows this point. In *Romanticism and Gender*, Mellor

argues that liberal/radical ideals espoused by male writers of the Hunt circle failed to

grasp the more subtle politics of female writers (specifically, Mary Shelley and Felicia

Hemans) by concentrating on belligerently oppositional political tenets based on critical,

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[17] In this dissertation, this model of intellectual public sphere will be distinguished from Habermas's model of bourgeois public sphere, in that the former is more flexible toward class boundaries and more conscious of the social function of intellectuals' practices than the latter is assumed to be. Still, it is hard to deny that these two models are overlapped with each other in many respects, whereby this dissertation will locate the historical limitation of the Hunt circle's intellectual public sphere.

rational thinking. In contrast, female writers renounced this violent oppositional politics (represented by the French Revolution) and proposed "the ethic of care" in which "the rights of all are respected" and all the people "find maternal shelter and sustenance," and thereby female writers through this ethic of care articulated their political ideal as "the egalitarian family as the basis of good government" (*Romanticism and Gender* 68-9). By attending to this significance of female writers' alternative politics, Mellor goes as far as to contend that women in fact played a dominant part in the public sphere formulated in the Romantic period. That is, as opposed to Habermas's assumption that women's activity was confined to private spheres (e.g., individual households), Mellor sees "the values of the private sphere associated primarily with women—moral virtue and an ethic of care—infiltrating and finally dominating the discursive public sphere during the Romantic era" (*Mothers of the Nation* 11).[18] Concerning this issue of class and gender, this dissertation will propose that the significance of the Hunt circle as a public sphere does not lie in its representativeness as a public sphere of the Romantic period but in its distinctive position in a specific historical context (i.e., a liberal/radical middle-class intellectual public sphere faced with state repressions and commercialized popular culture). From this perspective, public spheres formed by working class people and

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[18] For a more detailed account of the ethic of care, see Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003). For historical accounts of the development of domestic ideology, see Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984); and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987).

female writers/readers in the post-Napoleonic period will be positioned as counter-public

spheres which engendered complicated reactions of the Hunt circle.[19]

Focusing on the issues suggested thus far, this dissertation will trace the historical

process of the Hunt circle members' political, cultural activities. More specifically,

Chapter II will argue that the public sphere that the Hunt circle created with the

foundation of the *Examiner* and the *Reflector* was predicated on the traditional notion of

the republic of letters which had served as a public principle of eighteenth-century print

culture, and thus will align liberal/radical activities of the Hunt circle with traditional

intellectuals' (i.e., men of letters') practices for the public good. Chapter III will show

how the Hunt circle's public sphere founded on the notion of the republic of letters came

to expose problems in addressing the public in the face of the changed situation of early

nineteenth-century print culture where commercial elements determined the reading

public's taste by examining Keats's literary activities and critical responses to them.

Chapter IV will examine how the Hunt circle's attempt to generate a unified and

inclusive public sphere (as the notion of the republic of letters assumes) came to be

frustrated and distorted in the intensified division of classes by reading Percy Bysshe

Shelley's writings both on politics and literature. And finally, Chapter V will deal with

the disintegration of the Hunt circle as a public sphere and the inflected reception of its

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[19] The term "counter-public sphere" has been used by critics of Habermas's public-sphere theory in order both to manifest the existence of other forms of public sphere than the bourgeois public sphere and to critique the normative political, ethical assumptions inherent in Habermas's historical explanation of public sphere. For a detailed discussion of counter-public sphere, see Chapter II of this dissertation.

members' political, cultural activities for the public in the Victorian period by observing

the ways in which Mary Shelley memorialized the Hunt circle both from her female

perspective and for the increasingly feminized reading public. In brief, this dissertation

will critically survey both the achievements and the failures of the Hunt circle as a public

sphere, and from this critical survey the historical significance of what critics call "the

second-generation Romantic writers" will be reassessed and ultimately revalued.

CHAPTER II

LEIGH HUNT AS A MAN OF LETTERS AND THE HUNT CIRCLE AS AN

INTELLECTUAL PUBLIC SPHERE: THE FORMATION OF THE HUNT

CIRCLE AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In an article of the *Examiner* "Young Poets," Leigh Hunt announces "that there has been a new school of poetry rising of late, which promises to extinguish the French one" (*Selected Works* 2: 73). In this announcement of a new school of poetry set up against "the French one," Hunt praises, as specific examples of this new school's literary practice, Byron's recently published poem, the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and three new poets' (Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and John Hamilton Reynolds) "poetical promises" which would "restore the same love of Nature and of *thinking*" (73-5). Hunt's endorsement of this new school was sustained and even intensified after this announcement, and thus in the Preface to *Foliage* published two years after "Young Poets" he illustrated what this new school of poetry had achieved by pointing out that it "did honour to the beauty of nature, and spread cheerfulness and a sense of justice among [his] fellow creatures" as opposed to the coldness and artificiality of the French school (*Literary Criticism* 132). Thus, Hunt not only validates the newly appearing literary trends but also suggests a significant breakthrough in the post-Napoleonic cultural (and also political) scene of Britain. This cultural and political breakthrough, as is well known, roughly corresponds with the practices of the so-called

second-generation writers of Romanticism, which played a salient role in the intellectual topography of the later part of the Romantic period. But what Hunt highlights in those articles is not confined to the new ideas that this school of poetry brought to the fore in terms of poetics (and politics, to be sure). In fact, Hunt's announcement carries a more significant element in terms of contemporary literary practices; that is, Hunt here seeks to highlight the material means by which both his claim and the literary practice of this new school were constitutive of and engaged in the *public* discourse.

Hunt resorts to two significant cultural elements to endow his claim of the new school's cultural legitimacy with public resonance, apart from his obvious attempt to validate the new school's creeds by adopting such a term as "nature" which was acquiring cultural hegemony in the literary scene of the Romantic period.[1] The first element is his vigorous use of print media as a space of advancing and embodying his political and cultural opinions. The *Examiner*, which Hunt founded with his brother John Hunt and edited for most of the time of its working as a leading weekly journal, was one of the period's most significant periodicals, and *Foliage* was Hunt's first serious collection of verse in which he fulfilled his poetics and politics both by theory and practice. Simply put, Hunt attempted to secure wider publicity for his claims through actively engaging with public print media.[2] The second element is Hunt's emphasis of

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[1] For an account of the political and cultural connotation of the term "nature" in the Romantic period, see James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984) 62-92.

[2] Hunt's active engagement with print media for gaining wider publicity is related to the drastic expansion of print industry in the early nineteenth century. As to the importance

group activity. For example, Hunt uses the word "school" for designating how those new poets' practices became culturally significant. In fact, his approval of this new school of poetry brought about several critical debates among literary intellectuals, and thus this new school's self-portrait and reception in its contemporary literary scene became a serious public issue that would involve a considerable number of cultural and political conflicts and confrontations up to the passage of the first Reform Bill in 1832. The terms "the Cockney school" and "the Lake school" and several critical feuds between mutually antagonistic periodicals surrounding these terms reflect the public significance of Hunt's foregrounding of the notion of school—i.e., the importance of communal activity in literary production.[3] From this perspective of the public significance of the communal

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of print technology, Kathryn Sutherland mentions as follows: "the year 1800 signals the democratization of literature because it saw the building of the first hand-operated iron-frame printing press . . . . In the search for heroes, it may be that Charles Earl Stanhope, the press's inventor, inaugurates the modern age of literature, and not William Wordsworth, though it is Wordsworth's rather than Stanhope's name which endures" (1). For general historical accounts of print culture in the Romantic period, see Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader* (1957; Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1998); Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (1961; Peterborough: Broadview, 2001); Alvin Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters and Samuel Johnson* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987); Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987); Jane Millgate, *Scott's Last Edition: A Study in Publishing History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1987); James Raven et al., eds., *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); and Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998).

[3] The confrontation between the Cockney school and the Lake school was initiated by the Hunt circle's charge against the political apostasy of the Lake school poets, especially against Southey's acceptance of the position of the Poet Laureate in 1813. As Charles Mahoney tellingly illustrates, "Southey's appointment . . . necessitated a defense of poetry against the charges of servility and submission that Hunt and Hazlitt leveled—and would continue to level—against all three Lake poets" (241). Jeffrey Cox assesses

activity of the Hunt circle, this chapter will attempt to explore and elucidate what publicity the Hunt circle intended to achieve and actually achieved within the complicated and transitional historical reality of the early nineteenth century by especially attending to the print culture with which the Hunt circle was involved and the social connections created between the circle members in terms of public-sphere theory initiated by Habermas.

1. Hunt's Activities through the *Examiner* and the Formation of the Hunt Circle

In terms of Hunt's own literary (very often politically oriented) activity, these two cultural elements (i.e., print media and collective activity) that formulated the public character of Hunt's claims were closely related with each other and led directly to his ideal practice of journalism. Aside from Hunt's first collection of poetry, *Juvenilia* (1801), his active literary career can be said to start with his writing of theatrical criticism, and more importantly the job of editor for the *Examiner*.[4] Naturally, Hunt's

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the confrontation between the two schools from the perspective of the Hunt circle's intended group activity. Cox argues that "the Hunt circle becomes a coherent group through its collective engagement with, and ultimately its collaborative attack upon, the Lake School; it is not just *Blackwood's* that defines the Cockneys in opposition to the Lakers, but they themselves who—while admiring the verse produced by the Lake school—would contest their cultural, social, and political vision" ("Leigh Hunt's Cockney School" par. 8).

[4] In 1805 Hunt's brother John launched a weekly the *News* for which Hunt wrote the theatricals. During 1807 Hunt was also writing theatricals for *The Times* and in 1808 became an editor of the *Examiner* with the start of this new weekly. As to Hunt's writing of theatricals, Nicholas Roe mentions in his biography of Hunt as follows: "Over the next two and a half years [from 1805] Hunt would write, 'with six or eight exceptions,'

career from the beginning was concerned with both criticism in which one individually

comments on politics and cultural productions and editing in which one controls the

direction of a periodical in corporate terms. This combination of individual critic and

corporate editor in Hunt's early career provided a certain distinctive tendency not only

for his following literary career but for his ideas of politics and culture. As declared in

the first issue of the *Examiner*, Hunt strongly underscored the importance of

independence in establishing the aim of his writing in a periodical. For Hunt, this

emphasis of independence should be set up by avoiding both political factionalism (what

Hunt calls "party spirit") and commercial influence (represented by the common practice

of advertisements in contemporary periodicals), and this intended distance from political

and commercial influence derived from his will to assume a role of disinterested and

independent writer modeled on such eighteenth-century periodical writers as Addison,

Steele, and Swift.[5] But Hunt's position as an editor, who is assumed to represent a public

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every theatrical article and review in [the News], an astonishing output for someone who
was also holding down a daytime clerical job. . ." (*Fiery Heart* 78).

[5] In "Newspaper Principle" (the *Examiner* II 6 August. 1809: 497-8.), Hunt displays his
respect for those early periodical writers: "A hundred years ago, when Steel, Addison,
and Swift wrote in the cause of party, political dispute exhibited a much more estimable
character than at present . . . the periodical politics of these illustrious men exhibited a
strain of virtue and a reference to dignified principle scarcely discernible in the present
times: the interests of philosophy, of good morals, and of good letters, and the
consistencies of public and private character were seldom forgotten; . . ." Despite Hunt's
apparent respect for those early journalists, however, he did not forget to indicate their
weaknesses. In "On Periodical Essays" (the *Examiner* I 10 January. 1808: 26.), Hunt
says, "I shall always endeavor to recollect the consummate ease and gentility with which
Addison approached his divine fair [wisdom] and the passionate earnestness with which
he would gaze upon [wisdom] in the intervals of the most graceful familiarity; but then I
must not forget his occasional incorrectness of language and his want of depth, when he

print medium and its communal voices, inevitably entailed social and political

tendentiousness beyond an individual's independent voice; more specifically, his

independence as an individual critic, in the strained situations of contemporary politics

and culture, led him to a strong support of the so-called radical or oppositional position

and a formation of an intellectual circle which would exert their own influence through

Hunt's editorial practice. In other words, Hunt's independence did not aim at an

objective detachment from any political and economic interest as expected from the

model of Addison and Steele but at an active engagement with his contemporary politics

and cultural production by *publicizing* his sense of justice and *communalizing* his critical

voice through a mechanism of print media. In this sense, Hunt's notion of independence

serves his career as an ideological principle espousing his practice of public engagement

rather than as an apolitically neutral tenet endorsing solipsistic aloofness transcending

any interest and influence.[6]

Hence, Hunt's propensity for independence implicitly embodied his ideal publicity,

especially in terms of the political and cultural situations of the early nineteenth century.

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attempted to displayed the critic" (*Selected Works* 1: 36). But what should be noted in these assessments on eighteenth-century writers is that they are not generally accepted views based on historical facts but Hunt's own critical judgments. For example, Jonathan Swift has been considered by many critics to be a vehement party-affiliated writer.

[6] Hunt, in the poem "Politics and Poetics," expresses his urgent feeling that he should engage in correcting political injustices. He says, "Th' enduring soul, that, to keep others free, / Dares to give up its darling liberty, / Lives wheresoe'er its countrymen applaud, / And in their great enlargement walks abroad. / But toils alone, and struggles, hour by hour, / Against th' insatiate, gold-flush'd Lust of Pow'r, / Can keep the fainting virtue of thy land / From the rank slaves that gather round his hand" (*Selected Works* 5: 13-4).

When Hunt started the *Examiner* with his brother John Hunt in 1808, the field of print

media was crowded with a variety of periodicals due to several technological

innovations. The degree to which these periodicals competed with one another for a gain

of commercial predominance was already intense, and moreover their mutually

antagonistic positions concerning various political and cultural issues added more

complications to this heated arena. As these economic competitions and ideological

clashes on political and cultural issues between periodicals became intensified

throughout the 1810s, their connections to real politics and involvement in various

interest groups of society came to be an important role of print media. Accordingly,

these periodical voices functioned as a central apparatus of creating a variety of public

activities (e.g., from a decent intellectual discourse to a mobilization of mass

oppositional movements). In this period, any sort of periodical writing (maybe any

printed writing) could not but be associated with certain political implications.[7] Hunt's

principle of independence for his writing and editorial practice, in this context, must

have implied a meaningful challenge to his contemporary political and cultural practices

ridden with blind factionalism and blunt commercial interests.

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[7] Concerning the culture of periodicals of this period, Terry Eagleton explains as follows: "It is the scurrility and sectarian virulence of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* which have lingered in the historical memory, in dramatic contrast to the ecumenism of an Addison or Steele. In these vastly influential journals, the space of the public sphere is now much less one of bland consensus than of ferocious contention" (37). For a more detailed account of this issue, see Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism* (London: Verso, 1984) 9-43.

This emphasis of Hunt's principle of independence risks losing sight of his contemporary periodicals' general rhetoric for the ideal of independence and universality (with some exceptions of obviously party-oriented journals), and Hunt's own apparent political tendency aligned with radical and oppositional positions. As Greg Kucich and Jeffrey Cox extensively demonstrate, a claim of independence as a primary principle was a common practice for many periodicals around the time of the founding of the *Examiner*.[8] Just as the *Examiner* did, those periodicals in their prospectuses claimed a clear opposition to "the confirmed denominations of *Whig* and *Tory*," "the organ of party," or the "vile interests of party" and pledged "perfect impartiality" and "strict neutrality" (xl). The *Political Gleaner; or Weekly Echo* even denounced the *Examiner* as a party paper by contrasting it with its own impartial and neutral position (xl). Hence, the claim of independence in periodicals was not received literally in the complicated struggles between their political and ideological positions, but rather this claim had been a conventional rhetoric widely adopted in print culture since the establishment of classical bourgeois periodicals in the early eighteenth century. In addition to this common practice of periodicals, Hunt's own tendentious political position belies his claim of independence. In fact, Hunt's political criticisms had prolifically displayed an apparent tendency of anti-Tory and anti-government position since the first issue of the *Examiner*, and this tendency continued (sometimes intensified) throughout the 1810s and

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[8] Greg Kucich and Jeffrey Cox, introduction, *Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, by Leigh Hunt, ed. Greg Kucich and Jeffrey Cox, vol. 1 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003) xxxix-xli.

the early 1820s. In those political essays, Hunt strenuously dealt with widely ranged contemporary political issues (e.g., Catholic emancipation, tax system, corruption in the military, and government's policy of war and diplomacy, to name a few) in a consistent vein of the oppositional reformist position. Moreover, the event of his imprisonment under the charge of seditious libel for insulting the Prince Regent raised Hunt to one of central figures of the radical reformist camp. Considering all those tracks Hunt had followed as a political critic, it is understandable that the name Hunt and the *Examiner* were naturally associated with a clearly acknowledged political faction or tendency by his contemporaries, instead of representing or realizing the ideal of independence of a periodical.

The common use of the term independence among periodicals and the tendentiousness of Hunt's political position, however, do not render invalid his own claim of independence, because both Hunt and his brother's principle of managing the *Examiner* and the political affiliation exhibited through Hunt's writing revealed quite unique ways in which the *Examiner* was distinguished from other periodicals and thus could claim itself as independent.[9] This unique independence was demonstrated in two ways. First, when Hunt emphasized the principle of independence in the "Prospectus" of the first issue of the *Examiner* in 1808, this emphasis was not confined to his claim of impartiality in the matter of politics. Here Hunt also claimed financial independence by

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[9] For a general discussion of the concept of independence in terms of artistic "autonomy" from commercial, political, and religious sponsorship, see Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed., trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997).

declaring that "NO ADVERTISEMENT WILL BE ADMITTED in the *Examiner*"

(*Selected Works* 1: 33). Although this declaration seems to offer just one possible

principle of managing a periodical, its implied significance cannot be underestimated

when considering the print culture of the early nineteenth century as well as the

following steps that the *Examiner* would take with this principle. According to Kucich's

and Cox's explanation, early nineteenth-century periodicals heavily depended on

advertisements for securing their financial resource, and some periodicals completely

committed themselves to the commercial interests of some business groups. In addition,

the traditional way of getting patronage was still widely practiced among publishers.[10] In

both cases, a certain level of influence from a variety of interest groups or political

factions was definitely inevitable, and thereby a value of print media was frequently

determined or consolidated by the degree to which they could be utilized as an effective

device of propaganda and a profitable commodity, as Hunt critically implied several

times in his essays.[11] Against this backdrop of contemporary print culture, Hunt's claim

of financial independence from both advertising and patronage carried a more serious

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[10] Greg Kucich and Jeffrey Cox xli-xliii.

[11] For example, Hunt criticizes the way in which newspapers pursue their private interest by being used as an organ of party politics in "Newspaper Principle" (The *Examiner* II 30 July. 1809: 481-2). He says, "[w]hen a person wishes to establish a daily paper, he looks about for a set of patrons; and as the state for years past has been divided into Pittite and Foxite, it has hitherto been the custom to apply to one or other of these parties for their custom and recommendation: the choice was determined in some small measure by inclination, but principally by connection and chance, and from that moment the fidelity of the proprietor to his employers was to be altered by no change either of measures, or ministers, or public opinion,—in short, by no change but one,—that of private interest" (*Selected Works* 1: 103).

implication than just a possible form of financial management of a periodical, because this independence exemplified a way in which a public voice of print media could be *legitimately* set up against dominating connections between political, social, and commercial powers. In reality, the *Examiner* was successfully managed without advertisements until 1820, and Hunt's claim of independence, in this sense, should be said to remain valid in its own distinctive manner, despite the routine claims of independence by other periodicals.

Second, Hunt's (and his circle's) political tendency suggested in the *Examiner* was not exactly affiliated with any contemporary political positions, even though he was often received to his contemporaries as a radical writer espousing the popular opposition, just as the most famous popular writer William Cobbett was. From the beginning of Hunt's career as political writer, he endeavored to distance himself from any party affiliation.[12] He even designated in an article "On the Party Spirit" the prevalent party-oriented political thoughts (based on the Whig-Tory division) as the source of all the problems that the British political scene had revealed. Despite this denigration of "party spirit," nevertheless, Hunt's political position had been sympathetic toward the Whig reformist groups whose leader was James Fox, as opposed to the conservative Tory policies conducted by the regime of William Pitt. It was for this reason that he once had a hope of political reform by the Prince Regent who had been considered to support the cause of reform by Whig reformers. It was also for this reason that when the Regency

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[12] The *Examiner* took as its motto "Party is the madness of the many for the gain of the few."

regime turned out to refuse to reform the previous regime's conservative and repressive policies, he became frustrated and thus repeatedly poured fierce political critiques (sometimes scathing personal attacks) on the Regency regime, which finally sent him and his brother John to jail.

This political sympathy toward the Whig reformist groups seemed to continue in the middle of the post-Napoleonic period's political turmoil, when considering his subsequent support (though qualified) for Francis Burdett's reformist position. And in this sense, it is possible to say that Hunt was roughly affiliated with the reformist Whig position. However, Hunt also wrote several political essays espousing the popular oppositional movements represented by the Spa Fields Riots in 1816 and the Manchester gathering of 1819 leading to the "Peterloo" Massacre, in alliance with other oppositional writers who defined themselves and were received by their contemporaries as positioned outside of the conventional party politics of Whig-Tory division.[13] This alliance confirmed Hunt's principle of independence from party politics and gave him a new political identity as a radical. But again the attempt to connect Hunt with the popular oppositional groups should be qualified when he was seen to disavow those groups' mobilization of mass popular movements and regard this appeal to popular consent as an

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[13] See "Disturbances in the Metropolis" (The *Examiner* IX 8 December. 1816: 769-70.) and "Disturbances at Manchester" (The *Examiner* XII 22 August. 1819: 529-31.). In those articles, Hunt usually focuses on the Tory government's illegitimate repression of people's legitimate voice rather than on the ideological tenets suggested by the movements; still, he expresses his belief in the progress of knowledge and freedom as an intellectual reformist.

act of demagoguery.[14] In brief, an investigation of Hunt's writings and activities, even if it is confined to his career before he obviously became less political in the late 1820s (approximately when he founded the *Companion* in 1828), resists any clear definition of his political position or affiliation, thus validating his claim of independence. Given those independent ways of the *Examiner*'s financial management and Hunt's resistance against belonging to any political factions, Hunt can be said to embody the ideal of independence in his own sense. More significantly, this distinctive independence that he and his circle embodied in the political and cultural scene of the 1810s became a ground on which their claims on political and cultural issues were able to give rise to more reverberation among contemporaries.

As mentioned before, Hunt's notion of independence for the *Examiner* never excluded the necessity of communal voice (as exhibited in his focus on group activity) and engagement with the public (as demonstrated in his ceaseless concern for socio-political issues) in realizing the ideal of journalism. Rather, it would be more appropriate to say that Hunt's practice of writing and editing in the *Examiner* sought to fulfill legitimate publicity and communality through voices of a specific group of intellectuals who stood against the dominating political and cultural powers for the cause that independence of print media (or independence of writing in more abstract terms) should

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[14] From the early phase of the *Examiner*, Hunt distances his position from popular mass movements. In the "Prospectus" to the *Examiner*, he contends, "A crowd is no place for steady observation. The *Examiner* has escaped from the throng and bustle, but he will seat himself by the way-side and contemplate the moving multitude as they wrangle and wrestle along" (*Selected Works* 1: 32).

be secured. Thus Hunt's activity in print culture from the outset was predicated on his

belief in the potential of establishing public legitimacy by communal intellectual

practices, and this intellectual community, according to his principle of independence,

should be committed to advancing and embodying its own sense of justice, thereby not

conforming to any external influence or interest. Moreover, for Hunt this public

legitimacy achieved by intellectuals' communal practice should not rule out any practice

of prioritizing the significance of imaginative play of individual mind, since his notion

of independence also emphasizes an independent and free expression of individuals'

inner selves. And this emphasis of individual imagination leads to justifying the role of

literature (i.e., what Hunt calls "Poetry") in the public discourse of politics.[15]

Consequently, the public space constituted by Hunt's activity in journalism, which had

been pursuing the principle of independence, came not only to develop into one of

notable oppositional print media in which a variety of socio-political issues could be

discussed and criticized by communal deliberation of independent intellectuals, but more

importantly to demonstrate an alternative form of publicity through which a private

person's imagination could be freely interfused with political and social concerns in a

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[15] Many critics point out that Hunt's poetic ideas were associated with his radical politics. For a study of how Hunt's poetic practice was related to his political ideas, see Jeffrey Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); Richard Cronin, "Leigh Hunt, Keats and the Politics of Cockney Poetry," *The Politics of Romantic Poetry: In Search of the Pure Commonwealth* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000): 181-99; and Nicholas Roe ed., *Leigh Hunt: Life, Poetics, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003). In contrast to these studies, Gilmartin argues that Hunt's "poetic aspirations and belletristic inclinations" ultimately led him to apolitical conformism (*Print Politics* 216).

free mind-play of intellectual critics. To be sure, to what extent Hunt achieved this principle could be qualified by looking into Hunt's later career; nevertheless, it should be ascertained that this principle of Hunt's journalistic practice created a unique intellectual entity (what historians and literary critics have called the Hunt circle or the Cockney school) within the public sphere of print culture that had been formed in the early nineteenth century.

2. Debates Surrounding Habermas's Public-Sphere Theory

Here the term "public sphere" may need a more detailed explanation, not only because this term implies theoretical complications when derived from and applied to historical realities, but because there appears certain congruity between the publicity that the Hunt circle embodied in early nineteenth-century politics and culture and Habermas's normative assumption of his public-sphere theory. As is now widely recognized, it is after Habermas wrote *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* that the term "public sphere" came to carry theoretical significance not only for social and political studies but for literary studies. Although the term "public sphere" itself can be used to describe a space of public activity in any historical period as a neutral term, for Habermas this term takes on normative connotations of directing his socio-political ideals through his focusing on the bourgeois public sphere that appeared through the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in some European countries. The bourgeois public sphere was generated, according to Habermas, from specific

bourgeois social conditions. In those conditions, large numbers of middle-class men were given chances to be together through the remarkable increase of public places (coffeehouses, salons, and print media, for example) and came to engage in argument over various issues of mutual interest and concern, basing this argument on rational-critical discourse.[16]

The advent of this new practice of bourgeois society was consequent upon two historical phenomena. First, the cultivation of individual interiority through art and literature began to appear as a rudimentary ground on which a rational public discussion and debate could be effectuated. The number of published novels and memoirs was shown to increase tremendously from the eighteenth century, and therefore the issues of art and literature became a focus of many people, habituating them to publicly discussing given issues on the basis of their own subjective *reason*. Later, public issues more often discussed shifted from art and literature to politics and economics, and this shift rendered the bourgeois public sphere directly concerned with the state policies of political and economic matters while each individual was holding his or her private realm intact.

Second, the public discussion of the bourgeois public sphere was predicated on voluntary participation of people considered as mutually equal—i.e., what Habermas calls "the principle of universal access" (85). But this principle of universal access, as

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[16] For various critical debates surrounding the issue of Habermas's public-sphere theory, see Craig Calhoun ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1992); and Bruce Robbins ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993).

Habermas himself points out, accompanied significant qualifications in its application to historical reality; that is, a private person could be admitted to the public sphere only with property ownership and education, which means that only males of the bourgeois class could practically participate in this rational-critical debate of the public sphere. As to this problem, Habermas offers a compelling, but ambivalent answer:

> For the private person, there was no break between *homme* and *citoyen*, as long as the *homme* was simultaneously an owner of private property who as *citoyen* was to protect the stability of the property order as a private one. Class interest was the basis of public opinion. During that phase, however, it must also have been objectively congruent with the general interest, at least to the extent that this opinion could be considered the public one, emerging from the critical debate of the public, and consequently, rational. It would have turned into coercion at that time if the public had been forced to close itself off as the ruling class, if it had been forced to abandon the principle of publicity. (87)

The exclusive qualifications by which bourgeois class secured and sustained their class interest, Habermas admits, were a historical fact; however, the means by which they constituted public opinions (i.e., the critical-rational debate of the public) made it possible for their class interest to be congruent with general interest, because this procedural rationality could endow the principle of bourgeois publicity with normative legitimacy. Thus for Habermas it is only when this principle of publicity was abandoned

that the bourgeois public sphere turned into a coercive ruling ideology, and that is why

the validity of the principle of publicity itself cannot be annulled in his theory with the

degeneration of its historical realization.[17]

Despite Habermas's underpinning of the validity of the principle of publicity as

such, the way in which he describes a process of degeneration of the bourgeois public

sphere throughout the nineteenth century up to the present time reasserts the immanent

problems of this specific public sphere and explicitly reveals his strong critique toward

how the transformed socio-political order of the modern time disrupts this principle of

publicity. In addition, Habermas's critical survey of the transformational process of the

bourgeois public sphere can offer a useful insight to the study of the Hunt circle, in that

the problems and difficulties that the Hunt's circle faced and exposed in the course of

fulfilling their political and cultural ideals are in many respects congruent with the

historical process of the bourgeois public sphere's degeneration that Habermas displays,

although Habermas himself does not clearly demarcate the timeline of this

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[17] Habermas develops this normative dimension of the historical publicity of liberal
bourgeoisie into a more abstract communicative action theory. In rationalizing this new
theoretical perspective, he suggests that "the normative foundations of the critical theory
of society be laid at a deeper level. The theory of communicative action intends to bring
into the open the rational potential intrinsic in everyday communicative practices.
Therewith, it also prepares the way for a social science that proceeds reconstructively,
identifies *the entire spectrum* of cultural and social rationalization processes, and also
traces them back beyond the threshold of modern societies. Such a tack no longer
restricts the search for normative potentials to a formation of the public sphere that was
specific to a single epoch" ("Further Reflections" 442). For a more detailed account of
communicative action as a normative social principle, see Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of
Communicative Action*, trans. T. McCarthy, vol. 2 (Boston: Beacon, 1989).

degeneration.[18] In Habermas's scenario, the degeneration took place mostly because there came a blurring of relations between private and public realms which had functioned as a prerequisite for the formation of the bourgeois public sphere. This blurring brought about the loss of the notion that free and autonomous individuals pursue a general or public interest through critical-rational debates, because there could be no pure private realm from which a disinterested address to public affairs was possibly derived; instead, private realms came to be ceaselessly influenced by state powers that had been already infiltrated by commercial interest groups. Accordingly, the publicity conducted in politics was not produced from disinterested individuals' critical-rational debates but from negotiations between political organizations seeking their own interest, and the disinterested relationship between members engendered by their communal pursuit of public interest became commodified and reified through the encroachment of commercially motivated interest groups. Considering that the outcries that Hunt expressed concerning the political and cultural situations of the early nineteenth century were, as previously stated, mostly directed toward the corrupt politics based on a rigidified party system and the prevailing tendency of pursuing what Hunt calls "money-getting" especially in print culture, it is not difficult to note the resemblance not just

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[18] The starting point of this degeneration process can be roughly said to be from the mid nineteenth century, because Habermas sees in this period (but not so specifically) a social phenomenon that "an interventionsit policy (which has been characterized as 'neomercantilist') could restrict the autonomy of private people" and thus "the powers of 'society' themselves assumed functions of public authority," which he argues "destroyed the basis of the bourgeois public sphere—the separation of state and society" (*Structural Transformation* 142).

between Hunt's and Habermas's ways of seeing the problems inherent in the nineteenth-century politics and culture but between their normative ideals which foreground the principle of publicity as a means of achieving political justice and cultural legitimacy.

Despite a certain validity of Habermas's theorization of the bourgeois public sphere especially in explicating the historical significance of the political and cultural ideas of the Hunt circle, however, the theory itself implies several problems because this theory, by specifying male bourgeois-class publics that appeared in the early eighteenth century as a theoretical model, exposes too strict a class and gender boundary and too limited a time period to serve as a framework for a general theory. The questions aroused by these problems can be expressed as follows. Does Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere aim for a historical explanation of one specific period when this ideal principle of publicity was realized or for a proposition of a theory of publicity functioning as normative socio-political ethics regardless of its historical realization? If the bourgeois public sphere contains the problematic limitations derived from its own exclusive class interest from the beginning of its historical emergence, then isn't it possible to contend that the publicity embodied in this public sphere is not able to serve as a normative theoretical ground? Considering all the struggles and contradictions that the bourgeois public sphere historically displayed, can it be said that the means by which the bourgeois class achieved their publicity was not confined to critical-rational debates but depended to a considerable extent on power-oriented contestation among interest groups? Finally and most significantly, can there be any alternative publicity constituted

by other social or cultural groups than the classical bourgeois class, through which a new form of discursive legitimacy can supplement or even supplant the exclusive nature of the bourgeois public sphere?

From the same vein of those questions, many criticisms, indeed, have arisen in response to Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public-sphere theory, thereby contesting both its theoretical validity and historical implications.[19] Among these critical issues, the most relevant issue that can be applied to the context of the Hunt circle's group activity in journalism is whether or not other forms or principles of publicity than the one formulated from the bourgeois public sphere (i.e., what many critics have termed "counter-public spheres") served as a desirable alternative to bourgeois publics in early nineteenth-century politics and culture. This proposition of counter-public spheres, since Habermas's theorization of the bourgeois public sphere, has been a controversial but significant issue among social theorists who attend to theoretical and practical potentials implied in the public-sphere theory, because it is believed that the idea of multiple counter-public spheres can offer a useful solution to the problems immanent in construing the bourgeois public sphere as a venue of engendering single and comprehensive legitimate publicity.

Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's *The Public Sphere and the Experience* is one of those theoretical attempts to bring forward the notion of counter-public spheres. In Negt and Kluge's new notion of public-sphere theory, the normative principle of

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[19] For a comprehensive account of critics of Habermas's theory, see Peter Hohendahl, *The Institution of Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 242-80.

publicity generated by the workings of the bourgeois public sphere has not been able to hold its legitimacy since its exclusive nature became explicit and irreversible, for a simple reason that a working public sphere should presuppose universal accessibility in a practical sense. To be sure, Habermas directs his theoretical model toward inferring normative ethics rather than justifying historical cases, but for Negt and Kluge the discrepancy between the normative conception of the bourgeois public sphere and the real progress of history inevitably leads to a loss of theoretical legitimacy on the assumption that any legitimate theoretical proposition should be grounded in social experiences derived from historical reality. From this assumption, Negt and Kluge focus on the social experience of working-class masses and propose a necessity of establishing the proletarian public sphere as a substitute for the bourgeois public sphere that depends on class and gender exclusivity. But for them this new public sphere does not signify an appearance of a new form of publicity which reformulates all the existing social relations; rather, they suggest a possibility that multiple public spheres can be constituted from struggles and conflicts between social groups, and thus each public sphere can engender its own local publicity (instead of a single comprehensive publicity) through its own unique social experience. That is, the notion of counter-public sphere is predicated on abandoning a single normative publicity and thus endorsing the way in which various publics coexist, keeping their respective legitimacy.

Nancy Fraser, another critic of Habermas's public-sphere theory, develops this notion of counter-public sphere into a postmodern conception of the public sphere.[20] According to Fraser, this new conception of the public sphere has the following three features:

> (1) a postmodern conception of the public sphere must acknowledge that participatory parity requires not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of systemic social inequalities;
>
> (2) where such inequality persists, however, a postmodern multiplicity of mutually contestatory publics is preferable to a single modern public sphere oriented solely to deliberation; and
>
> (3) a postmodern conception of the public sphere must countenance not the exclusion, but the inclusion, of interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels "private" and treats as inadmissible. (295)

As clearly suggested here, the new notion of public sphere aims to embrace marginal groups and foreground their interests and issues which have been bracketed (excluded in practice) in the conception of the bourgeois public sphere, so that this new notion can secure a ground of validating a plural mode of public sphere. Moreover, this notion even modifies the traditional demarcation of "private" and "public" in an attempt to redeploy social roles which have been unequally distributed mostly due to gender distinction. The

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[20] Nancy Fraser, "Politics, Culture, and the Public Sphere: Toward a Postmodern Conception," *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, ed. Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 287-312.

result is an enlarged and diversified notion of publicity, and through this new notion, not only present social inequalities can be properly identified and corrected, but also a new perspective for the bourgeois publicity constituted in the past can be formulated, thereby offering an insight on the relativistic nature of bourgeois publics as opposed to their self-claim as a single mode of universal publicity.

This notion of counter-public sphere has actually offered useful insights to Romantic studies, since many new conceptions of publicity could be identified and valorized from this notion. Thus many studies based on those new conceptions of publicity started to shed a new light on various cultural practices (possibly, political and social practices as well) of the Romantic period by either modifying or completely correcting the original conception of Habermas's public-sphere theory. A forum on "Romanticism and its Publics," over which Jon Klancher presided at the 1993 MLA Convention in Toronto, is the most telling example of this intellectual concern for the notion of counter-public sphere in Romantic studies.[21] In this forum, four critics attempt to tackle the issue of how the notion of public sphere or publicity can serve Romantic studies as a theoretical guide, but interestingly (and significantly), their essays give more attention to "Habermas's revisionists and the *counter*-public sphere or spheres" than to "Habermas and the public sphere" (579), as the forum's responder, Orrin Wang points out. Those essays, indeed, cover a wide range of forms of publicity which were

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[21] Jon Klancher ed., "Romanticism and Its Publics," *Studies in Romanticism* 33.4 (1994): 527-88. In this forum which was the first serious attempt to apply public-sphere theory to the Romantic study, Klancher's introduction, four articles on specific publics of the Romantic period, and Orrin Wang's response essay are included.

obviously actualized in the early nineteenth century but excluded (or bracketed) in the mainstream Romantic discourse, whose examples are radical publics, feminist publics, and the Cockney school, to name a few. Even though this attention to counter-public spheres can be seen as an attempt to widen and diversify an intellectual focus of Romantic studies, which has been prevailing since the burgeoning of historicist studies, their essays nevertheless reveal certain notable assumptions in their underpinning of counter-public sphere: that in the early nineteenth century, the political and cultural situations did not comply with Habermas's model of the bourgeois public sphere; that the cultural practice that has been termed Romanticism was in fact a set of struggles and confrontations between contesting publics or public spheres rather than a series of mutually coherent cultural tendencies; and that the liberal conception of the bourgeois public sphere can reproduce and reiterate an intellectual view founded on what Jerome McGann calls "Romantic ideology" in which various Romantic discourses tend to be reduced to a single mode of discourse focusing on the narrowed notion of literature.[22]

James Chandler's essay among them especially provides an important insight regarding the Hunt circle by drawing upon the historical significance of the Cockney school from the perspective of counter-public sphere.[23] Chandler in his reading of both

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[22] McGann describes the working of this ideology as follows: "[Wordsworth's 'Intimations Ode'] generalizes—we now like to say mythologizes—all its conflicts, or rather resituates those conflicts out of a socio-historical context into an ideological one" (*Romantic Ideology* 88-9).

[23] James Chandler, "Hallam, Tennyson, and the Poetry of Sensation: Aestheticist Allegories of a Counter-Public Sphere," *Studies in Romanticism* 33.4 (1994) 527-37.

Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" and Arthur Henry Hallam's 1831 essay "On Some of the characteristics of Modern Poetry…" sees a space of new publicity derived from the Cockney school in which "a poetry of sensation not of reflection" replaced "a domain of *opinion*, doxa, 'doctrine'" (532-3). From this reading, Chandler argues that this new publicity served the Romantic period as a telling instance of a counter-public sphere by pointing up to the correspondence between Negt and Kluge's endorsement of the political potential that "fantasy" can bring forth and the public effect of "fantasy" that this poetry of sensation evoked among working-class people in the early nineteenth century. For Chandler, this counter-public sphere generated by the poetry of sensation was a space of an alternative discourse where working-class people were able to resist the political and cultural domination of the bourgeois class by conceiving their own sense of liberation. Thus Chandler concludes this essay by contending that "it is possible to see the poem ["The Lady of Shalott"] as offering the fantasy of its new form of art-writing as a labor-oriented alternative to the bourgeois domain of public opinion—and necessary to see that, if it does, it does so in the historical moment when the trajectory of an idealized public opinion in Britain turns downward from its apogee" (537).

In this argument, it is noteworthy to see two assumptions on which the Hunt circle is defined. First, the poetic practice made by the Hunt circle (as already assumed in the naming of the Cockney school) is defined as "poetry of sensation" that offered a new element of fantasy to its contemporary public domain. This definition obviously differentiates this poetic practice from the preexisting public discourse especially among

intellectuals, thereby characterizing this practice as constituting a counter-public sphere. Second, this argument traces the advent of a new counter-public sphere from the historical situation surrounding it, in which the decline of the classical bourgeois public sphere had already been in quite a degree of progress. In this situation, the argument implies, the formation of a new counter-public sphere inevitably entails a new type of public discourse which could possibly incorporate an element of historical progress, and this progressive element was represented by the new counter-public sphere's connection with the ethos of working-class people.

These assumptions convincingly demonstrate, on the one hand, the ways in which a new progressive counter-publicity replaces an old, conservative one with an aid of the growing power of a new social force (the working class, in this instance). On the other hand, this demonstration of a story of historical progress ironically reiterates the argument of reactionary critics who severely denigrated the cultural practice of the Hunt circle by inventing the originally derogatory term, "the Cockney school." In the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (below *Blackwood's*), Z, identified later as John Lockhart, derided the cultural basis of the Hunt circle (mostly by focusing on Hunt's work on poetry) as follows:

> Its [the Cockney school's] chief Doctor and Professor is Mr. Leigh Hunt, a
> man certainly of some talents, of extravagant pretensions both in wit, poetry,
> and politics, and withal of exquisitely bad taste, and extremely vulgar modes

of thinking and manners in all respects. He is a man of little education.

(Reiman 49)

Here several characterizations of Hunt as a representative figure of the Cockney school emphasize how the Hunt circle was deviant from the established cultural norm. Hunt in this judgment is a man of "pretensions" about all the intellectual practices, thus just displaying "bad taste" and "vulgar modes of thinking and manners." He even has a low level of education. All those features attest not so much to the Hunt circle's lack of proper qualities for an intellectual as to their difference from the mainstream decorum. For Lockhart, Hunt has such qualities necessary for an intellectual as knowledge of poetry and politics, taste for cultural products, modes of thinking and manners, and even education. But the problem lies in that all those qualities are vulgar, bad and low. Hunt and his circle from this perspective do not satisfy the proper level of intellectual qualities, but considering the subjective nature of this judgment, what seems to be a real problem is the Hunt circle's difference or newness. That is, it is the newness of the Hunt circle's poetic practice and its divergence from the established standard of how a man of letters should be that created the basis on which an antagonistic critic like Lockhart disavows the validity of the public implications engendered from the Hunt circle's cultural products. While the Hunt circle's distinctive cultural practice caused its contemporaries like Lockhart to see certain negative elements in it, modern critics like Chandler find this distinctiveness carrying a progressive energy which resulted in a formation of a new counter-public sphere. Still, despite the contrast, both contemporary reviewers and

modern critics commonly assume that the Hunt circle's cultural practice generated a new

mode of publicity deviating from and resistant to the ethos of the bourgeois public

sphere.

3. The Notion of the Republic of Letters as the Basis of the Hunt Circle's Publicity

Despite those critical efforts based on public-sphere theory, it cannot be denied

that some problems are located in this characterization of the Hunt circle as a new

cultural entity or a counter-public sphere (whether it is appreciative or denunciatory),

because this characterization itself can be disavowed by the fact that the members of the

Hunt circle did not admit the opposing critics' charge that they deviated from the

legitimate cultural norm.[24] The Hunt circle, in fact, did not attempt to bring forth a new

cultural practice different from that of traditional men of letters. Rather, they attempted

to correct or reform the misguided practice of contemporary politics and culture not from

a new or *counter* perspective but from a long cherished tradition of the republic of letters.

For example, Hunt contended in the Preface to *Foliage* that "[Hunt circle's poetic

principle] can neither confound [the French school of poetry's] monotony with a fine

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[24] Hunt attributed the hostile reception of his work to political factionalism, what Hunt called "the wrath of Tory Critics" rather than to his difference from the established literary norm. On the hostile reception of *The Story of Rimini*, Hunt says in *Autobiography* that "[*The Story of Rimini*] would have met with no such hostility, or indeed any hostility at all, if politics had not judged it. Critics might have differed about it, of course, and reasonably have found fault; but had it emanated from the circles, or had been written by any persons not obnoxious to political objection, I believe there is nobody at this time of the day, who will not allow, that the criticism in all quarters would have been very good-natured, and willing to hail whatever merit it possessed" (231).

music, nor recognize the real spirit of poetry in . . . their gross mistake about what they called classical, which was Horace and the Latin breeding, instead of the elementary inspiration of Greece" (*Literary Criticism* 130) for the purpose of criticizing the practice of the proponents of what Hunt calls "the French school of poetry." What is notable in this statement is Hunt's modified interpretation of the term "classical" which serves as a central assumption of his critique. For Hunt the problems of the French school of poetry lie in their wrong notion of the term "classical" resulting from an excessive dependence on Latin literature and a neglect of Greece rather than their penchant for classical principle itself. More simply put, Hunt does not create a new principle against an old one so much as sets up a right old one by criticizing a wrong old one. It seems inappropriate, in this sense, to characterize the Hunt circle's reformative address to the practice of conventional politics and culture as an attempt to establish a new counter-public sphere, for the circle members seemed to be clearly conscious, as the quoted Hunt's criticism demonstrates, of the traditionally accepted assumptions of intellectual discourse from which both the Hunt circle and their opponents searched for an authoritative basis of argument. In a word, with those commonly accepted assumptions, they displayed a sense of participating in the same public discourse that had been considered to be universally recognized among intellectuals.

Given these problems in defining the Hunt circle's publicity, it becomes imperative to place a more refined theoretical framework for the public sphere that the Hunt circle created than either Habermas's model focusing on the rise and fall of the

bourgeois public sphere or the dichotomous model in which only the opposing and struggling relationship between the dominant bourgeois public sphere and the resistant counter-public spheres of minority groups constitutes a meaningful ground of public-sphere theory. An attempt to figure out a new mode of public sphere from the publicity that the Hunt circle embodied is important in two ways: first, this attempt can provide a more appropriate theoretical ground of assessing the historical significance of the Hunt circle's political and cultural practice in terms of public-sphere theory without necessarily characterizing this circle either as proponents of the bourgeois public sphere or as a marginalized opposing group forming a counter-public sphere; second, the normative ethics implied in public-sphere theory (not only Habermas's theory but other counter theories as well) can be critically inspected by observing the ways in which the Hunt circle's public ideals were practiced in the middle of the complicated and transitional situation of early nineteenth-century Britain. That is, by attending to the distinctive feature of the Hunt circle's public sphere and exploring its unique practice for its ideal publicity in the context of diverse political and cultural publics' contestations aiming toward their own public influence, both the public dimension of intellectual discourses of the Romantic period and their normative public ideal that aimed to be universally valid can be reconsidered in a reflexive manner.

In order to proceed with this attempt, the following questions need to be answered. To what extent does the public ideal of the Hunt circle comply with the normative principles that formulate the bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth-century Britain? How

does the Hunt circle's engagement with its contemporary political and cultural practices confirm or modify Habermas's assumption that individual interiority cultivated in the literary public sphere provided a basis of critical rationality on which the political public sphere was founded? How and to what extent did the Hunt circle embrace or distance itself from the new tenets of the marginal but growing social groups (especially, the popular oppositional group that purported to represent the emerging working class and the feminist group that was gaining social, cultural influence through the increasing commercial power of women writers), when most of its members were committed to the cause of political (and cultural) reformation in which the pre-existing social orders should be reconsidered from a critical viewpoint? Finally, what sort of historical explanation can be offered concerning the disintegration of the Hunt circle and the limit of its ideological aim, especially in relation to Habermas's scenario of the decline of the bourgeois public sphere? In an attempt to answer those questions, contradictions and ambivalence immanent in the public sphere that the Hunt circle struggled to achieve will be revealed along with their historical significance. The exploration of this historical significance will bring about not only a new assessment of the Hunt circle's pursuit of legitimating its publicity but an alternative framework for public-sphere theory itself as well.

As many critics suggested, the most salient feature of the Hunt circle's public activity is the combination of a pursuit of literary writing and an active engagement with

contemporary political issues at stake.[25] Concerning the way in which this combination

has been interpreted in Romantic studies, however, there exist two definitely distinctive

critical approaches. Traditionally, literary critics and commentators of Hunt (and also

key members of the Hunt circle) have separated the political writing from the literary,

thereby assuming a certain fundamental difference between the purposes and functions

of the respective writings.[26] According to this critical view, while Hunt's political

writing addresses the issue of real politics for the purpose of criticizing and correcting

social injustices in public terms, his literary writing is more concerned with private

feelings, domestic life, and fraternal relationship between friends in order to fulfill his

aesthetic ideals. Critics with this view, on the basis of this classificatory assessment of

Hunt's writing, attend to the point where Hunt's political concerns weakened and his

literary pursuit came to the foreground. These critics roughly agree that this point was

after Hunt's imprisonment years by locating several evidences that prove Hunt's

growing apolitical tendency, which range from the denunciatory remark on Hunt's

retreat from politics by contemporary radical exponents like William Cobbett to Hunt's

own revision of his political tenets as suggested in his *Autobiography*.[27] Some critics

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[25] For example, in evaluating the *Reflector*, Kenneth Kendall says: "In continuing and repeating the political sentiments of the *Examiner*, [the *Reflector*] reflected the political discontent of the time so thoroughly that politics permeated much of its editor's imaginative writing" (11).

[26] For example, Lawrence and Carolyn Houtchens, when editing Hunt's essays, divide them into two separate volumes in accordance with whether they are political or literary.

[27] From the same vein, Gilmartin explains Hunt's ideological tendency as follows: "Hunt's willingness to associate peaceful reform with the rhetorical and cognitive style

even contend that Hunt's political writing does not have any consistent political ideology, and that most political concerns displayed in Hunt's writing were usually occasioned by his extempore private feelings for some specific events.[28]

Despite some convincing points regarding the change of Hunt's political position and Hunt's frequent mention of difference between literature and politics, however, this critical assessment does not fully explain the complexity inherent in Hunt's career of writing. For instance, although it is true that Hunt's radical support for the reformist tenets of the oppositional camp became remarkably neutralized around the passage of the first Reform Bill in 1832, throughout the 1810s and the early 1820s Hunt's and the circle members' oppositional position to the Tory government had been consistently presented in print media without revealing any recoil from the intensely critical tone of the early *Examiner* issues' political writings. More significantly, in the writing of the Hunt circle members it is hard to clearly distinguish between political tenets and pure

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of the middle class became his point of departure from popular radical opposition. The crucial transition in his career required a shift away from a radical rhetoric of fact, produced under critical conditions, towards a less straightforward rhetoric of progressive accommodation. Hunt was able to achieve limited sympathy with popular unrest when he reduced every political issue to 'a pure question of fact and universal comprehension'" (*Print Politics* 223-4). Mark Garnett also offers an interesting insight on Hunt's retreat from politics. See Mark Garnett, "'One That Loved His Fellow-Men': The Politics of Leigh Hunt," *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* 97.1 (1997): 2-8.

[28] See, for example, George Dumas Stout, *The Political History of Leigh Hunt's Examiner* (Saint Louis: Washington UP, 1949) 38-42; and Carl Woodring, "Leigh Hunt as Political Essayist," *Leigh Hunt's Political and Occasional Essays*, ed. Lawrence and Carolyn Houtchens (New York: Columbia UP, 1962) 51, 66.

literary concerns.[29] In fact, many debates in which the Hunt circle was involved by the

derogatory name, the Cockney school, were concerned with both literary and political

issues without placing any clear demarcation between them. That is why a great number

of denunciatory comments and reviews on the literary works of the Hunt circle members

frequently based their condemnation on the socio-political ideology implied in those

seemingly non-political writings of the Hunt circle.

Having noted this consistent political concern immanent in the writing of the Hunt

circle, recent critics begin to underscore the historical significance of the Hunt circle's

public activity through print media on the assumption that the members of the Hunt

circle contributed to the formation of radical discourse especially in the late 1810's not

only by propounding direct political critiques toward various conservative groups but by

embodying their radical views on politics and culture through literary writing. Hence, for

these critics all the public activities of the Hunt circle in print media, whether they were

concerned with literature or politics, assumed the same public implication as a way of

engaging with real political issues. In the vein of this critical view, Nicholas Roe argues

that in the course of the debates concerning the literary products of the Hunt circle

"seemingly innocuous categories such as cheerfulness, sociality, the greenwood, pastoral

bowers, suburban life, and even tea-drinking were received as suspect tokens of a

resurgent radical community whose opinions were canvassed explicitly in the columns

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[29] For example, most prefaces and dedications attached to Hunt's, Shelley's, and Keats's
literary works when advancing their literary contentions also include comments on
contemporary politics, society, and culture, whether they are implicit or explicit.

of newspapers such as the *Examiner* and the *Yellow Dwarf*" (116).[30] Developing this reading of the Hunt circle's literary activity in terms of contemporary political and ideological struggles, Cox even contends that by way of various group activities (e.g., writing for periodicals with which the members shared common concerns, reciprocal writing within the traditional form of literary coterie, and book publication extended from this coterie writing), the Hunt circle actively involved themselves in realizing "the generosity, the camaraderie, the collective inquiry, the communal celebration of life that the group offered as the ground for a new society" (*Poetry and Politics* 81). For these critics, in other words, the Hunt circle sustained and even elaborated its non-conformist and radical perspective toward politics, society, and culture not only by engaging in public debates with both political and literary writing but by creating a new mode of intellectual community in accordance with its social ideals and embodying this new communal mode in the print media that the members produced. This reassessment of the Hunt circle's intellectual activity definitely enlightens an understanding of the way in which an intellectual discourse (a production of literary works and concomitant reviews on them, for example) in the early nineteenth century was publicized and politicized by way of its social ideology and its incessant intercourse with contemporary real politics. More specifically, by attending more to the public implication of the Hunt circle's intellectual activity and the mode of reciprocal relations among the members, these

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[30] Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997). The issue of the Hunt circle is discussed mostly in the fourth chapter entitled "'Soft Humanity Put On': The Poetry and Politics of Sociality 1798-1818."

critics bring to light how one literary coterie's activity toward the public made differences to the courses of history (instead of being determined by them), thus launching a way to understand the Hunt circle in terms of public-sphere theory.[31]

Admitting these critics' reassessment of the historical significance of the Hunt circle's public activity, however, a more refined investigation is necessary to decide whether or not the Hunt circle's activity (usually practiced in an intellectual field such as writing for print media) constituted a new public entity that coherently contributed to the formation of radical discourse or even radical movements burgeoning throughout the 1810s in its self-differentiation from the traditional intellectual public, as implied in the aforementioned critics' studies. Despite the radical nature of the Hunt circle's cultural practice, Hunt's own intellectual activity through journalism and his way of forming a circle with the people of congenial interest were still modeled on the bourgeois intellectual public that had been constituted with the development of print culture throughout the eighteenth century and firmly established as a major journalistic agent around the early nineteenth century. In addition, Hunt's and his circle members' position toward their contemporary politics and culture was too complicated and multi-faceted to be clearly identified as consistently radical or even new. For example, while Hunt apparently opposed the reactionary policies conducted by the Tory government after the Napoleonic war and supported the cause of reform, he refused to align himself with

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[31] As explicated in the introduction of this dissertation, the theoretical merit of interpreting history in terms of public-sphere theory is to validate human agency's active role in historical progress without downgrading the effect of contextual collectivity on human agency.

agitators of popular movements such as Cobbett and "Orator" Hunt who were also known for their support of the political reform.[32] While Hunt strongly and consistently denigrated the political apostasy (and the concomitant deterioration of poetic capacity) of the proponents of the Lake school, he displayed quite a degree of respect for their poems in *The Feast of the Poets* and even emulated in *The Story of Rimini* the poetic principle propounded by Wordsworth in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and the "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface."[33]

In other words, neither the critical approach that sees in the Hunt circle's activity a literary detachment from real politics nor the one that attempts to identify radical political tenets in the Hunt circle's intellectual activity can offer a comprehensive explanation of what notion of publicity the Hunt circle brought forth to the deployment

[32] This ambivalence toward popular reformist groups can be more clearly observed in the case of William Hazlitt, another key member of the Hunt circle. On this ambivalence displayed in Hazlitt, Gilmartin offers the following explanation: "while [Hazlitt's] principles overlapped significantly with figures like Wade, Wooler, and Cobbett, he tended to exercise those principles in a very different manner. Hazlitt avoided appealing directly to a popular reading audience, never edited or published a periodical, was not directly involved in radical organization, and neither courted nor experienced political prosecution for what he wrote. The tensions and contradictions I have associated with radical opposition were there in Hazlitt's prose, but they were sublimated, and almost entirely translated to the printed page. This shift from circulation and organization to language involved a corresponding shift, with respect to the mainstream of popular radical reform, from politics to literature, culture, and metaphysics" (*Print Politics* 228).

[33] For example, on the language of poetry, Hunt contends in the Preface to *The Story of Rimini* that "the proper language of poetry is in fact nothing different from that of real life, and depends for its dignity upon the strength and sentiment of what it speaks. It is only adding musical modulation to what a fine understanding might actually utter in the midst of its griefs and enjoyments" (*Selected Works* 5: 167-8). This contention directly refers to Wordsworth's underpinning of "language really used by men" chosen from "incidents and situations from common life" as the proper language of poetry.

of its contemporary public spheres and what public sphere this circle embodied as opposed to other competing models, since the scope of the Hunt circle's activity complies neither with the conventional classification of intellectual activity based on the distinction between literature (or culture) and politics nor with the political and ideological classification based on Tory/Whig or radical/reactionary confrontation. It is necessary, in this sense, to bring forward a new framework through which the activity of the Hunt circle can be more comprehensively understood in terms both of its attitude toward literature/politics distinction and of its ideological location in the topography of contemporary political, social, and cultural ideas. This new framework, as a consequence, will enlighten the extent to which the publicity and the public sphere that the Hunt circle's intellectual activity bodied forth in early nineteenth-century historical realities confirm and modify both Habermas's normative principle of the bourgeois public sphere and alternative theoretical models based on counter-public spheres.

In order to begin this task of understanding the Hunt circle's activity in a new light, it could be necessary to give attention to Hunt's activity surrounding the *Reflector*, because this short-lived periodical, unlike the early *Examiner*, provides a clue for seeing how Hunt understood the interaction between literature and politics and also how Hunt developed his personal relationship with acquaintances into a form of social ideology through writings for a periodical.[34] When the *Examiner* had been already established as

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[34] Among the contributors for the *Reflector*, three writers (Thomas Barnes, Thomas Mitchell, and James Scholefield) were Hunt's schoolfellows of Christ's Hospital and Barron Field was Hunt's close personal friend. Hence, the writing practice of the

one of prominent weekly newspapers in the early spring of 1810, the Hunt brothers

planned to begin a new quarterly magazine, the *Reflector*, which would provide

criticisms of politics, theatre, and fine arts along with "Miscellaneous Literature,

consisting of Essays on Men and Manners, Enquiries into past and present Literature,

and all subjects relative to Wit, Morals, and a true Refinement" (*Selected Works* 1: 139).

As this claim in the "Prospectus" suggests, the purpose of publishing the *Reflector*, from

the beginning, was to offer a print medium that could cover subjects concerning broader

and more general public activities founded on human intellect than the ones that the

early *Examiner* had covered (i.e., more direct political and cultural comments usually

occasioned by contemporary events). This project of a new magazine that would provide

a more intellectual and "philosophiz[ing]" criticism on politics and various cultural

productions, indeed, had historical significance in terms of its singular function in

contemporary print culture. That is, the foundation of the *Reflector* meant an appearance

of another group that purported to engage actively with current issues in an intellectual

basis (beyond both the short and simplified report style and commercial motivation that

had been prevalent in daily or weekly newspapers) and also a foregrounding of an

independent communal voice represented by Hunt who was considered to represent the

non-party-affiliated oppositional position in politics.[35]

Reflector assumed a character of a coterie group, which would continue in Hunt's later journalism. Cox relates this coterie character of Hunt's editorial practice with his new social vision. See Cox, *Poetry and Politics* 78-9.

[35] Around the time of beginning the *Reflector*, this new attempt to offer more detailed and serious critical reviews on political issues and cultural productions had been already

Given this significance suggested by the publication of the *Reflector*, it is necessary to examine what the *Reflector* brought forward through the writings it contained. To begin with, the "Prospectus" reveals some notable principles. In the "Prospectus," Hunt specifies three important subjects on which the *Reflector* will exert the most serious effort differently from previous magazines usually focusing on cultural trifles such as "a shew of employing the Arts" or "embellishment" (136). The first of these subjects is politics. Having distinguished the *Reflector*'s position from other magazines' that "dismiss [politics] in crude and impatient sketches," Hunt contends that "[p]olitics, in times like these, should naturally take the lead in periodical discussion, because they have an importance and interest almost unexampled in history, and because they are now, in their turn, exhibiting their re-action upon literature, as literature in the proceeding age exhibited its action upon them" (137). Hunt, in this contention, justifies his concern for political issues, just as his writings in the *Examiner* have been doing and his fame as a rigorous critic of the government policies and the Prince Regent demonstrates to the eyes of his contemporaries. For Hunt, political issues were essential for his writing practice, because in his view of contemporary politics the political injustices were too obvious not to write on.

But here Hunt reveals one distinctive point different from his previous practices of political writing: the interplay between politics and literature. Hunt's idea of this

conducted by the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review* which were considered to represent Whig and Tory position respectively. In this context, the Hunt brothers' plunge into this intellectual public discourse by the *Reflector* signified a formation of another communal intellectual position, whether it could be classified as independent or radical.

interplay offers a significant point for his argument in the "Prospectus," since it reveals the extent to which Hunt's ideal of writing for periodicals as a public engagement with politics is predicated upon the traditional assumption of an intellectual community that encompasses both politics and literature. The following argument of what attitude is required for political writing clarifies the nature of this intellectual community in more detail. Hunt identifies two wrong attitudes of addressing politics. First, Hunt's critique is pointed to a group of people who are "fond of books" and "the gentler arts of peace," but "very apt to turn away from politics" because they see in politics "the traces of the greatest misery and folly" rather than "the seeds of the most flourishing and refreshing arts" (137). Second, Hunt designates less cultivated people who neglect politics "from regarding politics in too common, too everyday a light" (137). For Hunt both the types fail to assume a correct attitude for politics as they are occupied too much by "petty squabbles and interests" (137). Hunt, therefore, insists that any political writer should "philosophize [political issues] as much as possible" especially at a time when "*human intellect*, opposed to *human weakness*, has been called so unobstructedly into play, and has risen so fearfully into power" (137). This is not only a very powerful argument for a necessity of writing about politics but a revealing guideline as well that illuminates how writing about politics should be. For Hunt, the subject of politics is essential for public writing, but how it should be addressed is more essential because the ultimate purpose of writing about politics is not presenting specific depictions of each event or issue so much as cultivating *human intellect* by philosophically reflecting on political issues. In this

sense, political issues should be understood in their interplay with literature (i.e.,

literature not in the sense of expressive writing based on individual imagination but of

broader philosophical reflection based on human intellect), and thus public writers about

politics should be part of this intellectual community.[36] In brief, by suggesting the

interplay between politics and literature, Hunt assumes that while political writing

should be grounded in an intellectual basis that literature provides, literary writing

should be concerned with public matters of society that politics accommodates.[37]

Hunt's foregrounding of intellectual engagement with political and social issues is

repeatedly propounded in his discussion of theatre and fine arts. In the course of

discussing the value of theatre and the direction of its criticism, Hunt contends,

> The theatres, in their proper state, afford a most instructive as well as
>
> amusing course of lessons to a cultivated nation, not, as their enemies

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[36] While many critics indicate the changed notion of literature from general intellectual writing to imaginative and expressive creative writing as a definitive feature of Romanticism or Romantic aesthetics, I argue that both the notions were present in the Romantic discourse in a way in which they either compensated for or competed with each other. For a discussion of Romantic ideas of literature or Romantic aesthetics, see M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953); Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983); Paul De Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984); and Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

[37] Hunt's emphasis of the interplay between politics and literature was consistently maintained up to the point when he founded the *Indicator* and the *Liberal*, even though these later periodicals were sometimes considered by his contemporaries to be a sign of Hunt's retreat from political engagement. For a detailed account of Hunt's contemporaries' reception of his periodical writing and Hunt's response to them, see Michael Eberle-Sinatra, *Leigh Hunt and the London Literary Scene: A Reception History of His Major Works, 1805-1828* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

insinuate, because they pretend to teach morals better than religion itself,

but because they exhibit our virtues in social action and instruct us in that

kind of wisdom, which, without being worldly-minded, is so adapted to

keep us in proper harmony with the world. (138)

As a second major subject of the *Reflector*, Hunt attempts to validate the function of

theatre by suggesting that theatre as a cultural product had brought about significant

benefits to "a cultivated nation." As a cultural critic who is supposed to guide people's

taste in accordance with an appropriate standard of value judgment, Hunt highlights the

value of good theatre as opposed to the denigrated view of theatre from "their enemies."

Here what Hunt draws attention to, however, is not the value of theatre itself but how

and why theatre is valuable to the people. For Hunt, the reason that theatre is valuable is

that it cultivates a sense of virtue that people can apply to their involvement with society.

This reason implies two assumptions: 1) theatre serves as an intellectual guide by which

people can reflect on how to act and thus develop their principle of virtue; 2) theatre

relates people to social action without necessarily rendering them "worldly-minded."

That is, theatre in Hunt's argument serves as a cultural medium that practices Hunt's

ideal propounded in his discussion of the interplay between politics and literature: an

intellectual appraisal of and guide for people's engagement with political and social

issues. This idea is recurrently addressed throughout "The Prospectus," and Hunt,

discussing fine arts as another integral subject for *The Reflector*, even goes so far as to

claim the necessity of "an intellectual nation" whose government has "a disposition to

patronize" a group of intelligentsia whose engagement with both politics and culture will ultimately lead to the fulfillment of Hunt's ideal (139). In short, Hunt throughout "The Prospectus" proposes an ideal community where intellectuals engage with public practices for fulfilling the general good of people without necessarily placing any distinction between politics and literature (in the sense of broader cultural practice including theatre and fine arts).

This intellectual obligation for the public good through engaging with both politics and literature was in fact not a new idea conceived by Hunt but originated from the traditional notion of "the republic of letters." As Anne Goldgar explains, the notion of the republic of letters first appeared "in its Latin form [respublica literaria] in the fifteenth century and was used increasingly in the sixteenth and seventeenth, so that by the end of that century it featured in the titles of several important literary journals" (2). Although this notion displayed several heterogeneous elements through its historical manifestation, a sense of identity among men of letters founded on this notion had been formed through various modes of intellectual affiliation such as exchanges of books, visits, letters, and even literary writings, and thus their common aim of pursuing knowledge for the public good came to be communally conceived and gradually consolidated by this sense of belonging to the republic of letters. As to the historical function of the republic of letters, Paul Keen offers the following explanation:

> Literature, or the republic of letters as it was often referred to, was
>
> celebrated by the advocates of this vision as the basis of a communicative

process in which all rational individuals could have their say, and in which

an increasingly enlightened reading public would be able to judge the merit

of the different arguments for themselves. It is in this sense of publicity,

more than any idea of imaginative plentitude, that we must understand both

the ideal of the universality of literature in the period *and* the exclusion

which this ideal helped to legitimate. (4)

As clearly suggested here, the notion of the republic of letters is founded upon the

broader meaning of the term literature, as it was used before the nineteenth century.

Literature in this broader definition signifies more than a mode of writing related to

individuals' creative expression of inner self which some Romantic critics pinpoint as

the Romantic invention. It rather refers to a general intellectual activity mostly

conducted through various modes of writing and its circulation, especially focusing on a

communicative process between individuals capable of a rational exchange of opinions.

The ideal of the republic of letters, therefore, is not so much concerned with identifying

the best quality of knowledge that an intellectual seeks to invent by his or her individual

writing, but with the extent to which exchanges of opinions based on a rational thinking

process, whatever form those opinions take, enhance the general level of people's

intellectual capacity and thus offer to the people a sense that knowledge could gain

universality by this communicative process. This ideal, by underscoring the universality

of knowledge accrued from interpersonal communication among intellectuals, renounces

the distinction between public and private knowledge, thus subsuming, for instance, both

political debates and private letter-writing under literature in its broader sense. In other words, within the notion of the republic of letters both political and literary writings are just equal constituents of the practice of an intellectual public, and the sole purpose of this intellectual publicity is to strive for the most infallible and universal knowledge (or what is called the Truth) through a communicative process.[38]

This principle of communicative process inherent in the republic of letters is most tellingly illustrated in William Godwin's *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice* in which he contends that "[i]n proportion as one reasoner compares his deductions with those of another, the weak places of his argument will be detected, the principles he too hastily adopted will be overthrown, and the judgments, in which his mind was exposed to no sinister influence, will be confirmed" (3: 15). Moreover, this principle, Godwin argues, should be based on "unlimited speculation, and a sufficient variety of systems and opinions" (3: 15) in order to fulfill its end to the utmost. That is, for Godwin the most infallible state of knowledge can be deduced only from the unlimited and systemized reciprocal correction between intellectual members of a society. The intellectual circle that gathered around Godwin himself exemplified this principle of

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[38] This communicative process in which the republic of letters deliberates the Truth, in this sense, is directly related to Habermas's idea of the proper working of the bourgeois public sphere. But unlike the basic assumption of the republic of letters, Habermas does not assume the central role of intelligentsia in explaining the working of this communicative process. Still, in both the cases, the ideal of universality inevitably entails the displacement of marginal social groups. For example, eighteenth-century journalism as a historical site of both the republic of letters and the bourgeois public sphere, Klancher illustrates, "built the greater reading public by *colonizing* the social groups previously excluded from it" (25).

communicative process in the political turbulence of the 1790s. Mark Philp describes the intellectual practice of the Godwin circle as follows:

> . . . sociability is the basic fabric of the late eighteenth-century intellectual life. Once [Godwin] had concluded his morning's work Godwin's day was free and he generally spent it in company—talking and debating while eating, drinking and socialising. His peers' behaviour was essentially similar; they lived in a round of debate and discussion, in clubs, associations, debating societies, salons, taverns, coffee houses, bookshops, publishing houses and in the street. And conversation ranged through philosophy, morality, religion, literature, and poetry, to the political events of the day. Members of these circles were tied together in the ongoing practice of debate. . . . [T]hey [the members of the circle] were people who worked out their ideas in company and who articulated the aspirations and fears of their social group. (127)

The practice of the Godwin circle as an example of the republic of letters displayed two salient features. As definitely emphasized in Philp's description, the first one is sociability. The sociability embodied by the Godwin circle here meant neither a casual gathering of people nor formal convocation for a specific purpose. Its sociability was rather a natural extension of the life experience of the circle members, which consisted of the members' voluntary participation and a free way of discussion and debate. The place and mode of their socializing was also offhandedly settled, and thus they were able

to naturalize Godwin's abstract ideal of gradual progress toward perfectibility through communication by "work[ing] out their ideas in company." The second feature identified in the Godwin circle is the diversity of their discussion or debate subject. Their intellectual interest actually ranged through almost all of the human sciences that had existed thus far, and they did not place any distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. This is why they were able to serve the political and intellectual dynamics of the 1790s both as political radical and intellectual elite. And this mixture of practical concern for present political issues and theoretical quest for abstract principles constitutes an integral part of the republic of letters.

As discussed so far, the notion of the republic of letters is predicated upon a social communication among intellectuals for the public good and their encyclopedic concern for diverse subject matters, and these two features considerably overlap with the ideal representation of the bourgeois public sphere as suggested by Habermas. It is also notable that Hunt's ideal of journalism propounded in the "Prospectus" to the *Reflector* contains those two main features of the republic of letters as essential tenets. For this reason, Hunt can be said to inherit the tradition of the republic of letters and resurrect its ideal through the *Reflector*. And it is for the same reason that the intellectual circle formed around the *Reflector* could be interpreted as exponents of the liberal conception of the bourgeois public sphere rather than social deviants who would seek to form a counter-public sphere. Most remarkably, *The Feast of the Poets* (below *The Feast*), the most well-known literary work published in the *Reflector*, embodies this notion of the

republic of letters in its literary representation of poets' community. Moreover, Hunt's

own attempt to critically communicate with the poets as a man of letters is practiced

through the long "Notes" attached to this work.

In terms of its formal and thematic aspect, *The Feast* is linked to the tradition of

satirical poetry.[39] As Hunt himself mentions in the 1815 preface of *the Feast* and Rodney

Edgecombe explains in detail, the direct precursor of this poem is John Suckling's "The

Wits" written in 1637. Regarding Hunt's choice of Suckling's satire as his model instead

of Pope's whose "elegant and compacted malice" had dominated the tradition of satirical

poetry, Edgecombe argues that Hunt endorses Suckling's style that "is conciliatory and

often half-revokes his satiric raps after having administered them" as opposed to Pope's

merciless and definite critical judgment (153). Along with *The Feast*'s basic format that

Apollo, the deity presiding over poetry, offers critical judgments on living poets, this

selective address to the satire tradition reveals that *The Feast* is engaging in an

intellectual community by joining debates with other intellectual discourses. These

debates with intellectuals are, from the perspective of their public connotations, a literary

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[39] Satire, which had been composing a considerable part of eighteenth-century poetic practice but was long considered to be replaced by new Romantic poetry, was in fact flourishing in the Romantic period as well. Steven E. Jones, as opposed to the view of opposing satire and Romanticism, contends that "Romantic works are influenced by, infected with, and enfold within themselves examples of satiric writing" (10). This interaction within the satire tradition also took place between works of contemporaries. For example, Hunt's *Feast* was strongly influenced by Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. For more comprehensive accounts of the practice of satire in the Romantic period, see Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style*, 1789-1832 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); Steven E. Jones, *Satire and Romanticism* (New York: St Martin's, 2000); and Steven E. Jones ed., *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period* (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

embodiment of the communicative process implied in the republic of letters, and in *The Feast* this intellectual communication is conducted in both diachronic and synchronic directions, since its critical assessment touches on both historical and contemporary debates about the standard of evaluating poetry.[40]

The Feast reveals another notable feature. Since the first appearance in the fourth issue of the *Reflector*, *The Feast* went through a series of revising processes until 1860. And the change of its critical tone toward poets was quite remarkable in each revision. A comparison between the first version of 1812 and the 1815 version shows what a different tone each version assumes through revision. Edmund Blunden in *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* characterizes the first version of *The Feast* as "one of his pugnacious feats for the furtherance of what he thought truth and light" (65). Having discussed the poetic achievement of *The Feast* of 1815, Edgecombe concludes that "*The Feast* is an entirely pleasant poem, free and relaxed in its conduct, but never so digressive as to lose its way" (164). While Hunt presents himself as a rigid critic faithfully adhering to his principle in the former, the latter underscores how Hunt's flexible attitude of criticism provides a "pleasant, free and relaxed" atmosphere for his critical communication with other poets. This drastic change displayed in Hunt's revision of *The Feast* is not confined to its general tone and attitude. In some cases, Hunt changes the total direction of critical

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[40] This double approach to the past and the present at the same time is the general feature of Hunt's argument. For example, in his political essays, Hunt aligns himself both with historical proponents of political freedom such as King Alfred, Spenser, and Milton and with his contemporary proponents of political reform in order to validate his political position. On this point, I argue that this feature of Hunt's argument exhibits the way in which Hunt conforms to the tradition of the republic of the letters.

evaluation for some poets, as his assessment of Wordsworth tellingly exemplifies. In brief, Hunt seems to suggest that *The Feast* should not be finalized as one fixed text, preferring it to be an open text.

These continuous revisions of the text are, to be sure, due to Hunt's hope of "assuaging the various enmities to which the earlier versions gave rise," as Michael Eberle-Sinatra aptly points out (34). Hunt's intention to render *The Feast* less personal and less offensive through revisions is manifested by his statements about the poem. In the Preface of the 1814 version, Hunt attempts to justify his criticisms toward poets by claiming that "[w]hat praise or censure he may have bestowed on any one, has at least the merit of being sincere" and does not include any feelings "of an ill-tempered, still less of a personal nature" (*Selected Works* 5: 31). This self-vindication changed even to self-deprecation in later revisions. In the Preface to *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt* of 1832, Hunt expresses self-reproaching feelings toward his earlier critical practices represented by *The Feast*:

> I was full of animal spirits when I wrote it [*The Feast*], and have a regard for it accordingly, like that for one's other associations of youth. It was however a good deal more personal than at present, and showed me the truth of what has been observed respecting the danger of a young writer's commencing his career with satire: for I have reason to believe, that its offences, both of commission and omission, gave rise to some of the most inveterate enmities I have experienced. (*Selected Works* 5: 91)

The remorseful feelings expressed here are definitely a product of Hunt's recantation of his former critical position. But they are also a result of his continuous intercourse with other literary (and also political) positions and sometimes a change of personal relationship with them. Around this later period of 1832, Hunt's radical position of politics and literature maintained in the 1810s was, to be sure, compromised to quite a degree, and thus it is undeniable that this reconciliatory gesture toward hostile colleagues and audiences reflected his new perspective based on the middle-class conservatism.[41] Still, it is noteworthy to see the process by which Hunt kept engaging in intellectual communication, because Hunt's revisions, whether they are a self-vindicating justification or a compromising recantation, represent how one individual's critical assessment is conditioned upon his or her communicative interaction with other people's responses in the common ground of intellectual community.[42] And this communicative interaction is a core part of the publicity formed through the notion of the republic of letters.

Aside from this communicative interaction revealed in the revisions, the newly added long "Notes" attached to the 1814 version of *The Feast* also shows what Hunt

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[41] Gilmartin, *Print Politics* 196-8.

[42] For example, Hunt started to clearly articulate his admiration of Wordsworth, after the two of them met during Wordsworth's visit to London in 1815. Although Wordsworth's main purpose of this meeting was to promote the sale of his 1815 *Poems*, for Hunt this direct intellectual interaction served as a significant source of deciding his critical assessment on Wordsworth's literary works. That is, Hunt's own intellectual practice, in a considerable degree, was predicated on his communicative interactions with other intellectuals.

sought to achieve through intellectual publicity. Regarding the significance of the "Notes," Eberle-Sinatra offers the following explanation:

> Hunt's notes testify to his desire to be taken seriously as a literary critic: he elaborates on various lines from the poem and transforms a witty line into a sharp analysis of an author's strengths and weaknesses. . . . Hunt's annotations to his own poem highlight the symbiotic relationship between prose and poetry in many of his other works as well. His critical voice infiltrates his poetical productions and usually finds expressions in the lengthy prefaces he attaches to them, or, in the case of *The Feast of the Poets*, in his notes. (37)

While the poetic text of *The Feast* is a witty and playful assessment of other poets' practice within the satire tradition, the "Notes" works toward a serious literary criticism in which a critical assessment should be based on "a sharp analysis of an author's strengths and weaknesses." And this serious and balanced critical assessment written in prose, Eberle-Sinatra argues, has come to form a significant part of Hunt's literary practice in its symbiotic relation with his poetic works. In fact, Hunt began to write a series of critical essays on both general subjects of literature and specific literary works in the *Examiner* from 1815 (apart from what Kendall calls "familiar essay" first attempted in the *Reflector* with "A Day by the Fire"), and through these critical essays on literature Hunt was able to effectuate his ideal of intellectual publicity that had been deliberated by the start of the *Reflector* and would lead to a formation of a distinct

intellectual group (i.e., the Hunt circle). More specifically, in the critical essays Hunt kept insisting on the importance of social interaction between intellectuals for the public good (in both political and cultural terms), as opposed to intellectuals' pandering to social powers or their nonchalance for the public resulting from excessive egotism. For Hunt, in other words, the extent to which intellectuals engage themselves with social issues concerning the public good without pandering to any external powers came to function as a crucial standard of assessing a literary work in his critical essays; with this critical standard, he was able to continue an attempt to communicate with other intellectuals, thereby pursuing a fulfillment of ideal publicity based on literary communication.

The "Notes" of *The Feast*, in this sense, was Hunt's first attempt to pursue his ideal publicity through literary communication. In order to achieve a literary publicity, Hunt devises long and detailed notes for the poetic text in which poetic practices and critical comments in prose are combined in the common ground of communication; that is, as Lucy Newlyn aptly argues, Hunt "draws attention to the ways in which creativity and criticism work together, in a kind of collaborative and competitive dialogue" (186). Hunt's critical comments on Wordsworth both in the poetic text and the "Notes" show a telling example of what he tries to achieve through literary communication. As Eberle-Sinatra illustrates in detail, the critical assessment that went through the most striking change in Hunt's revisions of *The Feast* is his opinion of Wordsworth's poetic

practice.[43] According to Eberle-Sinatra, this change demonstrates Hunt's independent

attitude as a critic, because his improved assessment of Wordsworth was acquired

through his original reading of Wordsworth's poems during the years of imprisonment

as opposed to the negative opinions that had been generally directed toward Wordsworth.

And in the 1814 version, it is noted that Hunt was able to articulate his ideal of literary

publicity through this new critical assessment of Wordsworth.

In the 1814 poetic text of *The Feast*, Hunt does not retrieve his former critique of

Wordsworth's defects in both political and literary terms. Hunt condemns Wordsworth's

political apostasy by saying "Wordsworth, one day, made his hair bristle, / By going and

changing his harp for a whistle" (*Selected Works* 5: 38).[44] He also derides his poetic

style by parodying the so-called "rustic poems" whose style usually characterizes the

poems included in the *Lyrical Ballads*. But in the "Notes," Hunt employs a more serious

and balanced tone for his assessment of Wordsworth. Hunt's comment on Wordsworth is

made mostly in the long twentieth note which occupies 22 out of the total 110 pages of

the "Notes." In the early part of this note Hunt does not hesitate to appreciate

Wordsworth's strengths. Hunt says Wordsworth "always thinks when he speaks, has

always words at command, feels deeply, fancies richly, and never descends from that

pure and elevated morality" (*Selected Works* 5: 65). Considering the half-comically

derisive tone in the poetic text, this balanced compliment written in style of serious prose

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[43] Eberle-Sinatra 49-60.

[44] This view of Wordsworth as a political apostate was shared by most members of the Hunt circle. See Hazlitt's "Character of Mr. Wordsworth's New Poem, *The Excursion*" and Byron's *Don Juan*, for example.

signifies a new critical direction that Hunt intends to take for the "Note," which can offer

a more comprehensive and dialogic approach to an assessed object by supplementing the

lavish and inequitable nature of a traditional satiric criticism in verse. Hunt's

appreciation of Wordsworth is mostly focused on his endorsement of Wordsworth's

poetic theory propounded in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. According to Hunt, the

ideal poetry that Wordsworth works toward is the one that "should restore to readers

their true tone of enjoyment, and enable them to relish once more the beauties of

simplicity and nature"; that "appeal[s] to the great and primary affections of our nature";

and that "should be clothed in language equally artless" (66). Hunt agrees to these

principles of poetry and even praises Wordsworth as the first poet who proclaims them.

But for Hunt the problem that Wordsworth brings forward despite those great principles

is either that Wordsworth's poetry does not embody these theoretic principles or that he

applies them to the extreme. Wordsworth's misapplication of the principles, Hunt argues,

results in two problematic effects. The first one is concerned with the issue of

individuals' relationship with society. Hunt says,

> [Wordsworth] wishes to turn aside our thirst for extraordinary intelligence
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> to more genial sources of interest. . . . In like manner, he would clear up and
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> simplicize our thoughts; and he tells us tales. . . of an hundred inexpressible
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> sensations, intended by nature no doubt to affect us, and even pleasurably so
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> in the general feeling, but only calculated to perplex or sadden us in our
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> attempts at analysis. Now it appears to me, that all the craving after

intelligence. . . is a healthy appetite in comparison to *these morbid*

abstractions: the former tends, at any rate, to fix the eyes of mankind in a

lively manner upon the persons that preside over their interests, and to keep

up a certain demand for knowledge and public improvement;—the latter,

under the guise of interesting us in the individuals of our species, turns our

thoughts away from society and men altogether, and nourishes that

eremitical vagueness of sensation,—that making a business of reverie,—that

despair of getting to any conclusion to any purpose, which is the next step to

melancholy and indifference. (emphasis added 67-8)

For Hunt Wordsworth's attempt to "turn aside our thirst for extraordinary intelligence to

more genial sources of interest" and "clear up and simplicize our thoughts" is a failure,

since this attempt has just come to "perplex or sadden us" rather than "affect us

pleasurably in the general feeling." As a consequence, what Wordsworth gives us

instead of "the craving after intelligence" is the "morbid abstractions." These morbid

abstractions are, in Hunt's view, especially harmful to both individuals and society

because they detach individuals' interests from social proceedings, thus leading people

to a morbid feeling of "melancholy and indifference." Hence, Hunt contends that

Wordsworth's fault derives mainly from his extreme egotism which replaces the evils

that a frivolous taste of city crowds gives rise to with a more serious evil such as morbid

individuality separated from social connections. This critical point reveals the extent to

which Hunt places the value of literature in its implication with sociality espousing genial feelings for general humanity rather than with solipsistic transcendence.

The second point of Hunt's criticism draws upon Wordsworth's critical attitude toward the poetic technique of using an artificial language that was prevalent in eighteenth-century poetry. As already well known through the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth strongly objects to his contemporaries' common practice of using what he calls "poetic diction" (a set of conventionalized expressions of poetry), preferring a natural or "rustic" language derived from simple and pure feelings. But for Hunt, this preference of a natural language over an artificial one is another example of Wordsworth's propensity for the extreme which would ultimately bring about harmful effects. If we excluded "all language and all associations from poetry, but those of natural passion and humanity," Hunt insists, "it would cut off. . . a direct portion of the skillful and delightful from poetry," "hinder a number of subjects from being treated poetically," "rid us of one set of pretenders only to inundate us with another much more insufferable, the pretenders to simplicity," and "take away from the poetical profession something that answers to good breeding in manners, and that keeps it clear rusticity and the want of an universal reception" (70-71). That is, Hunt warns that an exclusive quest for natural language and simplistic feelings will deprive us of various poetic resources (e.g., poetic techniques, social delight associated with poetry, traditionally accepted poetic subjects, and good manners cultivated by poetry, etc.) which have constituted a variety of social values of poetry and kept people away from a pursuit of eccentric

values like rusticity. These poetic resources are, as seen in their contrast with eccentric values, concerned with universally accepted values of general humanity that have been inherited from the humanistic tradition of poetry (or literature in general) shared by intellectuals, and for Hunt this universality grounded in the intellectual tradition serves as a critical standard of deciding good poetry, which Wordsworth fails to achieve due to his excessive emphasis of naturalness and simplicity in feelings and language.

As clearly revealed in those two critical points of Hunt's evaluation of Wordsworth, Hunt focuses his critique on what Roe calls "the exaltations of solitary experience" which Hunt considers to be one of the most salient features of Wordsworth's poetry.[45] This celebration of solitude in Wordsworth's poetry, Hunt argues, displaces the social nature of poetry and the traditional cultural implication of poetry at the same time, both of which intellectuals have thought constitute the core part of how poetry functions as a significant medium for fulfilling the ideal of the republic of letters. More specifically, Hunt suspects that Wordsworth's exalted solitude does not so much offer a refreshed cure for the city crowds who are diseased with a senseless craving for immediate pleasure, but disrupts the social foundation on which poetry has contributed to the public good by imposing its arbitrary and excessive egotism on the readers. Hunt here attempts to stress the way in which Wordsworth's celebration of an individual's pure solitude detached from harmful effects of human community in fact endangers and even distorts the social and cultural function of poetry as a public medium

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[45] Nicholas Roe, *Fiery Heart* 203.

of communication between people, thereby reminding the readers that poetry (or say, any cultural practice that seems to be conducted in a personal space) inevitably entails a public character.[46]

Hunt's critique of Wordsworth's solipsistic egotism is meaningfully associated with Edmund Burke's disparaging evaluation of the French Revolution. In his famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke pointed up to some catastrophic results that a quest of pure reason would bring about by totally negating the socio-cultural validity of traditional values. For Burke, these traditional values are "pleasing illusions" and "the decent drapery of life" which "made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society," and thus without them "the defects of our naked shivering nature" would be laid bare, leading the balanced social order to a complete dissolution (171). Just as Hunt endorses sociality and intellectual traditions in assessing a value of poetry as opposed to an individual's

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[46] Recent studies attend to how poetry of the Romantic period assumed a public character as opposed to the established view of Romanticism as an internal quest of individual creativity. On this issue, Andrew Franta aptly claims that "this understanding of poetry as self-expression, as well as the host of influential critical narratives recounting Romanticism's turn inward and away from the audience that have continued to shape our understanding of the period's literature, has obscured the emergence of an equally important conception of poetry as a process which includes the poem's reception, dissemination, and transmission" (7). In the same vein, Paul Magnuson problematizes a subjective approach to poetry. He says, "A significant irony in twentieth-century criticism of subjective, first-person lyric poetry is that the very reason that it appears to be utterly self-involved is that its public utterance is always under the personal sign of the author, and yet in publication that personal sign is a mark of a public standing. Public authorship is a location in the discourse defined by its intertextual connections. So defined, publicness does not efface subjectivity; it augments it" (5).

solipsistic egotism, Burke underscores the function of traditional values inherited through social connections as neutralizing the possible damages that an arbitrary quest of reason would give rise to. It is interesting, in some sense, to see that Hunt, a radical reformist, and Burke, a conservative constitutionalist, retained similar attitudes toward the issue of sociality and tradition. But the similar tendency existent between those two seemingly opposite figures paradoxically suggests that the Hunt circle was linked to the tradition of the republic of letters, because both Hunt and Burke endorsed the value of tradition and social communication as a participant of this republic of letters, no matter how separated their political positions were from each other. And it is this link to the notion of the republic of letters that makes it difficult to characterize the Hunt circle as a singular and deviant intellectual entity that leads to a formation of counter-publicity.

4. Debates Surrounding the Issue of How to Characterize the Hunt Circle's Publicity

Despite the Hunt circle's inheritance of the tradition of the republic of the letters and its endorsement of intellectual communication in universal terms, it is hardly deniable that the practices of the Hunt circle have been received as politically resistant and culturally deviant rather than as conforming to the established norms both by its contemporary critics and modern studies. The term "the Cockney school" itself, which has been generally used to designate the Hunt circle, testifies to the way in which critics have assessed the social and cultural implication of the Hunt circle. Then what element

makes critics receive the Hunt circle as deviant or even revolutionary? And admitting that this reception serves as a basis of the argument that the Hunt circle contributed to a formation of a counter-public sphere in the early nineteenth-century socio-cultural space of Britain, to what extent can this reception be validated as a theoretic perspective of explaining the nature of the Hunt circle's publicity? Most importantly, what sort of connections and struggles can be found between the Hunt circle and other prominently emerging counter-publics of the early nineteenth century such as feminist and plebeian groups?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to look over how the Hunt circle's singularity has been assessed in relation to the social and cultural topography of the early nineteenth century. The term "the Cockney school of poetry," to be sure, pointed up to the Hunt circle's uniqueness from its contemporaries' perspective, but in fact this uniqueness was considered by its contemporaries (especially by Tory reviewers) to carry mostly derogatory connotations rather than to be original or innovative. In addition, the oppositional political position sustained by most of the circle members contributed to this negative reception of the Hunt circle. This negative reception was especially concentrated on Hunt himself as a representative figure of social and cultural deviation, to such an extent that the improved assessment of Keats in later periods, for example, frequently indicated the negative influence that Hunt had made on Keats's

poetry.[47] Recent studies, however, have started to notice the innovative originality that the uniqueness of the Hunt circle's practices brought forward to its contemporary political, social, and cultural scene. Basically, those recent studies attend to the way in which the Hunt circle gave rise to new trends, and these new trends can be roughly summarized as follows: 1) the politically and culturally progressive practices usually advanced through print media, which were especially resistant to the Tory government and literati affiliated with the conservative ideology; 2) the new mode of publicity created from the Hunt circle's unique way of group activity. In other words, those critics focus on the extent to which the Hunt circle resisted to and thus differentiated itself from the established order of publicity, whether the publicity was political or intellectual, rather than on how the Hunt circle shared the basic assumptions of the genteel literati tradition and thus was implicated with the established public sphere of intelligentsia as has been discussed throughout this chapter. More specifically, those critics presuppose a certain counter-public sphere that the Hunt circle was assumed to shape by articulating its difference from the dominant tenets of contemporary politics and culture.

The pioneering study of this critical vein was conducted by Nicholas Roe in *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent*. Here, having noted Hunt's influence on Keats's

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[47] Having surveyed the critical reception of Keats's poetry, Cox illustrates that critics "construct a 'bad' Keats of the poetically and politically reformist Cockney School who luckily graduates to become the most Wordsworthian poet of the second generation. In order, then, to save from Cockney contamination 'Hyperion,' the odes, and the later narrative poems, Keatsians have been willing to see Keats's 'early' work—and particularly his *Poems* of 1817—as an unfortunate adolescent flirtation with Hunt's muse or, more simply, as bad poetry" (*Poetry and Politics* 83).

socially progressive ideas, Roe underscores Hunt's radical aspects by reading *The Story of Rimini* and *Foliage*. Apart from the definitely oppositional tendency of Hunt's political criticisms, "Hunt's poetry of sympathetic, natural justice in *The Story of Rimini*, of 'nature' and 'sociality' in *Foliage*," Roe argues, demonstrates how these seemingly poetical themes were in fact "calculated to unsettle the 'authorized' complacencies of Regency life" and thereby served as "a lyrical expression of the *Examiner*'s oppositional politics" (122). Besides this political implication of nature and sociality, Roe indicates that Hunt's choice of "the suburban neighborhood of London" as the locale of his poetry also constituted his unique position, which was considered by his contemporaries to be "a threat to the political and cultural establishment" (128). In brief, Roe reads "sociality, friendship, and community" presented in Hunt's and Keats's poetry of "retirement and the natural world which may seem bland and uncontroversial to modern readers" as an implicit expression of their political opposition and cultural innovation (132).

Hence, Roe assumes that the poetic practices of the Hunt circle were aligned with its radical politics exhibited in the *Examiner*, thus creating a new public voice based on its "culture of dissent" which consequently led to a formation of counter-publicity as opposed to the hegemonic working of the established publicity. And this assumption has been shared by other critics who give attention to the heterogeneity of the Hunt circle not only in terms of socio-political ideas but of other cultural elements such as language, poetic or aesthetic ideas, localism, and class consciousness. Greg Kucich's study

displays a typical example of this critical vein.[48] Kucich, in an attempt to identify Hunt

and his circle members' social position, characterizes them by the term "insolent

insider." By this term Kucich implies a marginal and liminal position purposefully

adopted for an effective critique of the mainstream political and cultural tenets. Having

started this self-fashioning as an insolent insider with the Hunt brothers' incarceration,

Kucich contends, Hunt "could mobilize audacious excesses of aesthetic delight and

raucous sociability to push against the pressures of state discipline" without necessarily

placing himself outside of the established print culture ("The Wit" par. 5). Kucich

derives the Hunt circle's insolence from its "hyperbolic ('Cockney') mannerisms"

prominently represented by Hunt's poetic extravagances and thus notes its socio-

political function as "compromis[ing] hierarchies of rank, power, and prestige"

("Cockney Chivalry" 121). Hence, Kucich reads Hunt's intentionally hyperbolized

Cockneyfied poetic practices and extravagant aesthetics as "a sustained effort to

reimagine from within the iron center of despotism, prejudice, and self-interest a new

liberated social order governed by art, beauty and sociability" (128-9).

In a similar way, Richard Cronin reads the Cockney poetry (especially, Hunt's *The*

Story of Rimini) as an "inverted pastoral." Cronin argues that "[i]nstead of courtly poets

appropriating the language and sentiments of rustics, Hampstead poets [the Hunt circle]

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[48] Greg Kucich, "'The Wit in the Dungeon': Leigh Hunt and the Insolent Politics of Cockney Coteries," *Romanticism on the Net* 14 (1999): 10 pars, 16 August 2008 <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/cockneycoteries.html>; and "Cockney Chivalry: Hunt, Keats and the Aesthetics of Excess," *Leigh Hunt: Life, Poetics, Politics*, ed. Nicholas Roe (London: Routledge, 2003) 118-34.

appropriate the manners of the court, and infect its language with the cant terms of their own ordinary discourse: rural, tasteful, and accomplished" (187). Thus for Cronin, the Hunt circle's inverted use of the pastoral tradition was a manifestation of its attempt to disrupt the assumptions of the established high culture in order to accommodate them to the new politics that the circle aimed for. Jane Stabler's study of Hunt's writing style also highlights how Hunt's deviation from the high culture of literati created a resistant space to the hegemonic ideology of the ruling class. In Stabler's case, more specifically, the heterogeneous and resistant publicity of the Hunt circle is traced from Hunt's original way of using an "intimate" writing style which, despite the charge of over-familiarity and vulgarity from conservative reviewers, enabled Hunt to communicate with the rising middle-class readers who had been alienated from the tradition of high literature, thereby allowing Hunt to both conceive and practice a more egalitarian and thus more universal public sphere in the early nineteenth-century British cultural scene.

In addition to these linguistic and aesthetic features of the Hunt circle's writing practice, the geographical location of its members' residence and its social implication serve as a critical source that endorses the heterogeneity of the Hunt circle.[49] According to Elizabeth Jones, Hunt's and Keats's residence in Hampstead and the indulgence in a suburban life style that had been glamorized in their writings precipitated Lockhart's

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[49] For a more comprehensive understanding of the geographical implication of country and city in terms of social history, see Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975). For a recent revision of the same issue focused on the Romantic period, see James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin, eds., *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

attack on the Cockney school poetry, because "the new suburban model of society allowed citizens to move freely up the social hierarchy through the possession of the property" and thus were regarded as "a great danger to society" by the ruling class (91). That is, the suburban culture which was a hallmark of the Hunt circle became, Jones illustrates, associated with the appearance of "the leisured middle classes," and consequently the Hunt circle's public activity came to assume a radical posture to the established social order.[50]

Unlike the aforementioned critics who draw attention to the Hunt circle's oppositional self-positioning against the hegemonic politics and culture and thus identify a definite manifestation of counter-publicity in the members' practices of journalism and poetry, Jeffrey Cox's study locates the Hunt circle's new mode of publicity in its pursuit of communal activity for an engagement with contemporary realities. For Cox, what distinguished the Hunt circle's activity from others' lied not so much in its radical tenets

[50] Relating the new mode of disseminating and consuming information in the eighteenth century with the appearance of the leisured middle class, Ayumi Mizukoshi offers the following explanation: "The eighteenth century was the first age of an information explosion and witnessed an unprecedented rise in the number of printed books, journals and newspapers. Along with recipe books, gardening manuals, musical scores, primers and encyclopedias, literature (or more specifically, fiction) comprised a significant part of the booming print culture. With money to spend and time to spare, middle-class audiences were avid seekers of knowledge and enjoyment, forging a taste of their own. The age in which literature was monopolized by a privileged few was long gone. Literature had now become available to anyone who coveted the luxury of reading" (13). For more accounts of the middle-class ethos of luxury, see John H. Plumb, Neil McKendrick, and John Brewer, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982); Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts, eds., *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York UP, 1996); and John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

or progressive ideology as in its unique mode of forming an intellectual community. Having accommodated the traditional way of communication between coterie members to its literary practices and applied it to the already commercialized print culture of the 1810s, Cox demonstrates, the individual members of the Hunt circle were able to communally "exemplify their vision of community" (*Politics and Poetry* 81). And it is through this new vision of community which endorses social pleasure acquired from disinterested relationship between comrades that they were able to formulate a counter discourse as opposed to violently repressive politics and gradually reified commercialism. Cox, in other words, foregrounds the Hunt circle's principle of organizing "the social" as a counter cultural force by which the social injustices and contradictions, which prevailed throughout the early nineteenth century, could be criticized and corrected.

As has been illustrated by those recent studies, the trajectory that the Hunt circle followed through each member's literary career apparently shows how they attempted to distinguish themselves from the established order of politics and culture and thereby formulate a counter-public sphere of their own so as to effectuate a new social vision. Hence, it is undeniable that the Hunt circle, mostly through the communal practices in print culture, sought to conceive and actualize a certain version of counter-public discourse for the purpose of criticizing and correcting the wrongs and injustices of the illegitimate political, economic, and cultural powers in the turbulent post-Napoleonic situation, just as the radical reformist groups were supposed to do at that time. But this

does not necessarily mean that the Hunt circle created a counter-public sphere which is defined as disavowing the fundamental assumptions of the classical public sphere mostly conducted by the bourgeois intellectuals for achieving a new principle of forming social discourses, because neither the ideological ideal nor the material practices of the Hunt circle brought down the traditional ideal of fulfilling the public good pursued by intellectual public spheres, as has been demonstrated in the discussion of the republic of the letters. Rather, it should be proclaimed that the Hunt circle's self-fashioning as countering the dominating powers and the established order was an attempt to recover the original tenets and roles of the early intellectual bourgeois public sphere which had been distorted, exploited and even appropriated by the reactionary conservatives in power. Kucich's characterization of the Hunt circle as "insider" (although it is with an adjective "insolent") and Cronin's point that the Hunt circle repeatedly referred to traditional literary forms for its literary experiments reveal the extent to which even those critics who claim the Hunt circle's heterogeneity are aware of its alignment with the traditional way of generating intellectual discourses through public spheres.

This issue of how the Hunt circle's oppositional practices should be reassessed in terms of public-sphere theory can be more effectively illuminated by critically reflecting on the ways in which those recent studies claim the Hunt circle's formation of counter-publicity. In highlighting the oppositional aspect of the Hunt circle's literary practices, critics usually attend to conservative periodicals' hostile reception of the key members' literary productions during the post-Napoleonic period (specifically, the later part of the

1810s). The hostile reviews conducted by *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review* on Hunt's *The Story of Rimini* and *Foliage*, Keats's 1817 *Poems* and *Endymion*, and Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* might be said to be representative examples of this reception, since the very debate on the Cockney school of poetry came into being out of this reception.[51] And the countering criticisms from the Hunt circle against those hostile reviews such as Hunt's severe condemnation of Z (Lockhart) in the *Examiner*, John Hunt's mention that Z should identify himself, and Hazlitt's *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq*. made the Hunt circle's literary practices a significant issue in both cultural and political terms, because their literary practices were considered by conservative Tory critics to be associated with the oppositional political stance that Hunt and Hazlitt had displayed through radical periodicals.[52] Hence, in the middle of this reception, the literary claims suggested through the Hunt circle's literary productions came to be identified with one of representative radical creeds in association with such plebeian radicals as William Cobbett, T. J. Wooler, William Hone, and Richard Carlile.[53] In this sense, it can be said that the Hunt circle's contemporaries' reception that the members'

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[51] For a detailed reception history and review texts on the works of the Hunt circle, see Ronald Reiman ed*., The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers*, Part C, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1972).

[52] Eberle-Sinatra, 82-3.

[53] Gilmartin says, "Hunt was fully conversant with [a generalized libertarian rhetoric], especially in his contempt for the government, the whig party, and political corruption. The *Quarterly Review* did not hesitate to number him with Wooler and Cobbett among 'the white-hatted party,' and Carlile read the *Examiner* during the period of his radicalization" (*Print Politics* 198).

literary productions and concomitant social activities were a cultural manifestation of their political radicalism has persisted in the recent studies that attend to the Hunt circle's counter-publicity.

Among those literary productions associated with politics, Hunt's *Foliage* frequently receives critical attentions as representing the so-called Cockney politics of the Hunt circle. Cox's article "Leigh Hunt's *Foliage*: a Cockney Manifesto" exhibits a telling example of this critical assessment. In discussing how Hunt's *Foliage* "is in keeping with a broader agenda of social and political reform" (67), Cox contends,

> "Cheerfulness," in Hunt's argument, comes to include a number of
> potentially radical stances: a pagan embrace of earthly life, rather than
> despair at our existence in a fallen world; an affirmation of community in a
> society that increasingly exalted individualism and "money-getting"; and an
> effort—after the failure of the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon—
> to keep alive the hope of social change. Faced with disillusion and despair
> among the reformers, and with an unrelentingly conservative government in
> power, Hunt argues that sociality, solidarity, cheerfulness and hope are vital
> rallying points. . . . If Hunt's political writings in the *Examiner* are aimed at
> liberating the people from the tyrannical and exploitative political and
> economic powers, his poetry seeks to unlock the "mind forged manacles"
> that also oppress. (67-8)

As compellingly manifested here, Cox underscores how the overarching themes of "sociality, solidarity, cheerfulness and hope" exhibited in *Foliage* were set up as an alternative social vision by which not only the physical oppression imposed by "the tyrannical and exploitative political and economic powers" but the prevalent mental depression hovering around this time period, as represented by William Blake's phrase "mind forged manacles," could be corrected and even completely shattered. In other words, Cox attempts to assess the significance of the Hunt circle members' communal practices not simply as resisting political and economic injustices in terms of real politics but as propounding and executing a fundamentally new principle of society and culture through new poetic subjects, a theoretical manifestation supporting these new poetic subjects, and most importantly a new model of intellectual communality based on the coterie tradition; therefore, Cox assumes a formation of counter-publicity by noting the Hunt circle's general tendency of challenging the ideological workings of dominant public powers.

Granting that the Hunt circle was apparently articulating an oppositional voice against those in power, nevertheless, it needs a certain qualification to claim that the Hunt circle's practice formed a counter-public sphere in which a new principle of society was conceived and even put into action. This qualification seems clearly necessary when it is noted that the debates surrounding the Hunt circle's literary activity that gave rise to the hostile critical reception were placed entirely within the established print culture of bourgeois intellectuals that was still excluding the voice of marginal social groups;

furthermore, the Hunt circle's critiques on politics and culture never went so far as to subvert the basic assumptions of the established bourgeois public sphere in terms of gender and class. Therefore, although *Foliage*, as Cox suggests, exhibited a new social vision that could cure the existing social evils, this new vision was more of a corrective suggestion from an insider rather than a formation of a newly principled publicity. In the Preface to *Foliage*, Hunt advances the following arguments as basing his poetic creed: 1) "the French school of poetry" represented by Pope and controlled by "a coterie of town gentlemen" should be replaced by poets who possess a "sensitiveness to the beauty of the external world, to the unsophisticated impulses of our nature, and above all, imagination, or power to see, with verisimilitude, what others do not"; 2) the present penchant for the classical Latin literature represented by Horace should give way to "the elementary inspiration" and "the fine imagination of Greeks"; 3) instead of the prevailing poetic creed based on "a disappointed egotism" of melancholy and despondence, a new creed should be brought forward which endorses "a love of sociality" and nature, a spread of cheerfulness, and "a sense of justice among fellow-creatures" (*Literary Criticism* 130-3).

In the first argument, the target of Hunt's criticism is "the French school of poetry" which refers to the dominant trends of poetry from the early eighteenth century; therefore, this critique can be said to be opposed to the basic assumption of the poetic practice of the dominant culture. But it is hard to claim the innovative nature of Hunt's poetic principle with this oppositional stance, because this opposition to the French

school of poetry or the neo-classical poetics was already proposed by several exponents

of the poetry of sensibility and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*. Thus Hunt's first

argument should be assessed as an attempt of his own to elaborate a new poetics that had

been already gaining cultural power.[54] The second argument generally stays in the same

vein as the first one. The classical Latin model represented by Horace was a hallmark of

the neo-classical poetics; hence, Hunt's new emphasis of the Greek model derives from

his attempt to turn people's attention away from the neo-classical poetics. Still, Hunt

seeks to locate a model of his poetic principle from classical Greek literature (instead of

wholly new literature), which suggests that Hunt's way of conveying a literary claim,

even though it implies a subversive element to the dominant culture, remains completely

within the way of traditional intellectual communication. The last argument is that which

recent critics most frequently attend to for highlighting the radical politics inherent in

Hunt's poetic principle, as already demonstrated in some critics' arguments. That is, they

claim that Hunt's endorsement of sociality and cheerfulness as a social principle, by

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[54] McGann argues that the neo-classical poetics propounded by Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson in the eighteenth century was not so much a dominant cultural tenet as a product of reactionary intellectuals' resistance to the prevalence of poetry of sensibility. That is, what gained cultural power in the eighteenth century was the poetics founded on sensibility rather than neo-classicism. On the historical significance of poetry of sensibility, McGann says, "'Sensibility' was an equivocal condition even for those who gave their hearts to it. Eliot, like Pope in the eighteenth century, was both a great poet and a commanding cultural presence. He was also, like Pope and Johnson, a reactionary figure haunted with premonitory dreams of cultural Armageddon. This dark future cast its shadow across the presence of Pope and Johnson, on the one hand, and of Eliot and Pound on the other. In the eighteenth century the shadows were legion—its names are Gray, Macpherson, the Della Cruscans, and a mob of scribbling women" (*Poetics of Sensibility* 3).

which a sense of justice can be legitimately embodied in people's mutual relationship and mental attitude, functioned as a public principle countering the repressive powers based on selfish interest. But can this communitarian impulse immanent in Hunt's social principle be considered to be a decisive element by which Hunt's vision of society and even the ideological tendency of the Hunt circle are interpreted as a newly emergent counter-public discourse against the dominant public sphere? This claim needs to be qualified, since the Hunt circle's communitarian impulse for social reform has historical predecessors in the intellectual tradition of republicanism.

According to Isaac Kramnick, throughout the eighteenth century there was a debate between two conflicting discourses in British politics and society: between liberalism and republicanism. Kramnick explains liberalism as "a political theory of individual rights, consent, and a limited state" originated from "an ideology of work" and republicanism as "a communitarian theory of participation and civic obligation" whose historical origin can be traced back to Aristotle's championing of leisure as a precondition of civic virtue (1-2). Exploring the tension between those two discourses in the eighteenth-century political scene of Britain, Kramnick draws attention to the historical moment where "[a] modern self-interested, competitive, individualistic ideology emphasizing private rights has been replaced at the center of eighteenth-century political discourse by a classical-Renaissance ideology emphasizing selfless duty-based participation in the communal pursuit of the virtuous public good" (35). Faced with the persistent tradition of neo-Lockeanism which endorses the core tenets of liberalism by

suggesting self-interest as a basis of modernity, Kramnick proposes the necessity of

taking into account the extent to which the discourse of republicanism contributed to the

formation of eighteenth-century ideas of publicity. Given this study that indicates

communitarian ideas immanent in the traditional intellectual discourse of politics and

society, it should be claimed that the Hunt circle's communitarian impulse was not so

much a guaranteeing feature of its counter-publicity as a product of its attempt to

recuperate the old republican tradition that had been forming a considerable part of

intellectual public sphere but at the same time gradually encroached upon by political

corruption and a selfish pursuit of "money-getting."[55] And that is why Hunt so

emphatically celebrated the historical figures whom he considered to constitute the

English tradition of fighting against tyrannical forces for freedom and justice such as

John Hampden, Andrew Marvell, King Alfred, and John Milton.[56] Hence, it is a

classical intellectual public sphere where the word "public" is imbued with the strongest

emphasis rather than a counter-public sphere basing its ethos on marginal social

discourse that the Hunt circle sought to realize through its communal practice as literati.

This assertive self-positioning, however, ironically foreshadowed the Hunt circle's

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[55] In a similar vein, Anne Janowitz focuses more on the struggle between individualism and communitarianism when explaining the shape of the Romantic discourse, thus validating the historical persistence of communitarianism. She contends that "a central conflict within British society as a whole, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, reaching its height between 1790 and 1848, and persisting in various forms (as romanticism has persisted in various forms) well into the twentieth century has been the debate between voluntaristic individualism and embedded communitarianism as grounding social theories of the constitution of personal and political identity" (13).

[56] The *Examiner* 10 Jan. 1812: 17-20.

prospective struggles with the issues of class and gender and finally its demise as a communal entity.

5. The Difficulties Which the Hunt Circle's Ideal Publicity Faced in Historical Proceedings

As has been examined, the public sphere that the Hunt circle sought to embody through its communal intellectual activity was modeled upon the traditional republican ideal of literati which generally corresponds to the basic ethos of the classical bourgeois public sphere suggested by Habermas. But it is through this correspondence between the two forms of publicity that the Hunt circle came to reiterate the immanent problems of the classical bourgeois public sphere. As already mentioned in the discussion of the theoretical validity of Habermas's notion of public sphere, the main problem of Habermas's public-sphere theory lies in the discrepancy between its normative assumption of members' equal participation in a critical-rational debate and the historical reality to which this theory refers. Concerning the real situation of the early eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere on which Habermas's theory is grounded, many critics have pointed out that the idea of equal exchange of opinions without domination is an illusion. Terry Eagleton considers "the bourgeois principle of abstract free and equal exchange" to be "contributing to the political apparatus which sustains [the order of bourgeois economy]" (26), and in the same vein Peter Hohendahl notes that Habermas's propensity of "idealizing the Enlightenment public sphere" in his theory

definitely disregards "its specific class character" (246). Goeff Eley goes further on this

point. Eley contends that the very inception of public sphere was predicated upon a new

exclusionary ideology in terms of class and gender, and therefore competitions and

conflicts from the beginning took place between publics, thus shaping the main practices

of public spheres. Consequently, Eley characterizes the bourgeois public sphere "as the

structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety

of publics take place, rather than as the spontaneous and class-specific achievement of

the bourgeoisie" (306). For those critics, the bourgeois public sphere actualized in

eighteenth-century Britain was not a place for a free exchange of opinions among equals

but a place where class and gender contradictions were unstably disguised by the

ideology of equality; hence, the working of the public sphere was mostly nominal,

actually carrying several elements of instability and could not but be disrupted and

ultimately suspended as contradictions grew intensified.[57] By the time of the 1790s,

indeed, the ideal tenets of the bourgeois public sphere did not work any more in most

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[57] Faced with this critical charge, Habermas offers the following self-defense. He says, "from the beginning a dominant bourgeois public collides with a plebeian one. From this it follows, especially if one seriously tries to make room for the feminist dynamic of the excluded other, that the model of the contradictory institutionalization of the public sphere in the bourgeois constitutional state . . . is conceived too rigidly. The tensions that come to the fore in the liberal public sphere must be depicted more clearly as *potentials for a self-transformation*. As a result, the contrast between an early political public sphere . . . and the public sphere of the mass-democratic social-welfare states, which has been subverted by power, no longer has the ring of a contrast between an idealistically glorified past and a present distorted by the mirror of cultural criticism. . . . Still, a mistake in the assessment of the significance of certain aspects does not falsify the larger outline of the process of transformation that I presented" ("Further Reflections" emphasis added 430).

social and cultural sites of public sphere, and this historical phenomenon was most

salient in the culture of periodicals as a site of public sphere.[58] As to the changed

situation of periodicals, Klancher explains as follows:

> Public discourse had become an ideological minefield, and the passively
>
> "spectating," and "idling," or "rambling" eighteenth-century periodical
>
> writer had now, in the new discursive field, become a vigilant, censorious
>
> "watchman." In such conditions it was no longer enough to "*know* the Truth
>
> that it will make us Free!" For Coleridge had assumed in the *Watchman* a
>
> prior state of habituation, a set of minds already disciplined for his truth,
>
> that had now proven to be a mirage. (38)

In this phase of discursive field where the possibility of conceiving universally accepted

values was precluded, a disinterested deliberation with critical rationality for a unified

opinion of the public good could not be achieved simply because there could not be a

single standard of the public good. Every position endeavored to claim its own

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[58] On the complicated social and cultural topography of the 1790s, Andrew McCann offers the following explanation: "At the end of the eighteenth century many members of an emergent middle class were as politically disempowered as the workers and it wasn't until the first reform bill of 1832 that something like bourgeois political enfranchisement became a reality. Given this situation it may be more accurate, and politically relevant, to supplement oppositions between 'dominant' and 'oppositional,' 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' publics, with the distinction between forms of cultural production that fostered engaged and progressive political activity, and those that impeded this. The difficulty of analyzing the bourgeois public sphere in the 1790s is that it was quite clearly informed by both. . . .[The 1790s was] a decade which saw the emergence of both activist political and cultural practices (bourgeois, proletarian, and feminist) in opposition to both the residual forms of courtly culture and the emergent forms of an increasingly homogenized culture industry" (3).

legitimacy on the basis of its ideological assumption, and therefore the old ideal of

universal consensus through a public deliberation which had been assumed to be

embodied in the form of periodicals such as the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* was in the

process of disintegrating. In this process of disintegration of the liberal model of public

sphere aiming at universal consensus, a variety of public discourses or modes of

publicity started to be shaped with different and sometimes conflicting interests and

ideological assumptions. E.P. Thompson's explication of "the state of apartheid"

between radical, working-class interests and bourgeois commercial interests that

appeared in the 1790s (177) and Anne Mellor's valorization of "the private sphere

associated primarily with women" as "infiltrating and finally dominating the discursive

public sphere during the Romantic era" (*Mothers of Nation* 11) are typical examples of

the studies that attempt to reflect on the changed state of public sphere after this process

of disintegration. With respect to the public sphere of periodicals in the Romantic period,

Klancher identifies three distinct modes of publicity which manifested themselves as a

readership or audience of periodicals: "the radical audience," "the cultivated intellectual

readership," and "the mass readership" (38-9). In short, this unstable state of divided

interests and ideologies between public spheres, where mutual contestations and

negotiations were continuously taking place, had patterned the actual working of public

sphere since the late eighteenth century; consequently, the Hunt circle's literary practices,

mostly grounded in print culture of periodicals which had been exhibiting the most

intense degree of interest and ideological conflicts between publics, should be assessed against the backdrop of this historical situation.[59]

As mentioned before, the ideal public sphere that the Hunt circle attempted to embody was modeled on the notion of the republic of letters whose ideological ethos could be traced back to classical republicanism. As this ideal of the Hunt circle implied a communitarian impulse of fulfilling the public good, the members concentrated their literary and journalistic practices on the critique of political, economic, and cultural powers which they thought were committing social injustice. Hence, they came to be representatives of radicalism, who shared the political and cultural creeds with plebeian publics, and moreover their self-positioning as oppositional to the dominating powers confirmed their identity as radical. But this self-fashioning of the Hunt circle as oppositional or radical gave rise to several contradictions in terms of the ideological objective of its public practice and the public sphere that this circle sought to address and realize.

These contradictions can be viewed in three ways. First, although the Hunt circle's ideological objective of publicity was predicated upon the republican community model in which intellectually qualified individuals could deliberate on public agendas for

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[59] For more comprehensive accounts of the ideological conflicts between public groups that took place in the Romantic period print culture, see Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1832* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and the Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000); and Mark Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The "Literary Lower Empire"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

bringing about a unified consensus of practicing the public good, its oppositional stance to the dominating powers forced its mode of publicity in reality to assume a militant and resistant character of a marginal minor group which would inevitably subscribe to subversive factionalism rather than consensual universalism.[60] The public sphere of the Hunt circle, therefore, never achieved a universal character despite its clear ideological objective toward universalism.

Second, the Hunt circle's radical position sustained through its alliance with marginalized counter-publics was in a state of constant struggles and conflicts with those publics, because it based its mode of publicity on the ethos of the intellectual middle-class public sphere mostly composed of males. That is, the Hunt circle's middle-class oriented ideology could not but be contested with that of plebeian counter-publics founded on the working-class interests. Besides this tension with plebeian radical groups, the Hunt circle came to be confronted with the increasing social influence of female publics that had been mostly generated from the growing significance of female writers and readers in the literary market.[61] Moreover, the domestic ideology, on which female publics were based, expanded to the point of functioning as one of major public

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[60] This dilemma between dogmatic factionalism and consensual universalism was shared by other radical reformist groups. On this issue, Gilmartin writes that "[r]adical controversy had more in common with the reformation sense of a trial of truth than with subsequent theories of interest negotiation in a democratically structured public sphere. Suspicious of whig complicity, radical publicists set out to uncover the truths obscured by corruption, and to silence rather than persuade their antagonists" (*Print Politics* 18).

[61] Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000) 9.

principles of society.[62] Since the Hunt circle's ideal publicity based on the traditional

republicanism presupposed the distinction between males' public sphere and females'

private sphere, it maintained a reactionary stance toward expanding female publics,

which forced its ideological endorsement of disinterested publicity to be constantly in a

state of contradiction and instability.

Third, as the early nineteenth century witnessed the dramatic growth of

consumerism, a pursuit of commercial profit came to serve as a dominant principle for

most public spheres (especially for the publics of middle-class people). This commercial

spirit also dominated the working of print culture, which, to be sure, created a tension in

the Hunt circle's literary practice conducted through print media; that is, the members

were continuously forced to compromise their oppositional claim against commercial

powers mainly because they needed to depend on the middle-class readership for

sustaining the class foundation of their ideal publicity.[63] And this contradictory

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[62] Hannah More's campaign for cultivating and spreading Christian female virtue, for example, can be said to contribute to a growth of female publics based on domestic ideology. On the historical significance of Hannah More's literary career, Mellor argues as follows: "After the Evangelical campaigns of the early nineteenth century [by Hannah More], Britain would not have tolerated the rule of another George IV: a fiscally irresponsible libertine devoted to luxury, stylistic display, and dissipation. The new British nation required that its royal monarch be economically prudent, decorous in appearance and taste, and above all moral. And after the career of Hannah More, the symbolic representation of this new national identity had to be female: only a woman, in the historical case, Queen Victoria, could literally embody and thus transparently represent British national virtue, that Christian virtue that More had everywhere in her writings gendered as female. Only a woman could become the Mother of the Nation, Britannia herself" (*Mothers of the Nation* 38).

[63] This dilemma between the Hunt circle's self-positioning as oppositional men of letters and its need to cater to the middle-class readership kept hovering around the members'

relationship with middle-class interest based on commercialism finally came to exhaust

the radical energy of the Hunt circle around the time of the first Reform Bill in 1832.[64]

In brief, as opposed to the Hunt circle's strenuous effort to regenerate an intellectual

community practicing the universally accepted public good through literature by

referring to the traditional ideal of the republic of letters, its actual practice generated a

series of contradiction and instability in terms not just of its relationship with other

publics but of its internal working of ideology. The specific cases of this contradiction

and instability that could be manifested through the ways in which its members were

engaged with their contemporary history will be examined in the next chapters.

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literary practices, and the most telling literary representation of this dilemma was Hunt's *The Literary Pocket-Book* in which a man of letters' pursuit of intellectual cultivation was negotiated with a commercial motivation. But this active address to middle-class interests also served as what Pierre Bourdieu has called "a social function of legitimating social differences" (7). As Mizukoshi aptly points out, in *The Literary Pocket-Book*, Hunt provided "literary cultivation which supplied the middle-class demand for cultural prestige," thereby "articulating social distinction" of the bourgeois middle class (36-7).

[64] Gilmartin explains Hunt's later middle-class conformism as follows: "By the 1830s, Hunt was fully prepared to abandon print intervention in the public sphere, and leave politics to politicians. With the establishment of *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* in 1834, the ambitions with which he launched his career had become a frank discursive fantasy rather than a practical program for social change" (*Print Politics* 226).

CHAPTER III

THE ANXIETY OF WRITING FOR THE PUBLIC: THE CASE OF JOHN

KEATS

As discussed in Chapter II, the public ideal of the Hunt circle was concerned with the notion of the republic of letters modeled on the disinterested and independent periodical writers of the eighteenth century and their pursuit of the public good. Unlike these eighteenth-century predecessors, however, whose sense of the public was stably confined to the established bourgeois class, the Hunt circle members had to face the amorphous, uncertain and much expanded public for fulfilling their public ideal through writings. This new expanded public resulted from the tendency of democratization that the Hunt circle espoused, but this change also added a new difficulty to the public sphere that the Hunt circle aimed at. Due to the disappearance of preconceived solidarity between writers and the public, a writer's communication with the public, which constituted seminal part of the Hunt circle's ideal public sphere, became made possible mostly by commercial popularity—i.e., the popularity effected by catering to the public's taste, whether or not it conforms to their public ideal. Consequently, the Hunt circle members fell in with a serious dilemma, since their original intention to deliberate the public good by communicating with the public did not create a public sphere for a critical, rational debate between writers and readers but became controlled and even distorted by the logic of commercial market. This dilemma, in other words, had much to

do with a precarious position of authors in the more and more commercialized literary market of the early nineteenth century, and Keats, among the Hunt circle members, representatively embodied this dilemma of the Hunt circle by his marginal class and economic status.

Keats's position as one of key members of the Hunt circle is easily substantiated through numerous historical records of his social and literary practices. Keats's first published poem, "O Solitude," appeared in the *Examiner* for 5 May 1816, and a little later, he was mentioned as one of three promising "young poets" by Hunt in the same journal. Keats consulted Percy Bysshe Shelley, another of those young poets mentioned by Hunt, about publishing his first collection of poems, *Poems* of 1817, and thus, although Shelley felt it undesirable for these poems to be published, he ultimately conformed to Keats's resolve to publish them by introducing his own publisher, the Ollier brothers.[1] In this first publication, Keats wrote a dedication to Hunt and included "Written on the Day That Leigh Hunt Left Prison" which celebrates Hunt's political resistance against the "wretched crew" of the Regency regime, along with other poems endorsing political, social, and cultural values that the Hunt circle pursued. In addition to Keats's allegiance to the Hunt circle in his publishing career, he also developed intimate relationships with the members of the Hunt circle on a personal level. Since Keats first

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[1] But this alliance between Keats and Shelley for a business purpose did not persist, since the Olliers soon transferred this publication business to Taylor and Hessey mostly due to the poor sale of the book. And this initial failure in publication foreboded Keats's precarious relationship not only with the reading public but with a socio-economically superior member like Shelley. See G. M. Matthews, ed., *Keats: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971) 6-7.

met Hunt through Charles Cowden Clarke's introduction, Keats became a regular visitor at Hunt's residence in the Vale of Health of Hampstead, where he came to join the Hunt circle's social gatherings. In these social gatherings, Keats went through several socializing activities including eating, drinking, conversations about politics and literature, and even contests of poetry composition, whose atmosphere is vividly represented in "Sleep and Poetry," the final poem of *Poems* of 1817. As this poem suggests, these social gatherings within the Hunt circle offered to Keats a basic model not only for the manner in which he would develop social connections with people but for the thematic and ideological direction that his later literary practice would pursue. Most significantly, through this society of which Keats became an integral part, he was endowed with a new social and cultural identity (which also had much to do with Keats's political position) by his contemporaries (especially by Tory reviewers hostile to the Hunt circle)—i.e., a poet of the Cockney school.[2]

Indeed, to characterize Keats as a representative figure of the Cockney school, whether the derogatory implication of the term "Cockney" was intentionally underscored or the connection with Hunt was just factually designated in terms of poetic style and politics, was a commonly accepted critical evaluation of Keats in the contemporaneous literary scene. Initially, it was Hunt himself who presented Keats as one of key figures of

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[2] For detailed accounts of how Keats's poetic practice was integrated into the group activity of the Hunt circle, see Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 105-10, 116-33; and Jeffrey Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 82-122.

a newly emergent force in the literary scene, which would counter the cultural

establishment represented by Popeian poetic tradition (i.e., what Hunt repeatedly calls

"the French school of poetry" in his literary writings), so that Hunt could validate his

political and cultural ideals by standing up for a poet allied with his own position and at

the same time promote Keats's name as a recognized poet. And it was Keats's *Poems* of

1817 that exemplarily fulfilled these ideals of Hunt and his circle by bodying forth

poetic representations of their ideals in a compelling way.[3] This connection between

Keats and the Hunt circle thus underwritten by their own writing, however, meant for

Tory reviewers a formation of a literary school that would pose a serious challenge to the

political and cultural establishment. Hence, Tory reviewers attempted to confer a

derogatory sense upon this literary connection by labeling the Hunt circle (especially

pinpointing Keats) as "Cockney" poets and writing severely condemnatory reviews on

their poetic practices. From this moment on, Keats's identity as a Cockney poet

connected to the Hunt circle became fixed in his contemporary critical reception, and

thereby Tory reviewers, who were opposing the Hunt circle's political position, began to

capitalize on this Cockney identity of Keats for the purpose of invalidating radical tenets

espoused by the Hunt circle.[4]

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[3] *Poems* of 1817 includes a variety of epistle poems and sonnets addressed to Keats's acquaintances, most of whom were related to the Hunt circle directly or indirectly. What is notable in these address poems is not only that they vividly embody Keats's communal intercourse with members of the Hunt circle but that they emphatically articulate Keats's political, cultural, and literary ideals.

[4] Kevin Gilmartin characterizes Tory periodicals' way of attacking opposing sides as follows: "In these [Tory] periodicals, writing against revolution sustained its combative

But this Cockney identity made a far-reaching impact on Keats's literary career beyond this context of political feuds, since this identity stigmatized not only his poetic practice and political creeds but all the material conditions on which his personal life was based.[5] In other words, both Keats's poetry and life, due to the public influence of these reviews, came to *representatively* signify the problems with which the Hunt circle was implicated, when he began to address the public with his poetic practice. Given this peculiar significance of Keats's position among the Hunt circle members, this chapter will explore what material conditions of the early nineteenth-century literary public sphere distorted Keats's attempt to communicate and engage with the public through literature. Then, this chapter will also elucidate how Keats's literary practice embodies a sense of contradiction and instability in response to this historical distortion imposed on the ideal publicity that Keats and the Hunt circle sought to actualize.

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manner of political engagement while working to invest itself in a more sustained and reliable print medium" (*Writing against Revolution* 96).

[5] As to the connection between the material basis of Keats's life and his poetic practice, Marjorie Levinson offers a compelling argument. She says, "The deep contemporary insult of Keats's poetry, and its deep appeal (and long opacity) for the modern reader, is its idealized enactment of the conflicts and solutions which defined the middle class at a certain point in its development and which still to some extent obtain. We remember that Keats's style can delineate that station so powerfully because of his marginal, longing relation to the legitimate bourgeoisie (and its literary exemplars) of his day. In emulating the condition of the accomplished middle class (the phrase is itself an oxymoron), Keats isolated the constitutive contradictions of that class" (5).

1. Keats's Early Project of Poetry and Its Frustration: Keats's *Poems* of 1817 and *Endymion* and Tory Reviewers' Responses to Them

The two best-known and widely influential condemnatory reviews on Keats's poetry were John Lockhart's in *Blackwood's* and John Wilson Croker's in the *Quarterly Review*, both of which were written right after the publication of *Endymion* in 1818. Although these reviews purported to criticize Keats's *Endymion* (together with *Poems* of 1817 in Lockhart's case), as G. M. Matthews explains, their real target was Hunt.[6] Thus Croker describes Hunt as "the meanest, the filthiest, and the most vulgar of Cockney poetasters" and his circle as the "uneducated and flimsy striplings" (Matthews 99-101). That is, their attacks on Keats's poetry were explicitly directed against the political, social, and cultural values for which the Hunt circle stood up rather than Keats's individual poetic flaws. But this fact does not necessarily mean that Keats was just an occasional victim of party politics prevailing in contemporary print culture, because of the following reasons: first, the critical mode in which Lockhart and Croker condemn Keats's poetry touches on the material basis of how a cultural parvenu like Keats speaks to the public through poetry, thus making Keats a typical representative of what they denounce the Hunt circle about; second, these critical attacks on Keats in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* brought forward more reverberations (along with very fierce debates) in the contemporaneous literary scene than did any other reviews. In other words, Keats might be said to be selected by Tory reviewers as a figure representing not only the

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[6] Matthews, *Keats: The Critical Heritage* 15.

values that the Hunt circle stands for (e.g., loose sexual morality, radical politics) but the material basis of this circle (e.g., low class origin, low level of education), and therewith a series of intense and long-lasting debates came to ensue with a focus on the issue of what a communication through literature should be like (even after Keats died).[7] Ironically, then, it is due to the vulnerability implicit in the material basis of Keats's life that Tory reviewers designated Keats as a representative figure of the Hunt circle.

Besides the aforementioned struggles deriving from political animosity, Keats and his publishers indicated that these critical attacks on Keats's poetry substantially influenced the sale of *Poems* of 1817 and *Endymion*.[8] That is, they attributed the poor sale of Keats's publications to these attacks. This poor sale caused by Tory reviewers' attacks (at least in their judgment) engendered complicated anxieties toward the public (including both professional reviewers and the general reading public) within the process of Keats's producing a literary work for the literary market. For instance, when Keats's publishers (John Taylor and James Hessey) and his friend (John Hamilton Reynolds) disapproved the self-defensively written original preface of *Endymion* by pointing out that it contains the "feel of humility towards the Public," Keats responded that he "never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought," thus emphasizing the independence of his producing a literary work from what he calls "Multitudes of Men" (*Letters* 1: 266-7). But in another instance, Keats reveals a strong

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[7] For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Chapter II of this dissertation.

[8] Matthews, *Keats: The Critical Heritage* 15-9.

consciousness of the reading public's presence and even subjects his own self-evaluation to the public's prospective reception, when he expresses in the letter to Woodhouse of 21 September 1819 his reluctance to publish *Isabella* by saying, "[in *Isabella*] There are very few would look to the reality. I intend to use more finesse with the Public. It is possible to write fine things which cannot be laugh'd at in any way. Isabella is what I should call were I a reviewer 'A weak-sided Poem' with an amusing sober-sadness about it. . . . this will not do to be public" (2: 174). For Keats, the public in the actual literary market, for which his communication through literature is destined to be directed, is perceived to be both an object of contempt from which his literary ideal should be detached and an inevitably imposed material condition on which his literary production must depend.

The dilemma of Keats's literary production, in this sense, lies in the discrepancy between the notion of literature as a public medium by which one can pursue a literary public sphere where the public good is conceived and actualized through an author's transparent communication with an ideal reading public (as the pursuit of intellectual sociality practiced within the Hunt circle demonstrates) and the reality of the contemporaneous literary market where hostile reviews based on political factionalism distorted the meaning of his literary works and the general reading public's indifference to his works precluded a possibility of communication through literature. Although this dilemma was shared by other members of the Hunt circle as middle-class liberal intellectuals with an unstable economic basis, it was Keats's literary practice and the

material condition surrounding this practice that most conspicuously exhibited the dilemma and the contradiction inherent in the ideal publicity that the Hunt circle pursued.[9] The first instance where this dilemma foreshadowed Keats's poetic practice comes from the difference between Keats and Tory reviewers in communicating their ideas (and ideals) to the public. That is, while Keats's first publication was comparatively free of an anxiety over the public reception and thus depended on a model of transparent communication with the public, the Tory reviews' strategy of appealing to (more precisely, controlling) the public was usually predicated on a forestallment of an opponent's attempt to communicate with the public by denigrating his or her public image.

As previously mentioned, the intense critical attentions to Keats's poetry and the ensuing debates between antagonistic periodicals were initiated by the reviews in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* published in 1818.[10] The works dealt with in those two harshly condemnatory reviews are Keats's *Poems* of 1817 and *Endymion*, which traditional Keats's studies have classified as the works of Keats's earlier poetic career (thus immature period).[11] What is notable here is that these studies which underscore the

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[9] One example of this instability of Keats's life is that among the major members of the Hunt circle only Keats had a lower-middle-class manual job, apothecary, on which, of course, Tory reviewers capitalize when criticizing Keats's poetry.

[10] For accounts and texts of the critical reception of Keats's poetry, refer to Matthews, *Keats: The Critical Heritage* and Reiman, *The Romantics Reviewed*.

[11] See, for example, Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964) 73; and Paul de Man, "The Negative Road," *Selected Poetry of John Keats*, ed. Paul de Man (New York: New American Library, 1966) 11.

divide between Keats's immature early poems and later masterpieces, in fact, are still

under the influence of the critical views suggested by these Tory reviews, since they

repeat the Tory reviewers' denigration of Keats's early poems. Thus it might be said that

the impact of these Tory reviews has been substantially influential and long-lasting in

the public reception of Keats's poetry. Then, why did these Tory reviewers attend to

Keats's poetry with such special intensity as a model of bad poetry? And what element

of these earlier works was considered by the Tory reviewers to be so problematic? In

order to answer these questions, it is necessary to examine how Keats's early poems

functioned in the early nineteenth-century cultural and political public sphere. It is also

necessary to note how the poems attempted to generate a discursive field in which

autonomous agents (not bound by socio-economic status) engage in a public deliberation

for the social good through free communication.

These issues of Keats's early poetry's social function and its ideal of free

communication have attracted recent studies' critical concern. By refuting the traditional

views of Keats that his main poetic concern lies in a quest of the aesthetic through

imagination, recent studies have paid attention to the way in which Keats engaged in

early nineteenth-century politics and culture through his poetic practice allied with the

Hunt circle.[12] That is, these studies attempt to correct an aesthetic Keats who absorbed

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[12] Since the late 1970s, a variety of historical studies on Keats and his poetry have been
issued. For representative historical studies of Keats's poetry and its context, see, for
example, Jerome McGann, "Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism,"
Modern Language Notes 94.5 (1979): 988-1032; William Keach, "Cockney Couplets:
Keats and the Politics of Style," *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (1986): 182-96; Nicholas

himself in imaginatively creating an ideal world of beauty beyond the reality fraught

with pain and disillusion and thus newly establish a political Keats whose poetry was a

means of critiquing injustices imposed by illegitimate powers and fulfilling his ideal

political/social vision in contemporary public spheres. In these political readings of

Keats, it is his early poems (especially, *Poems* of 1817 and small pieces published in

liberal periodicals) that begin to receive new critical attention, not only because the early

poems have been belittled as immaturely arty or aesthetically defective works and thus

generally neglected in traditional Keats's studies, but because these poems contain many

elements that attest to Keats's impulse to engage with contemporary

political/social/cultural issues. The poems that critics emphasizing an aesthetic Keats

have considered to be puerile and thus bad (just as did Tory reviewers), ironically, have

come to be revaluated as essential part of Keats's poetic practice in this new critical

focus on Keats's politics and public engagement through literature, and thus what Keats

did with his early poetry serves as a source that reveals a more genuine Keats: a man

speaking to the public (in a qualified Wordsworthian sense).

To read Keats's early poems as a product not of poetic apprenticeship in an

immature period but of an active involvement in political/social/cultural issues changes

an interpretive direction of assessing Keats's poetic practice—i.e., from an escape into

private lyricism to an engagement in public discourses. This way of reading enables the

Roe, ed., *Keats and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Michael O'Neill, ed., *Keats: Bicentenary Readings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997); and Robert M. Ryan and Ronald A. Sharp, eds., *The Persistence of Poetry: Bicentennial Essays on Keats* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1998).

reader to see Keats as an intellectual activist who sought to publicize and fulfill his creeds through engaging himself in print culture which came to function as one of the most influential means of shaping and controlling public opinion in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, these studies offer a significant insight over Keats's initial attempt to communicate with the public (before a sense of anxiety prevailed over Keats's poetic practice).

The studies of this vein usually attend to the public significance of Keats's poetic practice in two ways. First, they suggest that Keats's poetry was in keeping with radical or liberal campaigns of reformist groups waged against repressive established powers. Instead of interpreting Keats's poetry in terms of lyrical transcendence of a private ego, they read a powerful manifestation of radical/liberal ideas about politics and culture in Keats's public practice of publishing his poetry. John Kandl's study on Keats's early poems typically exhibits this critical vein. In an essay dealing with the issue of public John Keats, Kandl contends that, in the cultural context of the early nineteenth century where a poem's privacy is a fiction that it "seeks to exchange in the literary market place for (real) public political authority," the production of "any 'private' literary expression . . . could become a way into the conversation, an inroad into the political-power mechanisms that dominated the public sphere of the time" ("Private Lyrics" 86). From this premise, Kandl interprets the publishing activities of Keats (aligned with Hunt's *Examiner* and other liberal periodicals) "as direct challenges to the public sphere itself, to the modes of authority and modes of signification perpetuated by an elitist and

still somewhat (in Habermas's sense) *representational* Tory press" (86). Thus in Kandl's

argument, what is significant in interpreting Keats's poetry is not Keats's poetry itself so

much as his publishing activities in the public sphere, and in this sense, a poetic practice

does not signify a personal writing about a privately chosen subject but a series of

activities of publicizing one's poetic articulations to engage in public discourses. From

this perspective, Kandl reads Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" as "a

state-of-the-art(s) weapon in the *Examiner*'s arsenal" which "challenges the very codes

of representation by which a political elite sought to maintain authority" (91) and "To

Kosciusko" as "a rallying cry for continued reformist action, directly participating in,

echoing, and employing the same rhetorical strategies employed by Hunt and others"

and at the same time "a dramatic challenge to the Tory press, begging dialogical

response" (100).

In another essay, Kandl applies this view of Keats as a public exponent of

radical/liberal positions to his reading of *Poems* of 1817. In this reading, Keats's "bold

revision of traditional imagery, involving classical mythology, romance, and chivalry" is

associated with "Hunt's polemic for classical myth" which attempts to articulate the

importance of "sensual delight" and "a challenge to the authority of the Church of

England" ("The Politics" 9). Besides, another significant theme in this poetry collection,

the ideal of intellectual solidarity through poetry, "joins an intimately shared enthusiasm

for poetry to a broad public purpose"—i.e., the advancement of "aesthetic and political

reform" (13-5). In brief, Keats's poetic practice, in readings like Kandl's, is interpreted

as a liberal/radical intellectual's challenge to the political and cultural hegemony sustained through the alliance between the conservative government and the Tory press. What is notable in this reading is that it interprets this challenge by Keats in terms of a historical fulfillment of the ideal public sphere as Habermas defines it, which necessarily leads to a view of Keats's early poetry as a communicative action.

The second way of interpreting the public significance of Keats's early poems is to note how these poems were related to the Hunt circle in terms not only of the material aspects of their production and circulation in the literary market but of their theme and style. Studies in this critical line, therefore, suggest that Keats's early poems attracted a public attention by serving as a representative literary production of the Hunt circle writers who were emerging as salient liberal voices in post-Napoleonic print culture and thus characterized by their Tory opponents as a politically radical and morally libertine group of literary parvenus. This emphasis of Keats's relation to the Hunt circle offers important critical points for reading Keats's early poems, in that this relation not only enlightens the extent to which Keats's early poems represented and practiced the political/social/cultural creeds that the Hunt circle members had been articulating in the public sphere of print culture of the 1810s, but also testifies to how Keats endorsed a special form of intellectual community (represented by the Hunt circle) by embodying the working of this community within his poetic practices.

Cox's study of Keats's early poems stands in this critical line. Following William Keach's influential account of the politics of Keats's couplet writing and its ideological

allegiance to the Hunt circle, Cox contends that Keats was a "house poet of the *Examiner* during late 1816 and early 1817, the period during which he came to be part of Hunt's circle," and thus serious critical attention should be paid to "the coterie nature" of his early poems (*Poetry and Politics* 88-9).[13] By attending to the coterie nature displayed in the Hunt circle members' literary practices, Cox notes the way in which Keats embraces it "not to exclude potential readers but to bid [these potential readers] to become part of the coterie itself" (96). That is, for Keats, Cox argues, the social principle of a literary coterie embodied in the relationships between the Hunt circle members serves to be an overarching theme of his poems. From this perspective, Cox concludes,

> Keats's *Poems* [of 1817], which finds the ground for a universal
> *fraternité* in the literal bonds between brothers, which seeks to rejuvenate
> our general social affections by awakening our pursuit of concrete erotic
> pleasure, which locates the hopes for a culture and society remade in the
> specific occasions of the collaborative, interactive work of the Hunt circle,
> both argues for and embodies coterie practice as a foundation for a
> communal act of reform. (122)

Cox's study places Keats's early poems completely within the context surrounding the Hunt circle, whose communal activities for the public provided contemporary intellectuals with numerous grounds of debates in the highly volatile situations of post-Napoleonic politics and culture. This connection of Keats to the Hunt circle's

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[13] William Keach, "Cockney Couplets: Keats and the Politics of Style," *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (1986): 182-96.

engagement with the public is in fact significant in elucidating Keats's relationship with

the public, since by this connection we can see that Keats's initiation into poetic practice

itself was concerned with his commitment to the Hunt circle's communal address to the

public; that is, for Keats the public is integral part of his poetic practice from the outset.

As these studies focusing on a political Keats tellingly illustrate, Keats's early

poems were more than a young literary novice's adolescent works preparing himself for

later masterpieces. Rather, these works were products of a liberal literary intellectual's

resolute attempt to engage in public discourses with new poetic resources and a new

social vision. Keats kept manifesting his endorsement of political reform through a series

of poems dealing with the issues on which liberal/radical groups capitalized for

subverting the established powers (e.g., the issue of political freedom, religious tolerance,

and sexual liberation, to name a few), thus making his poetic practice part of the larger

opposition movements.[14] In addition, the foregrounding of his connection with the Hunt

circle articulated in those poems made Keats one of the most faithful followers of the

ideology that contemporaries believed the Hunt circle's intellectual activities aimed to

espouse. As seen from these assessments, it seems most certain that Keats's early poems

in the public sphere of print culture functioned as a literary intellectual's proclamation of

his liberal vision of politics and culture which aimed to debunk and reform the

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[14] For a detailed historical account of how Keats's poetry was concerned with post-Napoleonic radical politics and culture, see Morris Dickstein, "Keats and Politics," *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (1986): 175-81; David Bromwich, "Keats's Radicalism," *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (1986): 197-210; and Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* 202-67.

conservative order of the established society, and Keats attempted to achieve this aim by directing his poetic articulation toward the public. And that is why the aforementioned condemnatory reviews on Keats's literary works appeared from the Tory press. The hostile reception of Keats's early poems, in this sense, can be said to be concerned not so much with aesthetic qualities as with political opposition.

Given this context of politically oriented confrontations between antagonistic factions surrounding the reception of Keats's early poems, it is easily reckoned that the Tory reviews' hostility toward Keats's poems was derived from their intention to neutralize the liberal/radical ideology implicit in Keats's poems. In order to neutralize Keats' political opposition, Tory reviewers touched on the spot in which the force of Keats's poetry lies: Keats's attempt to communicate with the public. The most famous (and infamous) hostile review on Keats's poetry was Croker's in the *Quarterly Review*. This fame was partly due to the *Quarterly*'s prestige and wide readership in contemporary print culture, but more significantly to Shelley's publication of *Adonais* in 1821, which attributes Keats's precocious death to "[t]he savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*" (Matthews 125). In this review, Croker grounds his attack on Keats's poetry in the connection between Keats and the Hunt circle, adopting Lockhart's term "the new school of . . . Cockney poetry" and employing an ad hominem description of this school's feature as "the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language" (Matthews 111). This reading of Keats's poetry in relation to the Hunt circle implies that Croker's attack on Keats, from the outset, points

to Keats's social connection and political affiliation; that is, Croker's aversion to the

socio-political backgrounds of Keats's poetic practice plays a more important role in

launching an attack than any immanent flaws (e.g., style, diction and ideas, etc.) of

Endymion.[15] And this reading also attests to the extent to which this review's attack is

directed toward the Hunt circle's liberal/radical politics rather than toward the quality of

Keats's poetry.

But this opposition to Keats's (and the Hunt circle's) politics which motivates

Croker's attack does not lead to a critique of specific political ideas implied in Keats's

poetry but to an ad hominem condemnation of Keats's personal defects. Croker says,

> This author [Keats] is a copyist of Mr Hunt, but more unintelligible, almost
>
> as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his
>
> prototype, who, though he impudently presumed to seat himself in the chair
>
> of criticism, and to measure his own poetry by his own standard, yet
>
> generally had a meaning. But Mr Keats had advanced no dogmas which he
>
> was bound to support by examples; his nonsense therefore is quite
>
> gratuitous; he writes it for its own sake, and, being bitten by Mr Leigh
>
> Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry.
>
> (Matthews 111)

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[15] Croker even confessed that he had "not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this Poetic Romance [*Endymion*] consists" (Matthews 110). This confession testifies not only to Croker's indifference to a close reading of *Endymion* but to the political motivation of his review from the beginning.

In this passage, Corker's attack is founded on two premises. First, Keats's initial problem, according to Croker, arises from his copy of a bad example, Leigh Hunt, who "impudently seat[s] himself in the chair of criticism" with "insane criticism." Second, more importantly, despite Keats's intention to copy Hunt, his literary production is much worse than Hunt's which has at least "a meaning." Thus Keats's works here comes to be regarded as bad beyond any critical prescription because they cannot follow even a bad example like Hunt's. This attack means that Keats's poetry is twice removed from poetic legitimacy by badly following a bad example. But the rhetorical effect of this double remove from poetic legitimacy implies more than an emphasis of the badness of Keats's poetry, because by this rhetoric Croker astutely assumes that any serious discussion of Keats's poetry is made impossible by their incurable nonsense; that is, all that can be said in a critical comment on Keats's poetry is pointing out its badness, since it deviates from any poetic principle and thus becomes pure nonsense. This, in fact, is quite an effective rhetoric for silencing an opponent for the reason that this rhetoric presupposes that any claim from the opponent is not able to make sense. On the other hand, by adopting this rhetoric, Croker's review disables the legitimate function of public discourse (i.e., critical conversation between opposing sides for the public good), in that this rhetoric denies any possibility of a reciprocal exchange of opinions in a public ground. Hence, what is actually taking place in Croker's review is not a critical debate about issues at stake (at which Habermas's notion of public sphere normatively aims) but a one-way condemnation toward an opponent's claims, and therefore, in Croker's

critical attack, Keats's purpose to engage in public discourses through writing and publishing poetry cannot but be thwarted from the outset. More simply put, Croker's practice of reviewing in a public medium is not for practicing an intellectual conversation in a public sphere as a review in periodicals is originally purported, but for preventing opposing claims from being publicly acknowledged. And this prevention of public acknowledgment is especially lethal to Keats's poetic practice, since Keats's poetic articulation is predicated on a connection to the public.

This critical rhetoric of Croker's review on Keats's poetry, which focuses on blocking any attempt of an opponent to address the public, is more saliently exhibited in Lockhart's review in *Blackwood's*. In Lockhart's review, not only Keats's deviation from the conservative standard of good poetry or his affiliation with a politically radical group like the Hunt circle, but his job as apothecary and his belonging to the lower middle class (both as the cause and effect of his job) serve as grounds of the assaults on Keats's poetry.[16] That is, Lockhart's review foregrounds the material conditions of Keats's social life as an essential basis on which his critical dealing with Keats's poetic practice is founded. This foregrounding of the material aspects of Keats's life in reviewing his poetry definitely falls within the category of an ad hominem attack, as does Croker's, but Lockhart's way of addressing this issue furthers the degree and the

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[16] The limitations imposed on Keats by his class, in biographical terms, exerted a significant influence both on the material condition of his poetic practice and his sense of what poetry should be. For a detailed account of the relationship between Keats's class and his poetic practice as a public writer, see Levinson, *Keats's Life of Allegory* 1-15.

effect of this ad hominem attack, since this attack questions Keats's qualification for a poet, to say nothing of the legitimacy of the theme and style of Keats's poetry. From the start, Lockhart addresses the issue of "Metromanie," a mental disease which he argues was prevalent among his contemporaries. For Lockhart, writing poetry is a practice that requires a strict qualification in terms of gender and class, and thus an enthusiasm for poetry shown in low, common people like farm-servants, footmen, unmarried ladies, and superannuated governesses is no more than a disease or a state of insanity under which Lockhart contends Keats's symptoms fall. In this perspective, the problem of Keats's poetry comes mainly from the fact that he chose poetry as his life vocation instead of the job of apothecary which fits for the class he belongs to, and therefore Keats's poetry is destined to be a product of an insane maniac, regardless of its inner quality. In Lockhart's rhetorical scheme, in other words, Keats from the outset is deprived of any means by which his poetry can be validated, because any claim advanced by his poetic practice toward the public is nothing more than an unqualified metromaniac's insane gibberish.

This rhetorical assumption based on the material condition of Keats's class dominates the whole tone of Lockhart's review. For example, in addressing specific claims of Keats's poetry, Lockhart does not regard him as a literary peer. For Lockhart, Keats is nothing but a young apothecary who unfortunately happens to deviate from the track he is destined to follow—that is, immature and presumptuous "Johnny Keats." Hence, the character of Endymion in *Endymion* "is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a

Grecian goddess" but a "young Cockney rhymester" patterned after Keats himself who "knows Homer only from Chapman" just like "his prototype Hunt" who "never read the Greek Tragedians," and all the poetic talents Keats has are only "pretty abilities, which he has done every thing in his power to spoil" (Matthews 103-4). Furthermore, in this condescending tone, Keats's critique of repressive political powers shown in the first part of Book III of *Endymion* is just a Cockney bantling's lisping of sedition, which signifies nothing but consistent folly in the *mature* world of Lockhart's review. The fundamental problem that Lockhart's review identifies in Keats's poetic practice is the fact that Keats, an apothecary the job of which is assigned to low and middle-class people, crossed the class boundary by writing and publishing poetry, the job which had been allowed only for the political/social/cultural elite. As a result of this fundamental problem, whatever subjects Keats's poetry deals with and whatever claims it advances, in Lockhart's review, cannot but become a pure nonsense which does not deserve any serious critical consideration.

This strong denigration of Keats's poetry, issued by these Tory reviews in a malicious but effective way, was not such a remarkable critical attack on an opposing author, considering the politically motivated hostilities prevailing in early nineteenth century print culture. Nevertheless, it is still notable to see the way in which these reviews compromises Keats's attempt to communicate with the public through his poetic practice, since their way of attacking Keats exhibits a significant clue to how Keats's (and the whole Hunt circle's) attempt to address the public in print culture was impeded

and distorted. As has been already suggested, the attacks shown by these reviews include some rhetorical features. First, the grounds of their attack usually have much to do with socio-political circumstances surrounding a targeted author rather than with the critical validity of the author's claims or the literary quality of the author's work. Thus, in these reviews, Keats's poetry is evaluated as bad, because he is affiliated with a politically radical and culturally vulgar group of literary parvenus, the Hunt circle, because he disavows the value of Pope's poetry which has served as an established paradigm of good poetry, because he has a low level of education and thus no knowledge of the Greek and the Latin language, most importantly because he is from the lower-middle-class, the people of which are not allowed for a high-minded intellectual practice like poetry. This rhetorical tendency of Tory reviews, in brief, completely depends on an author's politics and social status in assessing a value of a literary work, and furthermore they even do not consider the possibility of a disinterestedly conducted public sphere based on reciprocal communication between equal participants.

William Hazlitt, another key member of the Hunt circle, convincingly articulates this point in "A Letter to William Gifford." Hazlitt characterizes the reviewing practice of William Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, as follows:

> Your [Gifford's] praise or blame has nothing to do with the merits of a work, but with the party to which the writer belongs, or is in the inverse ratio of its merits. The dingy cover that wraps the pages of the *Quarterly Review* does not contain a concentrated essence of taste and knowledge, but is a

receptacle for the scum and sediment of all the prejudice, bigotry, ill-will,

ignorance, and rancour, afloat in the kingdom. This the fools and the knaves

who pin their faith on you know, and it is on this account they pin their faith

on you. They come to you for a scale not of literary talent but of political

subserviency. (9: 14)

Before this quoted passage, Hazlitt presents two different ways of advancing an opinion

by distinguishing "an honest conviction of the truth or justice of the case" from a

"collusion with the prejudices, caprice, interest or vanity of . . . employers" (9: 14). In

other words, Hazlitt here makes it a necessary ground for a review to be independent of

any prejudices deriving from political factionalism or subservience, so that critical

assessments practiced in a review can have an impartial standard by which a literary

work's merits are disinterestedly appreciated. From this perspective, the writings of

Gifford (as a representative figure of the Tory press) obviously fail to satisfy this

prerequisite for a critical writing, since all the critical activities in Gifford's writings are

motivated by "the prejudice, bigotry, ill-will, ignorance, and rancour, afloat in the

kingdom" rather than by "a concentrated essence of taste and knowledge."

But here what is more notable is Hazlitt's explanation of why this sort of distorted

critical practice is prevailing in print culture. According to Hazlitt, it is due to the

symbiotic relation between readers who only believe in their prejudices and writers like

Gifford who capitalize on these prejudices that these writings have been able to prevail.

That is, Tory writers do not so much promote "a concentrated essence of taste and

knowledge" by pursuing the truth, but pander to the interest of those in power (depicted as "the fools and the knaves") who would believe what they like to believe. Hence, for Hazlitt, these writers function only as "the oracle of Church and State" and "[t]he purveyor to the prejudices or passions of a private patron" by "always abusing low people" (9: 14-5). This critique of Tory writers can be quite fittingly applied to the aforementioned reviews on Keats's poetry. For Croker and Lockhart, how Keats has engaged with public issues through poetic practice is not an object of serious consideration; it is only Keats's social standing as a lower-middle-class apothecary that matters in reviewing his poetry. And this rhetorical attitude of Tory reviewers, in reality, functioned as a serious impediment to Keats's attempt to actualize his ideal publicity.

The second rhetorical feature of these Tory reviews is their constant attempt to regulate the taste of the reading public by imposing on the reader politico-ideologically driven assessments of literary works. For those reviewers, the reading public is not a reliable judge from whom a literary work's value derives, so much as an amorphous mass of people whose taste should be controlled by superior cultural authorities. They never provide for the reader how and why they reach their final critical assessments; rather, they just focus on forcefully informing the reader of how bad the quality of a given poem is and how dangerous and ridiculous ideas the poem includes. Thus, Croker keeps on emphasizing Keats's inferiority as a poet without giving the reader any detailed explanation of how he has made these value judgments, and Lockhart simply travesties Keats's poetic issues for the reason that Keats is an apothecary and aligned with the

Hunt circle. Simply put, they do not want Keats to have any readers, and for this purpose they attempt to pre-empt the reading public's taste by inculcating their critical assessments upon the readers.

This rhetoric used (more precisely, misused) by Tory reviewers was identified by reviewers of the liberal camp and thus became a target of their counter-attack. John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats's friend and another young poet who was introduced in Hunt's article "Young Poets" of the *Examiner*, published a refuting review against Croker's.[17] In this review, Reynolds locates the problem of Tory reviewers' (characterized as "a Lottery Commissioner and Government Pensioner") "false and remorseless pen" in their attempt to "frustrate hopes and aims" of a young poet whose genius could have been celebrated by the reading public if he or she had been introduced to the readers without being mediated by any prejudicial reviews (Matthews 117). Reynolds takes the example of Kirk White and Lady Morgan, who were initially dashed by harsh reviews but later praised by the reading public, to support his claim against Tory reviewers. For Reynolds, Tory reviewers' attempt to control the reading public's taste definitely results in a misjudgment of a poet's merits.

This point was more emphatically articulated by John Scott in a letter signed "J. S." to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*. In this letter, Scott puts the problem of prejudicial reviews as follows: "[a]lthough I am aware that literary squabbles are of too uninteresting and interminable a nature for your Journal, yet there are occasions when

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[17] Reynolds thought the author of the *Quarterly*'s review was Gifford, though.

acts of malice and gross injustice towards an author may be properly brought before the public through such a medium" (Matthews 115). In this statement, Scott implies two assumptions: 1) "literary squabbles" deriving from political confrontations between opposing journals were a common practice (especially in review writings); 2) in principle, reviews in literary journals should serve as a transparent gateway through which a literary work can be introduced to the reading public. For Scott, in other words, the present reviewing practice does not work properly, and Croker's review on Keats's *Endymion* in the *Quarterly* most typically exhibits this sort of wrong practice. In the letter, Scott employs the same logic as Reynolds's in criticizing Croker's review; that is, this sort of review precludes Keats's opportunity to test his literary merits by the judgment of the reading public, since this prejudicial but influential literary assessment wrongly directs the readers' reception of Keats's poems, and thus these readers will not read them. Scott implicitly places an ultimate judgment of a poet's value in responses of the general reading public, and thereby he maintains that reviews (particularly, Tory reviews) should not supplant this role of the reading public as a judge, as did Croker's in the *Quarterly*. Scott here argues that Keats's direct communication with the public, which Keats's original aim of his poetic practice purports, should be guaranteed in order for a review to make a legitimate judgment on his poetry.

Given those Tory reviewers' rhetorical features which foreground Keats's alliance with the radical Hunt circle and his low social standing and capitalize on the potential cultural influence that their reviews can wield on the reading public, it is easily estimated

that Keats's original attempt to engage with the public through poetic practice might meet with several difficulties in a considerable degree. Indeed, the sales of Keats's *Poems* of 1817 and *Endymion* were devastatingly low, and consequently the impact that Keats's poetic practice could make on the public was slight, or done in a negative direction if any. In this sense, the negative image of Keats as an immature novice coming from the low middle-class, conceived and publicized by Tory reviewers, effectively worked in the public reception of Keats's poetry; more specifically, the validity of the issues that Keats's poetry raised for the public could not be put to proof with the failure of securing a sufficient number of readers, and what was left to Keats in his actual poetic career was financial difficulties resulting from those poor sales. The Tory reviews discussed thus far produced damaging effects on Keats's literary project not only by frustrating Keats's poetic vocation as a literary intellectual but by putting a series of financial strains on Keats. And these damaging effects gave rise to an ambivalent and contradictory attitude that Keats would assume toward the public.

2. Keats's Ambivalent Attitude toward the Public: Keats's Letters

After the hostile reviews on and the poor sales of the first two publications (*Poems* of 1817 and *Endymion*), Keats assumed a self-defensive and even antagonistic posture toward the public. As already mentioned, in a letter to Reynolds where Keats answers his friends' response to the original preface to *Endymion*, Keats expresses a strong antipathy to the public who he thinks are indifferent to "the eternal Being, the principle

of Beauty. . .and the Memory of great Men"—i.e., general elements that make good poetry (*Letters* 1: 266). Thus, for Keats here the public is at most "Multitudes of Men" to whom he has "no feel of stooping" and no "idea of humility" (1: 267). Still, Keats in this letter sustains his respect for the idea of doing the public good, which was the original motivation of Keats's poetic practice, but he distinguishes the public good (which he pursues through his engagement with political and cultural issues as a man of letters) from "a Mawkish Popularity" which grows out of an author's servile subjection to the frivolous taste of the reading public (1: 267).

In the letter to the George Keatses written in 19 February 1819, Keats again displays his "contempt of public opinion" by saying that his persistence in writing poetry has nothing to do with his desire of a public success (2: 65). More importantly, this letter also shows Keats's sense of how the taste of the reading public became degenerated. Keats says,

> the Reviews have enervated and made indolent mens minds—few thinks for themselves—These Reviews too are getting more and more powerful and especially the Quarterly—They are like a superstition which the more it prostrates the Crowd and the longer it continues the more powerful it becomes just in proportion to their [readers'] increasing weakness. (2: 65)

To be sure, Keats as a victim might think that the hostile reviews on his poetry from the Tory press were a source of all the wrong practices in contemporary print culture, but the quoted passage points to more than Keats's personal resentment toward reviews. Here

what Keats emphatically criticizes is not so much the iniquity of bad reviews as the

public's vulnerability to the influence of popular reading materials. According to the

principle of the publicity that the Hunt circle pursued (as discussed in Chapter II),

literary intellectuals' devotion to the public good should be predicated on their

reciprocation with the reading public who critically respond to and actively engage in

given issues; that is, the process of intellectuals' pursuit of the public good needs the

enlightened reading public who have a capacity of participating in what Habermas calls

"rational-critical debate." But the reading public that Keats witnesses here definitely

lacks this capacity. They depend on reviews for making any judgment of what they read

or what they will read, which, in consequence, enervates and makes indolent their minds.

In addition, they are passively prostrated by these reviews, just as ignorant people

succumb to superstitions. Thus Keats deplores that "few [of the reading public] thinks

for themselves." In this sense, Keats has no way to achieve the original purpose of his

poetic practice, since he has no reliable reading public on which his poetic ideal depends.

For Keats, his contemporary reading public just serves his poetic practice as an

impediment, because they provide material resources (with wide readership) for bad

reviews that suffocate readers' mental faculty (e.g., Tory reviews), which, in Keats's

view, impede the actualization of his poetic ideal.

In fact, this distrust of the reading public is shared by other Romantic writers,

whether their position toward contemporary politics and culture is liberal or

conservative.[18] For example, Coleridge, based on his conservative disavowal of his

contemporaries' commercially oriented reading practice, criticizes the lowered power of

discrimination in general readers, the reading public's superficial attitude toward books,

and the "depravation of the public mind" in *Biographia Literaria*.[19] Mary Wollstonecraft,

who was interested in the issue of education of readers from her liberal enlightenment

perspective, denounces the practice of women's novel-reading in her review of *Edward*

and Harriet, or the Happy Recovery: a Sentimental Novel by a Lady, by pointing out that

they were using novels of circulating libraries as a model of their indiscriminate

reproduction of novel-writing rather than of cultivating a reflexive faculty of mind.[20]

Moreover, Wordsworth even divides the reading public by distinguishing the public

from the people in "Essay, the Supplementary to the Preface." According to Wordsworth,

while the public are a "small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by

factitious influence," the people, on whom Wordsworth put his trust, are reliable readers

who embody a philosophical character and a spirit of knowledge and move an author's

devout respect and reverence "at the present, faithfully supported by its two wings, the

past and the future" (*Selected Prose* 413). For Wordsworth, contemporary readers

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[18] For a historical and critical account of Romantic writers' anxiety over audience, see Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 3-48.

[19] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and Walter Jakson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 1: 39, 1: 48, 1: 57, 2: 229.

[20] Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, vol. 7 (London: Pickering, 1989) 20.

swayed by fickle and shallow taste are an object of contempt, and his writings should be directed for ideal readers who are able to appreciate the implied values of his writings that transcend temporal limitations. In all those writers, just as in Keats's case, the expanded reading public who thoughtlessly consume reading materials in the rapidly commercialized society of the early nineteenth century cannot be a reliable judge by whom a literary work's value is decided; rather, the existence of this sort of reading public serves only as a source of the corruption of contemporary writing practice.

For the members of the Hunt circle who were usually from the middle-class and had to make a living with their writing, however, the reading public was a necessary condition for their writing practice.[21] To be sure, their ideal of public communication also required readers with whom they could pursue the public good, but what they needed in reality was good sales of their writings, by which they were able to sustain their vocation as a literary intellectual. For this reason, they had to be concerned about the way in which they could attract readers for their writings despite the aforementioned contempt toward the reading public, and these contradictory attitudes that they were forced to assume brought forward a deep anxiety in their sense of the public reception of their writings.

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[21] Hunt and Hazlitt, the two representative periodical writers and proponents of liberal ideas of the Hunt circle, completely depended on their writings for making a living; for this very reason, they fostered a serious antagonism against Tory writers who persistently obstructed the sales of their writings with slanderous attacks on their personality. Hence, the confrontation between the Hunt circle and the Tory press was not only about political opposition but about the material means of their living.

Hazlitt's frequent resentment for the credulity of the reading public is a typical example of this anxiety. In *Characteristics*, Hazlitt says,

> A man's reputation is not in his own keeping, but lies at the mercy of the profligacy of others. Calumny requires no proof. The throwing out malicious imputations against any character leaves a stain, which no after-reputation can wipe out. To create an unfavourable impression, it is not necessary that certain things should be true, but that they *have been said*. The imagination is of so delicate a texture, that even words wound it. (9: 197)

As a vehement exponent of liberal politics and a well-known member of the Hunt circle, Hazlitt was in strained terms with the Tory press, just as were Keats and Hunt. Thus several attacks were launched against Hazlitt's writings by Tory journals, and Hazlitt himself was actively involved in the liberal side's attack on Tory writers. But what angered him the most was not so much Tory writers' malevolence as the reading public's sensitivity to groundless calumnies. Indeed, the sales of *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* decreased in a considerable degree after the *Quarterly*'s malicious ad hominem attack.[22] For Hazlitt, the reading public, who were too frivolous to testify to the truth of words, must have been felt to be contemptible, as implied in the quoted passage; however, the source of his anger and frustration (and therewith his anxiety)

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[22] For a biographical account of Hazlitt's antagonism against the Tory press (particularly, the *Quarterly* and the *Blackwood's*), see Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008) 244-8.

resulted from the fact that his vocation as a literary intellectual and writer wholly depended on the presence of this reading public. For Romantic writers and especially for the members of the Hunt circle, the reading public was at once an object of contempt beyond which their ideal of writing should be conducted and a prerequisite material ground on which their vocation was founded.

Keats was not an exception to this general condition of Romantic writers; rather, this strained relationship with and the subsequent anxiety toward the reading public were displayed more acutely in Keats's writing practice, because the material condition of Keats's life, as Marjorie Levinson aptly phrases, was "sandwiched between the Truth of the working class and the Beauty of the leisure class" (5). Keats was placed in a conspicuously precarious position as a literary intellectual. He was from the lower middle class; therefore, he was not able to receive a proper education for the ordinary intellectual elite and instead had to have such a practical job as apothecary. But, as Roe tellingly illustrates, his education at Enfield School offered sufficient resources and motivations for him to develop a literary ambition (of course, in different ways than the established educational institutions did).[23] Besides this unique educational background at odds with the general literati, his financial condition totally depended on the money secured by his writings after his quitting the job of apothecary. Still, he was engaging in a liberal ideal of pursuing the public good through the notion of poetic beauty (following the Hunt circle's ideal), which, to be sure, was not able to guarantee a stable financial

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[23] For a detailed biographical and historical account of Keats's education in Enfield School, see Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* 27-50.

status. That is, Keats's position in the contemporaneous literary scene was marginalized from the outset both in terms of class prestige and of financial security, and thus for Keats the only option for his sustaining his vocation as a literary intellectual was a commercial success, which necessitated his appeal for the reading public. But his literary career in the first two publications was not successful, and the material basis of his career itself was about to be dismantled due to these failures. In this biographical context, it was a natural consequence for Keats to develop ambivalent and complex feelings toward the reading public; more specifically, Keats was deeply angered at the reading public's indifference to his poetry, but urgently yearned for their attention at the same time.

The process of Keats's revising the preface of *Endymion*, for example, exhibits the working of these contradictory feelings in his writing practice. In the original preface of *Endymion*, Keats shows a strong sensitivity to the poor reception of his previous publication, *Poems* of 1817. Mentioning the disputes surrounding *Poems*, Keats takes a self-defensive but also self-effacing attitude toward the public: he says, "this Poem [*Endymion*] must rather be consider'd as an endeavour than a thing accomplish'd; a poor prologue to what, if I live, I humbly hope to do" (*Complete Poems* 739). The memory of the previous failure of Keats's poetic practice works here as a restraint on his confidence in the second poetic project. This submissive attitude, however, is followed by a feeling of complex resentment toward the public reception of his first publication, especially to the critical responses of reviews. Keats contends,

It has been too much the fashion of late to consider men biggotted and

addicted to every word that may chance to escape their lips: now I here

declare that I have not any particular affection for any particular phrase,

word or letter in the whole affair. I have written to please myself and in

hopes to please others, and for a love of fame; if I neither please myself, nor

others nor get fame, of what consequence is Phraseology? I would fain

escape the bickerings that all Works, not exactly in chime, bring upon their

begetters:—but this is not fair to expect, there must be conversation of some

sort and to object shows a Man's consequence. (739)

In contrast to his submissive compliance with the poor public reception shown in the

early part of this preface, this statement reveals Keats's disagreement (and thus his

anger) with the way in which his works were criticized. By mentioning the recent

fashion of criticisms which "consider men biggotted and addicted to every word," Keats

might refer to the critical responses focusing on his use of poetic language associated

with Hunt's style and politics, to which he objects, of course.[24] But what is notable here

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[24] As Matthews illustrates, the reviews on Keats's *Poems* of 1817 were few (6 in total) and generally favorable, and the serous attacks of caustic Tory reviews on Keats's poetry were initiated mostly by the publication of *Endymion*. But this does not mean that the critical reception of *Poems* of 1817 was not bad. When Keats switched his business from the Olliers to Taylor and Hessey, the Olliers sent George Keats, Keats's brother, a letter which describes the responses to *Poems* as follows: "By far the greater number of persons who have purchased it [*Poems*] from us have found fault with it in such plain terms, that we have in many cases offered to take the book back rather than be annoyed with the ridicule which has, time after time, been showered upon it. In fact, it was only on Saturday last that we were under the mortification of having our own opinion of its

is Keats's response to these unfair criticisms. Instead of reinforcing the legitimacy of his "Phraseology" (or politics implied in it), Keats underscores the innocence of his poetic project. That is, he contends that all his poetic concerns are confined to a natural ambition of a poet who tries to advance to the world (i.e., self-pleasure, a desire to please others, and a love of fame). In addition to this emphasis of the innocence of his intention, Keats even accepts the necessity of criticisms as a way of conversation between men of letters, although he at the same time does not hide his desire to "escape the bickerings" that he has already received. While Keats keeps expressing his anger toward the public who have unfairly responded to his works, this anger is continuously offset by his conciliatory gesture toward the public.

Despite this conciliatory gesture toward the public, however, this version of preface did not work due to the objection of Keats's publishers, Taylor and Hessey, and his friend, Reynolds. As implied in the letter to Reynolds dated 9 April 1818, the reason of this objection was the association with Hunt's style and more significantly his hostility toward the public. Keats's conciliatory gesture displayed in the original preface was not sufficient for those concerned with the publication of his poetry. As a result, the newly revised preface addresses the reading public in a much more discreet manner; still, his concern for criticisms on his poetry remains intact.

In the new preface, after self-defensively mentioning the weaknesses of *Endymion*, Keats again deals with the public reception of his poetry.

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merits flatly contradicted by a gentleman, who told us he considered it 'no better than a take in'" (Matthews 7).

This [Keats's own excuse of his poetic weaknesses] may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature. (*Complete Poems* 102)

Keats's strained attitude toward the public is definitely toned down here. He now accepts the legitimacy of criticisms, and no more displays vexed reactions to the hostile public reception. Still, Keats is strongly concerned about the way in which his poetry has been and will be received by the public. First, despite his seeming acceptance of the legitimacy of criticisms, Keats attempts to disavow their possible influence on the public reception by suggesting the necessity of the direct contact between his poetry and the reading public (as shown in the phrase "no feeling man will be forward to inflict it"). He might insinuate that the failure of his first publication was not due to the reading public's antipathy to it but to the influence that the hostile criticisms unfairly exerted on the readers. More significantly, Keats attributes his posture of self-defense to the desire of disinterestedly appealing to "men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature." This desire, indeed, implies Keats's complex feelings toward the readers of his poetry. On the one hand, the desire to

conciliate men (readers) points to Keats's concession to the necessity that readers should be integral part of a literary production. On the other hand, Keats confines these readers to those who have competence and zealous eye; that is, for Keats only those who have a proper level of understanding and literary taste can be qualified to be his readers, and thereby he astutely excludes antagonistic critics and readers influenced by them from what he calls "criticisms" or proper readers. Keats, in this sense, suggests not only that his works should be attuned to the readers' taste, but that readers, who are supposed to determine a literary work's value, should be confined to qualified ones. Keats, faced with the actual material condition of literary production, cannot but concede the value of his literary practice to readers' taste and judgment, but this concession is predicated on his selective sense of proper readers.

These ambivalent and complex feelings kept on dominating Keats's attitude toward the public after the failure of his second publication (*Endymion*), but the way in which he manifested these feelings changed from the oscillation between contempt and acceptance of the general reading public's taste to the state of being constantly uncertain of how to establish a relationship with the public as an author. In fact, this second failure and the subsequent hostile reviews (which have already been discussed in detail) made a profound impact on Keats's sense of his literary career. As mentioned several times in his letters, Keats, in reaction to this failure with the public, seriously thought of having a practical job like a "Surgeon to an I[n]dianman," for example (2: 114). But finally Keats decided on the continuation of literary career. In the letter to Fanny Keats written on 17

June 1819, Keats reveals the resolve to "try the Press onece more. . . with all [his]

industry and ability," and retired himself to the Isle of Wight to focus on writing (2: 121).

For Keats, this resolve, however, entailed a sense of reservation. On 6 July, he

again wrote to Fanny, "I think I told you the purpose for which I retired to this place—to

try the fortune of my Pen once more, and indeed I have some confidence in my success:

but in every event. . . I shall be sufficiently comfortable, as, if I cannot lead that life of

competence and society I should wish, I have enough knowledge of my *gallipots* to

ensure me an employment & maintainance" (2: 124-5). This statement shows the extent

to which Keats planned his prospective life career in practical terms. He bases the

attempt "to try the fortune of [his] Pen once more" on his confidence in a success of his

poetic practice and even considers a counter-plan as an apothecary in case of another

failure. But this realistic and practical bent does not completely supersede Keats's ideal

as a man of letters. While delineating his literary plan in terms of its viable success, he

foregrounds the social purpose that his literary practice pursues ("that life of competence

and society I should wish") as a necessary condition for the plan. And by employing the

word "gallipots" intentionally, he attempts to make satirical reference to Lockhart's

review on *Endymion*.[25] As displayed in these letters, Keats's bent for a practical success

in the press coexists with his desire to fulfill his ideal with the public as a literary

[25] In the ending part of the review on *Endymion*, Lockhart directly mentions Keats's
original job, apothecary. He says, "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved
apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr John, back to 'plasters, pills, and
ointment boxes,' &c. But for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of
extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry"
(Matthews 109-10).

intellectual, and this coexistence attests to how Keats's feelings or attitudes toward the

public remained uncertain and ironically hung between the two opposite impulses after

his unsuccessful poetic practices.

This state of being uncertain about his literary career and the public was

repeatedly displayed, especially when Keats was writing the works for his third

publication. As frequently shown in Keats's letters written from May to October 1819,

his will to achieve a success in the press was evident, mostly with relation to his urgent

situations of monetary matters. In the letter written on 11 July, explaining the progress of

his working on poetry, Keats wrote to Reynolds that he had "great hopes of success" and

used his "Judgment more deliberately" for this purpose (2: 128). In addition, during this

period Keats kept consulting with his friends, Reynolds, Charles Brown, C. W. Dilke,

Richard Woodhouse, and his publisher, John Taylor about how to succeed in a business

of publication with poetry and drama that he had been working on.[26] Keats even

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[26] For example, concerning the description of the consummation between Porphyro and
Madeline in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats had a debate with Woodhouse and Taylor. What
is notable in this debate is the extent to which they were conscious of the poem's
reception. In Woodhouse's letter to Taylor of 19 September 1819, Woodhouse explains
Keats's response to the request of altering this part as follows: "He [Keats] says he does
not want ladies to read his poetry: that he writes for men" (2: 163). Taylor replies to this
letter by accusing Keats of his wrong attitude toward potential readers. He says, "This
Folly of Keats is the most stupid piece of Folly I can conceive.—He does not bear the ill
opinion of the World calmly, & yet he will not allow it to form a good Opinion of him &
his Writings. He repented of this Conduct when Endymion was published as much as a
Man can repent . . . Yet he will again challenge the same Neglect or Censure, & again (I
pledge my Discernment on it) be vexed at the Reception he has prepared for himself. . . .
I will not be accessary (I can answer also for H. [Hessey] I think) towards publishing any
thing which can only be read by Men . . ." (2: 182). As explicitly revealed here, the

considered being a professional writer for periodicals, as he wrote to Charles Brown on 22 September that he would "write, on the liberal side of question, for whoever will pay me" (2: 176). In the course of all those endeavors to address literature in terms of popular success, however, Keats acutely sustained his reflexive sense of both the public and private significance of his literary vocation; that is, he never abandoned the question of how and why he would act as a public writer in the literary public sphere.

On 23 August 1819, Keats wrote to Taylor for the purpose of requesting advancement of money and at the same time expressed his present feelings as a public writer. He says,

> I feel every confidence that if I choose I may be a popular writer; that I will never be; but for all that I will get a livelihood—I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman—they are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence. I shall ever consider them (People) as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration—which I can do without. . . . You will observe at the end of this if you put down the Letter 'How a solitary life engenders pride and egotism!' True: I know it does but this Pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than anything else could—so I will indulge it—Just so much as I am hu[m]bled by the genius above my grasp, am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world—A Drummer boy who holds

public reception of ongoing poetic works was a primary concern both for Keats and his publishers.

out his hand familiarly to a field marshall—that Drummer boy with me is

the good word and favour of the public—Who would wish to be among

the commonplace crowd of the little-famous—who<m> are each

individually lost in a throng made up of themselfes? Is this worth louting

or playing the hypocrite for? To beg suffrages for a seat on the benches of

a myriad aristocracy in Letters? (2: 144)

This passage, to be sure, shows how Keats viewed the literary public sphere of his

contemporaries (mostly in negative terms), but his view is not an objective observation

on other writers' practice so much as a self-assessment on his own writing practice

inflected by his marginal position in the literary world. Keats's self-assessment here

revolves around two contradictory facts about his position: 1) a professional writer who

can potentially wield a power over the public by his writings; 2) an obscure writer who

has been failing to gain public popularity on which his basic means of life depends.

While Keats, as mentioned repeatedly, had been intensely concerned for his prospective

third publication project in terms of popular success, this letter seems to reverse this

concern for public success by showing Keats's dislike for the public. Keats compares his

relationship with readers to a financial contract grounded in reciprocation between his

verses and readers' admiration and makes it clear for him to have a superior position in

this contract; that is, he imagines gaining a cultural power without begging people's

admiration or public popularity. After admitting that his desire to predominate over the

public is concerned with pride and egotism, Keats enhances these two self-aggrandizing mental attitudes to inalienable sources of his poetic creation.

This bravado toward the public, however, ironically betrays Keats's realistic sense of his position with the public (i.e., an unpopular minor writer who searches for people's attention to survive in the literary world). While Keats dreams of getting independence for his poetic practice, he can never escape from an involvement with the public (as he imagines people begging verses from him). While he "look[s] with hate and contempt upon the literary world" which feeds on "the good word and favour of the public," he can never abandon this literary world by adhering to an act of writing for the public. Even when Keats consolidates his sense of vocation as a literary intellectual by saying "fine writing is next to fine doing the top thing in the world" in the letter to Reynolds of 24 August, he can never be free from "the crowds of Shadows in the Shape of Man and women that inhabit a kingdom" (2: 146). Hence, in his diatribe against the commercially reified literary market composed of "the commonplace crowd of the little-famous" and "a myriad aristocracy in Letters" resides his anger over the fact that his position in the literary world was in reality less than that of these contemptible fame seekers. But at the same time this anger accompanies his anxiety over the reflexive recognition that he is destined to pursue this contemptible public popularity as far as he maintains his literary vocation. It is sensible, in this sense, to say that the precarious and ambivalent tenor implicit in this reflexive self-assessment concerning his literary vocation comes to predominate over Keats's original question of what to do for the world as a public writer.

3. Keats's Complicated Position on the Issue of What Poetry Can Do for the World:
The Fall of Hyperion* and *Lamia

Keats's reflexive self-assessment of his literary practice or what Levinson calls "the subject meanings of his social objectivity" (221) began to permeate the works written around the time when he prepared for the third publication. Rather, it might be said that the issue of what a poet can do for the world where poetry is being distorted by reactionary politics and reified commercialism became one of the major themes that Keats would deal with and answer, after he witnessed and went through the contradiction immanent in his original scheme of poetic vocation—i.e., the ideal of practicing the good by communicating with the public and engaging with public issues. Indeed, this issue did matter personally to Keats as a writer, since his resolve to continue writing served him as a source of all the uncertainties that he came to feel in relation to himself and the public.

The Fall of Hyperion offers some clues to how Keats incorporates this issue into his poetic practice. As revealed in Keats's letters, the revision of *Hyperion* into *The Fall of Hyperion* was begun around July 1819 and continued till November-December of the same year.[27] This period roughly corresponds with the time when Keats started a new project for his third publication and at the same time his self-conscious anxiety over an act of writing toward the public gradually intensified. Hence, it might be meaningful to note that the revised part of *The Fall of Hyperion* includes a highly reflexive

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[27] For a biographical account of the writing process of *The Fall of Hyperion*, see Miriam Allott, ed., *The Poems of John Keats* (London: Longman, 1970) 655.

contemplation on a poet's significance to the world and has something to do with

Keats's own question of what he can do with his poetry, the very question that he

repeatedly raises in his letters. The narrator-poet of *The Fall of Hyperion* directly tackles

this issue, when he first meets Moneta, the goddess who presides over the poem's

narrative. In this scene, the narrator-poet's concern is focused on a potential worth that

he could retain as a dreamer/poet toward the world. Moneta, who both controls and

enlightens the narrator's view, answers this question by presenting two distinctions.[28]

First, she distinguishes "visionaries" or "dreamers weak" from those who practically

promote the good of human beings, and makes it clear for the narrator to belong to

visionaries/dreamers who "venoms all his days, / Bearing more woe than all his sins

deserve" rather than enjoys a duly allotted portion of life as do practical people, thus

underscoring visionaries/dreamers' unpractical and self-consuming nature (*Complete

Poems* 1.175-6). But here some ambiguities are found. Despite Moneta's assertion that

the narrator's tribe (i.e., dreamers) is inferior to the people practically contributing to the

good of the world, it is dreamers like the narrator that are admitted into the temple of

Moneta and understand the meaning of happiness and suffering in the world. The

narrator's "unworthiness" for the world paradoxically assures a chance to have an

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[28] Moneta contains several contradictory aspects, and thus critics have offered various interpretations on Moneta and her symbolic function. For example, John Barnard characterizes Moneta's symbolic function as an imaginative "capacity to contemplate suffering, without in any way losing the ability to feel with its victims" (132); on the contrary, Daniel Watkins reads Moneta as money by tracing her mythological origin and thereby argues, "Her presence and actions show that in a world governed by the marketplace, everything—even the most personal and sacred elements in life—is commodified and thus controlled by money" (167).

insight over the nature of people's life. Given this ambiguous validation of dreamers, then, what sort of value-judgment does this poem try to make on the role of dreamers (or implicitly poets)? As to this point, Daniel Watkins suggests that the superior or dominant role of practical people derives from Moneta's (or money's in Watkins's reading) manipulative power to "hegemonize the world" with an artificially imposed view of life which "divides experience into unique and autonomous components, which . . . can never be effectively integrated" (168). That is, Watkins reads in this first distinction the alienation of dreamers/poets in the capitalistic world of Moneta/money.

The distinction between dreamers/poets and practical people, however, is more complicated than this dichotomy between the unworthiness of alienated dreamers/poets and the worthiness of reified capitalistic value, because in the next question the narrator stresses the worthiness of poets by indicating that "a poet is a sage; / A humanist, physician to all men" (1.189-90). In other words, in this poem unworthiness is not the only characterization by which the role of dreamers/poets is valuated. On the contrary, the poem also seeks to locate dreamers/poets' value in how they are useful for the world. Now at this moment, ironically, the validation of dreamers/poets is being assured both by their unworthiness and worthiness, and follows the second distinction as a solution to this state of aporia.

> . . . 'Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
>
> The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
>
> Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.

The one pours out a balm upon the world,

The other vexes it.' Then shouted I

Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen,

'Apollo! Faded, far flown Apollo!

Where is thy misty pestilence to creep

Into the dwellings, through the door crannies,

Of all mock lyricists, large self worshipers,

And careless hectorers in proud bad verse.

Though I breathe death with them it will be life

To see them sprawl before me into graves. (1.198-210)

According to the second distinction, poets and dreamers are different beings in terms of their worth in the world. Rather, they are "sheer opposite," and "antipodes," in that "The one pours out a balm upon the world, / The other vexes it." Thus the validation of poets, opposite to dreamers, is secured by their worthiness for the world. This characterization of poets as promoters of the good of the world has a meaningful bearing on Keats's earlier poetic scheme for the public good, and, as Marilyn Butler rightly points out, this distinction between poets and dreamers "re-enacts the classic contemporary literary controversy, between the poet as activist or physician, and the poet as visionary or dreamer" (153). In this sense, the second distinction, as John Barnard puts, articulates "a rejection of poetry which turns away from the 'great world'" (131)—i.e., a rejection of the role of dreamers in support of that of poets.

But this seemingly clear value-judgment on poets and dreamers also contains ambiguous points. First, neither Moneta nor the narrator asserts which category the narrator belongs to, although both of them implicitly suggest that he is closer to dreamers. That the narrator's identity is undecided or undecidable is significant in interpreting the way in which this poem validates poets' role for the world, because this undecidability represents not only the narrator's uncertain positioning about what his work aims for but also the uncertain self-positioning of Keats himself whose self-reflexive introspection over his poetic practice originally initiated the revision of *Hyperion* into *The Fall of Hyperion*. In other words, this undecidability, in terms of Keats's life, signifies that Keats was not able to decide whether or not his poetic practice could or would contribute to the good of the world despite his initial espousal of a poet's role as activist. Besides this ambiguity, the fact that this distinction is made by Moneta also implies certain interpretive problems. In order for the distinction to have a final authority over the issue of poets/dreamers' value in the world, Moneta should be presented as a faultless and omniscient being. But throughout the poem, the figure of Moneta is far from a image of a faultless, omniscient being. In the textual context, Moneta is a waning survivor of the tribe of fallen gods, Titans, and a messenger of the suffering vision of their history of fall. Thus in the plot of the poem, she is less a sure guide of proceedings of the world than a suffering exile excluded from historical progress; for this reason, it is hard to say that her judgments offer an idealized vision of human society and art for the narrator. In the context of mythology, Moneta means

money.[29] And if we apply this mythological meaning of Moneta as a symbol of money to an interpretation of the poem, as do Watkins and Hoagwood, Moneta's precepts are not an enlightening wisdom from an equitable being so much as a capitalistic principle whereby "the blessing of money makes survival possible" (Watkins 167) or "the structures of deception" working in the social world (Hoagwood, "Keats, Fictionality, and Finance" 136). In those readings, therefore, poets' worthiness for the world asserted by Moneta becomes a commodified value conditioned upon a capitalistic order rather than a universal value for the public good. Hence, Moneta's validation of poets' worthiness does not serve, in both cases, as an assertive answer to the question of what value poets/dreamers bring for the world.

The third point is that after the second distinction is made by Moneta, the narrator's critique is not directed toward dreamers but toward "large self worshipers" and "careless hectorers"; therefore, it becomes difficult to decide what sort of poet this poem is attacking. Of course, it is possible to identify these self-worshipers and hectorers with dreamers, in that both indulge themselves in an egotistical vision, as does Marilyn Butler.[30] But the interpretation on this question (i.e., whom the narrator is critiquing) is indeed open to various possibilities, because the identity of dreamers and this poem's value-judgment on them are far from clear. If we identify dreamers with the narrator

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[29] For a detailed account of the mythological meaning of Moneta in *The Fall of Hyperion*, see K. K. Ruthven, "Keats and *Dea Moneta*," *Studies in Romanticism* 15.3 (1976): 449.

[30] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982) 152-3.

himself, for example, these dreamers cannot be among self-worshipers who are hectoring in proud bad verse, since these self-aggrandizing practices by bad versifiers, as many critics argue, are modeled on culturally dominating contemporary poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron, who are just opposite to the culturally obscure narrator-poet and Keats himself.[31] Moreover, the self-worshipers, who are immersed in egotism, could not have been invited to Moneta's temple into which only dreamers who sympathize with sufferings in the world (like the narrator) are allowed to admit. Hence, the narrator's critique of self-worshipers cannot be said to aim at dreamers in any way, even though this critique is made as a response to Moneta's denunciation of dreamers as vexing the world. Given these uncertainties and complications, all the value-judgments here are unsettling and unsettled, and frequently mixed with the narrator's (or Keats's) personalized perspective.

As examined thus far, Keats's self-reflexive question in *The Fall of Hyperion* (i.e., what sort of poet he is and what good his poetry can do for the world) remains ambiguous and thus open to various answers. While he argues for an act of practically contributing to the public good, he never abandons a position of self-indulgent and obscure dreamers/poets who are sympathetically sensitive to sufferings and contradictions scattered in the world. While he places the role of poet as activist involved in public issues above that of poet as visionary detached from the world's proceedings, his own self-positioning toward the public is unsettled between those two

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[31] See, for example, Allott, *Keats* 671; Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* 152; and Barnard, *John Keats* 132-3.

roles, and sometimes he even intentionally distances himself from an involvement with public proceedings since he senses that this involvement inevitably entails the commodification of poetry in the commercially reified society. While he endeavors to resemble great poets who acted as physician to the world, he despairs of his contemporary literary public sphere occupied by poets who absorbed themselves in a solipsistic and egotistic world of their own. In short, Keats's original ideal of practicing the public good with poetry becomes complicated by his obscure position as a public poet and the commodification of poetry's value; therefore, he cannot but modify his view on poetry's role for the public and even this modified view itself never remains stable and certain. That is, through *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats's question on poetry goes through a significant transformation—i.e., from what sort of task poetry should do for the good of the world to whether or not it is possible to resort to poetry as a reliable medium by which to bring forward the public good. This skeptical reflection on the function of poetry for the public, which *The Fall of Hyperion*'s narrator attempts to tackle apart from the main narrative, constitutes an integral part of Keats's writing of *Lamia*, another major work of this period when he prepared for the third publication. Thus in *Lamia* his self-reflexive anxiety over the engagement of his poetic practice with the public comes to pervade the whole narrative.

Unlike the feelings that Keats had for his other romances (e.g., *Isabella* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*), which he thought were mawkish and "smokeable" (thus would be no more successful with the public than *Endymion*), he kept a certain confidence in *Lamia*,

his last romance. In the letter to Woodhouse of 22 September 1819, Keats confidently

says, "There is no objection of this kind to Lamia," while displaying his worry about

Isabella, "A weak-sided Poem" that "will not do to be public" (2: 174). This confidence

was continued, when he wrote to the George Keatses on 18 September that "I am certain

there is that sort of fire in [*Lamia*] which must take hold of people in some way—give

them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation. What they want is a sensation of some sort"

(2: 189). In these statements, Keats's confidence in *Lamia* is predicated on two points.

First, *Lamia* is free of the defects that he identifies in his previous poems—i.e.,

mawkishness and smokeability deriving from an immature view of life. Second, *Lamia*

contains some sort of sensation that could be appealing to the public, whether it is

pleasant or unpleasant. For Keats, *Lamia* is an advanced poem that exhibits a more

elaborate sensation acquired from a mature view of life, and thus has an element that

could be resonant with the reading public's taste. Given this reason for Keats's

confidence, then, what is this "sensation" which defeats his previous works'

sentimentality and immaturity? A clue to this question can be found in *Lamia*'s abundant

ironies and complications.[32]

The basic storyline of *Lamia* is founded on Robert Burton's *Anatomy of*

Melancholy, whose main plot is centered on the seduction by Lamia, a serpent disguised

as a fair gentlewoman, of Lycius who was attracted to her by her charm and thus

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[32] Because of these ironies and complications inherent in *Lamia*, critical interpretations of this poem tremendously vary especially on the point of what Lamia and Apollonius represent and signify in thematic terms.

promised a marriage to her, and the exposure by Apollonius, an astute philosopher, of

Lamia's true identity which ultimately resulted in Lamia's extinction. That is, the

confrontation between Lamia, a false seducer and femme fatale, and Apollonius, a

clairvoyant sage, constitutes the main stay of the plot, thus rendering this story a

simplistic allegory of a conflict between good and evil. But Keats's *Lamia* endows this

original story with complications, and thereby creates a wholly different type of romance

which avoids a stereotyped characterization. These complications result mainly from a

discrepancy between the original evil nature of Lamia as a serpent seducer (as embodied

in the character of the fatal lady in "La Belle Dame sans Merci") and the setting of

idealized romance in which Lamia is presented as an ethereal beauty thirst for and

anguished with love in a sympathetic point of view (as female protagonists in *Isabella*

and *The Eve of St. Agnes*). Moreover, the complications are furthered by another

discrepancy between the idealized world of pure, unmediated love where love justifies

all the modes of existence and the reality of human relationship which inevitably betrays

negative byproducts of love such as jealousy, possession desire, and social isolation.

Hence, Keats's *Lamia* complicates both the relatively simplistic moral vision of the

original story and the tradition of romance founded on the idealized conception of love.

In relation to this point, Barnard suggests a reading of *Lamia* which focuses on its

self-reflexive dealing with the genre of romance.

> Intended as a critique of the reader's 'romantic' expectations, *Lamia*
>
> opens up, and appears to endorse, an unbridgeable chasm between the

pleasures of fancy and the realities of life, between early poetic fictions

and modern reality, and between the conventional idealisation of 'Love'

and the disillusion of mature experience. This kind of polarisation, and its

accompanying explicitness, denies the kind of truthfulness attained by the

'unmisgiving' version of *The Eve of St. Agnes*. (120)

In other words, by adopting basic elements of romance on the one hand but debunking

the fictitiousness of those elements on the other hand, *Lamia* reveals a sense of irony

embedded in this romance genre and critically challenges the conventional conception of

how romance should be. As a consequence, a variety of ironies pervade the characters

and plot of *Lamia*, which makes it difficult to decide on what the characters and their

actions signify in the poem.

These ironies are concentrated on Lamia's character, who is both the protagonist

and the antagonist of this story, in a most apparent way. Indeed, the characterization of

Lamia is quite ambivalent. From the beginning, Lamia is described both as "some

penanced lady elf" and "Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self" (*Complete Poems*

1. 55-6); that is, she represents a devout lady and a fatal demon at the same time. In

terms of plot, all of her actions toward Lycius, her lover, are composed of deceptions

and false charms; in addition, the gorgeous palace created for a love with Lycius is

nothing but an illusion sustained only by a self-addicted state of trance (as in Lycius's

case) and a detachment from an ordinary contact with human society. Despite this

illusiveness and falsity, however, Lamia's love itself is consistently presented as genuine,

devoting, and unconditional, and thus the life in the illusive palace serves as a source of lovers' mutual happiness rather than of their destructive sin.[33] Here it is notable to see that all those ironies surrounding Lamia's character has something to do with her capacity of creating things, whether they are deceptive illusions or sanctified fantasies for love. Considering that this poem displays a reflexive critique of the conventional writing of romance or poetry in general as previously pointed out, Lamia's character, focused on a creative capacity, can be said to represent a form of poetic imagination. In this reading of Lamia as poetic imagination, Lamia's romantic relationship with Lycius based on her creative capacity invokes Keats's poetic practice aimed at the reading public, and her contrivances for achieving Lycius's love reflect Keats's concern for the public in his poetic creation.[34]

This issue of how to attract Lycius (or readers) constitutes the core of Lamia's (and *Lamia*'s) transformative charms:

> Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
>
> Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,

---

[33] In the plot of the story, the distortion and the ultimate destruction of Lamia and Lycius's love are triggered not by the deceptive nature of Lamia's work of creation for love but by Lycius's desire to contact with the real world. Ambiguities, however, are still present with respect to the cause of the fall of their love, since the fall itself would not have taken place without Lamia's deception in the beginning. In this sense, it can be said that Lamia's love itself is the basis of all the ironies that prevail in the poem.

[34] Keats's confidence in *Lamia*'s public success, for example, is related to this symbolic connection between Lamia's creative artifice for love and Keats's concern for the public, because the act of writing *Lamia* (that is, the act of tracing how Lamia tries a love and fails it), in this perspective, becomes a reflection of how Keats himself has addressed the reading public and failed to achieve their interest.

> There is not such a treat among them all,
>
> Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
>
> As a real woman, lineal indeed
>
> From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
>
> Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
>
> That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
>
> So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
>
> More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
>
> With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
>
> That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save. (1.328-39)

In order to appeal to Lycius's (or audience's) taste, it is necessary for Lamia to adapt herself to the human world in which Lycius is placed. Despite her power of imaginatively invoking superhuman beings like "Fairies, Peris, Goddesses," which mad poets inadvertently versify (recalling "self worshipers" in *The Fall of Hyperion*), Lamia humanizes her image "As a real woman" so that she can "[win] his heart / More pleasantly . . . / With no more awe than what her beauty gave." The act of Lamia's courting Lycius love is a series of adaptations to Lycius's taste and situation with a suitable form of beauty, and this act of courting aptly represents the working of poetic imagination in which the author engages in a process of communication with the reader

for a creation of the best imaginative world that can be conceived with poetic beauty. This is an idealized aesthetic process of poetic imagination.[35]

But this ideal state of love, made possible by Lamia's creative power, is soon exposed to various limitations, since her world of fantasy is ultimately an illusion separated from a social context of human beings. An act of love is part of this social context, and thus an isolated love, even if it is placed in an ideal state, cannot but collapse. Lycius is finally waked from a state of trance, and Lamia's ideal abode becomes "That purple-lined palace of sweet sin" (2.31); as a result, Lycius desires to socialize their love with an act of wedding, which ultimately brings about the tragic extinction of Lamia and the subsequent death of Lycius. From this perspective of Lamia's fall, this poem is read as a critique of a working of poetic imagination rather than a championing of it. In this vein of reading, Walter Evert argues that the illusive nature of Lamia's creation and the death of Lycius resulting from it represent Keats's new recognition of the distorted working of poetic imagination and its pernicious effect on human life.[36]

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[35] Keats, in his early poetic career, had a more positive faith in the working of imagination for creating beauty than in the later period when he went through two failures of publication. In the letter to Benjamin Bailey of 22 November 1817, Keats says, "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty" (1: 184).

[36] Walter. H. Evert, *Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965) 276-81.

Developing this reading with a focus on Lycius's fantasy, Hoagwood reads a

critique of delusional idealism in this poem. He says,

> Keats's poem [*Lamia*] is critical of its own illusions. The poem
>
> undermines the escape attempt whereby *ideas* are taken to be autonomous
>
> or effective solutions to actual human dilemmas. In the language of Marx
>
> and Engels, "Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.";
>
> when people mistake their ideas (which they have themselves produced)
>
> for objectively existing things or powers—when Lycius mistakes his
>
> illusionistic projection for Beauty—an inversion has taken place. ("Keats
>
> and Social Context" 693)

Unlike Evert, Hoagwood derives the cause of Lamia's and Lycius's fall from Lycius's

mistaking "illusionistic projection for Beauty" rather than from Lamia's illusive

imagination. In Hoagwood's reading, in other words, the process of ideas' isolation from

their material condition, which takes place in Lycius's self-made world of fantasy, is an

object of critique, and thus Lamia's creation, on which Evert's critique is centered,

becomes a delusional, immaterial form of ideas conceived in Lycius's head. Despite this

difference, both critics commonly suggest that in *Lamia* any attempt to idealize

immaterial works of human mind by transcending specificities of the social world,

whether it is called poetic imagination or a tendency for idealism, serves as an object of

critique. This reading makes sense especially in terms of the history surrounding Keats's

life, because, throughout 1819 when *Lamia* was written, intense political struggles

refreshed Keats's interest in history and social realities, and more importantly because his recognition of the effect of material conditions on his writing (as displayed in his continuous concern about the reading public) preoccupied his poetic practice. In *Lamia* Keats's earlier ideal of engaging with social realities and practicing the public good is maintained through a critique of the transcendental and thus anti-social working of imagination and idealism.

Lamia exhibits another problem immanent in poetic imagination or idealism, and this problem is concerned with the way in which Lamia's creative power reveals itself toward the world. From the beginning, Lamia's transformation into a beautiful woman and the accompanying creative capacity are products of her exchange dealings with Hermes. Lamia is originally a protector of a nymph for whom Hermes is looking, and this role of protector comes from her benevolent feeling for the nymph's liberty. But this benevolent feeling soon succumbs to a private desire for love, and thus she can obtain a shape of a real woman in exchange for giving the nymph up for Hermes. In this exchange between Lamia and Hermes, Watkins sees a working of capitalism. According to Watkins, Lamia's transformation is "one that destroys public, mutually protective life, replacing it with private, consumerist life"; that is, with the exchange dealings with Hermes, Lamia comes to "pursue her private interests, which, the narrative shows, now entail a complete denial of public exchange and public responsibility" (144).

Indeed, only by material affluence acquired from her dealings with Hermes, can Lamia's subsequent love for Lycius be sanctified as a pure form of disinterested, private

feeling. In this sense, Lycius's transgression from Lamia's private realm of love, which accompanies a "mad pompousness" and an impulse for violence ("Let my foes choke"), is an ineluctable consequence, since the pursuit of self-interest, which initiated Lamia's love, cannot sustain a form of love aiming at harmonious union between two selfless lovers. Hence, as Levinson suggests, the state of ideal love made possible by Lamia's creative capacity "owes its charm, an illusion of perfect disinterest, to the existence it repudiates: namely, the order of buying and selling" or "the exchange form," since this seemingly unmediated love is in fact "part—the most deceiving, enthralling part—of business as usual" (288-91). That is, Lamia's love as creative imagination implies collusion between poetic imagination and the order of capitalism, and into this collusion Keats seems to project his critique of the capitalistic mode in which poetic art is commodified. This critical dealing with commodified poetic imagination, however, does not necessarily mean that in *Lamia* Keats renounces the order of contemporary publishing markets founded on commercialism. As already mentioned, Keats confidently expected a commercial success in the writing of *Lamia*, and the writing process of this poem itself reveals his interest in the marketability of this poem. Hence, the commercial motivation operating on his writing of *Lamia* contradicts a critique of commercialism implicit in this poem. Perhaps this contradiction is another instance of Keats's complicated attitude toward the issue of how his poetry should address the public in the commercialized publishing market, and *Lamia* offers a poetic reflection on this issue in comprehensive, but never decisive ways.

As discussed thus far, the characterization of Lamia and its symbolic function as poetic imagination reveal various limitations and problems and thus serve as an object of critique on many points. In terms of the narrative, however, it is hardly deniable that a sympathetic point of view toward Lamia is maintained throughout the whole work. To be sure, Lamia's fall is a natural consequence of the illusiveness of her work of creation for love, but in the plot of the story her fall is prompted more by Lycius's perverse desire to boast their exuberant love and dominate over her in their relationship. Certainly, Lycius shows a distorted form of love. Faced with Lamia's hesitation in publicizing their love, he is obsessed with a "fancy to reclaim / Her wild and timid nature to his aim" and takes "delight / Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new" (2.70-4). A love that begets mutual bliss turns into an impulse for dominating violence.[37]

But the decisive cause of Lamia's fall is more concerned with Apollonius, a sage-mentor of Lycius and a magician-philosopher. Unlike Burton's original story, Keats's *Lamia* makes quite a negative character out of Apollonius. His character is termed "cold philosophy" which nullifies a variety of wonders in life.

> . . . Do not all charms fly
>
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
>
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
>
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given
>
> In the dull catalogue of common things.

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[37] See Jeffrey Cox, "*Lamia, Isabella*, and *The Eve of St. Agnes*," *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 60.

> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
>
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
>
> Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
>
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
>
> The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade. (2.229-38)

The quoted part recounts a contrast between charms and philosophy or rather a working of philosophy on charms. Since charms and philosophy respectively represent Lamia and Apollonius in the context of the plot, this part can be read as an explanation of what work Apollonius does to Lamia. And this work of Apollonius, as obvious in the plot, is to see through Lamia's works of creation (i.e., charms) and disclose their falsity—namely, to make right what Lamia's false charms have misdirected. But here it is not Apollonius's insight but Lamia's charms that attract the narrator's sympathy. Apollonius's work toward rationality (termed "philosophy") is from the outset modified by a negative adjective, "cold," and its operation on charms is described as reducing a variety of creative wonders (in a positive sense) to "the dull catalogue of common things" and monotonous "rule and line." From this perspective, therefore, Lamia's charms are not so much a deceiving force misdirecting people as a humane power of imagination enriching people's life, and thus Apollonius's act of rectifying charms is no more than a reductive work of cold, materialistic rationalism.[38] For this reason, in the

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[38] In a similar vein, Wordsworth criticizes the working of materialistic rationalism in *The Prelude*. He says, "This was the time, when, all things tending fast / To depravation, speculative schemes— / That promised to abstract the hopes of Man / Out of his feelings,

language of Lycius, Apollonius's work is depicted as "impious proud-heart sophistries, / Unlawful magic, and enticing lies" (2.285-6) which undo Lamia's "fair form" and "sweet pride" (2.248).

Attending to this derogatory view on Apollonius implied in *Lamia*, critics have offered several interpretations on the meaning of Apollonius in reference to the cultural context of the early nineteenth century. For example, Butler reads in Apollonius "Christian asceticism implicit in the intellectual paganism of the post-war era" (135); Levinson identifies Apollonius's work on Lamia as "abstract systemacity" and "conceptual idealism" reified by the exchange form of capitalism (284-5); and Cox argues that "Apollonius embodies what Nietzsche would later call the great error in Western thought: the belief in a transcendent truth that renders the 'mere' appearances of lived life false" ("*Lamia, Isabella*, and *The Eve of St. Agnes*" 60). Despite the interpretive divergence of those critics, they commonly suggest that Apollonius acts as an antagonistic force that suppresses the creative energy engendered from Lamia's symbolic function as poetic imagination. Given this vein of interpretation on Apollonius's character, it seems evident that throughout this poem Keats is critical of any form of cultural forces that counter the potential of poetic imagination, whatever they specifically refer to.[39]

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to be fixed thenceforth / For ever in a purer element— / Found ready welcome" (*Prelude* 1850.11. 223-8).

[39] In relation to Keats's biography and the reception history of his poetry, these hampering cultural forces may refer to hostile reviews on his poetry and its poor reception among the reading public. Just as Apollonius forces Lamia to "melt into a

With those sympathetic perspectives on Lamia's creative energy sustained throughout the poem, Keats might articulate his adherence to his earlier poetic ideal shared with the other members of the Hunt circle (i.e., his belief in the political/social/cultural validity of poetry in generating the public good for the world), even though the world in which Keats was placed was politically repressive, commercially reified, and culturally degraded. Moreover, the fact that Keats wrote this poem, which reflexively reiterates his own poetic practice, in the face of several difficulties threatening his position as a poet, testifies to his will to uphold poetic vocation as a literary intellectual. Ironically enough, however, Lamia's fall is irrevocable in the poem, and with this fall, Keats thought he overcame his previous immature sentimentality and achieved a mature version of romance. Most significantly, with the extinction of Lamia, Keats looked forward to a commercial success of *Lamia* with the reading public that he at once despised and feared of. This is a contradiction most explicitly shown in Keats's writing of *Lamia*. And this contradiction is connected to the character of Lamia in the plot of the poem, in that both Keats's writing of *Lamia* and Lamia's creative work with charms are able to substantiate their value in the public world only by erasing themselves. In the literary public sphere constituted in the early nineteenth century, this self-erasure was the only realistic form of communication that Keats's poetic practice could conceive of in the face of prevailing conservative politics and commercialized publishing markets, and *Lamia*'s (and also Lamia's) duplicitous

shade," "bad" reviewers and readers frustrated Keats's poetic practice for the public, thus rendering it socially obscure and culturally meaningless.

engagement with the public reflects this sinister historical reality.[40] This precarious connection with the public was the problem that the whole Hunt circle faced as a liberal middle-class group of intellectuals, which gradually increased their sense of anxiety and uncertainty over the public. Keats's *Lamia*, in this sense, can be said to embody the historical limitation of the Hunt circle and the public sphere that its members sought to communally actualize.

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[40] Both because of and despite this duplicity of Keats's *Lamia* (and other poems written around the same period), his third publication in 1820 achieved a great improvement, compared with the obvious failures of the previous ones, although it is hard to call this improvement a success. It is interesting, however, to see that until recently studies on Keats's poetry have attended to the poems included in this third volume as works worth reading, in contrast to their disregard of earlier poems. In this sense, Keats's special endeavor exerted on the third volume to communicate with the public can be said to have a meaningful effect at least among professional literary scholars of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER IV

BEYOND AN INTELLECTUAL BOURGEOIS PUBLIC SPHERE: PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY'S NOTION OF IDEAL PUBLICITY AND ITS HISTORICAL LIMITATION

Percy Bysshe Shelley served as a representative exponent of the Hunt circle's public positions in the post-Napoleonic period, since Shelley was introduced as one of the three promising young poets (i.e., Shelley, John Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds) in the article "Young Poets" of *The Examiner* in 1816, thus becoming one of the major contributors of poetry to the *Examiner*. Moreover, Hunt's family temporarily stayed with the Shelleys at Marlow in 1817, developing not only mutual friendship but their communal pursuit of liberal/radical ideals for contemporary politics and culture. Shelley's new friendship with Hunt was a significant event both for Shelley and the Hunt circle, not only because through this friendship Shelley came to form a close connection with a wide variety of people of the liberal camp such as the John and Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Keats, Reynolds, and Charles Ollier, but because the Hunt circle's identity as a liberal intellectual group communally pursuing the public good was consolidated by a series of social gatherings generated from these acquaintances. That is, Shelley's liberal/radical ideas and practices, which had persisted since his writing of *The Necessity of Atheism* in 1811, became associated with the communal practice of the Hunt circle. Due to this association, the Hunt circle was able to

develop more coherently principled political, cultural ideas, since Shelley's ideas on

politics and culture contributed to making their communal deliberations more elaborate,

and thus the Hunt circle assumed a new public perspective that would direct the circle

members' political, cultural actions in print and real politics.

Shelley's joining in the Hunt circle also meant a significant breakthrough for the

circle especially in terms of its concern and intervention with contemporary politics,

because Shelley's political ideas both widened and deepened the range of the Hunt

circle's political spectrum. Shelley's political ideas were founded on a wide range of

political and philosophical theories which had been developed both in Britain and the

Continent since the eighteenth century, such as atheistic materialism, philosophical

anarchism, skepticism, republicanism, and constitutionalism, to name a few.[1] In addition

to these various intellectual theories to which Shelley refers for his political ideas, his

concern extended even to plebeian radicalism whose tenets popular exponents like

William Cobbett, Henry Hunt, and Richard Carlile propagated as a significant political

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[1] Many critics have attempted to identify and explain the origin and development of Shelley's political ideas. For studies that deal with Shelley's politics from extensive perspectives, see Kenneth Neil Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974); Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (New York: Dutton, 1975); Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980); P. M. S. Dawson, *The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); Michael Henry Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982); Terence Allan Hoagwood, *Skepticism and Ieology: Shelley's Political Prose and Its Philosophical Context From Bacon to Marx* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1988); Stephen Behrendt, *Shelley and His Audiences* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1989); Michael O'Neil, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillian, 1989); and Kim Wheatley, *Shelley and His Readers: Beyond Paranoid Politics* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1999).

discourse opposing the Tory government's conservatism, but which most members of

the Hunt circle distanced themselves from.[2] Indeed, Shelley's inclusion of plebeian

radicalism within his political vision was so progressive an agenda as to both enlarge

and compromise the political perspective of the Hunt circle, a group of middle-class

liberal intellectuals. Despite Hazlitt's strenuous endorsement of the cause of "the

people" against the tyranny perpetrated by the Tory government and Hunt's sympathetic

analysis of popular mass movements like the Spa Fields Riots and the Peterloo Massacre,

it is scarcely deniable that the Hunt circle members did not seriously consider the newly

emerging working class and plebeian radicalism based on the interest of this new class

as an appropriate agent of the ideal political public sphere that they would actualize

through parliamentary reform.[3] The public ideal of the Hunt circle, therefore, was

confined to the limited perspective of what Habermas terms the bourgeois public sphere.

In this sense, Shelley's political writing and practice, which attempted to address

working-class people and articulate their plebeian vision, can be said to make a

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[2] On the elements of plebeian radicalism permeated in Shelley's poems, Anne Janowitz offers the following argument: "although it may at first appear odd for Shelley to commemorate an event in an industrial city with a vision of an agrarian utopia [in *The Mask Of Anarchy*], in fact, he was writing right out of the mixture of visions that characterized the plebeian radicalism of the beginning of the nineteenth century and provided the lexicon of Spencean agrarianism. . . . All the poems which Shelley wrote in the months after learning the news of the massacre at St. Peter's Fields draw upon the language of urban radicalism and utilize the rhetoric of constitutionalism, Anglo-Saxon rights, customary right, and non-Godwinian rationalism" (98-9).

[3] See, for Example, The *Examiner* IX 8 December. 1816: 769-70; The *Examiner* XII 22 August. 1819: 529-31; and William Hazlitt, "What is the People," *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, vol 7 (London: Dent, 1932) 259-81.

meaningful effort to overcome the class limitation that the Hunt circle's public practice implied and reconcile moderate intellectual reformers with exponents of plebeian radicalism as well.

This noteworthy attempt made by Shelley, however, was obviously unsuccessful in the contemporaneous political scene. Neither politicians nor literary intellectuals gave serious attention to his political ideas, and his published writings were able to attract an extremely small number of readers. Moreover, a considerable part of his writings could not have a chance of being published during his lifetime, because his careful publishers (mostly, John and Leigh Hunt and Charles Ollier) suspected that a publication of Shelley's writings, which included too radical ideas for the Tory government's standard, could have brought a prosecution.[4] Shelley's attempt to create a readership beyond class boundaries (and subsequently, enlightened political agents) could not make any impact on contemporary realities, since his works in reality encountered with most people's indifference. Besides this failure to address the general reading public with his inclusive political vision, what was more fatal to the public reception of his writings was a prevalent critical view that his political and poetical ideas were products of high-mindedly conceived but practically irrelevant idealism detached from contemporary realities. This view continued to the later period, as shown in Matthew Arnold's famous

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[4] For a detailed account of the situation of the publication of Shelley's works in the post-Napoleonic period, see Charles Robinson, "Percy Bysshe Shelley, Charles Ollier, and William Blackwood: The Contexts of Early Nineteenth-Century Publishing," *Shelley Revalued: Essays from the Gregynog Conference*, ed. Kelvin Everest (Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1983) 183-226.

description of Shelley as a "beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain" (203-4). In the perspective of this critical view, Shelley's political ideas were inclined to face a failure in actual practices of them, not only because his chance to address the public was forestalled by the contemporaneous conditions of politics and print culture, but more significantly because the political tenets implied in his writings were simply impracticable.[5]

Then, were Shelley's political ideas and practices misplaced idealism in terms of their effect and reception? The answer could hardly be yes, since Shelley's political writings made an obvious influence on plebeian radicalism of the Victorian period (e.g., the Chartist movement) through pirated editions.[6] But the Chartists' practice, which championed Shelley's political ideas as an important guide of their actions, cannot be said to actualize what Shelley contends in his writings, because their use of Shelley was partial and selective and their political vision was far from the ideal political public sphere at which Shelley aims. That is, Shelley's attempt to unite liberal intellectuals and

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[5] For example, in a notice signed "J. W." included in *The Champion* of December 23, 1821, an anonymous reviewer comments on Shelley's public unpopularity as follows: "It is our opinion, that the poetical merits of Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley have never been duly appreciated by the public. This neglect (for, in reality, it amounts to that) is chiefly to be attributed to himself. He writes in a spirit which the *million* do not comprehend: there is something too mystical in what he says—something too high or too deep for common comprehensions. He lives in a very remote poetical world, and his feelings will scarcely bear to be shadowed out in earthly light" (Barcus 287).

[6] For studies of Shelley's influence on the Chartist movement, see Bouthaina Shaaban, "Shelley and the Chartists," *Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996) 114-25; and Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour* 97-108, 133-158.

exponents of plebeian radicalism within his ideal political public sphere was either

disregarded or misunderstood by both the audiences. Given these complications and

contradictions effected by Shelley's politics, this chapter will examine how Shelley's

political writings attempted to create a unified and inclusive political public sphere as a

part of the Hunt circle's activities and why this attempt was not able to resonate with the

public (both with his contemporaries and following generations). And by this

examination of Shelley's politics, this chapter will also elucidate the historical limitation

of Shelley's (and the Hunt circle's) notion of ideal publicity.

1. Embodying an Inclusive and Open Public Sphere in Writings: Shelley's "Hermit of Marlow" Pamphlets

In 1816 when the Hunt circle's identity as a liberal intellectual group seeking to

achieve the public good was consolidated by deepened friendship among members and

frequent publications of their writings in liberal periodicals (mostly in the *Examiner*), the

Spa Fields Riots took place, which gave a nation-wide impact on contemporary politics,

and accordingly the Hunt circle members paid serious attention to these events. In the

course of these political disturbances Hunt issued in the *Examiner* several reports on the

aftermath proceedings of these events and political essays arguing for constitutional

reform; at the same time, he published Keats's most explicitly political poems including

"To Kosciusko" and "After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains." Shelley's first

"Hermit of Marlow" pamphlet, *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote throughout*

the Kingdom (below *A Proposal*), was also a product of the Hunt circle's response to these political disturbances. In this pamphlet, Shelley argues for the legitimacy of parliamentary reform, agreeing with other members of the Hunt circle and other liberal/radical reformers. Shelley's *A Proposal*, however, requires a closer critical attention, not only because this pamphlet includes philosophical insights and an ideological critique on political issues at stake, as Terence Hoagwood suggests, but more significantly because it embodies Shelley's ideal political public sphere through its unique format of writing.[7]

Before examining *A Proposal*'s text in detail, it might be necessary to look over the historical context of the Spa Fields Riots and the topography of contemporary politics, since Shelley's publication of *A Proposal* and its main argument were closely related to these contextual backdrops. The Spa Fields Riots, briefly put, were a series of agitations aroused by agricultural laborers for alleviating their sufferings imposed by the post-war depression and the widespread corruption of the Tory government. The year 1816 witnessed a considerable number of riots and agitations due to severe economic misery, but the Spa Fields Riots triggered a special alarm to Tory ministers, because

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[7] As to the distinctive feature of Shelley's political writings including *A Proposal*, Hoagwood offers the following argument: "Shelley's skeptical methods engage his polemic (even his apparently journalistic polemics on a reform of the vote, or on the execution of political prisoners) in philosophical structures. Shelley's issues are deepened, and conceptualized more philosophically, and his arguments' conclusions tend accordingly toward a more thorough and profound revolution than what the polemicists envision. Rather than an attack on one or many abuses, Shelley writes ideological critique, a more total challenge to the thought structure and political structure of his society" (*Skepticism and Ideology* 161).

these riots exhibited an unprecedented degree of violence from a large number of

working-class people. The effects of these events appeared in two ways. First, the Tory

government effectuated a series of repressive policies including the suspension of

Habeas Corpus in order to suppress the increasingly radicalized political consciousness

of working-class people. Second, both liberal and radical reformers found in these events

an appropriate opportunity to achieve parliamentary reform, thus attempting various

actions for precipitating immediate reforms. That is, among intensified confrontations

between desperately suffering working-class people and the repressive government,

reformers (one of whom was Shelley) expected to achieve their political aim, despite the

government's continuous prosecutions against these attempts of reformers.[8] But this

growing tendency of precipitating parliamentary reform also accompanied certain side

effects; that is, the divide between factions of reformers surfaced in an intense degree.[9]

As E. P. Thompson convincingly argues, the Spa Fields Riots brought about reformers'

consciousness of popular radicalism, but this consciousness served to distance most

moderate reformers from the popular movement, and moreover radical reformers'

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[8] In many cases, the government's repression could not be said to be successful, since several prosecutions conducted against reformers were defeated in jury trials, as representatively shown in the cases of William Hone and Richard Carlile. For a detailed historical account of radical movements and the government's reactionary policies in the post-Napoleonic period, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963) 603-710.

[9] For an account of factions among reformers in the post-war period with relation to Shelley and the Hunt circle, see Kenneth Neil Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974) 122-5.

leadership toward popular radicalism was far from being unified.[10] Hence, the issue of inducing a united aim from all the camps of reformers came to be a major concern for most reformers. More specifically, as Michael Henry Scrivener illustrates, reformers were constantly challenged by an urgent need to decide "whether to champion radical reform (annual parliaments, universal manhood suffrage) or moderate reform (triennial parliaments and suffrage limited to those who paid direct taxes, freeholders, and house holders)," and any decision could have alienated either moderate Whigs and Burdettites or working-class people (112). Shelley's *A Proposal* is directly occasioned by this dilemma inherent in the reform movements, and his notion of ideal political public sphere comes from an attempt to solve this dilemma.

Shelley's *A Proposal* is literally a proposal for justifying parliamentary reform and directing (or suggesting) its most desirable form in the contemporaneous political situation. As previously mentioned, despite reformers' consensual attempt to effectuate parliamentary reform in the disordered political state of post-war Britain, the confrontations between different positions on the issue of what sort of reform should be effected made it difficult for reformers to undertake a practical reform movement. Thus, Shelley tries to present an argumentative proposal by which to resolve these hampering confrontations. Shelley's position on this issue is clear in *A Proposal*. Shelley supports annual parliaments and suffrage limited to "those who register their names as paying a certain small sum in direct taxes" (*Prose* 161). This position is a mixture of a radical and

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[10] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* 631-2, 691-7.

a moderate method of reform, but it seems reasonable to align Shelley's position with

moderate reformers if we consider an immediate action that Shelley attempts to

effectuate. Although Shelley's support of annual parliaments was shared by radical

reformers, his reason for this support in *A Proposal* is distinguished from radical

reformers' political line, in that unlike radical reformers' intention to fully embrace the

ethos of popular movements through annual parliaments, Shelley is more interested in

"familiariz[ing] men with liberty by disciplining them to an habitual acquaintance with

its forms" in gradual steps (161). That is, Shelley's concern lies in an education of "the

people" (in the sense of the general public as potential political agents) rather than in a

full-scale implementation of a political system conducted by the people.[11] Many critics

have argued that Shelley's political ideas suggested in *A Proposal* (in his other political

writings as well) were directed toward moderate reformers' position. For example, P. M.

S. Dawson points out that, although Shelley "had a vivid sympathy for working-class

people as victims of social injustice," "he also feared and distrusted them" and "[h]is

own political experience and connections always lay within the circle of metropolitan

radicalism" represented by Francis Burdett, Francis Place, and Leigh Hunt (171).

Scrivener also points to the fact that most of Shelley's political connections attempted

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[11] The support of gradual reform founded on an education of people implied in Shelley's political ideas shows William Godwin's influence on Shelley. For a detailed historical account of the relationship between Godwin and Shelley, see William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: A Biography of a Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989).

through *A Proposal* were toward "respectable" and "moderate" reformers for the reason that "he knows hardly any radical or plebeian reformers" (117).

Although all these points on Shelley's alignment with moderate reformers are rightfully conceived in terms of his biographical backgrounds, however, his ideological and class alignment with moderate reformers' position is not presented as a central issue of *A Proposal*; nor does he dogmatically argue for the legitimacy of moderate reformers' method of parliamentary reform. Rather, what is notably revealed through *A Proposal* is Shelley's scrupulous attempt to make his writing of a proposal for reform a public medium by which a variety of possible positions on the issue of reform can be deliberated and contested. That is, in *A Proposal* Shelley does not present a fixed argument about the issue of what sort of reform should be practiced so much as invites the reader to engage in a process of reflecting and deciding on the issue, so that a virtual public conference for reform can be represented (or re-presented) by his writing.

That Shelley's writing serves to represent an open public conference is manifested in the way in which he suggests a propositional agenda.

> If the majority of the adult population shall, when seriously called upon
>
> for their opinion, determine on grounds however erroneous that the
>
> experiment of innovation by reform in Parliament is an evil of greater
>
> magnitude than the consequences of misgovernment to which Parliament
>
> has afforded a constitutional sanction, then it becomes us to be silent; and
>
> we should be guilty of the great crime which I have conditionally imputed

to the House of Commons if after unequivocal evidence that it was the
national will to acquiesce in the existing system we should by partial
assemblies of the multitude, or by any party acts, excite the minority to
disturb this decision. (159-60)

Here Shelley's way of proposing an agenda for parliamentary reform assumes two features. First, all the statements of proposing reform are made up of conditional sentences, and thereby any presupposed political dogma and principle are not allowed to control a process of proposing a necessity of reform except the will of the people who would participate in this virtual public conference (ultimately a real vote on a nationwide scale). Second, despite Shelley's foregrounding of formal openness on which any proposal for reform should be conditioned, he does not pose himself as a purely objective observer of this public conference for reform, but explicitly reveals his support of reform and even implies that the majority of people's will, which should be the only ground of reform's legitimacy, could be "erroneous." Shelley not only foregrounds an open public conference in which participating people's will serves as the first condition by which any proposal for reform should be validated, but at the same time he presents himself as an opinionated participant in this conference by making explicit his own position. In some sense, those two features do not seem to fit into each other smoothly, since the second feature can undercut the validity of the principle that the first feature suggests; that is, the existence of an individual who judges whether a given issue is erroneous or not (here Shelley himself) can mean that the majority of people's will is not

a sure ground of inducing the most right political decision. In addition, it can be even inferred from this reasoning that a right political decision (the necessity of reform in this case) is conceptually preordained regardless of the suggested material process of investing this decision with legitimacy by referring to the people's will. Despite these logical flaws inherent in the juxtaposition of the aforementioned two features, however, Shelley's endorsement of the process of making a decision by the majority of people's will is suggested to be unconditional. What matters here, therefore, is not how to induce a right decision through a reasonable process (i.e., following the majority of people's will) but how to maintain a principle which assures the people's participation in a decision-making process however erroneous a selected decision could be. Then why does Shelley emphasize the people's participation as a procedural precondition of making a decision, while at the same time sustaining his presupposed conviction of the legitimacy of parliamentary reform?

An answer to this question offers an important clue to Shelley's political ideas (and ideals). As previously mentioned, what Shelly foregrounds as an essential element in a discussion of reform is a procedural system that reflects the majority of people's will. For Shelley, in other words, it is a formally established publicity that legitimizes political agendas most reasonably, and this publicity legitimized by the people's will should be preferred to any abstractly conceived ideas, however reasonable elements those ideas include. Despite this emphasis of a publicly operated procedure, however, Shelley never subdues his own support for reform and even attempts to justify its necessity throughout

A Proposal, and his sustained support for reform is founded on his critical reason. Here

we can observe one distinctive aspect of Shelley's ideal publicity for politics: a political

publicity that embraces heterogeneous voices founded on individuals' critical reason.

This aspect is indeed significant, since by this aspect the political public sphere at which

Shelley aims becomes a space where the people's will leads to legitimate political

actions not only in terms of the quantitative number of people but of the qualitative

validity of each individual's opinion. More specifically, a legitimate political publicity,

for Shelley, is not a formal institution that mechanically counts on the number of people

for legitimizing a political decision, but an open space where each participant's opinion

is freely debated and contested for measuring its validity with critical reason. Likewise,

admitting the role of the quantitative number of people as an inevitable means of

finalizing a political decision, Shelley at the same time allows his ideal political

publicity to open up to a rational debate based on critical reason, as Habermas's model

of an ideal public sphere theoretically implies, and a form of this critical, rational debate

is exemplified in *A Proposal* by Shelley's insistence on a necessity of reform.

Certainly, for Shelley, annual parliaments that he endorses serve to be an

exemplary political public sphere which will actualize his notion of ideal publicity. As to

the necessity of annual parliaments, Shelley contends as follows:

> It appears to me that annual Parliaments ought to be adopted as an
>
> immediate measure, as one which strongly tends to preserve the liberty
>
> and happiness of the nation; it would enable men to cultivate those

energies on which the performance of the political duties belonging to the

citizen of a free state as the rightful guardian of its prosperity essentially

depends; it would familiarize men with liberty by disciplining them to an

habitual acquaintance with its forms. (161)

Here Shelley's preference of annual parliaments to triennial parliaments, which

distinguishes him from most of other moderate reformers, derives from his conviction

that annual parliaments enable men to more frequently "cultivate those energies" that are

necessary for "the citizen of a free state." The practical consequence of those energies

cultivated by annual parliaments, Shelley argues, would be the general public's

familiarization with the notion of "liberty" on which the formal operation of parliaments

essentially depends. Thus, for Shelley, a key element immanent in his support of annual

parliaments is this notion of liberty. Then what does this liberty mean for Shelley? The

liberty here obviously means a liberty that can be implemented in a parliament, and since

a parliament is originally a place for a political discussion, this liberty comes to signify a

liberty by which one can freely conceive and speak political agendas on a given issue.

This is a liberty of thinking and debating, which Shelley in the previous quotation

suggests as integral elements of his ideal political publicity. In this sense, Shelley's ideal

political publicity doubly functions in his discussion of parliamentary reform. On the one

hand, this publicity lays both an ideational and material foundation for conceiving and

implementing parliamentary reform; on the other hand, a parliament thus reformed

serves as a place where this publicity is actualized and sustained in real politics. Shelley,

through his own act of proposing parliamentary reform in *A Proposal*, exhibits his notion of ideal publicity and at the same time attempts to practice this notion in real politics.

Shelley, indeed, shows a strong interest in how to generate a feasible parliament in the real world, and throughout *A Proposal* Shelley's way of approaching the issue of parliamentary reform is founded on his realistic understanding of the contemporaneous state of politics and the general public. Shelley's attitude toward the issue of what sort of suffrage should be adopted, for example, typically shows this tendency. When deliberating over a proper political structure that parliamentary reform will induce, Shelley explicitly articulates his support for suffrage limited to taxpayers as opposed to universal suffrage. Shelley's reasoning about this support is thoroughly concerned with his understanding of the realities of his time. More specifically, Shelley considers it a precondition of universal suffrage that the public mind arrives at a sufficiently mature stage; hence, his contemporary people (mostly, working-class people) who "have been rendered brutal and torpid and ferocious by ages of slavery" are unprepared for having a right of voting, and, if political power was placed in their hands through universal suffrage, in his perspective, "anarchy and despotism" perpetrated by demagoguery would follow just as the French Revolution previously exemplified (161-2).[12] Shelley bases his support of limited suffrage on its practical feasibility, and this realistic

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[12] This idea is also borrowed from Godwin's political thoughts.

approach points to Shelley's serious intention to actualize his proposal for reform in real politics.

Shelley's realistic approach to the issue of parliamentary reform is also revealed by the list of the names of persons to whom Shelley wished copies of *A Proposal* to be sent. In a letter to Charles Ollier written right after completing *A Proposal*, Shelley gives a detailed instruction about how to publish and circulate this pamphlet. Here Shelley reveals his intention to circulate *A Proposal* as widely as possible: he says, "Do not advertise sparingly: & get as many booksellers as you can to take copies on their account" (*Letters* 1: 385). Shelley even specifies names of publishers who will conduct this task most appropriately. That is, Shelley seems to be quite serious in disseminating his proposal for parliamentary reform in the actual world. Most of all, Shelley includes a list of persons and organizations whom he wants to receive this pamphlet, and this list shows how scrupulous he is in selecting recipients of his political proposal by which he attempts to generate a space for discussing parliamentary reform in a practical sense. As to the significance of this name list, Scrivener argues as follows:

> The list of persons and organizations who are to receive the pamphlet
> directly from the author is illuminating for a number of reasons. It is
> apparent that Shelley is appealing to a broad spectrum of reform
> sentiment, ideologically, geographically, and socially. Fourteen of the
> forty-two names are M.P.s, roughly half of whom are moderates like
> Grey, while the other half are Burdettites or left Whigs like Cochrane and

Madocks. Of the extraparliamentary reformers, some of the radicals are

represented (Cobbett and Cartwright), but some are not (Henry Hunt and

Jonathan Wooler). Hunt's omission is surely deliberate, expressing

Shelley's contempt for a man whom he and Leigh Hunt viewed as a

violent demagogue. . . . (115)

As Scrivener clearly demonstrates here, Shelley's list is directed toward "a broad

spectrum of reform sentiment" which covers liberal M.P.s, moderate reformers, radical

Whigs (like Burdettites), and even extra-parliamentary reformers (or so-called plebeian

radicals).[13] This wide range of political sects and positions that this list includes is

indeed revealing, in that this list not only shows Shelley's practical understanding of

how to make up a comprehensive and feasible public conference for discussing reform,

but virtually embodies an exemplary political assembly that legitimately represents the

will of the people unlike the existing parliaments. The inclusivity and

comprehensiveness of this list, in other words, bring to light what Shelley construes as a

legitimate political publicity in relation to the topography of contemporary politics.

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[13] As to this issue, Dawson offers a different argument. He says, "[Shelley's] tendency to take his stand with the moderate Reformers of the metropolis is evident in the list of people to whom he wished copies of the pamphlet to be sent; the only radicals on the list were Cobbett and Cartwright (Henry Hunt being significantly absent), and no copies were ordered to be sent to the really radical journals" (174). In terms of the human connections that Shelley had developed to the point of writing this pamphlet, Dawson's argument that Shelley was aligned with "the moderate Reformers of the metropolis" is definitely sensible. But this does not necessarily mean that Shelley attempts to represent moderate reformers' position in *A Proposal*, since what is emphasized in his instruction of circulating the pamphlet and the list of people is not tendentious selectiveness by which to exclude inappropriate people but practicable inclusivity that Shelley can improvise within the situation given to him.

More significantly, Shelley's list, as Scrivener aptly points out, excludes demagogues like Henry Hunt, and thereby Shelley discloses another aspect of his ideal political public sphere. As previously discussed, Shelley's ideal publicity does not disregard minority opinions if they are reasonably conceived and can contribute to a rational, critical debate; hence, while maintaining his principled endorsement of following the people's will on the issue of reform, Shelley never fails to add to this general will of the people his own critical reasoning about the legitimacy of reform. A demagogue's political actions, however, are directly opposite to this notion of publicity. A demagogue bases the legitimacy of his or her political tenets on the majority of people's will, but he or she completely excludes a process of discussing issues at stake and even misdirects people's will to his or her personal advantage; that is, a political publicity at which a demagogue aims definitely lacks an element of reciprocal communication on which a rational, critical thinking is founded, and consequently the people's will, which legitimizes a political agenda, does not derive from a public mind that transparently reflects a majority opinion but from a demagogue's skillful manipulation of people's opinions in this model of publicity. Acts of demagogues, in this sense, is not different from those of the Tory regime, in that both attempt to impose their dogmatic agendas on the people who are, in their principle of publicity, bound to accept their agendas without any chance of critically thinking of them. And that is why Shelley so strongly refuses to include demagogues in his ideal political public sphere.

Shelley's ideal publicity, hence, consistently displays a tendency of opposing any sort of dogmatic imposition in generating a public agenda, while foregrounding a communicative process based on a critical thinking as an integral principle. And this tendency is related to *skepticism* that Shelley embraces in his political ideas. According to Hoagwood, skepticism or a skeptical argument is defined as "an epistemological circle, which is a mentalistic or phenomenal limit to the truth content of knowledge claims," in contrast to dogmatism which supposes "a criterion of truth" against the epistemological limit posited by skepticism (*Skepticism and Ideology* 33). While dogmatism presents a definitive answer to a given issue in the name of truth, skepticism ceaselessly points to the limit inherent in claims for a single truth, thus problematizing any truth-based (or authority-based in socio-political terms) discourse structure. Skepticism is, in this sense, concerned with resisting any attempt to subject diverse, conflicting elements to a single principle, and Shelley's political ideas that oppose dogmatic and authoritative policies of the Tory government are directly related to this aspect of skepticism.

As to the relationship between Shelley's political ideas and skepticism, Hoagwood offers a compelling argument:

> The skeptical paradigm of metaphysical analysis involves, in Shelley as in the history of skepticism, a questioning of authority, an undermining of dogma, an overthrow of antecedent conceptual structures. In Shelley's political world, with the growing pressures and vitality of movements for

reform and social revolution, it is the case that these paradigmatic forms

of the skeptical dialectic arise from the political and economic conflicts

that Shelley observed so keenly; at the same time, those metaphysical

speculations and critiques are invested with concrete historical

applications and forms. (*Skepticism and Ideology* 77)

Here Hoagwood highlights two aspects of how "the skeptical paradigm of metaphysical

analysis" affects Shelley's political ideas. First, this skeptical paradigm provides Shelley

with a logical ground of challenging a single, coercive standard of thinking (represented

by "authority," "dogma," and "antecedent conceptual structures"), and thereby Shelley is

able to justify reformers' and revolutionaries' resistance to repressive political and

economic powers. Second and more importantly, through the skeptical paradigm,

Shelley can build his political ideas upon "concrete historical applications and forms"

generated from his observation of "political and economic conflicts" in history. That is,

skepticism makes it possible for Shelley to base his political theory on historical

specificities which comprise a series of conflicts between various positions and forces.

Shelley's turn to historically specific conflicts in theorizing his political ideas carries a

significant implication, since by this turn Shelley can conceive a political theory in

which a variety of specific conflicts in the world, rather than an abstractly imposed

principle, serve as a foundation of inducing a legitimate political action. And by this

theory Shelley can also conceive his notion of ideal political public sphere where various

conflicting positions of respective participants, rather than an externally imposed single

authority, constitute a basic element of political sovereignty. Through skepticism Shelley

comes to espouse the notion of diversity embodied in historical specificities of conflicts

as a key element of political legitimacy, and this notion of diversity contributes to

reinforcing Shelley's ideal publicity by serving as a conceptual ground of rational,

critical debates between different positions that this publicity necessitates.

This notion of diversity, which subscribes to a coexistence of heterogeneous and

conflicting ideas and positions, thus constitutes an integral part of Shelley's political

ideas revealed in *A Proposal*, and this tendency continues in the second "Hermit of

Marlow" pamphlet, *An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte*

(below *An Address*). *An Address* is, like *A Proposal*, Shelley's corrective response to

contemporary politics as a liberal intellectual who attempts to bring forward the public

good, but there are some differences between them. While *A Proposal* is a direct

proposition for an immediate political action (i.e., parliamentary reform), *An Address* is

closer to an intellectual's reflection on how politics should be, occasioned by a nation-

wide event (i.e., the death of the Princess Charlotte) that triggers many people's concern

for problems of the government led by the Regent and Tories. As is well known, around

the economic depression of the post-Napoleonic period, a great deal of political

criticisms were directed toward the Prince of Wales, not only because the policies of his

government failed to alleviate the nationally prevalent distresses caused by this

economic depression, but because his profligate lifestyle served to be an anti-example of

political leaders' behaviors, especially for many liberals who wanted reform and low-

class people who had hard time even in sustaining basic necessities. In this context,

hence, the death of the Princess Charlotte, who might have succeeded to the throne and

brought forth reform, gave rise to a general disappointment among those liberals, and

Shelley, as a principled supporter of reform, attempted to offer a reflective political

writing by which the pro-reformative atmosphere occasioned by the princess's death

would lead to actual reforms.[14] In this sense, Shelley can be said to take advantage of the

situation that favored reformers' position in *An Address*, but what is remarkable is that

he took a distinctive path in delineating his contentions for precipitating reform; that is,

he bases his contentions on the notion of diversity, the core concept of his ideal publicity.

In *An Address*, this notion of diversity makes it possible for Shelley to adopt a

unique address to political issues at stake by differentiating his ways of addressing them

from those of other intellectual liberals, and these distinctive ways can be summarized in

two features. First Shelley parallels the death of the Princess Charlotte with the

execution of the three working-class men, Jeremiah Brandreth, Isaac Ludlam, and

William Turner, and thus he inserts a heterogeneous voice into the public discussion of

politics occasioned by people's mournful feeling for the young princess's death. To be

sure, the public space for political discussion generated from this special occasion

provided liberals and reformers with a good chance to justify their political cause;

however, it is hardly deniable that their cause thus justified, as Scrivener argues in his

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[14] For historical accounts surrounding Shelley's writing of *An Address*, see, for example, Kenneth Neil Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years* 125-6; Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* 383-5; Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley* 108-12, 133-4; and Terence Hoagwood, *Skepticism and Ideology* 160-1.

comment on *An Address*'s subtitle "We pity the plumage, but forget the dying bird," was directed "only for royalty and aristocrats but not for the People" (134). In other words, the moderate reformers' public discourse fortified by this occasion of the princess's death was predicated on strict class boundaries, and thus working-class people's voices were never given a chance to articulate themselves. Shelley's inclusion of heterogeneous voices of working-class people, in this situation, was a striking way of participating in this public discourse and carried an important implication. Shelley, by this inclusion, took the initiative in considering working-class people as a significant political agent and thereby expanded liberal intellectuals' political consciousness which had been confined to decent classes of stable economic foundation.

As to the historical significance of this turn to working-class people in Shelley's political writing, Scrivener argues as follows:

> Neither Shelley nor anyone else wrote essays on the dead Luddites. But by late 1817, there is a new social environment within which working-class people cannot be dismissed; they have faces, names, and words. Shelley participates in this new cultural sensitivity, which Cobbett had pioneered in his "To the Journeymen and Labourers." One wonders whether Peterloo would have caused a nearly revolutionary situation if it had not been for the previous public outcry over the Derbyshire rebels. (135)

Shelley makes reference to Cobbett's serious approach to working-class people several times in both the "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets, and keeps emphasizing those people's participation in politics as a seminal ground of his ideal political publicity. Even though the political consciousness of most working-class people was not yet mature enough to function as a major subject of reform, as Shelley contends in *A Proposal*, the political public sphere that he attempts to generate in *An Address* never forecloses those people's role as a legitimate political agent and thus characterizes itself as an open space where diverse voices can be freely articulated regardless of class and property. And from this public sphere based on the notion of diversity derives Shelley's serious reflection on the inequitable execution of three poor laborers paralleled with the immature death of the Princess Charlotte.

An Address's second feature that displays Shelley's notion of diversity is his mixed use of various styles. More specifically, Shelley, in an attempt to argue for a necessity of mourning the death of three laborers rather than of a young princess, combines a hard-headed analysis of economic relations, a passionate charge of social injustice, and an apocalyptic prophecy of a visionary future. The combination of these different styles creates a powerful rhetorical effect of communicating his argumentative points to various audiences, but at the same time undercuts the coherence of his writing, thus engendering some contradictions between the respective styles. For example, Shelley offers a refined analysis of how the aristocratic system of taxation "produce[d] such an unequal distribution of the means of living as saps the foundation of social union

and civilized life" (*Prose* 166). According to this analysis, sufferings of working-class

people were doubled by an appearance of "petty piddling slaves who [had] gained a right

to the title of public creditors, either by gambling in the funds, or by subserviency to

government, or some other villainous trade" (166). Shelley here pinpoints the newly

formed industrial bourgeois class as a major cause of social injustice by analyzing their

economic function and thus approaches the existing social problems from a perspective

of economic structure. But in the next section, Shelley suspects that the activities of

government spies hindered gradual parliamentary reform, which, in Shelley's view, was

the only means of achieving political justice, by manipulating poor people into extreme

actions. At this time, Shelley attributes social injustices to individual actions—i.e., the

conspiracy of people belonging to the government and poor people's unenlightened

political consciousness.

　　After thus suggesting a structural analysis of economy and a speculation on the

individualistically practiced conspiracy of the government without giving logical

coherence to those two different ways of assessing social problems, Shelley makes

another turn of style in the last section. Here Shelley changes an object of mourning

from the three laborers to "Liberty" and offers his mourning statement in a starkly

figurative language. Shelley says,

> Liberty is dead. Slave! I charge thee disturb not the depth and solemnity
>
> of our grief by any meaner sorrow. . . . But *man* has murdered Liberty,
>
> and while the life was ebbing from its wound, there descended on the

heads and on the hearts of every human thing the sympathy of an

universal blast and curse. . . . Let us follow the corpse of British Liberty

slowly and reverentially to its tomb; and if some glorious Phantom should

appear and make its throne of broken swords and sceptres and royal

crowns trampled in the dust, let us say that the Spirit of Liberty has arisen

from its grave and left all that was gross and mortal there, and kneel down

and worship it as our Queen. (168-9)

In this quotation, Shelley personifies the abstract term liberty and endows the death of

liberty with an apocalyptic tone by using biblical imagery. The rhetorical effect created

by these metaphorical techniques is quite different from that of the previous analytical or

speculative style; here what Shelley is doing seems to be more a transcendental prophecy

than a realistic assessment of social problems. After examining the two symbolic social

events (i.e., the deaths of the Princess Charlotte and the three laborers) from various

angles, Shelley abruptly turns to visionary millenarianism, and this turn again impairs *An*

Address's coherence. Moreover, as several critics point out, Shelley's political aim is

seen to be radicalized in this section.[15] In contrast to the previous sections where Shelley

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[15] By concentrating on the unique effect generated from sentimental, apocalyptic imagery used in this section, Scrivener offers the following argument: "The imagery and rhetoric are republican, not moderate. It is typical that as Shelley's language becomes more 'poetic' and allegorical, the politics seems more radical" (137). Behrendt also offers a similar point by focusing on the stylistic feature of this part: "in passage like the last paragraph of the *Address*, as Shelley moves to the most direst forms of address ("Mourn then People of England") he turns to shorter sentences, often cast in the imperative, and to such rhetorical devices as cadences and formulaic repetitions, all of which reflect the

endorses gradual, moderate reform, in this section he seems to suggest republicanism as a necessary alternative political form by imagining "some glorious Phantom" who tramples down monarchical emblems. And the description that "the Spirit of Liberty" arises from the old regime's evils and ascends to the legitimate throne is even reminiscent of the Jacobin regime of the French Revolution. From *An Address*'s general perspective, all these radicalized millenarian visions are definitely a jump of logic; consequently, a reader could be confused about what exactly Shelley contends in *An Address*.

If we apply Shelley's ideal publicity that embraces the notion of diversity to a reading of *An Address*, however, all those contradictions between styles shown in this pamphlet can be understood as Shelley's attempt to practice his ideal publicity through writing. As discussed before, Shelley's ideal publicity embraces multiple positions on a given issue and induces these positions to interact with each other; that is, in Shelley's view, a process of debating between different positions on a rational, critical basis, even though these positions are sometimes mutually contradictory and incompatible, guarantees a public's legitimacy. Thus, what matters for Shelley's ideal publicity is not a concordance between agents that constitute a public but a coexistence of differently positioned agents and a continuing reciprocation between them. In this sense, the dissonance between the styles shown in *An Address* can be said to fit for this model of publicity; rather, it is more appropriate to say that Shelley deliberately parallels these

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familiar conventions of the literature of the masses, including popular hymns and the Bible" (36).

different styles and their immanent political assumptions in order to embody a form of

publicity that he endorses within the formal practice of his writing. All the various

perspectives employed in *An Address* (i.e., an intellectual discourse on economic

structure, conspiracy theory, and revolutionary millenarianism) aim at different reading

publics (middle-class intellectuals, under-educated middle-class people and working-

class people, for example), and thereby Shelley invites these wide and various reading

publics to participate both in the imaginary public sphere that he creates in his writing

and in the real one that those readers will create in real politics.[16] A nation-wide

attention to politics triggered by the death of the Princess Charlotte, for Shelley, serves

as a material source by which he could attempt to bring forward his ideal political

publicity, and his writing of *An Address* is both a starting point and a product of this

attempt. For Shelley, the public for *An Address* points to both its readers and the general

public as potential political agents, and thus Shelley, by writing and circulating *An

Address* for a wide range of people, attempts to create a public sphere where a reading

activity (based on a process of rational, critical thinking, to be sure) directly leads to a

political action.

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[16] It is doubtful, however, that Shelley achieved a wide readership for *An Address* right
after he wrote it. As to the situation of *An Address*'s printing and publication, Martin
Priestman explains that "Though Ollier also agreed to publish *Address on Princess
Charlotte*, its legal status is less clear. No original copy exists, the first available edition
being an 1840 reprint, whose publisher Thomas Rodd states that Shelley himself only
published 20 copies. Rodd's copy of the title page has no publisher's or printer's name,
which, if an accurate imitation of the original, puts the latter in the same illegal camp as
most of the earlier political writings" (237).

2. Poets as the Unacknowledged Legislators of the World and the Public Sphere

Which They Created: *Laon and Cythna*, *Prometheus Unbound*, **and** *A Defence of*

Poetry

Given this purpose of writing shown in the two "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets,

was it the real case that Shelley's general writing practice (beyond occasional writings

about politics) would bring about or at least aim at a formation of this inclusive and

cacophonous public sphere? In fact, there are several cases of writing in which Shelley

seems to selectively search for a limited class of readers who are capable of appreciating

his ideas, rather than inclusively accept as possible readers for his writing a variety of

publics which are fragmentarily and conflictingly diverse. One telling example that

displays this tendency is *Laon and Cythna*, written and published in the period between

the publications of the two "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets.[17] In the preface to *Laon and*

Cythna, Shelley states the purpose of his composition of this poem, and more

importantly, manifests what sort of readers he wants to address and how.

> It [*Laon and Cythna*] is an experiment on the temper of the public mind,
>
> as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society
>
> survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have

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[17] From March 1817 to February 1818, the Shelleys were settled in Albion House, Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire. Here, Shelley enjoyed an intellectual and creative life with his friends (including Hunt and his acquaintances, thus almost identical with the Hunt circle), and *Laon and Cythna* is a product of these intellectual interactions. It is estimated that Shelley wrote *Laon and Cythna* through the spring and summer of this year, and the printed copy started to be sold at the beginning of December. Hence, it can be safely said that *Laon and Cythna* and the two pamphlets were conceived and written almost simultaneously and in the same political and cultural situation.

shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist . . . all those

elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and

comprehensive morality, and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of

my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and

justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence,

nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among

mankind. For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion . . .

appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions and institutions, to the

common sympathies of every human breast. . . . I would only awaken the

feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be

incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed,

and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. (*Poems of

Shelley* 32-33)

As in the two "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets, Shelley here manifests that the purpose of

writing *Laon and Cythna* is socio-politically motivated—that is, to substantiate the

validity of "a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society" in the public

mind. Thus, what Shelley would promote through the poem is "a liberal and

comprehensive morality," "a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and

justice," and "that faith and hope in something good"; they are all social values by which

the public good could be implemented in politics and culture. Moreover, the way in

which Shelley attempts to disseminate those values is similar to that used in the two

pamphlets. Just as Shelley in the aforementioned pamphlets attempts to validate political reform on the basis of a majority of people's understanding and consent, he here justifies a critique of "all artificial opinions and institutions" by appealing to "the common sympathies of every human breast." This preface displays the points that reflect Shelley's intense concern for politics in 1817, occasioned both by a series of widely impactful political disturbances and his intellectual intercourses with the Hunt circle members, as do the two pamphlets.

Despite these similarities, however, the preface diverges from the pamphlets on one significant point. In contrast to Shelley's willing inclusion of diverse voices into a space of political discussion (in the form of both readers and political agents) in the two pamphlets, "an experiment on the temper of the public mind" proposed in the preface to *Laon and Cythna* is directed toward "the enlightened and refined" (i.e., a selected class of readers who can intellectually follow Shelley's moral, political ideals). Thus, despite Shelley's appeal to people's common sympathies, "the reader" for this poem is qualified by his or her ability to see "the beauty of true virtue" and apprehend Shelley's "moral and political creed" and "that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world." This qualification suggested as a prerequisite of a proper reader of this poem does not quite fit into the inclusive posture that Shelley takes in the two pamphlets, and thus there seems to be an explicit discrepancy between this poem and the two pamphlets. Besides, in juxtaposing his moral, political creed with the world's sublimest intellects, Shelley seems to conduct a process of enlightening people's consciousness by his superior

intellectual capacity rather than by participants' communication on an equal basis. Here Shelley's way of approaching readers for this poem entails his own criterion of intellectual hierarchy and in this sense contradicts the principle of publicity based on the notion of diversity and inclusivity implied in the two pamphlets.

Another problematic point revealed in this preface is the way in which Shelley makes a value judgment on which his moral and political ideas are founded. As shown in the above quotation, Shelley depends on people's common sympathies and feelings for communicating his ideas. But how do we know that these sympathies and feelings can guarantee the righteousness of the ideas engendered from them? In the latter part of the preface, Shelley gives an answer to this question. He says, "It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention" (*Poems of Shelley* 47). Shelley, in other words, endows the "feelings," by which his communication with readers is made possible, with a normative legitimacy by extracting "the most universal" elements out of them. Still, this universality is too abstract a term to be stipulated as a working criterion for moral and political legitimacy, since this criterion can be infinitely variable according to those who conduct moral and political acts in specific circumstances. Thus, it is necessary to identify who decides this criterion of universality. If we follow Shelley's logic in this preface, the moral, political agents who decide the criterion of

universality should be "the enlightened and refined," since Shelley already confines the meaningful communications generated by this poem to those among this selected class of readers; that is, Shelley communicates his "universal" ideas to the enlightened and refined readers because only this sort of readers understand them, and at the same time Shelley's ideas assume a "universal" value because these readers admit them so. This is definitely a circular logic. And by this circular logic, the criterion of universality that validates Shelley's ideas becomes confined to a local communication between a few intellectual readers of his own selecting, and this locality of his "universal" ideas reduces his concept of universality to parochial idealism detached from various other groups of people existing in the actual world.

This problematic universal idealism, which aims at a fundamental change of the world with universal values but in reality functions as a limited political actions for certain specific classes, is also revealed in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, another politically oriented work that foregrounds Shelley's will to achieve the public good. Specifically, in a part where Shelley suggests his "passion for reforming the world," he at the same time qualifies this political passion by offering a more elaborate account of what he attempts to do in this poem. Shelley says,

> . . . it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions
> solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any
> degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life.
> Didactic poetry is my abhorrence . . . . My purpose has hitherto been

simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select

classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence;

aware that until mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and

endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the

highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust,

although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. (*Poetry and Prose*

135)

Shelley here makes a significant distinction between a didactic writing and a poetic

writing, and he places the latter above the former. According to Shelley, a didactic

writing is purported to give rise to practical political actions (e.g., "the direct

enforcement of reform") based on "a reasoned system on the theory of human life." This

definition is indeed about general features of a political writing with practical purposes,

and the two "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets can be categorized as this type of writing.

On the other hand, the type of writing that Shelley attempts to practice in a work like

Prometheus Unbound (say, "poetry" in Shelley's sense) has quite a distinctive purpose.

This type of writing, instead of directly delivering a workable political agenda, implicitly

suggests "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence"; more importantly, the reader should

belong to "the more select classes of poetical readers" with "highly refined imagination."

Hence, in this type of writing, the true meaning of a work can be brought to light only

through a mediation of enlightened and refined individuals' mental capacities

represented, for example, by love, admiration, trust, hope, and endurance. In this sense,

poetry, despite its explicit aim toward achieving the public good, is distinguished from what Shelley calls a didactic writing, and the form of communication that will be practiced in poetry requires selected classes of readers endowed with intellectually refined mentality. The publicity immanent in this type of poetic writing, therefore, comes to be differentiated from the one generated by the two pamphlets, and this publicity ineluctably includes an elitist principle founded on the notion of exclusivity and selectivity rather than of inclusivity and diversity.

Given this distinction between didactic writing and poetic writing, does Shelley presuppose two different types of publicity in practicing the public good through an act of writing? Many critics offer an affirmative answer to this question. For example, Dawson, despite his objection to distinguishing between didactic and non-didactic writing, sees the public ideals suggested in Shelley's revolutionary epics (especially, *Laon and Cythna*) anti-revolutionary, since Shelley's heroes of these epics embody the lesson that political revolutions would be doomed to fail if it were not for individuals' reformed consciousness.[18] From this reading of Shelley's poetic works, he argues that, to understand the precise nature of the public ideals implied in Shelley's poetry, "we must turn from the democratic activist, Paine, to the philosophical theorist of anarchism, William Godwin" (75). In other words, Shelley's poetry, for Dawson, seeks to achieve

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[18] For Dawson, Shelley's poetic practice cannot but fall under a category of didactic writing, despite his claim that he abhors didactic poetry. Dawson contends, "[Shelley] announces his intention to 'enlist' poetry in the service of a previously settled system of morality and to persuade his readers to adopt the 'doctrines' which constitute his own 'moral and political creed.' This is to make poetry a means to some exterior end, which is what we now understand by didacticism" (213).

political ideals by referring to refined philosophical theories, and this way of engaging

with politics is obviously distinguished from the way of Paine, a down-to-earth activist

for procedural democracy.

Scrivener offers a more explicit point on this issue. For Scrivener, Shelley's

political (thus didactic) writings represented by the "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets are

motivated differently from his poetic writings, in that "the former tries to embody the

actual state of social consciousness in institutions," but "the latter tries to *alter* that

consciousness" (124). Thus, in Scrivener's view, while in those pamphlets Shelley acts

as "a libertarian activist" who is concerned with "the actual level of public opinion," in

poetry he becomes "a philosophical anarchist" who "is not satisfied with moderate

reforms and desires a radically new society" (124). Moreover, Scrivener touches on the

issue of the intended reading public for Shelley's poetry. He contends,

> Shelley was not writing *Laon and Cythna* [and *Prometheus Unbound*] for
>
> the followers of Cobbett or Wooler, but for the readers of the *Edinburgh*
>
> *Review*, the *Examiner*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Independent Whig*.
>
> If the leisure-class liberals would undergo a cultural revolution, adopting
>
> Shellyan principles and carrying them into practice, then they could lead
>
> a new movement that would go beyond merely parliamentary reform.
>
> (124-5)

Hence, for Scrivener, Shelley's poetic practice not only goes beyond realistic political

agendas that concern the general public's practical interest (e.g., parliamentary reform),

but exclusively aims at a specific class of people who are intellectually and economically competent enough to share Shelley's "enlightened and refined" ideals and thus participate in the literary elite's public sphere—i.e., what Behrendt terms "a potential universal army of visionaries" (24). And for Scrivener, the existence of this special class of readers for poetry signifies Shelley's dichotomous approach both to his writing practice and its public reception.

This dichotomous view on Shelley's writing and its reception is elaborated in Kim Wheatley's study.[19] Wheatley supposes that there were two discursive stances in literary dialogues of the Romantic period. The first stance, which dominated most of the Romantic period as a result of the intense political struggles of this period, is "paranoid," "Satanic" stance. Writers in this stance (especially, writers for the political, cultural establishment) "characterize their adversaries as Satanic rebels against orthodoxy" by "[a]dopting the Miltonic and apocalyptic imagery of English political rhetoric" (2). Shelley's early writings, Wheatley argues, maintain this stance in their defiant confrontation against an antagonistic readership. The second stance is an alternative to this paranoid discourse, which Shelley developed in his later poetry. According to Wheatley, this "nonparanoid" stance is concerned with Shelley's turn to idealism and aestheticism, in which the aesthetic replaces the political by "momentarily sidestepping the oppositional structure of Satanic scenario," and, by this turn "the very act of opening up a nonpartisan aesthetic space can be seen as offering a way out of a rigid and morally

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[19] Kim Wheatley, *Shelley and His Readers: Beyond Paranoid Politics* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1999) 1-12, 109-150.

bankrupt political discourse" (6). Briefly put, Wheatley opposes Shelley's political writing to his aesthetic writing and finds in the latter an advanced form of speaking to the world through literature; in this sense, Wheatley also locates two different types or attitudes in Shelley's practice of writing.

As discussed thus far, many critics argue for an existence of a certain hiatus in Shelley's writings, and this hiatus is explained in terms of several binary oppositions such as working-class laborers vs. leisure-class liberals, democratic activist vs. philosophical theorist, and the political vs. the aesthetic, to name a few. Despite some differences in details of arguments, critics who presuppose this hiatus in Shelley's writing commonly assume that, unlike political writings for practical purposes or what Shelley calls "exoteric poems," the form of writing that Shelley practices under the name of "poetry" seeks to achieve some high-minded and noble values by which the best state of human morality and politics can be conceived beyond down-to-earth material conditions of the existing human society. In other words, these critics construe Shelley's "poetry" as a sort of transcendental, mental mechanism through which a more fundamental improvement of human life than immediate political reforms, which will lead ultimately to "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence," can be made possible. To be sure, these idealistic values that Shelley's poetry conceives and practices should not be regarded as a solipsistic evasion of social realities through transcendental literature or what McGann calls "Romantic ideology," since the goal of these values is definitely directed toward the general public and the social realities shared by them. Still, it is hard

to deny that, in this view of Shelley's poetry, the values that poetry would bring about are condescendingly set up against the general public's down-to-earth wish to improve their immediate life conditions, and therefore the principle of publicity implicit in Shelley's poetic practice is predicated on an exclusion of intellectually and economically unqualified readers. The publicity that these critics consider Shelley implies by his poetic practice does not lie in a specific historical space where various people's voices are cacophonously conflicting with each other, so much as in an imaginary ideal world created by Shelley's and his qualified peers' *poetic* deliberation.

As suggested in these critical assessments, does Shelley, in his poetic practice, attempt to generate a distinctive public sphere to which only enlightened and refined readers are admitted? And by validating the values engendered from this public sphere of poetry, does Shelley single out *poets* (authentic ones represented by himself, to be sure) as a principal guide who will bring forward the ultimate public good for the world? It is true that several statements in the two prefaces, as we have seen thus far, confirm this view of the poet as a qualified enlightener of the world ridden with ignorance and prejudice, but it is also the case that these prefaces include a number of elements that contradict the assumption implied in this view that poets take an absolute, exclusive position in giving rise to the public good.

In the preface to *Laon and Cythna*, Shelley frequently reveals an anxiety that his poetic practice may not effectuate the public good as he intends. For example, right after an elated announcement of what this poem will do for the public, Shelley tempers this

announcement by intimating a possibility of a failure of his intended poetic task. Shelley says,

> . . . if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story, shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which within his mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward.
>
> (*Poems of Shelley* 34)

Of course, Shelley here sticks to his faith in the way in which poetry generally makes a beneficial influence on the reader by "human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes"; nevertheless, this faith does not guarantee a successful implementation of *his own* poetic practice toward readers. Shelley accepts a possibility of his own poetry's failure to achieve its public missions in terms of its relation with readers. This acceptance of a possible failure of poetic missions carries a significant connotation. Shelley, by this acceptance, intimates that, although it is indubitable that poets play a seminal role in fulfilling the public good for the world, their way of playing this role is not so much a one-sided act of enlightening or instructing readers as a reciprocal interaction between poets and readers. And Shelley also implies that even a poet's

excellent ideas could be inconsequential without the reader's corresponding responses, and in this sense readers can be said to influence poets (not only vice versa). From this perspective, it is understandable why Shelley underscores an ability to "communicate to others" as a poet's important business, and this model of communication on which Shelley's notion of poetic practice depends contradicts the view that Shelley absolutizes poets' role as a moral, political guide of the world.

Throughout the preface to *Laon and Cythna*, Shelley keeps emphasizing readers' role in fulfilling his poetic practice. In a part in which Shelley states the experiences and the feelings from which he cultivated his poetic capacity and obtained sources of his poems, he again suggests that the power that his poetry will potentially wield depends on the audience's engagement in the process of poetic creation. He contends,

> How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry,
> the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my
> own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which with
> an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect
> which I shall produce upon those whom I now address. . . . there must be
> a resemblance which does not depend upon their own will, between all
> the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a
> common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of
> circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in

a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus

pervaded. (*Poems of Shelley* 41)

While still foregrounding a faculty of sympathy awakened by poetry as its "essential

attribute," Shelley no more places this faculty exclusively in poets' act of creation.

Shelley now seriously considers readers' part in a poetic creation; more specifically, he

elevates readers' role from passive recipients of a poet's own ideas to equal participants

in a process of creating poetry. Thus, Shelley here "expect[s] to be taught" by what he

will effectuate on the readers, and from this reciprocation he assumes a discursive field

of poetry founded on dynamics between poets and readers. Furthermore, Shelley

expands this dynamic discursive field formed between poets and readers into a more

comprehensive dimension of time and space (i.e., what Shelley calls "age"). This notion

of age indeed qualifies influences that a poet possibly makes on the world and shifts the

source of poetry's power to generate sympathetic feelings from an individual poet's

autonomous volition to a collective engagement made between members of a society

(including both writers and all potential readers).[20] In other words, Shelley supposes the

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[20] As to Shelley's qualified view on the role of an individual will in poetic creation, Chandler offers a compelling argument in relation to the notion of age: "In contemporary commentary on Romanticism, the natural supernaturalism of Wordsworth's Prospectus to *The Recluse* and the faithful skepticism of Byron's *Manfred*—or again, the progressive-conservatism of *Waverley*—are each of them offered as oxymoronic representations of the age's consciousness of itself. From this confident fiction of epochal self-consciousness derives what Shelley called the 'didacticism' of such programs; it is what Keats, working out of Hazlitt, called the sense of 'palpable design' (*LJK*, 1:224). Shelley persistently fostered a generous suspicion of this claim of an individual will to represent the general will, even (indeed, especially) for those among

general public's engagement in producing socially influential discourses rather than an individual poet's one-sided address to readers when he explains how poetry speaks to people.

Despite Shelley's emphasis of a collective aspect of poetic creation, however, it should be noted that he never discards a belief in an individual poet's power to make a meaningful difference to the world. For Shelley, "a common influence" to which a poet is inevitably subject does not mean an external condition that coercively determines his or her poetic creation, but a discursive field to whose formation a poet's individual will can meaningfully conduce; therefore, a poet's act of creation in itself contributes to the formation of this common influence, and the poet him/herself becomes "the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded." And from this belief in an individual effort to effectuate the public good with poetry, Shelley can validate the public significance of his own poetic practice, while conceding its limited role in giving rise to an age's leading discourse by which to practice moral, political ideals. For Shelley, in this sense, a poet's act of creating poetry functions both as an agent and a product of a public discourse.

This double function of poets' practice in forming a public discourse is more clearly enunciated in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound*. Explaining how both internal powers of an individual poet and external influences on him/her contribute to a poetic

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his contemporaries whom he regards as possessed of greatest genius" (*England in 1819* 193).

creation, Shelley offers a definition of poet which encompasses these antipodal elements existing within a poetic creation. He says,

> A poet, is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is in this respect modified by all the objects of nature and art, by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are in one sense the creators and in another creations of their age. (*Poetry and Prose* 135)

As Shelley compellingly argues here, a poet's role in a society, despite his/her special capacity to "modify the nature of others" with "internal powers" given by poetic writing, is not different from that of other producers of culture (e.g., "philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians"), since his/her mind (and "Every man's mind) is completely open to publicly operated cultural practices (i.e., "all the objects of nature and art," "every word and every suggestion"), and thus "one form" created by one cultural producer is a cultural product of a mind in which "all forms" belonging to an age are reflected. More simply put, by placing a poet's act of writing poetry in a public operation of various cultural practices, Shelley suggests that a poet is after all a participant in a cultural public sphere formed in a specific age where an individual cultural action shapes

and is shaped by a working of cultural circulations.[21] And that Shelley in the two

prefaces frequently mentions other poets (both predecessors and contemporaries),

reviewers, and prose writers on politics, economics, and metaphysics in order to explain

the principle of his poetic writing attests to the extent to which his own writing itself

represents and embodies this working of cultural circulations.

This public sphere assumed in the two prefaces, however, is not confined to

circulations and interactions of cultural practices. An ideal poet suggested by Shelley's

notion of poetry in these prefaces is less a man of culture who contemplatively

appreciates and delivers a beauty of nature and art than a man in pursuit of achieving the

public good for the world, and this aim of a poet toward an engagement in public affairs

is closely aligned with the Hunt circle's notion of literature which endorses an

engagement in politics as an essential part of literary practice. Hence, Shelley's strong

contention of poets' public mission as political activists, suggested in the part of his

assessment of contemporary politics in the first chapter of *A Philosophical View of

Reform*, is repeated almost verbatim in his most comprehensive and ambitious writing

for vindicating the role of poetry in the world, *A Defence of Poetry*. This part, which

elucidates the nature of poets, is obviously linked to the points on the same issue

suggested in the aforementioned two prefaces, in that it defines a required quality of poet,

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[21] On the issue of how Shelley positions his act of writing in terms of a public working of cultural circulations, Hugh Roberts comments that "Shelley repeatedly urges the reader to see his texts as existing within a noisy pre-existing universe of circulating poems, stories, manuscripts and even newspaper accounts, which inevitably shape his own writing, and the reader's potential responses to that writing" (196).

"a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit," as "less their spirit than the spirit of the age" (*Poetry and Prose* 508); that is, it makes explicit that poets' practice does not lie in poets' individual will but in a public sphere in which they are participating, as do the two prefaces.

This part, however, goes beyond this consistently sustained point by presenting another definition of poets—i.e., the famous phrase "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (508). Here the word "legislators" strongly suggests that poets' practice bears a political connotation. By this word, what poets do to the world is solemnly heightened from a liberal address on public affairs to a normative practice of giving laws by which standards for righteousness in the world are assessed and ultimately enforced for the good of the people. This connotation obviously takes on the feature of practical politics. Just as the two "Hermit of Marlow" pamphlets aim to effectuate a legislative action (say, parliamentary reform), this definition of poets as legislators aligns Shelley's poetic statements with political actions which would provide normative rules for fulfilling political justice. In this sense, the political public sphere embodied in the writings of the two pamphlets and the literary public sphere assumed in Shelley's poetic writings can be unified in this definition of poets as legislators, and with this unified public sphere that encompasses all cultural, political practices Shelley identifies his notion of ideal publicity.

Besides this connotation of the word legislators, the word "unacknowledged" also bears a significant meaning. In fact, the word "unacknowledged" is oxymoronically

connected to the word "legislators," since "unacknowledged" seems to highlight an aspect of poets as solitary recluses in contrast to the obviously public term "legislators." Considered from Shelley's repeated point that poets' internal mind is a mirror of all the public elements of a society that they belong to, however, "unacknowledged" should be interpreted as signifying less poets' solitary state or their alienated position than a public character of their internal mind unknown to themselves; that is, the publicity inherent in their seemingly individual practices of poetic writing is unacknowledged by themselves, and the acknowledgement of this inevitable publicity can be completed only by the corresponding responses of the people who participate in the public sphere that they belong to. Given this meaning of "unacknowledged," then, the phrase "unacknowledged legislators" perfectly makes sense. Moreover, through the word "unacknowledged," poets' legislative activity, which may imply their superior position as belonging to the enlightened elite class, is properly qualified as a practice open to and even depending on the participation of the general public including working-class people. That is, as Keach compellingly contends, "Shelley's writing may need and appeal to cultural knowledge and skills generally found 'among the higher orders,' but his political vision depends upon the eruption of volcanic forces from below that enter human existence in ways that cannot be confined to established practices of refinement and taste" ("Political Poet" 132). In brief, the notion of publicity proposed and embodied in both of Shelley's political and poetic writings is predicated on his ideal (and practical in many cases) aim

toward a realization of a public sphere that espouses free circulations of various

positions and embraces voices of people from all the classes.

3. The Failure of Shelley's Ideal Public Sphere: Two Receptions of Shelley's Writings

Shelley's ambitious project of creating an inclusive and open public sphere of

politics and culture both in writings and realities, however, found no place for its

fulfillment in post-Napoleonic print culture and politics. On the one hand, the circulation

and sale of Shelley's writings were strikingly low in most cases, thus attracting too small

a number of readers to bring about a formation of any type of public sphere. On the other

hand, in most times when significant social, political events (especially the Peterloo

Massacre) took place, Shelley was staying abroad and thus could not effectively control

the publications of his writings. Moreover, the radical ideas manifested in Shelley's

writings made it hard for any publishers to publish them due to the government's

frequent prosecutions of printing materials for libel.[22] Given these difficult situations

that faced Shelley's project for the public, it is appropriate to say that he was simply

deprived of any material means by which to address the public.

Besides these unfavorable material conditions in which Shelley's writing practice

was situated, the failure of Shelley's project of creating an inclusive and open public

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[22] For a detailed historical account of the publications of Shelley's works in this period, see Charles Robinson, "Percy Bysshe Shelley, Charles Ollier, and William Blackwood: The Contexts of Early Nineteenth-Century Publishing" 186-208.

sphere can be more aptly understood by tracing two typical ways in which Shelley's

writings were received by his contemporaries. The first tendency of receiving Shelley's

works came mostly from literary intellectuals (both liberals and conservatives) in the

form of reviews or literary essays. As already discussed in other chapters, Tory

reviewers' assessment of the Hunt circle's literary productions was generally

unfavorable both in terms of their style and implied political ideas, and the critical

reception of Shelley's works by these reviewers was not an exception to this adverse

assessment. To be sure, there were some exceptions to this tendency. Surprisingly,

Lockhart, who wrote several notoriously condemnatory reviews on the "Cockney school

of poetry," approves Shelley's "qualities of a powerful and vigorous intellect"

manifested in *The Revolt of Islam* and "very extraordinary powers of language and

imagination in his treatment of the allegory [of *Prometheus Unbound*]" in his reviews on

The Revolt of Islam and *Prometheus Unbound* for *Blackwood's* (Barcus 116, 237). These

favorable responses from Lockhart, nevertheless, are confined to literary styles and

techniques (he is critical of Shelley's political ideas); more significantly, this

conciliatory gesture toward Shelley was related to the fact that Shelley belonged to the

decent gentry class unlike Hunt and Keats. Rather, it is most appropriate to say that

critical debates surrounding Shelley's works were practiced in the context of the long-

lasting animosity between liberals and conservatives, and his political, social ideas were

disregarded as dangerously radical or impracticably idealistic in most cases.[23]

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[23] For a detailed account of the critical reception of Shelley's works by his

These critical disregards for Shelley's writings appeared even within the Hunt circle. In a *Table-Talk* essay, "On Paradox and Common-Place," Hazlitt includes an impressive portrait of Shelley:

> The author of the *Prometheus Unbound* . . . has a fire in his eyes, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic. . . . He is clogged by no dull system of realities, no earth-bound feelings, no rooted prejudices, by nothing that belongs to the mighty trunk and hard husk of nature and habit, but is drawn up by irresistible levity to the regions of mere speculation and fancy, to the sphere of air and fire, where his delighted spirit floats in 'seas of pearl and clouds of amber.'. . . he puts every thing into a metaphysical crucible to judge of it himself and exhibit it to others as a subject of interesting experiment, without first making it over to the ordeal of his common sense or trying it on his heart. . . . It would seem that he wished not so much to convince or inform as to shock the public by the tenor of his productions, but I suspect he is more intent upon startling himself with his electrical experiments in morals and philosophy . . . . (8: 148-9)

Here Hazlitt's assessment of Shelley's literary practice generally corresponds to what contemporary reviewers criticize Shelley about, although Hazlitt does not direct his

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contemporaries, see James E. Barcus, ed, introduction, *Shelley: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1975) 1-37.

critical points toward Shelley's political, social ideas as do those reviewers. That is, Hazlitt finds Shelley's literary practice out of place in terms of actual human lives. This portrait, however, points to more than a commonplace characterization of Shelley as an impractical idealist, since the terms that Hazlitt uses here reveal a significant irony inherent in Shelley's writing. The central terms that describe the character of Shelley are "philosophic fanatic," and an explanation of their meaning follows these terms. For Hazlitt, Shelley's writing practice takes on a "philosophic" character, since Shelley in his "speculation and fancy" "puts every thing into a metaphysical crucible" in order to test the notional validity of the objects he is dealing with both to himself and others. Despite the negative connotations implicit in such terms as "speculation," "fancy," and "metaphysical crucible," in other words, Hazlitt admits that Shelley's writing practice aims toward a fulfillment of his sense of righteousness, however erratic this sense may be in terms of solid realities. Hence, Hazlitt considers Shelley "philosophic" in the sense that Shelley pursues something truthful in his own ways. But the problem is, for Hazlitt, that Shelley is a "fanatic." By this term, Hazlitt means the impracticability of Shelley's ideas, and thereby he enumerates several practical things from which Shelley's ideas are detached. Indeed, these practical things that Hazlitt enumerates are suggestive for his critique of Shelley, since they show what Shelley's ideas are lacking in. These listed things are "systems of realities," "earth-bound feelings," "prejudices," "nature and habit," "common sense," and "heart"; that is, Hazlitt, by specifying these practical entities existing in a human society, implies that Shelley's ideas are definitely short of a

realistic ground. Thus, for Hazlitt, Shelley's way of addressing the public (and even

himself) consists only in shocking them by "his electrical experiments in morals and

philosophy," and this deviation from a general way of communicating ideas causes

Shelley to be a "fanatic."

Given the respective connotations of "philosophic" and "fanatic" in the quoted

portrait of Shelley, it is found that these two terms are ironically related. More

specifically, Hazlitt bases his critique of Shelley on his observation that Shelley's

literary practice aiming for an achievement of righteousness for the public, in fact, does

set aside the realities in which this public is situated. In Hazlitt's perspective, Shelley is

building an ideational world for the public in a place where this public does not exist. As

suggested in the previous discussions, what Shelley attempts to create in the

contemporaneous politics and culture through his writing practice is a public sphere

which includes the public of all the classes. But, as Hazlitt scathingly points out here,

this comprehensive public sphere conceived in Shelley's writing could not reach any

people for its deviation from contemporary realities, and therefore Shelley's literary

project came to fall under the term "fanatic" by one of the Hunt circle members. This

reception of Shelley as a philosophic fanatic suggests an important point about the

historical meaning of Shelley's political ideas, since it informs how Shelley's attempt to

create a comprehensive political and cultural public body beyond the conventional class

distinctions was faced with difficulties and finally a failure in the historical context of

the early nineteenth century. Certainly, Shelley's notion of ideal publicity might be said

to be unrealistically ideational, in that it transcends all the existing systems, but in another sense it could be a most realistic approach to the intensified political, social problems of this period, since all those problems derived from the very systems that Shelley tried to get rid of.

Another notable tendency of receiving Shelley's works is found in the responses from working-class people. As is well known, Shelley's writings (especially *Queen Mab*) were extensively circulated and read by working-class people through numerous pirate editions.[24] This wide circulation is mostly due to the fact that Shelley's works include elements of plebeian radicalism and suppose working-class people as potential readers. On the mode of circulation of pirate editions of Shelley's works and their historical significance, Neil Fraistat offers an edifying explanation: "connected to the radical underground and retailed among obscenity, sedition, and blasphemy in inexpensive editions for working-class and artisan readers, Shelley's poetry in general— but especially *Queen Mab*—gained or regained its most transgressive implications. As reproduced by low publishers primarily for 'vulgar' readers, then, the unauthorized or illegitimate Shelley took textual form as an earthbound body with a vengeance, circulating through the culture as a signifier of certain kinds of culturally prohibited knowledge and behavior" ("Shelley Left and Right" 112). In contrast to literary

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[24] For a comprehensive study of literary pirates' mode of production, see Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988). For a specific account of the pirating of Shelley's works, see William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: A Biography of a Family* 512-8.

intellectuals' reception of Shelley as a "philosophic fanatic" who adheres to an

ideational world detached from earth-bound realities, this "unauthorized or illegitimate

Shelley" created through pirate editions disseminated subversive ideas on blatant

realities of low, prohibited culture among politically and culturally alienated people. And

by this reception, Shelley came to act as a heroic political activist for working-class

readers rather than as an impractical idealist.[25]

This mode of reception by working-class people, however, was another digression

from Shelley's notion of ideal publicity, because it gave rise to a consolidated class

consciousness of working-class people rather than an inclusive public sphere open to all

the classes. Although the radical Shelley conceived by working-class people's reception

contributed to regenerating an aspect of Shelley as political activist, the unified public

that Shelley would create in contemporary politics and culture was displaced by this new

political vision of working-class people which located political legitimacy in class

division and conflicts. The Chartists' championing of Shelley as their predecessor

succeeded to this plebeian mode of reception of Shelley in the mid-nineteenth century,

and this tendency has persisted up to the present, as shown in Paul Foot's study on

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[25] This mode of reception of Shelley was frequently criticized by writers of the established culture, and along with these criticisms, the sale of pirate editions decreased in quite a degree. On this failure of pirate editions, for example, Derwent Coleridge contends that Shelley's works "have no charm for the ignorant or half-informed [as] is proved their narrow sale, notwithstanding all the arts of low and venal publishers. They are indeed addressed to the highest order of readers, to whom the nature both of the thoughts and the diction confines them, much more effectually than a learned or even a technical language" (195).

Shelley's radicalism.[26] As observed in those two main receptions of Shelley, Shelley's

desire to address the general public and effectuate a political, cultural public sphere that

embraces all the people was either sneeringly disregarded as impracticable or misused

(both intentionally and unintentionally) for furthering class conflicts. And this failure of

Shelley's project highlights the extent to which the most comprehensive and progressive

political ideas coming from the Hunt circle's public activities were inevitably

misunderstood and distorted in the contemporaneous political and cultural scene.

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[26] Paul Foot from his own working-class perspective tries to see Shelley as a principled socialist leftist unlike other critics of Shelley's politics (Dawson and Scrivener, for example). See, specifically, Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980) 160-91.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE HUNT CIRCLE AND MARY

SHELLEY'S RETROSPECTIVE WRITINGS ON THE HUNT CIRCLE

The Hunt circle's engagement with contemporary politics and print culture

reached its peak in 1819 and 1820 when the Peterloo Massacre obviously exposed the

corruption and iniquity of the Tory government, and thus most of the liberal/radical

reformers found the most opportune time for parliamentary reform. Leigh Hunt and

William Hazlitt issued a series of political essays which attacked reactionary policies of

the government in liberal/radical periodicals (e.g., *The Examiner*, *The Champion*, *The*

Yellow Dwarf, etc.), and Percy Bysshe Shelley's and John Keats's literary works, which

include critical reflections on contemporary politics and culture, were written most

prolifically in this period. Despite this intense degree to which the Hunt circle members

engaged themselves in contemporary realities, however, the effects of their writing

practices were not so consequential as to bring about tangible changes in the established

order of politics and culture. Most of the political and cultural contentions suggested in

the Hunt circle members' writings were not seriously considered by their contemporaries

to provide effective alternative solutions to the problems that the established order

exposed, since conservative writers' strenuous attacks on these contentions made their

writings seem ideologically biased; consequently, the intellectual practice of the Hunt

circle came to be understood as a manifestation of factitious partisanship, not of a

disinterested pursuit of the public good.[1] Furthermore, in most cases the Hunt circle

members' writings did not succeed in attracting the reading public enough to make a

significant difference to contemporary realities, and some members (especially, Shelley)

frequently had a hard time even finding a chance to publish their writings. The peak of

the Hunt circle's activities for realizing the public good did not lead to consequential

effects in contemporary politics and culture, and soon the Hunt circle faced a phase of

disintegration.

The disintegration of the Hunt circle took place in the form of Hunt's leaving for

Italy and most importantly a series of deaths of key members. After Keats acquired an

improved reputation resulting from a moderate success of the *Lamia* volume, he sailed

for Italy in September 1820 and died in February 1821. Hunt, in the middle of financial

strains caused by the stark decrease of the sale of the *Examiner*, left for Italy to join the

project of launching a periodical (i.e., *The Liberal*) with Byron and Shelley in November

1821. But Shelley was drowned just one week after Hunt met him in June 1822. Hunt's

and Byron's co-work for publishing the *Liberal* was terminated after issuing only four

numbers, resulting in an estrangement between them. Byron died in April 1824 while he

participated in the movement for Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire. Key

members' absence from the cultural scene of contemporary Britain and the subsequent

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[1] The most typical example of this characterization of the Hunt circle as a factitious party
is John Lockhart's term "the Cockney school of poetry" employed in his reviews for
Blackwood's. By this term, Lockhart achieved an effect of making the Hunt circle seem
not only ideologically biased in its views of politics and culture but unrefined and
parochial in terms of intellectual capacity.

deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron transformed the Hunt circle's activities into

memories, and these memories came to take a material form by a series of publications

of memoirs, biographies, and poetry collections to the memory of the now deceased

members. From this point on, the significance of the Hunt circle did not lie in how its

members were engaged with contemporary politics and culture but in how their past

activities were recollected and assessed through a series of retrospective writings,

although many of them (including Hunt himself) were still alive.[2] In this sense, the ideal

publicity that the Hunt circle attempted to embody in the context of post-Napoleonic

politics and culture became not so much a feasible principle for realizing the public good

as a past intellectual experiment about which only a critical assessment could be made

from a retrospective perspective. The disintegration of the Hunt circle caused by the

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[2] For example, in an article for *Monthly Repository* written in October 1837, Hunt refers to the past activities of his circle surrounding the *Examiner* in order to justify his present political position. Here Hunt says in retrospective terms on the significance of the *Examiner*, "It [the *Examiner*] was the Robin Hood of its cause, plunder excepted; and by the gaiety of its daring, its love of the green places of poetry, and its sympathy with all who needed sympathy, produced many a brother champion that beat it at its own weapons. Hazlitt, in its own pages, first made the public sensible of his great powers. There Keats and Shelley were first made known to the lovers of the beautiful. There Charles Lamb occasionally put forth a piece of criticism, worth twenty of the editor's, though a value was found in those also; and there we had the pleasure of reading the other day one of the earliest addresses to the public of a great man, who, with a hand mighty with justice, has succeeded in lifting up a nation into the equal atmosphere, which all have a right to breathe,—Daniel O'Connell. Let no friend, who ever mentions our having suffered for a 'libel' (a word we hate) on the Prince Regent, forget to add, that it was occasioned by the warmth of our sympathy with that nation, and our anger at seeing the Prince break his promises with it" (*Political and Occasional Essays* 376-7). Despite Hunt's vivid description of his circle's activities surrounding the *Examiner*, however, the way in which he uses these activities in this article is confined to suggesting them as glorious memories.

three key members' deaths, indeed, accompanied the demise of all the practical public

implications that the Hunt circle's activities bore for contemporaries.

Given this process of the Hunt circle's disintegration, it might be meaningful to

look over the ways in which retrospective writings on the Hunt circle recollected and

assessed its members' activities, since these retrospective writings, after all, came to

serve as a post-phase of the Hunt circle's public practices. More specifically, when the

Hunt circle's immediate practices for the public were no more possible, the Hunt circle's

significance for the public could not but be left to these retrospective writings, which

ultimately attest to how the Hunt circle functioned in a later political, cultural public

sphere. Among various retrospective writings on the Hunt circle, this chapter will focus

on Mary Shelley's writings—specifically, *The Last Man*, Preface to *Posthumous Poems*

of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Preface to *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*.

Shelley's writings include significant elements by which to highlight how the Hunt

circle's notion of ideal publicity functioned in the Victorian period, and these elements

are related to her special position toward the Hunt circle (especially, her husband Percy

Shelley). On the one hand, Shelley was a consistent witness to all the public and private

activities of the Hunt circle during the time of its active engagement with contemporary

politics and culture; she even participated in these activities by writing her first novel

Frankenstein. On the other hand, Shelley from the outset distanced herself from the Hunt

circle's liberal/radical ideas on politics and culture, and thus she served the Hunt circle

as a critical observer rather than as an active participant; moreover, her sense of

difference from the Hunt circle was furthered by her female identity. Shelley's
ambivalent position toward the Hunt circle made her vacillate between an insider and an
outsider; therefore, while continuing to revive the Hunt circle's achievements for the
public of the Victorian period, Shelley ceaselessly revealed a critical attitude toward the
Hunt circle's public practices at the same time. Given this unique position that Shelley
assumed in relation to the Hunt circle, this chapter will examine how her retrospective
writings on the Hunt circle reconstruct (or deconstruct) its members' political, cultural
practices for the public and how this re/deconstruction inflects the Hunt circle's notion
of ideal publicity.

1. Mary Shelley's Privatization of the Hunt Circle's Public Activities: *The Last Man*

　　Among Shelley's works, *The Last Man* is most directly related to her immediate
recollection of the Hunt circle's public practices, and this relation can be substantiated
by noting her biographical backdrops. Shelley started to write *The Last Man* in the
spring of 1824, when Byron had just died in Greece. During this time of writing *The
Last Man*, Shelley frequently expressed her feeling of solitude or a feeling that only she
was left in the world after a series of deaths of her family members and acquaintances,
and, as many critics point out, this novel's central motif that a man has come to be left
alone in the world is based on this feeling of solitude and loss that Shelley had at this

time.[3] Indeed, Shelley herself mentioned the direct connection between her feeling of solitude and *The Last Man*. In Shelley's journal for 14 May 1824, she says, "The last man! Yes I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself as the relic of a beloved race, my companions, extinct before me" (*Journals* 2: 476-7). Here Shelley identifies herself with the last man in the novel, Lionel Verney, in that both have lost all the fellow beings, and this identification highlights the extent to which Shelley's personal feelings permeate her writing of *The Last Man*. Shelley's characterization of herself as "the relic of a beloved race, [her] companions," however, implies more than that her life experiences and feelings serve as material sources of this novel. In fact, by presenting herself as "the relic" of the group to which she belonged (which was possibly identified as the Hunt circle for contemporaries), Shelley attempts to claim to herself an authority for narrating the story of this group. And by claiming this authority, Shelley suggests that she is a legitimate successor of the Hunt circle, and thereby that her writing of *The Last Man* is an attempt to regenerate the Hunt circle's public significance in the changed cultural context.

Due to this biographical element which serves as a seminal ground of *The Last Man*'s composition, this novel takes on the feature of a *roman a clef* in which Shelley projects Percy Shelley and Byron in the characters of Adrian, Earl of Windsor, and of Lord Raymond. In many respects, Shelley's description of these two characters discloses

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[3] See, for example, Morton D. Paley, "The Last Man: Apocalypse without Millennium," *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. Audrey Fisch, Anne Mellor and Esther Schor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 109.

her desire to ideally present for the public the two men who were most dear to her. First, Shelley idealizes the personal character of Percy Shelley through Adrian.

> His [Adrian's] vivacity, intelligence, and active spirit of benevolence, completed the conquest [of Verney's heart]. . . . he was deep read and imbued with the spirit of high philosophy. This spirit gave a tone of irresistible persuasion to his intercourse with others, so that he seemed like an inspired musician, who struck, with unerring skill, the "lyre of mind," and produced thence divine harmony. In person, he hardly appeared of this world; his slight frame was overinformed by the soul that dwelt within; he was all mind . . . (26-7)

Here Adrian is lovingly portrayed as possessing desirable human qualities, and these qualities include not only natural goodness but an extensive intellectual capacity. This intellectual capacity immanent in Adrian's character forms a rare spiritual faculty, which "gave a tone of irresistible persuasion to his intercourse with others." Hence, the strength of Adrian's character is depicted as consisting in his ability to make a sympathetic communication with others. This ability of communication has much to do with a writer's practice, and thus Adrian's link to Percy Shelley as a writer can be easily traced here. Moreover, in a later part of this novel, this strength of Adrian's character makes him engage in several public practices. He disinterestedly supports a system of republican government despite his royal lineage and courageously fights for the cause of freedom by participating in the Greek people's war against their Turkish oppressors. He

never takes advantage of his position as Earl of Windsor for gaining political power, and his final decision to take the position of Lord Protector is made only for a purpose to "sacrifice himself for the public good" in a time when the fatal plague devastates the whole parts of England (251). That is, Adrian devotes himself to realizing the public good in the world, as Percy Shelley did. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Percy Shelley failed to exert any influence on the public by his writing practice; in this sense, Adrian is an idealized character who vicariously fulfills what Percy Shelley attempted to achieve.

Shelley's description of Lord Raymond, a character based on Byron, also exhibits this tendency of idealization. In terms of personal qualities, Raymond is not so ideally described as Adrian; rather, his character is opposite to Adrian's in many respects. He is proud and ambitious; he is willing to use all the possible means in order to achieve his personal ambition. Besides, he is excessively passionate in terms of love and sexual desire. This is a portrait of a man with worldly desires, and Shelley models these qualities on the real character of Byron. Despite these personal weaknesses modeled on Byron's real character, however, Shelley's idealization of Byron is obviously revealed in her description of Raymond's public activities. Unlike Byron, who retreated from the political and cultural scene of Britain due to his personal scandals and died in the Greek War of Independence without any achievement, Raymond attains a spectacular success both in his political career and the military campaign in Constantinople. In addition, although Raymond's political aim is to restore the British monarchy against the

republican system, his rule over Britain contributes to improving people's lives, and his

military campaign results in liberating the oppressed Greek people. Through this novel,

Shelley resuscitates Byron as a man of action who effectively performs his task in a

political public sphere.

Given this aspect of *The Last Man* as a *roman a clef*, Shelley's idealization of

Percy Shelley and Byron through the descriptions of Adrian and Raymond can be

interpreted as her attempt to memorialize the past activities of the Hunt circle and restore

their public significance in an imaginary way. In other words, Shelley retrospectively

evokes the ethos of the Hunt circle as a legitimate successor of this group. In terms of

the plot of this novel, however, this memorial evocation of the Hunt circle members'

public activities does not lead to a full accomplishment of the ideals implicit in their

activities. Rather, this novel relentlessly displays a series of failures of various political,

cultural ideals and finally a complete extinction of humankind except the narrator

Verney. Indeed, apart from Adrian's idealistic republicanism and Raymond's practical

monarchism (reminiscent of Bonaparte Napoleon's reign) with which the Hunt circle's

public activities are directly associated, *The Last Man* covers a variety of political

positions which are depicted as competing with each other in the political public sphere

of the novel's setting—e.g., democracy, theocracy, visionary utopianism, and

imperialism, to name a few. Faced with the deadly power that the plague wields upon

humankind, all those positions present themselves as righteous principles by which all

the evils (including the plague itself) will be eliminated and ultimately the public good

will be achieved. None of them, however, can corroborate its validity in the course of historical proceedings, since each practitioner's inexorable display of fear and greed in the face of the plague corrupts and finally annuls all the attempts to effectuate the public good through these principles. To be sure, Adrian's act of committing himself to the rescue of humankind is portrayed as coming from a pure spirit of self-sacrifice, and this act serves as a final buttress of human integrity in the narrator's perspective; however, even this sort of heroic act is destined to fail in the plot of *The Last Man*. Throughout the novel the plague is presented as an impervious and mysterious natural power which any human activities are unable to bring down.

Focusing on the total devastation of the human race by the plague's overwhelming power in *The Last Man*, many critics have interpreted this novel as a critique of political, cultural discourses generated by the French Revolution; they have also suggested that this critique is related to a sense of disillusionment toward revolution and political reform which predominated over quite a number of intellectual discourses in the post-Napoleonic period. For example, Lee Sterrenburg contends that *The Last Man* "can be placed among a number of other post-Napoleonic works of literature and painting which shared analogous themes of the end of the race or the end of empire" (326). According to Sterrenburg, these works include Byron's "Darkness" (1816), Thomas Campbell's "The Last Man" (1823), Thomas Lovell Beddoes's fragmentary play *The Last Man* (1823-5), Thomas Hood's "The Last Man" (1826), and so forth. Aligned with these works that deal with the theme of the end of the human race, Sterrenburg argues, Shelley's *The Last*

Man reflects "the collapse of revolutionary hopes in the years after 1815" in its presentation of disaster visions (326). In a similar critical vein, Anne Mellor argues that *The Last Man* "put[s] forth a particularly devastating critique of the range of political options" which comprise both "[t]he republican ideals of the French Revolution" and "[t]he conservative belief in a divinely ordained monarchy and a hierarchically ordered and gradually evolving social system" (xix).[4] Kari E. Lokke identifies the political options that Shelley criticizes in *The Last Man* as "the radical discourses of Godwin and Wollstonecraft's generation that figure the French Revolution as a purgative disease of the body politic" and "the conservative discourse of Edmund Burke, who asserts the regenerative power of the body politic to fight off the plague of revolution, anarchy, and chaos" (128). Morton D. Paley, by noting that the apocalyptic occurrences appearing in *The Last Man* preclude any possibility of regeneration in the future, contends that this novel "denies the linkage of apocalypse and millennium that had previously been celebrated in some of the great works of the Romantic epoch, perhaps most fully in *Prometheus Unbound*" (110).

Although these critics offer divergent arguments on the issue of what positions Shelley attempts to criticize in her presentation of a story of the end of the human race, they commonly point out that *The Last Man* is a literary representation of Shelley's refusal to endorse the validity of various political, cultural discourses which her contemporaries employed to justify their practices for the public. In other words,

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[4] Anne Mellor, introduction, *The Last Man*, by Mary Shelley, ed. Hugh J. Luke, Jr. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993) vii-xxvi.

Shelley's critique, in the view of these critics, is directed toward public activities themselves, whatever political, cultural position these activities aim at. In this novel, Shelley casts doubt on all the public actions by describing processes in which any attempt to engage with public events comes to be thwarted by the plague's deadly power, even if these actions derive from an individual's unblemished integrity (as shown in the case of Adrian). Hence, Shelley's memorial evocation of Percy Shelley's and Byron's activities in the novel does not accompany her approval of the validity of their activities; rather, her sympathy for the characters modeled on Percy Shelley and Byron is confined to their personal qualities or motives for action. In this sense, it might be appropriate to say that what *The Last Man* represents through the description of the plague's relentless power over the human race is Shelley's feeling of distrust toward any activities aimed at the public.

In *The Last Man*, this feeling of distrust toward public actions is most dramatically represented in Verney's act of writing the dedication of his book about the human race's extinction to dead people. After losing his last two companions (i.e., Adrian and Clara), Verney settles in Rome and decides to write a book.

> I also will write a book, I cried—for whom to read?—to whom dedicated? And then with silly flourish (what so capricious and childish as despair?) I wrote,
>
> DEDICATION
>
> TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD.

SHADOWS, ARISE, AND READ YOUR FALL!

BEHOLD THE HISTORY OF THE

LAST MAN. (466)

Writing is a representative public activity. It usually requires an existence of the reading

public and a cultural context from which a writer derives sources of his/her writing. And

values of a written material come from interactions between a writer and readers.

Moreover, the Hunt circle's public practices in print culture were founded on a belief in

this public function of writing. But Verney is deprived of all these basic assumptions of

writing; he is the only survivor of humankind and thus has no single reader to interact

with. Still, he keeps on writing by imagining that dead people will be readers of his book.

Here, this act of writing for "the illustrious dead" bears a significant implication, since it

means that Verney's writing is no more a communicative practice for the public. Now,

Verney's book is written only for its own sake and functions as a historical monument.

Verney himself mentions that his book will function as a monument: "I will write and

leave in this most ancient city, this 'world's sole monument,' a record of these things. I

will leave a monument of the existence of Verney, the Last Man" (466). Verney, in other

words, builds the last and sole monument of the world out of his own writing practice in

one of the most monumental cities in the world. And from this monumentalization of

writing practice in *The Last Man*, Shelley reveals her distrust of a traditional function of

the writer as speaking to or influencing the public, thus once more confining her

sympathetic memorialization of the Hunt circle members not to their public practices but

to their personal integrity, as shown in her description of Verney's adamant will to proceed with his writing in the face of the reality that no reader exists in the world.[5]

Despite this distrust of the function of writing in a public sphere revealed in *The Last Man*, however, it cannot be said that Shelley disavows the validity of writing itself, since Verney's act of writing a book is in some sense sanctified as a final representation of human integrity, and furthermore the whole story of this novel itself is presented as a product of Verney's writing practice. Then, what does Shelley suggest on the issue of the function of writing? An answer to this question can be traced in the novel's introduction. In the introduction, an imaginary author (a disguised figure of Shelley herself) explains how s/he acquires a feeling of consolation in the middle of transcribing a story of human extinction.

> My labours have cheered long hours of solitude, and taken me out of a world . . . to one glowing with imagination and power. Will my readers ask how I could find solace from the narration of misery and woeful change? . . . I confess . . . that I have been depressed, nay, agonized, at some parts of the recital, which I have faithfully transcribed from my materials. Yet such is human nature, that the excitement of mind was dear to me, and that the imagination, painter of tempest and earthquake, or,

[5] As to the issue of the public function of writing in relation to *The Last Man*, Samantha Webb offers a useful contextual explanation. She says, "[Shelley's] critique [of the ways in which texts can be made to function in society] is certainly located in contemporary debates about the social function of writing; it also proceeds from a sense of alienation from her own audience, surely a uniquely contemporary dilemma for Romantic period authors" (133).

worse, the stormy and ruin-fraught passions of man, softened my real

sorrows and endless regrets, by clothing these fictitious ones in that

ideality, which takes the mortal sting from pain. (7)

In this explanation of how the author's act of writing (or transcribing) affects him/her,

two significant assumptions are found in relation to the issue of writing's function. First,

for the author, a writing practice is not for engaging in a communication with the public

but for inducing his/her mind to react to effects of writing. More specifically, the author

does not focus his/her concern on what sort of content his/her writing should deal with,

to whom s/he should speak, and in what way his/her writing should affect the reader, as

writings for communication usually do. Rather, his/her concern is concentrated on the

way in which his/her writing practice gives rise to a spiritual redemption in a private

manner. This is an obvious inversion of what the Hunt circle members aimed at in their

writing practices. Shelley here places the function of writing in a private sphere, thus

rendering the publicity implicit in a writing practice superfluous.

Second, the author engages not in writing a story of his/her own creating but in

transcribing a story written by another person. According to the explanation of the

introduction, the author, during a trip to the Sybil's Cave, happens to find some materials

which Verney originally wrote (or will write) after two centuries, but which have been

delivered to the author in a mysterious way. This setting in which this novel comes to be

initiated, indeed, makes a significant difference to the author's attitude toward his/her

writing. Although the story of the novel is about fatal tribulations effected on the human

race, the author (and also the potential reader) can be safely distanced from these events, and thereby the author's novel functions not as a story of immediately lived experiences or at least an allusion to these experiences but as an artifact which invites both the author and the reader to soften his/her "real sorrows and endless regrets by clothing these fictitious [disasters] in that ideality." *The Last Man* includes a variety of allusions to contemporary occurrences, as previously mentioned; however, the presentness of these allusions comes to be displaced into a state of fictitious narratives harmlessly contained in an artifact by the setting in which the author transcribes a story of the distant future rather than writes a story about his/her own world. And more importantly, this setting reduces the public workings of the author's writing practice to a private act of reconstructing and appreciating an artifact, thus making the product of his/her writing a personal monument.

2. The Inflected Reception of the Hunt Circle's Publicity in the Victorian Period: Mary Shelley's Editorial Works

As discussed thus far, by questioning the ways in which any practices aimed at the public (including writings for communication) work in a public sphere, Shelley construes her own writing itself as an artifact whose values are located in its use for private purposes, rather than as a practice for promoting the public good at which the Hunt circle aimed in the past. Hence, through Shelley's memorialization of the Hunt circle members in *The Last Man*, their activities become historical monuments which

readers can appreciate in a private sphere, and consequently all their public connotations come to be critically explained away or just forgotten.

This tendency of displacing the publicity implicit in the Hunt circle's activities into a monumental artifact functioning in a private sphere appears more prominently in Shelley's editorial practices. Throughout her literary career, Shelley edited three books, all of which are collections of Percy Shelley's works.[6] As Shelley frequently reveals in her letters and journals, the basic motive of Shelley's editing her husband's works is her personal affection toward him. For example, in a letter of 27 August 1822 written to Maria Gisborne, Shelley expresses how proud she is of having been Percy Shelley's wife and how she is "alive with unutterable anguish" due to his absence, and then says, "I can conceive but of one circumstance that could afford me the semblance of content—that is the being permitted to live where I am now in the same house, in the same state, occupied alone with my child, in collecting His [Percy Shelley's] manuscripts—writing his life, and thus to go easily to my grave" (*Letters* 1: 252). Considering the fact that Shelley's work of "collecting His manuscripts" and "writing his life" came to lead directly to the publication of *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (below *Posthumous Poems*) in 1824, this statement attests to the extent to which Shelley's personal feelings affect her editorial practice. Likewise, in a journal of 3 September 1824, Shelley says, "I write—at times that pleases me—tho' double sorrow comes when I feel

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[6] These three books are *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1824), *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1839), and *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments. By Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1840).

that Shelley no longer reads & approves of what I write—besides I have no longer faith

in my success" (*Journals* 2: 482-3). Here Shelley construes her memory of Percy

Shelley as the sole ground of validating her own writing practice by assuming that Percy

Shelley should be the only authoritative reader of her works. Besides, Shelley even

intimates that the success of her literary career cannot be guaranteed without this sort of

affective tie to Percy Shelley. That is, Shelley from the outset foregrounds her personal

tie to and her affective memory of Percy Shelley as a basis of her editorial and writing

practices.

Given this foregrounding of personal feelings in her editorial and writing practices,

it is quite understandable that in the poetry collections of Percy Shelley that Shelley edits,

she attempts to memorialize Percy Shelley by sanctifying his personal qualities.[7] Both

the prefaces to *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* and *The Poetical Works of*

Percy Bysshe Shelley display how much Shelley's endorsement of Percy Shelley's

poetry depends on his merits as a private person. At first, in both the prefaces, Shelley

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[7] Recently, many feminist critics have attended to this foregrounding of personal feelings shown in female writers of the Romantic period and claimed that this personalistic tendency of literature was the way in which female writers gained cultural hegemony in early nineteenth-century public spheres. For more detailed discussions of female writers' cultural practice and its historical significance in the early nineteenth century, see, for example, Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988); Marlon B. Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989); Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley, eds., *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices* (Hanover: UP of New England, 1995); Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000); Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000); and Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

praises Percy Shelley in terms of his natural goodness. In the preface to *Posthumous Poems*, Percy Shelley is presented as "the wise, the brave, the gentle" and "a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford" (*Selected Works* 2: 238). In a similar vein, Percy Shelley is portrayed as having "a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection, and helpful sympathy" (*Selected Works* 2: 255) in the preface to *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (below *Poetical Works*). By these descriptions, Percy Shelley's natural goodness functions as an essential merit which transcends public standards (e.g., "all the realities that society can afford").

After thus consecrating Percy Shelley's merit as an essential one, Shelley continues to exculpate him from his infamous label as a radical. In both the prefaces, Shelley attempts to explain how and why Percy Shelley came to have radical ideas on politics, and in this attempt, Percy Shelley's radical politics are interpreted in a new light. Especially, Shelley's hindsight explanation in the preface to *Poetical Works*, which was published after the first Reform Bill, more explicitly discloses the way in which Shelley intends Percy Shelley's political ideas to be received by the public of the Victorian period. She says,

> Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general
> and unselfish subjects, cannot understand this [Percy Shelley's radical
> ideas on politics]; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the
> younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn

and hatred with which the partizans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He [Percy Shelley] had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. (2: 255-6)

Here Shelley presents two elements as the causes of Percy Shelley's radicalism. First, Percy Shelley has a special kind of mental faculty—i.e., "the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects" or "a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his." This mental faculty is linked to an innate sense of justice, by which Percy Shelley committed himself to "alleviate for others the evils of those systems." Shelley ascribes Percy Shelley's radicalism to his selfless personality which accompanies a natural compassion for others. Second, the condition of the time in which Percy Shelley lived (which can be identified as what Percy Shelley and other Romantic writers call "the spirit of the age") forces him to engage in the cause of the French Revolution (and subsequent radical ideas); that is, the notion of historical determinism here serves as an interpretive frame for Percy Shelley's radicalism. This notion of historical determinism

can quite effectively disarm the later generation's prejudice toward his radicalism, since it not only makes Percy Shelley's past activities seem normal in relation to those of his contemporaries but also mystifies these activities as incomprehensible to those who live in a later period. In other words, Percy Shelley, whose name has been strongly associated with the ethos of radicalism, is redeemed as a victim of history, and thereby his radicalism is cleared of its public connotations that his activities during his lifetime carried for his contemporaries.

This work of consecrating Percy Shelley and his works is intended to promote his reputation as a good poet, but at the same time this work of consecration deprives his poems (and perhaps all his past activities) of the public significance that they assumed in the post-Napoleonic context and the political, cultural ideals that he would realize in his contemporary public sphere. Many critics have attended to the way in which Shelley's editorial works for Percy Shelley's poetry defuse the political bent that Shelley's poetry originally implies. Neil Fraistat, as to *Posthumous Poems*, argues that "After dealing with [Percy] Shelley's politics in only the most general frame of reference, the preface uses a class-coded language of sensibility to stress his refinement, in the process describing his ill health, his elegant scholarship, and his extraordinary emotional responsiveness both to nature and to others" ("Illegitimate Shelley" 411). In a similar perspective, Susan Wolfson, after analyzing Percy Shelley's character portrayed in *Poetical Works*, contends that "In the contours of this mature character of [Percy Shelley], the poet's radical politics could be assigned to the century's passionate

childhood and absorbed into an elegiac, or at least forgiving, reading of that generation"

(202). And commenting on the *Note on Poems of 1819*, Wolfson adds that this *Note*

"tactically runs the political questions into a romance of the spirit of the age" (202). As

these critics reasonably point out, by purifying Percy Shelley's radical politics through

her editorial practices, Shelley reconstructs him as a poet of "a more genuine and

unforced inspiration" and an extreme sensibility that "gave the intensity of passion to his

intellectual pursuits" (*Selected Works* 2: 257). And thereby Percy Shelley's (and

implicitly the Hunt circle's) writing practices come to be embellished (or inflected) as

depoliticized literary practices for creating lyrical poetry.

It is explicit that Shelley deliberately effaces the traces of radical politics in Percy

Shelley's poetry, when we see that the two categories into which Shelley divides Percy

Shelley's poems in *Poetical Works* do not include poems occasioned by political events

or dealing with politically oriented issues. These two categories are composed of "the

purely imaginative [poems], and those which sprung from the emotions of his heart" and

"the more popular [poems], as appealing at once to emotion common to us all" (2: 256).

Both the categories characterize Percy Shelley's poetry as an imaginative expression of

personal emotions, whether these emotions are concerned with his own inner spirits or

with people's general sentiments. These categories, however, imply another significant

point; that is, Shelley here strongly suggests that Percy Shelley's poems involve an

element by which they can successfully appeal to popularly acceptable emotions. This

point is repeatedly emphasized throughout the prefaces to *Posthumous Poems* and

Poetical Works. In fact, suggesting a potential popularity of Percy Shelley's poetry is an important work for an editor who attempts to publish his poetry, especially because he never succeeded in being a popular poet during his lifetime, and thus it was generally accepted that, as Shelley's first category demonstrates, his poems excessively cling to "the subtler inner spirit" or "a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception" (256). Moreover, as Fraistat rightly observes, the burgeoning of pirate editions of Percy Shelley's poetry caused his poems to seem quirky and dangerous in both moral and political terms.[8] Hence, Shelley's emphasis of popular elements is an attempt to relocate Percy Shelley's poetry in a literary market for middle-class readers, and through this attempt his poetry was able to be linked to the general reading public which had never been available for him in his lifetime.[9]

However, the reading public that Shelley's editorial practices secured for Percy Shelley's poems does not coincide with the public which Percy Shelley (and other members of the Hunt circle) originally attempted to address through his (and their) writings; nor does the way in which his poetry was linked to the public by the poetry

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[8] Neil Fraistat, "Illegitimate Shelley: Radical Piracy and the Textual Edition as Cultural Performance" 412-3.

[9] After the circulation of *Posthumous Poems*, Percy Shelley's lyrical pieces started to assume a cultural significance through their inclusion in literary articles, anthologies, musical settings, and critical discussions, and the notes included in *Poetical Works* brought Shelley a general approval from critics, by which both Shelley as editor and Percy Shelley as poet were able to be validated in the literary scene of the Victorian period. For detailed accounts of these two poetry collections' link to the Victorian middle-class reading public, see Karsten Klegs Engelberg, *The Making of the Shelley Myth: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism of Percy Bysshe Shelley 1822-1860* (London: Mansell, 1988) 78; and Susan Wolfson, "Mary Shelley, Editor" 204, 207.

collections that Shelley edited correspond to the ideal publicity that he attempted to embody through his communication with the reading public. First, the reading public at which Shelley aims in her editorial works was confined to the upper and middle classes, as opposed to Percy Shelley's vision of a comprehensive publicity beyond class boundaries. According to Fraistat, the bibliographical codes of Shelley's editorial works (i.e., their material production, their price, and their selection of poems) made clear that the volumes were "designed for consumption by the middle and upper classes" ("Illegitimate Shelley" 412). In addition, a characterization of Percy Shelley as a poet of imagination and personal emotion and an effacement of his political bent from his poetic ideas, both of which Shelley carefully deploys for a reconstruction of Percy Shelley in her editorial works, attest to the extent to which Shelley tries to meet the taste of upper/middle-class readers who became more individualistic and conservative after the passage of the first Reform Bill.

Second, while Percy Shelley pursued a formation of a public sphere where individuals with different positions deliberate given issues without being influenced by any external conditions but their own critical reason, as demonstrated in his writings aiming at public actions, Shelley engaged in the contemporaneous literary public sphere by conforming to the demand of the literary market of the early nineteenth century. As several critics indicate, the literary market of the early nineteenth century was dominated by female writers and readers; this female domination of the literary market, as Mellor argues, was historically embodied in the way in which "the values of the private sphere

associated primarily with women . . . infiltrat[ed] and finally dominat[ed] the discursive

public sphere" of this time (*Mothers of the Nation* 11).[10] In this context, Shelley's mode

of conforming to the demand of the literary market, as Mary Favret points out, is most

explicitly illustrated in her "feminiz[ing] the poet [Percy Shelley] as a beneficent spirit,

her own 'angel in the house,'" since Shelley, in her portrait of "feminized" Percy Shelley,

creates a literary product that fits into the prevalent public taste of the market, and thus

"she can ally herself with that undifferentiated public which threatens to feminize the

poets" (25). More simply put, Shelley through her editorial works launches both Percy

Shelley and his poetry into a new public sphere formed in the female-dominated literary

market by replacing his original notion of publicity with feminized values—i.e., what

Mellor terms "moral virtue and an ethic of care" (*Romanticism and Gender* 11). And

through this process of feminizing (and also commercializing) Percy Shelley and his

poetry, the public ideals that he and other members of the Hunt circle attempted to

achieve in their writing practices come to be subsumed into the traditional notion of

Romanticism.

Shelley's successful editorial works, which finally secured the reading public for

Percy Shelley, ironically confirmed the disintegration not only of the Hunt circle as a

liberal/radical intellectual group but of the ideal publicity that its members would realize

in the contemporaneous political, cultural scene. But this final failure of the Hunt circle's

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[10] For more historical accounts of women's domination of the early nineteenth-century literary market, see, for example, Stuart Curran, "Romantic Poetry: The I Altered," *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988) 185-207; and Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000) 1-12.

political, cultural ideals for the public does not necessarily mean that its members'

activities have completely lost their validity in the ensuing processes of history, because

this failure itself functions both as an agent and a product of history in action.[11]

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[11] In this sense, the oppositional voice of the Hunt circle members can sustain practical
validity as an intellectual critique of dominant culture even in the present time, because
their cultural critique mobilized in historical practice, despite their failure, cannot be
completely contained in the ensuing modes of dominant culture, and thus the site of
resistance remains active through its interaction with ongoing history. As to this point,
Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* provides a suggestive insight: "no mode
of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture
ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human
intention. This is not merely a negative proposition, allowing us to account for
significant things which happen outside or against the dominant mode. On the contrary,
it is a fact about the modes of domination, that they select from and consequently
exclude the full range of human practice" (125).

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