

which prompted him to blend the choicest products of his thought and fancy with the fairest images borrowed from the earth on which he lived. He never willingly composed except under the impulse to body forth a vision of the love and light and life which was the spirit of the power he worshipped. This persistent upward striving, this earnestness, this passionate intensity, this piety of soul and purity of inspiration, give a quite unique spirituality to his poems. But it cannot be expected that the colder perfections of Academic art should be always found in them. They have something of the waywardness and negligence of nature, something of the *asymmetreia* we admire in the earlier creations of Greek architecture. That Shelley, acute critic and profound student as he was, could conform himself to rule and show himself an artist in the stricter sense, is, however, abundantly proved by *The Cenci* and by *Adonais*. The reason why he did not always observe this method will be understood by those who have studied his *Defence of Poetry*, and learned to sympathize with his impassioned theory of art.

Working on this small scale, it is difficult to do barest justice to Shelley's life or poetry. The materials for the former are almost overwhelmingly copious and strangely discordant. Those who ought to meet in love over his grave, have spent their time in quarrelling about him, and baffling the most eager seeker for the truth.¹ Through the turbid atmosphere of their recriminations it is impossible to discern the whole personality of the man. By careful comparison and refined manipulation of the biographical treasures at our disposal, a fair portrait of Shel-

¹ See *Lady Shelley v. Hogg*; *Trelawny v. the Shelley family*; *Peacock v. Lady Shelley*; *Garnett v. Peacock*; *Garnett v. Trelawny*; *McCarthy v. Hogg*, &c., &c.