Review of *The Shelley-Godwin Archive*

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Abstract

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Keywords

digital humanities, Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, archive, digitization, transcription, manuscripts

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The Shelley-Godwin Archive. General Editors: Neil Fraistat, Elizabeth Denlinger, and Raffaele Viglianti, http://shelleygodwinarchive.org

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The Shelley-Godwin Archive currently offers a small but significant collection of digitized manuscripts for exploration, and, assuming it lives up to its ambitious goals, promises to be a wonderful resource for scholars in years to come. In this review, I will provide a description of the archive and address the appearance and navigability of the archive, its methodology and technical choices, content and editorial choices, and its long-term goals. In determining these criteria, I was influenced by the 2011 whitepaper published by NINES that outlines a framework for evaluating digital work.

Through open licenses, *The Shelley-Godwin Archive* (S-GA) provides electronic access to the handwritten manuscripts of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft. In its current state, the S-GA is primarily a digitization and transcription project and has only published twelve manuscripts, including one work by Mary Shelley, two works by Godwin, and nine by Percy Bysshe Shelley. No works by Mary Wollstonecraft have been added yet. As scholars in British Romanticism, library curation, and research programming, the general editors of the archive, Neil Fraistat, Elizabeth Denlinger, and Raffaele Viglianti, reflect the interdisciplinarity of a Digital Humanities project. They are supported by a robust list of current and past contributors in technical, academic, and archival fields, and the Advisory Board for the project is an impressive collection of prominent scholars. The technical support and design of the archive is provided by the Maryland Institute of Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland, where Fraistat and Viglianti are both located. Additional partnerships with the New York Public Library (Denlinger's institution), the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford, Harvard University Library, the Huntington Library, and British Library means the S-GA has access to over 90% of all known relevant manuscripts by the four authors.

The overall appearance of *The Shelley-Godwin Archive* is clean and uncluttered, with good use of white space and an attractive, usable interface. The homepage presents a short description of the S-GA and thumbnails of some of the major works already published. The tabs at the top remain consistent across the website, providing easy high-level navigation.

The "About" page provides a good overview of the project along with a brief biography of the family of writers and a thorough explanation of the technological infrastructure of the archive. The transcriptions and software applications are currently housed on GitHub, and visitors to the website can follow links to view TEI updates/revisions and data analytics. This feature conforms to their desire for open access, but they do not make mention of plans for long-term preservation of content. The S-GA has a linked open data model and uses the established standards of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). The data model they are currently using is Shared Canvas, which is based on a concept of annotation to help describe and present artifacts. However, according to their own explanation, they plan to migrate to the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF), which is more widely used. There is no stated timeline for when that might occur. TEI has been almost universally adopted by Digital Humanities projects, and the number of TEI elements S-GA is using is laudable (the list is available on the "About" page). For instance, encoders are noting authorial revisions or interventions by different hands, which is especially important for journals shared by Mary Shelley and Percy Bysshe Shelley, as well as additions, deletions, substitutions, and retracings. While all this information regarding the manuscripts is useful, it is also time consuming, which might explain the slow releases of the manuscripts.

Visitors to the website can either jump immediately into an examination of the manuscripts, with very little explanation necessary; use the basic search function to investigate all content in the archive, which can be sorted by work, manuscript, hand, or revisions; or learn more about effectively using the archive through

written descriptions and short videos. I found the descriptions and videos to be clear and informative, resulting in a fairly smooth use of the archive.

One can explore the texts through two primary methods, either by work or manuscript. If one chooses a work, *Caleb Williams* for example, then the text will be presented in a linear sequence of page images as it would appear in the final version of the work. If one chooses a manuscript, such as Bodleian MS. Abinger c.56, then the text would appear as it does in the actual manuscript, which might be out of order or have other texts interspersed.

The landing page of the work or manuscript will have a brief introduction, links to resources (bibliographic or contextual), and thumbnails of the page images. Hovering over the thumbnails will produce color-coded dots indicating the curatorial status of the page, both transcription and metadata. A red dot means no encoding or transcriptions have been completed, a yellow dot suggests that only basic transcriptions exist, while green equates to a fully corrected and TEI-encoded transcription.

Each viewing page for the images includes metadata, the transcription status, the manuscript image, transcription (if there is one), and control buttons. The transcription defaults to the diplomatic, with reading text and TEI encoding sometimes available as well. The control features include zooming and rotating. One of the more interesting functions is the marquee feature, which allows one to display the text by individual handwriting. For example, one might look at the *Frankenstein* text and determine what was written in Mary Shelley's hand versus what was written in Percy Bysshe Shelley's.

Originally funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, *The Shelley-Godwin Archive* started as a partnership between the MITH and the New York Public Library to digitize and transcribe the handwritten manuscript of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, located in the Bodleian Library. The fully transcribed and encoded text is accompanied by material reproduced from Charles Robinson's *The* Frankenstein *Notebooks: A Facsimile Edition: Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics* (1996). With its public launch in 2013 of the *Frankenstein* notebooks, the S-GA has slowly been publishing manuscripts by the other members of "England's first family of writers." Despite the grant ending in 2015, the S-GA has continued to find partner libraries and funding, including from The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. In 2016, the *Archive* published the Bodleian's Percy Bysshe Shelley *Prometheus Unbound* fair copy notebooks, including the title poem as well as "Ode to Heaven," "Misery.–A Fragment," and his draft translation of Plato's *Ion*. Then, early in 2017, S-GA published the Scrope Davies Notebook from the British Library. The manuscript contains two sonnets, "Upon the wandering winds" and "To Laughter–," and alternate versions of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Most recently, through a grant from the Queen Mary University of London Humanities and Social Sciences Collaboration Fund, S-GA published William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*, which are held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In collaboration with the respected Godwin scholar, Pamela Clemit, the archive includes substantial editorial notes and context for the two works. The last text to make up the archive is "My lost William (To William Shelley)," the one work digitized from the Huntington Shelley notebook.

The one major aspect missing from this otherwise well-articulated archive is an explanation of the editorial choices regarding content. One can assume that they chose the most popular and widely-recognized works first, thus starting with *Frankenstein*. And now that they have works by Godwin and both Shelleys, it seems reasonable to expect Wollstonecraft will be next–perhaps with *Vindications of the Rights of Woman*. But then what? There is no published plan for the addition of manuscripts, nor is there a timeline. Beyond the recent excellent material accompanying the Godwin manuscripts, there is also no new scholarship in the S-GA.

The *Shelley-Godwin Archive*'s stated goal is to publish all known manuscripts, including drafts, of the four authors. Assuming they continue to have funding, this would make the archive a truly valuable resource for scholars; however, the rate of publication to this point has been rather sluggish and this ambitious plan might take years. In addition, the S-GA hopes to eventually support user curation and create a commons where scholars, students, and the general public can contribute to transcriptions, corrections, annotations, and TEI encoding. Graduate students at the University of Maryland and the University of Virginia assisted with the transcribing and encoding of *Frankenstein*, and as the S-GA scales up, they might encourage more student participation. Yet, there has been no public announcements that this is any closer to coming to fruition than it was when it first launched.

Ultimately, I am excited by the promise of the *Shelley-Godwin Archive*. There is so much potential for future scholars and students, especially once more manuscripts are added and it is open to collaboration with "citizen humanists." In the meantime, it is an example of a well-designed digital archive and offers access to manuscripts one used to travel thousands of miles to see.