Between March 1820 and April 1821 Percy Bysshe Shelley, then residing in Tuscany, awakened to the idea that he might assume agency as the mediator of anxious expectation at a time of political crisis in Europe. This essay examines one of his sources of news during this period, Galignani’s Messenger, an English-language daily newspaper published in Paris and distributed on the continent. It also considers Shelley’s use of the London-based Morning Chronicle as a vehicle for publishing a poem and letter that raised awareness of contemporary political events in Naples and Greece. Finally, it suggests that in early 1821 he may have had in mind the publication of a poem and a prose-piece in Italian in a Florentine newspaper or monthly review to the same end. As well as seeking to avail himself of the fastest possible means of publishing responses to breaking news, daily newspapers enabled him to secure audiences denied by the poor sales of volumes of his poetry. Furthermore he could circumvent the editors with whom he had placed much of his work since autumn 1816, Leigh Hunt and Charles Ollier, both of whom from autumn 1819 had been hesitant about publishing some of the works he had sent them. Before examining instances of this newspaper-genre of his oeuvre, an outline is offered of why news was important to Shelley between March 1820 and April 1821, the channels through which he received it, and some examples of his earlier writings prompted by widely-reported political events.

A significant amount of Shelley’s poetry and prose was occasioned by news reports and intended for immediate public consumption. The Mask of Anarchy, written in September 1819 in Livorno and sent to Leigh Hunt later that month for publication in his London weekly newspaper, the Examiner but not published until 1832, is only the most celebrated example. This poem and some of the prose pamphlets he published while living in England testify to his ability to identify and represent events that encapsulated civic division with the aim of instilling debate and shifting public opinion. This opportunistic bent may be seen as evidence of an early political instinct that in a letter of June 1822, one of his last, he both acknowledged but was glad to have kept in abeyance: ‘I once thought to study these affairs & write or act in them – I am glad that my good genius said refrain.’ Earlier cases in point are A Letter to Lord Ellenborough (1812), ‘occasioned’, its title-page states, by the imprisonment of Daniel Isaac Eaton on a charge of publishing a blasphemous libel attributed to Thomas Paine entitled The Age of Reason: Part the Third, and An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte (1817), prompted by the ‘news … nearly at the same time’ as the death of the Regent’s daughter in...
November 1817, of the hanging of three Nottinghamshire men, Jeremiah Brandreth, Isaac Ludlam, and William Turner for high treason. In these instances, widely-circulated national news provided the pretext for Shelley to instruct an already-educated audience philosophically and historically in the extendedly discursive manner appropriate to the pamphlet form. Milton must have been a prominent role-model in this regard along with William Godwin. As recent editors have noted, accounts Shelley read in ‘American papers’ (Letters, i. 272) – that is, presumably, reports from American sources reproduced in the British press – inspired an early poem, ‘To the Republicans of North America’ (written in 1812 but not published until 1890), addressed to Mexican rebels against Spanish colonial rule. But what of his writings published in newspapers before his removal to Italy in March 1818? On returning from Switzerland in autumn 1816 he submitted ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’ to Hunt for publication in the Examiner (where it appeared on 19 January 1817), that paper also publishing his review of Godwin’s novel Mandeville (28 December 1817) and what has come to be his best-known sonnet ‘Ozymandias’ (11 January 1818). But such publications owe as much to Hunt’s method of patronizing young poets as to Shelley actively seeking a newspaper outlet for writings that were, anyway, hardly ‘occasioned’. The obvious point that daily newspapers hardly feature as conduits of his writings during his time in England because there is little evidence that he sought to publish in them has some weight. But another reason that even the possibility of this channel was closed to him was his inability, in marked contrast with Byron, to command a profile early in his career such as to make him sought after by influential editors and publishers of newspapers and periodicals.

Residence in Italy from April 1818 altered his relationship to news. In September 1819, in the aftermath of Peterloo, he was acutely aware of his remoteness from, and anxious to be nourished by, the latest reports from England, as his plea to Thomas Love Peacock in London makes clear: ‘Pray let me have the earliest political news which you consider of importance at this crisis’ (Letters, ii. 119). From Livorno in June 1818 Shelley had requested the Examiner regularly (Letters, ii. 18), a commission undertaken over the next three years by Peacock who also sent other periodicals including Cobett’s Political Register and the Quarterly Review. An opportunity to compensate for his feeling of dependency on reports from England evident in the autumn of 1819, presented itself between September 1820 and April 1821 when he tried to take on the role of foreign correspondent, a transmitter to England and, it seems, within Tuscany, of the breaking news of revolutions in southern Italy and of the Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Such a role was complicated during this period – when he was living in, or near, Pisa – by a tranquillity in his places of residence that amounted to isolation, partly a consequence, he noted, of Tuscany’s enlightened government relative to the rest of the Italian states (Letters, ii. 177). To get news there he had to go out and seek it.

The two-and-a-quarter-year period from January 1819 until April 1821 was one of hope for liberals such as Byron and Shelley whose publications had been critical of the principles of the Restoration of 1814–15. It marked a phase when the fabric of the political order established after Napoleon’s defeat seemed, to some contemporary observers, on the verge of crumbling. Between the uprising in Cadiz on 1 January 1820 and 8 April 1821 when the Piedmontese revolutionaries were defeated by Austrian troops at Novara, widely-reported rebellions took place in Naples, Sicily, Portugal and Modena. Some were instigated by disaffected military leaders and carbonari and resulted in monarchs being forced to accept
constitutionalist principles, amongst them – and significant, in light of the topic of this essay – freedom of the press. The constitutionalists’ cause which Shelley so publicly supported was republican in spirit yet tolerated a monarchy with limited powers, and, as suited his preference, was not revolutionary but reformist (Letters, ii. 223). However, these constitutional governments were regarded as seriously threatening by the ‘Holy Alliance’, as evidenced by Metternich’s use of the Austrian army to terminate them. It was from a wish to hear that the efforts of the Austrians and of monarchist elements in Spain to destroy constitutionalism had failed that Shelley sought news between spring 1820 and spring 1821. As Mary Shelley later recollected of this period: ‘Shelley … looked upon the struggles in Spain and Italy as decisive of the destinies of the world, probably for centuries to come. … Day after day, he read the bulletins of the Austrian army, and sought eagerly to gather tokens of its defeat.’

I

Galignani’s Messenger played a part in mediating political, literary and commercial news to Shelley in these months in a way that has not been possible to assess in detail hitherto because complete runs for 1819–21 are hard to locate. From a reference to news from England communicated by ‘some Paris Papers’ in August 1819 (Letters, ii. 115), it seems that Shelley was familiar with the Messenger by then, if not earlier, perhaps even in May 1818 when he first visited Livorno. In May and July 1820 he noted that the household took in ‘Galignani’s paper’ (Letters, ii. 193, 213), as did Mary Shelley in March and August. These, and other references to ‘papers’ in December (MWS Letters, i. 168–9), as well as the phrase ‘take in’ (Letters, ii. 193), suggest that from the beginning of 1820, the Shelleys purchased and renewed the first of its three categories of subscription ‘out of France’, three months, six months and one year. It seems almost certain that their copies of the Messenger were collected from the Post Office in Pisa or the bookseller in Livorno as advertised: ‘English Travellers in Tuscany are respectfully informed, that subscriptions to GALIGNANI’s MESSENGER are received at Pisa, by M. Averani, Director of the Post-Office; at Leghorn, by M.G. Masi, bookseller; and at Florence, by M.G. Piatti, bookseller’ (G, 12 October 1819, 4). Between August and October 1820, while at Bagni San Giuliano, their reading must have been more sporadic since they had to fetch it, or have it collected by others. The relationship between where he lived in Tuscany and his awareness of events in Europe is significant. It would be fitting if Livorno were his first point of acquaintance with the Messenger given the cosmopolitanism of that free port and its British factory. But it should be noted that while Livorno and Pisa yielded regular reports in English- and French-language newspapers like the Messenger and le Constitutionnel, such sources of printed news were frequently, in respect of Italian affairs, neither as fresh nor as authentic as his appetite required. This is clear from his letter of 18 February 1821 to Claire Clairmont in Florence, in which he seeks information about the ominous progress of the Austrian army southward. Her location meant she had access to authoritative oral and published information in Italian that he did not: ‘You send us news of Naples & Neapolitan affairs; we know nothing of them except what we hear from Florence’ (Letters, ii. 266). Thus, to Shelley, as will be shown below, the Messenger was in many respects limited, partial and unsympathetic in its coverage of constitutionalist developments on the continent as well as representative of an outlook on English politics to which Shelley was opposed.

The thoroughness of the Galignanis’ circulation of news is illuminated by Mary Shelley’s observation to Maria Gisborne a few days after the latter’s departure for England in
May 1820: ‘perhaps [you] will know more of the state of your Country from reading Galignani at Leghorn, than in England itself’ (MWS Letters, i. 145). This remark may be explained by the Messenger’s renown for reprinting generous extracts from a variety of sources including British and continental dailies and weeklies. It did so with notably more latitude than explicitly constitutionalist organs such as the Examiner and the Constitutionnel that also adopted this practice. Such a method of *bricolage* was, as Diana Cooper-Richet indicates, strategic: ‘Cette façon de travailler est à la fois économique et sage; elle n’entraine de la part des responsables aucune prise de position pour ou contre des régimes qui, jusqu’en 1881, se méfient de la presse et souhaitent la contrôler’ [this way of working was both economical and prudent; on the part of those responsible it did not involve any adoption of an opinion in favour or against regimes which, until 1881, distrusted the press and wished to control it]. In relaying and distributing news, the Messenger was also reliably fast. Typically its reports from sources such as the London Times, the Courier (a conservative populist daily described by Mary Shelley as ‘the most detestable of all papers’, MWS Letters, i. 75), and regional newspapers, are dated four or five days previously. However Shelley’s letters show that, for them, the Messenger was an ideologically impoverished source. With regard to England post-Peterloo he complained to Hunt in May 1820, ‘Of the politics of the day you never speak’, and went on to lament it being his sole news-channel: ‘I only see a Paris Paper in English filled with extracts from the Courier’ (Letters, ii. 191).

The tone of an editorial published in the Messenger shortly after the trial and conviction for blasphemy of the republican Richard Carlile indicates its hostility towards reform: ‘There is evidently a patricidal spirit abroad … which if not checked … will … in its pestyential and relentless course, remove every vestige of our fine hallowed and equal institutions, and make indeed a desert of England’s enviable soil’ (G, 26 October 1819, 3). Had he read it, this kind of language would have no doubt have given added edge to Shelley’s entirely different judgement of Carlile’s trial in a letter (Letters, ii. 136–48) to the editor of the Examiner that Hunt did not publish. A few months later, in marked contrast with the jubilation expressed in the Constitutionnel and the Examiner, the Messenger reacted to news of the uprising in Naples of 1–2 July with regret: ‘We are sorry to inform our readers that, by accounts from Naples, which reached Paris yesterday, several Regiments were in a state of insubordination there, demanding a new Constitution similar to that lately granted to Spain. We hope, in our next, to be able to announce the restoration of tranquillity in that Capital’ (G, 18 July 1820, 4). But the Messenger’s politics was not consistently reactionary as is evident from its publication, as Shelley began to draft his ‘Ode to Liberty’, of ‘An Ode, Sung at the Spanish Dinner in London; Freely Translated from the Spanish of Mr. Segura’. The poem begins: ‘Raise the song, for all around / Liberty and Love resound! / Terror lives no more in Spain, / Terror now has ceas’d to reign’ (G, 2 May 1820, 3). Moreover, occasionally the sheer breadth of the Messenger’s coverage was a means to direct inspiration, as in July 1820, when it ‘copied some excellent remarks from the Examiner’ (Letters, ii. 213) about the trial of Queen Caroline that must have fuelled *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1820). Quite probably Shelley felt distant from, if not wished to see himself as altogether outside the readership Cooper-Richet identifies as targeted by the Galignanis: ‘l’aristocratie et la bourgeoisie cosmopolites, les gens de lettres et les intellectuels, les hommes d’affaires et les industriels internationaux’ [the aristocracy and cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, intellectuals and men of letters, businessmen and international industrialists] (130). Notwithstanding such a
clientele, the paper’s commercial orientation had its uses. Advertisements in the *Messenger* of 2, 5 and 7 June 1820 prompted Mary Shelley’s awareness of a rival scheme to that sponsored by Shelley through Maria Gisborne’s son, Henry Reveley, for the construction of a steamboat that would ply the Mediterranean (*MWS Letters*, i. 155).

Above all, Shelley would have found in the pages of the *Messenger* further affirmation of his poetry’s lack of worldly success. On 12 April 1820, a small advertisement for *The Cenci* appeared at the foot of the middle column on the back page. The wording – which to my knowledge has not been recorded hitherto – confirms the received view that the Shelleys were in error in believing the play to have been pirated by the ‘rascal’ Galignani (*Letters*, ii. 188, 188 n. 1 and *MWS Letters*, i. 155, 157 n. 6):

“This Day is Published, price 3 Francs, / THE CENCI, A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS, / BY PERCY B SHELLEY. / To be had at Galignani’s Library, 18, Rue Vivienne, [P]aris’ (G, 12 April 1820, 4). The first edition of *The Cenci* had been printed at Livorno the previous September then published in London in March. Rather than reprinting it, as the Shelleys supposed, it appears that the Galignanis had instead acquired copies to sell in Paris at less than the London price. There are further reasons why Shelley was hostile to the *Messenger* in respect of its literary coverage which was discerning and stylish. It included prominent advertisements of the Galignanis’ in-house editions of the poetical works of Byron and Moore, a reminder of their lowly method of retailing his tragedy. The paper recorded Maria Edgeworth’s arrival in Paris (G, 28 April 1820, 3), reproduced an article from *The Scotsman* announcing the publication of Scott’s *The Monastery* (G, 7 April 1820, 3), and published poems by, amongst others, Hogg (G, 24 November 1819, 3), Clare (G, 25 November 1819, 4), Campbell (G, 27 November 1819, 3), Burns (G, 30 December 1819, 3), and Moore (G, 8 February 1820, 4). The *Messenger* therefore would have been for Shelley a merely smart ‘quality’ broadsheet that in its commercial orientation, espousal of conservative opinion and promotion of literary celebrity reminded him what he was up against.

II

By contrast, the *Morning Chronicle* was a natural home for up-to-the-minute continental news and offered Shelley an opportunity to raise his profile with a more sharply defined, metropolitan audience. It was ‘liberal’ in the sense of ‘favourable to constitutional change’, a recently-established English usage (*OED* 5) that, as Peter Thorslev notes, finds an echo in the description of Spanish constitutionalists in the early nineteenth century as ‘liberales’. Shelley’s familiarity with the *Morning Chronicle* may be embedded in the hinterland of his upbringing in a Whig home that Ian Gilmour notes was sufficiently ‘conservative’ to foster dissent. At the age of seventeen he aspired, albeit jokingly, to place his poetry in it (*Letters*, i. 16). While at University College, Oxford he placed advertisements in the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Times*, and the *Oxford University and City Herald* for the publication of his Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things (1811; recently rediscovered), which was itself intended to attract funds for the Irish journalist, Peter Finnerty, then languishing in prison for an alleged libel on Castlereagh. On 9 December 1817 the *Morning Chronicle* published, at Godwin’s behest and unknown to Shelley (though apparently to his gratification), a modified part of his letter to Godwin praising Mandeville, under the heading ‘Extract of a Letter from Oxfordshire’.

Shelley’s interventions in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1820–21 are illuminated too by his expedition to Dublin in 1812. As Timothy Webb notes, recollections of this visit were no doubt prompted in Pisa in March 1820 by his meeting Lady Mountcashell (‘Mrs Mason’).
who had associated in 1798 with some of those United Irishmen Shelley had met in 1812. His memories of Ireland must also have been re-ignited by reports in the Messenger of renewed unrest there involving the Ribbonmen in the early months of 1820. One of the pamphlets he published in Dublin, An Address to the Irish People (1812), invoked the famous judgement in favour of James Perry, editor of the Morning Chronicle, at his trial in 1793 (Prose, 32). However, to identify the Morning Chronicle as a ‘Whig opposition newspaper’ during the era of the Liverpool administration is not quite accurate and underestimates its forthright reputation. The Whig party was frustrated at Perry’s unwillingness to toe the line and Cobbett praised its ‘spirit of independence rarely to be met with’. Shelley was very likely to have been aware that its publication of politically-engaged verse for an educated readership in the 1790s included Robert Southey’s two first published poems, one of them a ‘Botany-Bay Eclogue’. Perry’s links with Leigh Hunt must also have been known to him. In 1810, after reprinting a paragraph critical of George III from the Examiner, he was tried for libel (though found ‘not guilty’). The Morning Chronicle’s affinity with the Examiner in its willingness to risk prosecution by criticizing the British monarchy is one pertinent context for its selection by Shelley as a medium to promote the European constitutional revolutions of 1820–21. Another was that from the beginning of Perry’s editorship – when he had gone to Paris to report on the new revolutionary government in 1792, to Shelley’s time in Italy, when ill health forced him to retire – the Morning Chronicle had a pre-eminent reputation as the national daily most committed to reporting continental news from first-hand sources. Ian Christie notes that, in the 1790s, ‘there is no doubt that Perry’s dispatches from Paris helped to make the Morning Chronicle a phenomenal success. Edmund Burke, who deplored its politics, referred angrily at this time to its “amazing circulation”. This reputation apparently extended to the post-war period and circulated on the continent. Byron informed Douglas Kinnaird in a letter of March 1817 from Venice that, ‘The Morning Chronicle has been taken out of your letter I suppose in France – it is useless to send newspapers – they hardly ever arrive – at least the opposition ones.” Its specialism in European news, as well as Godwin’s connection with Perry, explains its publication in January 1819 of a letter by Charles Clairmont (half-brother of Claire) from Valencia. In 1814 Ferdinand VII, newly restored to his throne in Spain, had declared the Constitution of 1812 null and void. In his letter, Clairmont reported the brutal suppression by General Elio of a carbonarist uprising, including a vivid eye-witness account of the execution of its leaders. His final sentence foresees the future of the restored monarchy in Spain as untenable: ‘the eyes of the Spaniards have been opened by the French war to the state of political and religious tyranny under which they have sufficiently groaned, and certain it is that neither can be of long duration’ (Morning Chronicle, 13 February 1819, 4). The anticipated triumph of the constitutionalists’ cause is thus set against the violence used to try to suppress it. In this way, Clairmont’s 1819 letter anticipates Shelley’s use of the Morning Chronicle in 1820–21 as a medium for appealing to the British public from the front line of southern Europe to support a political cause with momentum but with no guaranteed success, prophesied rather than achieved. As first noted by Charles E. Robinson, Shelley’s ‘Ode to Naples’ was first published in the Morning Chronicle on 26 September 1820 above the initials ‘P. B. S.’ Shelley may have been aware that the Constitutionnel had, on 12 February 1820, reproduced reports of the uprising in Cadiz from the Morning Chronicle. The possibility therefore of the ode’s publication leading to further outings, perhaps
even translation, in other constitutionalist newspapers and periodicals in Britain and on the continent cannot have escaped him. Nor could the possible extent of its audience. It may in fact have been the most read, or most potentially read, poem of Shelley’s published in his lifetime. The daily circulation figure for the Morning Chronicle in 1820 was about 3,100, admittedly less than its chief rivals, the Times at 7,000 and the Courier at 5,000, but still enough to give the poem significant reach through Coffee Houses and other means of circulation. First recorded by White (ii. 223), there was a subsequent two-part printing on 1 and 8 October 1820 in the Military Register Historical, Political, Literary & c. for the Army, Navy, Colonies, and Fashionable World, a weekly ‘circulated throughout the United Kingdom and to the British Isles, the Continent of Europe, Mediterranean, East Indies, British Africa, America, and the West Indies, including Hayti’.

In its Morning Chronicle incarnation Shelley’s ode may also be read as an answering-call to Byron’s ‘Ode (From the French)’ of March 1816, one of several he had published anonymously in the same paper. Its single note, ‘Murat’s remains are said to have been torn from the grave and burnt’, refers to the vengeful behaviour of the restored King of Naples, Ferdinand IV, after defeating Joachim Murat who had, in 1815, called upon Italians ‘to liberate themselves from foreigners and set up an independent state’. Murat, who was a hero of quasi-Napoleonic proportions to Byron (Byron &J, iv. 330), supplies an echo for Shelley’s ode because it was residual Muratist elements who were partly responsible for the Neapolitan uprising of July 1820. Furthermore the note explaining the significance of the viper in ‘Fair Milan / Within whose veins long ran / The Viper’s palsyng venom’ (ll. 110–12) – ‘The device of the Visconti – whose tyranny has been inherited by the German Emperors’ – resonates with Byron’s in the precision of its topical reference. Here Shelley invites the notorious Visconti warlords of medieval Italy to be seen as direct ancestors of Francis I (Emperor of Austria since 1806). Both poems thus seek, at different moments in the post-war, Restoration era, to make the British public conscious of the absurdity of the Italian peninsula being in thrall to Northern tyrants. The close of Byron’s ode predicts the violent demise of the newly-restored régimes, a prophecy and threat he later insisted was confirmed by the assassination of the Bourbon Duc de Berri in February 1820:

Even in this low world of care, Freedom ne’er shall want an heir, Millions breathe, but to inherit, Her unconquerable spirit – When once more her hosts assemble, Let the tyrants only tremble; – Smile they at this idle threat? Crimson tears will follow yet. (Morning Chronicle, 15 March 1816, 3).

Four-and-a-half years later, the speaker in the concluding Epode of Shelley’s ode invokes the ‘Great Spirit, deepest Love!’ (149), also addressed as ‘Spirit of beauty!’ (155), within an idiom of typically Shelleyan complexity as, at once, having the capacity to destroy the enemy and to inject hope:

Bid the Earth’s plenty kill! Bid thy bright Heaven above Whilst Light and Darkness bound it Be their tomb, who planned To make it ours and thine! Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill And raise thy sons, as o’er the prone horizon Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire! Be man’s high hope and unextinct desire The instruments to work thy will divine! (ll. 160–9)

Yeats’s gloss on these lines is enlightening: ‘[Shelley] calls the spirit of beauty liberty, because despotism, and perhaps … all authority,
pluck virtue from her path towards beauty, and because it leads us by that love whose service is perfect freedom’. It allows us to see that they are to be read as provisional. They refuse the idea that the constitutional government’s future is a foregone conclusion in order to make clear that its success is conditional on the newspaper’s readers embracing its cause. Yet the fiery imagery of the ‘high hope and unextinct desire’ (l. 168) (‘unextinct’ in the sense of ‘unextinguished’) which follow from its ‘sons’ being filled with ‘harmonizing ardours’ makes it natural that the ultimate success of that cause is assured. Thus, in the manner of ‘A Defence of Poetry’, his ode constitutes writing as poetic legislation. So does the final instalment in his *Morning Chronicle* corpus, the translation he made with Mary Shelley of the Greek General Ypsilanti’s ‘eloquent & Beautiful Cry of War to his countrymen’ (*MWS Letters*, i. 188), communicated to them by Alexander Mavrocordato and sent with a covering letter by Shelley to the *Morning Chronicle* on 5 April 1821. Although their translation, the draft manuscript of which has been edited twice in the past decade, was anticipated by another printed on 13 April, his letter appeared later that month. Alan Weinberg’s comment that ‘[i]n actively promoting the Greek cause, the Shelleys were encouraging the British Government to abandon its possible support for the Turks’ (30) poises this intervention, like ‘Ode to Naples’, between alarmism and hope. In my concluding remarks, I speculate that another ode and prose-piece by Shelley, this time written in Italian, may have been intended to further the cause that had prompted his ‘Ode to Naples’ of August–September 1820. His medium now would possibly be the columns of a Florentine newspaper or periodical whose readers he wanted, in a similar way to those of the *Morning Chronicle*, to enjoin to reformist aspiration.

III ——————

The prose-piece, a manuscript draft known as the ‘Sgricci review’, has been discussed by its editors elsewhere but requires brief mention. It is an account of an ‘accademia’ [performance] of a tragedy, *La Morte di Ettore* [The Death of Hector], by the ‘improvvisatore’ [improviser] Tommaso Sgricci, attended by the Shelleys in Pisa on 22 January (*MWS Letters*, i. 181–2). As William Michael Rossetti first observed, it ‘appears to have been done for publication in some review’. Of the ‘Sgricci review’, P.M.S. Dawson notes that ‘it is of interest that Shelley uses the first person plural to associate himself with his Italian audience.’ In a letter in Italian to Hunt of 3 December 1820, Mary Shelley had commented that Sgricci’s subject ‘era il destino futuro d’Italia’ [was the future destiny of Italy] (*MWS Letters*, i. 163). That both Shelleys wrote in Italian in December 1820 to February 1821, at the very time when they were most entranced by Sgricci’s powers and when the constitutionalists’ cause was at its most critical juncture, is suggestive. Their assumption of an Italian voice seemed to be a means of authenticating their commitment to that cause, a posture that was encouraged by Sgricci’s ability to speak, apparently spontaneously, in any number of different voices.

The second example of Italian ventriloquizing is the surviving portions of Shelley’s draft and fair copy of ‘Ode alla Libertà’, a translation of his ‘Ode to Liberty’ based on the text of the poem published in *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts, with Other Poems* (1820). Its command of Italian is comparable to that of the ‘Sgricci review’ and superior to his translations of passages from *Laon and Cythna* and *Prometheus Unbound* which were probably done in late October or November 1820. Jean de Palacio thought the translation of the ode was made ‘pour l’édition de la Contessina’ [for the edification of the daughter of the Count [i.e. Emilia Viviani]]; but, like the ‘Sgricci
review’, its intended destination is more likely to have been a Florentine newspaper such as the Gazzetta di Firenze, or the Antologia (a cosmopolitan literary monthly edited by G.P. Vieusseux launched in January 1821 with an explicit commitment to publishing translations of reviews and poems from other European languages into Italian). It seems reasonable to suppose that the purpose of the ode’s Italian incarnation was thus to shape Italian public opinion in favour of the cause of the Neapolitan constitutional government now under threat both from the advancing Austrian army and internal divisions within Italy and Naples itself. This threat from within is noted in a report from Naples in Galignani’s Messenger of 12 January 1821 that indicates the scope for such a rallying cry to unite the constitutionalists. It announces the intention of their general, Guglielmo Pepe, to ‘place before the eyes of the Prince Regent … the names of the Intendants [etc.] … who do not display all the necessary energy in order to second the national enthusiasm, in a moment so decisive of the glory of the people which compose the Two Sicilies’ (4).

It seems very likely that Shelley would have known the five odes that make up Vittorio Alfieri’s L’America libera (1781–3) and Ugo Foscolo’s two odes of 1797, Bonaparte Liberatore and Ai Novelli Repubblicani. His Italian translation of ‘Ode to Liberty’ allowed it to be identified with this recent, native tradition of politically libertarian odes. He must have been aware too that a translation into Italian (in a portion of the manuscript of ‘Ode alla Libertà’ that is now lost) of his ode’s call upon Italy to free itself from Austrian domination would have resonated directly with the sentiments of many Italians in early 1821: ‘O Italy, / Gather thy blood into thy heart; repress / The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces’ (‘Ode to Liberty’, ll. 208–10). Shelley’s imperfect Italian in both efforts is accompanied by a bold and, in retrospect, vain attempt to challenge the historically-entrenched divisions in the Italian peninsula through an English idiom of political freedom to be found in the columns of the Morning Chronicle and the Examiner. Thus it may be proposed that the translation of his ‘Ode to Liberty’ from a Spanish to an Italian context, and from the English to Italian language, is accompanied by a re-orientation in respect of audience, from a London-based readership of a volume of poems (all too small, in Shelley’s case), to a Tuscan newspaper-reading intelligentsia. If this hypothesized destination of these two Italian writings by Shelley is correct, then newspapers and periodicals may be seen as his readiest means to shape the world’s destinies in international fashion.

Notes
1. I am grateful to the following institutions and their staff for enabling the research undertaken here: All Souls College, the Bodleian Library and the Taylor Institution Library, University of Oxford, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the British Library, Geheimes Staatsarchiv PK, Berlin, and Newcastle University. For help of various kinds I am indebted to Dr. Kiera Chapman, Dr. J.P. Donovan, Dr. Ann Gardiner, Prof. Dr. J. Kloosterhuis, Prof. Nicholas Roe, Dr. Susanne Schmid, Dr. Elinor Shaffer and anonymous readers. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Gerald Bevan kindly corrected my translations from the French.
6. I have consulted September 1819–June 1821
issues at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv PK, Berlin, to my knowledge, the only extant and publicly-available complete run between these dates in Europe.

7. The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, ed. Betty T. Bennett (3 vols, Baltimore, 1980–8), i. 140–1, 158.


16 'Talk concerning the Irish rebellion’ in Mary Shelley’s journal-entry of 20 February 1820 may therefore not refer to the uprising of 1798, as supposed by Timothy Webb in the essay cited in note 14; and by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (eds) in The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814–44 (2 vols, Baltimore, 1987), i. 309 note 3.


29. This text is based on that published in my ‘Claire Clairmont’s Fair Copy of Shelley’s “Ode to Naples”’: A Rediscovered Manuscript, Review of English Studies, 56 (2005), 59–89, though with some minor changes.


34. Dawson, 20.

