

## A FRAIL BOAT

### *A Symbol of Shelley's Poetry (An Essay)*

Yukio ODA

— 1 —

Reading through the two thousand and six hundred lines of "*Prometheus Unbound*", some may find themselves quite exalted by the spirit of freedom embodied in the suffering Titan. Some others may declare with a sigh that what has attracted them most is the sweetness of the graceful Oceanides. But neither of these high themes is the subject of this present essay of mine. What I should like to call my readers' attention to now is only this little fact that in the first lyrical cry that came out of the heroine's lips on the glorious morning of emancipation, her soul was compared to an "enchanted *boat*". (1)

Throughout his rather short residence in this sublunary world Shelley kept within himself an ardent love for little *boats*. One summer in the last decade of the eighteenth century, he was a little boy clapping his hands in joy at a small paper boat of his own invention (— with, as his biographers tell us with a comic emphasis, a cat as its unfortunate guest! (2)—) sailing down his village-stream. Twenty years later, and within half an hour of that disastrous moment with which his sudden death was deplorably brought about, we find him a happy figure at the sunny bay of Spezzia steering his fatal "Ariel" on the still waters of the deceitful Mediterranean.

One has only to have a casual look through some pages of his works to realize how this affection for *boats* was also carried on in his poetry through the whole period of his literary creation without the slightest modification in its intensity shown in his actual daily life. Take, for instance, his first artistic produce, "*Alastor*", — it was on board a little *shallop* lying deserted on the lonely Chorasmian shore that the wandering poet was led into the deepest nook in the bosom of Nature. His next long narrative poem "*The Revolt of Islam*" is started and ended in a picture of a wonderful *boat*. Even with such a work of playful humour as "*The Witch of Atlas*", half its poetical charm would be gone if those stanzas describing the magic *boat* speeding down a mountain torrent were taken away from it.

If I rightly remember, it was Prof. Strong that suggested in his ingenious study of the poet's symbols that these *boats* stand for individual human souls

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(1) "My soul is an enchanted boat" (*Prometheus Unbound* Act II sc. v)

(2) cf. E. Dowden's "*Life*"

while the waters on which the *boats* are afloat represent the universal "life". This, I must heartily approve, is a bright idea, and there could scarcely be any ground for reasonable objections if we should now take it for granted. But even taking it for granted one has to face another fundamental question here, — why, and how, should these particular images have been chosen out while there were many other symbols that might as well have been employed for the same purpose, the representation of these two fundamental ideas in the philosophy of life, — the individual soul and the universal life — ?

Pope's reason had its own way of representing what is universal as "*a stupendous whole*". With the natural piety of Wordsworth, his individual soul was conceived to be a *priest*, a *spirit dedicated* to the universal mind, "Nature", his all in all. One Leibnitz might here have ushered in a symbol of a little "*microcosm*" for the individual human mind upon which the image of the whole universe could be caught in miniature. — One must not forget that it was among all these possible varieties of imagery that we have Shelley's particular symbols of *little boats* and *flowing waters*.

What a poet tried to represent with his symbols is one question. Why or how he did so is another. If the former has to do with the contents, the materials, of the poet's spiritual experience, the latter concerns its *mode*. Or, if I may use another phraseology, the former is a question of *ideas*, while the latter is that of *atmosphere*. And it is not so much the *ideas*, as the *atmosphere* that attracts me in poetry. Though I envy Shelley his pure and bright *ideas* about life and humanity, I still more envy him his still purer and brighter *atmosphere* his artistic soul sheds around those pure and bright *ideas*.

This essay is written as a little trial of mine to approach the secret of the poet's mode of experience through the appreciation of his poetical symbols. I know, however, what a dangerous attempt it is to try to analyse so subtle a poetic soul as his. All I can do in this little prosaic trial may not go any further than to confess my own incompetence in my effort revealing, in contrast with it, the inaccessible profundity of his artistic mystery.

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It is noticeable that in Shelley's world of imagery the notion of unrestrained *movement* was closely associated with that of human perfection. If to the static mood of his brother poet John Keats the "mellow fruitfulness" of autumn with its "swelling gourd", "plumped hazels" and the "full-grown lambs loud bleating from the hilly bourne" was the very image of supreme bliss, (3)

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(3) *To Autumn* (J. Keats)

Shelley saw the symbol of the essential, supreme state of universal humanity in the never-ceasing movement of flowing waters.

“The everlasting universe of things  
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—  
Now lending splendour,——” (*Mont Blanc*)

—Not only does Shelley symbolize by this wellknown passage his philosophical conception of the universe but also he is really trying to figure his own mental picture of perfect human freedom.

This true phase of humanity, the everlasting movement, may have long been concealed to oblivion and smothered to stagnation under the “heavy weight of hours”<sup>(4)</sup> — his favourite phrase to denote the oppressive influence exerted upon human souls by secular forces and powers. Yet — this is where his hopes and beliefs were set — as, at the call of spring, every sentient being is awakened into bloom, so, some day in future, human spirit must, bursting the icy chains of convention, flow out into the boundless ocean of freedom regaining this essential phase of uninterrupted movement.

We find one beautiful expression of this idea in what the spirit of the Moon sings in the last act of “*Prometheus Unbound*” celebrating the resurrection of human freedom.

“The snow upon my lifeless mountains  
*Is loosened into living fountains,*  
*My solid oceans flow, sing, and shine.”*

Another symbolical example is to be found in the final chorus of *Hellas* where, with the arrival of the time of emancipation, the legendary human *voyages* are prophesied to be reopened fraught with renewed meanings.

“*A loftier Argo* cleaves the main  
Fraught with a later prize;  
.....  
*A new Ulysses* leaves once more  
Calypso for his native shore.” .....

Compared with these, how stagnant, suppressed and, sluggish everything looks at the beginning of either of these lyrical dramas where the hope of freedom is yet nothing more than a feeble remote call!

“Breathe, *low, low,*

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(4) *Ode to the West Wind*

The words which, like secret fire, shall flow  
Through the veins of the *frozen* earth—*low, low!*”

(Hellas)

Nailed to the eagle-baffling walls of mountains, and tormented by the *crawling* (note the implication of tardiness!) glaciers, the Titan champion of freedom stands fast under

“The *wingless, crawling* hours”.

(*Prometheus Unbound* Act I)

Also in *Alastor* we have several images of this stagnancy in the description of the strange places to which the desperate steps of the roaming poet were tended in the earlier stage of his hopeless wandering. See how the “bitumen lakes”

“On black, bare pointed islets ever beat  
With *sluggish* surge,”

or how he found upon the “wide and melancholy waste of putrid marshes”,

“a *sluggish stream* among the reed”.

It was beside this *sluggish* stream that he found that deserted *shallow*, and the sudden change here to be noticed in the touch of Shelley’s description, not only of the poet’s mood but also of the scenery surrounding him, becomes all the more significant.

“As one that in a silver vision floats  
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds  
Upon resplendent clouds”,—

the *straining* boat began to speed over the sea, while

“The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky  
Drank its inspiring radiance, and *the wind*  
*Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.*” .....

Among the seven hundred and twenty lines of which this work consists, so full of dark and weird imagery, this is almost the only paragraph where any trace of blissful peace is to be seen in the atmosphere surrounding the wandering “human form”.

It has been a theme of heated discussion among modern critics of Shelley what he meant by the word "*bounds*" when he wrote about the poet,

"He overleaps the *bounds*".

(l. 207)

Whether it was the boundary between "life" and "death", or that between "reality" and "dream" — I admit it is a subject worth while to consider. Yet of far greater significance is the boundary that is observed to exist here at the very moment of the poet's embarkment. It is the boundary between the two figures of the same person — the poet standing on the shore and him sailing on board the *straining boat*. It is the border-line where the world of his past *stagnancy* is distinctly divided from that of his future *movement*. It was not until he, urged by his "restless impulse", leapt over this border-line that the poet could find himself in an element congenial to his wandering instinct. The little shallop he embarked at this moment must be interpreted as the only medium by which the union of the solitary pilgrim soul and the ever-flowing universal mind could be accomplished.

"O stream !

Whose source is inaccessibly profound,  
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?  
*Thou imagest my life.* Thy darksome stillness,  
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,  
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course  
*Have each their type in me :*"

..... (502-508)

Thus the poet sang later in the same piece of work. No wonder that the poet looked like an "elemental god" <sup>(5)</sup> among the battling waves of the whirling ocean on which his boat was driven along.

It must be admitted of course that this embarkment did by no means lead to the immediate realization of the poet's artistic ideals. It was indeed nothing any further than a first resolute step taken toward the eternal goal, — a dim and remote region from which only one frail light of invitation came to assail mortal eyes, beckoning dubiously and retiring treacherously as the aspiring human steps tried to approach it. Yet, for all its remoteness, and for all the dire misery that awaited the poet in the way of his endless pilgrimage, it was an undeniable decisive step that marked a notable turning point in his life that might well have matched St. Paul's conversion in its

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(5) *Alastor* l. 351

significance. Nor, I hope, is it going too far to say that this is also suggestive of the epoch-making turning point where Shelley himself was standing as an artist when he wrote *Alastor*.

Almost every boat that appears in Shelley's poetry is suggestive of this essential mood of the aspiring human soul. And it was only while it was driven by the "restless impulse" — the "divine inner unrest" — upon the waves of the ever-moving heart of the universe that Shelley could feel any trace of peace within him.

For a man to whom "perfection" is an ideal to be sought at the farthest end of his endless pilgrimage, and for whom the invulnerable solemnity of humanity originates, not in its alleged *present* perfection — a misconception tragic misbeliefs in which have given birth to all the variegated forms of inhuman dogmas of totalitarianism men and women in this world have been, and even are, suffering under —, but in its *capability* of endless progress, there can be no moment of breakage upon this course of his journey but means the first step taken toward deterioration.

Life may be a *limited* mansion <sup>(6)</sup> of many mysterious chambers to Keats, but to Shelley, it was an *infinite* wilderness of twilit ocean — another poetic symbol of his I should like to have another occasion to dwell on — into which his little "*spirit's bark*" was sailing out

"Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
Whose sails were never to the tempest given".

— *Adonais* —

Shelley admired "swiftness" in things as a visible proof of infinite freedom. "A pardlike spirit beautiful and *swift*" was an image he invented for his ideal self. Bleeding on the thorns of life, bearing the weight of the

"Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours", <sup>(7)</sup>

he speeds on and soars, showering down, like his skylark, his beads of songs upon the yet unawakened earth while his West Wind scatters his words of prophecy among mankind

"As from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks —".

Sometimes he laughs, and his laughter — shrill as his actual voice was — is

(6) cf. Keats' letter to J.H. Reynolds (May 3, 1818)

(7) *Prometheus Unbound* Act I

the very voice of exultation his never-restful soul raises in its desperate aspiration for the reunion with the *ever-moving* soul of the infinite universe.

But such aspiration for freedom and such sublimity of unrest are not all that hangs around the symbol of his "spirit's bark". One must not forget that his strength was "girt round with weakness" as his love was "masked in desolation". His impetuous spirit, — "tameless, and swift and proud" as it was, — had a touch of frailty within it. About this phase of his poetic soul a few further words are to be spent in the following little chapter.

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Shelley was, in a sense, a born revolutionary and it is true that the materials of his revolutionary ideas were chiefly acquired from William Godwin's "*Political Justice*", which may now seem too puerile to be seriously discussed. Yet, puerile as these ideas on which a considerable part of his lifetime activities— from his participation in the Irish movement to his more matured encouragement bestowed upon the awakened Greek people — depended may be, there is behind them one thing peculiar to Shelley that distinctly distinguishes him from all the other revolutionary contemporaries of his, rendering him an immortal character in the history of human thought. It was his idea of "beautiful revolution" — the artistic motive that penetrates through all his doctorines and activities.

Addressing to what he calls "Intellectual Beauty", he asserts in one of his youthful hymns,

"Never joy illumed my brow

Unlinked with hope that *thou* (=i. e. Intellectual Beauty) *wouldst free*  
*This world from its dark slavery*".

Here one may see how exquisitely the political ideal of freedom is linked with the artistic symbol of beauty. Liberty to be ushered in by the spirit of beauty! — this is a declaration of triumph on the part of Art over Politics. Not only does he suggest here his denial of the narrow-minded idea of "Art for Art's sake" as he charges the spirit of beauty with a solemn mission of bringing about the earthly salvation, but also he warns every political movement against the invalidity of the revolutions that are void of artistic motives.

This motive of artistic aspiration for beauty is necessarily that of self-abnegation as no entire appreciation of beauty can be accomplished without the mental process of "empathy", — the perfect yielding up of one's subjective self to the influence of the object one stands before —, one live picture of which is found in a passage sung about a poet in the first act of "*Prometheus Unbound*".

“He (=the poet=) will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
 Nor heed nor see, what things they be;  
 Yet from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living man,  
 Nurslings of immortality!”

No mortal eye, remaining mortal, can see the image of what is eternal, as mortality confines the scope of spiritual sight within its boundary. The only way of getting over this boundary for a mortal being is to cease being himself, and, in the very depth of this experience of self-abnegation, release himself of all the preoccupant imperfections his flesh and mind is heir to.

“Among the ruined temples — where marble demons watch  
 The Zodiac’s brazen mystery, and dead men  
 Hang their *mute* thoughts on the *mute* walls around,  
 He lingered, poring on memorials  
 Of the world’s youth, through the long burning day  
*Gazed* on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon  
 Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades  
 Suspended he that task, but ever *gazed*  
 And *gazed*, till meaning on his *vacant* mind  
 Flashed like strong inspiration, —”

(*Alastor*)

So fragile is the entirety of this spiritual experience that a slightest stir of the mortal mentality interrupting it can be enough destructive. Wordsworth may call it “*wise* passiveness” (8), but at the very moment when one stops to wonder whether what he is experiencing is “*wise*” or not, the entirety of the passiveness will be gone.

It is a thing of interest to read about the first moment of awakening that came to each talented artist of the world. And to compare those lines in the “*Prelude*” telling about the memorable moment Wordsworth had while he was at Cambridge (9) with the opening stanzas of the “*Dedication*” prefixed to Shelley’s “*The Revolt of Islam*” will be of some use in realizing the extraordinary scrupulousness with which Shelley kept himself vigilant against the natural “selfishness” that might lurk even in himself as well as in others. Wordsworth allowed himself to be confident enough to boast

(8) *Expostulation and Reply* (Wordsworth)

(9) “*The Prelude*” Book IV. (Wordsworth)

of his being a "dedicated spirit", but Shelley did not forget to mention "meekness" among the other ideals to which he determined to devote himself on that "fresh May dawn". This self-annihilating mildness also formed the characteristic backbone on which he created all his poetical heroes. Laon in the "*Revolt*" spares the life of the fallen tyrant even at the cost of his own life and his newly-built "Golden City." Lionel in his "*Rosalind and Helen*" was so gentle that he could stand "mid the passions wild of human kind like a spirit calming them." If Shakespeare had written a drama on the subject of Prometheus the Titan, he might have ended it in a scene of a nuptial banquet with multitudes of newly liberated people hailing and shouting around the throne of their newly-risen King the Emancipator. But the last scene of Shelley's "*Prometheus*" is presided by the sublime character of Providence, Demogorgon, whose sullen, mighty voice overflows the stage telling him of the deep secret of real victory — the decree of perseverance, the supreme form of creative passiveness.

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;  
To forgive wrongs darker than Death or Night ;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;  
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wrecks the thing it contemplates";

.....

Some critics may, taking notice of the lines about the cave to which Prometheus retires with Asia after their liberation, lay charge on him for his "weak" sentimentalism, but here I completely agree with Prof. Doi who observes in this not a moral deficiency but a spiritual excellence of the meek Titan. A true revolutionist, Shelley seems to suggest here, should never allow himself to be seated in complacency upon the new throne of glory, but, like those nightingales sung about in Robert Bridges' "*Shorter Poems*", is only "*dream*" when the long night through which he has remained wakeful is withdrawn. A poet may be a legislator of the world, but one must not forget that he should still be an "*unacknowledged*" one. <sup>(10)</sup>

It is with such meekness, — the self-annihilating motive so often misinterpreted as his weakness<sup>(11)</sup> — that Shelley's "pardlike spirit" is girt round. And considering this tendency alive in the depth of his mode of experience it is a fact worthy of special remark that most of his *boats*, especially those

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(10) *The Defence of Poetry*.

(11) His last uncompleted work "*The Trimmph of Life*" shows us how well he was aware of the danger of "self-annihilation without sublimation". His "*devotion to something afar*" — (To —) — had nothing in common with "slavery", — the "devotion to something definite" —.

that stand for human souls at the height of exultation, sails not by its own initiative power but under the inspiration of some universal element to which its entire *passive* self is yielded up.

“It seems to float ever, for ever,  
 Upon that many-winding river,  
 Between mountains, woods, abysses,  
 A paradise of wildernesses!  
*Till, like one in slumber bound,*  
*Borne to the ocean, I float down around,*  
*Into the sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:”*

thus sails on Asia’s “enchanted boat”, — the symbol of her own soul, —

“*without a course, without a star*” —

its whole self perfectly given up to the “instinct of sweet music”, — the heart of the flowing air, the sole inspiring motive power for the soul’s boat. There is no trace of interrupting subjective will, nor is it annoyed by any shade of the hours — the genii of the conventional human history. It is an inland boat borne to the ocean. In the entirety of idle forgetfulness and self-abnegation, it passes through “the *Age’s* icy caves”, “*Manhood’s* dark and tossing waves, “*Youth’s* smooth ocean”, and “shadow-peopled *Infancy*” — stripping itself of each stratum of imperfections that has heretofore been accumulated upon it in actual life ( — Mark the reverted chronological order of the four periods. — ) to a “diviner day” beyond the realm of death and birth.

No boat of Shelley’s that is afloat on a river, sails *up* the stream except when the river itself rises up driven by some extraordinary natural power as it does in some part of “*Alastor*”. Even the voyage of the magic boat owned by the witch of *Atlas* is a one-way process *down* the mountain-torrent. There is a sufficient reason in supposing that, if modern engined steamers had been popularized in Shelley’s age, he would never have employed them for such symbols as we have been studying. Frail is every boat of his — whether it be a little bark piloted by gentle winds to a flowering isle as we see it in his lines written among the *Euganean Hills*, or it be the one driven out to the heart of the desolate ocean as we find it in the last stanza of *Adonais*. It looks so released of its own substantiality that there is no sense of weight left in it. One may freely wonder if it might not be another example of things made of such stuff as dreams are made of.

It is also remarkable that in Shelley’s world of imagery the airiness in

the aspects of things increases as the aspiring human soul soars higher into the heavens. His ideal realm of imagery is a region consisting chiefly of atmospheric *light*, *sound*, and *odour* even to the exclusion of *colour*, *taste* and all the other attributes pertaining to this actual world of corporal existence.

It is a garden where a violet ceases to be a violet but lives, just as

“Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory”,

(To—)

in “*the sense they quickens*”. Shelley tells us of the “*bright course*”<sup>(12)</sup> of a swan, but never of its “*ebon bill*”<sup>(13)</sup> to which Keats’ “*earnest*” inner eyes were fixed when he sat down at his desk to image out a line on the same bird.

“The *golden lightning* of the sunken sun  
O’er which clouds are *brightening*”

(To a Skylark)

is one of his favourite images, but he never sees a “*ball*” or a “*bubble*” of fire in the same heavenly body as Francis Thompson did in his wonderful “*Ode*”. — If

“Spring goeth all in *white*”

(Shorter Poems)

with the joyous Poet Laureate of the twentieth century, what Shelley feels in the autumnal sky are “*a harmony*” and “*a lustre*”.

Not that Shelley lacks the sense of *colour* in his poetry, — there are varieties of exquisite colour-symbols in it. Yet it is also an undeniable fact that even when he tells of

“*Pale, purple even*”

as in his famous line in the “*Skylark*”, the colours are so fine and airy, that they are going to “*melt*” around the flight of the airy figure of the little bird.

Another element closely connected with this unsubstantial airiness peculiar to his world of visual imagery is his sense of *odour*, or *fragrance*. It is not a

(12) *Alastor*

(13) *Sleep and Poetry* (Keats)

mere ornament in the structure of his poetical imagery any more than the sense of taste is in that of John Keats'. Even in such a work of twilight and gloom as *Alastor* one has only to get along several lines from the beginning to come across the first allusion to fragrance, —

“dewy morn and *odorous* noon” —.

(1. 5.)

Laon is resurrected with Cythna after death

“On the waved and golden sand  
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o’erentwined  
With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind  
*Breathed divine odour.*”

(*The Revolt of Islam* XII)

This is repeated again in “*Prometheus Unbound*” in the description of the nuptial nook of the hero and the heroine.

“There is a cave,  
All *overgrown with trailing odorous plants*,  
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,  
— And a fountain  
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.”

..... (III. —iii)

Considering what a banquet of fragrance is presented in his garden of the “Sensitive Plant”, it is scarcely surprising if Shelley’s rose, when it is deflowered by warm winds, gives out a scent which

“*Makes faint with too much sweet* those heavy-winged thieves.”

(*To a Skylark*)

Even a kiss, though in a metaphor, was to him a thing to be *breathed*. Spring *breathes* her sweet kisses. <sup>(14)</sup> Asia’s lips enkindle with their love “the *breath*” between them. <sup>(15)</sup> “*Aerial Kisses* of shapes that haunt thought’s wilderness” <sup>(16)</sup> are what his poet feeds on. Keats may tell us of his *delicious* <sup>(17)</sup> kisses and a “*pearly bite*”, <sup>(18)</sup> Shelley’s was an airy, fragrant kiss.

(14) *Alastor* (15) *Prometheus Unbound* II. v. (16) *Ib.* I.

(17) Keats’ favourite word. cf. “*The Sense of Taste in Keats’ Poetry*” (Y. Oda) — Journal of Shinshu Univ. 1955.

(18) *Endymion* IV.

Shelley enjoyed "fragrance" or "odour" *as such*, and it was not so much its *origin* or *material* as its *atmospheric effect* itself that attracted his attentions. To him this aesthetic value was always light and transparent as "the breath of the moist earth hovering around its unexpanded buds",<sup>(19)</sup> and so far as the ambient air was filled with this delightful sense of fragrance, he felt no curiosity about "whence" or "whither" it came or went. In contrast with this one may recall the significant lines in the "*Ode to a Nightingale*" where Keats' inquisitive mind was turned to the analysis of the sweet smell by which his senses were seized at the moment.<sup>(20)</sup> Shelley was never vexed by this kind of virtue — diligence — as bees are said to have instinctively discriminating the kind of honey they are engaged in collecting. ( — And, curiously enough, bees were Keats' favourite poetical pets. — ) In this respect, again, Shelley unconsciously finds himself among those poets who will pass a whole day gazing idly at things without heeding or seeing "what things they be".

Beauty, which, in the earnest eyes of Keats, might have been a truth treasured "a long age in the deep-delved earth", to be *tasted* by those whose heads were kept

"Cool-bedded in the flowering grass",<sup>(21)</sup>

was with Shelley nothing but

"The awful *shadow* of some unseen Power"

visiting this various world, his "vale of tears",

"with as inconstant wing

As summer winds that creep from flower to flower".<sup>(22)</sup>

"A fading coal"<sup>(23)</sup> is another symbolical name given by Shelley to the lyre of human heart whose strings are to be touched to melodious vibration by the genii of this wind of inspiration. And the coal must also remain a dark clod of earth for ever unless it gets itself free of all its material substantiality that tends to fix itself to the earth from which it was born and to which it is akin.

The meekness of all his poetical heroes, the airiness of his realm of

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(19) *Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples*

(20) *Ode to a Nightingale* (Keats) st. ii

(21) *Ode on Indolence* (Keats)

(22) *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*

(23) *The Defence of Poetry*

ideals, the fragrant lightness of the floating shadow, — if one phase of uniformity is to be recognized through all these varieties of imagery I am positive that his *frail*, little boat sailing *down* a stream with its entire self yielded up to the heart of the inspiring wind is a figure to be illumed up in the core of that one uniformity.

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In the eyes of a mid-Victorian critic, and also in those of the unvisionary spirits of our own age, the twentieth century, Shelley might be “an ineffectual angel beating in the void its luminous wings in vain”.<sup>(24)</sup> I do not deny that he was “ineffectual” though I reserve my right to wonder if “ineffectuality” can really be a slightest defect in human character on which any libellous picture of a person may reasonably be grounded. Yet this much I feel it is my duty to remark, — that he was too far above every mortal attribute to be supposed to have been carrying with him such an unwieldy part of himself (if it could really have been any part of himself) as “*a luminous wing*” to be *beaten* in the void. Nor should one look over the fact that, frail and ineffectual as his boat might have been, it was always piloted by the spirit of “*Pain*”<sup>(25)</sup> and that the man on board was a frail nerve so sensitive that no shadow of oppression could be imposed upon any remotest part of the human world without making it tremble.<sup>(26)</sup> *Frailty* of mind and *sincerity* of ardour were the two coexistent aspects of one purity of his aspiring soul.

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(24) *Essays in Criticism* — “Shelley” — (M. Arnold)

(25) *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills*

(26) *Julian and Maddalo*