Appendix

*The Masque of Anarchy*¹

‘Written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester’

Described by Richard Holmes as ‘the greatest poem of political protest ever written in English’ and by Kelvin Everest as ‘perhaps the greatest English poem of radical political thinking’, *The Masque of Anarchy* is central to the poems written by Shelley in the aftermath of Peterloo.² Comprising ninety-one fast-paced verses, fuelled by fury yet clear in its rationality, *Masque* is remarkably similar to the poems being written and published at that time in the radical press. It was the first poem to be written by Shelley following his receipt of news in Italy regarding Peterloo from his friend, Thomas Love Peacock, in early September.³ On receiving news of the massacre, Shelley wrote to the publisher, Charles Ollier:

The torrent of [m]y indignation has not yet done boiling in my veins. I wait anxiously [to] hear how the country will express its sense of this bloody murderous oppression of its destroyers. ‘Something must be done ... What yet I know not.’⁴

Written swiftly, the finished poem was sent to Leigh Hunt for publication on 23 September 1819, although it remained unpublished until Edward Moxon’s single-volume edition in 1832 with a preface by Leigh Hunt.⁵

The poem begins languidly with its slow, dream-like rhythm beguiling the reader into the expectation of a more conventional, lyrical poem.⁶ The resulting vision continues for the rest of the poem moving from the destructive ‘masquerade’ led by Anarchy⁷ to his death at the hands of the shadowy ‘Shape’ and the speech to ‘Men of England’ by the figure of Hope. Following a consideration of slavery and freedom, Hope re-imagines Peterloo where the might of collective passive resistance results in the triumph of the people over the might of the state.

Shelley turned to the ballad in 1819 in order to give a bardic voice

to his outrage at events in his native country.⁸ What he achieved in *Masque*, therefore, is both a traditional ballad in its presentation of England and a yearning for liberty, together with a contemporary satire that evokes the iconography of the day. Although he was not to return to the ballad again, *Masque* demonstrates the possibilities of the genre and its appropriateness as a method of engaging a diverse readership. Had it been published at the time of writing, it could have contributed invaluablely to the ballad tradition, fuelling generic experimentation with ideological daring. Despite the failure of publication in 1820, *Masque* has enjoyed and continues to enjoy success over the ensuing two centuries and has been used by politicians ranging from Ghandi to Thabo Mbeki, as well as the student protestors in Tiananmen Square.⁹ It was performed superbly by Maxine Peake at the Manchester International Festival in 2013 and continues to be read at events commemorating the massacre.

As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.¹⁰

I met Murder on the way-
He had a mask¹¹ like Castlereagh –¹²
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds¹³ followed him:

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon,¹⁴ an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.¹⁵

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth,¹⁶ next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile¹⁷ rode by.

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.¹⁸

Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.¹⁹

And he wore a kingly crown;
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
And on his brow this mark I saw –
'I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW.'

With a pace stately and fast,
Over English²⁰ land he passed,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

And a mighty troop around,
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword,
For the service of the Lord.

And with glorious triumph²¹ they
Rose through England proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.²²

O'er the fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the Pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down,
Till they came to London town.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,
Felt his heart with terror sicken
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers, who did sing
'Thou art God, and Law, and King.

'We have waited, weak and lone
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold.

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering – ‘Thou art Law and God. –

Then all cried with one accord,
‘Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!’

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

For he knew the Palaces
Of our Kings were rightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,²³
And the gold-inwoven robe.

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,²⁴
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned Parliament²⁵

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope,²⁶ she said:
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

‘My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

‘He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me-
Misery, oh, Misery!’

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses’ feet,
Expecting, with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak, and frail
Like the vapour of a vale:

Till as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

It grew-a Shape arrayed in mail²⁷
Brighter than the viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;
And those plumes its light rained through
Like a shower of crimson dew.

With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men-so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked, – but all was empty air.

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

And the prostrate multitude
Looked – and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien:

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth;
The Horse of Death tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
A sense awakening and yet tender
Was heard and felt – and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose

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

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

‘Men of England, heirs of Glory,²⁸
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another;

‘Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,²⁹
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many – they are few.³⁰

‘What is Freedom? – ye can tell
That which slavery is, too well –
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

’Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants’ use to dwell,

‘So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

“Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,
When the winter winds are bleak, –
They are dying whilst I speak.

“Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye;

“Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e’er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

‘Paper coin-that forgery³¹
Of the title-deeds, which ye

Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

‘Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

‘And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
’Tis to see the Tyrant’s crew
Ride over your wives and you –
Blood is on the grass like dew.

‘Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood – and wrong for wrong –
Do not thus when ye are strong.

‘Birds find rest, in narrow nest
When weary of their wingèd quest;
Beasts find fare, in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air.

‘Asses, swine, have litter spread
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one –
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none!

‘This is Slavery – savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den
Would endure not as ye do –
But such ills they never knew.

‘What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand – tyrants would flee
Like a dream’s dim imagery:

‘Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

‘For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
In a neat and happy home.

“Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude
No – in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

“To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

“Thou art Justice – ne’er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England – thou
Shield’st alike the high and low.

“Thou art Wisdom – Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

“Thou art Peace – never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.³²

“What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood?
It availed, Oh, Liberty,
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

“Thou art Love – the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee,

“Or turn their wealth to arms, and make
War for thy beloved sake
On wealth, and war, and fraud-whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

“Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

“Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless

Art thou – let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

‘Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

‘Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

‘From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village, and town
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others’ misery or their own,

‘From the workhouse and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold –

‘From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares –³³

‘Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

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

‘Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold –

‘Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free –

'Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes³⁴ let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

'Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

'Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

'Let the fixèd bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

'Let the horsemen's scimitars³⁵
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars³⁶
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

'Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,

'And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armèd steeds
Pass, a disregarded shade
Through your phalanx undismayed.

'Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute,

'The old laws of England – they
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo – Liberty!

'On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state

Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

'And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew, –
What they like, that let them do.

'With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.³⁷

'Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

'Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand –
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

'And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company.³⁸

'And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

'And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again – again – again –

'Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number –
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you –
Ye are many –they are few.'

Notes

- 1 The title of the poem varies between 'masque' and 'mask'. Jack Donovan notes that Shelley used 'Mask' in the press-copy of the poem (P.B. Shelley,

- The Poems of Shelley*, ed. Jack Donovan, Cian Duffy, Kelvin Everest and Michael Rossington (London: Longman, 2011), vol. 3, p. 29). However in a letter to Hunt in November 1819, Shelley used ‘masque’ (P.B. Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. F.L. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), vol. 2, p. 152). When first published in 1832, the title *The Masque of Anarchy* was used, although *The Mask of Anarchy* is used in modern editions (Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy* (London: Moxon, 1832); Shelley, *Poems*, vol. 3, pp. 35, 27).
- 2 R. Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (New York: New York Review Book, 1994), p. 532; K. Everest, *English Romantic Poetry* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), p. 45. I have written elsewhere on *The Masque of Anarchy* and Shelley’s other Peterloo poems. For a more detailed examination of this text, see A. Morgan, ‘Shelley and Peterloo: Radical, Nationalist and Balladeer’, PhD Thesis, University of Salford, 2012.
 - 3 Shelley, *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 117. Peacock regularly sent copies of the *Examiner* to Shelley in Italy. John Tyas’ eye-witness account of Peterloo was reprinted in the *Examiner* on 22 August. Post from England would routinely take two weeks to arrive in Italy. There is no evidence to suggest that Shelley had access to any of the other radical periodicals of the time.
 - 4 The letter is dated 6 September and the quotation is from Shelley’s play, *The Cenci* (Shelley, *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 117).
 - 5 Hunt’s imprisonment for libelling the Prince Regent in 1813 had understandably made him cautious with regard to the content of the *Examiner*. According to Nicholas Roe, Hunt had a real fear of being transported if he was prosecuted for libel a second time (*Fiery Heart: The First Life of Leigh Hunt* (London: Pimlico, 2005), p. 323).
 - 6 The concept of the vision, a dream-like state in which the imagination flourishes, is a staple feature of Romantic poetry from Blake’s prophetic verse in poems such as *The Four Zoas*, through Coleridge’s hallucinatory ‘Kubla Khan’ to Keats’ longing for oblivion in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’.
 - 7 For Shelley, anarchy represents the result of tyranny.
 - 8 Shelley also used the ballad genre for his little-known poem, ‘The Ballad of the Starving Mother’, written in 1820. See Morgan, ‘Shelley and Peterloo’.
 - 9 T. Morton, ‘Receptions’, in T. Morton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 35–41.
 - 10 Shelley travelled to Italy in the spring of 1818 and was in Livorno when he heard news of Peterloo early in September 1819. The trope of awakening permeates the poem, beginning with Shelley being roused from sleep, and concluding with his invocation to the people to awaken. See the introduction to Chapter 1 for more information on the use of this trope in radical poetry.
 - 11 See p. 127 for the motif of the mask.
 - 12 Lord Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary. In the 1832 version, ‘Castlereagh’ is printed in full whereas Eldon is printed as ‘E—’ and Sidmouth as ‘*:*’ (Shelley, *Masque*, ll. 2, 3). I can only assume that these differing devices

were used because at the time of publication, Sidmouth and Eldon were still alive, whereas Castlereagh was dead.

- 13 Donovan notes that the 'seven bloodhounds' refers to the seven nations, including Britain, comprising the Holy Alliance which agreed to postpone the abolition of slavery in 1815 (*The Poems of Shelley*, p. 37). For more information on the image of bloodhounds, see pp. 12 and 63n.73.
- 14 Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor. Shelley's antipathy towards Eldon was in part due to Eldon presiding over the 1816 court case in which Shelley lost custody of his children by his first wife, Harriet (Holmes, *Shelley*, p. 356). Eldon also presided over the treason trials of Horne Tooke and John Thelwall in 1794, both of whom were acquitted.
- 15 In 'To the Lord Chancellor', written in 1819 or 1820, Shelley describes Eldon thus: And – (for thou canst outweep the crocodile) – / By thy false tears – those millstones braining men – (P.B. Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. Z. Leader and M. O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 450, ll. 47–8).
- 16 Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary.
- 17 According to the *OED*, 'the crocodile was fabulously said to weep, either to allure a man for the purpose of devouring him, or while (or after) devouring him'. This allusion to the duplicitous behaviour of the crocodile may have influenced Shelley's selection of this image, although it was in fact Lord Eldon, rather than Sidmouth, who, when Attorney-General, was famous for weeping as he persuaded juries to hang men (Donovan, *The Poems of Shelley*, p. 38). In *Political Showman at Home*, Hone and Cruikshank also depict the crocodile as weeping in order to attract its prey: '[It] sheds tears, and, attracting the unwary, suddenly darts upon a man and gorges him with all he has' (W. Hone and G. Cruikshank, *The Political Showman at Home* (London: Hone, 1821), n. pag).
- 18 Shelley is attacking what he saw as weapons of the state: the judiciary, the church, the aristocracy and *agents provocateur*.
- 19 An allusion to *Revelation*: 'And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth' (Rev. 6.8). Shelley may also have been familiar with Benjamin West's 1796 painting *Death on a Pale Horse* and James Gillray's 1795 caricature, *Presages of the Millennium*, depicting a naked Pitt riding a Hanoverian horse over the people.
- 20 'England' and 'English' are used twelve times in this poem, more than any other poem by Shelley.
- 21 'Triumph' also means a procession, usually to celebrate a military victory.
- 22 Shelley could be alluding to the drunken state of the MYC.
- 23 Orb – another symbol of monarchy.
- 24 Bank of England and Tower of London – symbols of state power. The

- capture of these buildings was one of the aims of the failed Spa Fields Uprising in 1816.
- 25 Ministers received a pension to ensure their loyalty to the government (Donovan, *The Poems of Shelley*, p. 44).
 - 26 Haywood asserts that Hope is 'a hybrid symbol of self-sacrifice and resistance, and a figure who is clearly based on the trampled women who were at the visual and moral centre of the popular iconography of Peterloo' (I. Haywood, 'Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy* and the Visual Iconography of Female Distress', in P. Connell and N. Leask, eds, *Romanticism and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 153). The introduction to Chapter 3 explores the presentation of women in Peterloo poems. Shelley often used females as political figures in his poems, such as *Queen Mab* and *Laon and Cythna*.
 - 27 The identity of the chivalric Shape appears deliberately obscure, or, in the words of Haywood, 'allegorically unfixed' ('Shelley's *Mask*', p. 161). Donovan suggests it 'recalls the warrior Britannia of popular prints' (*The Poems of Shelley*, p. 46). See the introduction to Chapter 5 for a discussion on the theme of chivalry in the Peterloo poems.
 - 28 The identity of the speaker has been subject to critical debate: Holmes suggests Hope (*Shelley*, p. 535); Scrivener suggests Britannia (*Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 205); Cross suggests Mother Earth (A. Cross, "What a World We Make the Oppressor and the Oppressed": George Cruikshank, Percy Shelley and the Gendering of Revolution in 1819', *Journal of English Literary History*, 71 (2004), p. 14). Haywood cites the speaker as the Earth, 'a national female icon', who represents both Britannia and Liberty, part of the female iconography post-Waterloo ('Shelley's *Mask*', pp. 164–5). I share Haywood's view that the voice is the embodiment of English nationalism.
 - 29 Webb notes that positive meanings underlie many of Shelley's negatives, as is the case here with 'unvanquishable' alluding to the strength and courage of the people (T. Webb, 'The Unascended Heaven: Negatives in *Prometheus Unbound*', in K. Everest (ed.), *Essays from the Gregynog Conference* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp 37–62, at p. 57).
 - 30 See the Introduction to Chapter 1 for an exploration of the exhortatory ballad.
 - 31 Even though banknotes had been in circulation since the end of the seventeenth century, the Bank of England issued £1 and £2 notes during the Napoleonic Wars due to the drain on its gold reserves. Like many others, Shelley was deeply suspicious of paper money (P.B. Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. Z. Leader and M. O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 761).
 - 32 The alliance of Prussia, Russia, Austria, Holland, Spain, Sardinia and Great Britain which defeated France and the values of the French Revolution.
 - 33 Weeds.

- 34 Shields.
- 35 Scimitars are short, curved swords, associated with 'the military force of Oriental despotism' (*OED*). Comparisons between the MYC and Turkish soldiers can be found in Chapter 5, number 8.
- 36 Meteors.
- 37 Ghandi was influenced by Shelley's views on passive resistance (Leader and O'Neill (eds), *The Major Works* p. 762).
- 38 Shelley anticipates that regular troops, such as the Fifteenth Hussars, would reject the use of violence on the English people.