

Shelley and the Musico-Poetics of Romanticism

Jessica K. Quillin



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Addressing a gap in Shelley studies, Jessica K. Quillin explores the poet's lifelong interest in music. Quillin connects the trope of music with Shelley's larger formal aesthetic, political, and philosophical concerns, showing that music offers a new critical lens through which to view such familiar Shelleyan concerns as the status of the poetic, figural language, and the philosophical problem posed by idealism versus skepticism. Quillin's book uncovers the implications of Shelley's use of music by means of four musico-poetic concerns: the inherently interdisciplinary nature of musical imagery and figurative language; the rhythmic and sonoric dimensions of poetry; the extension of poetry into the performative realms of the theatre and drawing room through close links between most poetic genres and music; and the transformation of poetry into music through the setting and adaptation of poetic lyrics to music. Ultimately, Quillin argues, Shelley exhibits a fundamental recognition of an interdependence between music and poetry which is expressed in the form and content of his highly sonorous works. Equating music with love allows him to create a radical model in which poetry is the highest form of imaginative expression, one that can affect the mind and the senses at once and potentially bring about the perfectibility of mankind through a unique mode of visionary experience.

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