

## NOTES TO MATHILDA

### Abbreviations:

F of F--A The Fields of Fancy, in Lord Abinger's notebook

F of F--B The Fields of Fancy, in the notebook in the Bodleian Library

S-R fr fragments of The Fields of Fancy among the papers of the  
late Sir John Shelley-Rolls, now in the Bodleian Library

[1] The name is spelled thus in the MSS of Mathilda and The Fields of Fancy, though in the printed Journal (taken from Shelley and Mary) and in the Letters it is spelled Matilda. In the MS of the journal, however, it is spelled first Matilda, later Mathilda.

[2] Mary has here added detail and contrast to the description in F of F--A, in which the passage "save a few black patches ... on the plain ground" does not appear.

[3] The addition of "I am alone ... withered me" motivates Mathilda's state of mind and her resolve to write her history.

[4] Mathilda too is the unwitting victim in a story of incest. Like Oedipus, she has lost her parent-lover by suicide; like him she leaves the scene of the revelation overwhelmed by a sense of her own guilt, "a sacred horror"; like him, she finds a measure of peace as she is about to die.

[5] The addition of "the precious memorials ... gratitude towards you," by its suggestion of the relationship between Mathilda and Woodville, serves to justify the detailed narration.

[6] At this point two sheets have been removed from the notebook. There is no break in continuity, however.

[7] The descriptions of Mathilda's father and mother and the account of their marriage in the next few pages are greatly expanded from F of F--A, where there is only one brief paragraph. The process of expansion can be followed in S-R fr and in F of F--B. The development of the character of Diana (who represents Mary's own mother, Mary Wollstonecraft) gave Mary the most trouble. For the identifications with Mary's father and mother, see Nitchie, *Mary Shelley*, pp. 11, 90-93, 96-97.

[8] The passage "There was a gentleman ... school & college vacations" is on a slip of paper pasted on page 11 of the MS. In the margin are two fragments, crossed out, evidently parts of what is supplanted by the substituted passage: "an angelic disposition and a quick, penetrating understanding" and "her visits ... to ... his house were long & frequent & there." In F of F--B Mary wrote of Diana's understanding "that often receives the name of masculine from its firmness and strength." This adjective had often been applied to Mary Wollstonecraft's mind. Mary Shelley's own understanding had been

called masculine by Leigh Hunt in 1817 in the Examiner. The word was used also by a reviewer of her last published work, *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, 1844. (See Nitchie, *Mary Shelley*, p. 178.)

[9] The account of Diana in *Mathilda* is much better ordered and more coherent than that in F of F--B.

[10] The description of the effect of Diana's death on her husband is largely new in *Mathilda*. F of F--B is frankly incomplete; F of F--A contains some of this material; *Mathilda* puts it in order and fills in the gaps.

[11] This paragraph is an elaboration of the description of her aunt's coldness as found in F of F--B. There is only one sentence in F of F--A.

[12] The description of *Mathilda's* love of nature and of animals is elaborated from both rough drafts. The effect, like that of the preceding addition (see note 11), is to emphasize *Mathilda's* loneliness. For the theme of loneliness in *Mary Shelley's* work, see Nitchie, *Mary Shelley*, pp. 13-17.

[13] This paragraph is a revision of F of F--B, which is fragmentary. There is nothing in F of F--A and only one scored-out sentence in S-R fr. None of the rough drafts tells of her plans to join her father.

[14] The final paragraph in Chapter II is entirely new.

[15] The account of the return of Mathilda's father is very slightly revised from that in F of F--A. F of F--B has only a few fragmentary sentences, scored out. It resumes with the paragraph beginning, "My father was very little changed."

[16] Symbolic of Mathilda's subsequent life.

[17] *Illusion, or the Trances of Nourjahad*, a melodrama, was performed at Drury Lane, November 25, 1813. It was anonymous, but it was attributed by some reviewers to Byron, a charge which he indignantly denied. See Byron, *Letters and Journals*, ed. by Rowland E. Prothero (6 vols. London: Murray, 1902-1904), II, 288.

[18] This paragraph is in F of F--B but not in F of F--A. In the margin of the latter, however, is written: "It was not of the tree of knowledge that I ate for no evil followed--it must be of the tree of life that grows close beside it or--". Perhaps this was intended to go in the preceding paragraph after "My ideas were enlarged by his conversation." Then, when this paragraph was added, the figure, noticeably changed, was included here.

[19] Here the MS of F of F--B breaks off to resume only with the meeting of Mathilda and Woodville.

[20] At the end of the story (p. 79) Mathilda says, "Death is too terrible an object for the living." Mary was thinking of the deaths of her two children.

[21] Mary had read the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius in 1817 and she had made an Italian translation, the MS of which is now in the Library of Congress. See Journal, pp. 79, 85-86.

[22] The end of this paragraph gave Mary much trouble. In F of F--A after the words, "my tale must," she develops an elaborate figure: "go with the stream that hurries on--& now was this stream precipitated by an overwhelming fall from the pleasant vallies through which it wandered--down hideous precipieces to a desart black & hopeless--". This, the original ending of the chapter, was scored out, and a new, simplified version which, with some deletions and changes, became that used in Mathilda was written in the margins of two pages (ff. 57, 58). This revision is a good example of Mary's frequent improvement of her style by the omission of purple patches.

[23] In F of F--A there follows a passage which has been scored out and which does not appear in Mathilda: "I have tried in somewhat feeble language to describe the excess of what I may almost call my adoration for my father--you may then in some faint manner imagine my despair when I found that he shunned [me] & that all the little arts I used to re-awaken his lost love made him"--. This is a good example of

Mary's frequent revision for the better by the omission of the obvious and expository. But the passage also has intrinsic interest.

Mathilda's "adoration" for her father may be compared to Mary's feeling for Godwin. In an unpublished letter (1822) to Jane Williams she wrote, "Until I met Shelley I [could?] justly say that he was my God--and I remember many childish instances of the [ex]cess of attachment I bore for him." See Nitchie, *Mary Shelley*, p. 89, and note 9.

[24] Cf. the account of the services of Fantasia in the opening chapter of *F of F--A* (see pp. 90-102) together with note 3 to *The Fields of Fancy*.

[25] This passage beginning "Day after day" and closing with the quotation is not in *F of F--A*, but it is in *S-R fr.* The quotation is from *The Captain* by John Fletcher and a collaborator, possibly Massinger. These lines from Act I, Sc. 3 are part of a speech by Lelia addressed to her lover. Later in the play Lelia attempts to seduce her father--possibly a reason for Mary's selection of the lines.

[26] At this point (f. 56 of the notebook) begins a long passage, continuing through Chapter V, in which Mary's emotional disturbance in writing about the change in Mathilda's father (representing both Shelley and Godwin?) shows itself on the pages of the MS. They look more like the rough draft than the fair copy. There are numerous slips of the pen, corrections in phrasing and sentence structure, dashes

instead of other marks of punctuation, a large blot of ink on f. 57, one major deletion (see note 32).

[27] In the margin of F of F--A Mary wrote, "Lord B's Ch'de Harold." The reference is to stanzas 71 and 72 of Canto IV. Byron compares the rainbow on the cataract first to "Hope upon a death-bed" and finally

Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene, Love watching Madness with unalterable mien.

[28] In F of F--A Mathilda "took up Ariosto & read the story of Isabella." Mary's reason for the change is not clear. Perhaps she thought that the fate of Isabella, a tale of love and lust and death (though not of incest), was too close to what was to be Mathilda's fate. She may have felt--and rightly--that the allusions to Lelia and to Myrrha were ample foreshadowings. The reasons for the choice of the seventh canto of Book II of the Faerie Queene may lie in the allegorical meaning of Guyon, or Temperance, and the "dread and horror" of his experience.

[29] With this speech, which is not in F of F--A, Mary begins to develop the character of the Steward, who later accompanies Mathilda on her search for her father. Although he is to a very great extent the stereotyped faithful servant, he does serve to dramatize the

situation both here and in the later scene.

[30] This clause is substituted for a more conventional and less dramatic passage in F of F--A: "& besides there appeared more of struggle than remorse in his manner although sometimes I thought I saw glimpses of the latter feeling in his tumultuous starts & gloomy look."

[31] These paragraphs beginning Chapter V are much expanded from F of F--A. Some of the details are in the S-R fr. This scene is recalled at the end of the story. (See page 80) Cf. what Mary says about places that are associated with former emotions in her Rambles in Germany and Italy (2 vols., London: Moxon, 1844), II, 78-79. She is writing of her approach to Venice, where, twenty-five years before, little Clara had died. "It is a strange, but to any person who has suffered, a familiar circumstance, that those who are enduring mental or corporeal agony are strangely alive to immediate external objects, and their imagination even exercises its wild power over them.... Thus the banks of the Brenta presented to me a moving scene; not a palace, not a tree of which I did not recognize, as marked and recorded, at a moment when life and death hung upon our speedy arrival at Venice."

[32] The remainder of this chapter, which describes the crucial scene between Mathilda and her father, is the result of much revision from F of F--A. Some of the revisions are in S-R fr. In general the text of Mathilda is improved in style. Mary adds concrete, specific



words and phrases; e.g., at the end of the first paragraph of Mathilda's speech, the words "of incertitude" appear in Mathilda for the first time. She cancels, even in this final draft, an over-elaborate figure of speech after the words in the father's reply, "implicated in my destruction"; the cancelled passage is too flowery to be appropriate here: "as if when a vulture is carrying off some hare it is struck by an arrow his helpless victim entangled in the same fate is killed by the defeat of its enemy. One word would do all this." Furthermore the revised text shows greater understanding and penetration of the feelings of both speakers: the addition of "Am I the cause of your grief?" which brings out more dramatically what Mathilda has said in the first part of this paragraph; the analysis of the reasons for her persistent questioning; the addition of the final paragraph of her plea, "Alas! Alas!... you hate me!" which prepares for the father's reply.

[33] Almost all the final paragraph of the chapter is added to F of F--A. Three brief S-R fr are much revised and simplified.

[34] Decameron, 4th day, 1st story. Mary had read the Decameron in May, 1819. See Journal, p. 121.

[35] The passage "I should fear ... I must despair" is in S-R fr but not in F of F--A. There, in the margin, is the following: "Is it not the prerogative of superior virtue to pardon the erring and to weigh with mercy their offenses?" This sentence does not appear in

Mathilda. Also in the margin of F of F--A is the number (9), the number of the S-R fr.

[36] The passage "enough of the world ... in unmixed delight" is on a slip pasted over the middle of the page. Some of the obscured text is visible in the margin, heavily scored out. Also in the margin is "Canto IV Vers Ult," referring to the quotation from Dante's *Paradiso*. This quotation, with the preceding passage beginning "in whose eyes," appears in Mathilda only.

[37] The reference to Diana, with the father's rationalization of his love for Mathilda, is in S-R fr but not in F of F--A.

[38] In F of F--A this is followed by a series of other gloomy concessive clauses which have been scored out to the advantage of the text.

[39] This paragraph has been greatly improved by the omission of elaborate over-statement; e.g., "to pray for mercy & respite from my fear" (F of F--A) becomes merely "to pray."

[40] This paragraph about the Steward is added in Mathilda. In F of F--A he is called a servant and his name is Harry. See note 29.

[41] This sentence, not in F of F--A, recalls Mathilda's dream.

[42] This passage is somewhat more dramatic than that in F of F--A, putting what is there merely a descriptive statement into quotation marks.

[43] A stalactite grotto on the island of Antiparos in the Aegean Sea.

[44] A good description of Mary's own behavior in England after Shelley's death, of the surface placidity which concealed stormy emotion. See Nitchie, *Mary Shelley*, pp. 8-10.

[45] Job, 17: 15-16, slightly misquoted.

[46] Not in F of F--A. The quotation should read:

Fam. Whisper it, sister! so and so! In a dark hint, soft and slow.

[47] The mother of Prince Arthur in Shakespeare's *King John*. In the MS the words "the little Arthur" are written in pencil above the name of Constance.

[48] In F of F--A this account of her plans is addressed to Diotima, and Mathilda's excuse for not detailing them is that they are too trivial to interest spirits no longer on earth; this is the only intrusion of the framework into Mathilda's narrative in *The Fields of*

Fancy. Mathilda's refusal to recount her stratagems, though the omission is a welcome one to the reader, may represent the flagging of Mary's invention. Similarly in *Frankenstein* she offers excuses for not explaining how the Monster was brought to life. The entire passage, "Alas! I even now ... remain unfinished. I was," is on a slip of paper pasted on the page.

[49] The comparison to a Hermitess and the wearing of the "fanciful nunlike dress" are appropriate though melodramatic. They appear only in *Mathilda*. Mathilda refers to her "whimsical nunlike habit" again after she meets Woodville (see page 60) and tells us in a deleted passage that it was "a close nunlike gown of black silk."

[50] Cf. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, I, 48: "the wingless, crawling hours." This phrase ("my part in submitting ... minutes") and the remainder of the paragraph are an elaboration of the simple phrase in F of F--A, "my part in enduring it--," with its ambiguous pronoun. The last page of Chapter VIII shows many corrections, even in the MS of *Mathilda*. It is another passage that Mary seems to have written in some agitation of spirit. Cf. note 26.

[51] In F of F--A there are several false starts before this sentence. The name there is Welford; on the next page it becomes Lovel, which is thereafter used throughout *The Fields of Fancy* and appears twice, probably inadvertently, in *Mathilda*, where it is crossed out. In a few of the S-R fr it is Herbert. In *Mathilda* it

is at first Herbert, which is used until after the rewritten conclusion (see note 83) but is corrected throughout to Woodville. On the final pages Woodville alone is used. (It is interesting, though not particularly significant, that one of the minor characters in Lamb's *John Woodvil* is named Level. Such mellifluous names rolled easily from the pens of all the romantic writers.) This, her first portrait of Shelley in fiction, gave Mary considerable trouble: revisions from the rough drafts are numerous. The passage on Woodville's endowment by fortune, for example, is much more concise and effective than that in S-R fr. Also Mary curbed somewhat the extravagance of her praise of Woodville, omitting such hyperboles as "When he appeared a new sun seemed to rise on the day & he had all the benignity of the dispenser of light," and "he seemed to come as the God of the world."

[52] This passage beginning "his station was too high" is not in F of F--A.

[53] This passage beginning "He was a believer in the divinity of genius" is not in F of F--A. Cf. the discussion of genius in "Giovanni Villani" (Mary Shelley's essay in *The Liberal*, No. IV, 1823), including the sentence: "The fixed stars appear to abberate [sic]; but it is we that move, not they." It is tempting to conclude that this is a quotation or echo of something which Shelley said, perhaps in conversation with Byron. I have not found it in any of his published writings.

[54] Is this wishful thinking about Shelley's poetry? It is well known that a year later Mary remonstrated with Shelley about *The Witch of Atlas*, desiring, as she said in her 1839 note, "that Shelley should increase his popularity.... It was not only that I wished him to acquire popularity as redounding to his fame; but I believed that he would obtain a greater mastery over his own powers, and greater happiness in his mind, if public applause crowned his endeavours.... Even now I believe that I was in the right." Shelley's response is in the six introductory stanzas of the poem.

[55] The preceding paragraphs about Elinor and Woodville are the result of considerable revision for the better of F of F--A and S-R fr. Mary scored out a paragraph describing Elinor, thus getting rid of several clichés ("fortune had smiled on her," "a favourite of fortune," "turning tears of misery to those of joy"); she omitted a clause which offered a weak motivation of Elinor's father's will (the possibility of her marrying, while hardly more than a child, one of her guardian's sons); she curtailed the extravagance of a rhapsody on the perfect happiness which Woodville and Elinor would have enjoyed.

[56] The death scene is elaborated from F of F--A and made more melodramatic by the addition of Woodville's plea and of his vigil by the death-bed.

[57] F of F--A ends here and F of F--B resumes.

[58] A similar passage about Mathilda's fears is cancelled in F of F--B but it appears in revised form in S-R fr. There is also among these fragments a long passage, not used in Mathilda, identifying Woodville as someone she had met in London. Mary was wise to discard it for the sake of her story. But the first part of it is interesting for its correspondence with fact: "I knew him when I first went to London with my father he was in the height of his glory & happiness--Elinor was living & in her life he lived--I did not know her but he had been introduced to my father & had once or twice visited us--I had then gazed with wonder on his beauty & listened to him with delight--" Shelley had visited Godwin more than "once or twice" while Harriet was still living, and Mary had seen him. Of course she had seen Harriet too, in 1812, when she came with Shelley to call on Godwin. Elinor and Harriet, however, are completely unlike.

[59] Here and on many succeeding pages, where Mathilda records the words and opinions of Woodville, it is possible to hear the voice of Shelley. This paragraph, which is much expanded from F of F--B, may be compared with the discussion of good and evil in Julian and Maddalo and with Prometheus Unbound and A Defence of Poetry.

[60] In the revision of this passage Mathilda's sense of her pollution is intensified; for example, by addition of "infamy and guilt was mingled with my portion."

[61] Some phrases of self-criticism are added in this paragraph.

[62] In F of F--B this quotation is used in the laudandum scene, just before Level's (Woodville's) long speech of dissuasion.

[63] The passage "air, & to suffer ... my compassionate friend" is on a slip of paper pasted across the page.

[64] This phrase sustains the metaphor better than that in F of F--B: "puts in a word."

[65] This entire paragraph is added to F of F--B; it is in rough draft in S-R fr.

[66] This is changed in the MS of Mathilda from "a violent thunderstorm." Evidently Mary decided to avoid using another thunderstorm at a crisis in the story.

[67] The passage "It is true ... I will" is on a slip of paper pasted across the page.

[68] In the revision from F of F--B the style of this whole episode becomes more concise and specific.

[69] An improvement over the awkward phrasing in F of F--B: "a friend who will not repulse my request that he would accompany me."



[70] These two paragraphs are not in F of F--B; portions of them are in S-R fr.

[71] This speech is greatly improved in style over that in F of F--B, more concise in expression (though somewhat expanded), more specific. There are no corresponding S-R fr to show the process of revision. With the ideas expressed here cf. Shelley, Julian and Maddalo, ll. 182-187, 494-499, and his letter to Claire in November, 1820 (Julian Works, X, 226). See also White, Shelley, II, 378.

[72] This solecism, copied from F of F--B, is not characteristic of Mary Shelley.

[73] This paragraph prepares for the eventual softening of Mathilda's feeling. The idea is somewhat elaborated from F of F--B. Other changes are necessitated by the change in the mode of presenting the story. In *The Fields of Fancy* Mathilda speaks as one who has already died.

[74] Cf. Shelley's emphasis on hope and its association with love in all his work. When Mary wrote *Mathilda* she knew *Queen Mab* (see Part VIII, ll. 50-57, and Part IX, ll. 207-208), the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and the first three acts of *Prometheus Unbound*. The fourth act was written in the winter of 1819, but *Demogorgon's* words may already have been at least adumbrated before

the beginning of November:

To love and bear, to hope till hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

[75] Shelley had written, "Desolation is a delicate thing" (Prometheus Unbound, Act I, l. 772) and called the Spirit of the Earth "a delicate spirit" (Ibid., Act III, Sc. iv, l. 6).

[76] Purgatorio, Canto 28, ll. 31-33. Perhaps by this time Shelley had translated ll. 1-51 of this canto. He had read the Purgatorio in April, 1818, and again with Mary in August, 1819, just as she was beginning to write Mathilda. Shelley showed his translation to Medwin in 1820, but there seems to be no record of the date of composition.

[77] An air with this title was published about 1800 in London by Robert Birchall. See Catalogue of Printed Music Published between 1487 and 1800 and now in the British Museum, by W. Barclay Squire, 1912. Neither author nor composer is listed in the Catalogue.

[78] This paragraph is materially changed from F of F--B. Clouds and darkness are substituted for starlight, silence for the sound of the wind. The weather here matches Mathilda's mood. Four and a half lines

of verse (which I have not been able to identify, though they sound Shelleyan--are they Mary's own?) are omitted: of the stars she says,

the wind is in the tree  
But they are silent;--still they roll along  
Immeasurably distant; & the vault  
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds  
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.

[79] If Mary quotes Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* intentionally here, she is ironic, for this is no merciful rain, except for the fact that it brings on the illness which leads to Mathilda's death, for which she longs.

[80] This quotation from *Christabel* (which suggests that the preceding echo is intentional) is not in F of F--B.

[81] Cf. the description which opens *Mathilda*.

[82] Among Lord Abinger's papers, in Mary's hand, are some comparable (but very bad) fragmentary verses addressed to Mother Earth.

[83] At this point four sheets are cut out of the notebook. They are evidently those with pages numbered 217 to 223 which are among the

S-R fr. They contain the conclusion of the story, ending, as does F of F--B with Mathilda's words spoken to Diotima in the Elysian Fields: "I am here, not with my father, but listening to lessons of wisdom, which will one day bring me to him when we shall never part. THE END." Some passages are scored out, but not this final sentence. Tenses are changed from past to future. The name Herbert is changed to Woodville. The explanation must be that Mary was hurrying to finish the revision (quite drastic on these final pages) and the transcription of her story before her confinement, and that in her haste she copied the pages from F of F--B as they stood. Then, realizing that they did not fit Mathilda, she began to revise them; but to keep her MS neat, she cut out these pages and wrote the fair copy. There is no break in Mathilda in story or in pagination. This fair copy also shows signs of haste: slips of the pen, repetition of words, a number of unimportant revisions.

[84] Here in F of F--B there is an index number which evidently points to a note at the bottom of the next page. The note is omitted in Mathilda. It reads:

"Dante in his Purgatorio describes a grifon as remaining unchanged but his reflection in the eyes of Beatrice as perpetually varying (Purg. Cant. 31) So nature is ever the same but seen differently by almost every spectator and even by the same at various times. All minds, as mirrors, receive her forms--yet in each mirror the shapes apparently reflected vary & are perpetually changing--"

[85] See note 20. Mary Shelley had suffered this torture when Clara and William died.

[86] See the end of Chapter V.

[87] This sentence is not in F of F--B or in S-R fr.