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**Aims and Scope:** Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is a twice-yearly journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality, and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists, and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. As of Issue 15 (Winter 2005), *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality, and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

# ‘WOULD THAT ITS TONE COULD REACH THE RICH!’

Thomas Hood’s Periodical Poetry  
bridging Romantic and Victorian

*Peter Simonsen*



THOMAS HOOD’S VERSATILE CAREER SPANS THE YEARS from the early 1820s until he died of consumption and overwork in March 1845. At various stages, he worked as engraver and illustrator, reviewer, editor, publisher, playwright, novelist, and short-story writer, but it is his large body of poetry in particular that still merits sustained critical attention. Yet, the productive period in Hood’s poetic career coincided with what both his contemporaries and literary historians since have seen as a transitional ‘interregnum’, characterised by the absence of strong creative poets and the demise of the art under commercial pressure. When William Michael Rossetti in 1872 famously characterised Hood as ‘the finest English poet between the generation of Shelley and the generation of Tennyson’, he was therefore not necessarily saying too much.<sup>1</sup> In a lecture on ‘The Present State of Literature’ (1827), John Stuart Mill expressed a common perception, which Byron’s death in 1824 had crystallised:

No new poets have arisen or seem likely to arise to succeed those who have gone off the stage or speedily will [...] I am not sure that I am able to assign any cause of our being thus left without poets, as it seems probable that we soon shall be.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, even if they were unnoticed and unexpected by Mill, certain poets did write in the immediate wake of the second-generation Romantics, and increasing critical interest has in recent years been given to the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>3</sup> Hood’s poetry nonetheless remains neglected—even as it calls out for critical attention to complete further the picture that is emerging of the interface between the Romantic and Victorian periods as a fertile place of creative transformation. Hood played an important role in the formation of the characteristic early-Victorian interventionist poetry of public, social protest. This type of poetry may also be found in the writings of such Chartist poets as Thomas Cooper and Ebenezer Elliott, and in the works of Letitia Elizabeth Landon (‘The Factory’, 1838), Caroline Norton (‘The Weaver’, 1840), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (‘The Cry of the Children’, 1843). What Hood has to offer in comparison is an understanding of how the emergence of this poetry was

conditioned not only by issues such as class and gender, but more generally by the commercialisation of poetry that occurred in the periodicals and which dominated the literary marketplace of the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>4</sup>

Hood's poetry must be approached in its own terms rather than terms informed by High-Romantic ideals of solitary genius, quasi-divine inspiration, disinterested spontaneous creativity, organic form, and transcendent aspirations for 'something evermore about to be'. The terms in which to understand and by which to evaluate Hood and other poets of the period (such as Landon, Felicia Hemans, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, and Edgar Allan Poe), were set by the popular literary periodicals for which most of his work was written. A periodical culture had been present in Britain since at least the late seventeenth century, but it was arguably not until the appearance of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1817 that the periodical format became a decisive factor in literary history. As Kim Wheatly puts it, with *Blackwood's* a notable 'heightening of the literary pretensions of the miscellaneous magazine' set in.<sup>5</sup> Soon, a distinctive, fiercely competitive, and financially lucrative market for literary periodicals emerged in the 1820s and beyond, as a broad range of often short-lived journals mushroomed to attract and spur the productivity of some of the most talented writers of the day.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout his career, Hood was an omnipresent and dominant figure in the periodical marketplace. His experiences as a professional periodical writer shaped both his poetry and his poetics in ways that combined to make him a significant Victorian 'forerunner'—as John Clubbe has shown in what remains the most thorough critical reevaluation of Hood's life and work.<sup>7</sup> Clubbe focuses his investigation on Hood's last decade, relating it to the poet's mental breakdown in 1834/35. For Clubbe, this explains what enabled Hood's humanitarian poetry of social protest, which legitimises our continued interest in his work. This essay sets out to revise Clubbe's psychological reading of Hood's career by arguing in a more materialist manner that we must begin with Hood's experiences as a professional man of letters from the early 1820s onwards. This may suggest not only what caused the breakdown itself, but more importantly it will provide a better account of what gave Hood special insight into the inhuman social conditions of exploitation in late-Romantic/early-Victorian England. Finally and most importantly, it can explain what gave Hood the unique style of writing that enabled him to articulate this insight in the influential protest-poem, 'The Song of the Shirt' (1843).

## I

Thomas Hood entered the periodical marketplace in 1821 as a contributing sub-editor for one of the most famous literary periodicals in the first half of the nineteenth century, the *London Magazine*. He ended his career as the editor of *Hood's Monthly Magazine* (1844–45), which numbered Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, and Walter Savage Landor among its contributors. He had

been part-owner of the *Athenaeum*, edited the *New Monthly Magazine* (1841–43), produced ten *Comic Annuals* of his own (1830–39), and had edited the annual *The Gem* (1829–32), securing contributions from, among others, Walter Scott, John Keats, John Clare, Charles Lamb, and Alfred Tennyson. In his *Literary Reminiscences*, issued serially in the monthly *Hood's Own* in 1838, Hood described his years at the *London Magazine* (July 1821–June 1823) in glowing terms: 'I dreamt articles, thought articles, wrote articles [...]. The more irksome parts of authorship, such as the correction of the press, were to me labours of love'.<sup>8</sup> As James Reid has put it, this was the 'turning point of Hood's life. At twenty-two he found himself plunged into the world of letters and in contact with some of the leading writers of his day. [...] In the new environment, his literary gifts flowered'.<sup>9</sup> In the 1820s, Hood published large quantities of poetry and prose not just in the *London*, but anywhere he could—for instance in the weekly *Literary Gazette*, monthlies such as the *Atlas*, *Blackwood's*, and the *New Monthly*, as well as in the popular illustrated annual gift-books that appeared after 1823, such as *The Forget-Me-Not*, *The Literary Souvenir*, *Friendship's Offering* and, of course, *The Gem*.

Hood subsequently collected most of these periodical poems and published them in book format along with new material: the satirical and humorous *Odes and Addresses to Great People*, co-authored with John Hamilton Reynolds, came out anonymously in 1825 (Coleridge at first believed it was authored by Lamb), and in 1826 and 1827 the two series of *Whims and Oddities in Prose and Verse* were issued with Hood's own characteristic illustrations. These career-launching books were successful and soon saw second and third editions. In these works, Hood fashioned an image of himself as an unpretentious minor poet in a low-key, inconspicuous manner. 'It happens to most persons', Hood said in the Preface to *Whims and Oddities*,

in occasional lively moments, to have their little chirping fancies and brain crotchets, that skip out of the ordinary meadow-land of the mind. The Author has caught *his*, and clapped them up in paper and print, like grasshoppers in a cage. The judicious reader will look upon the trifling creatures accordingly, and not expect from them the flight of poetical winged horses.<sup>10</sup>

This reflects the self-deprecating image of the poet given in the first poem in *Odes and Addresses*, 'Ode to Mr. Graham, the Aeronaut' (*CW*, pp. 1–4). In the poem, Hood imagines going up in a balloon with Graham, who had recently made a spectacular ascent. Typically, Hood promised his readers a spectacular poetic flight in one of the new products of the burgeoning entertainment industry rather than on 'poetical winged horses'. Midway through the poem, the poet-speaker says, 'we are above the world's opinions, / Graham! we'll have our own!' (ll. 92–93). The poem then turns self-reflexive, as the speaker begins to question reigning opinions of literary celebrities: 'Now—*do* you think Sir Walter Scott / Is such a Great Unknown' (ll. 95–96). And, before he comes to

the real subject, his own failure to achieve success on the periodical marketplace, he says: 'And, truly, is there such a spell/ In those three letters, L.E.L.,/ To witch a world with song?' (ll. 127–29).

'L.E.L.' were the alluring initials of Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who, with the strong support of William Jerdan and his weekly *Literary Gazette* (founded soon after *Blackwood's* in 1817), had captured the imagination of poetry readers in 1821 to become one of the most popular poets of the 1820s and 1830s. Hood's question is in other words rhetorical and it sets up the pathetic self-presentation of the poem's speaker:

My name is Tims.—I am the man  
That North's unseen, diminish'd clan  
So scurvily abused!  
I am the very P.A.Z.  
The London Lion's small pin's head  
So often hath refused!

Campbell—(you cannot see him here)—  
Hath scorn'd my *lays*:—do his appear  
Such great eggs from the sky?—  
And Longman, and his lengthy Co.  
Long, only, in a little Row,  
Have thrust my poems by! (ll. 148–56)

This is a fitting, even if caricatured, image of the 'minor' male poet in the years after Byron that could also easily suit Hartley Coleridge, George Darley, or Winthrop Mackworth Praed: belittled by L.E.L., abused by 'Christopher North' (alias John Wilson) in the Scots *Blackwood's*, rejected in the *London Magazine's* famous editorial column 'The Lion's Head' (which Hood wrote when he was editor), scorned by Thomas Campbell, the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and neglected by Longmans.

Hood made a single attempt to escape the self-imposed role and status of comic minor and be counted, in his own word, a 'serious' poet. In the Preface to *Whims and Oddities*, he had alerted readers: 'At a future time, the Press may be troubled with some things of a more serious tone and purpose,—which the Author has resolved upon publishing, in despite of the advice of certain critical friends' (CW, p. 736). The 'serious' poems were, incidentally, published by Longmans in 1827 as *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies, Hero and Leander, Lycus the Centaur, and Other Poems*. Primarily inspired by Keats, this book 'represented a carefully organized attempt to win a name as a poet of substance', as Reid notes, calling it 'one of the most interesting and appealing books of poetry of its decade'.<sup>11</sup> In a letter of 18 July 1827 to his friend and fellow man of letters, Alaric Watts, Hood was writing to generate publicity for his volume in the *Literary Gazette*, saying that

Longmans are to bring out my Serious Poems. You shall have one of the first sets of sheets I can get. I expect it will be out in a month—& any notice you can get for it will oblige me. Poetry I suspect is nowadays of somewhat suspended animation & will require artificial inflation alias puffing.<sup>12</sup>

Writing to thank Watts for the solicited puff, Hood recognised that his book 'is of a kind [...] that in these times requires all helps' (*LTH*, p. 85). However much help the book was given, it did not impress a utilitarian-minded market increasingly uninterested in books of poetry with aesthetic pretensions by single (male) authors; as Hood's son remarked: 'My father afterwards bought up the remainder of the edition [...] to save it from the butter shops'.<sup>13</sup> Though encouraged by friends such as Allan Cunningham and Lamb to persist in writing serious poetry, Hood could not, like Tennyson, afford to not publish for a whole decade out of spite for the market's treatment of his work; hence, his characteristically punning and humorous personal motto: 'I have to be a lively Hood for a livelihood'. If Tennyson forged one kind of Victorian poetry during his 'silent decade' in the 1830s, then Hood forged another in the same years—not through resistance to the market but through assimilation of it.<sup>14</sup>

## II

Hood had to produce according to the demands of the market and his characteristic identity as minor, unpretentious comic poet was dictated by these demands. 'It has often been claimed', Reid points out, 'that the hostile and indifferent reception given to *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* was a disaster for poetry in that it diverted the considerable talents of Hood into second-rate entertainment, and verbal slap-stick'.<sup>15</sup> However, against this claim, Reid importantly suggests that it was not until 'Hood had rid himself of his ambition to become another Keats and came to draw his subjects and his emotions more directly from life that he wrote poetry that is remembered'.<sup>16</sup> Accepting this interpretation of the career, I wish to develop it further by showing how the work best characterised as 'second-rate entertainment, and verbal slap-stick', and the conditions under which it was produced, constitute the condition of possibility for the production, and consequently our fuller understanding and appreciation of the humanitarian poetry of social indignation and protest that Hood is remembered for. Reid, like Clubbe, suggests that Hood's most valuable poetry somehow emerged from within virtually by itself, while I argue that it was to a large extent dictated by the material circumstances of his career and profession.

To earn a living in the periodical market meant a pragmatic readiness to write what a given editor thought his or her audience wanted and the ability to deliver the right amount of sheets in time to meet the deadline, irrespective of whether inspiration had set in or there was time for final revisions. Hood openly articulated these prosaic and mundane concerns from a High-Romantic

point of view. Midway into an early piece for the *London Magazine* in October 1821, a rather long review of a cookery book (Dr Kitchener's *The Cook's Oracle*), Hood revealed his concern with quantity as well as a characteristic consciousness of the physical palpability of his work, when he reflected on the similarity between cooking and printing in terms of the transformation of handwritten manuscript into printed text:

these our articles in the London Magazine boil up like spinage [*sic*]. We fancy, when written, that we have a heap of leaves fit to feed thirty columns; and they absolutely and alarmingly shrink up to a page or two when dressed by the compositor.<sup>17</sup>

For the periodical writer, quantity and palatability were crucial aspects to take into account in literary productivity, and as Mark Parker points out, the commodity mode of production was typically 'referred to openly within the pages of the magazine'.<sup>18</sup>

As Parker also observes, this meant that 'there [was] little space for the high-flown rhetoric of aesthetic idealism in the working world of magazines and reviews'.<sup>19</sup> This was humorously and symptomatically articulated by the writer ('H') of an article of 1823, entitled 'Printed by Mistake' and published in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Giving voice to a widespread anxiety of overproduction, the writer commented:

a crisis is approaching;—there must be some great convulsion in the world of Ephemerides;—this prodigious multiplication of Magazines and Periodicals can never endure, for how can their myriad and insatiable maws be replenished without generating a literary famine in the land?<sup>20</sup>

One answer was that the articles turn self-reflexive and deal with their own coming-into-being: 'Printed by Mistake' is about a writer who has missed a deadline and now writes about this in order to supply copy after all. The problem for this writer was the commercialisation of literature brought about by the periodicals, a commercialisation perceived as having reached a new alarming level compared to eighteenth-century Grub Street hack-writing. 'Editors and booksellers', the article continued and symptomatically illustrated,

have committed a great mistake: paying for our contributions by the sheet instead of their intrinsic weight, they have offered a premium for adulterating the commodity of which they are the purchasers. Dilution and dilation are tempting processes, when there is no standard gauge or measure. (*ibid.*).

Although the writer acknowledges that '[h]igh prices have certainly brought great talents into the field of periodical competition', this also meant that 'he who can get paid for glass beads and trinkets, will not take much pains to search for diamonds' (*ibid.*). For the periodical writer, quantity and visibility often mattered more than quality and substance.

In the *Literary Reminiscences*, Hood sketched his poetics when he looked back on his first attempts as periodical writer:

my lucubrations were generally committed to paper, not in what is commonly called written hand, but an imitation of print [...] to make the reading more easy, and thus enable me the more readily to form a judgment of the effect of my little efforts. It is more difficult than may be supposed to decide on the value of a work in MS., and especially when the handwriting presents only a swell mob of bad characters, that must be severally examined and reexamined to arrive at the merits and demerits of the case. Print settles it, as Coleridge used to say; and to be candid, I have more than once reversed, or greatly modified a previous verdict, on seeing a rough proof from the press. But, as editors too well know, it is next to impossible to retain the tune of a stanza, or the drift of an argument, whilst the mind has to scramble through a patch of scribble scabble, as stiff as a gorse cover. The beauties of the piece will as naturally appear to disadvantage through such a medium, as the features of a pretty woman through a bad pane of glass; and without doubt, many a tolerable article has been consigned hand over head to the Balaam Box for want of fair copy. Wherefore, O ye poets and prozers, who aspire to write in Miscellanies, and above all, O ye palpitating Untried, who meditate the offer of your maiden essays to established periodicals, take care, pray ye take care, to cultivate a good, plain, bold, round text. Set up Tomkins [author of *The Beauties of Writing* and other works on calligraphy] as well as Pope or Dryden for a model, and have an eye to your pothooks. Some persons hold that the best writers are those who write the best hands, and I have known the conductor of a magazine to be converted by a crabbed MS. to the same opinion. Of all things, therefore, be legible; and to that end, practise in penmanship [...]. Be sure to buy the best paper, the best ink, the best pens, and then sit down and do the best you can [...]. So shall ye haply escape the rash rejection of a jaded editor; so, having got in your hand, it is possible that your head may follow; and so, last not least, ye may fortunately avert those awful mistakes of the press which sometimes ruin a poet's sublimest effusion, by pantomimically transforming his roses into noses, his angels into angles, and all his happiness into pappiness.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage Hood playfully undermines central aspects of High-Romantic conceptions of disinterested, inspired, and spontaneous composition. Hood's poetic is predicated on 'legibility' rather than sincere self-expression and on achieving an immediate, powerful 'effect' thereby avoiding the capricious reader-editor's 'rash rejection'. This reflects the basic criterion for success in periodical poetry, which was to please immediately. Such work could not rely

on a slow mode of dedicated rereading that pondered sublime moments of obscurity.

Hood articulates an awareness of and readiness to utilise the transformative impact of the medium of publication. He presents print as virtually the condition for achieving the beautiful when he says that 'The beauties of the piece will [...] appear to disadvantage through [the] medium' of bad handwriting whereas print, or handwriting that imitates print, gives a better sense of a poem's real value. For Hood, 'Print settles' the value of a given work. The traditional High-Romantic view of this issue, against which Hood reacted, has it the other way round. As Mario Praz says in *The Romantic Agony*: 'The Romantic exalts the artist who does not give a material form to his dreams—the poet ecstatic in front of a forever blank page [...]. It is romantic to consider concrete expression as a decadence, a contamination'.<sup>22</sup> While Praz primarily had the German Romantics in mind, this position can be found among the English poets as well. In his note to 'The Thorn' in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth, for instance, said that 'Words, a Poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling, and not measured by the space which they occupy upon paper'.<sup>23</sup> Later in his career, Wordsworth would sneer at the popularity of writers like Scott and Byron, as well as at the literary annuals and other more ephemeral journals and magazines, where he seems to have found evidence of this idea that undue attention to exterior matters was detrimental to poetry.<sup>24</sup> Shelley more famously but along similar lines proposed, in the *Defence of Poetry* (1821), that 'when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet'.<sup>25</sup> Like Wordsworth, Shelley did of course write and frequently wished to see his poems published in print; yet, the manner in which he wrote and his motives for publication were different from Hood's.

In Chapter 8 of his *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* (1858), Edward J. Trelawny tells us that he found Shelley 'in the pine forest [...] writing verses'.<sup>26</sup> Trelawny picks up a fragment, but 'It was a frightful scrawl':

words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together 'in most admired disorder'; it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered:

'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch, as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing. If you ask me why I publish what few or none will care to read, it is that the spirits I have raised haunt me until they are sent to the devil of a printer'.<sup>27</sup>

Shelley's motive for printing as reported by Trelawny was personal rather than commercial (he knows no one will buy what he makes): he sends his manuscripts off to the printer not to enhance their value but to keep the 'spirits' from haunting him and potentially to have an impact on future generations (as envisioned for instance in 'Ode to the West Wind'). In comparison with this idealistic view, which does not count the present as audience and money as an incentive for writing and publishing, Hood integrated the conditions of the periodical marketplace in his formulation of a materialist counter-poetic. Hood thus theorised poetic production in a more unpretentious and unmetaphysical manner, and foregrounded the value of mechanical acts of composition (both in the sense of writing as such and of the printed work of the compositor). For Hood, the physical realisation of poetry on the page added to its value. Clearly, he could not afford the luxury of inexpressibility or of producing 'what few or none will care to read'.

The idea that the technology of print participated actively in the creative process and contributed positively to the value of the end-product was common within periodical culture during the 1820s. When he ascribes to Coleridge the idea that 'Print settles' the value or merit of a poem, Hood may be teasingly alluding to Coleridge's anxiety about the medium—for instance, expressed by the fact that Coleridge often circulated his best works in manuscript (such as 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel') and only reluctantly submitted them to print (something Hood could by no means afford); or by what he says in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817) about poetry's degeneration to consist merely of clichés produced mechanically in a press room. For Coleridge, this

spares the reader the trouble of thinking; prevents vacancy, while it indulges indolence; and secures the memory from all danger of an intellectual plethora. Hence of all trades, literature at present demands the least talent or information; and, of all modes of literature, the manufacturing of poems.<sup>28</sup>

Hood surely knew that the saying and the sentiment belonged to his friend, Charles Lamb, who had used the phrase in the essay, 'Oxford in the Vacation', first published in the October 1820 issue of the *London Magazine*. 'There is something to me repugnant, at any time, in written hand', wrote Lamb,

The text never seems determinate. Print settles it. I had thought of the Lycidas as of a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in evil hour, I was shown the original written copy of it [...]. How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected!<sup>29</sup>

Along the same lines, in the essay, 'The Proof-Sheet', published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1821, the writer ('D.C.') reflected that

The printer it is who *consummates* the author's conceptions. The mechanic puts the finishing stroke to the finest dreams of imagination [...]. Without the compositor and the printer's devil, what a

poor dreaming, fruitless, futile thing, is a wit. He is a soul without a body [...]. An author in MS. is a half-fledged sloven, unseemly to look upon; but, when turned out from the various hands, who conspire to dress and powder him for the public, what an Adonis he walks forth! what a typographical dandy!<sup>30</sup>

Print and fine writing are necessary to achieve the goals of periodical poetry; something the author of 'The Proof-Sheet' recognises in speaking of 'the beautifying hands of the compositor, devil, printer, sewer, and boarder'.<sup>31</sup> As Hood recognised, print and fine writing are media and technological processes by virtue of which, and not in spite of which, a creative author's conception can be realised as something beautiful, as well as an attractive marketable commodity.

This view earned periodical writers the scorn of proponents of High-Romantic aesthetic ideology from Wordsworth and Coleridge to the most important Victorian disseminator of their 'invention' of the poetry of sincere self-expression, John Stuart Mill. Mill provided one of the most damning characterisations of periodical literature in his lecture, 'The Present State of Literature' (already referred to), in which he emphasised 'one feature which particularly marks the literature of the present day, and which I think has contributed more than any other to its degradation: I mean the prevalence of periodical publications'.<sup>32</sup> For Mill, periodical works were less valuable than other works because of their topicality, and because they had made publication too easy. By virtue of their anonymity and pseudonymity, they encouraged irresponsibility among authors, who found that

that accuracy of research, that depth of thought and that highly finished style, which are so essential to a work destined for posterity, would not only not contribute to [their] success, but would obstruct it, by taking up [their] time, and preventing [them] from composing rapidly. (p. 416)

Yet, the most damning aspect of the literary periodical was that it 'made literature a trade' (p. 417). The periodical press brought into being a new breed of authors,

who chose authorship as an advantageous investment of their labour and capital in a commercial point of view, contracted for a stipulated quantity of eloquence and wit, to be delivered on a certain day, were inspired punctually by 12 o'clock in order to be in time for the printer's boy at one, sold a burst of passion at so much per line, and gave way to a movement of virtuous indignation as per order received.

Mill lumped together all literature written for and published in periodicals, and denounced it as trash because compromised by the pervasive commercialism of the medium. According to Mill, a true poet must have no ulterior motives for production; poetry should come as naturally as leaves to a tree and not

because there was a blank page that needed to be filled before a given deadline. If the latter were a concern for a poet, then 'the occupation of a street walking prostitute is surely far more respectable'.

Mill's description of typical periodical poetry (even if not his final conclusion) was apparently endorsed by one of the most prominent periodical publishers, William Blackwood. This is suggested in correspondence from the early 1830s between the renowned astronomer, William Rowan Hamilton, and his friend Wordsworth. Hamilton had asked Wordsworth to endorse the publication of Hamilton's sister, Eliza Mary Hamilton's poetry in *Blackwood's*. In the course of this correspondence, Hamilton reports Blackwood as having said:

'the existence of high merit in a poem does by no means imply adaptation to produce effect in a popular miscellany. In truth in most cases is inconsistent with it, for the readers of such works demand something racy and highly peppered, a sort of poetical *devil* [...]. In short, *Magazine* poetry must deal in Exaggeration, or in other words must be written in vicious taste to suit the diseased craving of the public. They want something of strong and stirring incident, the display of furious passion'.<sup>33</sup>

Such elitist and essentially High-Romantic characterisations of periodical literature as aesthetically worthless because theatrical, topical, superficial, exaggerated, 'racy and highly peppered', composed too rapidly, and inherently compromised by its commodity character and interest in entertaining the reader-consumer hardly account for all periodical poetry of the 1820s and 1830s. But they do take us a long way toward capturing what Hood aimed for in his periodical poetry and what his conditions of writing were in terms of time pressure and audience expectations.

### III

Hood's aim and ambition in his typical periodical poetry may be illuminated by considering his attraction to the fireworks in the amusement park at Vauxhall, and his sense that the master of fireworks, Madame Hengler, was in charge of something that poets could only envy. In 'Ode to Madame Hengler. Firework-Maker to Vauxhall', first published in the inaugural *Comic Annual* in 1830, Hood begins:

OH, Mrs. Hengler!—Madame,—I beg pardon;  
 Starry Enchantress of the Surrey Garden!  
 Accept an Ode not meant as any scoff—  
 The Bard were bold indeed at thee to quiz,  
 Whose squibs are far more popular than his;  
 Whose works are much more certain to go off. (CW, p. 257, ll. 1–6)

To achieve a comparable pyrotechnical style of writing was the aim of the periodical poet, whose main ambition was to catch but not indefinitely to monopolise

the reader's attention, and whose pieces were ephemeral 'squibs' meant to be popular here and now, not inscrutable monuments for posterity.

In 'Sonnet to Vauxhall', published in the same *Comic Annual*, Hood tried to verbally emulate Hengler's fireworks:

Hengler! Madame! round whom all bright sparks lurk,  
 Calls audibly on Mr. and Mrs. Pringle  
 To study the Sublime, &c.—(vide Burke)  
 All Noses are upturn'd!—Whish—ish!—On high  
 The rocket rushes—trails—just steals in sight—  
 Then droops and melts in bubbles of blue light—  
 And Darkness reigns— (CW, p. 274, ll. 6–12)

The language of these lines struggles to come off the page to re-enact the movement and effect of the rocket ('!—Whish—ish!—') in a casual, mock-sublime manner where the 'darkness visible' of the terrifying eighteenth-century sublime has been commercialised and packaged like a periodical publication, for punctually repeatable and predictably alluring theatrical performances. The poem shows how Hood provides a humorous instance of a more general trend among poets during the 1820s and 1830s 'to bring romantic sublimity and visionariness under control',<sup>34</sup> and both thematically and formally it instances a poetry that foregrounds surface effects and abides a principle of instant gratification—it provides cheap thrills.

Other characteristic examples of Hood's ephemeral periodical poetry can be found in two poems published in the *Comic Annual* in 1832 and 1833 respectively: 'A Nocturnal Sketch' (CW, pp. 221–22), which was a part of 'A Plan for Writing Blank Verse in Rhyme' (CW, pp. 745–46), and 'The Double Knock' (CW, pp. 259–60), which was a part of a text titled 'Rhyme and Reason' (CW, p. 747). The poems are presented as experimental innovations in rhyme and foreground Hood's production of a theatrical poetry through a focus of attention on the mechanically crafted surface of poetry. 'A Nocturnal Sketch' is prefaced by a letter from the fictive author to the editor where he claims to have discovered a revolutionary principle of imparting rhyme to blank verse by making one line rhyme with itself. Thus, in the poem the final three words in a single line rhyme: for instance, 'dark Park hark' (l. 1), or 'chime, prime time' (l. 3), leading to the extreme final line, 'goes shows Rose knows those bows' woes' (l. 34). The effect is humorous—almost ludicrous—and the radical foregrounding of sound effects renders the poem virtually unreadable in terms of semantic meaning (it verges on nonsense verse), meaning simply that it has realised its goal as periodical poetry: to call attention to itself; to make some noise and 'go off' like a 'poetical *devil*'.

In 'The Double Knock', another imaginary correspondent (John Dryden Grubb) addresses Hood and presents another 'novelty' (CW, p. 747) in rhyme technique. The problem he has solved concerns the situation where a poet ends a line on a word he can not find a rhyme word to match:

I have an ingenious medical friend, who might have been an eminent poet by this time, but the first line he wrote ended in ipecacuanha, and with all his physical and mental power, he has never yet been able to find a rhyme for it.

As he puts it, his new

system is [...] to try at first what words will chime, before you go farther and fare worse. To say nothing of other advantages, it will at least have one good effect,—and that is, to correct the erroneous notion of would-be poets and poetesses of the present day, that the great *end* of poetry is rhyme. I beg leave to present a specimen of worse [*sic*], which proves quite the reverse, and am, Sir, Your most obedient servant.

The new 'system' is exemplified in 'The Double Knock' by making rhyming couplets from the initial words of each line (a reversed verse, as it were), such as:

Rat-tat it went on the lion's chin,  
 'That hat, I know it!' cried the youthful girl;  
 'Summer's it is, I know him by his knock,  
 Comers like him are welcome as the day!' (CW, p. 259, ll. 1–4)

This reversed verse is matched by the reversal of the poem's content at the end, when the double knock that sets off the daydreams of the 'youthful girl' of which the poem consists turns out not to be made by her lover (Summer), but by the tax-collector, who provides comic relief even as he represents hard reality. This rhyme 'system' implements Hood's materialist poetic, insofar as it gives priority to the mechanical craft of verse-making, makes composition assume primacy over inspiration, and foregrounds the palpable product of the writing hand, while the thinking head and the level of ideational sense are put into the background. To the extent that this experiment is rather silly and superficial in its blatant verbal pyrotechnics, it may be said to give eloquent articulation to what the poem is about—that is, a teenager's fantasy of being taken to the theatre by her lover who she hopes is at the door: 'Sure he has brought me tickets for the play—/ Drury—or Covent Garden—darling man!' (ll. 11–12). The superficial mode of representation matches the represented world of fancy and reverie, which again seems to match the expectations of the readership of Hood's *Comic Annual*.

Hood is not necessarily raising his finger to denounce such dreamily escapist behaviour as idle and shallow, and not only because his livelihood depended on it. He often seemed to indulge in it, in fact, and to have theorised the value and function of literature to be a means of temporary escape from the reality of tax-collectors and, paradoxically, the pressure of deadlines. In a letter from early January 1844, Hood wrote to encourage a friend and contributor to his new struggling periodical, *Hood's Monthly Magazine*, to persist in writing literature despite the decease of his wife, saying:

I have had my share of the troubles of this world, as well as of the calamities of authors, and have found it to be a very great blessing to be able to carry my thoughts into the ideal, from the too strong real. (*LTH*, p. 583)

Hood's 'share of the troubles of this world, as well as of the calamities of authors' refers among other things to the preceding fifteen-odd years of hard work of writing always faced with having to publish or perish, and always feeling cheated and exploited by his publishers. Through all these years, his health had been failing and his nerves had been steadily deteriorating after the profound psychological crisis and breakdown in 1834/35, which coincided with a personal bankruptcy that forced him to live in exile on the Continent for five years. With a few strokes of luck that he was incapable of taking full advantage of, owing to a lethal mix of bad business talent and what seems a well-developed talent for living above his means, Hood's working conditions became increasingly desperate.

Although there is a strong desire for some form of escape in Hood's work, which may readily be explained by reference to his biography, as well as to his need to appease and give instant pleasure to his audience, his poems often critique and expose escapist dreams as illusory, thus acknowledging and articulating 'the too strong real'. They do so by simply thematising the impossibility of escape, as in the sentimental 'A Retrospective Review' (1827), which conjures a present moment informed by the loss of the plenitude of childhood ('Oh, when I was a tiny boy/ My days and nights were full of joy' [*CW*, p. 176, ll. 1–2]), a loss inadequately compensated for by the alienating work of writing:

My authorship's an endless task  
[...]  
My heart is pain'd with scorn and slight,  
I have too many foes to fight,  
And friends grown strangely cool. (ll. 38–42).

Or they do so by foregrounding grotesque scenes of dismemberment and accident, as in the comic-grotesque masterpiece, *Miss Killmansegg her Precious Leg* (1840–41), or by ending on an unsettling, ironic note of sudden reversal, as in 'The Double Knock' or the curious 'Stanzas to Tom Woodgate of Hastings' (1828).

This latter poem explicitly points to the conditions of the professional periodical poet navigating the literary marketplace as the context that both generated Hood's desire for escape and denied its realisation. The poem centres on a flight of fancy, which is halted abruptly by the intrusion of the printer's devil demanding that the writer hand in the sheet to meet the deadline. The poet-speaker dreams of going sailing with an old friend yet recognises that it will only occur through the medium of writing: 'as we have erst braved the weather,/ Still may we float awhile together,/ As comrades on this ink!' (*CW*, p. 430, ll. 58–60). The poet's desire 'for that brisk spray' and 'To feel the wave

from stem to stern' (ll. 85–86) increases through the poem until the illusion is almost perfect and he is on the brink of achieving a visionary state of full presence: 'Methinks I see the shining beach;/ The merry waves, each after each,/ Rebouncing o'er the flints' (CW, p. 431, ll. 103–05):

And there they float—the sailing craft!  
 The sail is up—the wind abaft—  
     The ballast trim and neat.  
 Alas! 'tis all a dream—a lie!  
 A printer's imp is standing by,  
     To haul my mizen sheet!

My tiller dwindles to a pen—  
 My craft is that of bookish men—  
     My sale—let Longman tell!  
 Adieu the wave! the wind! the spray!  
 Men—maidens—chintzes—fade away!  
     Tom Woodgate, fare thee well! (ll. 109–20)

Hood is here torn out of his escapist reverie by the 'calamities' of authorship. The 'sail' that was 'up' and ready to carry him away is punningly transformed into his 'sale', which he has no control over, but from which he may wish to be carried away as we may assume it is 'down' (Longmans were the publishers of *The Midsummer Fairies*, which appeared around the time of composition—the only time Hood published with the firm).

The poem was first published in Alaric Watts' *Literary Souvenir* for 1828. In letters to Watts, we gain a keen sense of the pressure Hood wrote under. On 18 July 1827, Hood stated to Watts that he 'will write something (good I hope) certainly, for your next volume. Only give me as much time as you can, for both our sakes' (LTH, p. 80). A little later, he wrote both to apologise for not having delivered the work owing to having to meet other deadlines, and to express hope that he had not 'put you to any inconvenience by waiting for me—for I certainly will do my best as soon as I can hit on a subject' (LTH, p. 85). The inspiration for the poem did not arise from nothing but was actively sought, and there is a real sense in which the lack of inspiration and the guilty fear of not being able to meet the deadline (Watts' Preface to the *Literary Souvenir* was signed 15 October and the volume was published 1 November) in the end became the subject of the poem. Around the final deadline on 18 September 1827, Hood, having submitted a draft, wrote again: 'I am waiting for your answer to my last, that I may know how to proceed,—for time now is precious' (LTH, p. 86).

The force with which the constant pressure to meet deadlines registers in Hood's later work may be measured if we read it as the subtext of the Gothic short story, 'A Tale of Terror' (1841), which was apparently conceived and composed in order to fill out a blank space in the *New Monthly Magazine*, which

Hood edited at the time. According to Hood's son, 'This paper was really written under circumstances often spoken of as happening to authors. The printer's devil was really waiting for copy down-stairs while it was done,—an unexpected gap appearing in the Magazine'.<sup>35</sup> The story returns to the motif of the balloon ascent with which Hood had opened the *Odes and Addresses* in 1825, but now the narrator is in the basket with what turns out to be a lunatic wanting to fly to the moon. The story ends in mid-air, as it were, with the lunatic saying he wants to go to the moon, and the narrator responding, 'I heard no more, for suddenly approaching me, and throwing his arms around my body——'.<sup>36</sup> As Hood's son remarked, 'My father received frequent letters requesting him to finish the sketch, and put his readers out of suspense'.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the story is irresolvable and profoundly unsettling, insofar as it is told by a first-person narrator who must have survived events that the story strongly suggests have killed him. This story lends itself to being read as a parable of the author working under stressful conditions—desirous of escape yet strangled by the 'too strong real' in the form of the very medium that promised escape.

#### IV

In his last years, from at least late 1843, Hood was beginning to envision his poetry as a means of intervention in, rather than temporary escape from, the world of the 'too strong real'. The extent to which this, more than anything, was the result of his accumulating experiences as a pressured man of letters has been neglected by the critical tradition, yet I wish to argue that Hood's material conditions of production were generative of both the form and the content of one of his most serious and powerful poems, 'The Song of the Shirt'. To argue thus is to argue that the rampant commercialisation of literature in the periodicals did not necessarily signal the death of serious poetry but in certain instances in fact released a valuable creative potential and critical insight.

On 14 August 1843, a few months prior to the composition of 'The Song of the Shirt', Hood wrote to a German friend, Philip de Franck, and described his working conditions as editor of *The New Monthly Magazine*: 'I have to write, till I am sick of the sight of pen, ink and paper [...]. For one half month I have hardly time to eat, drink, or sleep' (*LTH*, p. 549). Hood went on to contrast his correspondent's imagined pace of life with his own:

[Y]ou travel through life in slow coaches, with the wheels locked, and have no notion of the railway pace at which we wear ourselves here in England. [...] you cannot imagine the hurry I live in like most of my contemporaries, but aggravated in my case by frequent illness, which makes me get into arrears of business, and then, as the sailors say, I have to work double tides to fetch my lee-way [...]. Sometimes at the end of the month, I sit up three nights successively.  
(*LTH*, pp. 549–50)

We have come a long way from the romancing of composition and proof-reading as labours of love at the *London Magazine* in the early 1820s. This description of Hood's deadly working conditions mirrors his description of the working conditions of the seamstress in 'The Song of the Shirt' (*CW*, pp. 625–26). Published in the recently founded (1841) and still struggling periodical *Punch*, the poem allegedly trebled its circulation. As William Michael Rossetti said, 'The "Song of the Shirt", which it would be futile to praise, or even to characterise, came out [...] in the Christmas number of *Punch* for 1843; it ran like wildfire, and rang like tocsin, through the land'.<sup>38</sup> The poem saved both the periodical and Hood's career, becoming one of the best-known poems in the nineteenth century.

Inspired by horrifying newspaper reports of seamstresses' working conditions, as well as an emerging literature of protest, Hood's poem was reformist rather than revolutionary, inasmuch as it did not envision radical changes in the social fabric but aimed to generate sympathy for the poor. How much impact it had on the reform movement is hard to tell. A scathing footnote to Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) suggests little: 'a fine poem [...] which wrung many compassionate but ineffectual tears from the daughters of the bourgeoisie', is how Engels characterised the poem in reference to the last sentences of his description of the proletariat:

These poverty-stricken needlewomen usually live in attics, where as many herd together as space will permit. In winter they crowd together for warmth, as they have no other source for heat. There they sit bent over their work and sew from four or five in the morning until midnight. Their health is ruined in a few years and they sink into an early grave, without having been able to earn the barest necessities of life. In the streets below the gleaming carriages of the wealthy middle class rattle past, and close at hand some wretched dandy is gambling away at faro in a single evening as much money as a needlewoman could hope to earn in a year.<sup>39</sup>

The seamstress had been a feature of a few literary descriptions by John Galt and Dickens in the 1830s, but not until 1842 did writers begin to pay attention to her as a subject of real suffering. This happened in Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's novel, *The Perils of the Nation* (1842), which 'sounded the first warnings about the abuses of the dress trade', as Lynn Alexander puts it.<sup>40</sup> In 1843, the governmental *Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission* more fully documented the appalling working conditions of seamstresses. This provoked widespread discussion and public outrage as extracts were circulated in the periodical press and inspired Hood to take up the pen to produce what John Dodds, at variance with Engels, calls 'perhaps of all poems in the decade the one to make the deepest impact on the largest number of people'.<sup>41</sup> The poem's impact was stimulated by the many paintings and engravings it inspired, such as Richard Redgrave's *The Sempstress* (1844).<sup>42</sup> It was also to some extent 'scripted'

by Hood himself in a follow-up poems, such as 'The Lady's Dream', which was published in February 1844 in *Hood's Own*, and presents in a vivid, even lurid, manner an upper-class lady's Gothic nightmare vision of the starving poor, among them seamstresses (*CW*, pp. 641–42).

While 'The Song of the Shirt' was by no means Hood's first or last poem of social awareness and protest, it arguably represents the one instance he found a perfectly suitable style of writing and an adequately dramatic form to match the topic making him, as Isobel Armstrong has noted, a 'ventriloquist' for the working class.<sup>43</sup> Yet, a surprising number of the poem's critics have been dismissive of its style. For George Saintsbury, Hood 'occasionally loses sight of strict meaning in producing metrical and other effects',<sup>44</sup> while for John Heath-Stubbs the poem does not have sufficient 'strength of style nor adequate social insight to justify the very high praise that has sometimes been given [it]'.<sup>45</sup> Finally, James Reeves finds that although the poem shows 'a new power in Hood's work' insofar as 'a genuine social concern emerges', it is blemished by 'the unintentional humour [that arises] from the excessive use of repetition'.<sup>46</sup> Repetition *is* the primary stylistic marker of the poem. Prominent examples are the almost identical first and last stanzas which present the working seamstress in a melodramatic *tableau* as she sings 'The Song of the Shirt' 'with a voice of dolorous pitch' (ll. 7, 95), the repetitive and cumulative phrases 'Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!' (ll. 5, 29, 93), 'In poverty, hunger and dirt' (ll. 6, 30, 94), 'Work! Work! Work!' (ll. 9, 11, 17, 19, 41, 49, 51, 57, 59, 82), the identical lines, 'It seems so like my own—/ It seems so like my own' (ll. 36–37), and particularly the powerful chiasmus, 'Seam, and gusset, and band,/ Band, and gusset, and seam' (ll. 21–22, 53–54, 81–82) repeated a number of times to function as a formulaic refrain.

We should not be surprised to find refrain-like and almost incantatory patterns of repetition in poetry that purports to be imitative of a work song, one of whose generic traits is indeed a foregrounding of repetition (hence also its proliferation of alliteration and internal rhyme). Nevertheless, a supplementary explanation of the meaning of these patterns of repetition (which are equally present in Hood's framing stanzas and in the framed work-song) may be sketched: one that sees them as examples of Hood's radical artifice—his extreme foregrounding of the poetic sign—and therefore as similar in nature to the examples noted above in the typical periodical poems. However, rather than being unintentionally humorous and thus sounding insincere they powerfully enact the mechanical repetition which informs both the nature of the seamstress' labour and that of the professional poet working to meet deadlines. They are not excessive superficial surface effects that disrupt the poem's meaning, but the very opposite.

The chiasmus, 'Seam, and gusset, and band,/ Band, and gusset, and seam', for instance, almost physically embodies and figures in an iconic manner the endlessly circular and repetitive needlework it is about; a circularity emphasised by its second appearance in reversed form:

Work—work—work!  
 From weary chime to chime,  
     Work—work—work—  
 As prisoners work for crime!  
     Band, and gusset, and seam,  
     Seam, and gusset, and band,  
 Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,  
     As well as the weary hand. (ll. 49–56)

The identical repetitions of 'work' and 'stitch' in addition seem to empty the words of their semantic meaning in a manner suggestive of the empty and meaningless work and life of the seamstress. In the middle of stanza five, the identical lines thematically dramatise and formally enact the recognition of the similarity between the 'terrible shape' of death and the physical appearance of the seamstress:

But why do I talk of Death?  
     That Phantom of grisly bone,  
 I hardly fear his terrible shape,  
     It seems so like my own—  
     It seems so like my own,  
     Because of the fasts I keep,  
 Oh! God! that bread should be so dear,  
     And flesh and blood so cheap! (ll. 33–40)

This repetition stages the dehumanising effects of this kind of repetitious work—its way of taking a subject out of herself, splitting or dividing her from herself—which was also noted in one of the first literary accounts of seamstresses' conditions, the anonymous *A London Dressmaker's Diary* (1842). Here, the seamstress herself speaks:

I am weak to such a degree as to be always tired [...]. Sewing stitch after stitch is not work for the mind; yet whenever it goes away, it is called back to attend to the everlasting repetition of the same.<sup>47</sup>

The effects of repetition and rhyme that Hood used playfully in the poems discussed earlier, and that he had cultivated in his humorous periodical poetry for theatrical purposes to meet the demands of a thoroughly commercialised system of commodity production, are used again in 'The Song of the Shirt'. But this time, they articulate a very different world, and support a loud and effective poetry of protest against the exploitation of workers in a commercial, capitalist system: a protest-poetry which only works through the rhetoric of excessive repetition and by calling attention to itself in a powerful—indeed theatrical—manner, instanced by the numerous exclamation marks that dominate the poem. Hood's poem was written by someone intensely aware of the hard times of labour, whether as seamstress or as man of letters—someone who did not contemplate physical labour at a distance, but who participated directly in it and from that perspective transformed it into an engaging and

stirring work. Hood's empathetic identification with the seamstress—his use of her as an Other to talk among other things about himself—is brought out by biographical circumstances in the sense that they are *makers* of in many ways similar products (with the shared etymological derivation of *text* and *textile* from *textere*, to weave, being merely one connecting thread), who use rhythmic language as a means to transcend momentarily the 'too strong real' that informs their immediate situation. It is further established by the use of 'chime' in 'Work—work—work!/ From weary chime to chime', to suggest the sound of a bell to tell the time of the day and the working hours, but also to call attention to the extreme chiming of the poem. 'Work—work—work!/ From weary chime to chime' is both the woman's needlework and Hood's working his way through the poem from rhyme-word to rhyme-word. In the last stanza, the poem breaks the formal symmetry of identical and (by-now monotonous and deadly) stultifying repetition by adding an extra, penultimate line: 'Would that its tone could reach the Rich!' This wish and appeal to the reader can be interpreted both as a wish that the seamstress' song 'could' find a specific audience and work to raise consciousness of the inhuman working conditions of seamstresses, and as Hood's own desperate wish for a paying audience to secure his livelihood.

The commercialism that energised the literary periodicals certainly brought about enough ephemeral and seemingly worthless hack-work to partly justify John Stuart Mill's diatribe. Yet, we must study this material to fully understand 'The Song of the Shirt', and we must situate both in the enabling context they shared. Hood's 'Song of the Shirt' and other poems of social awareness and humanitarian protest from late 1843 until his death in March 1845 secured his fame and canonised him as a memorable poet and artist. Still, he could not have written this poem and articulated its world-view without his previous experiences as a hard-working, to some extent exploited, and alienated man of letters operating on the periodical market. Thus, to understand and appreciate the poem fully, we must take these experiences into account. This is not to suggest that the context fully explains the poem and stabilises its meaning, but rather that the context enriches the poem by revealing it as a more resonant, complex, and layered work than typically allowed by the critical tradition. Insofar as 'The Song of the Shirt' played an important role in ushering in a characteristic interventionist poetry of public, social protest that reflects the Victorian world, it must be understood in terms of its author's experiences on the late-Romantic marketplace for periodical poetry, which in the end opened his eyes to the subject matter and provided him with an answerable style of writing. By attending to Hood's periodical poetry, we obtain a better understanding of the cultural products made in the 1820s and 1830s, and of the importance of these years as a zone of transformation that vitally connects and co-implicates the Romantic and Victorian periods in British literary history. 

## NOTES

1. *Poems of Hood*, edited by William Michael Rossetti (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1872), p. xxxi.
2. John Stuart Mill, 'The Present State of Literature' in *Collected Works*, edited by F. L. L. Priestly and John M. Robson, 33 vols (London: Routledge, 1964–91), xxvi, 410.
3. Virgil Nemoianu, *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier* (London: Harvard University Press, 1984); Herbert F. Tucker, 'House Arrest: The Domestication of Poetry in the 1820s', *New Literary History*, 25 (1994), 521–48; Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Patrick H. Vincent, *The Romantic Poetess: European Culture, Politics and Gender 1820–1840* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2004); Peter Simonsen, 'Late Romantic Ekphrasis: Felicia Hemans, Leigh Hunt and the Return of the Visible', *Orbis Litterarum*, 60 (2005), 317–43; Paul Schlicke, 'Hazlitt, Horne, and the Spirit of the Age', *Studies in English Literature*, 45.4 (Autumn 2005), 829–51; Virgil Nemoianu, *The Triumph of Imperfection: The Silver Age of Sociocultural Moderation in Europe, 1815–1848* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).
4. The neglect of Hood has to a large extent been due to his gender and class status as well as the idea that he was a writer of 'mere' comic verse. Roger B. Henkle addresses the problem of the value of Hood's comic verse in 'Comedy as Commodity: Thomas Hood's Poetry of Class Desire', *Victorian Poetry*, 26 (1988), 301–18. For reflections on problems concerning the attempt to republish and reanonise a middle class male poet, see Susan Wolfson, 'Representing some Late Romantic-Era, Non-Canonical Male Poets: Thomas Hood, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, Thomas Lovell Beddoes', *Romanticism on the Net*, 19 (August 2000), Online: Internet [2 Aug 2006], <<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2000/v19/n19/005932ar.html>>.
5. Kim Wheatley, 'Introduction', *Romantic Periodicals and Print Culture* (London: Frank Cass), p. 1.
6. See Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 12, and John Boening, 'The Unending Conversation: The Role of Periodicals in England and on the Continent during the Romantic Age', in *Nonfictional Romantic Prose: Expanding Borders*, edited by Steven P. Sondrup, Virgil Nemoianu, and Gerald Gillespie (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 285–301.
7. John Clubbe, *Victorian Forerunner: The Later Career of Thomas Hood* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968).
8. *Thomas Hood & Charles Lamb: The Story of a Friendship being the Literary Reminiscences of Thomas Hood*, edited by Walter Jerrold (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1930), p. 100.
9. J. C. Reid, *Thomas Hood* (London: Routledge, 1963), p. 35.
10. Thomas Hood, *The Complete Poetical Works*, edited by Walter Jerrold (London: OUP, 1906), p. 736 (hereafter cited as *CW*). This is the only readily available complete edition of Hood's poetry. See also the annotated selections in *Selected Poems of Thomas Hood*, edited by John Clubbe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) and *Selected Poems of Thomas Hood, Winthrop Mackworth*

- Praed and Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Peter Manning (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).
11. Reid, *Thomas Hood*, pp. 78 and 92.
  12. *The Letters of Thomas Hood*, edited by Peter F. Morgan (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 80 (hereafter cited as *LTH*).
  13. Quoted in Reid, *Thomas Hood*, p. 93.
  14. Tennyson was nonetheless reliant on the commercial market for periodicals, as Kathryn Ledbetter has shown in a series of articles, most recently in 'Protesting Success: Tennyson's "Indecent Exposure" in the Periodicals', *Victorian Poetry*, 43.1 (Spring 2005), 53–73. As Ledbetter argues, 'Tennyson's entire career is inseparable from a dependence on the very format he supposedly hated' (p. 54).
  15. Reid, *Thomas Hood*, p. 94.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
  17. Thomas Hood, *The Works*, edited by Thomas Hood, Jr and Frances Feeling Broderip, 11 vols (1882–84). Reprinted in *Anglistica and Americana: A Series of Reprints Selected by Bernhard Fabian, Edgar Mertner, Karl Schneider and Marvin Soevack* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), 1, 19.
  18. Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 13.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
  20. [Anon.], 'Printed by Mistake', *New Monthly Magazine*, 5 (1823), 529–32 (p. 530).
  21. Jerrold (ed.), *Hood & Lamb*, pp. 86–87.
  22. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford: OUP, 1970), pp. 14–15.
  23. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, edited by R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 288.
  24. As Peter Manning has demonstrated on several occasions, however, Wordsworth did not maintain his haughty disdain for Scott or the annuals, but was in fact to some extent inspired by them and sought to emulate them in his own manner—see *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: OUP, 1990), pp. 165–94; 'Wordsworth in *The Keepsake*', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, edited by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 44–73; and 'The Other Scene of Travel: Wordsworth's "Musings Near Aquapendente"', in *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading*, edited by Helen Regueiro Elam and Frances Ferguson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 191–211. Wordsworth's paradoxical relationship to the popular market dominated by Scott and by periodicals (Scott was an important force behind the establishment of the *Quarterly Review* in 1807) was thus in certain ways similar to Tennyson's (see n. 14, above).
  25. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Prose: Or the Trumpet of a Prophecy*, edited by David Lee Clark (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966), p. 294.
  26. *Trelawny's Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, edited by Edward Dowden (London: Humphrey Milford, 1931), p. 49.
  27. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.
  28. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by James Engell and Walter Jackson Bates, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 1, 39. Coleridge's later career was invigorated by the literary annuals. He was thus in the same position as Tennyson and Wordsworth, both attracted to and repelled by

- the medium. See Morton D. Paley, 'Coleridge and the Annuals', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 57.1 (Winter 1994), pp. 1–24.
29. Charles Lamb, 'Oxford in the Vacation', *London Magazine*, 2 (1820), pp. 365–69 (p. 367).
  30. Anon., 'The Proof-Sheet', *New Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1821), 232–36 (pp. 233–34).
  31. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
  32. Mill, 'Present State of Literature', p. 415.
  33. William Wordsworth to Eliza Hamilton, 26 Feb 1833. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Second Edition. The Later Years, Part II: 1829–1834*, edited by Ernest de Selincourt and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 597.
  34. Nemoianu, *Taming of Romanticism*, p. 72.
  35. Hood, *Works*, v, 382.
  36. *Ibid.*, p. 386.
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  38. *Poems of Hood*, p. xxvi.
  39. Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, translated and edited by W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pp. 239–40.
  40. Lynn M. Alexander, *Women, Work, and Representation: Needlewomen in Victorian Art and Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. 6.
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  45. John Heath-Stubbs, *The Darkling Plain: A Study of the Later Fortunes of Romanticism in English Poetry from George Darley to W. B. Yeats* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950), p. 51.
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  47. Quoted in Alexander, *Women, Work, and Representation*, p. 42.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



**Gavin Edwards** is Professor of English Studies at the University of Glamorgan, Wales. His research focuses on Romantic literature and society, and historical applications of narrative theory and semantics. He is the editor of *George Crabbe: Selected Poems* (Penguin, 1991) and *Watkin Tench: Letters from Revolutionary France* (Palgrave, 2001), and *Narrative Order, 1789–1819: Life and Story in an Age of Revolution* (Palgrave, 2005). He is currently working on capital letters in the novels of Dickens.

**James R. Fleming** is a Kirkland PhD Fellow in Victorian and Folklore Studies at the University of Florida. He is a Review Editor and Co-Managing Editor for *ImageText* <<http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/>>. He is currently working on a dissertation tentatively entitled ‘Trauma, Testimony and the English Romantic Movement’ and a study focusing on issues of space, place, and temporality in the works of Jane Austen and Lord Byron.

**Jonathan Hill** is a member of the Department of English, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. His main area of teaching is the British Romantic period, his main research interest Regency culture broadly understood, including graphic satire and book history. This article is part of an ongoing study of books in boards, both British and American.

**Essaka Joshua** is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Birmingham. She is the author of *Pygmalion and Galatea: The History of a Narrative in English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) and *The Romantics and the May-Day Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming).

**Jonathan Kelly** is IRCHSS post-doctoral fellow in University College, Dublin, where he is engaged in research on the writings of Charles Robert Maturin (1780–1824).

**Peter Simonsen** is Postdoctoral Carlsberg Research Fellow at the University of Southern Denmark. His research project concerns British poetry of the 1820s and 1830s. He has published articles on frontispiece portraiture, problems of literary historical periodisation, the aesthetics of typography, and ekphrasis.

His monograph entitled *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts* is forthcoming from Palgrave.

