



Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love (Princeton Legacy Library)

William A. Ulmer

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In this work William Ulmer boldly advances our understanding of Shelley's concept of love by exploring eros as a figure for the poet's political and artistic aspirations. Applying a combination of deconstructive, historicist, and psychoanalytic approaches to six major poems, Ulmer follows the logic of the writing's rhetoric of love by tracing links between such elements as imagination, eros, metaphor, allegory, mirroring, repetition, death, and narcissism. Ulmer takes the mutual desire of self and antitype as a paradigm for rhetorical and social relations throughout Shelley and, in a significant departure from critical consensus, argues that his poetics were predominantly idealist.

Ulmer demonstrates how the idealism of Shelleyan eros centers on a symbiosis of contraries organized as a dialectical variation of metaphor. In so doing, he contends that this idealism is both a rhetorical construct and revolutionary agency, and traces the failure of Shelley's visionary humanism to the gradual emergence of contradictions latent in his idealism. What emerges are new readings of individual texts and a reconsideration of the poet's imaginative development.

Originally published in 1990.

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