



# Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography

By James Bieri

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## Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography By James Bieri

This major biography of Shelley, England's most radical and controversial Romantic poet, is the first to appear in thirty years. Informed by the author's extensive research, psychological insight, and recent scholarship on Shelley and his circle, the biography stresses the intimate relationship between the poet's writing and his complex personality.

James Bieri draws upon his dual background as a Shelley scholar and a psychologist to create a compelling narrative of Shelley's multifaceted life. Shelley's personality transcends any entreaty either to see it "plain" or to be labeled with a clinical diagnosis. Remarkably resilient, he was continually creative despite intervals of depression and periodic, hallucinatory panic attacks. Fascinated by the human psyche, he incorporated into his poetry his own self-analysis, including a remarkably sophisticated theory of love that provided the title to his most powerful erotic poem, *Epipsychedion*.

Bieri also probes Shelley's numerous emotional, romantic, and familial entanglements. Based on the author's twenty years of research, the book includes new information on the discovery of Shelley's older illegitimate half-brother; important letters of his father and grandfather; his mother's early life, her letters about young Shelley, and her major influence upon Shelley; the first published portrait of Sophia Stacey, who beguiled Shelley in Florence; and further evidence on Shelley's secretly adopted Neapolitan infant.

This biography offers a sympathetic and nuanced view of Shelley's tumultuous life, personality, and poetry.



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#### Review

Bieri's biography, which will surely be the definitive study of Shelley's life and work for many years to come, advances and enriches the state of contemporary Shelley studies in remarkable ways.

(Stephen C. Behrendt *Romantic Circles*)

Bieri's detailed presentations and thoughtful analyses make this an especially admirable volume... This could well become the standard Shelley biography. Essential.

(*Choice*)

It is the life of the subject that really carries this book. Shelley's life was indeed sensational, tragic, and still contains mystery enough to stretch the mind... The achievement of this book is in its gathering together and careful presentation of evidence. It is the unfortunate life of Shelley that grips the reader throughout.

(Sharon Ruston *Times Literary Supplement*)

The young Shelley that emerges from this well-researched biography, the outcome of many years' work, is in part the product of family personalities and tensions, but Bieri also respects the strength of Shelley's own opinions.

(Elizabeth Helsinger *SEL Studies in English Literature*)

A quietly magisterial feat of scholarship... All those who admire Shelley's work or wish to find out more about his life will gain much from these superbly researched and executed volumes.

(Michael O'Neill *Keats-Shelley Journal*)

An impressively comprehensive and frequently exciting work.

(Rebecca Oppenheimer *Howard County Times*)

This is a work sure to become an indispensable resource for the next generation of Shelley scholars.

(Rowland Weston *Circles*)

Bieri's biography is an unmatched resource for scholars and readers of Percy Bysshe Shelley.

(Matthew C. Borushko *Studies in Romanticism*)

## About the Author

**James Bieri** is a retired professor of psychology at the University of Texas-Austin.

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