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Résumé de l'article

This paper employs the concept of queer to examine Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Epipsychidion*. Shelley's idealism towards love was widely received in atheism, materialism and Platonism. Compared with other Romantic poets, Shelley exercised his concept of love very differently. Shelley's quest for love is particularly discussed in most of his love poems. Among them *Epipsychidion* is a long poem that Shelley wrote to demonstrate his philosophy of love. In his later life, Shelley worked on translating Plato's philosophy, particularly *The Symposium*, which partly focuses on Greek love, and further pondered on his own sexuality. Shelley started to draw on atheistic materialism and Platonic metaphysics. *Epipsychidion* extends Shelley's early concept of love, namely "a soul within our soul," and dramatizes his narrator's love towards a female character named Emily. Different from major perspectives from Shelley critics (Notopoulos, Wasserman, Sperry, Peterfreud) who particularly pay attention to Shelley's love affairs, heterosexuality, as well as the real identity of Emily in *Epipsychidion*, the paper instead focuses on this poem to testify Shelley's homosexuality. The closeted poet honestly, but vaguely, discloses his traumatic love towards his male "Emily" and eventually his potential suicide with the man. I argue that a queer reading of Shelley's poetry helps to reexamine Shelley's philosophy of love in *Epipsychidion*.

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Shelley's Quest for Love: Queering *Epipsychidion*

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Abstract
This paper employs the concept of queer to examine Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Epipsychidion*. Shelley's idealism towards love was widely received in atheism, materialism and Platonism. Compared with other Romantic poets, Shelley exercised his concept of love very differently. Shelley's quest for love is particularly discussed in most of his love poems. Among them *Epipsychidion* is a long poem that Shelley wrote to demonstrate his philosophy of love. In his later life, Shelley worked on translating Plato's philosophy, particularly *The Symposium*, which partly focuses on Greek love, and further pondered on his own sexuality. Shelley started to draw on atheistic materialism and Platonic metaphysics. *Epipsychidion* extends Shelley's early concept of love, namely "a soul within our soul," and dramatizes his narrator's love towards a female character named Emily. Different from major perspectives from Shelley critics (Notopoulos, Wasserman, Sperry, Peterfreud) who particularly pay attention to Shelley's love affairs, heterosexuality, as well as the real identity of Emily in *Epipsychidion*, the paper instead focuses on this poem to testify Shelley's homosexuality. The closeted poet honestly, but vaguely, discloses his traumatic love towards his male "Emily" and eventually his potential suicide with the man. I argue that a queer reading of Shelley's poetry helps to reexamine Shelley's philosophy of love in *Epipsychidion*.

Biographical Note
Terence H. W. Shih is Associate Professor at the Department of Applied English, St. John's University, Taiwan. His research focuses on Romantic literature, scientific culture, neuroscientific historicism, and the materiality of the mind and emotion. His major monograph is entitled *Desire and Technology in Science Fiction and Beyond* (2016).

1. While he is regarded as a radical Romantic, Percy Bysshe Shelley's philosophy of love or sexuality still confuses his readers. Shelley's enthusiasm for atheism and ambivalence with French materialism, as well as Platonism, leads him to envisage an unconventional love. Love is one of the most mysterious human emotions to fascinate Shelley. He pondered early on the theme of love in *Alastor* and *On Love*, for example. *Alastor* was published in 1816 and suggested Shelley's pessimistic philosophy of love. Echoing *Alastor*, Shelley published a short essay *On Love* in 1818 to explore the bodily aspect of romantic love. A year before his tragic death in 1822, Shelley continued to focus on the concept of love in *Epipsychidion*, where he proposed a more mysterious philosophy of love. Wide-ranging critical perspectives have revealed Shelley's preoccupation with love in terms of a visionary journey or self-quest. Sexuality, desire, passions, homoeroticism, libido, and eros are all aspects of Shelley's works often discussed by critics and which form a point of departure for my own argument concerned here with queer love. Current critics continue their enthusiasm for Shelley's narration of *love*. Synthesising David Duff's discourse of romance with a wide range of desire-themed criticism of Harold Bloom, Earl R. Wasserman, Michael O'Neill, William A. Ulmer, Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, and Tilottama Rajan, Mark Sandy suggests the subtle relationship between physical desire and spiritual love in Shelley's *Alastor* and *Epipsychidion* from a "quest" reading (272-73). Prior to writing *Epipsychidion*, Shelley saw love as "the link and type of the highest emotions of our nature" (19) in *A Discourse on the Manners of the Antient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love*, *Plato: The Banquet*. His unorthodox concept of love advocates the idea of free love and relates to his queer desire in his poetry.

2. My approach draws on emotion and sexuality to explore how Shelley's philosophy of love is manifest from a queer reading. The concept of "queer" has been subjected to a variety of

different interpretations. Anna-Marie Jagose extends the term queer from "lesbian and gay" to include "cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery" (3). Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi, referring to a wider school of queer theorists, argue that "'queer' names or describes identities and practices that foreground the instability inherent in the supposedly stable relationship between anatomical sex, gender, and sexual desire" (1). Exploring Romantic sexuality, Amanda Berry employs ideas of "queer Romanticism" and analyses Shelley's homoeroticism in *The Cenci*.[1] The concept of queer in my reading of *Epipsychidion* echoes Berry's analysis related to homosexuality. Michael O'Neill and John Lauritsen early suggested queer ideas in their analyses of *Epipsychidion*. O'Neill recognises Shelley's pre-Foucauldian ideas in this poem (157). Lauritsen heightens Shelley's subtle homosexuality that penetrates this poem.[2] My analysis provides a thorough investigation into Shelley's later quest for queer love evidenced in *Epipsychidion* and his manuscripts related to the love poem.

3. Compared to his earlier assertion of love, Shelley's philosophy of love in *Epipsychidion* is more complicated. Earl R. Wasserman, referring to the etymology of "Epipsychidion" from C. D. Locock and James A. Notopoulos, claims that *Epipsychidion* echoes the idea of "a soul within our soul" in Shelley's *On Love*, which he continues to explore as his "theme of the 'epipsyche' [on the soul]" (418). This "little soul" (psychidion), in my discussion, signifies a suppressed or *belittled* love. In *Epipsychidion*, Shelley relates this *little* love or homosexual love to "the eternal Curse" (25) or a "sad song" (35).[3] Forbidden love or queer sexuality in *Epipsychidion* has been a topic of investigation for critics of Shelley. In his letter to his publisher John Gisborne, Shelley refrains from revealing his unspoken homoerotic desire and instead calls this poem "a mystery": "The Epipsychidion is a mystery—As to real flesh & blood, you know that I

do not deal in those articles … as expect any thing human or earthly from me" (qtd. in Wasserman 419). Shelley's sexuality fluctuates between homosexuality and heterosexuality, which intrigues his biographers and critics to unveil the mystery of his sexuality. Nathaniel Brown argues that this "psychodynamics of Shelleyan love are thus epitomized as the quest of the lover to match his ideal self-image or inner *type* …" (36).

4. The fragments of (as well as drafted Prefaces to) *Epipsychidion* reveal Shelley's sexual and emotional ambivalence that is embedded in his love poem. This inner conflict derives from Shelley's queer love for a "woman" or, arguably, a disguised man. Mary Shelley omits a few significant passages in Shelley's "Passages of the Poem [*Epipsychidion*], or Connected Therewith" (published in 1839),[4] to reduce speculations about Shelley's homosexual orientation behind his notorious womanisation. Shelley's "myth" in *Epipsychidion* relates to sexuality and his unsaid queer or potentially same-sex lover:

> And as to friend or mistress, 'tis a form;
> Perhaps I wish you were one. Some declare
> You a familiar spirit, as you are;
> Others with a more inhuman
> Hint that, though not my wife, you are a woman;
> What is the colour of your eyes and hair?
> Why, if you were a lady, it were fair
> The world should know—but, as I am afraid,
> The Quarterly would bait you if betrayed;
> And if, as it will be sport to see them stumble
> Over all sorts of scandals, hear them mumble

Their litany of curses—some guess right,

And others swear you're a Hermaphrodite; ("PPCT" 45-57)

Shelley indirectly tells the reader that this poem is not dedicated to a "friend or mistress" (45) but to a non-female lover: "Perhaps I wish you were one [of them]" (46). The assumption that this secret lover is "a woman" (49), according to Shelley, is an "inhuman / Hint" and this alludes to Shelley's queer philosophy of love. Shelley's expression – "if you *were* a lady" [emphasis added] (51) – implies that this love-object is by no means a lady but a non-female love object despite the general public's assumption that the addressed person is "a woman" (49).[5] Shelley even worries that once the public knows of the real gender of this "lady," particularly through the Quarterly's investigation (53), it will be an unbearable scandal (55-56) and his male lover will be cursed as "a Hermaphrodite" (57). In his letter to Gisborne, Shelley confirms this unorthodox love or queer sexuality: "I think one is always in *love with something or other* … The *error*, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased *in flesh and blood to avoid it* …" [emphasis added] (qtd. in *SMV* 159). Shelley suggests that this "error" (159) is his genetically or psychologically determined homosexuality. This sexual desire implies the void of Platonic love, which requires no "flesh and blood" (*SMV* 159). Instead, this sex drive is thoroughly demonstrated in *Epipsychidion*. Furthermore, Shelley's understatement of his homoerotic preference becomes reasonable as he worries that this fatal announcement of his love could incur "curses" (56) from anti-homosexual "litany" (56) in Christianity and make his same-sex lover humiliated as "a Hermaphrodite" ("PPCT" 57). As it is, Shelley became more enthusiastic about writing love poems in Italy in 1819 as an escape from this queer anxiety.[6] The concerns of these poems, though fragmented, are still reflected in his later *Epipsychidion*.

5. In addition to these "Passages," which suggest Shelley's queer inclinations, the three complex

drafts for the Advertisement to *Epipsychidion* and its published Advertisement reveal further hints of his understated sexual secret. In the Advertisement, Shelley outlines his ambivalence over homoeroticism:

> The present Poem, like the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. (*SPP* 392)

Acquainted with Dante's *Vita Nuova*, Shelley attempts in *Epipsychidion* to advocate a new life of sexuality, presumably queer love. Shelley alludes to a "certain class of readers" (392) to "gay men"[7] or other sexual dissidents whose "history" is devoiced by the heterosexuality-oriented authorities – "without a matter-of-fact history" (392). Worse than atheism in Shelley's time, homosexuality was forcefully silenced by political and religious authorities and, therefore, lacked its own written "history" (392). For Shelley, *Epipsychidion* will confuse "a certain other class" (392), that is, those people who are unable to perceive "the [queer] ideas of which it [*Epipsychidion*] treats" (392). Due to the unarticulated voice of the queer, Shelley points to his disappointment by quoting a prose line from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, as translated from Italian:

> Great would be his shame who should rhyme anything under the garb of metaphor or rhetorical figure; and, being requested, could not strip his words of this dress so that they might have a true meaning. (392)[8]

Shelley refrains from writing explicitly about the "true meaning" (392) of queer love or potential homosexuality, but feels ashamed to decorate his true feelings with "metaphor or rhetorical figure" (392). This *shame* of forbidden love is further alluded to in *Epipsychidion*: "… Emily, / I love thee; though the world by *no thin name* / Will hide that love from its unvalued *shame*" [emphasis added] (42-44). Shelley again disconnects his lover's name from

"Emily": "… the world by *no thin name* / Will hide that *love*…" [emphasis added] (43). The "unvalued shame" (44), meaning extremely great shame,[9] refers to his queer love. Shelley later insists in his idealist optimism, asserting hope to conquer negative emotions, like "grief and shame" (322): "At length, into the obscure Forest came / The Vision I had sought through *grief and shame* [emphasis added]" (321-22).

6. A heterosexual reading of *Epipsychidion* discloses the real identity of Emily as well as Shelley's unspoken sexuality. Even though the feminine name "Emily" is interpreted by critics to be associated with the persona of Teresa Viviani (known to the Shelleys as "Emilia Viviani"), a queer reading of Shelley's biography leads to a suggestive *darker* realm of Shelley's sexual desire.[10] This traditional association of Emily with Emilia Viviani was earlier mentioned by Notopoulos. Notopoulos argues that "Emilia Viviani" is "the Platonic counterpart of his [Shelley's] soul," that is, "Plato's Intellectual Beauty and Love" (276). In his textual reading of *Epipsychidion*, Wasserman relates "the love song of P. B. Shelley to Emilia Viviani" (428) and affirms King-Hele's idea[11] about the similarities between some lines in "Emilia [Teresa] Viviani's essay on Love" (460) and *Epipsychidion* in an attempt to "prove" that the Emily is Emilia. Stuart M. Sperry doubts this glib connection of Teresa and Emily: "If it springs directly from the intensity of Shelley's involvement with Teresa, it also moves through a series of progressive disengagements. The lines are not addressed to Teresa Viviani but to an "Unfortunate Lady, Emilia V—," or, more simply, the "Emily" of this poem" (159).[12] It is therefore arguable that Emily refers to Emilia. In the light of this, Nancy Moore Goslee re-examines the drafts of *Epipsychidion* and infers that Shelley may have started *Epipsychidion* in the fall of 1820 instead of December 1820 when the Shelleys met Teresa Viviani.[13] Lauritsen's queer reading particularly rejects Emily's association with either Teresa or Emilia

and instead relates Emily to Edward Ellerker Williams (Shelley's best friend in Italy), whose "code name" would be Emily in "the Shelley-Byron circle."[14] From this queer perspective, the feminised name "Emily" – ideally to meet mainstream values of sexuality which are dominated by a heterosexual society – can be seen as Shelley's disguise of a male lover. This literary phenomenon related to "cross-dressing" or queering is demonstrated in Gothic texts, such as Lewis's *The Monk*, Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Byron's *Manfred*, and Polidori's *The Vampyre*.[15] Shelley's acquaintance with these texts and their authors reinforces the queering of his "female" Emily.

7. Following Lauritsen's assumption, I further probe into Shelley's "cloud" that alludes to his secret lover: "The *Epipsychidion* I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a *cloud* instead of a Juno …" [emphasis added] (qtd. in *SHTW* 271). Different from his public authorship of *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), Shelley's motive to publish *Epipsychidion* anonymously alludes to his "cloud" to conceal his homosexuality. Like Byron's Thyrza or William Shakespeare's Mr. W. H., Shelley veils his dark sexuality through this feminised Emily. It turns out that Shelley becomes reluctant to use the name "Emily" and a female third person pronoun, like she or her, rather than a male one to narrate his young love. In *Epipsychidion*, Shelley suggests an angelic woman's form to relate to a male lover (thee): "Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human, / Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman / All that is insupportable in thee / Of light, and love, and immortality!" (21-24). This non-female lover is again implied when Shelley desires to "ha[ve] been twins of the same mother" (45) with Emily. Biologically, the identical traits in genes and/or characteristics that Shelley expects only occur to monozygotic twins (identical, same-sex twins). This is another example to prove Shelley's reluctance to feminise his lover. "[T]hat love" (44) that Shelley intends to "hide" (44) is

homosexual in orientation, but Shelley's own time forces him to conceal any explicit descriptions of his love toward his male lover and, therefore, prevent his lover from being humiliated: "Aye, even the dim words which obscure thee now / Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow; / I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song" (33-35). "[T]he dim words" (33) refer to Shelley's poetic lines in *Epipsychidion* and seek to protect his lover with "this sad song" (35) serving as a reference to the poem's understated queer love.

8. Shelley's *Epipsychidion* represents a vision of Godwinian free love (*SHTW* 273) as well as his own coded homosexuality. This free love is, however, not limited to mainstream heterosexuality. Like *Queen Mab*, *Epipsychidion* again depicts Shelley's vision of happiness or his philosophy of love. Love, as an emotion that calms the mind, penetrates into Shelley's *Queen Mab* and *Epipsychidion* and eventually is the culmination of Shelley's idealist philosophy. Shelley's enthusiasm for homoeroticism emerges from *Epipsychidion,* but F. S. Ellis, in his Shelley's *Concordance*, defines "love" in a traditional heterosexual understanding: "the passion of love, a feeling of affection, sympathy and devotion *between the sexes* [emphasis added]" (417). In other words, among Ellis's twenty-three aspects (nouns or verbs) to define "love" (*Concordance* 417-20), sexuality only occurs "between the sexes" rather than same sex. In terms of this, a potential spectrum of sexuality that Shelley suggested was not equally detected until queer scholars revisited it.[16] *Epipsychidion* also includes the oppression of queer sexuality: "Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse! / Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!" (25-26). For Shelley, the reciprocal love, though manifest in a queer and love-object-relation, is an oxymoron between sweetness and bitterness: "Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse" (25). The "Curse" (25) derives from legal sanctions as well as social pressure against non-mainstream or queer sexuality.[17] Shelley's poetic narrative prefigures a sexual utopia that

queer scholars endeavour to attain. In his poetical language, this utopia should "… ha[ve] no thorn left to wound thy bosom" (12). This trope of "thorn" (12) refers to prejudices from moral and legal codes that incur pain to the "bosom" (12) or the human mind. Love becomes a natural force for Shelley that leads to a visionary perfection. This power of true love in *Epipsychidion* helps Shelley to overcome these difficulties:

> … but true love never yet
>
> Was thus constrained: it overleaps all fence:
>
> Like lightning, with invisible violence
>
> Piercing its continents; like Heaven's free breath, (397-40)

In addition to Lauritsen's claim that "[t]he death penalty for "buggery" remained in effect in England until 1861, and in Scotland until 1887" (Introduction 7), Richard C. Sha suggests Shelley's disguise of homosexuality due to his worry about death penalty: "That sodomy is a crime punished by hanging in this period perhaps explains why Shelle[y] makes a show of his disgust" (127). Since 1 June 1787, George III issued a royal proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality, sexuality, along with other "immoral" vices, had been suppressed to avoid contaminating "the minds of the young and unwary." This potential "coming out" or queering through *Epipsychidion* is implied in Shelley's letter to Gisborne:

> The "Epipsychidion" I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are anxious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. *It is an idealised history of my life and feelings*. *I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps*

eternal. [Emphasis added] (Qtd. in Bieri 222-23)

In other words, Shelley's letter to Gisborne instigates the potential rumour about Shelley's queer sexuality which could be explained in *Epipsychidion*. Shelley also suggests that this love poem demonstrates his "life and feelings" (*Letters*, 2, 434) relating to his homoeroticism. Shelley's sexuality is determined by his body or, scientifically, his genes: "I [Shelley] confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it [sexual preference]" (*Letters*, 2, 434). This "confession" is less explicit than those of St. Augustine and Rousseau, and conveys Shelley's sexually "new life" as suggested by Dante's *Vita Nuova*. Read as important material for "Greek love" or homosexuality (11), *The Symposium* aroused Shelley's enthusiasm, and he translated the original version from Plato. Despite the mention of his short-lived emotional attachment to Emilia, Shelley comments on his own *Epipsychidion* and intentionally alludes to the homosexual issue throughout this love poem: "… even they [critics] it seems are inclined to approximate me to the circle of a servant girl & her sweetheart. – But I intend to write a *Symposium* of my own to set all this right" (*Shelley on Love* 232). This "Symposium of [Shelley's] own" is *Epipsychidion*, which he regarded as a work of anti-Platonic or pro-queer love.

9. The vision of happiness in *Epipsychidion*, like that in *Queen Mab* or the solitary quest in *Alastor*, demonstrates Shelley's hope for idealism of the potential of love. The concept of hope or optimism is used in *Queen Mab* and persists through his poetic concern to *Epipsychidion*. This idea of love brings pain to Shelley:

Ah, woe is me!

What have I dared? where am I lifted? how

Shall I descend, and perish not? I know

That Love makes all things equal…. (*Epipsychidion* 123-26)

Love, no doubt, is a force for Shelley's optimism. In *Epipsychidion*, the imagery of light refers to love or Emily (Wasserman 432). Different from the non-material void in the darkness, light is presented through metaphors of material substance which repeatedly appear in *Epipsychidion* to relate to love, vision, and hope in the poem. Shelley's utopia of queer love is through his Vision or imagination:

I stood, and felt the *dawn* of my *long night*

Was penetrating me with *living light*:

I knew it was the *Vision* veiled from me

So many years—that it was Emily [Emphasis added] (*Epipsychidion* 341-44)

Shelley contrasts darkness and light to demonstrate his sentiments of longing for idealised love. Emily is symbolic of this ideal love. This *light*, in the hypothesis of quantum physics, is a kind of material and Shelley relates its substance to love. Like a current assertion of sexual equality and sexual rights, Shelley expects that his new perspective on love can change old-fashioned sexual values over time:

Young Love should teach Time, in his own grey style

All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile,

A lovely soul formed to be blest and bless?

A well of sealed and secret happiness,

Whose waters like blithe light and music are,

Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? (55-60)

This "Young Love" (55) alludes to a new form of sexuality or potential homosexuality. It also discloses Shelley's longing for a Dantean "new life" as in *Vita Nouva*. With the advances of thought, Shelley predicts that the "grey style" (55) in history should be replaced by new values,

especially sexual values. Shelley suggests that the unblessed love or same-sex love of "[a] lovely soul" (57) who faces its true sexuality without "guile" (56) or trickery should be recognised or "de-stigmatised" by the general public. This "well of a sealed and secret happiness" (58) signifies a homoerotic circle, in which homosexual love is confined within a well-like world.

10. The frequently appearing imagery of light in *Epipsychidion* reflects Shelley's desire for sexual equality. He interrogates whether homoerotic people's intelligent thoughts, like "blithe light and music" (59), can defeat their identity crises and self-negation – "dissonance and gloom" (60) – when they live in an extremely homophobic society. A homophobic or anti-queer society, for Shelley, is like a "Tempest" (312) or an "obscure Forest" (321) represented in his Dantean allusion. This imagery of darkness and storm, therefore, clouds oppressed homosexuals and, according to Shelley, is like "a lampless sea" (311). In *Epipsychidion*, Shelley refers to his male lover in the feminised form of "Emily" (344) and as a "living light" (342):

> Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
> When light is changed to love, this glorious One
> Floated into the cavern where I lay,
> And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
> Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
> As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
> I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
> Was penetrating me with living light:
> I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
> So many years—that it was Emily. (335-44)

This "Vision" (343) that Shelley has expected for "[s]o many years" (344) is stressed in the Poet's lonely quest in *Alastor* and especially resonates with Shelley's own vision. This Emily who once entered Shelley's early teenage life is his schoolmate, but Shelley's object of affection was a boy. In his "An Essay on Friendship," Shelley recalls a similar same-sex attachment and this event may also be reflected in *Alastor* and now again in *Epipsychidion*:

> The nature of Love & Friendship is very little understood and the distinctions between them ill established. This latter feeling – at least a profound & sentimental attachment to one of *the same sex,* wholly divested of the smallest alloy of *sensual intermixture*, often precedes the former. … *The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age*, of a character eminently generous[,] brave & gentle, & the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth genially compounded within him. There was a [d]elicacy (sic) & simplicity *in his manners inexpressibly attractive*. … I recollect thinking *my friend exquisitely beautiful*. Every night when we parted to go to bed I remember that *we kissed each other*. [Emphasis added] (*SPW* 245)

In this poem, Shelley blurs the boundary between "Love & Friendship" (*SPW* 245) and implies sexual attraction between groups of male friends or homosocial circles. Against this background, *Epipsychidion*, though published anonymously, can be read as Shelley's private declaration of queer love.

11. In *Epipsychidion*, Shelley pursues the beautiful and the transcendence of such queer love through death. From line 513 to the end of *Epipsychidion*, Shelley's escapism or transcendentalism through love grows clear. It suggests that Shelley's poet-speaker appeals to Emily in terms of a suicide pact: "This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed / Thee to be lady of the solitude.—" (513-14). The "solitude" (514) of Emily may allude to her eternal

slumber or death. This materialist transcendence, for Shelley, coalesces sense experience with an abstracted world of ideals: Those instruments [bodily senses] … / … / … make the present last / In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die, / Folded within their own eternity" (520-24). Death becomes the couple's chamber where they "sleep" (524) and will never be separated in "eternity" (524). Shelley's nihilism or materialist idealism of love is strikingly demonstrated in *Epipsychidion*. This type of idealism for Shelley is rooted in his atheistic materialism. Meditating on the bodily and scientific limitations of a materialist worldview, Shelley proposes that death is a transcendence of life and eventually leads to a transcendent realm of "eternity." He suggests that dying together with Emily is his death-wish and bid to transcend mortality.

12. The close connection between the poet-speaker in *Epipsychidion* and Shelley's own biography is reinforced by Shelley himself. Sperry details critical debates on the affinity of Shelley's life and the Poet's narration in *Epipsychidion*.[18] Shelley instead emphasises that "the advertisement [to *Epipsychidion*] is *no fiction*" [emphasis added] and that "the 'Epipsychidion' … is an idealized history of my life and feelings" (qtd. in *SPP* 391).[19] In this sense, the death of the "Writer of the following Lines at Florence" before embarking on a "voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades" in the Advertisement (*SPP* 392) and the request to Emily to embark on a deadly "journey" point to the possibility of Shelley's planned "double" suicide with Williams. Shelley's homoerotic desire to Williams is suggested in his melancholy poem to Williams entitled "The Serpent Is Shut Out from Paradise."[20] Shelley's suicidal intention is stated in his letter to Edward Trelawny dated 18 June 1822. On the day of the shipwreck, according to Trelawny, Shelley may have forced Williams to take the tragic voyage (Quennell 416). Connected to the tragic Poet's intention with "Emily" for a suicidal voyage in *Epipsychidion*

(388-415), this "double" suicide that Shelley suggests would be with Williams. A range of terms that describe Shelley's physical desire for being "one" with Emily recur in the last stanza of *Epipsychidion* (551-85). This imagery of union is earlier shown in Shelley's love poems written in 1819. *Epipsychidion* intentionally conceals Shelley's homosexual love in the language of heterosexual desire.

13. The "love's rare Universe" (589) at the very end of *Epipsychidion* alludes to Dantean outermost Heaven – the Primum Mobile, where Beatrice guides Dante through the Sphere of Fire: "The winged words on which my soul would pierce / Into the height of love's rare Universe. / Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.—" (588-90). These "chains" (590) remind the reader of the limitation of bodily frames early – Shelley's unsteady health condition[21] – as well as that of Shelley's homosexual desire for an unidentified male in the guise of Emily. Instead, Shelley's "winged words" (588) lead the reader to his untrodden "Universe of love." Shelley's philosophy of love is connected to "eternity" or immortality through a physical death. In Shelley's knowledge of physics, this Dantean paradise, like a *black hole*, surpasses the nine planets, all of which are dominated by physical mechanism. By this inference, Shelley's last line in *Epipsychidion* – "I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!" (591) – is by no means exclusively a sensual metaphor. Echoing Wasserman, Sperry thinks that the line is a "sexual metaphor" and "ecstasy can be achieved only at the cost of ultimate dissemination and collapse" (*SMV* 180). Stuart Peterfreund elaborates on this sexual reading and relates "the *petit mort* of sexual climax" to "a triumphal return to the Edenic state" (282). Shelley ambivalently implies this act of suicide either in the Advertisements or in the final section of *Epipsychidion*. Shelley's tragic "accidental" drowning is prefigured in the imagery of drowning in *Epipsychidion*: "I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!" (591). Presumably, the coda of *Epipsychidion* is a farewell letter: "…

Then haste / Over the hearts of men, until yet meet Marina [Mary Shelley] Vanna [Jane (Giovanna) Williams], Primus [Edward Williams],[22] and the rest, / And bid them love each other and be blest:" (599-602). Shelley struggles between a materialist void and a religious "reunion" with his beloved Mary, Jane, Edward, and "the rest" (600) in Heaven after death. In Shelley's materialist or atheistic transcendentalism,[23] self-termination for love reveals divinity or eternity through a Dantean flaming fire: "… 'Love's very pain is sweet, / But its reward is in the world divine / Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave'" (596-98). Shelley anticipates the physical struggle of dying and likens the pain to the burning fire which prefaces a Dantean paradise. His materialist worldview, in some way, draws him back from this religiously "divine" (597) vision and he backs away with a conditional "if not here [the divine world]" (598) to return to an atomic worldview – "beyond the grave" (598). This concept of the atomic dates back to Shelley's description of the utopian "isle" (478), which, Shelley thinks, is "[a]n atom of th' Eternal" (479). Such aspiring passion, for Shelley, is the substance of love. This materiality is clearly explained in his *On Love*, in which Shelley extends David Hartley's theory of vibrations[24] to demonstrate the mental physics of love: "… if we feel, we would that another's nerves should vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own … This is Love" (*SPP* 503-04). Like Plato and Kant, Shelley understands that excessive physical passions will lead the mind to an inharmonious state.

14. Shelley prefigures those forms of sexual freedom advocated by recent critics, for example Eve K. Sedgwick, Gayle Rubin, and Judith Butler, and launches a discourse of *love* in order to construct a more humane society. My inquiry into *Epipsychidion* has explored Shelley's pursuit of romantic love by demonstrating his sexuality and re-examining his philosophy of love. Prior to emerging queer or LGBT studies,[25] as well as scientific research on love,[26] the complex

emotions of love earlier attracted Shelley. Before his death, Shelley persisted in his atheistic values and his enthusiasm for materiality led him to bridge gaps between the body and the mind, the physical and the spiritual, and emotion and reason. Shelley should be still admired due to his intellectual practice and profound philosophy of life and courage. He understates how a gay poet was confined to a homophobic society and how he suffered from the forbidden love. Shelley's philosophy of love demonstrates his disagreement with contemporary sexual morality and chimes with our current queer discourse which asserts the equality of sexuality.

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[1] See Berry.

[2] Regarding Lauritsen's inference, see John Lauritsen's "Homoeroticism in *Epipsychidion*." Hereafter "HiE."

[3] All lines in Epipsychidion that I refer to are quoted from Donald H. Reiman, and Neil Fraistat, eds. Shelley's Poetry and Prose. Authoritative Texts, Criticism, by Percy Bysshe Shelley, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2002). Hereafter *SPP*. For this long poem, see *SPP* 392-407.

[4] This work, hereafter abbreviated to "PPCT," is collected in Thomas Hutchinson's *Shelley: Poetical Works*. See Thomas Hutchinson, ed., *Shelley: Poetical Works* (London: Oxford UP, 1967), hereafter *SPW*.

[5] In Lauritsen's footnote to this subjunctive, the "lady" is Shelley's male friend. See "HiE."

[6] After Shelley's tragic death at sea in July of 1822, Mary Shelley, with Leigh Hunt's assistance, published Shelley's posthumous poems in 1824. The poems that understate Shelley's sentiment of same-sex love mainly include "Love's Philosophy," "Fragment: Love the Universe To-day," "Fragment: A Gentle Story of Two Lovers Young," "Fragment: Love's Tender Atmosphere," and "Fragment: Wedded Souls." Regarding Shelley's 1819 love poems, see *SPW* 582-85.

[7] In his Note 18, Lauritsen argues that these "readers" can recognise Shelley's expressions through their "gaydar." See "HiE."
[8] See Reiman and Fraistat's footnote 3.
[9] See Reiman and Fraistat's footnote 8, *SPP* 394.
[10] See John Lauritsen, "Piecing Together Percy," *Gay and Lesbian Humanist*, Web, 29 Sept. 2009.
[11] See King-Hele's *Shelley: His Thought and Work*, 270-85, 270. Hereafter *SHTW*.
[12] See Sperry's *Shelley's Major Verse: The Narrative and Dramatic Poetry*. Hereafter *SMV*.
[13] For this inference, see Goslee's footnote 7. Nancy Moore Goslee, "Dispersoning Emily: Drafting as Plot in *Epipsychidion*," *SPP* 735-47, 741.
[14] Lauritsen argues that "'Emily' is not a variant of 'Emilia,' but stands for Edward Ellerker Williams—Shelley's beloved companion—either as a code name for him or as his nickname." Lauritsen discovers that "feminine nicknames" are used by the "men in the Shelley-Byron circle" and take John Polidori's nickname – "Polly" – as an example to support this inference. See "HiE."
[15] Sue Chaplin, rev. of *The Orders of the Gothic: Foucault, Lacan and the Subject of Gothic Writing*, by Dale Townshend, and *Queering the Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye*, by Max Fincher, *BARS Bulletin & Review* 33 (2008): 30-32, 31.
[16] Judith Butler, seen as one of the forerunners of queer theory, challenges "the foundational categories of sex, gender, and desire" (xxix) in the sexual discourse of (traditional) "feminism" in order to reshape identity and gender. See Butler's Preface xxvii-xxxiii, xxix.
[17] This sexuality is persistently examined by recent queer theorists. Rubin, for example, articulates the human rights of the sexual minority, for example, gays, lesbians, transsexuals, and other sexual dissidents. Rubin's notion of a sexual hierarchy demonstrates the inequality of sexuality as well as marginalised sexuality that violates heterosexual ideology, in which the "worse" sex – seen as "abnormal, unnatural, sick, sinful, [and] 'way out'" – includes "[p]romiscuous homosexuality, sadomasochism, fetishism, transsexuality, and cross-generational encounters" (152-53).
[18] See *SMV*, 158, 220. Particularly refer to Sperry's first footnote on page 220.
[19] Echoing Kenneth Neill Cameron and Sperry, Reiman and Fraistat point out more evidence relating to Shelley's anxiety about this poem's circulation. See *SPP* 391.
[20] For this poem, see *SPP* 475-76.
[21] Shelley's health in Italy was mentioned in Mary Shelley's Preface to the *Volume of Posthumous Poems of Mrs. Shelley*: "Ill health and continued pain preyed upon his [Shelley's] powers; and the solitude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy …; but, when in health, his spirits were buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree" (xiii-xiv). *SPW* xiii-xv, xiii-xiv.
[22] Regarding the analogue of those names, see *SPP* 407.
[23] The concept of transcendentalism found an affinity with Christianity since the eighteenth century. Kant, Wordsworth, and Coleridge all followed in varying ways this metaphysical concept to explore the human mind. See "Transcendentalism," *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 7 Mar. 2011, Web, 19 May 2011.
[24] Shelley's understanding of Hartley's principle of neural vibrations for sensations derives from William Drummond's *Academical Questions* (1805), which, according to A. M. D. Hughes, Shelley reads "[i]n the spring of 1812" (241). See A. M. D. Hughes, *The Nascent Mind of Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947) rpt. 1971, 241. William Drummond, *Academical Questions*, 1805 (Delmar, NY: Scholars, 1984) 289-95.
[25] The term LGBT or GLBT is an acronym referring to the sexual minority of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (transsexual) people. LGBT studies are developed from feminism, gay/lesbian studies, and sexuality or queer studies. Since the 1990s, the term LGBT or GLBT has been largely adopted by academic institutions, for example LGBT studies at Yale University. See "LGBT Studies at

Yale University," Yale U, Web, 23 Nov. 2010. "LGBTQ" is a new term that currently includes "queer" or "questioning," as seen in the letter Q.

[26] In the mid-twentieth century, scientific evidence for the relationship between love and sexuality was "first" (though indebted to Havelock Ellis) released in Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948). The science of love attracted more researchers afterwards.