

# The Sacred Immorality of Keats' Political Spirit in Shelley's *Adonais*

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Percy Bysshe Shelley is a prominent poet of the early 19th century Romantic Movement and a second generation of writers because his literary representation of the world is considered as more progressive rather than conventional. *Adonais* is a pastoral elegy in which Shelley despairingly mourns his friend, John Keats's tragic death. In spite of Keats's physical death in reality, Shelley symbolically portrays the tragic death as a possible triumph in *Adonais*. Although Adonais, the protagonist, dies miserably from a barbaric boar, through the power of visionary imagination, he is

supernaturally able to regain his eternal revival. From Shelley's perspective, there are crucial relationships between the mythological characters, Adonais and Keats—the very idea of their corporeal deaths paradoxically expresses spiritual revival or rebirth. With the main motif of divine immortality in *Adonais*, Shelley is assumed to assert his political intention as a radical poet during the Romantic period of England for the purpose of idealized revolt. Without doubt, Shelley's aggressive and eternal desire for taking over power is reflected in *Adonais*, manipulating the realistic fact of Keats's death. To some extent, Shelley subconsciously disguises his sense of political power by questioning Keats's death as a poetic frame of *Adonais*.

In the Romantic period, the ideological conflicts and disparities between the conservative and the liberal poets become greatly complicated after the failure of the French Revolution. While the conservative poets are likely to control rapid proliferation of progressive ideology, the liberal poets strongly propose that they have to change the society more idealistically by means of their supernatural poems. For the poets of the second

generation, their poems are sentimentally concerned with the fulfillment of political aims by indicating their burgeoning aspirations for power. Unfortunately, the conservative authority believes that the ideology of the second generation might possibly destroy and annihilate the dominant hierarchy, which might result in a largely ungovernable chaos. For this realistic reason, *Adonais* visibly suggests the political tension as well as Shelley's unchanging tendency to revive the radical agenda at that time.

### I. Conflict Between Shelley's Progressive Spirit and the Conservative Oppression

In *Adonais* Shelley's motivation to immortalize Keats's spirit is politically associated with his progressive idealism. For Shelley, the contemporary world of the Romantic era is evidently full of pain and agitation. Shelley enthusiastically demonstrates unsanctioned liberation from the conservative tyranny with the growing interest in "the movement for political

activity to reform movement" (Cameron 62). He has focused on the unavoidable relationship between poetry and politics, "attempting to explain poetry's role in effecting political change" (Franta 765). The conception of "poetic indirection—which extends the tie frame of poetry— suggests images of transcendence in *Adonais* ground for poetic authority" (Franta 765). Certainly, on way of drawing in such an explosive intrigue by the conservative domination at the same time, Shelley's progressive ideas challenged the canonical conservatism more and more. To some conservative critics, Shelley's unusual placement of Keats's Romantic works in the status of immortality seems to be either a ridiculous insult or a derisive debate to Keats's reputation at that time. They think Shelley's *Adonais* is not appropriate as an aesthetic criterion. Nevertheless, Shelley's exertion towards justifiable treatment seems to be seen as a convincing desire to recreate his own poetry, which unveils that Keats is killed by a negatively conservative review of *Endymion*. Shelley presumed the critic would be Southey. For this reason, Shelley's passionate mind to defend Keats leads him to an attack on

the canonical authority for lessening their monstrous power. In the message of Shelley's 1820 *Defence of Poetry*, he implicitly shows "at one famous moment to have Keats's poem in his mind" (Everest 245):

A Poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness,  
and sing to Cheer its own solitude with sweet  
sounds; his auditors are As men entranced by  
the melody of an unseen musician Who feel that  
they are moved and softened, yet know not  
Whence or why (Stillinger 843).

Remarkably, Shelley's substantial decision to cast his lament for Keats's death caused an insolvable conflict between artist and society. Thus, the sacrificial death of Keats is the potential reason for Shelley to courageously fight against the orthodox convention.

For Shelley, Keats's death as well as illnesses becomes the direct motivation for creating his *Adonais*. It is perceived that Shelley admires *Adonais* to commemorate his friend, Keats's death; their literary friendship plays a pivotal role in stimulating Shelley for establishing *Adonais*. Historically, it is well known that the intimate relationship between Shelley and Keats

fundamentally makes it clear for them to share an equivalent political propensity with skepticism. Whereas Shelley's poetic feature is assertive and extrovert, Keats shows an inward and introvert tendency in his poems; their distinguished attitude of critique make an empirical distinction. For Shelley, Keats is eligible enough to be judged as the highest genius who dies young. However, Keats sympathetically encounters his early death because of the conservative oppression. Shelley seems not to admit the poetic failure, which is occurred from Keats's death. Instead of being frustrated by the physical death of Keats's body, Shelley intentionally supports his colleague as an immortal hero. As a way of meditating from imaginative perspective, Shelley assumes that the meaning of Keats's literary spirit should not be abandoned, but rather it will be remembered forever even after his death. In this way, Shelley's progressive mind certainly tries to be released from the extensive "enslavement of orthodoxy" (Arditi 2).

Based on Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, his poetic imagination virtually entails infinite echoes for the eternity of life. Given Shelley's romantic

perspective, the repeated cycle of rebirth and death allude the central allegory for Keats' death in *Adonais*. In other words, Shelley makes a "metaphysical defense" in *Adonais* (Scrivener 759). Through compliment of Keats's death, Shelley points out that poets are going to be alienated from the society, as a "spiritual activity," writing poetry might bring about ingredients of "new possibility" in *Defence of Poetry* (Scrivener 759). For this reason, Shelley politically intends to ritualize Keats's mortality; for the purpose of progressive rebellion in the Romantic era, Shelley tends to advocate Keats's death. Shelley "dedicates himself his poetical composition solely to the direct enforcement of reform" (Matthews 567). In regards to the symbolic meaning of death, both poets try to predict a more idealized Romantic society despite the desperate failure of the French Revolution. Shelley urges that the serious tragedy of life and society in the Romantic period should be reformed.

Shelley's unfulfilled aim for reawakening the world is potentially witnessed in *Adonais*. Because Shelley is categorized as the most radical and hypersensitive poet of the Romantic era, the way

his vision of world and poetry is described in *Adonais* is implicitly sentimental. Perhaps, for Shelley, the literary genre of poetry indirectly functions as the politically progressive action against the imperious sovereignty: his growing resentment and independence against hypocrisy of the conservative authority. Since Shelley thinks that Keats's death is closely associated with the engagement of the conservative political power, Shelley illuminates the defensible pretension of Keats's death in *Adonais*. That is, the symbolical representation of *Adonais* justifies the strong resistance against the social pressure of conventional political authority by transforming the initial images of Utopia. Indeed, Shelley protested for political justice, overwhelmed with a fascinated passion for reforming and compromising the world. In *Defence of Poetry*, Shelley claims that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (Stillinger 850). He is essentially a persuasive believer in universal goodness by using poetry that "is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth" (Stillinger 842). From Shelley's point of view, Keats's spirit supernaturally remains eternal with imaginative conviction and belief in *Adonais*.



Shelley believes that his symbolization of Keats's death in *Adonais* can become a pervasive evasion of reality in the Romantic era.

At the beginning of *Adonais*, Shelley purposely reinforces the classical Grecian adaptation of the pastoral elegy for lamentation of Adonais' death: "myth offers Shelley a renewed challenge to explore and dramatize the irreconcilable affiliation of man's dual nature" (Wasserman 571). Through the poetic form of elegy, Shelley dramatizes both graceful honor and grief over Keats's death. In fact, Shelley mistakenly thinks that Keats's death is driven from a vituperative denunciation of Keats's *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review* (Stillinger 822). Because Keats himself is unfortunately a very sensitive and weak person, after hearing the severe judgment of his own poetry, he might feel great despair. It is assumed that Keats's trembled feeling accelerates his early death. In other words, the politically intentional and barbaric critique is the main cause for Keats's sympathetic death for Shelley. Considering the historically repeated unrest in the Romantic period after the French Revolution, the conservative authority might feel fear of

overpowered subversion under the radical influence of second generation poets. For the purpose of weakening the emerging power of progressive discourse in the Romantic era, the awfully conservative representative of *Quarterly Review* silently attacks Keats's poem to transcend the aggressive power of young generation. Based on this historical actuality, *Adonais* is argued a literary means of "another defense of imagination, an angry protest against the mistreatment of Keats at the hand of hostile critics" (Scrivener 753). For this reason, for Shelley, the death of Keats is also connected with the great loss of idealization in the English society in the Romantic period. In need of such justification, Shelley seemingly reshapes the identity of Keats with a social victim. So, through *Adonais*, Shelley publicly attacks the detractors in order to magnify "cultural reaction of murderous insensitivity," since Keats is worthwhile member of the human community in the Romantic era (Scrivener 753). Therefore, the poetic speaker in *Adonais* encourages Urania to participate in lamenting Keats's death presented by Adonais' death. In this sense, in the opening scene, Shelley begins his elegy "with the fact of

death, with weeping, and with a claim of the value of the life that has been lost" (Haggerty 386):

I weep for Adonais—he is dead!  
 O, weep for Adonais! Though our tear  
 Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head  
 And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years  
 To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,  
 And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me (Shelley, 1-6)

Although Keats is dead, Shelley excessively clarifies that Keats's spiritual works will be remembered eternally; while Adonais recovers his spiritual revival, the critic will "self-destruct" from the social evil (Scrivener 753).

## II. Platonic Idealism Against the Evils of Society

Shelley was philosophically influenced by Platonic idealism. Plato suggested two different states of the world: the Real World and the Idea, the shadow of the naughty world. According to Plato, the Idea is a more idealistic sphere because the Real World is full of unexpected malice. Shelley preferred the Platonic attitude and blamed

the evils of his society. Shelley's Platonic mysticism is resulted from his constant disappointment and debasement of official authority in the contradictory Romantic era. Shelley seemed to give up "his early hopes and locate[d] the ideal in the after life" (Scrivener 753). What Shelley subjectively adheres to his utopian world is the absolute anarchy that is innately free from the disillusionment of conservative standards or values. For this reason, Shelley became so "nonconformist" that he rejected to accept any form of ordered "discipline." He normally showed a predilection for anarchism. In fact, Shelley was not only greatly frustrated by the contemporary political reality but also dogmatic theology, which leads to introspective searching into the causes of historical misery. There are discrepant dichotomies in reality: good and evil, preserver and destroyer, liberal and conservative, the spirit of freedom and tyranny, pleasure and pain. However, despite the divided aspects of the reality, Shelley was against the skeptical view of French Revolution. Shelley still longed for the idealized society through marginal and synthetic power; he directly dreamt of Utopia in *Adonais*, transposing that the "Romantic trust in

the imagination" suggests the possible solution to a better world (Ware 551). By adapting to the Platonic approach, Shelley sufficiently looked forward to seeing the eternity not in reality, but rather, in supernatural place and time: the Grecian mythology. As a result, in *Adonais*, Shelley can passionately appreciate that the soul can be released from the physical body. From Shelley's understanding, only after separating from the body of human, the soul returns to the hometown of "innocent soul." Although the dead body is changed into mere dust, the soul will live forever":

Dust to dust! But the pure spirit shall flow  
 Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
 Through time and change, unquenchably the  
 same(Shelley, 338-341)

Shelley notably argues that after death, soul including spirit must be broadly freed from the body for retaining the triumph of spirit. Thus, for Shelley, only death originally enables to give a specified solution to the realistic surveillance at this time.

Shelley is regarded as a "philosophical

atheist" poet since the ideology of the Romantic period is no longer dependent upon religious power (Arditi 4). According to Arditi, Shelley's attitude towards the canonical texts of the Bible was no different from "delusion of Christianity" (4). Shelley has to acknowledge that his paradise cannot be attainable in the suspicious reality. This is why, as a utopian poet, Shelley principally plays as a poetic negotiator between the political ideal and reality by destructing the evil complexity in realistic vision. For this reason, in *Adonais*, Shelley explicitly represents Keats's triumphant death in the classical realm of imagination, symbolism and imagery in order to induce Keats's eternal immortality; Shelley "idealized and universalized Keats through the form of symbolic identification with the mythological character," *Adonais* (Wilcox 19). Shelley simultaneously deduces the necessity to exaggerate the poetic promise of his subject. For this reason, he expresses evocative and extended allusiveness to literary tradition and classical culture to represent the value of his idealism by depending on this specific approach. In particular, Shelley aesthetically combines the divine goddess, Venus,

as Adonais' mother by changing the classical role of Venus, as Adonais' lover; "He stresses the connection between the divine intuitions of the imagination and poetry" (Ware 550). It is assumed that Shelley's feeling is creatively inspired by the motif of "mother-son" with his imaginative mind. In this manner, Shelley delineates how Adonais' mother struggles to define his son's heroic death as the undeniable immortality in *Adonais* (Wilcox 21).

The narrative unambiguously presents the wicked contemporary society as "in darkness"; the world implies concession of ugliness and brutality. It is both predatory and destructive that threatens the fragile human beings' freedom. Shelley's realistic world means "the Jupiter-world where Paradise is lost and inaccessible" (Reiman 758). Here, Shelley begins to refashion the mane of Venus as Urania. It is speculated that the structured setting of Urania's "Paradise" refreshes an idealized place where Adonais can either revive or get an endless life again: in *Adonais*, the figure of Urania distinctively embodies the mobilizing character who offers a mode of "immortality through its continual successive reincarnations"

(Everest 241). The fact that the identity of Shelley's Urania is a mother reminds of the significant meaning for Adonais' immortality. Under the convention of English poetry, Urania is shown as the archetype of goddess who looks for comfort after the bereavement. She is about to go on her journey to Keats's solemn tomb because she is anxiously aroused by all the echoes. The fundamental frame is similarly described in *Adonais*:

Where were thou mighty Mother, when he lay,  
 When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies  
 In darkness? Where was Iorn Urania  
 'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise  
 She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,  
 Rekindled all the fading melodies,  
 With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,  
 He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.  
 (Shelley, 10-18)

However, Urania's qualified position in *Adonais* is quite discrete from the real mythical status. Unlike the authentic muse of astronomy for a motivation, Shelley's Urania represents the ideal existence of pure love with strength and liberty. In contrast, Adonais shows realistic weakness and constraints.



It is true that Shelley is greatly influenced by Platonic and Neoplatonic imagery. In his *Defence of Poetry*, Shelley demonstrates that Plato continues to be honored as the best poet who guides the body of thought. In this sense, Shelley thinks that the idea of Keats's death should be reestablished as a fixed star in the constellation of the great poets like Plato for the immortality of Keats's spiritual works.

The poetic speaker continuously assures a change of emotion from appealing lamentation to reposing consolation of Adonais' death. In the beginning, the desperate desire for woe is described because of forceful loss of Adonais. However, although Adonais is dead in that "our tears thaw not the frost which bind so dear a head," the narrative articulates "an echo and a light unto eternity" in order to insist upon his immortality. For Shelley, the memories and hopes of Keats's great spirit should not be lost; it could be presented as an entirely validate evocation. In this sense, Shelley's narrative asserts symbolic elements of the firm belief that "the death of Keats must be acknowledged, must be spoken, for this hope to be realized"; "a death must be

spoken" before a ceremonial consolation (Haggerty 386):

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!  
 Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!  
 Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed  
 Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep  
 Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;  
 For he is gone, where all things wise and fair  
 Descend:—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep  
 Will yet restore him to the vital air;  
 Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair  
 Shelley,19–27)

Although here the central narrative comforts Urania for mourning for Adonais' death, he is likely to modulate that Urania is surely the important character for Adonais' stirring revival, namely his stubborn turning into the ritual immortality: "death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair."

After that, Shelley elucidates the magical process how Adonais is endowed to regain his revival from Urania. Through the activities of memory, Adonais is expected to be reborn in the living imagination. From this, Shelley eagerly emphasizes the fact that the true nature of imagination itself has a potentially transformative

power to change the world and even life; Nothing can die forever. In fact, Adonais refers to a classical figure who is associated with "a vegetation spirit" in the cycle of death and rebirth in nature as the feature of immortality (Everest 238). Venus loves a young boy, Adonais. Unfortunately, Adonais is killed by a devouring savage boar. At first, he is thought as a paradigm of tragic hero. Luckily, Venus' tears can rescue his life though; he has to return to life only in summer due to the divine goddess' love. For the rest of the year with Persephone, Adonais is inevitably doomed to sleep on flowers in the underworld. However, he can sleep as an immortal being. In this way, Shelley parallels the fate of Keats's works which are ultimately reabsorbed into the "vitality of Nature" and whose spirits live on which the "enduring dead" (Everest 239). The symbolic adaptation of this source articulates that in Shelley's *Adonais*, Keats's works can last even after his death within the wishfully "hallucinatory" form of traditional Greek effect in regards to immortality (Haggerty 287).

Interestingly, like Shelley, Keats has the positive thought about the potential notion of death

because of realistic pain. In Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," the speaker clearly prefers to death since his life is extremely suffering. For this reason, the speaker hopes to become like a free and happy nightingale without realistic concern:

My hear arches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
 My sense, as though a hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
 But being too happy in thine happiness (Keats, 1-6).

Indeed, Keats' s "cool vision" of reality in the Romantic period is shown in his "Ode to a Nightingale." Just like the nightingale, Keats transparently reveals his personal desire to be unbridled from the cruelty in reality through death:

Darkling I listen; and, for many time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Call'd him soft names in many mused rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath;  
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy!  
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain  
 To thy high requiem become a sod (Keats, 51-60).

Unlike Shelley, Keats's "Negative Capability" accounts for his accepting the reality. For Keats, it is difficult for him to heal or cure the suffering of human lives. It means that Keats's Romantic Movement must have altered to be passive after getting awareness of poisoning power in the real world. Keats unconsciously manifests the realistic limitation:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Not what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonal month endows (42-46)

That is, dealing with the social problem through art solely is hard to compromise in reality. However, Keats's intellectual maturity implies that his innocent spirit is not easily subordinated by the conservative authority that intends to deprive him of spiritual life. He perceives the external fierce destruction even in Nature.

### III. Immortality Against the Realistic Misery

Concerning the connection between Shelley's

*Adonais* and Keats's "Ode to Nightingale," Keats already asserts his immortality by way of Nightingale that symbolically represents himself. Indeed, in this ode, Keats gleefully intensifies his desire to assimilate to the state of the nightingale because of its freedom:

Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird!  
 No hungry generations tread thee down;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn:  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Or perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn (Keats, 61-70)

This poem explicitly explores the generic difference between mortality and immortality. From Keats's view, the birds' true nature is explicable to its immortality. For this reason, if "the nightingale's song implicates a symbol of lyric poetry, the immortal Bird refers to the Poet" (Kappel 270). By comparing himself with the nightingale, Keats self-consciously asserts the self-description of human immortality in order to overcome the realistic misery. Keats's immortality displays his

ability to find any suitable alternative way of confronting problems in the world.

From an ontological perspective, Keats's emphasis of the bird's natural status reflects his desire of immortality. There is an ontological disparity between the poet and the nightingale because the poet is human and the nightingale embodies natural existence. Indeed, the bird in Keats's "Ode to Nightingale" is essentially "oblivious to death" even though normal human beings "painfully aware of its woe" ( Kappel 272). For this reason, it is possible for the bird not to worry about the termination of its joy and to preserve its happy condition. In order to "encompass the infinite," the poet urgently seeks to the bird's state of obliviousness by forgetting his own present reality (Kappel 274):

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
 ....  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow (Keats, 21-30)

Shelley's central theme in *Adonais*, the immortality

of Keats's spirit, is definitely influenced by Keats's famous "Ode to a Nightingale." "Ode to a Nightingale" and *Adonais* symbolically offer some insights to be paralleled because of the equivalent themes and interests they share:

Most musical of mourners, weep again!  
Lament anew, Urania!—He died  
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,  
Blind, old, and lonely, when country's pride,  
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,  
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite  
Of lust and blood: he went, unterrified,  
Into the gulph of death: but his clear Sprite  
Yet reign o'er earth: the third among the sons of light  
(Shelley, 27–36)

Perhaps, Shelley confirms that Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" is the very poem that predicts Keats's immortality after Keats's immediate death. Just as Keats allows the bird nightingale to live in the immortal existence, in *Adonais* Shelley transforms Keats's fated and lonely mortality into immortality of a higher beauty. It is certain that in Shelley's mind, Keats's death can be paradoxically triumphed.

Similarly, in *Adonais*, Shelley wants to display the immortality of Keats's creative spirit



so that with his imagination, he will reform the enormity of the real world that is characterized as the errant material realm. While Adonais' death is tragedy, Shelley's imaginative hypothesis aims to escape from the disturbance of the natural world and to recuperate the personified resurrection for immortality. That is, in Shelley's poetic power, "the failure of the hero" comes to 'The Triumph of Life' as immortality (O'Neil 37):

May imply a doubt on Shelley's own part  
 About the ills that haunted him. Life, he may  
 Have felt, is so inexplicable and so much ill  
 Seems to spring from what we once thought  
 Good and even superlatively good, that we  
 Can have no certainty as to the ultimate ill  
 Of what seems, and even haunts us as (p. 453).

For this reason, Shelley attempts to search for the seemingly reversed atmosphere, the festive atmosphere of a revolutionary age. It is Shelley who is the typically progressive entity of this immortal influence and its effects. In a mode of indirect discourse, Shelley seeks to evoke the nature of young generation's vision, which is represented by Keats's poetic works. Thus, Shelley's view of the world is converged into "the

glorious power of immortality" in general view of poetry (O'Neil 40):

The world to him is a melancholy place, a  
 'dim vast vale of tears,' illuminated in flashes  
 By the light of hidden but glorious power  
 Nor is this power, as that favourite metaphor  
 Would imply, wholly outside the world. It  
 Works within as a soul contending with  
 Obstruction and striving to penetrate and  
 Transforms the whole mass (p. 152)

The immortal power is a literary term used in Shelley's poetry for a force located inside and beyond human beings to examine his inescapable political discourse.

To strengthen the excuse of Keats's obligatory immortality, Shelley expresses the desperate feeling of sorrow and confusion after the loss of the great poet in *Adonais*. Although the love and power that form the young poet's imagination is gone, all natural processes intangibly respond to the sympathetic grief to long for his creatively spiritual imagination as a way of hope for ineffable immortality:

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished  
 The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,

Like a pale flower by some sad maiden chrishted,  
 And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;  
 Most musical mourner, weep anew!  
 Thy extreme hope, the lovelist and the last,  
 The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew  
 Died one the promise of the fruit, is waste;  
 The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast. (Shelley, 46–54)

The first part of Shelley's elegy ends with the speaker's paralysis of sorrow, fear, and despair. Because of the never-ending continuum of severe pain, "Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow, /Month follow month wit woe, and year wake year to sorrow" (188–9). By invoking the "mighty Mother" of poets, he finds out her dormant power to restore the sublime spirit of Adonais. Urania's sympathetic reaction matures the fading poetic spirit, as the material world is awakened by the creative energy. He experiences and emotional collapse. Urania awakes regardless of the intense despair:

"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise  
 Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,  
 A wound more fierce than his with tears and sights."  
 .....

Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung  
 From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.  
 (Shelley, 191–8)

Through the speaker's repeated outburst of pain, Urania can recognize the "Sorrow and fear" (203). In order to accomplish Adonais' immortality, Urania will restore not only herself but also his divine spirit. It is an occasion of a mutual dramatization of events although Adonais' body becomes relentlessly lifeless after his death. For healing the wounds of suppressed despair, Urania decides to furnish a consolatory wisdom that possibly defeats the restricted reality of death.

It is important to understand Urania's sing of directing reversal for Adonais' immortality. The perplexing atmosphere from tragic mortality starts to obscure force: "Death/ Shamed by the presence of that living Might/ Blushed to annihilation" (217-9). Of course, Adonais cannot return to life in reality because he is dead as a victim in the time of nightmare that governs the imaginative world. However, Shelley endows Urania the position of protector and "mighty Mother" who can grant the poet's death a new kind of meaningful life:

Of thee, my Adonais! I would give  
All that I am to be as thou now art!  
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

(Shelley 232-234)

Surprisingly, Urania's wisdom has the flexible power that can be expanded beyond the temporal world. By removing the terror of Adonais' death, she profoundly elicits the possible hope for the realization of immortality in the destructive reality. If there were Urania's supernatural power, Adonais would face eternal death.

Similarly, Urania's consistent metaphorical account suggests the fate of the poet within a hostile world to heighten Adonais' creative spirit:

The sun come forth, and many reptiles spawn;  
 He sets, and each ephemeral insect then  
 Is gathered into death without a dawn,  
 And the immortal stars awake again;  
 So is it in the world of living men:  
 A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight  
 Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when  
 It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light  
 Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.  
 (Shelley, 253-61)

In this section, Shelley emphasizes the fact that the poet's spiritual light cannot become extinct even though in the temporal world, the light is sinking. Absolutely, Shelley intends to recover Adonais'

"supernatural metamorphosis" for the atemporal existence of "immortal stars" (Becht 206). The speaker shows the inspiring echoes of Adonais' eternity in the intolerably hideous world:

The splendours of the firmament of time  
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;  
Like stars to their appointed height they climb  
And death is a low mist which cannot blot  
The brightness it may veil. (Shelley, 388-92)

Thanks to Urania's wisdom, there occurs the surprising alteration from the mood of despair into the "enlightened consolation" for the immortality of Keats's works (Becht 206). The permanence of art is set against the ravages of time through the sight of a viable structure in *Adonais*.

Within the method of isolation, the speaker is designated to keep his distance from the phenomenon of the disappearing poetic spirit that spurs Adonais' immortality. In particular, the influence of Urania's entrance ambitiously regenerates liberation of the speaker's mind until his paralyzed despair is appeased for emotional tranquility. From Urania's perspective, it is possible to blur the strict mortal illusions. Whereas

the poet's spirit has faded from the realistic viewpoint, his pure spirit can be justified forever in the "eternal life of the Neoplatonic One" (Becht 207):

The pure spirit shall flow  
 Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
 Through time and change, unquenchably the same.  
 (Shelley, 338-41)

Even though there exists a distinctive difference between the natural creativity and extinguished imagination, the young poet has his own interactive ability to create the supreme love of great nature:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
 His voice in all her music, from the moan  
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird:  
 He is a presence to be felt and known  
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move  
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own;  
 Which wields the world with never wearied love,  
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above. (Shelley, 370-8)

Although Shelley implicitly expresses horrible anxiety because of Adonais' realistic failure, from

the speaker's keen perspective, there is a place for "The inheritors of unfulfilled renown" and it is among these "kings of thought" that Adonais can take his celestial throne of his immortality after enduring the metaphysical process. The light of the poet's imagination and reputation has been transmuted into the light of "dazzling immortality." In this sense, the poet has become a part of a heavenly reality where he had apprehended through his poetic imagination to be remained immortal: "He is a portion of the loveliness/ Which once he made more lovely" (379-80).

#### IV. Conclusion: Hopeful Vision of the World

Moreover, the speaker comes to discern not only Adonais' immortality but also himself before Urania's sympathetic response. His own emotional and spiritual conditions are connected with the particular significance that the poet's fading imagination has had throughout the poem. He discovers that he, like the "pardlike Spirit" of part two, is a "dying lamp," a poet whose imaginative powers have ceased to glow. It is apparent that he



has been bound up with his emotional despair, with his speculative contemplation of mutability and death and his special powers as a poet have stopped rebelling. Although the speaker realizes the continuous images of Adonais' immortality, however, he cannot but suffer from the temporal and spiritual decay that Adonais undergoes in death:

'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep  
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife,  
 And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife  
 Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay  
 Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief  
 Convulse us and consume us day by day  
 And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living  
 clay. (Shelley, 345– 51)

His mind is misdirected towards arousing "fear and grief" because of his own loss of imaginative power. Nevertheless, Adonais is a fortunate protagonist because he is provocatively predestined to live in the secure state of his celestial existence. He will not have to mourn "A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain." Because "his spirit self had ceased to burn," death would not have exulted his feelings of horror and despair.

That is, "the Sire of an immortal strain" has feared death.

However, as an allegorical prophet, the speaker's previous anxieties are consistently released from debilitating fear and sorrow due to his resolute reverie. In other words, not only is his imaginative power returning to penetrate through the confusions of the temporal world, but also he can see the hopeful vision of the world with exultation and joy: "No more let Life divide what Death can join together" (477). His spirit is not cold. Rather, it glows with the reflection of Beauty and Love:

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,

...

Which burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of

The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,

Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality. (Shelley, 478-86)

The obvious movement from sorrow and despair to a consolatory knowledge of reality corresponds with a glorifying shift in thought and feeling. Thanks to Urania's insights, the dejected poet has finally transformed into an inspired poet: "The breath whose might I have invoked in song/

Descends on me' (487-8). The depressed speculation on the characteristics of life and death has acquired an active imaginative construction of "the inmost veil of Heaven" (493).

In conclusion, *Adonais* is the poem that Shelley wrote after recognizing the realistic restraints of mortality. Shelley might acknowledge that in reality it is extremely difficult to satisfy his idealistic aspiration. From his critical response to reality, Shelley introduces the theme of death and eternity after death. Just as Adonais' soul and spirit fundamentally go beyond the limited range of his physical body, Keats's compassionate spirit can supernaturally remain in physical world. Especially, Shelley liberally treats his *Adonais* as a consciously exposed manifestation of realistic antipathy or a confirmation of discreditable orthodox by clinging to his Utopia. Shelley has a genuine understanding of conscious process and imaginative powers in the context of *Adonais*. On Shelley's view, with Beauty and finally with that ideal, supernal Beauty and Perfection, progressive ideology will prevail within the hegemonic ideology concerning the Romantic society. Rearranging earthly forms of death and through suggestive

imagery and music, Shelley's *Adonais* performs to provide the eternal Beauty and Divinity of Keats's central spirit wit. Shelley is imaginatively impelled to depict ultimate annihilation, as evidence that death is merely contemplated as a part of prelude to Divine process and perfection. For this reason, *Adonais* is crucially an active allegory chorusing Shelley's arena in his imaginative mind.

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Abstract

**The Sacred Immortality of Keat's Political  
Spirit in Shelley's *Adonais***

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In the Romantic period, the ideological conflicts between the conservative and the liberal poets become greatly complicated after the failure of the French Revolution. The liberal poets like Shelley strongly propose that they have the change the society more idealistically by means of their poems. Shelley might acknowledge that in reality it is extremely difficult to satisfy his idealistic aspiration. *Adonais* is the poem which Shelley's burgeoning aspirations for the political power is deeply embedded in, though it is well known as a pastoral elegy for Keats's tragic death. He subconsciously disguises his sense of political power by questioning Keats's death in *Adonais*. In spite of Keats's physical death in reality, Shelley symbolically portrays the tragic death as a political triumph in *Adonais*, which means the realization of idealized revolt. In

addition, Shelley's aggressive and eternal desire for taking over the political power is also reflected in *Adonais*. Especially, Shelley liberally treats his *Adonais* as a consciously exposed manifestation of realistic antipathy or a confirmation of discreditable orthodox by clinging to his Utopia. The Utopia that Shelley in *Adonais* aspires for can be said to be what he wishes to realize politically as a poet of revolution. Though Shelley's political aim was not realized in the reality, his political aspiration for the Utopia is fulfilled in his imaginative poem.

**Key Words:** *Adonais*, immortality, political power, Platonic idealism, imagination

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