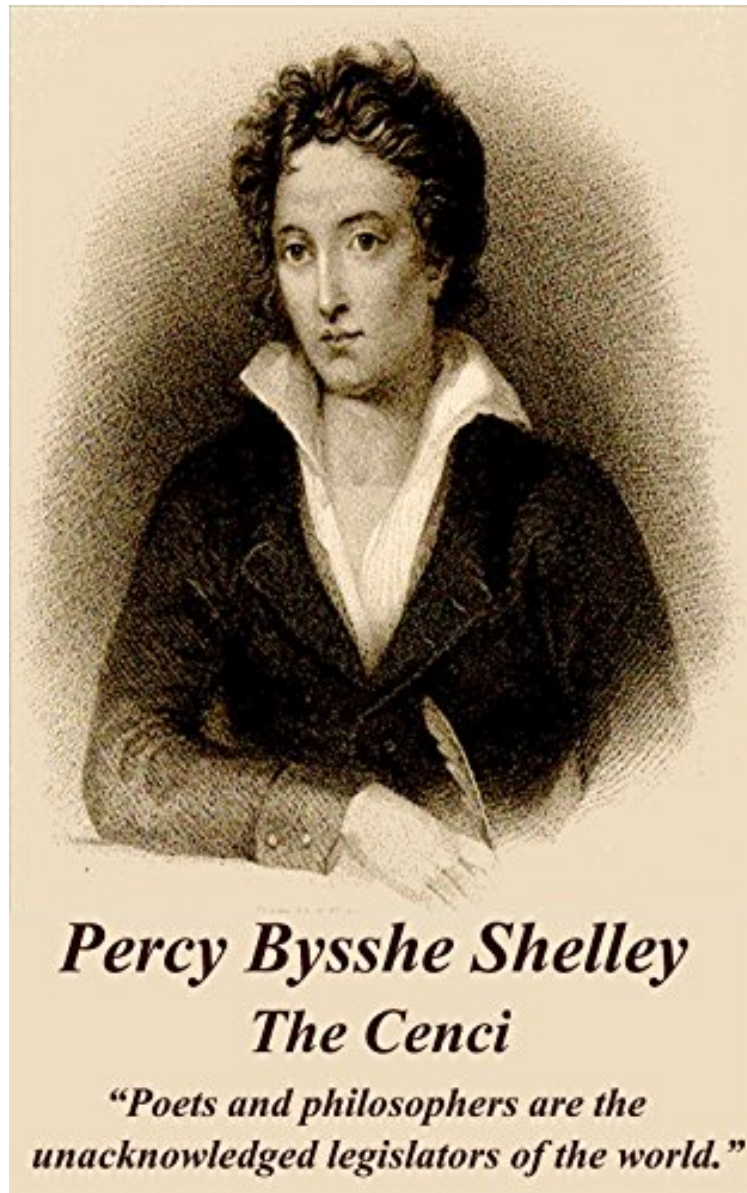


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The Cenci: "Poets and philosophers are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Percy Bysshe Shelley

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Cenci: "Poets and philosophers are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Shelley is one of the most revered figures in the English poetical landscape. Born on the 4th August 1792 he has, over the years, become rightly regarded as a major Romantic poet. Yet during his own lifetime little of his work was published. Publishers feared his radical views and possible charges against themselves for blasphemy and sedition. On 8th July 1822 a month before his 30th birthday, during a sudden storm, his tragic early death by drowning robbed our culture of many fine expected masterpieces. But in his short spell on earth he weaved much magic. *The Cenci*, A Tragedy in Five Acts was a verse play that Shelley tried to have performed at Covent Garden in his lifetime. He was unsuccessful despite the play being his only work to be published in a second edition and many acclaiming the work as a tragic masterpiece. He was inspired to dramatise this real life story of the tragic execution of a young Italian woman in 1599 for the pre meditated murder of her father after viewing a portrait of her, Beatrice Cenci by the painter Guido Reni. After seeing a performance of the play in 1886 George Bernard Shaw commented that: Shelley and Shakespeare are the only dramatists who have dealt in despair of this quality