



Shelley's Poetry and Prose

Percy Bysshe Shelley , *Donald H. Reiman (Editor)* , *Neil Fraistat (Editor)*

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"Criticism" reflects the recent renaissance in Shelley studies, the greatest renaissance since 1870-92. All twenty-three essays are new to the Second Edition; among them are the work of Harold Bloom, Stuart Curran, Annette Wheeler Cafarelli, Michael Ferber, James Chandler, and Susan J. Wolfson.

A Chronology, an updated Selected Bibliography, and an Index of Titles and First Lines are included.

Shelley's Poetry and Prose Details

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From Reader Review Shelley's Poetry and Prose for online ebook

J.E. says

I have to say that Shelley does have some of the best imagery, and that alone makes reading most of his poetry worth while for me. However, I was disappointed with all other aspects of his work.

First of all, his longer poems seem to either go in circles or have a rather chaotic line of thought.

Secondly, whenever he puts in a theme, message, etc. they will often contradict one another.

Lastly, at times one has to put a lot into understanding the simplest words because of how many different ways Shelley will not only fit them to his own way of thinking, but also use them the usual way as well.

In the end, I have no way of knowing what others will think of it, but I personally found it difficult to push my way through his odd line of thought.

Jennifer says

I am okay with Shelley. I understand for the most part what he's trying to do and his insolence is kind of charming. But, his poetry style is far too dramatic to be enjoyable and it's difficult to break down the meaning between his lines, which is what I'm used to doing in poetry.

Michael says

O Wind! I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

You had me at "O Wild West Wind!"

Stephen says

Shelley's philosophy is debatable, but his genius is undeniable. This volume sheds light on his poetry, and thereby adds to the reader's enjoyment. Top picks include Mont Blanc, Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, Ozymandias, Adonais, The Cloud, and Ode to the West Wind.

Mont Blanc:

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark - now glittering - now reflecting gloom -
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought
Its tribute brings Of waters, - with a sound but half its own....
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears, still, snowy, and serene....
The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

Adonais (elegy on the death of Keats)

The breath whose might I have invoked in song Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven, Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng Whose sails were never to the tempest given; The massy earth and sphered skies are riven! I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar: Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven, The sould of Adonais, like a star, Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Ricky Ganci says

The book that began science fiction, it reeks of a tragedy too perfectly concocted to fully capture in a quarter-page book journal entry. I love every character in this book for what they bring to it, and it is one of the few books I can read effortlessly, even though it contains almost no dialogue. It is a joy to teach, because every year I learn something new about it, and not many books present that kind of “replay value.” I’m actually pretty glad that I didn’t have to study this one in college, because I don’t think that I’d appreciate it as much as I do. Perhaps my love for it has something to do with the fact that it was the first novel that I ever taught at the high-school level, but I think that the story and the thematic questions the book raises make me enjoy it for all the more reasons. I love how real and how human the creature seems, and the idea that Victor is the real monster. Whether or not Mary Shelley had that in mind when she wrote is a question worth asking.

Dana says

Shelley is the quintessential Romantic. I first became interested in his poetry as a high school senior, and he has remained one of my favorite poets. This is an excellent collection, including Shelley's famous Defense of Poetry.

Keith says

Prometheus Unbound – ** What is this work? It lacks plot, suspense or development, characterization is flat and the poesy is dense and numbing. Is it a play? A poem? An epic? A philosophical dialogue? The last act was tacked on after its original publication. Need I say more?

Prometheus Unbound is written in a highly complex style – dense, convoluted, expansive and ornate. Sentences go on for 20 or more lines and contain innumerable clauses that dart this direction and that. Some sentences aren’t even sentences. The poetic descriptions are thick and almost unnavigable – the metaphors are piled on top of each other in such numbing succession it’s hard to remember what he was trying to describe in the first place.

The poem appears to be Shelley’s Paradise – a vision of a positive future, a tract on what the world could be if we but freed ourselves from the shackles of tyrants. But this type of prophecy is always fraught with difficulties. The human mind understands misery more than joy. Visions of perfection thus often seem sterile, boring and kind of creepy. It’s the same challenge facing Dante in describing heaven.

The secret is to make paradise less of a paradise – to acknowledge human suffering will always be present. Shelley hints at this, but never comes to grips with it. The good vs evil in the play is so simplistic it allows no

shade of grey. Shelley's Paradise seems to be just an highly ornate heaven.

So, to answer my original question: What kind of work is this? Let me take a stab. This not a play, though written as one. It is more like a courtly masque – a highly stylized pageant or tableaux. It isn't meant to convey a story or a character. Everyone knows how it ends. It's meant to dazzle with rich language and exotic setting and song – to present a vision of the world as it could be.

Granted that unique format, the poem/pageant still seems a failure. Shelley's thickets of impenetrable poetry and his unsympathetic characters put off the reader/audience. Only Robert Browning, who greatly admired Shelley, could write a more obtuse, uninviting, tortured-syntax poetry.

I'm taking an online course in November on Prometheus Unbound. We'll see if that changes my mind.

Mr. Hollis says

Reading Queen Mab at the moment. Had to do some background research into Edmund Spenser's "Faery Queen." I'm finding significant parallels with Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in both works. This is my initial impression.

Madly Jane says

Shelley always brings me back to the truth about myself. I am glad to have re-read his work. I want to write a book about him one day, but it's not now. His poems have reminded me of what I need to do. Shelley was a true visionary, like Rimbaud, like Goethe, like Milton. He lived his work. I want to do that.

Sandra says

I'm rating the edition, not the poems. First, there's no introduction so it's hard to situate the poet and the work (in total)....good critical stuff at the end....helpful introductions to many of the individual poems....good footnotes.... now I know what a camel-leopard is so thanks.

Matt says

A nice collection of Shelley's works.

Christie says

Hands down, the best edition of his selected works one can own. He was a writer not much appreciated in his time but the years have been kinder to him. I am truly enamoured of his writings, esp. 'Mont Blanc'. You cannot go wrong with much contained here.

Geoff says

There's no Romantic I adore as much as Shelley. I can't wait to read Richard Holmes' *Shelley The Pursuit* and get a little more acquainted with the Shelley mythology. This Norton edition of his writings has a good deal of introductory material before each piece, and is a worthy biographical study in its own right. I can't imagine a more complete edition of his works. Essential.

Micah says

Love, Love Shelley. I reread daily!

Nada says

Shelley's influence as a Romantic poet on subsequent generations is evident in the many phrases and images that survive in our collective consciousness even today: His Sky-Lark with its "rain of melody," His West Wind sweeping away the "Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red" leaves, Ozymandias's "sneer of cold command" and his echoing statement "Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" His style is exuberant and at times bombastic, and he seems to impose on his readers his boundless and insatiable youthful energy inherent in the young and the young at heart. But too much of Shelley can be exhausting; impetuous youth is great while it lasts, but we all have to grow up at some point. In the end, I find it always a joy and a wonder to see how writers from different backgrounds and with different philosophies have essentially addressed the same subjects in their work. Whether it is the Greeks or the Romans, the Romantics of the Victorians, all writers throughout the ages have tried to capture in words the beautiful mysteries of life and the inexplicable ironies of human existence, and Shelley is no exception. He has earned critical respect and secured his immortality with his unique way of expressing those universal truths.
