“Dangerously Brainy” Women and their Male Editors

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Department of English in Candidacy for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honors in English

Advised by Taylor Walle

Second Reader: Lesley Wheeler

Danielle Hughson

Washington and Lee University

Lexington, Virginia

April 2018

Table of Contents

Dedications and Acknowledgments

Many thank yous follow to those across the world—in Coeur d'Alene and in Mountain View, in Lexington and in Nashville, in Dingle and Oxford—who supported me throughout this project. To everyone who has read drafts or excerpts (willingly or unwillingly), thank you for always affirming that my ideas were sound and my arguments were clear when I could not see straight enough to tell anymore. To everyone who encouraged me to pursue this project and always believed in my capabilities more than I did, thank you for your endless support and occasional blind faith.

In Oxford: Glyn Redworth, thank you for always challenging me on my ideas and for encouraging me at the very beginning of this project. Christine Gerrard, thank you for pushing me to connect with primary texts and not rely on other people's scholarship, but also for long, sunlight afternoons in Oxford discussing Sylvia Plath and the injustices done to her by Ted Hughes. Kenneth Fincham, who not only allowed me but also encouraged me to return to Oxford, was always happy to listen to my ideas no matter how early in their formulation, and who made me feel like a scholar for the first time. And Annie Persons, who read countless drafts and sat in endless coffee shops, thank you for never failing to brighten my days and my sentence structure.

In Lexington: Professor Pickett, thank you for endless confidence and reassurance, for always pushing me towards things I thought out of my reach. Professor Wheeler, for much expertise and support, and for caring about Plath as much as I do. And Professor Walle, for always liking my writing much more than I ever do, thank you for your endless patience and reassurance, and for inspiring me to be a better writer and a better researcher. I cannot thank you enough.

Then while we live, in love let's so persever,

That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Anne Bradstreet, *To My Dear and Loving Husband*

Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos

Mary Shelley, *Author's Introduction to Frankenstein, 1831*

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

Sylvia Plath, *Lady Lazarus*

Introduction

The decision to write on Anne Bradstreet, Mary Shelley, and Sylvia Plath cannot be abstracted from their gender. In the beginning of my thesis process, I was captivated by the question of how male editors affect the works of the women they edit. This led to a series of questions: Do these male editors alter texts significantly from the female writers' original purpose? What do they remove, what do they emphasize, can these choices be seen as affected by gender? And when I narrowed my interest to women who are edited by the men close to them—how does the marital or familial connection between the writer and editor affect those choices? And finally, how do literary scholars more specifically and academic audiences more generally receive, interpret, and acknowledge the writing of women after it had been edited by men? I selected Anne Bradstreet, Mary Shelley, and Sylvia Plath as the subjects of my research because of two criteria. Firstly, because they each had close familial relationships with their male editors. Secondly, because each of their biographies possessed something unique, striking, or sensational which has previously been used to reduce these women to their biography, removing focus and attention from the quality of their work.

When I decided to write on three women, and these three women in particular, I had no anticipation of the reactions I would receive from various prominent academic figures. While doing preliminary research in Oxford, I had the opportunity to meet many respected historians and literature scholars, and made a point to ask each and every one of them about these women, thinking that with their varied expertise and the high levels of respect in the academic world, a few of them might have useful suggestions about my research. I was shocked and reaffirmed by the responses. Shocked, because the responses ranged from indifference and ignorance, to vehement statements that Bradstreet was a bad writer (with the caveat that he had never actually

read Bradstreet) and Plath was overrated, laced with a condescending judgement pointed in my direction, telling me not to merely demonize Hughes like all the other feminists. The majority of the scholars I spoke with knew little to nothing about Bradstreet and rolled their eyes at me when I mentioned Plath. And yet I was reaffirmed because Bradstreet has experienced a surge of interest recently, while before she neglected by the academic community who may know her name and little else.[1] Bringing these writers into conversation with one another allows for a broader understanding of gendered editorial relationships, specifically how they do or do not progress across time.

Some may question the importance of studying these writers and their editors through the lenses of gender and relationship. As Cheryl Walker writes, "The act of writing poetry has been a fundamentally different experience for women than for men. To be poets women have risked alienation from the one group into which the patriarchy has allowed them free entry, the caste of sex—defined for women in terms of the duties of caring for others" (2). Writing and being published as a woman colors every aspect of that experience. Moreover, the roles of writer and the roles of women are frequently perceived as being mutually exclusive. Female writers overcome a drastically different set of gendered challenges than their male counterparts, such as societal expectations of women, the duties and tasks of motherhood, as well as audience perception of their work when it is published. Because of these roles and perceptions of women,

---

[1] MLA International Bibliography documents 262 sources on Anne Bradstreet, 93 of which are peer reviewed. Of those 262 sources, 160 of them have been published since 1990, indicating that Bradstreet has seen a recent surge in academic attention. This may explain why the academics I spoke to this summer had relatively little knowledge of her--many of them have been academics for upwards of forty or fifty years, and might not be as in tune with recent trends of scholarship. Furthermore, of those 160 sources, the majority of them are articles, with relatively few full length books focusing on her.
As a comparison, MLA Bibliography lists 1,144 results total and 766 results since 1990 for Sylvia Plath and 1,983 total and 1,620 since 1990 for Mary Shelley. Comparably, Bradstreet is understudied.

the material that male editors include or exclude from female writers' publications can be drastically different due to her gender. Alternatively, such as the case of Mary Shelley, the editorial relationship itself is viewed differently due to the gender of the writer and editor. Male editors, and particularly those who are related to the author whose work they are editing, curate specific images of the female author, to make her more feminine, more accessible or to address her perceived shortcomings. This male editorial control manifests in vastly different ways for Bradstreet, Shelley, and Plath but is present in all of their narratives, despite the three hundred and twenty years and oceans that separate them. Additionally, preconceived notions of femininity and female work stain the critical reception of the work of female writers, which has already been edited and changed by male editors. While Bradstreet in the 1600s, Shelley in the 1800s, and Plath in the 1900s, come from different times and lived drastically varied lives, an astonishing number of these obstacles remain constant across the years.

On the surface, Anne Bradstreet, Mary Shelley, and Sylvia Plath's differences may appear to overwhelm their similarities. While all are female writers, their differences begin with the hundreds of years separating them and do not end there, many of them caused by the time between them. Despite her remarkable achievements, Bradstreet has faded into the background of the literary world. In contrast, Shelley and Plath are household names, though for drastically different reasons. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) has become a staple on most high school reading lists. Plath has reached fame or even infamy due to her suicide and confessional poetry that intentionally allows the audience to share in her struggles with mental health and her marriage. As is to be expected, many other differences separate these three women. Bradstreet was a respected member of a Puritan community, Shelley and her husband rebelled against sexual expectations of the time, and Plath writes freely about her sexual exploits. Yet Bradstreet,

Shelley, and Plath are yoked together by their similarities. Bradstreet and Plath parallel one another, their similarities made more intriguing by their numerous differences. Bradstreet was an Englishwoman who emigrated to America, while Plath was an American woman who lived the majority of her adult life in England, married to an Englishman. Furthermore, all three women wrote about the trials of maternity, feared infertility, and discussed death. Both Bradstreet and Plath not only had poetry published posthumously, but also the posthumously published poems were considered among their most poignant and significant. By contrast, Shelley published her husband's poetry after his death. Bradstreet's first collection of poems was published first in England, and only over twenty years later in America; Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* (1963) was first released exclusively in England, coming into print in America only after her death. Finally, and most significantly, all three women's works were simultaneously liberated to print and controlled by the male figures in their lives, leaving a modern audience to wrestle with this duality of agency.

In constructing my thesis, I first engaged with secondary texts, locating myself within the academic conversation through examining the biographies and critical reception of my three writers. Because I focused on editorial control and relationships, I focused particularly on that aspect of the biographies. Then, I moved to primary texts and performed a similar process of cross-referencing for all three writers. For Anne Bradstreet, I examined both the 1650 publication of her poems and the 1678, noting which poems were included in both editions and which were individual to their respective publications. Additionally, I considered the differences in the poems themselves that appeared in both versions, which allowed me to compare how the poems changed in the twenty-eight years between publications. Because of the early dates of these publications, unfortunately there is no access to manuscripts for Bradstreet's writing, but

the alterations between poems included in both publications allow for comparison regardless. For Mary Shelley, I first examined Percy's edits on her manuscript of *Frankenstein,* and assessed the types of edits he suggested to the text, as well as evaluated their importance to the meaning of the text as a whole. Additionally, because Mary functioned as an editor to Percy in turn, I examined her influence over his texts as well, performing the same process of comparison and cross-reference. Finally, for Sylvia Plath, I examined Ted Hughes's publication of *Ariel* and compared it to Plath's original intended version and analyzed the poems which he chose to remove from his version of the collection. Then, I compared his abridged version of Plath's journals with *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (2000) and evaluated the editorial choices Hughes made and what they might reveal. As such, I kept my methodology across all three female writers relatively consistent, adapting in order to accommodate their editorial narratives as well as the logistical element of what exists to be examined.

Bradstreet, Shelley, and Plath's relationships with their male editors possess similarities across them that subvert the commonly accepted narrative of progress. One might expect Plath to have vastly more control over her work because of the shift towards increased women's rights. However, Plath faces patriarchal control even as a female writer coming much later than Bradstreet, while Bradstreet is not completely oppressed as a woman writing in the 1600s. Shelley, falling between Bradstreet and Plath, defies her father's authority, but is constrained by scholarly critics' perception of her husband's engagement with her works. The similarities in editorial narrative and critical reception among Bradstreet, Shelley, and Plath force us to consider why these obstacles continue to exist when they are so separated by time, culture, and academic focus.

Chapter One: "I like not a female poetesse at any hand"

Introduction and Biography of Anne Bradstreet

Because Anne Bradstreet's first book of poems was published in 1650, she might seem to offer a case study of editing and publishing at its most male-dominated and controlled. For example, women were among the least literate classes in seventeenth-century England with "only about 10 percent of women able to sign their names" (Snook 40). This statistic may lead one to assume that there were few to no female writers in the seventeenth-century English-speaking world. However, female authors were present in early print, "Despite the discouragements women writers faced in early modern England" (North 68). North writes, "The path leading to publication may have been more difficult for women, but, once in print, the appearance and fate of men's and women's texts were comparable" (68). Bradstreet would have faced obstacles in pursuing her writing, but more difficulties in pursuing publication. Both writing and publishing were against the expectations of femininity at this time. For example, Thomas Powell, who published *Art of Striving* in 1635, just a few short years after Bradstreet's first publication, writes, "Let them [women] learne plaine works of all kind, so they take heed of too open seeming. Instead of song and musick, let them learne cookery and laundry, and instead of reading Sir Philip Sydney's *Arcadia* let them read the grounds of huswifery. I like not a female poetesse at any hand" (Walker 4). Another example of prejudice regarding female intellectuals comes from John Winthrop, the very Puritan minister whose ship Bradstreet and her family arrived in America on, who wrote extensively in his journal on the topic of female writers in their community and "criticizing Hopkins's husband for letting his wife devote herself to intellectual work, an error which led to her loss of sanity" (Walker 5).[2] Bradstreet lived in a time

[2] Clearly, this prejudice was not held by everyone as evidenced by Bradstreet's family involvement and support of her publishing and writing career.

wherein women faced great opposition to their writing and publishing, not to mention the time constraints of their expected roles as wives and mothers. Being the first woman published in both England and America is a remarkable achievement. Bradstreet serves as a liminal figure, spanning the divide not only between countries but also between the restrictions of her gender and the literary world. Because of her exceptionalism, one must question why she has been neglected in the academic world until very recently, with so little focus placed upon her life, her poetry, and the miraculous feat she performed in reconciling her life with her writing.

Anne Bradstreet was born Anne Dudley in either 1612 or 1613, mostly likely in Northampton, England. In 1628, she married Simon Bradstreet, the son of a "nonconformist Puritan vicar" (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography). She moved to America with her new husband and her father in 1630 on the *Arabella*, eventually settling in Andover after briefly living in several other colonies. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography describes her family and her relationship with politics: "Though she herself made no direct intervention in the political or religious life of Massachusetts, Bradstreet's was one of the most politically significant families in seventeenth-century New England" (par. 4). Even though Bradstreet eventually had eight children, she was initially concerned that she would never become a mother due to the length of time it took her to conceive. Maternity and mortality twined together are important themes in her later published poetry, similar to both Mary Shelley and Sylvia Plath. Bradstreet has come to be known primarily for her confessional poems about her daily and family life, which were not published until after her death. However, her first set of published poems exclude her domestic poems; instead, this collection consists of poems with religious, political, and historical focuses (*The Tenth Muse* 1-207). Bradstreet's poetry was published in two separate seventeenth-century editions, which demonstrate this divide in poetic style.

However, these publications were overseen by two male editors, who played a large role in creating her persona as a poet. The first edition appeared in London (1650) and a later version, in Boston (1678), six years after her death (Wright 57). These two publications will be returned to and examined as sources for editorial changes made by male editors on her writing. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography cites her as "The first English woman and the first New Englander to publish a collection of original poems, and so may claim to be both the first female poet and the first colonial poet in English, and a radical figure....she is very well aware of the contemporary prejudice against women's engagement in intellectual and artistic activity" (par. 6). Bradstreet, as a woman writer in a Puritan colony in the early seventeenth-century, with her work being published on both sides of the Atlantic, is a seminal figure. Women could be and were punished for defying the order of society in these American Puritan colonies, making Bradstreet's writing and her two publications yet more significant and groundbreaking (Walker 4).

First Publication: 1650

Bradstreet's first collection of poems was published in 1650, allegedly without her consent or knowledge, by her brother-in-law, John Woodbridge. He titled it *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America.*[3] Bradstreet's lack of involvement in the publication is noted not only by Woodbridge in his introduction to the book, but also in Bradstreet's later poem "Author to her Book" wherein Bradstreet decries the unruly nature of the book that had been published without her permission.

[3] The use of the word "muse" typically connotes someone who is inspiring a work of art, not the one creating it. Thus it is interesting that Woodbridge refers to Bradstreet in this way, the title itself almost taking away from her authority as the author, not the muse.

The Tenth Muse contains a series of prefatory poems written about Bradstreet, followed by "poetic discourses" regarding the four elements, the four humors, the four ages of man, the four seasons, and the four monarchies. Additionally, it contains "A Dialogue between Old England and New" wherein Bradstreet personifies America as a daughter speaking with her mother, England (*Oxford Companion to American Literature* 84). Despite the fascinating narrative behind these poems and the fact that they defy expectations of female writers by speaking on political topics, these poems have been generally discounted as being poor in quality and thus disregarded. As Wright writes, "Also deprecated is the tenor of many of the male-authored poems prefixed to *The Tenth Muse,* which praise Bradstreet at the expense of other women: depicting her as, usually amongst her sex, poetically competent, morally solid, and both witty and wise. Most damning of all, however, has been the view that *The Tenth Muse* is quite simply, dull" (58). Wright here summarizes the majority opinion regarding Bradstreet's first publication—that the poetry of *The Tenth Muse* is not all that interesting or well-written. In part, this judgement may come due to Bradstreet's mimicry of the standard, masculine forms of poetry prominent at the time. Walker argues, "Because poetry was male-identified, Bradstreet and other women poets seem to feel that they must express the views of the masculine world even when such views diminish the status of women" (9). Thus Bradstreet was forced into a double-bind—conform to masculine standards in order to be allowed to enter into the literary conversation, but then rejected as dull for conforming to those very standards. In the nineteenth century, a rejection of serious study of Bradstreet's work was justified due to its perceived quality, which was deeply tied to her gender. Dolle writes, "Rather than literary analysis, commentary was limited to critical opinions and some patronizing concessions to her minimal talent and remarkable

accomplishments considering her sex and circumstances" (xx). Bradstreet was reduced to her remarkable narrative, precluding discussion on the poetry itself.

However, regardless of the quality of this poetry, one must ponder why Woodbridge would have gone to the trouble to have it published. As such, this first publication opens up a series of questions regarding Woodbridge's reasons for publishing Bradstreet's poems. Of the few scholars who study Bradstreet, most agree that Bradstreet was unaware of Woodbridge's decision to publish her poems. Bradstreet's ignorance of the publication is corroborated by Woodbridge, who states, in one of the prefatory poems, "This only I shall annex, I feare the displeasure of no person in the publishing of these Poems but the Authors, without whose knowledge, and contrary to her expectation, I have presumed to bring to publick view what she resolved should never in such a manner see the Sun" (*The Tenth Muse* 2). Woodbridge thus claims that this publication is without Bradstreet's knowledge and furthermore, against her express resolutions. Bradstreet's alleged unawareness is further supported by Bradstreet's poem, "Author to Her Book" that is included in the second publication of Bradstreet's work in 1678, which discusses the unformed and unprepared state of her first publication. Interestingly, Woodbridge also points out in 1650 preface that she is the only person whose displeasure he fears—thus, he does not fear any criticism for his publishing of a woman's work.

Woodbridge's statement brings up several complications. First, if he did indeed publish Bradstreet's work without her knowledge and against her express desires, his actions have violated Bradstreet's authorial agency. Woodbridge thus appears to be using her work to achieve his own goals. White puts forth a theory that, "They [the men of Bradstreet's family] felt that the publication of *The Tenth Muse* would prove, to those in England who watched the progress of the colony with critical appraisal, that opportunities for cultural development and expression,

even for women, were not lacking there" (257). As such, White hypothesizes that Woodbridge is *using* Bradstreet and her poetry to represent the blossoming culture of the New World. Woodbridge offers another reason for publication in his introduction. He writes in the introduction, "But I found that divers had gotten some scattered papers, affected them well, were likely to have sent forth broken pieces to the Authors prejudice, which I thought to prevent, as well as to pleasure those that earnestly desired the view of the whole" (*The Tenth Muse* 2). In other words, Woodbridge writes that his motivations are purely to avoid the spread of incorrect and scattered poems, as well as to allow the general public to have access to the whole collection of poems.[4] Thus another explanation for Woodbridge's decision to have Bradstreet's poetry published is as an attempt to protect his sister-in-law's writing reputation by avoiding plagiarized or incorrect copies. If so, Woodbridge thus saw value in Bradstreet's writing, which he then released to a larger audience as well as protecting it from deteriorating into inaccurate copies. However, Woodbridge's defense of Bradstreet's reputation as a writer implies that Bradstreet *had* a writerly reputation of some kind, even before his publication of her poetry in the form of *The Tenth Muse.*

While these two possible explanations are feasible arguments if one accepts that Bradstreet had no knowledge of the publication of *The Tenth Muse*, Wright points out that perhaps his insistence that Bradstreet was not associated with the publication comes from a fear that critics may see it as improper for her to push for her own publication. Thus, Woodbridge's insistence of her ignorance protects her from any accusations of stepping out of her place as a

[4] Ted Hughes cites this same reason for the publication of *The Bell Jar* in America, given that it had already been published in England and American copyright law would have allowed for its publication without the estate's permission a certain number of years after Plath's death. However, in the same letter he notes that he has found a large country home he wishes to purchase, which is then funded by the publication of *The Bell Jar*.

woman (Wright 72). This theory leads to a possible reading in which Bradstreet was aware of the publication, but feigned ignorance. Because of the societal expectations of feminine performance wherein modesty was expected of women, Woodbridge arranging for the publication for Bradstreet "without her knowledge" would allow Bradstreet's work to reach a larger audience while also protecting her from accusations of stepping outside the confines of femininity. This connects to the "gendered modesty topos" wherein a woman issues "an apology for being a woman and daring to write" (Kothe 5).Through denying her involvement with the publication, Bradstreet avoids having to defend her modesty, since the responsibility of daring to publish falls onto a male family member, not upon her. Thus a final, third theory is that Woodbridge published *The Tenth Muse* because Bradstreet asked him to, but due to the climate surrounding women's writing and female modesty, she could not take ownership of that fact.

Woodbridge's motivations greatly affect how one can critically interpret his actions and his effect upon Bradstreet. Thus this first publication opens up questions of agency and Bradstreet's control over her writing. If one examines *The Tenth Muse* from the perspective that Bradstreet was unaware of Woodbridge's decision to publish, then it appears Woodbridge thus robbed her of her authorial agency. Furthermore, if Woodbridge wanted Bradstreet's writing published in order to represent the Puritan colonies as centers of thought and education, Woodbridge thus uses Bradstreet's writing for his own purposes, stealing and making public her work against her will. Furthermore, White argues that Woodbridge would have had access to Bradstreet's more domestic poems and yet chose not to include them. Instead, Woodbridge only included poems with the subject matter of politics, religion, and history—which comply with the masculine subjects of poetry at the time. By not including Bradstreet's domestic poetry, which would be clearly gendered as feminine, Woodbridge curated a specific image of her. The

domestic poems were included in the posthumous publication of her work in 1678, and are regarded as her more successful, poignant, and confessional verse. This analysis of Woodbridge of robbing Bradstreet of authorial control also retains its significance if Woodbridge had Bradstreet's writing published without her knowledge, but to protect it from being published or spread incorrectly. Regardless, Woodbridge edited out poems as he saw fit, discarding what has come to be regarded as Bradstreet's more significant work.

The third possible explanation for Woodbridge's decision to have Bradstreet's work published—that Bradstreet herself was behind the publication of the manuscript—allows for a far more controversial and anachronistic reading of Bradstreet. While on the surface, the publication of *The Tenth Muse* appears to be patriarchally controlled, this possible reading could grant Bradstreet far more agency. This possibility is not presented in any scholarship on Bradstreet, despite the evidence that it could be a viable explanation. First of all, because Woodbridge had the manuscript to publish, and referenced it as "scattered papers," Bradstreet's writing was already in circulation, merely not in print. As such, if one accepts that Bradstreet's poetry must have already had a wide audience, due to Woodbridge's concern about it being plagiarized or false copies distributed, then Bradstreet was already actively participating in a form of publication (Wright 23). Bradstreet was already purposefully circulating her writing, before it could be published with or without her knowledge. This collection of her writing into a manuscript for circulation thus underscores the possibility that she could have intended to be published. Another piece of evidence that suggests Bradstreet may have been more involved with the publication of *The Tenth Muse* appears in "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jacob." Bradstreet writes, "Alas slain is the Head of Israel, \ Illustrious *Saul* whose beauty did excell, \ Upon thy places mountainous and high, \ How did the Mighty fall, and falling dye?" (*The Tenth*

Muse 217). This poem appears to be referencing the execution of Charles I, which occurred in 1649. Given that *The Tenth Muse* was published in 1650, and Woodbridge had left the colonies several years earlier,[5] Bradstreet would have had to have sent this poem to Woodbridge in order for it to be included. However even if one can draw the conclusion that Bradstreet was an active participant in the decision to publish her poetry, we can accept that Woodbridge would have had final say over what was included in the publication, due to his location in England and proximity to the publisher. Thus Woodbridge appears to have omitted certain poems, as well as arranged for the prefatory poems, meaning his effect on Bradstreet's collection of poetry remains significant. Whether or not Bradstreet was aware of the decision to publish, Woodbridge retained control over *The Tenth Muse*, even as he liberated it to print.

However, regardless of Bradstreet's possible involvement in the decision to public, aspects of *The Tenth Muse* were not only controlled by Woodbridge but also display aspects of sexism and paternalism. The prefatory poems to *The Tenth Muse* appear to have been arranged by Woodbridge and it seems probable that Bradstreet would have little to no control of them. These prefatory poems written by male family members or close friends of the family offer some perspective on the gendered perception of print culture at the time. These poems were most probably solicited and collected by Woodbridge, and he includes several of his own poems as well. Several of these poems contrast Bradstreet to a male writer or place emphasis on her gender. Woodbridge, in his introductory poem, "To my deare Sister, Author of these Poems" writes, "If women, I with women, may compare, \ Your Works are solid, others weake as aire; \ Some books of Women I have heard of late, \ Perused some, so witlesse, intricate, \ So void of sense, and truth, as if to erre" (*The Tenth Muse* 9 *).* Woodbridge elevates Bradstreet's poetry but

[5] Sources have mixed dates on when Woodbridge left the colonies to return to England, but the latest of those reports has 1647.

only by diminishing the works of other female writers. Furthermore, he emphasizes her gender repeatedly, through the use of gendered words such as “sister,” and the word “women” three times in as many lines. The emphasis on Bradstreet’s gender continues with the other prefatory poems. In, “Another to Mrs. Bradstreet, Author of this Poem” the writer, identified by his initials H.S. states, “I've read your Poem (Lady) and admire, \ Your Sex, to such a pitch should e're aspire” (*The Tenth Muse* 12). In two short lines, H.S. references her gender twice, the direct address of “Lady” as well as pointing out his admiration based on someone of her gender writing on such a high level. Through the use of gendered diction, H.S. focuses on Bradstreet as a woman first, and a writer second. Bradstreet is identified by her married name, an emphasis is placed on her as a married woman, before being referenced as a lady, and if the audience was still unaware that she was a woman, H.S. then specifically points out her “sex.” These prefatory poems indicate that there were men willing to commend Bradstreet’s poetry and recommend it to their peers, but that the fact that she was a female writer was out of the ordinary, and thus a main role they played was to justify her poetry’s worth, despite her gender. As such, Woodbridge’s choices to not include Bradstreet’s more domestic, family-based poetry is not shocking because, as Wright points out, “The reception of Bradstreet’s poetry by human female readers appears, however, to have been less highly valued...the reader addressed in Woodbridge's prose epistle and implied in his commendatory poem is consistently male...construct it as worthy of male approval” (74). Given that this collection is designed to fit a male audience, the poems contained within it reflect that bias. As such, to examine Bradstreet’s confessional and domestic poetry, one must turn to the second publication.

Second Publication: 1678

The second publication of Bradstreet's poems occurred in Boston, in 1678 under the title, *Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning*. The second publication reflects Bradstreet's revisions of her poems that had been published before, as well as including her more domestic works of poetry (Wright 57). The 1678 publication complicates the narrative of editorial/authorial control (Gray 45). The edited versions of the poems originally published in the 1650 Woodbridge version can be used to argue that Bradstreet did not intend for the poems to be published as they were in 1650; rather, that they were unfinished and that she was unhappy with their representation in that publication. Alternatively, these edits could merely reflect her development and continual work as a writer—revising her older poems, all the while writing new ones. Many of the poems reveal subtle shifts in diction and phrasing from the 1650 publication to the 1678 publication. For example, Bradstreet subtly alters the ending of her poem, "A Dialogue Between Old England and New, Concerning Their Present Troubles." In 1650, the poem concludes with, "If any pity in thy heart remain, \ Or any child-like love thou dost retain, \ For my relief now use thy utmost skill, \ And recompence me good, for all my ill" (*Tenth Muse* 178). In contrast, in the 1678 publication, Bradstreet alters the poem to conclude with, "If any pity in thy heart remain, \ Or any child-like love thou dost retain, \ For my relief, do what there lyes in thee, \ And recompence that good I've done to thee" (*Several Poems* 198). Through only altering these last two lines slightly, Bradstreet shifts the tone of the poem dramatically. She no longer ends with an emphasis on the "ill" between the two countries, but rather focuses only on the good between them. While this is just one example, it encapsulates the small shifts that can be found throughout Bradstreet's 1678 publication. None are exceedingly dramatic, but they do reveal an active writer who alters her work over time. Furthermore, these small changes in her poetry show the attentive nature of the editor who published her later work, who did not merely

replicate the poems as previously published in the 1650 edition, but rather referenced Bradstreet's later version of those poems for inclusion.

Another important aspect of this second publication is the inclusion of the poems that have become the focus of scholarly criticism and academic focus—the ones wherein she discusses her husband, her children, the everyday fears and tribulations of a woman living in her situation. These poems are vastly different from the poems published in *The Tenth Muse* (1650), speaking of deeply personal issues. As a result, Bradstreet has been credited as the originator of the confessional style of poetry (Gray 45).

However, a distinct challenge arises when wrestling with the idea of editorial control over *Several Poems* (1678). Unfortunately, little to no evidence exists regarding the identity of the editor that collected Bradstreet's poems and published them. Furthermore, because these poems were published posthumously, it is hard to determine the level of control Bradstreet would have had on this second publication. White and Hensley offer a family friend of the Bradstreets, John Rogers, as the most likely editor of *Several Poems* because "Rogers was an accomplished scholar, a member of the Dudley family circle, and an outspoken admirer of Anne's work" (White 363). However, other scholars such as John Harvard Ellis offer figures such as Norton as the editor, despite him being much younger than Bradstreet and not as well connected to the family (White 366). Overall, there is very little concrete evidence as to who was the editor of *Several Poems*.[6] However, this mystery editor made important decisions regarding this second collection of Bradstreet's poetry—he chose to include what would eventually be called her "finest work" (Gray 45).

[6] Despite the lack of evidence, we can assume that the editor was probably male given the time period.

In *Several Poems,* the section appending the domestic poems begins with the introduction, “Several other Poems made by the Author upon Diverse Occasions, were found among her Papers after her Death, which she never intended should come to publick view, amongst which, these following, at the desire of some friends that knew her well, are here inserted.” As such, the editor suggests that despite Bradstreet’s wishes, her friends had decided to include the domestic poems regardless. Interestingly, this phrase is exceedingly similar to Woodbridge’s introduction to the 1650 edition of her poetry, and invokes the same modesty topos. None of the poems from the domestic section were included in Woodbridge’s *The Tenth Muse,* however, despite many predating it. Wright argues that due to the timeline, Woodbridge had access to them, but decided not to include them. The later mystery editor did make the choice to include these poems. Wright writes, “It becomes apparent that the much remarked-on dichotomy between public and private poems in her oeuvre does not, reflect a division between her early poetry—public, didactic, and still obsessed with Europe—and the later, more American poems of her maturity, but is instead a construct of print-publication. In short, the reason why there are no personal poems in *The Tenth Muse* is not because Bradstreet had not yet started to write them, but rather because personal materials have been consistently excluded from the volume” (79). In both cases, however, Bradstreet did not have the final say over what was or was not included in either of these two editions—in the 1650 edition because Woodbridge published without her knowledge, or at the very least without her oversight, and in the 1678 publication because the second collection was published posthumously. However, if the editor of the 1678 *Several Poems* had not chosen to include these poems, they could have conceivably been lost forever. This demonstrates the ability of an editor to dictate perceptions of an author; if

Woodbridge's 1650 publication had been the only version, he would have completely controlled the narrative surrounding Bradstreet.

The poems appended to the end of the 1678 publication, which have heretofore been referred to as the "domestic poems" are drastically different both in content and in form from the poems which constitute the 1650 publication in its entirety. In *Tenth Muse* (1650), the only poem which makes direct reference to any subject remotely personal to Bradstreet is her first poem, which dedicates her verses to him. Bradstreet writes, "These ragged lines, will do't, when they appear. \ On what they are, your mild aspect I crave, \ Accept my best, my worst vouchsafe a grave." (*Tenth Muse* 2). Asking her father to accept her verse, declaring it is the best that she can write, and asking for his approval is the closest the entire publication of 1650 comes to approaching Bradstreet's personal life. Notably, this apparent address to her father further suggests Bradstreet's awareness of this collection's publication. However, that is where Bradstreet's explicit personal references end. The rest of the collection is highly impersonal. In contrast, the subject matter of *Several Poems* (1678) and particularly the appended poems is deeply personal and at times, emotionally vulnerable. Bradstreet spends several poems discussing her illness and the attached fear of abandoning her children without a mother ("Upon a Fit of Sickness" and "Upon some distemper of body"), writes poignantly personal love poems to her husband ("To my Dear and Loving Husband," "A Letter to her Husband, absent upon Publick employment," and "Another"), and writes about her children, grandchildren, and the pains of motherhood and loss that comes with it ("In reference to her Children," "In memory of my dear grand-child Elizabeth Bradstreet, who deceased August, 1605. being a year and half old," "In memory of my dear grand child Anne Bradstreet. Who deceased June 20. 1669. being three years and seven Moneths old," "On my dear Grand-child Simon Bradstreet, Who dyed on

16. Novemb. 1669. being but a moneth, and one day old," and "To the memory of my dear Daughter in Law, Mrs. Mercy Bradstreet, who deceased Sept. 6. 1669. in the 28. year of her Age."). In not only subject matter, but also form, these poems differ vastly from the poems of 1650. In her first publication, Bradstreet's poems follow masculine constructs, discussing empires and civilizations in extremely long-winded and elaborate verse. But in these poems, Bradstreet not only moves to more personal subject material, but does so in much more simple and poignant lines. "To My Dear and Loving Husband" provides an excellent example of this.

> If ever two were one, then surely we.
> If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee,
> If ever wife was happy in a man,
> Compare with me ye women if you can.
> I prize thy love more then whole Mines of gold,
> Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
> My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
> Nor ought but love from thee, give recompence,
> Thy love is such I can no way repay,
> The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.
> Then while we live, in love lets so persever,
> That when we live no more, we may live ever. (*Several Poems* 240).

In this poem, Bradstreet places herself into the poem through the use of the first person and does not shield the emotion through the use of allusion. This difference is striking when compared with her poems from *Tenth Muse,* which rely heavily upon complex syntactical structure and allusion. Furthermore, "To My Dear and Loving Husband" is structurally much different, consisting of a much shorter length, and simpler rhyme scheme. Overall, this poem is simple in content and structure, but poignant due to its simplicity and honesty. It functions as an example of the types of poems in the "domestic" category that were included in the 1678 publication of Bradstreet's works.

Unfortunately, due to the sheer lack of evidence it may be impossible to ever certify that Bradstreet was involved in the publication of her poems in 1650 or who the editor of the 1678 edition was. Examining the timeline of Woodbridge's return to England as well as the inclusion of Bradstreet's poem dedicating her poetry to her father appears to suggest at least some knowledge of this publication, which would complicate the narrative of complete editorial control that has existed otherwise. However, to a certain extent, Woodbridge does appear to have had discretion over which poems were included in the 1650 publication, given that many of Bradstreet's domestic poems were written at that time and were not included (Wright 79). In choosing to exclude these poems, Woodbridge created an image of Bradstreet that would have been more appealing to the masculine audiences at the time—distant, political, historically informed. If Woodbridge was indeed attempting to prove that scholarship still existed in the colonies, these poems would have achieved that goal, despite not receiving much praise from a modern audience. However, the modern audience has Bradstreet's mysterious second editor to thank for the inclusion of her more personal poetry in the 1678 *Several Poems.* This too brings up questions of authorial agency—is it ethical to publish personal poetry the author had no intention of distributing publically? As such, this second editor liberates Bradstreet's deeply personal side to the public, perhaps against her will, but in doing so gives a voice to a woman from the early 1600s, allowing modern audiences to access and examine feminine embodied experiences, ones that resonate strongly with both Shelley and Plath hundreds of years later.

Chapter Two: "I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves."

Introduction and Biography of Mary Shelley

Considering Mary Shelley's personal and editorial relationships with her husband Percy Shelley allows for a surprisingly subversive reading of the editor's role when framed in a patriarchal and familial context. Instead, the sexist interpretations of Percy's influence over *Frankenstein* are what have led to an underestimation of Mary's writing ability and her own role as an editor. Many elements of Mary and Percy's relationship are troubling and display Percy's patriarchal control and Mary's internalized misogyny. Details such as Mary's young age of seventeen at the time of their elopement to the controlling and deeply unhealthy power dynamics present in their marriage, as well as Percy's rampant infidelity and its impact on Mary's mental health, particularly after the deaths of several of their children are prime examples of this. Interestingly, aspects of the Shelley's marital relationship are comparable to the relationship of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath. Yet when it comes to their literary partnership, Mary and Percy in many ways mirror the more positive aspects of Plath and Hughes's writing relationship. An examination of Percy's editorial influence upon Mary's *Frankenstein* as well as her posthumous publications of Percy's works helps to illuminate both similarities and differences between their relationship and that of Sylvia and Ted. Where Sylvia left a completely collected and prepared manuscript for print, which Ted then altered, Mary performed the hard work of collecting

Percy's disparate writings and bringing them together for preservation. Thus while both performed the role of editor after a spouse's death, the details of this editing process delineate clearly their respective motivations.

In his introduction to *The Frankenstein Notebooks*, the definitive collection of *Frankenstein* manuscript facsimiles, Charles Robinson points out that Percy's impact upon *Frankenstein* is not out of the ordinary for the Shelleys' working relationship. Robinson writes, "The Shelleys left a long history of their shared activities as creative artists. They transcribed and they edited each other's works; they encouraged each other to undertake or to modify major works" (*lxvii*). The nature of this collaborative relationship requires more extensive study. Some scholars have argued that Percy's editing of *Frankenstein* greatly impacted Mary's eventual novel and its success, some even going so far as to title Percy as "co-author," where others (including Robinson himself) argue that Percy's edits were no more substantial than a typical editor on any book, while still others call for more extensive study of the impacts of his editorial hand upon *Frankenstein* (Mellor 224). While the editorial dance between Percy and Mary on *Frankenstein* is integral in my project, Mary's posthumous editing of Percy's work also allows us to consider yet another dimension of editorial relationships. Unlike both Plath and Bradstreet, who were edited posthumously themselves, Mary is the sole woman under consideration who takes on the role of editor after the death of her spouse. As such, one might consider the ways in which a female editor making posthumous edits is both comparable and differs from the role that male editors play in editing a woman's posthumous works.

Biography, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Writing Life

The life of Mary Shelley (nee Godwin) was marked with tragedy and family scandal from its inception. Mary Wollstonecraft, her mother, and William Godwin, her father, had only been

married for five months when Mary was born, and Wollstonecraft died a mere ten days after Mary's birth (Mellor 1). Despite being marked by this tragedy, Mary was "the fruit of the most famous radical literary marriage of eighteenth-century England" (Mellor 1). Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, had argued for the education and rights of women and Godwin was a prominent philosopher and scholar in and of himself (Mellor 2). After Wollstonecraft's death, Godwin memorialized her in *Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, giving a shockingly honest account of her life and political and literary contributions, even including details of her sexual liberties with other men as well as recounting her several suicide attempts (Mellor 2). Mellor argues that Godwin's brutally honest portrayal of his deceased wife's life made it "impossible for a respectable English woman openly to associate herself with Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist views" (3). As such, despite the best intentions of remembering his wife's legacy through memoir, Godwin instead alienated women who may have been supporters of his wife's views. Mellor further argues the burden this placed on Mary, writing that despite Mary's idealization of Wollstonecraft, she was also deeply aware of the societal prohibitions upon many of her mother's views and the danger of openly claiming them (4).

Godwin, with the help of a housekeeper and governess, Louisa Jones, went on to raise both of Wollstonecraft's daughters, Fanny (the daughter of Wollstonecraft and her lover, Gilbert Imlay) and Mary (Mellor 4). However, Godwin sent Louisa away, after several affairs with Godwin's protégés, when Mary was three years old, and shortly thereafter Godwin began courting women in pursuit of finding a new wife and a mother for the two children (Mellor 5). In time, he married Mary Jane Clairmont, a widow with two children herself, with whom Mary had a complicated relationship (Mellor 8). Mary resented her stepmother for what Mary perceived as

her stepmother's role in depriving her of the attentions of her father, who became less and less involved in the domestic sphere of the household now that his wife could instead manage these affairs (Mellor 12). Mary was sent to live with distant relations and family friends several times throughout her childhood, which only distanced her further from her father and various siblings (Mellor 15). Upon returning from one of these stays, this time with the Baxters, a mere acquaintance of Godwin's, Mary began to hear of Percy Bysshe Shelley, a young and wealthy philosopher who admired and corresponded with her father (Mellor 16). Percy was married at the time of their first introduction, but upon subsequent meetings became yet more interested in Mary. Mellor writes, "When he saw Mary Godwin again, her beauty, intellectual interests, evident sympathy for him, and perhaps above all her name immediately attracted him" (19). An amorous connection between them quickly developed. Mellor writes, "For Mary, Percy was a youthful version of her father, a revolutionary and a philosopher, but one who, in contrast to Godwin, might fully reciprocate her love and embrace her as his companion. To Percy, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin embodied the soulmate and intellectual beauty he had been seeking" (Mellor 20). Mary had been searching for a companion and a father figure, which she found in Percy while he was searching for a literary and intellectual female partner, who adored him unquestioningly. They found this in one another, and despite being forbidden from continuing their relationship by Godwin, they eloped to France shortly thereafter, disregarding both their respective ages (Mary was sixteen, Percy was twenty-one) and Percy's current marriage to another woman (Mellor 21). Jane Clairmont, Mary's stepsister, came with them to France for the purpose of acting as a translator (Gittings 12). In July of 1814, Mary, Jane, and Percy traveled for six weeks, visiting France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland, despite a constant lack of funds, and upon reaching Switzerland, decided to return to England due to their inability to

secure further financing (Robinson *xxv*). The financial situation upon their arrival was so dire that Percy had to seek out his legitimate wife, Harriet, to ask her for the funds to pay for their passage (Gittings 18). Expecting to be welcomed home by the Godwins, instead all three were shunned, particularly Percy and Mary, and plans were set in motion to place Jane in a convent (Gittings 19). Despite Godwin's philosophical writings on the concept of free love, and his acceptance of his first wife's premarital affairs, he was violently opposed to this behavior in his daughter, Mary.

Upon their return to England, Mary, Percy, and Jane were scorned not only by Percy and Mary's family, but also society as a whole. While the Godwins may have harbored some hope that with their return, both girls would be willing to admit their mistakes and return to their families. However, at this point Mary was already pregnant and Percy made it clear to Harriet, his very pregnant wife, that he would be staying with Mary, saying that he had "a violent and lasting passion for another...you [Harriet] are no longer my wife" (Seymour 116). In February of 1815, Mary gave birth to a premature daughter who died shortly thereafter. Their unconventional family was constantly troubled by issues of finances: Percy frequently was threatened with imprisonment for his debt and left Mary in their lodgings and resided with friends instead, to avoid being captured and imprisoned (Seymour 117). As such, despite Percy's relative wealth in comparison to Mary, these early years of their relationship was marked by financial stress, as well as Mary's dependence upon Percy after their elopement and her subsequent exile from her already distant family. In February of 1815, the still unmarried Mary gave birth to Percy's son, and only a few months later traveled to Switzerland with Percy and Claire (previously known as Jane) Clairmont to meet Lord Byron (with whom Jane had conceived a child) (Robinson *xxv*).

This was the summer that *Frankenstein* came into being, finished by April or May of 1817, and published in January of 1818 (Robinson *xxv*).

Percy and Mary lived a rather tumultuous life, marked by periods of poverty and calamity, periods of literary fruitfulness and study, and finally marked by Percy's sudden death. Despite their relationship lasting only eight years as a result of Percy's tragic death by drowning, they exerted immense influence upon one another. The literary nature of their relationship cannot be understated. Mary was expected to be the living embodiment of her parents' literary intellectual abilities, both by herself and by Percy. To some degree, this was the foundation of her relationship with Percy, similar to Plath and Hughes, who pushed each other to write, to study, to publish. Percy instructed Mary by setting her reading lists, and Mary spent her time aiding his literary pursuits by creating and sending fair copies of his poems to publishers. But not just literary actions affected both of their writing. Percy's infidelity and the death of several of her children, either by miscarriage or in childhood, greatly marked both Mary's life with Percy and her writing. *Frankenstein* allows for a means to step into both their literary and personal relationships. The plot and characterization of this revolutionary gothic novel are influenced not only by Mary's life, but also her relationship by Percy. Furthermore, Percy himself helped to shape the novel itself through editing, though the extent to which his influence fundamentally and integrally shaped *Frankenstein* has been debated by scholars. However, the ways in which critics came to view *Frankenstein* and Percy's effects upon it are distinctly marked by misogyny, both of their contemporaries and modern ones, particularly upon considering Mary's significant editorial control over posthumous publications of Percy's poetry.

Frankenstein: **Creation and Editing**

The story behind *Frankenstein* has taken on an almost mythic character in the two hundred years since its creation. Levine writes in the significant collection of essays, *The Endurance of Frankenstein,"* "It's a commonplace now, that everybody talks about *Frankenstein*, but nobody reads it….But while *Frankenstein* is a phenomenon of popular culture, it is so because it has tapped into the center of Western feeling and imagination" (3). Due to the designs of Jane Clairmont, now going by the name Claire Clairmont, the Shelleys, herself, and Lord Byron met in Geneva, the Shelleys renting a house near Byron's, and spending great deals of time there (*The Original Frankenstein* 20). On one such evening, with the group of friends gathered and reading a collection of ghost stories, Byron challenged those present, including Percy and Mary, to write a horror story. Byron and his friend Polidori wrote "fragmentary tales about vampires" (*The Original Frankenstein* 21). Percy began writing a story of his childhood, but eventually tapered off. At first, Mary was unable to conceive of a topic, but one night had a "waking dream" which would eventually became the foundation for *Frankenstein (The Original Frankenstein* 21). At Percy's encouragement, what had started as only a short story grew through the months of July and August into a novella and then a novel (*The Original Frankenstein* 22).

The foundations of the conflict surrounding Mary's authorship can be seen even as early as *Frankenstein*'s inception story. Percy was deeply involved in the creation of the novel, just as Mary had also been involved in collaborating on his literary works. Robinson writes, "Collaboration seems to have been a hallmark of the Shelleys' literary relationship: for example, Mary Shelley often transcribed Percy Shelley's poems; Percy contributed lyrics to Mary's mythological dramas...at the most significant, they collaborated on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*...Percy deleted many words in the extant Draft and he also added nearly 3,000 words to the text of the novel" (24). Not only that, but upon their return to London, Percy sought

out a publisher for the novel, which he advertised as being "written by a young friend" (*The Original Frankenstein* 24). The extent to which Percy contributed to the text, editing, and publishing of *Frankenstein* thus have allowed for some scholars such as Marie-Helene Huet in *Monstrous Imagination* (1993) to argue for his position as co-author. Yet, as Robinson points out, "Despite the number of Percy's words, the novel was conceived and mainly written by Mary Shelley, as attested not only by others in their circle (e.g. Byron, Godwin, Claire and Charles Clairmont, Leigh Hunt) but by the nature of the manuscript evidence in the surviving pages of the Draft" (25). Percy's contribution to Mary's *Frankenstein* thus was comparable to the effects any editor might have on a novel in progress (*Frankenstein Notebooks* lxvii-lxx).

Yet, there is a tradition in *Frankenstein* scholarship of subordinating Mary Shelley to Percy Shelley, undermining not only her accomplishments in the face of outstanding barriers to success (many of which did originate with Percy) but also underestimating her role in the creation of her own novel. For example, these critics of Mary range from James Rieger, who edited and wrote the introduction for the text of *Frankenstein* that is frequently used in classroom settings, to E.B. Murray who wrote "Shelley's Contributions to Mary's *Frankenstein*" and whose bias is immediately evident even by the choice to defer to Percy's last name, while retaining Mary's first. Rieger argued in his introduction that Percy, "oversaw his wife's manuscript at every stage" and was so integral in the creation of *Frankenstein* "at every point in the book's manufacture...that one hardly knows whether to regard him as editor or minor collaborator" (*Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus* xviii). Reiger not only refuses to refer to Mary by name, only defining her in relation to her husband, but also suggests that at least some of the credit of *Frankenstein* is due to Percy, not Mary. Furthermore, Marie-Helene Huet inaccurately attributes several key decisions made by Mary to Percy, which later scholarship

accepts as fact, instead of returning to the primary text (*Frankenstein Notebooks* lxix). As such, these are just a few examples of the rich tradition of underestimating Mary Shelley's value and worth in the creation of *Frankenstein*, which can be more closely examined through analysis of Percy's specific, major contributions to the text of *Frankenstein* and their significant to the text as a whole.

Fortunately, *Frankenstein* possesses an extensive textual history in the form of multiple "collations and parallel texts" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* xxvii). While scholars disagree on how to interpret the collaboration between Mary and Percy, Charles Robinson's *Frankenstein Notebooks* have now compiled the extant material and traced the respective edits of Mary and Percy. This textual history includes a draft dated to 1816-1817, of which Notebooks A and B still survive (87% of the 1818 text), the 1817 Fair Copy which contains Notebooks C1 and C2 (12% of the 1818 text), the 1818 1st edition, which was produced in three volumes, the 1823 2nd edition in two volumes, and finally the 1831 revised edition in one volume (*Frankenstein Notebooks* xxvi). In order to localize edits from Percy and their effect upon Mary's eventual published work, my focus here will be centered on the 1816-1817 draft as well as the Fair Copy of 1817 in comparison with the actual publication of 1818.

Percy's edits on Mary's drafts of *Frankenstein* can be sorted into several different categories. These categories include misspelling or grammatical errors, diction changes, and phrase alterations or additions. The category of misspelling or grammatical errors will not be analyzed as significant contributions, for it is unlikely that any scholar could argue that Percy's remedying this type of error significantly impacts the content of the novel. It should be noted, however, that these corrections are frequent throughout the text, and thus contribute greatly to the statistic of Percy's editing of 30% of the text. However, in terms of actual words that Percy

contributed, he only added 3,000 words of the 74,800 word text (*Frankenstein Notebooks)*. Furthermore, these include very slight shifts in diction. For example, the rectification of spelling errors or changes of words such as “men” to “fishermen” constitutes as the addition of a word, but does not appear to be a substantial edit. Additionally, Percy will occasionally suggest edits which Mary does not then include in the final text, but rather responds to with her own edits. As such, the manuscript of *Frankenstein* reads like a dialogue, with Percy responding to Mary’s writing, which she then responds to in turn. Furthermore, while Mary does accept a great number of Percy’s edits, they do not substantially affect the meaning or impact of the text. When Percy’s edits do affect the text, it is more typically in a negative manner. Many of his suggestions lead to elevated (that is to say, inaccessible) phrasings and diction, which needlessly complicate the message and do not positively contribute to Mary’s content.

The diction changes Percy suggests and Mary accepts are revealing of their relative styles. For example, Mary wrote, “His favourite study was books of chivalry and romance and we used to act plays composed by him out of these books” which Percy alters to, “His favourite study *consisted in* books of chivalry and romance; *and when very young, I can remember, that* we used to act plays composed by him out of these favourite books” (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 41). Percy takes a relatively simple, passive sentence, changes the verb “was” and adds a phrase situating this anecdote in childhood. While this sentence is by no means overly significant to the plot of the novel, Percy’s changes in diction and additional phrases complicate the meaning of the sentence, causing it to trail on far longer than Mary’s. While one might argue that “consisted in” is a stronger verb than “was,” this change does not add any extra meaning, and if anything disrupts the flow of the sentence structure. Furthermore, the additional phrases that Percy includes do situate the anecdote, but makes the sentence more difficult to follow and process. As

such, Percy's additions to this sentence not only display two of the types of edits (additions and corrections) he made upon *Frankenstein* but also reveal how his style impacts Mary's writing, pushing it towards more flowery and complicated sentence structure.

A more extended example of Percy's edits to the text reveals a more significant contribution to the text, though revisions of this length are rare. Where Mary wrote, "Such views although futile were grand; but now it was all changed and the expulsion of chimera overthrew at the same time all the greatness in the science," Percy elaborated greatly, writing, "Such views, although futile, were grand; but now *the scene* was changed. *The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest* in science *was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange* chimeras *of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth*" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 57). Percy's alterations to these few sentences are not so much edits as a complete rewrite of both meaning and subject matter. Mary's sentence was not particularly clear in its meaning, but Percy salvages a few words such as "chimera" and "science" and adds several details not present in Mary's writing. In part, this more extensive addition could be explained because Percy studied natural philosophy at Oxford, thus making him more knowledgeable on how to write about scenes in relation to science. In her introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein,* Mary references Percy and Lord Byron's many conversations about scientific and philosophical issues, characterizing herself as "a devout by nearly silent listener" (*Frankenstein* 195). As such, she viewed herself as less knowledgeable due to her lack of education on these topics, and may have used Percy's expertise in writing scenes that related to scientific pursuits. However, these extended additions are uncommon throughout the text. When they do appear, similarly to the example seen above, Percy's additions are circuitous where Mary's was straightforward, employing complex sentence structure and elevated diction.

Mellor describes Percy's edits of this nature as indicative of his "inclination for an inflated rhetoric" (223).

While these are two more extended examples of Percy's contributions, many of his edits are as simple as suggesting simple changes in diction. For example, on a single page of the manuscript Percy suggests replacing "the other" with "his colleague," "wealth" with "power," "chemistry" with "natural science," "Half out of" with "Partly from," "solitary" with "solitude," and "science" with "doctrine" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 57). At first, the number of diction suggestions appears substantial, particularly for a single page in the manuscript. Yet, several of these diction changes are exceedingly minor. For example, "solitary" to "solitude" merely moves from one form of the word to another. But several of these shifts in diction change to a word that is not synonymous with what Mary originally wrote. For example, the change of "wealth" to "power" minorly alters the meaning of the text, by placing a more general concept into the text, instead of something as concrete as wealth. However, both of these words merely imply the character's status, and reach the same effect. In other cases, Percy does suggest more specific words to replace Mary's more simple diction. Yet, the overall effect is not substantially different from Mary's original choices and at times approaches arbitrary. For example, the shift from "chemistry" to "natural science" does not greatly impact the meaning of the text as a whole, despite not being synonymous with Mary's original word choice. Again, this change could stem from Percy's knowledge of a more precise scientific term to clarify her meaning. As such, while Percy does suggest and Mary does accept a great number of these types of edits, they are neither particularly significant nor revelatory in nature. They do not shape the overall effect of the narrative but rather only make it slightly more specific in its diction choice. As such, when critics

use the argument of the high percentage of *Frankenstein* edited by Percy, they are including many relatively insignificant edits such as these.

One example of this can be found in the second half of *Frankenstein.* This scene occurs shortly after Frankenstein's creature has been rejected by the De Lacey family due to his hideousness, as well as while he is coming to accept the horror of his own creation. Additionally, this passage is shortly before the creature encounters Victor and asks him to create a female companion for him. Mary originally writes, "Unfeeling heartless creator! You had endowed me with perceptions and passions and then cast me abroad for the scorn and horror of mankind. But on you only had I any claim and from you I determined to seek that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from your fellow creatures" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 83). Percy suggests altering this slightly, changing "your fellow creatures" to read "any other being that wore the human form," which is what is published in the 1818 publication. Percy's alteration pushes for a reading of *Frankenstein* which allows for much more distance between Frankenstein and his creation, instead of Mary's original phrase which would more closely connect them both together as similar creatures, without specifying humanity or not. However, Percy's edit also puts this phrase into a more circuitous, indirect, and complicated phrasing. Mary's original phrase casts all people as "creatures" who have been created, which more closely parallels the creature's association of his own creation story with *Paradise Lost,* which he has recently found in the woods and read. However, Percy's edit makes this connection less clear, as well as more wordy. Despite being a relatively small edit and somewhat insignificant in nature, Mary's original phrasing more closely related to the events occurring in the plot, whereas Percy overwrites that small connection and offers space for a different reading of the relationship between

Frankenstein and his creation. As such, Percy's suggestion does not offer a dramatic change of the plot, but does offer a different reading from Mary's original intention.

The facsimiles of the manuscript also contain many edits proposed by Percy that Mary chose to reject. For example, Mary writes, "When I arrived at this point, my residence there being no longer conducive to my improvements, I thought of returning to my friends and my native town" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 62). Percy suggests altering this sentence by inserting the phrase, "and having learned all the professors at Ingolstadt were qualified to teach" after "this point" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 62). Mary does not adopt this phrase suggested by Percy. Rather, in the 1818 edition, this sentence reads, "When I had arrived at this point, *and had become well acquainted with the theory and practice of natural philosophy as depended on the lessons of any of the professors at Ingolstadt,* my residence there…" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 62). There is a clear dialogue present in this interaction. Percy suggests an edit, which Mary rejects, and instead writes her own correction to the text. Thus this functions as a response to the lack of clarity that Percy's suggested edit implies. Mary's inserted phrase offers more detail, as well as being more clearly stated. As such, Percy does have an effect on this passage—that of pointing out the need for a revision. But Mary actively rejects his proposition, instead inserting her own phrase.

In examining the facsimiles of the manuscript, Mary's self-editing also rises to the surface. In many places, Mary makes edits quite similar to that of Percy's. For example, Mary changes the phrase, "with great warmth" to "with fervour" and the phrase, "the various improvements different men had made pronouncing the names of greatest discoverers" to "the various improvements *made by* different men *of learning*, pronouncing…" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 58). These changes in diction and addition of phrases are similar, if not nearly

indistinguishable from Percy's edits. Some differences arise as well—where Percy typically inserts inflated diction, Mary tends to simplify and make more accessible. For example, she changes the phrase "the elixir vitae is a mere chimaera" to "the elixir of life is a chimera" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* 58). In doing so, Mary creates a simpler and more straightforward sentence, making the meaning more readily accessible while also retaining its importance. These edits that Mary made on her own manuscript show how very capable she was and her own participation in the editing process. These edits reveal that it was not the single-handed effort of Percy to read and revise the diction and phrasing of *Frankenstein,* but rather that Mary was not only an author, but an active editor of her own work as well.

As these examples demonstrate, Percy did contribute to the text of *Frankenstein.* He suggested changes in diction, corrected errors in grammar, and elaborated phrases. In doing so, Percy functioned as an editor of *Frankenstein,* but nothing more. Some of these suggestions, as argued by Mellor, do not improve the text but rather force it into more flowery and indirect language, more fitting to Percy's style of writing than Mary's. As Robinson points out, "The fact that PBS had greater experience, having seen two of his own novels through the press as well as a number of volumes of poetry, might have given him a professional edge in their relationship, but that experience did not make PBS into a better novelist (his own novels, written before he was 20 years old, have little merit)" (*Frankenstein Notebooks* lxvii). Mary felt the pressure of literary inheritance due to the legacy of both her mother and her father, as well as her husband. But Percy's total effect upon *Frankenstein* is minimal. The genesis of the idea, the execution of the plot, and thus its lasting effect all stemmed from Mary. Furthermore, one might suggest that Mary herself would have caught these small changes herself if she had needed to review the manuscript without Percy's aid—it was simply the nature of their collaborative relationship that

lead to his reading and editing of her drafts before she reread them herself. Overall, the lasting impact and cultural resonance of *Frankenstein* does not stem from the small, semantic suggestions of Percy Shelley, but rather from the poignant themes and plot created by Mary. The fact that his edits on *Frankenstein* have been endowed with such weight points to a single cultural factor of misogyny. Mary Shelley was a young woman at the time of writing *Frankenstein*, with an older, published husband. As such, his influence over her writing ability has been overestimated due to a lack of belief in the capabilities of young women.

Percy's Posthumous Poems

The movement to credit Percy as contributor or occasionally even co-author to *Frankenstein* baffles when one takes into consideration Mary's role in curating and ensuring the publication of Percy's poetry after his death. By taking on the role of editor, Mary possesses complete control over Percy's legacy and subverts the gendered positions elsewhere examined within the scope of this thesis. Unlike both Anne Bradstreet and Sylvia Plath, she outlives her editor long enough to fulfill that role for him instead. As noted previously, a posthumous publication possesses potential to silence, erase, and rewrite, for the deceased author is unable to voice their opinions—everything is left at the discretion of the editor. Mary Shelley performed an invaluable role in the act of preserving Percy's writing that could otherwise easily have disappeared. The editor of *Posthumous Poems of Percy Shelley,* Irving Massey, points out that Percy's manuscripts "were in a notable state of confusion, being scattered through many libraries and an unknown number of private collections. This huge disarray of documents is largely uncatalogued" (3). Mary collected these many disparate drafts into three fair copy notebooks, preserving and cataloguing them. As such, Mary's fair copy notebooks provide the valuable service of preservation, collection, as well as allowing ease of consultation. Massey presents that

many of these poems are not-extant elsewhere and thus found exclusively within Mary's transcription (Massey 7). In other cases, manuscript sources of the poems do exist, but only in preliminary draft form (Massey 8). Massey writes, "We can only marvel at the care and effort which Mary devoted to the incoherent jumble of her husband's literary legacy" (9). Mary edited *The Posthumous Poems of Percy Shelley* as well as the four-volume *Poetical Works of P.B.S* in 1839, another volume by the same title in 1840, and finally *Letters from Abroad, Translations, and Fragments, by Percy Bysshe Shelley* in 1840 (Ko 4). Ko argues that there has been no literary scholarship on Mary as "critic of Percy Bysshe Shelley's work," merely short references to this editorial role in small portions of articles or perhaps relegated to a single chapter (4). Instead, discussions of Mary in her role of wife or Mary as the edited author of *Frankenstein* overwhelm the scholarly world. In some cases when her impact is acknowledged, it is criticized or undervalued (Ko 5). Yet, even if one were to disregard Mary's work as critic and advocate of Percy's work and her role in promoting and publishing it in numerous volumes after his death, she still profoundly impacted the scholarship surrounding Percy through her transcription of his manuscripts, the authoritative source for much of his posthumously published poetry. This transcription does complicate analysis of where her edits end and Percy's own writing begins, for due to the state of manuscripts, one cannot always discern between Mary's contributions to the poems or her transcriptions from later drafts now lost. Mary does acknowledge her impact upon the poems, writing, "I have scratched out a few lines" (Ko 32). In changing Percy's poems, Mary slips into the traditionally masculine role of editor, exerting control over the content and inclusion of his poems.

In considering Mary's editing of Percy, gender functions in a complicated fashion. First of all, the lack of recognition of Mary's significant role in the preservation and criticism of Percy

underscores a fundamental injustice. The scholarly focus on Percy as editor of *Frankenstein* particularly emphasizes the gendered nature of the scholarship surrounding this pair of writers. Despite Mary's significantly larger contribution to the scholarship surrounding Percy, there is no comparable scholarly push to credit her as a contributor or co-author. Her role in preserving his legacy is hardly acknowledged at all. Ko writes that, "Mary Shelley the editor has received some attention because her notes and her editions are primary materials for Percy Shelley scholarship...Although her work has received intermittent attention, critics tend to treat her as a minor helpmate in their understanding of Percy...there has been no full treatment of Mary as a critic of Percy's work" (4). Mary's work as an editor is undervalued and at times, ignored. However, one may also argue that Mary escapes a certain form of critique as a female editor as well. We might speculate that due to her gender, scholars do not see her as altering Percy's work significantly. In "Mary Shelley's Editions of 'The Collection Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley': The Editor as Subject," Samuel Gladden examines how Percy's biographers consider Mary's influence over his writing. For example, Gladden examines Richard Holmes, a prominent Percy Shelley biographer. Gladden points out that Holmes characterizes her life after Percy's death as, "A similar lack of significance, a deadening period of depression, failure, and regret: 'She was still obsessed by Shelley's papers and trapped by memories both idealized and remorseful'" (182). Interestingly, Gladden goes on to argue that, "Holmes's morbid representation might best be couched in the language of Sylvia Plath's 'Daddy,' in which the twentieth century poet engages in a series of ritual acts of self-destruction, among them 'praying to recover you'" (182). As such, Gladden presents and criticizes Mary's depiction by scholars as a mournful, depressed, lost widow who is obsessed with her husband's work after his death, rather than an active participant in the process of editorial criticism and collection.

While the lack of extant manuscripts makes this scholarship difficult, one could postulate that Mary did not necessarily preserve all of Percy's poems, fragments, and translations but may have done her own censorship of material during the transcription process. As such, it seems that Mary played an active role in curating Percy's image. Mary's communications with Edward John Trelawny indicate that she performed certain forms of censorship on Percy's work. Trelawny, a close friend of both Percy and Mary, criticized her for allowing censored versions of poems such as "A Revised Edition of Queen Mab Free from All the Objectionable Passages" to be published instead of their original versions (Seymour 401). Mary uses the same reason that Ted Hughes will later use to justify withholding certain personal writings of Sylvia Plath—to protect their children. At one point, Mary told Trelawny that she will prevent the publication of personal details about Shelley until after the death of their son (Seymour 401). As such, Mary does appear to make similar editorial choices to that of male, related editors and yet not only escapes criticism but rather is written off as merely a mournful widow. Some might argue that this is due purely to her gender. But it would be reductive to overlook the power structures surrounding these relationships, as well as the precarious position Mary herself was in, as a young widow of a controversial, rebellious figure. In her introduction to *The Collected Poems of Percy Shelley* (1839), Mary writes of her father-in-law's prohibition of her publishing anything regarding Percy, on pain of losing any small financial support from him, "Obstacles have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty…" (Gladden 188). Despite the danger of pursuing the publication of Percy's writing, Mary carries out her perceived duty regardless, preserving Percy's work for posterity.

Chapter Three: "The only quiet woman is a dead one"

Introduction to Sylvia Plath

Much of Sylvia Plath's life has become so well-known since her death that other details slip beneath the surface. Even non-academics know that Plath killed herself by placing her head in an oven. Many people, academics and non-academics alike, negatively associate Plath with female readership, affecting both perceptions of Plath's quality as a writer as well as limiting the esteem given to those academics who choose to focus on her. As Janet Badia writes, "When taken together, examinations of literary, historical, and cultural constructions of the Plath reader reveal not simply the persistent nature of her association with uncritical (and largely feminist) reading practices, but also...how the collective preoccupation with this figure of a woman reader has constrained and circumscribed discussions of Plath" (9). Badia argues that cultural and social perceptions of Plath have affected how scholars treat her work. Further, responses among academics and general readers are heightened by polarized attitudes about her turbulent marriage with Ted Hughes. In these interpretations, Hughes transforms into either a villain for driving her to suicide and redacting whole sections of her works, or into a martyr for caring for his mentally ill wife and ensuring her legacy lived on. Despite continued vigorous academic interest in both

Plath and Hughes, and perhaps because of the perceived association between her and young female readers, Plath (and the study of Plath) is frequently treated with condescension. Klaver writes, “In the unwritten handbook for aspiring female writers, it’s understood that the chapter on Plath ends with adolescence...knowledge of Plath exists on the level of cultural mythology...she was simply alluded to, a metonym for ‘crazy girl’” (180). Because of the drama of her life, the study of Plath’s work and its editorial history are often treated with that same condescension. But in order to engage with her editorial relationships, one must look past the sensationalization of Plath’s suicide and the stereotypes surrounding her legacy, and instead take a critical approach to Plath’s works and the ways in which they have been represented, edited, and received critically, while still admitting biographical context. Because Plath’s work has been affected by her biography, the story of her life must be considered, but cannot be allowed to overshadow and reduce her to just biography, and not an examination of her actual work.

Background, Hughes, and Writing Life

Plath’s life is marked by formative events of the death of her father at age eight, the publication of her first poem that same year, her first suicide attempt at age twenty, her marriage to Ted Hughes at age twenty-three, and her eventual suicide at the age of thirty. In “America! America!” Plath refers to herself as “dangerously brainy” (42). From a young age, she was constantly writing. Throughout her life, Plath wrote and sought publication frequently, sending off her poems, short stories, and articles to publications ranging from *The New Yorker* to *Seventeen* (Alexander 247). While Plath’s drive to write and publish began long before she met and married Hughes, his editorial influence greatly impacted her writing after the inception of their relationship, and continued into the years after her death. Thus the editorial narrative of these years hinges upon the figure of Ted Hughes.

Plath and Hughes met at a launch party for a literary magazine, *St. Botolph's Review,* in Cambridge where Plath was a Fulbright scholar and Hughes, recently graduated, was visiting his college friends with whom he had begun to publish the aforementioned literary magazine. Plath and Hughes's writing lives became intertwined the day after they met, with Plath's writing of a poem. Her poem, "Pursuit" was modeled after a poem titled "Jaguar" Hughes had just published in *St. Botolph's Review.* In "Pursuit" Plath describes a panther stalking a woman, beginning with the lines, "There is a panther stalks me down: \ One day I'll have my death of him" (Plath, lines 1-2). Not only was Plath inspired by the hulking, dangerous cat of Hughes's poem, she was also inspired by her first encounter with Hughes himself. They quickly became romantically involved and began to exert enormous influence on one another's poetry, a reciprocal relationship of writing, editing, and submitting. Only two months after they met, Plath began typing up Hughes's poems, and submitting them to the same American magazines that she submitted her own to, telling her mother that he had named her his literary agent (Alexander 189). She even collected, arranged, and submitted Hughes's poems to a contest in New York, which led to the publication of his first book, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) (Alexander 200). Interestingly, when Hughes found out that this book was to be published both in America and in England, he wrote to his parents saying he would "be the first poet ever to publish his first book in both countries." In Jonathan Bate's biography of Hughes, Bate points this out only to note, "Indeed only Auden and Dylan Thomas had gone before him in having a volume of poems published on both sides of the Atlantic" (Bate 127). Both of these statements are wrong, in fact. They all followed Anne Bradstreet, who first accomplished this feat in 1678—nearly three centuries before Hughes.

Frequently, scholars who hold more sympathetic views of Hughes's extensive editing of Plath after her death, use this collaborative relationship to argue that Hughes, by editing Plath's

work after her death only continued the process of partnered writing that existed throughout their relationship. Ennis writes, “Hughes and Plath had a deeply collaborative working relationship from the very beginning of their marriage. It was common for the couple to suggest poem and story ideas to one another, to read one another's work in progress, to offer criticism of that work, and to read proof together” (66). Indeed, writing and poetry had brought them together and remained a significant and constant part of their relationship. Three months after they met, Plath and Hughes were married in a small ceremony with only Plath’s mother Aurelia present. Shortly after, Plath and Hughes went on a honeymoon in Spain for several months which they spent writing. (Alexander 191). Much of their lives was devoted to the process of writing, submitting to journals, and receiving rejections or acceptances (Alexander 193). And during their seven year marriage, they collaborated and supported one another financially primarily through their literary pursuits. Regardless of the nature of their marriage otherwise, they did participate in a literary process of collaboration during Plath’s lifetime.

However, this literary relationship broke down when their marriage began to crumble. Hughes’s impact on Plath’s mental health should be considered, especially when examining the control he would come to have over her works. She entered their marriage with preexisting mental health concerns, but Hughes’s extramarital affairs tore their marriage apart and eventually led to her suicide. Plath had taken her two children and left Hughes after discovering his affair with Assia Wevill and was in the process of asking for a legal separation from him, even considering asking for a divorce, when she committed suicide (Bate 202). It should be noted as well that Plath’s doctor, Dr. Horder, had also just placed her on a new medication, one that he was worried could lead to suicidal thoughts. Horder later commented that, “Sylvia had reached the dangerous time when someone with suicidal tendencies is sufficiently roused from disabling

lethargy to do something about it" (Bate 213). This is not a simple question of whether or not Hughes drove Plath to suicide. Clearly, there were many factors affecting Plath's mental health.

However, given that Hughes inherited Plath's entire body of work after her death, their separation and the nature of his relationship with her at the time of Plath's death further complicates the effects Hughes has upon her work. The night that Plath committed suicide, Hughes was in the flat where he and Plath had consummated their marriage—with a different mistress, Sue Alliston (Bate 212). They had left Hughes's flat in London in order to get away from the incessant phone calls from Plath, and as Sue recalled later, "We slept while she died in each others arms" (Bate 212). If this evidence indicates anything, Plath and Hughes were separated at the time of her death. Furthermore, as Frieda Hughes, Plath and Hughes's daughter, points out, "Throughout their time together my mother had shown her poems to my father as she wrote them. But after May 1962, when their serious differences began, she kept the poems to herself. My father read 'Event' in the *Observer* that winter and was dismayed to see their private business made the subject of a poem" (*Ariel: The Restored Edition* xii). Even before Hughes started spending most of his weeks in London with Assia and before Plath had asked him not to return to their home, Plath had already ceased sharing her work with him. Hughes and Plath's marriage was effectively over, they had been separated for several months at this point, and Hughes was seeing several other women. In the month following their separation, Plath wrote a dozen poems and wrote to her mother that they were, "Terrific stuff, as if domesticity had choked me" (Middlebrook 193). Plath felt liberated in her writing in her departure from Hughes. But Hughes remained Plath's legal husband. As a result, Plath's entire literary heritage came into his possession after her death.

After Plath's death, the editorial relationship between Plath and Hughes transforms into its most controlling and controversial form. Enniss writes, "Hughes's posthumous editing of *Ariel* was a continuation of the collaborative relationship they had shared in life, not a new intervention Hughes suddenly undertook after Plath's death" (67). But two people cannot collaborate if one of them is dead. Furthermore, Frieda points out that Plath had already rescinded Hughes's permission to have input on her works when she reveals that Plath had ceased to allow Hughes to read her poetry as early as May 1962. Their editorial relationship had ended when their marital relationship effectively did, although they were not yet divorced. Plath had considered divorce, but divorce at that time was still greatly stigmatized. Thus because of Hughes's marital right to her possessions, Hughes was able to curate both of their images within the work (Middlebrook 215). Though Plath and Hughes's literary entanglement began quickly, it did not end even when their marriage ended, nor when Plath's life did shortly thereafter. Hughes inherited not only immense profits from the sale of the rights to her literary estate, various publications of poems and of *The Bell Jar*, but also the ability to control how Plath depicted both herself and him within her works.

Plath's confessional style of poetry invites the audience into her life, allows them to become one with her experiences. The characters in her poems, short stories, and novels become so closely related to the actual people they depict that the audience has a difficult time distinguishing where fiction ends and where reality begins. Plath draws heavily upon the people and events that have shaped her life, but also alters and accentuates them. Hughes would have been acutely aware of Plath's writing about oppressive male figures, about marriage, and about their relationship, aware that people would read it not just as poetry, but also as an accurate depiction of who he was. Many of the works that Hughes was left as the guardian of directly

depicted him and their relationship. Thus Hughes was not only curating an image of Plath with the posthumous publication of her works, he was curating his own image.

Ariel

In *Ariel: The Restored Edition,* Plath and Hughes's daughter Frieda discusses her father's influence on her mother's final collection of poetry. *Ariel* had been left on Plath's desk when she committed suicide, neatly collected into a "black spring binder" including forty poems, many of which had been written since her separation with Hughes, as well as a table of contents for their intended order (*Ariel: The Restored Edition ix*). Plath intended to end *Ariel* with "Wintering" which ends with the optimistic lines, "The bees are flying. They taste the spring" (*Ariel: The Restored Edition* 90). However, Hughes alters the order of poems, instead ending with "Kindness," "Contusion," "Edge," and "Words." Wagner writes in *Ariel's Gift,* that this editorial choice makes the collection "end blackly, with foreboding poems," shifting the legacy that Plath intended to leave of hope to one of darkness (23). Additionally, Frieda Hughes notes that when *Ariel* was published, Hughes had removed twelve and thirteen poems from the U.S. and U.K. publications respectively, and replaced them with poems he chose from her slightly earlier works (*Ariel: The Restored Edition* x). Wagner writes that among the critical audience, "This [omission of poems critical of Hughes] has been perceived as carelessness at best, censorship at worst" (24). In her introduction, Frieda acknowledges some of Hughes's struggles in curating *Ariel,* writing that, "He was well aware of the extreme ferocity with which some of my mother's poems dismembered those close to her—her husband, her mother, her father…" Frieda lists the poems that Hughes left out: "The Rabbit Catcher," "Thalidomide," "Barren Woman," "A Secret," "The Jailor," "The Detective," "Magi," "The Other," "Stopped Dead," "The Courage of Shutting-Up," "Purdah," "Amnesiac," and "Lesbos" (*Ariel: The Restored Edition* xiii). "Lesbos" was excluded

from UK printing, but not from US printing. Frieda defends her father in these actions, saying that he sought to protect the feelings and the memory of "[Plath's] husband, her mother, her father" and yet, Hughes himself was her husband, and had already been exposed to Plath's harsh depictions of him in these poems, and her father was already long deceased. Furthermore, Plath's mother is not depicted in any of these poems. Frieda also writes, "My father had a profound respect for my mother's work in spite of being one of the subjects of its fury. For him the work was *the* thing, and he saw the care of it as a means of tribute and a responsibility" (*Ariel: The Restored Edition* xiv). Thus Frieda presents Hughes's reasons for excluding certain poems from *Ariel* as a way to protect those who had been harshly treated and represented by Plath and as a way to give tribute to Plath's work.

When one examines the other poems that Hughes excluded from his publication of *Ariel,* a pattern of exclusion forms that does not entirely match the motivations that Frieda Hughes presents.[7] These poems can be sorted into several categories: those relating to abusive relationships, those relating to maternity, those relating to infidelity, and those that appear not to reference Hughes. The majority of the poems Hughes prevented from being published in the initial version of discuss an abusive husband or confining, edging on violent, relationships. "Rabbit Catcher," "The Jailor," "Magi," "Stopped Dead," "The Courage of Shutting Up," "Purdah," and "Amnesiac" number among these poems, seven of the thirteen excluded. Each possesses pointed references to the sensation of being confined, restricted, or even abused within

---

[7] Multiple Plath scholars have studied Hughes's editing of *Ariel.* Some examples of their work includes:
Wagner, Erica. *Ariel's Gift: Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, and the Story of Birthday Letters*. New York: Norton, 2001.
Clark, Heather L. *The Grief of Influence: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011
Bundtzen, Lynda K. *The Other Ariel.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.

a marriage, though some are more vicious than others in their description. To offer some examples, in “The Jailor,” Plath writes, “My night sweats grease his breakfast plate...I have been drugged and raped” (lines 1-6). These lines reference how the terror of the speaker aid her performance in domestic duties such as cooking breakfast, before explicitly referring to sexual abuse. In “Amnesiac” Plath writes, “Name, house, car keys, \ The little toy wife \ Erased, sigh, sigh, \ Four babies and a cocker” (lines 3-6). Plath evokes the domestic scene through mentioning specific household items and the sensation of being imprisoned or erased within it. Others such as “A Secret” and “Thalidomide” discuss feelings of discontent in relation to maternity and children, frequently referencing biographical details from Plath and Hughes’s life. “A Secret” references Hughes’s distance from their second child, Nicholas. In “Thalidomide,” Plath depicts pregnancy with contrasting emotions of joy and disgust by describing a mother’s work as, “All night I carpenter \ a space for the thing I am given” (lines 17-18). The mother in “Thalidomide” struggles emotionally with her pregnancy while simultaneously undertaking the strenuous physical work of being pregnant. In contrast, male participation is relegated to, “White spit \ of indifference!” in reference to his singular contribution of sperm (lines 21-22). While Plath’s depiction of pregnancy could be a general commentary about male and female gender roles, the clearest autobiographical reference would be to Hughes himself. Further, poems such as “The Detective” and “The Other” refer to infidelity, which can quickly be linked to Hughes’s affairs. Only two of the excluded poems, “Barren Woman” and “Lesbos” appear to lack some sort of reference to Hughes. “Barren Woman” discusses infertility and the emptiness associated with it while “Lesbos” jabs at friends of Plath and Hughes’s, the Kanes, though it does contain overtones of an oppressive and stifling marriage. Thus only two of the thirteen poems appear not to reference Hughes in any way. The majority of these poems directly defy what Frieda offers as

Hughes's possible reasons for exclusion, and are instead clearly removed in order for Hughes to control his reputation through eliminating negative portrayals of himself and their relationship. Rather than serving as a faithful steward of Plath's vision for her manuscript, Hughes altered her voice posthumously for the benefit of protecting his reputation and privacy. Plath did not leave a scattered collection of poems that Hughes faithfully collected, arranged, and published. Rather, she left a final copy of a neatly organized manuscript, complete with a table of contents and evidence of drafted titles. Then the man she had ceased showing her writing nearly a year earlier was given the power to remove and reorganize her final artistic vision, and discarded primarily poems that could be construed as referencing him in a negative light.

A close examination of "Rabbit Catcher," which Plath had intended to be the third poem in *Ariel*, allows for deeper understanding of why Hughes may have removed it from *Ariel*'s publication. This poem is also a key example of the type of poem Hughes removed from *Ariel*. First, Plath placed emphasis upon it by placing it early in the collection, which indicates that she saw it as an integral part. For anyone acquainted with Hughes or aware of his biography would know that "Rabbit Catcher" clearly references him—he loved hunting on the moors of his home in Yorkshire (Bate 39). This childhood sport of Hughes is so integral and formative for his character that Jonathon Bate, in his newly released and extensive biography of Hughes, entitles his second chapter "Capturing Animals" (37). In "Rabbit Catcher," Plath appears to be drawing parallels between herself and a trapped rabbit, with the trap symbolic of marriage and her husband represented as the rabbit catcher, writing, "And we, too, had a relationship—\Tight wires between us, \ Pegs too deep to uproot, and a mind like a ring \ Sliding shut on some quick thing, \ The constriction killing me also" (lines 26-30). Plath evokes the sudden violence of the rabbit trap capturing and killing its prey, comparing this sensation of being trapped and killed to

the sensation of being confined within her relationship. Plath also writes, “How they awaited him, those little deaths! \ They waited like sweethearts. They excited him” (lines 24-25). In these lines, the key phrase is “little deaths” which await him, perhaps Hughes, “like sweethearts.” One possible interpretation of these lines is that the deaths of small creatures, such as rabbits, “excited” the “rabbit catcher” in question. However, “little deaths” in French (*les petites morts*) is used to refer to orgasms, a connection that is underscored by Plath’s use of the word “excited” as well. As such, these lines tie together death with the erotic, creating a twisted connection between sexual arousal and violence. Furthermore, Plath’s use of the word “sweethearts,” specifically in the plural, alludes to romantic relationships. Thus unfaithfulness, sexuality, and death are all tied together in a few short lines. When examining this poem in the light of its exclusion from *Ariel*, it does not appear to fit into Frieda’s argument. The only person whose feelings that would be protected would be Hughes’s, and he had already read it, as well as much more vicious portrayals of himself. Thus it is not that he wanted to protect “her husband’s feelings,” as Frieda would have it. Rather, it would seem that Hughes excludes this poem to protect himself and his reputation from other people from other people. And as the heir of Plath’s literary heritage, he had every ability to do so.

Not only that, but Hughes eventually publishes his own “Rabbit Catcher” in a collection of poems regarding his relationship with Plath called *Birthday Letters.* Hughes’s “Rabbit Catcher” responds to Plath’s poem, which had been eventually published in other collections. In *Birthday Letters,* Hughes seized the chance to retell their marriage, to rewrite the narrative and paint himself in a different light. Andrew Motion, a poet, wrote about *Birthday Letters*, “Anyone who thought Hughes’s reticence was proof of his hard heart will immediately see how stony they have been themselves...This is a book written by someone obsessed, stricken, and deeply loving”

(Bate 504). In his "Rabbit Catcher" Hughes writes, "In those snares \ You'd caught something. \ Had you caught something in me, \ Nocturnal and unknown to me? Or was it \ Your doomed self, your tortured, crying, \ Suffocating self?" (lines 67-72). Hughes reverses Plath's "Rabbit Catcher," making her the one with the snares, that had "caught" him. Hughes additionally implies that Plath was caught in the snare of her own personhood, making herself wholly responsible for her own torment, and removing his influence from the equation. He paints her as someone already fated to be constrained through the use of the word "doomed," tortured not because of him, but because of her own nature. Thus even when Plath's "Rabbit Catcher" is free to the public, Hughes still has the ability to respond to it, to rewrite the past, to refute the claims that she made, responding in a way that she cannot. Not only does he control the narrative and what is released to the public, but Hughes has the ability to continue to write and rewrite his persona, while Plath has been fixed in time by her death.

The Journals of Sylvia Plath: Edited and Unabridged

Hughes's influence over *Ariel* reveals just one area in which he was able to edit, shape, and control the narrative of Plath's life. However, in addition to unilaterally editing *Ariel* after Plath's death, Hughes also edited her journals and published them in 1982—a full nineteen years later. Frances McCullough, a Plath scholar, served as consulting editor on the journals. Because Hughes and McCullough worked together on this project, it can be difficult to determine who exactly made the edits. However, Hughes, out of the two editors, is the only person who has anything to gain personally from the edits being made. Regardless of who made the precise edits, Hughes stands to benefit from them in a way that McCullough does not. While it can be difficult to discern who made the exact edits, Hughes would have had the final say as literary executor, as well as benefactor of the edits, and as such will be referenced as having editorial control. In her

introduction to the published (and heavily censored) journals, McCullough writes, “Sylvia Plath began keeping a diary when she was a child, she kept it right up until her death, and, next to her poems, it is her most important work” (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath* xi). As such, Hughes edited her two most significant works—her poems and her diaries. McCullough also offers guiding principles on their edits, writing that Hughes and McCullough “stick to a few basic principles: to include what seem to us the most important elements relating to her work, her inner life, and her valiant struggle to find herself and her voice” (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath* xii). McCullough and Hughes had the liberty of deciding “the most important elements” of Plath’s life. However, in emphasizing these elements of Plath’s life, Hughes and his actions disappear from the narrative, despite his profound effect upon it. McCullough also acknowledges that “there are quite a few nasty bits missing—Plath had a very sharp tongue and tended to use it on nearly everybody...” (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath* xii). McCullough’s disclaimer offers a defense of the editing of Plath’s journals as well as emphasizing their reasons for eliminating what they considered insignificant. With the 2000 publishing of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* from the original manuscripts at Smith College, one can now examine whether sections removed by McCullough and Hughes fit into their professed directives, as well as consider how scholars have incorporated this new information into their conception of Plath, Hughes, and their complex editorial relationship.

Scholars concur that *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* is a groundbreaking and fundamental document integral to understanding and studying Sylvia Plath, made all the more important by its relatively recent release in 2000.[8] Despite the extent of Plath’s literary estate,

[8] This opinion is additionally expressed by the following Plath scholars, to name a few:
Johnson, Greg. “The Eloquent Wrath of Sylvia Plath.” *The Georgia Review* 54. 2000.
Ozick, Cynthia. “Smoke and Fire.” *Yale Review* 89 (2001).

accessing and analyzing extensive biographical information as well as Plath's works proved difficult until recently, due to the efforts of the Hugheses. When permission to cite and access Plath's documents was granted, it was tightly controlled by the Hugheses. *Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath* (1989), a highly anticipated but eventually discredited biography written by Anne Stevenson, faced extensive criticism due to the extensive editorial control by Olwyn and Ted Hughes, inciting some reviews that described the biography as being effectively authored by them, not Stevenson (Johnson 752). Paul Alexander, in his well-known biography of Plath, *Rough Magic* (1991), writes, "Historically, when an author has submitted a manuscript to the Plath estate for permission to quote, the Hugheses [Olwyn, Ted Hughes's sister aided him as a literary executor] have asked the author for changes in substance as well as quotation in exchange for that permission. I decided early on that I would not subject myself to the constraints of the estate, and so I did not quote from unpublished sources, although much information in my biography is gleaned from such sources" (Alexander 2). Johnson describes *The Silent Woman* (1994) by Janet Malcolm as "having a chilling effect to date on anyone contemplating a new book on Plath while Olwyn Hughes controlled permissions and Ted Hughes was still alive" (752). As such, scholars concur that the publication of *The Unabridged Journals* is a literary goldmine of information, giving unrestricted access to Plath's innermost thoughts when previously the Hugheses had maintained tight control over Plath's estate and personal details such as contained in *The Journals*.

In scholarship before and after the release of *The Unabridged Journals,* Plath scholars almost universally emphasize Hughes's destruction of the journals containing Plath's records of

---

Matthews, Pamela R. "Sylvia Plath Hughes: The Middle Ground in the New Millennium." South Central Review, vol. 23, no. 3, 2006, pp. 89–93.
Helle, Anita. *The Unraveling Archive.* The University of Michigan Press. 2007.
Brain, Tracy. *The Other Sylvia Plath.* Routledge, 2016.

the last six months of her life. Hughes himself was very open about the destruction of these journals, mentioning them in his foreword to Plath's *Journals,* heavily edited and released by him in 1982. In this foreword, Hughes acknowledges the importance of these journals and writes, "Though I spent every day with her for six years, and was rarely separated from her for more than two or three hours at a time, I never saw her show her real self to anybody—except, perhaps, in the last three months of her life" (*Journals* xiv). However, despite emphasizing Plath's concealed nature, Hughes concludes his foreword to *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* by revealing he destroyed the record of this time of Plath's "true self." Hughes writes, "Two more notebooks survived for a while, maroon backed ledgers like the 1957-1959 volume, and continues the record from late 1959 to within three days of her death. The last of these contained entries for several months, and I destroyed it because I did not want her children to have to read it (in those days I regarded forgetfulness as an essential part of survival). The other disappeared" (xv). In a few short pages, Hughes reveals that he believes Plath only was her truest self in the months before her death, and confesses to the destruction of her record of that time. Notably, these are the months in which Plath discovered his infidelity and was subsequently separated from him. This is the loss that is repeatedly emphasized by scholars. Yet, little scholarly emphasis has yet been placed on the exact contents that were removed from the version of Plath's journals which were released by Ted Hughes and Frances McCullough in 1982, a loss that has now become apparent with the release of the complete journals in 2000.[9] *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* do not emphasize these removals either—Karen Kukil, the editor, does not note in any way the sections that had been edited out by Hughes and

[9] Bate, Jonathon. *Ted Hughes: The Unauthorized Life."* Harper Collins, London. 2015.

McCullough in the journals' previous release. While scholars note the importance of the information in order to have a fuller understanding of Plath herself, only Matthews emphasizes that this new information can be used to illuminate Hughes's role in controlling Plath's image through analyzing what has been removed. Instead, scholars note the clarity of Plath's voice in her expression of anger (Johnson), the insights the journals provide into her inner thoughts as well as their disjointed, inscrutable quality (Ozick), and even the sheer amount of her writing (Helle). Some recent and prominent sources which address relevant questions of Plath's representation, such as Bayley and Brain's *Representing Sylvia Plath*, which "re-evaluates Plath's body of work" and attempts to address "new developments in Plath Studies" focus on Hughes's representation of Plath in his book of poetry, *Howls & Whispers.* But these sources do not utilize Plath's finally complete journals which would allow academics to see how her image was manipulated through the use of her own words to form a specific representation (167). Here, they overlook the priceless source that is Plath herself, in a complete and whole form. Overall, these are all valuable and important analyses that have been permitted by the publication of *The Unabridged Journals*, yet it is not sufficient to merely focus on the missing journals and acknowledge that previously hidden information is now accessible to the public and allows for further study. Rather, one must delve into the edits themselves and examine *why* Hughes might have felt compelled to exclude the material he did.

In order to understand the extent of Hughes's control over Plath's narrative, at least what remains of it, one can turn to a relatively well-known and colossal life event in both of their lives—their first meeting. Plath describes the scene vividly in her journals, and while Hughes permits a large amount of the scene in his edited version, a few crucial details are exempted. For clarity, Hughes's omissions will be italicized in all excerpts.

> And then it came to the fact that I was all there, wasn't I, and I stamped and screamed yes, and he had obligations in the next room, and he was working in London, earning ten pounds a week so he could later earn twelve pounds a week, and I was stamping and he was stamping on the floor, and then he kissed me bang smash on the mouth *and ripped my hairband off, my lovely red hairband scarf which has weathered the sun and much love, and whose like I shall never again find, and my favorite silver earrings: hah, I shall keep, he barked.* And when he kissed my neck I bit him long and hard on the cheek, and when we came out of the room, blood was running down his face. *His poem "I did it, I." Such violence, and I can see how women lie down for artists. The man in the room who was as big as his poems, huge, with hulk and dynamic chunks of words; his poems are strong and blasting like a high wind in steel girders.* And I screamed in myself, thinking: oh to give myself crashing, fighting, to you. (*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* 212)

Through the process of editing this segment of Plath's journals, Hughes omitted his violence, but retained Plath's. Both of the sections that are removed reference his violence towards her, first through ripping off her hairband and her earrings, and secondly through Plath's actual use of the word "violence." Yet Hughes includes Plath's violent action of biting his face so hard it bleeds. Through this removal of his own actions, Hughes crafts a completely different narrative. In his narrative, Plath's actions are unprompted and erratic. However, with the complete narrative in place, it is revealed that these actions are not that, but rather *reactions* to Hughes himself.

Hughes additionally removes two powerful descriptions of himself: Plath's use of the word "barked" in describing his nearly instantaneous possessiveness over objects dear to her, create an image of a commanding figure. Additionally, she depicts him as being as large in size

as his poems, physically intimidating and powerful. This careful diction crafts a portrait of Hughes as large, masculine, commanding and aggressive—an image that is missing from the *Abridged Journals.* Furthermore, these edits do not seem to fall within the parameters of McCullough's introduction. Even in this short excerpt a comparison of the edited and unedited Plath journals provide a telling glimpse into how Hughes wielded his editorial power to improve (or even remove) his own image while allowing for Plath to represent herself negatively, crafting a distinct narrative through removing himself from it.

While the scene of Hughes and Plath's first meeting provides an example of Hughes improving or removing his own image from Plath's journals, while allowing Plath's more erratic representation of herself, many of his edits are far more extensive than in this first example. In a more extensively edited entry, Hughes removes nearly an entire entry from March 29th, in which Plath describes "a horrible hangover and nightmare morning" (*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* 357). Plath discusses a dream she has about teaching, resolves not to drink martinis but rather only beer, muses on her husband's last day of work, and lists authors that she needs to read to prepare for the next year of teaching. Much of this section appears to be innocuous, giving relatively little clues as to why Hughes felt the need to exclude it from his abridged journals.

But then, Plath moves on to a discussion of a friend, Marty, who had revealed the night before that she cannot conceive (358). This prompts Plath to think of her and Ted, writing, "The only worse, worst: to have an idiot or crippled child of one's own. Will I have them? Will mine be all-right? Ted's family is full of madness—suicide, idiots & mine has a diabetic father, grandmother died of cancer, mother with ulcers & tumors, aunt unable to conceive after three miscarriages, uncle with heart trouble" (359). These passages are removed entirely from the

abridged journals, with not even an annotation or an acknowledgement of omission. However, both of these brief passages follow the pattern of removal that Hughes and McCullough have established as editors. The removal of the first passage describing a friend's infertility can be justified by a line in McCullough's "Editor's Note" to the edited journals. McCullough writes, "Because it is very early—in terms of the ages of Plath's survivor—to release such a document, there has been special concern for those who must live out their lives as characters in this drama" (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath* xii). Clearly, if this friend survived Plath, the removal of this section in order to protect her reputation and her feelings can be understood and appreciated for its sensitivity.

However, the following passage discussing Plath and Hughes's respective families and family history can be interpreted as a more specific exertion of control over their narrative. Given the modern association of Plath herself with mental illness and suicide (due to her eventual death by this means), the fact that Plath writes that "Ted's family is full of madness" creates a vastly different perspective on the issue. Two major characterizations of Hughes occur in biographies of both Plath and Hughes—either Hughes as the violent, philandering husband who caused Plath's death by his infidelity and abuse, or Hughes as the patient savior of Plath, taking care of his insane wife and eventually driven to affairs by her madness, thus absolving him of any blame for those affairs or for her death. Thus, Plath's own depiction of Hughes as coming from a family "full of madness" complicates this narrative. Yet, this representation of his family is removed.

Finally, the fact that the nearly the entire journal entry for that day is excluded, except for a few lines near the end where Plath suddenly turns to a discussion of "wanting to buy art books" and listing several poems she plans to write, also adds complexity to the editorial choices. While

the last two passages have clearer interpretations as to why they could have been removed—to protect the friend of Hughes and Plath, and to protect Hughes himself—the first section discussing Plath's hangover and her dream does not have an obvious explanation for its removal. However, it does reveal that Hughes and McCullough removed sections that they perhaps simply found irrelevant to their narrative of Plath as a writer. Finally, there is no indication that these passages have been removed in the abridged journals. Rather, Hughes and McCullough slide the edited passages together as if nothing had been removed, an act which misleads readers into believing they have access to the whole story.

Despite evidence of copious edits in Plath's abridged *Journals*, wherein Hughes crafts a specific image of himself and continues to curate Plath into the "mad girl," Hughes surprisingly does not remove some sections that would match his editorial pattern of curation. A striking example of this arises with a relatively well-known fight between Plath and Hughes. Hughes had promised to meet Plath after her last day of teaching for the year, but instead of meeting her at the arranged time, Plath writes in her journals,

> Ted was coming up the road from Paradise Pond where girls take their boys to neck on weekends. He was walking with a broad. He was walking with a broad, intense smile, eyes into the uplifted doe-eyes of a strange girl...He thought her name was Sheila; once he thought my name was Shirley...Strange but jealousy in me turned to disgust. The late comings home, my vision while brushing my hair of a black-horned grinning wolf all came clear, fused, and I gagged at what I saw. I am no smiler anymore. But Ted is. His aesthetic distance from his girls so betrayed by his leaning stance, leaning into the eyes of adoration—not old adoration, but new, fresh, unadulterated. Or, perhaps adulterated… (*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* 390)

This damning passage defies expectation. While one may have anticipated that Hughes would have removed this scene entirely from Plath's journals due to her condemnation of him, her obvious jealousy and overt suspicions of his infidelity, instead, Hughes allows nearly this entire journal entry to remain unedited. Plath even references Hughes's girlfriend from when they met (and kissed), Shirley, whose name he had once made the mistake of calling Plath by. Despite all of this, Hughes leaves this section in the abridged journals. Perhaps this section remains as a way to portray Plath as jealous and insecure, traits which are obviously revealed in this passage. However, given that Hughes would go on to be unfaithful to Plath only a few years later, this jealousy and lack of trust is not entirely unfounded, and a less Hughes-sympathetic reader may see the roots of that infidelity here, as Plath herself did. Overall, the inclusion of this passage does lend him some credence—he could have removed it entirely, not given the reader of these journals the freedom to interpret it for or against him. One possible explanation for this inclusion is that at this point, this incident was already well-known enough that removing it from the journals would have shown his heavy editorial hand. Alternatively, perhaps Hughes enjoyed the depiction of himself as alluring to college girls.

However, the section following Plath's retelling of events is not left fully intact. Hughes motivation in removing these sections allows for slightly more interpretation than others Plath writes,

> Later, much later. Some time the next morning. The fake excuses. Vague confusions about name & class. All fake. All false. And the guilty look of stunned awareness of the wrong presence. So I can't sleep. Partly out of shock myself at the cheapness of vanity, *the heavy ham act: oh yes, Stanley, very clever: matinee idol: hanging over, great inert heavy male flesh: "Let's make up." O such good fuckings. Why so weary, so slack all*

> *winter? Ageing or spending. Fake. Sham ham. No explanations, only obfuscations. That is what I cannot stand, why I cannot sleep. He snorts & snores even now in smug sleep.* And the complete refusal to explain...He is shamed, shameful and shames me & my trust, which is no plea in a world of liars and cheats and broken or vanity-ridden men. Love has been an inexhaustible spring for my nourishment and now I gag. Wrong, wrong: the vulgar heat of it: the picture of fatuous attention, doe-eye rollings of smiles, startled recognition, flight-all cannot be denied. Only clearly explained. I do not want to ask for what should be given before the heavy hammy American cheap slang "let's make up." The heavy too jocular-jocularity. *This is the vain, selfish face & voice I first saw and the Yorkshire Beacon boy, the sweet & daily companion is gone. Why should he be proud of my recent nastiness to Hecht & Van Voris if it isn't a judgement on his own inner corruption.* For I smell it. The house stinks of it. (*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* 391)

McCullough, in her editor's note to the abridged journals, points out that "there are a few others cuts—of intimacies—that have the effect of diminishing Plath's eroticism, which was quite strong" (xii). However, in this section, it is not Plath's eroticism that is removed, but rather her anger at Hughes's use of his sexuality as a way to end the argument. While Hughes allows for the scene of conflict to remain wherein Plath discovers him with a young, female student, this section is deemed unsuitable for print. In the first removed passage, Hughes removes Plath's references to his "heavy, inert male flesh," a reference to his genitalia. (*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* 391). In addition, he removes, "Why so weary, so slack all winter? Ageing or spending" (*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* 391). Hughes included the scene in which Plath describes possible infidelity, thus one can deduce that these references to his

genitalia are the possible source of their removal. Perhaps it is the overt sexuality and discussion of his genitalia, as well as Plath's disdain at his sexual offer to "Make up" that caused Hughes to omit this passage. However, Plath's use of the words "inert," "weary," "slack," and "ageing" evoke not a sense of masculinity and eroticism, but rather a dwindling masculinity and sexual prowess. Thus, these edits do not remove Plath's eroticism; they remove Hughes's (or his lack thereof).

Interestingly, Hughes also removes two additional sentences near the end of the passage, both of which discuss him in a negative light. Plath's tone towards Hughes in these two sentences shifts substantially from previous journal entries, but not greatly from those entries or even sentences directly preceding. As such, Hughes's choice to remove these two sentences specifically is somewhat mystifying, particularly in light of those surrounding it.

In editing Sylvia Plath's journals, Ted Hughes gained the power to control the narrative of her life, particularly the time in which he played a major figure. Bundtzen writes in *The Other Ariel*, "Plath's textual body is hopelessly entangled with that of her husband, Ted Hughes. Many of the manuscripts and typescripts for her final poems are written on his backside, so to speak: Plath recycles old manuscripts and typescripts by Hughes, and often she seems to be back talking, having the last word in the argument" (7). While this creates a beautiful image of the literary give-and-take between Plath and Hughes, after Plath ceased to exist, Hughes was given the power to "have the last word in the argument" in her poetry and her most private writings, her journals. Up until the release of *The Unabridged Journals*, Hughes used this "last word" to erase himself from several conflicts. This negation of his presence in the journals crafts a specific image of Plath—emphasizing her negative responses while taking away the inciting action, focusing on her madness while removing Hughes's family history of the same, and even

emphasizing Plath's eroticism and jealousy while displacing her comments on his sexuality. Hughes removes himself from Plath's journals, in doing so creating a sharper focus on Plath, but also a highly biased and incomplete one.

Conclusion

Anne Bradstreet, Mary Shelley, and Sylvia Plath's relationships with their respective male editors simultaneously exhibit liberation and control. These women's relationships with their male editors are complex, at times mysterious and at times confusing. Despite the negative effects that may manifest due to their editorial control, these editors' efforts also made it possible for Bradstreet, Shelley, and Plath's work to first reach a larger audience. With expanded access to additional sources, whether it be centuries after their deaths or fifty-five years, the critical audience now has the most access to their complete writing yet, and the capability to parse through it all, unraveling the layers of control and secrecy that has obfuscated these women's authorial images until now.

In the case of Bradstreet, it was her brother-in-law, John Woodbridge, who liberated her works to print. Woodbridge arranged prefatory poems that proclaimed Bradstreet's exceptionalism and, in doing so, discredited other female writers. As editor, Woodbridge also mediated which poems were published, crafting a specific image of Bradstreet for his own purposes. However, Bradstreet may have been aware of her brother-in-law's plans for *The Tenth*

Muse and may have privately advocated for its publication, a reading which allows her surprising authorial agency in a time when writing and publication was primarily patriarchically controlled. However, even in this more optimistic reading, Woodbridge almost certainly had the final say over which poems were published. Furthermore, the unknown editor of *Several Poems* did have complete editorial control, since this edition was published after Bradstreet's death. Despite this mysterious editor's complete control over *Several Poems,* this publication allows a modern audience to access Bradstreet's more personal work, which has been deemed her most poignant. The scholarly focus on this part of Bradstreet's corpus is the primary reason why Bradstreet is known at all, indicating a certain academic preference for poetry from early modern women that meets strict standards of femininity. Yet defying the expectations placed upon a woman at her time and despite the layers of male control that shaped her work and her authorial image, Bradstreet became the first *person* to be a published writer in both England and America.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was edited by her husband, but she actively participated in this editing process and even edited him after his early death. Yet despite her agency she at some points has been demoted to "co-author" of her own work and as a mournful widow, obsessed with her dead husband. Percy's edits on *Frankenstein* are varied, some contributing alternate readings, some clarifying diction, and some which reveal Percy's confusion of overly complicated phrasing for elevated style. Mary collaborated with Percy, and he aided *Frankenstein*'s path to publication, while she ensured that his poetry did not disappear into the darkness after his death. Mary's reduction and oversimplification comes primarily from how scholars evaluated the impact of her editorial relationship with Percy, rather than the editorial relationship itself. Nevertheless Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* holds a key place in the literary canon, and thanks to her efforts, Percy's poetry survived his early death.

Plath continues the narrative of a dual relationship of agency and control with her editor and husband, Ted Hughes. Plath and Hughes's relationship was centered around writing, and both pushed the other to pursue their literary goals. Plath wrote some of her finest poetry in reaction to Hughes and their relationship. After Plath's death, Hughes altered the contents of *Ariel*, but also ensured that *Ariel* was published, if not in its entirety. Thus Hughes's influence and his decision to publish *Ariel* after Plath's death, in some ways, allowed for her poetic development and the spread of her legacy, despite Hughes keeping back some of her poems from publication. In the abridged version of Plath's journals, Hughes curated the image of the 'mad girl,' removing himself from the negative aspects of the narrative and foregrounding his version of Plath. And yet, despite this extensive editorial control, Plath's poetry and her novel, *The Bell Jar*, have similarly become a part of the literary canon, even above Hughes's work, and the new access to her unabridged journals allows us now to read the complete narrative.

The dialogue created in examining these women in unison reveals a complicated, nonlinear progression of female liberation and male control. Anne Bradstreet has long been treated as a woman who was taken advantage of by men, who was robbed of authorial agency and control. Yet closer examination reveals that she may have played a very active role in the publication of her works, one that she was forced to undermine for the sake of modesty, and one that continued to be overlooked due to critics' bias. Mary Shelley, despite having written a classic, *Frankenstein*, faces being robbed of her authorial credit merely because her husband edited a small percentage of the novel. Furthermore, Mary does exert a similar form of editorial control over Percy, which is hardly acknowledged nor credited, despite its integral nature in preserving his poetry and other writing. Sylvia Plath faces extensive editorial control, with Ted Hughes removing numerous poems from *Ariel* and discarding large chunks of her journals in

order to craft a particular image of himself. Thus the narrative surrounding Sylvia Plath, who is frequently championed as a feminist hero in her own right, and who comes latest in this trio, faces the most patriarchal control. These case studies reveal that male editorial control, paired with persistent sexism in both scholarly and casual reception constantly undermines and undersells women's agency in their own lives. As a society, we are skeptical of female writers—skeptical of their ability to rebel against oppressive systems if that rebellion is not at first clearly stated, skeptical of their ability to produce powerful writing without the help of more experienced men, skeptical of the *value* of what they have to offer us. The expectations of femininity placed upon women hinder them in their writing—Bradstreet, Shelley, and Plath all discuss the worries of motherhood and the difficulties of balancing those domestic tasks with that of being a writer—and yet, write they do. And their writing survives through editorial control, through being pushed behind the scandals of the author's personal life, through sexist critical misinterpretations. Their writing not only survives; it thrives.

As such, these complex editorial relationships reveal the effects of gender, in writing, in editing, and in reception, frequently subverting expectations and assumptions about attitudes towards woman across time and the complex nature of liberation and authority. These similarities in editorial narrative exhibit the persistence across centuries of male editorial control and gendered scholarly focus. Even though attitudes towards and expectations of female writers have shifted across time, the shared experiences with male editors remind us that the relationship between patriarchal control and a woman's narrative agency remains complex. And finally, these editorial narratives reveal the power of women's writing to transcend countless barriers, of feminine expectations and patriarchal control, of sexist interpretations and chronic

underestimation, of perceived liberation and unanticipated agency, and to forcefully assert their place in a traditionally male-dominated canon.

Works Cited

Alexander, Paul. *Rough Magic: A Biography of Sylvia Plath.* Cambridge, Ma: Da Capo, 2003.

Bate, Jonathon. *Ted Hughes: The Unauthorised Life.* London: William Collins, 2016.

Bradstreet, Anne. *The tenth muse lately sprung up in America: or severall poems, compiled with great variety of vvit and learning, full of delight.* London: for Stephen Bowtell at the signe of the Bible in Popes Head-Alley, 1650

---. *Several Poems.* Boston: For John Foster, 1678.

---. *The Works of Anne Bradstreet.* Ed. Jeannine Hensley and Adrienne Rich. Belknap Press, 1981.

Badia, Janet. *Sylvia Plath and the Mythology of Women Readers.* Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Brain, Tracy. *The Other Sylvia Plath.* Routledge, 2016.

Bundtzen, Lynda K. *The Other Ariel.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.

Clark, Heather L. *The Grief of Influence: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011

Dolle, Raymond F. *Anne Bradstreet, a Reference Guide*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990.

The Endurance of Frankenstein. Ed. George Levine and U.C. Knoepflmacher. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Ennis, Stephen. *"No Other Appetite:" Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, and the Blood Jet of Poetry.* Stinehour Press, 2005.

Gittings, Robert and Jo Manton. *Claire Clairmont and the Shelleys: 1798-1879.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Gladden, Samuel Lyndon. "Mary Shelley's Editions of 'The Collected Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley': The Editor as Subject." *Studies in Romanticism* vol. 44, no. 2. (2005). pp. 181-205.

Gray, Richard. *A History of American Literature.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2012.

Greenberg, Arielle, and Becca Klaver. "Mad Girl's Love Songs: Two Women Poets, a Professor and Graduate Student, Discuss Sylvia Plath, Angst, and the Poetics of Female Adolescence." *College Literature* 36.4 (2009): 179-207.

Hart, James D., and Phillip W. Leininger. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Helle, Anita. *The Unraveling Archive.* The University of Michigan Press. 2007.

Hensley, Jeannine. "The Editor of Anne Bradstreet's *Several Poems.*" *American Literature.* Duke University Press, Jan 1964. Web. 31 May 2017.

Huet, Marie-Helene. *Monstrous Imagination.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Hughes, Ted. *Birthday Letters.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998.

Johnson, Greg. “The Eloquent Wrath of Sylvia Plath.” *The Georgia Review* 54. 2000.

Keeble, N.H. “Anne Bradstreet.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* September 2004.

Ko, Gap-Hee. “Making a Difference: Mary Shelley’s Revision of Percy Bysshe Shelley.” New York University, 1991.

Kothe, Ana. “Displaying the Muse: Print, Prologue, Poetics, and Early Modern Women Writers Published in England and Spain.” University of Maryland, 1996.

Malcolm, Janet. *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.* New York: Random House, 1993.

Massey, Irving. *Posthumous Poems of Shelley: Mary Shelley’s Fair Copy Book.* Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1969.

Matthews, Pamela R. “Sylvia Plath Hughes: The Middle Ground in the New Millennium.” South Central Review, vol. 23, no. 3, 2006, pp. 89–93.

Mellor, Anne K. *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters.* New York: Methuen Inc, 1988.

Middlebrook, Diane. *Her Husband.* New York: Penguin, 2003.

Murray, E.B. "Shelley's Contribution to Mary's Frankenstein." *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin* 29 (1978): 50-68.

North, Marcy L. "Women, the Material Book and Early Printing." *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing.* Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 68-82. Print. Cambridge Companions to Literature.

Ozick, Cynthia. “Smoke and Fire.” *Yale Review* 89 (2001).

Plath, Sylvia. *Ariel: The Restored Edition.* Ed. Frieda Hughes. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004.

---. *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000.

---. *The Journals of Sylvia Plath.* Ed. Ted Hughes and Frances McCullough. New York: Ballantine Books, 1982.

---. *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath.* Ed. Karen V. Kukil. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

Seymour, Miranda. *Mary Shelley.* New York: Grove Press, 2000.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *The Frankenstein Notebooks.* Ed. Charles E. Robinson. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996.

---. *Frankenstein (1818 Text).* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

---. *The Original Frankenstein.* Ed. Charles E Robinson. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.

---. *Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus.* Ed. James Reiger. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Snook, Edith. "Reading Women." *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing.* Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 40-53.

---. *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Wagner, Erica. *Ariel's Gift: Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, and the Story of Birthday Letters*. New York: Norton, 2001.

Walker, Cheryl. *The Nightingale's Burden: Women Poets and American Culture before 1900.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982.

Wall, Wendy. "Women in the Household." *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*. Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 97-109.

White, Elizabeth Wade. *Anne Bradstreet, "The Tenth Muse."* New York: Oxford UP, 1971.

Wright, Gillian. *Producing Women's Poetry, 1600-1730.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ, 2016.

Works Consulted

Bayley, Sally, and Tracy Brain. *Representing Sylvia Plath*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Bloom, Harold. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. New York: Chelsea House, 2007.

Engberg, Kathrynn S. *The Right to Write: The Literary Politics of Anne Bradstreet and Phillis Wheatley*. University Press of America, Lanham, Md, 2010.

Engen, Abram Van. "Advertising the Domestic: Anne Bradstreet's Sentimental Poetics." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*. University of Nebraska Press, 02 July 2011.

Garrett, Martin. *Mary Shelley*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Gordon, Charlotte. *Mistress Bradstreet: The Untold Life of America's First Poet*. New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2005.

---. *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Daughter Mary Shelley*. New York: Random House, 2015.

Johnson, Barbara. *A Life with Mary Shelley*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Poovey, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Rosenmeier, Rosamond. *Anne Bradstreet Revisited.* Boston, MA: Twayne, 1991.

Stevenson, Anne. *Bitter Fame.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989.

Van Dyne, Susan R. *Revising Life: Sylvia Plath's Ariel Poems*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Wagner-Martin, Linda. *Sylvia Plath: A Literary Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Wall, Wendy. *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1993. Print.

Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800. Ed. George L. Justice & Nathan Tinker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.