

Michael Rossington, Jack Donovan and Kelvin Everest, eds., *The Poems of Shelley, Volume Four, 1820-1821*. Oxford: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xxxiii + 390. £140. ISBN 9781405873536.

The recently published and penultimate fourth volume of *The Poems of Shelley* continues the editorial principles first established by F.W. Bateson and set out in the first volume by the general editor John Barnard. The series' stated focus is an 'ideal of comprehension, for the reader, combined with comprehensiveness, for the poet' (Vol. 1, x). To achieve this focus, the editors mean to print the poems in chronological order, to give contextual (both literary and historical) detail, whilst modernising the presentation and spelling where appropriate in order to ease 'the reader's sympathetic response' (x). The editors also stress however, the need to be flexible in their methodology.

Volume Four continues the high standard set by the series, using freshly edited texts with expansive headnotes. However, it is important to recognise that, whilst the book covers 1820-1821, it does not cover the entirety of either year, instead running from the poems completed in the late Autumn of 1820, to those completed in the late Summer of 1821. As such, the major poems included are *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais*. The volume also includes Italian translations of small excerpts from *Prometheus Unbound* and *Laon and Cythna* and these are of particular note. The inclusion of Shelley's Italian poems placed alongside their English translations are of particular merit and will be of use to those researching the impact of Italy on the British Romantic Poets. The treatment of the Italian poems written during Shelley's time in Italy may be of use to scholars seeking to situate Shelley as a poet in dialogue with his creative sources. However, neither *Prometheus Unbound* nor *Laon and Cythna*, both being poems covered by the series elsewhere, are accompanied by their English translations. This would have been a useful addition, and aided discussion of the passages Shelley translated. Again, the commentaries are full and informative on contextual details and allusions.

In discussing their aims the editors have stressed clarity for the reader and in this they have largely succeeded. The commentaries in *The Poems of Shelley*, for example, are excellent. Yet this clarity has come at a cost and academics seeking to research textual variants in each poem will also require *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Johns Hopkins), also being published at this time and which does place emphasis on the textual variants in each text. The challenge of combining comprehensiveness with clarity is one which, as yet, has not been solved, but, simply may not be possible.

The discussion of each poem is always clear and states where the editors have found the original sources for each text. Michael Rossington, for example, in his discussion of 'Unrisen splendour of the brightest sun' notes that 'the fragment is drafted in ink in the upper half of *Nbk 17* p. 121 immediately below the sketch of a tree' (Vol. 4, 201) before going on to note its connection to *Adonais* through the stanza form. The headnote to *Adonais*, given by Kelvin Everest, is especially useful, covering its background, composition, publication, sources and influences, as well as a list of some of the most interesting and useful essays on the poem. The discussion of the composition is particularly good, noting the arguments that previous scholars, such as Donald Reiman, have used for the order in which the poem was composed. Similarly, the thorough commentary on the sources and influences which characterise the poem is of especial note. This commentary on influence also delves into how Keats's own influences affect Shelley's choice of allusions. In addition to this commentary, the notes to the poem themselves explore in further depth the allusions studied throughout *Adonais*. Importantly, where Shelley has been influenced by other poets, the editors have given full stanzas of the appropriate works and discuss their relevance to *Adonais*.

Although expensive, this series is of definite value and will be of use to scholars and libraries particularly when the final fifth volume, which covers the remainder of Shelley's life, is complete. How the editors decide to discuss *The Triumph of Life* will be interesting indeed. The inclusion of the Italian with translations as well as the commentary makes this a valuable book not only for those studying Shelley, but for scholars of the engagement between the British Poets and Italy (and by extension, Europe). This excellent contribution to Shelleyan scholarship provides a solid ground from which to work on Shelley's poetry.

Christopher Grove
Durham University