



*In the so-called ‘culture wars’ that accompany the much more tangible conflicts plaguing the beginning of this century, the literary canon seems, on the one hand, destined for irrelevance, as evidenced by the reduction in funding for humanities research and the closures affecting humanities departments; on the other hand, it represents ‘safe’ (albeit problematic) cultural capital, a somewhat protected investment compared to lines of research that touch on topics that are apparently worthy of greater investment in the present.*

*This special issue of de genere on two crucial figures in the English literary canon, Mary and Percy Shelley, shows, on the contrary, that not only, as was argued at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, all culture is contemporary, but that the canon can represent not an aseptic space for literary analysis, but a field for questioning issues that are deeply relevant to our time, from the metamorphoses that the canon itself undergoes over time to highly topical issues such as veganism.*

*Marta Cariello and Serena Guarracino*

*Cover image: Shelley Composing Prometheus Unbound in the Baths of Caracalla, by Joseph Severn (1845). Property of the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association. All rights reserved.*

