



**The Constitution of Shelley's Poetry**  
 The Argument of Language in *Prometheus Unbound*  
 Edward T. Duffy

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### Description

**A close philosophical reading of Shelly's *Prometheus Unbound* from the perspective of the argument and drama of language played out in its pages.**

*The Constitution of Shelley's Poetry* is a close philosophical reading of *Prometheus Unbound* from the perspective of the argument or drama of language played out in its pages. At its heart a four-chapter reading of *Prometheus Unbound*, the book is punctuated with readings of other Shelley works and prefaced with two earlier chapters: one on 'Mont Blanc' and 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', the companion poems inaugurating Shelley's poetic maturity; the other one 'Ode to the West Wind' originally published with *Prometheus Unbound* and here represented as 'signature' Shelley. The book's most distinguishing feature, from which several others derive, is its bringing the power and pertinence of Stanley Cavell's thought to Shelley's poetry and to his explicitly articulated philosophical interest in language.

The book urges and practises close reading, but it provides philosophical grounds for this ostensibly old-fashioned approach, and it implicitly proposes an understanding of language very different from those now most generally assumed in literary studies. The book's bringing of Cavell's thought to Shelley's poetry would make two related but distinguishable contributions. There is, first of all, the reading of Shelley's poetry, which is new and persuasive both in many of its local moments and in its overall thrust. Second, there is the practical demonstration of the relevance and yield of Cavell's thought for literary studies.

**Readership:** This scholarly work is essential for academics engaged in literary criticism and Romanticism studies; also of interest to philosophy researchers engaged with the thought of Stanley Cavell.

### Contents

Introduction: A Philosophical Poet (of Ordinary Language); Chapter 1: The Everlasting Universe of Things as Shelley Found It in 1816: "Mont Blanc" and "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"; Chapter 2: Where Shelley Wrote and What He Wrote for: The Signature of "Ode to the West Wind"; Chapter 3: Knowing What We Do (with Words): Act I of *Prometheus Unbound*; Chapter 4: Recounting Reverses, Recovering the Initiative: Act II of *Prometheus Unbound*; Chapter 5: The Congregated Powers of Language: Act IV of *Prometheus Unbound*; Chapter 6: Resounding Celebrations and Constraining Commissions: Act IV of *Prometheus Unbound*

### About the Author

Edward T. Duffy is Associate Professor of English at Marquette University, Wisconsin, USA. His research interests centre on English romantic poets, in particular the poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth, and extend to a cross-disciplinary engagement with the 'ordinary language' philosophy practised in various ways by John Austin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Stanley Cavell. His publications include *Rousseau in England: the Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment* (1979).

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