

# Aspiring Child

A Biography of Mary W. Shelley in Sonnets

by Ted Morrissey

**J**hese 100 sonnets tell the story of an extraordinary young woman who had an immeasurable impact on literature and other media worldwide. The collection focuses on the period from her birth, as Mary Godwin (daughter of literary firebrands William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft), to her twenty-fourth year, when she returned to London after five years abroad: a widow and a mother to a young son, but with a scandalous reputation and no clear means of support. However, she was “The Author of ‘Frankenstein?’” The *nom de plume* carried the weight of a novel that had already become famous (indeed, infamous), and she understood that it may make it possible for her to support herself and her son via her pen.

The sonnets also chronicle Mary Shelley's interactions with some of the most influential writers

and thinkers of her day: her husband Percy Shelley, of course, as well as Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew “Monk” Lewis, John Polidori, Leigh Hunt, and others. And no biography of Mary Shelley would be complete without an accounting of the famous ghost story writing contest among the “Diodati Circle” in the year with no summer.

Some of the sonnets first appeared in *Feminist Spaces*, *The Poetry Lighthouse*, *Rockvale Review*, *The Soliloquist*, *Disturbances*, *HAUNTER Review*, *The Basilisk Tree*, and *The Brussels Review*. The paperback and Kindle editions include the Appendix “A Tale of Two Sonnets.”

**“Measured, disciplined, and emotionally resonant, this is an extended poetic love letter—one that honors not only Mary Shelley's achievement, but the cost at which it was earned. A stunner.”** — *The Prairies Book Review*

**“A loving epistle to a literary hero, a biography that doubles as a Bildungsroman, Künstlerroman and project of compressed literary criticism, this collection is a *sui generis* compendium, riveting for initiated and amateur alike.”** — *BlueInk Review*,

Biography | Poetry

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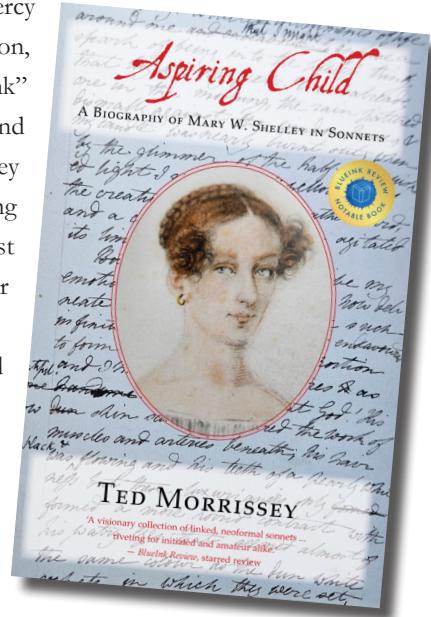
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starred  
review

“I often  
forgot that  
Mary Shelley  
belonged  
to another



century. Her longing felt familiar. Her isolation felt personal. Her need to create meaning through words felt deeply recognizable.” — Alisha Abbasi, *medium.com*

“One of the collection's strengths is its clear and chronological structure, which sheds light on the events that influenced Mary Shelley's writing.... An absorbing biography in sonnet form.”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

“From her writing to her politics and the gothic tragedies that she endured, the book recalls the circumstances that shaped her life and legacy using a steady, even rhythm and subtle traces of witty, tongue-in-cheek turns of phrase.”

— Katelynn Watkins, *Foreword Reviews*

“A genuine expression of love for an author whose life often swerved into tragedy.” — Jordan Waterwash, *Reader Views*



**TED MORRISSEY** has been called “the modern-day Hawthorne” (*Reader Views*), and he's been the recipient of several literary awards, including the American Fiction Award, the International Book Award, and the Manhattan Book Award.

He's also been nominated for Pushcart Prizes, the Kirkus Prize, and the *Best American Mystery and Suspense* anthology.

His novels include *Mrs Saville*, a sequel to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; and *An Un-*

*timely Frost*, also inspired by the life and times of Mary Shelley. He is also the author of *Delta of Cassiopeia: Collected Stories and Sonnets*, winner of a Maincrest Media Award and a finalist for the American Fiction Award, Global Book Award, and Big Other Book Award.

Ted teaches for Lindenwood University and Southern New Hampshire University, and co-hosts the monthly podcast *A Lesson before Writing*. Like the poet Carl Sandburg, Ted was born and raised in Galesburg, Illinois.

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