

INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

- 1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.**
- 2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.**
- 3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.**
- 4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.**
- 5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.**

University Microfilms International

**300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 USA
St. John's Road, Tyler's Green
High Wycombe, Bucks, England HP10 8HR**

7900773

CHAMEDES, PETER

"FOR THE EYE ALTERING ALTERS ALL": THE
DIALECTIC OF PERCEPTION IN THE NARRATIVE
POETRY OF KEATS.

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, PH.D., 1978

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

© 1978

PETER CHAMEDES

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

"FOR THE EYE ALTERING ALTERS ALL":
THE DIALECTIC OF PERCEPTION IN THE NARRATIVE POETRY OF KEATS

by

PETER CHAMEDES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1978

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Sept. 1, 1978
date

J. H. Ridway
Chairman, Examining Committee

Sept. 1, 1978
date

Allen Mandelbaum
Executive Officer

Thomas McFarland
Morris Dickstein

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

ABSTRACT

Keats criticism is characterized by an emphasis upon the poet's loss of faith in the visionary imagination. Such a development is seen to lead either to a worldly acceptance of human insufficiency or to a highlighting of the pathos of the mortal condition; irony and pity thus appear as the vital touchstones of the verse. Keats's treatment of perception -- the contrary ways of seeing and the dilemma of being seen -- is emphasized in this study. Perceptual opposition is a central principle of characterization and of structure in each of the major narrative poems. At the same time, the reader's apprehension is manipulated through the use of point of view and authorial commentary, strategies which apparently are related to Keats's own concern with "being seen," the desire to be read sympathetically and to be recognized as a significant poet. Finally, the status accorded to poetry itself within the four narratives is vital to the dialectic of perception. As the potentiality for attaining an inclusive imaginative vision is explored, Keats increasingly predicates such a capability upon the creative construal of "things as they are."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Professor George Ridenour for all his assistance and encouragement during the writing of this dissertation -- and for the deep love of Romantic poetry which inspires his teaching. I wish to thank Professor Thomas McFarland and Professor Morris Dickstein for their careful reading of the manuscript and their cogent advice. Finally, I am thankful to my friends for their support -- and, in particular to Giuliana for her help and warm concern.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I. <u>ENDYMION</u> : PERCEPTION AND IDENTITY.....	6
CHAPTER II. <u>ISABELLA</u> : PERCEPTION AND NEGATION.....	80
CHAPTER III. <u>THE EVE OF ST. AGNES</u> : PERCEPTION AND SPACE.....	148
CHAPTER IV. <u>LAMIA</u> : PERCEPTION AND DRAMA.....	227

To my parents

INTRODUCTION

The standard reading of Keats emphasizes the poet's maturing recognition that "the fancy cannot cheat so well." In consequence of this loss of faith in the visionary, Keats turns toward an acceptance of the compromised mortal condition. The forsaking of imagination for objective reality is reflected in a poetry of experience that embodies the necessary, if reluctant, adult acclimatization to "the world." If an acceptance of human insufficiency is not proffered as the key to Keats's moral/poetic development, then the pathos of unaccommodating man whose desire exceeds his limited grasp may receive primary critical stress. Irony and pity would thus appear as the vital touchstones of Keats's verse.

I approach the narrative poems from a very different perspective. My interpretation places in the foreground Keats's focus upon perception -- the contrary ways of seeing and the dilemma of being seen. Each of the four major narratives is analyzed in detail as a dialectic world of contrasting vision-intensities, in which the perceptual opposition between and within personae is of central moment. The capacity for achieving and maintaining an inclusive imaginative vision

is found to remain Keats's fundamental concern. Such a capability is predicated upon a breadth of experiential knowledge and, to an expanding extent as we move chronologically from poem to poem, upon the constitutive act of the perceiving mind, which creatively construes and thus humanizes "things as they are."

The forthcoming analyses are centered upon the opposition of contrary modes of seeing, as embodied both in narrative structure and characterization. We find that the poems are disposed formally into spaces of counterview. On a second level of organization, discrete personae with antithetical perspectives are juxtaposed or brought together in confrontation, while individual personae themselves pass through an internal dialectic of perceptual development. The way in which the reader's apprehension is manipulated, particularly through the use of point of view and authorial commentary, is also considered in this study. Not unrelated to such manipulation, we discover, is Keats's own concern with "being seen" -- that is, the complementary desires to be read sympathetically and to be recognized as a successful poet. Relevant as well at certain points in our investigation is the perspective in which poetry itself appears to be apprehended within the narrative -- the status accorded to imagination in the creative transfiguration of the phenomenal.

We proceed in a chronological fashion, offering in Chapter I an interpretation of Endymion as the dual quest of the protagonist and the fledgling poet alike for perceptual identity. By way of an extended and ranging scenario, Endymion comes to surmount the divisive apprehension of mortal and immortal, flesh and spirit, as exclusive and incompatible states. He achieves at the close of his story an integration of vision, an inclusivity of insight, which is marked by the union with Cynthia/Indian Maiden, seen to be a single figure of desire. By way of the extended composition of Endymion, entered into as a trial of imaginative powers, Keats would generate his professional identity; he would perceive himself and be recognized as an accomplished poet. The published preface to Endymion, however, may be taken to reveal a darkening of outlook in reference to this self-creative enterprise, a deepening consciousness of the burden entailed by exposing one's work as the object of critical regard.

In Keats's second major narrative, analyzed in Chapter II of this study, the weight of being seen is found to assume central significance both in thematic and stylistic terms. In place of the exclusively interior landscape of Endymion, where a wholeness of vision is attained without external impediment, Isabella presents a conflict of

antithetical visions that fragments the Erotic oneness of regard with which the earlier poem closes. External revision appears to exert its influence as well upon the style and structure of Isabella, in which the feature of negation predominates as Keats adopts a variously distant and schematic approach to the tale he is rewriting after Boccaccio.

In Chapter III, The Eve of St. Agnes is approached in terms of space and perception. For Keats utilizes with considerable success the resource of spatializing the different characters' modes of vision, setting the rich insight of the lovers against the fearful, insentient, and ascetic perspectives of the other personae. St. Agnes is a narrative of juxtaposed regard. The pressure of being seen, although cited at various points in the tale, proves tangential to the lovers, who are permitted to sidestep all confrontation and thus escape quite unnoticed. Spatialization extends to a parabolic structure of vision by which the reader is led into a sympathetic apprehension of the favored personae and subsequently distanced from such affective involvement. A particularly accomplished performance, St. Agnes would seem to reflect its author's posture of confidence -- almost the posture of disregard -- in relation to the critical review of the poem.

The centrality of perception in Keats's narrative poetry finds its culminating instance, its most vital embodiment, in the tale of Lamia, to which Chapter IV of this study is devoted. Lamia focusses upon the conflict between Erotic and moral vision, dramatizing in its climax an overt confrontation between these antithetical perspectives. As in Isabella, and unlike the presentation in St. Agnes, the significance of being seen is neither minimized nor evaded. Lamia reveals, however, that the dialectic of perception is rather a product of internal than of external politics. Despite an absence of easy solutions to the dilemma of perceptual conformity and instability, a qualified space of affirmation is found for art and for imaginative vision.

CHAPTER I

ENDYMION:

PERCEPTION AND IDENTITY

"There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions -- but they are not Souls till they acquire Identities, till each one is personally itself . . . How then are Souls to be made? . . . the World or Elemental space is suited for the proper action of Mind and Heart on each other for the purpose of forming the Soul or Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity."

Keats

"All knowledge takes its place within the horizons opened up by perception."

Merleau-Ponty

The quest for an embracing vision of the self impels the narrative of Endymion on the complementary levels of theme and reflexive content. In the adventures of his persona, Keats portrays a richly various opening of perception. Through his act of extended composition, to be reviewed by "men who are competent to look, and do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature,"¹ Keats would achieve recognition as an accomplished poet. We shall first engage in a close explication of the text, focussing upon the perceptual development of Endymion. Thereafter, we shall examine the reflexive dimension of being seen, in particular as it obtrudes upon the introduction and the Preface to Endymion.

Rather than beginning his poem with the persona's quest for integrated vision, Keats chooses instead to place this tale within a frame of sympathetic reference. The introduction to Endymion (lines 1-62) posits a monistic cosmos infused with the vital rhythm of increase native to Erotic perception. The "green world" (l.16) intertwines with "the Heart's affections and the Truth of Imagination,"² offering a plenitude of beautiful things to enlighten consciousness, to "move away the pall/ From our dark spirits"(ll.12-13), and facilitate freshly creative vision.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
breathing.

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'erdarken'd ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear
rills

That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

(11.1-24)

The opening axiom of the Romance -- "a thing of beauty is a joy forever" -- projects upon the subsequent narrative a ruling principle of benevolent complicity between things and the psyche, between that which is perceived and the perceiver. An attuned diversity of "things of beauty" immediately is enumerated, the image of that potentially inclusive and harmonious perspective through which the world is seen to be sufficing to all desire. If the comprehension of fulfillment is

being embodied, the opening of initial abstraction into rich particularity suggests as well the process of focussed perception itself, which realizes the promise that "the more intently we look, the more there is to see."³ Such a reading is made to seem less remote when we consider that the sequentially detailed things of beauty might be approached rather as synchronic increments of a materializing field than as temporal displacers of one another. As synchronic elements, they "fill in" the space they simultaneously make manifest much in the same manner as consciousness comes to open and define in particularity and expanse the space it perceives. A narrative the dimensions of which are particularly responsive to shifting and expanding vision is perhaps presaged in the opening passage.

Although natural things precede those of specifically human tenor in Keats's listmaking, organic form and rhythm are rapidly implicated into "the mind of man," the primary region of concern. Goethe speaks of the mediation of objects that favor man, that invite the perceiver to enjoy life and advise him to be happy in the order of things.⁴ Such objects are Keats's things of beauty, their invitation half-perceived and half-created by the willing eye. We note that the opening maxim, which identifies a thing of beauty as consubstantial with a state of joy, translating object into subject, already indicates Keats's anthropocentric bias:

the value accorded the world is not a function of empirical fact, a reflection of reality "out there" irrespective of human cognition, but rather an hypothesis of human perception.

Taking their meaning from how they are seen, things of beauty signify in terms of affect. They activate an inward sequence of response, retrieve the mind from division, and restore a healthful outlook. The quiet bower and the dreamy sleep (lines 4 and 5), familiar topoi in the early poetry, are Keats's emblems for this salutary process. These enclosing spaces mark the withdrawal of consciousness from the flux and turmoil of data into a state of unaccosted self-perception, where a natural rhythm of "quiet breathing" may be regained. Distant from anxiety, the self may renew its assurance of worth and return to the ardent pursuit of experience.

Keats often has been read as an escapist fleeing from reality into simpering and luxurious wish-fulfillment. The bower delineated in the introduction to Endymion, however, like Nature in Hartman's reading of Wordsworth,⁵ expressly nurtures and casts forth the self beyond its own confines. In lightening the blind thoughts and dim sadness of the brooding and isolate subject, Keats's easeful bower facilitates an escape from "inhuman dearth"(1.8), and therefore the freedom to re-engage in existence. In Bachelardian terms, Keats strives to posit a "complete psychology" which re-

integrates "the poetics of reverie" with "the prosaism of life."⁶

The generous catalogue of things of beauty suggests that all aspects of nature and imagination -- for all are interdependent, fit and fitting -- qualify as affective catalysts for the mind's relaxation into receptivity. Through multiform perception and complementary inward response, a continuing interchange between perceiver and perceived, disagreeables come to lose their sting, and the self returns to an open involvement with the world. The realization of identity is conceived of as a phenomenological progress advancing not by way of abstraction and metaphysics but through the inclusive assimilation of felt experience.

The Classical consciousness, Goethe maintained, "operates as a whole, knows itself one with the world and therefore does not experience the objective external world as something alien . . . but recognizes in it the answering counterparts to its own sensations."⁷ Sharing this conception of the self, Keats utilizes the image of a temple surrounded by woods to spatialize the depth of interdependency. The trees "round a temple become soon/ Dear as the temple's self." Boundaries blur until a single physical context, absorbed and interiorized, fuses with the beholder's full identity. Surroundings "always must be with or we die"(1.33), Keats declares; contiguity itself suggests an intimate interpenetration. Wood and temple, therefore, appear metonymic of one

another, while both are metaphoric of the mind; perceived and perceiver, finally, are inseparable.

While the world is seen as an answering counterpart, some features of the imaginative landscape speak more tellingly than others. The catalogue of beautiful things proceeds from the automatic order of celestial bodies to a specifically human orbit:

And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Leaving for later consideration Keats's use of Christian hyperbole, we may note an implicit hierarchy of elements consonant with the Romantic choice of poetry as the instrument and catalyst of psychic development. Although perhaps "heavenly" in its own right, art is envisioned not as an aestheticist surpassing of reality, a superior and autonomous cosmos, but as a purposive influence upon the mind. The disease of consciousness, a brooding upon mortality that obscures all value, is most potently ministered to by the articulate energy of imagination.

Lauding the fictive depiction of heroes, especially in the high distinction of their leave-taking, Keats validates interest in the quest of Endymion, while bringing the issue of time to the fore in an uncharacteristically benign light. Fictive ends -- the apotheosis of Endymion, for example -- endow our apprehension

of time with a grandeur that seems to ensure that life is meaningful, transfiguring the dread of attrition and death.

The sequential presentation of beautiful things culminates in "all lovely tales that we have heard or read." Tales of the heart coax the reader to leave his own narrowing cares, the bound horizon of **Selfhood**, and identify with the concerns of a fictive other. The reader's comprehension of desire and of potentiality is thereby enlarged. Furthermore, and I am thinking especially of the aesthetic theory underlying Endymion, tales foster interrelations between the poet and the reader, the latter coming to participate in creativity. To this point we shall return in our analysis of Keats's reflexive poetics.

A final feature of the introduction to Endymion merits consideration before we proceed to the narrative proper. A profusion of Christian and Platonic terminology might suggest that Keats is inscribing his poem within the boundaries of a doctrinal vision of truth. The critical literature does, in fact, abound with interpretations of Endymion as an allegorical construct in the service of abstract systems. Nevertheless, an alternative perspective that de-emphasizes the jurisdiction of such codes might usefully be adopted. Rather than determining either the locus of values or the structural principles that inform Endymion, Platonism is being adapted to atranscendent allegiances, as Keats borrows from a traditional context and subverts its orthodoxy. The intro-

ductory "things of beauty" and "shape of beauty," for example, are immediately "de-Platonized" by illustrative natural enumeration; longing for the concrete object and delight in a solidity of specification displace abstraction. The onrush of organic detail, furthermore, promotes a horizontal (or non-hierarchic) momentum in apparent disagreement with a dualistic order. More germane than the focus upon Platonic thematics, I find, is John Jones's emphasis upon palpability: Keats applies conventions of spiritual talk to ennoble the pleasures of sensation, having located "the fruit of apprehension within the feeling act" itself.⁸ Components of an available system of idealism already generically accommodated by Spenser and Drayton are adapted for purposes of intensification. A Platonizing rhetoric is utilized to enforce the tangible presence of the sensuous object, the amplified perception of concrete being. Keats's so-called "etherealization" denies disembodiment in favor of a subjective and imaginative heightening of sense. Accordingly, the Platonic climax of Endymion might be interpreted as the triumph of Erotic vision, which is quite uninvolved in the orthodox raising of phenomena to a universalized absence. We might note that a very different brand of Platonism, ruthlessly antagonistic to gratified desire, shall be represented by the figure of Apollonius in Lamia.

As to Christianity, it is in St. Agnes that the polar ramifications of this ideology are explored: the Christian

religion of love, in its Keatsian erotic guise, is juxtaposed with an Augustinian creed of denial. In Endymion, however, Christian language, like Platonic terminology, comprises a rhetoric of intensification. Terms like "immortality" and "eternity" lend their expansive dimensionality to the here and now; "heaven" is impressed for amorous delight. In accord with literary history, Keats is extending the canonic Petrarchan transformation into Eros of Christianity's supernatural virtue of Caritas, while he is more generally avoiding the fondness of traditional religion for moral imperative and anathema. Thus, the "fountain" of "immortal drink" celebrated in the introduction to Endymion may be read not as the influx from an otherworldly perfection but rather as a metaphor of this world offering itself as the ideal source of perpetually present being.

We may endorse Jones's reading of Keats as fundamentally a poet of sensation and yet abstain from assuming that "Endymion's spiritual pretension is a great yawning hole."⁹ An accustomed distrust of "spirituality," the Nietzschean critique of the ideal as "the actual force for disparaging the world and man . . . the great seduction to nothingness,"¹⁰ may be tempered by an historicist recognition that idealistic philosophy and religion have served as major repositories of desire, enlivening the meaning and the worth of human life by constituting visions of human

potentiality. Keats takes his place among the Romantics who would resemanticize otherworldly systems of thought to express their own immediate and concrete reality. Grappling more intimately with the spectres of imagination and sense, Keats will come to find problematic such translation into spiritual talk; in St. Agnes and Lamia he will expose the abstract vision as a calumny against life.

As elements of Platonism and Christianity are adapted to a sensual vision of correspondences, their original meanings are undermined. If narrative incident and outcome are left relatively unregulated and unprotected by Christian or Platonic certainties, however, the provident eye of "things of beauty" offers a sheltering orientation toward affirmative perception. An additional benign frame of reference is provided by the scene of communal worship with which the tale of Endymion begins.

The worshippers of Pan appear to emblemize a prelapsarian communality centered around the realization of the Human Form Divine. Analogous to the community of belief is myth itself, a unitary perspective of consciousness which would repair the separation of image from thing, of wish from fulfillment. Just such "repair" of divisive regard, we might note, impels Endymion's internalized quest through mythic landscape.

Ceremonial space for observance of the Pan ritual is established by way of an elaborate inward focus not unrelated to that

concentered vision that consecrates all it looks upon. The worshippers of Pan approach the enclosed clearing which, in turn, encircles an altar, the point of origin; the Hymn will be performed, in Eliade's phrase, at "the center of the world."¹¹ Centripetal motion, a crystallizing of focus in shared desire, initiates the rite that shall locate divinity at the nucleus of human experience, at the last invoking the original identity of man as god. For the worship of Pan is an enactment of self-expanding perception, an accreditive promotion of self-regard. It is the divinity of the worshipper in the process of recognizing itself and fulfilling the Blakean imperative, "thine own Divine Humanity learn to adore."

While directing interiority within a common form, the Pan rite also serves as internalized worship -- a pervasive motif in Keats's oeuvre, which finds its paradigm in the "Ode to Psyche," with its address to a deity homonymic with the poet's soul. For Keats, the human and the divine differ less in kind than in degree of intensity, and "divinity" signifies only in terms of human aspiration. Rather than "disparaging the world and man" (the Nietzschean critique of idealism to which we earlier referred), the worship of Pan -- not unlike the rituals of Keats's "religion of love" informing Isabella and St. Agnes -- magnifies the range of human possibility by adding a precious seeing to the eye, by

authorizing a creative conception of the world as full of wonder.

While partaking of a complex literary tradition,¹² Keats's Pan is an implicit metaphor of the poet's own concerns, much as Keats's Hellenizing serves to make his Greece metaphorically available. The pagan Pan, external nature deity and universal symbol of the nature of things, is conflated with the Christian Pan, theological mediator of the human and the divine. For the Hymn projects a god of divinized nature that expands to become, in a sense, the guarantor of an "immortal" vision of inward fulfillment.

We might interpret the Hymn as the desire for access to a full apprehension of humanity in the act of finding what will suffice. The name "Pan" itself conventionally signifies "all"; as a center of meanings, the universal hieronym radiates links of imaginative cohesion. By way of incremental and directional definition, Pan metamorphoses in the vocative stanzas from an external to a mental deity, assuming an identity homologous to the elevation of human potential; it is an "ontological expansion" of the order Poulet specifies, in which "to expand is to create one's being."¹³ The verbal progress comprises a rhetoric leading the reader through an increasingly generous conception that finally consumes de-finition itself.

Sequential invocation expands to the limiting instance in

linguistic as well as conceptual inclusivity. The worshippers first address Pan as a voyeur who takes pleasure in spying upon nymphs. Such a literal paganism comes to approach pantheistic vision when Pan is next cast as a nature-god wandering "at even tide/ Through summer meadows." We note up to this point in the Hymn a poetic mode of scenic concretization defined by spatial and temporal locatives. Conceptual stationing begins to open, in a Shelleyan manner, beyond the fixity of concrete description. In the fourth and fifth stanzas of the Hymn, the naming of Pan comes to absorb the opening space of mystery, invoked at first as a modifier of agency, substance and sense, and then affirmed in unqualified abstraction beyond dimensionality: the "strange ministrant of undescribed sounds" and "dread opener of the mysterious door/ Leading to universal knowledge" becomes the "universal lodge/ For solitary thinkings" and the "symbol of immensity" itself. Pan thereby assumes in Keats's conceptual etymology the identity of All coincident with his name. A final invocation follows in which the god is cast as an unlimited entity or non-referent, simply "an unknown" beyond the broadest enclosure of language and imagination.

The Hymn to Pan unfolds ex-centrally, in widening spheres, demonstrating that awareness is essentially an augmentative act. The typicality or generality of words is stretched until the

space of silence is at last returned to. Such thrusting against the linguistic boundary suggests, on the social level, a communal ethos of uncircumscribed aspiration, a collective urging of self-conception according to the ideal that "less than All cannot satisfy Man."

As a communal event, the Hymn to Pan evidences the coincidence of public and private vision, an accord mirrored by the common utterance in unison of each worshipper. Perhaps the presence of community and the Dionysian annihilation of individuality would therefore appear requisite for personal fulfillment. Such a reading, however, would subvert the focus and progress of the Hymn itself, which elevates the primacy of individual consciousness. It is in the tale of individual quest -- the narrative of Endymion -- that the Hymn to Pan finds its natural counterpart, its answering praxis.

Despite the apparently congenial community with which Endymion opens -- a community that worships at the shrine of "solitary thinkings" rather than group mentality -- Keats's central ideal of relationship in the Romance is the pair of lovers enjoying their "solitude." As Northrop Frye observes,

The Romantic poets, especially Keats, preserve the feeling that at the heart of the best and fullest life is something beyond society which is still essential to human identity.¹⁴

It is not that the world of use intrudes upon Endymion, for Keats maintains a mythic communality as the context of encouragement surrounding his persona's interior quest. This choice reflects not only that deviation from social realism licensed by Romance, but also the tangential position of society within Keats's psychological focus. Discrepancy between the inner spirit and the outer world is insisted upon, however, in the narrative poems subsequent to Endymion. How repressive toward differences in outlook are the majority of "others" in Isabella, St. Agnes, and Lamia; and how much more incidental to the central action of their respective poem are the Lyceans. In Endymion, attention is quickly shifted away from the arena of community: personally authentic vision must be pursued elsewhere. Keats adopts the Romantic strategy of centering upon the self, upon the private quest and the privileged apprehension of a Chosen One. For it is the Wordsworthian myth of solitary growth which may well underlie Keats's decision to trace a persona's development from blindness to sentience. Perhaps his own inexperience made Keats wary of such "worldlier" themes as the achieving of mutuality and the complex ramifications of social identity. The decorative and mechanical presentation of the lovers in Isabella may explain the earlier abstention. Endymion's adventures may usefully be read as the internalized drama of a protagonist who comes to see through the self-contradictory opposition of spirit and flesh, of subject

and object, at last perceiving the oneness of desire. As Endymion is centered upon the psyche of its persona, the tale may be approached as a complex transcription of psychomachia and moralized landscape, in which characters other than Endymion function as trial modes of seeing for the protagonist in his passage through mental regions of self-confrontation and discovery.

The personal history of Endymion begins with the juxtaposition of contrary responses to loss, which in turn reflect antithetical states of consciousness. Loss may be shared with a relatively creative and loving openness, or experienced as alienation, a destructive self-concealedness; the Lyceans and Endymion, respectively, dramatize these alternatives.

All but Endymion share memories of youth, "vying to rehearse anticipated bliss." The Lyceans see beyond present loss and escape a devitalizing self-absorption by placing themselves in a human order of affection and hope. Endymion, on the other hand, is engulfed in the consciousness of self-division; striving "to hide the cankering venom that had riven/ His fainting recollections" -- a hiding that is itself the internal canker of self-deceit -- he lies separated from community and perception. The insentience of solipsism is emblemized by unconsciousness, as the protagonist falls "dead-still as a marble man." In place of the vital memorial vision of the Lyceans, Endymion assumes the perspective of denial

which would fix becoming in a cold memorial. The contraction of regard to its blank limiting case serves as the motivating situation for the narrative: Endymion's cankered vision must be attended to, its psychic origin revealed and its cure effected.

Recovery from the disease of consciousness commences with the Wordsworthian intercession of the sister. When Peona "whispers him so pantingly and close," we may take this intimacy with Endymion to suggest an internalizing of the derivative motif: the thematic initiation of interior relief. Retiring to a "bowery island," an enclosed and solitary center, Endymion enjoys the undistracted self-communion of sleep. As in the introductory formulation, "a bower quiet for us, and a sleep/ Full of sweet dreams" facilitate recuperation. Endymion awakens "calm'd to life again," no longer blindly self-involved or blankly rigid. His refreshed placidity of outlook, however, is not that lasting vision for which he seeks. The perception of the human and the divine as one remains unattained until the close of the narrative.

Like the cottagers and the Arab Maiden in Alastor, like Dorothy of The Prelude, Peona dispenses "human ministrations." Her caring presence informs Endymion with the psychological dimension of recovering a prior self, an earlier stage of consciousness relatively secure in its certainties. While equilibrium is regained by the retreat from mental strife, the act of entering

into the easeful perspective of a former identity functions as well as a kind of self-encounter; as such it serves to generate that self-awareness needed in the forthcoming pursuit of intense experience. Rather than an end in itself, then, retreat serves as a vital means for growth.

Blackstone simplifies the figure of Peona in a revealing fashion when he imports the Blakean rubric, "corporal friends are spiritual enemies"¹⁵; for Peona does preach a conformist psychology of normality to discourage all seeing beyond the unexceptional. Hers is the judgmental outlook of reason as she interrogates Endymion:

Wherefore sully the entrusted gem
Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick
For nothing but a dream?

We may interpret this rebuke as a voicing of Endymion's own misgivings regarding his quest. Yet to identify Peona as representing the outlook of complacent passivity is not sufficient, insofar as she provides the comfort for unburdening the self and returning to the senses, and thus she makes possible a re-immersion in felt experience which transcends her own horizon. "Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain," a fresh clarity of vision, Endymion no longer hides from awareness. Instead he awakens to an "out-telling"

of memory and dream that recalls the Lyceans. The parallelism of the episodes allows for interpreting the earlier group scene as a dramatization of the protagonist's latent capacity for regenerative self-regard. Speech is the agency of such comprehension; in analogue, language is the vehicle by which each worshipper of Pan enacted an expanding definition of his own humanity. Since perceptual identity is complex, recourse to a dialectic structure is useful for uncounfounding its intermingled features. The lengthy dialogue between Endymion and Peona is just such a clarifying dialectic, a colloquy between the contrary perspectives of the self and the soul. Yet the drama of this ideological discourse is weaksided and its outcome a foregone conclusion; Endymion's vindication of striving for the visionary overwhelms Peona's advocacy of a regressive caution.

Recovery of faith in imagination is made manifest in the "fellowship with essence" sermon. Memory and hope are reconciled within an enclosing idealism, a vision of universal correspondences springing from man, which is comparable to the colder interrogative concluding Shelley's "Mont Blanc";

. . . so may love, although 'tis understood
The mere commingling of passionate breath,
Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit
 would swell
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,

The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
If human souls did never kiss and greet?

(I, 832-42)

All natural processes may be dependent upon human passion. Elevating the ontological stature of passion, Endymion validates the authenticity of imaginative vision -- as heart-certainty. Seeing and being are equated within in informing subjective idealism. To incarnate this interior ground, an elaborate set of natural features is enumerated, which bind together mental reality and that creative perception through which the given emerges in its full richness. We come upon the conventionally obscure wood, Endymion announcing that "we should see but for these dark boughs"; a function of the perceiver's apprehension, the dark boughs of obscurity will vanish as vision gains focus. Perhaps Keats is promising the clarifications of narrativity, a forthcoming elucidation, and requesting of the reader a receptive attentiveness toward the tale at hand. One must "keep within his stedfast aim/ A love immortal, an immortal too," Endymion continues; such an intensity of regard reveals the common immortality of the human and the divine -- and, perhaps, the potential "kindness" of poet and reader.

The self-communion of dialogue affords Endymion new ease and resolve: "no more will I count over, link by link/ My chain of grief"(I, 978-9). In words which foreshadow the unrenounced outlook of the Beadsman in St. Agnes, Endymion comes to realize that re-

flection may weave a net of barren and redundant despair; and yet, the reflective expression of personal history may be the sole means to escape its vortex. A composed Endymion recants his visions, vowing to follow Peona's counsel and maintain an inadventuresome placidity of mind. The fervent affirmations expressed in his sermon, however, cast this resolve as self-deceptive and provisional. The internalized quest will soon be resumed.

The uses of memory and loss, of central moment in Book I, point toward the concern with historiography which marks the opening of Book II. As different historiographies entail divergent visions of human priority, Keats contrasts pageant history with tales of the heart, amplifying the preference implicit in Endymion's introduction for "lovely tales" over epic accounts. Love-tales "are things to brood on with more ardency/ Than the death-day of empires," for pageant history is a "gilded cheat," a surface of social costumery uncharged by deeply human values. The parade of great men's exploits offers no real pattern for aspiration and response. History's chain-of-events recalls Endymion's recounting "link by link" of his "chain of guilt"; fabled by the daughters of memory and not of imagination, treadmill history points toward the determinism of the past. For the autonomy of historic fact inspires no creative greeting of the

spirit. Suggested instead is a fatalism that casts the inadequacy of things "as they were" as all there is. The onlooker to history may be drawn into this perspective and may become merely an apologist for the status quo. Affect finally is Keats's agent of negative judgment: the reader of pageant history cannot be moved for long; "all dimly fades/ Into some backward corner of the brain," receding into the indistinctness and subsequent invisibility of that which lacks personal moment. All incident is levelled to "a continuous murmur/ Along the pebbled shore of memory," an undertone of undifferentiated time, a devaluing relativity. Love-tales, on the other hand, leave an undimmed impression on the mind. Personal and distinct, never fading into a value-neutral ocean of past time, they qualify as real history, for they inspire an intuitive comprehension of common humanity as a reciprocity of desire. Rather than illustrating social honor codes, love-narratives focus upon singular crystallizations of experience, essential moments of inward life, which possess an intensity of transhistorical extension. We may discern an implicit "metaphysics of the moment"¹⁶ as Keats celebrates the instant of love so resonant that transience seems to give way to an eternal present. Neither do such instants carry with them the abiding sense of incompleteness characteristic of history; they appear, instead, aligned with mythic repetition that conveys the sense of

a unified whole. Though in more obvious accord with narrative time, an historiography centered upon teleology seems alien to Endymion, with its dominantly episodic form and its ideology of Erotic vision.

Having vindicated tales of the heart, Keats invokes the aid of time and proceeds with his own love-narrative. As in a serial adventure, we seem to re-encounter the plotline at a step prior to the point at which it was left off. Endymion is caught once more in the impasse of self-consciousness, "counting his woe-worn minutes" by "the strokes/ Of the lone woodcutter." Beneath the impulse of desire, however, Endymion escapes this internal metronome of un-lived time, leaving the hesitation of thought to inhabit his world. He plucks "a bud which snares his fancy," and instantly "it swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight"; here is the local process of his emergent vision, which telescopes the promise of full perceptual growth. With the ripe moment grasped, a butterfly comes forth -- an image of the psyche -- to guide Endymion's interior wanderings.

Yet the insight that follows finds Endymion unprepared to face his imaginings. He fears the "wide-gaping air," projecting upon an "encroaching" sky, as does the knight-at-arms in "La Belle Dame," the anxiety that he will be engulfed by personal vision. Endymion stands at the edge of deluge and rebirth:

Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the Flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.

He is like the creator perched over his own chaotic mind, the hunter rising toward vision. Nearly "frozen to senseless stone," like an Hyperion Titan, Endymion is urged from within to "Descend."

Descent is an aspect of the inward and concentric focus characteristic of Keats's spatial patterning -- a patterning which we have identified in the scene of worshipping Pan and which we shall find most telling in St. Agnes. The motif of descent partakes of the epistemological metaphor of depth. Keats aspires to in-sight, the bringing to light of a "verisimilitude caught from the Penetratum of Mystery" (as the ideal is expressed in the Negative Capability letter¹⁷). This poetic process -- analogous to the delving into essences which Keats attributes to Plato, who "looked into the penetralia, the innermost recesses of truth" -- involves an essential deepening of sense awareness and imaginative penetration. As Goldberg observes,

Wordworth's structuring of the poetic act (like his structuring of the metaphysical universe) is dependent upon his transcendence of the world of things into the truths they can teach us. Keats would structure the act on the basis of his penetration into the essences of things. He would move through and with them and not above and beyond them.

18

Considered as a metaphor, depth directs the journey back to origins; as an image of the reading process, it signals a whole-hearted submersion in the text; and, as a figure of psychomachia, depth directs

self-exploration downward to a creative center.

While his passage is less rigorous than the dyings into life of Apollo and Lamia, Endymion's descent into experience is fraught with risk. Although the Aeneid served as the major poetic model for the underworld of Book II, Keats provides his hero with no corresponding external aid, "no Sibyl or Anchises to guide him to vision"; hence, as D'Avanzo observes, "Aeneas's awe is not quite the terror which Endymion, also in the labyrinth of the imagination, feels as he chanches his way downward."¹⁹

Having invoked the Deucalion myth of genesis from stone, Keats directs his protagonist into a mineral underworld. Endymion descends into the bedrock of his existence -- a primal region reminiscent of Wordsworth -- to discover an archaeology of interior sources. This conceptual terrain is situated below being, prior to the contradiction between animacy and inanimacy, existence and non-existence. Endymion may generate a comprehensive vision from the point where being originates.

The deep center is reached through a cleansing of perception, figured in the mutation of topography. As "appetite" sharpens "by degrees" -- a version of the pleasure thermometer -- Endymion's vision grows more intense; that region which appeared at first

dark nor light . . . nor bright, nor sombre wholly,/ But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;/ A dusky empire," comes to gain a specificity of outline, a precision of detail. Vagueness and clarity function as poetic loci, coordinates of definition revealing degrees of fear and perplexity, desire and self-assurance. The process of visual emergence enacts the acclimatizing of the unfamiliar to a previously withheld personal regard. Endymion advances from peripheral to centered vision, from the perception only of a vast and amorphous confusion to the apprehending of waterfalls and bejewelled structures indicative of expanded lucidity. Rapid metamorphoses of landscape image the growth from a bewildered gloom to the realization of imaginative riches. Read reflexively, the emergence of structural outline depicts the clarification of feeling-tone through the formative impulse of art.

Through the refinement of perception, a murky and protean vista resolves itself into a still point. Access is gained -- on the sudden and without conscious intent -- to an invariant center, an orb'd diamond; it is the image of Endymion's deepest insight, or perhaps the seed of noetic consciousness, subjectivity discovering an ideal objectivity. All contingency is dispersed in the burnishing of vision toward its bright hard core. Hardness

implies an absolute existence invulnerable to change, a full and flawless self-coincidence; we are reminded of Hopkins' phrase, the "immortal diamond of the purified self." By his use of the gem Keats makes the essence of things eternally palpable but coldly inanimate. Here is no receptivity or sensitivity but a neutral and impervious finality at the heart. Correspondingly, diamond-sharp perception is a perfection of self-contained regard lacking in humanity. An emblem and end-product -- rather like the steadfastly fixed "bright star" of the late sonnet -- the orb'd diamond is exempt from all heat and friction, the necessary turbulence of living. It is a frozen if consummate vision of things. Such a static crystallizing of perception and identity cannot hold; beckoned by thoughts of "habitual self," the everyday surface of being, Endymion retreats from unmediated vision. The diamond vanishes, its loss an image of perceptual instability or the dynamics of comprehension. It may be truth that is eluding the grasp -- yet it is a cold truth not unrelated to the marmoreal refinement of life into the perfect otherness of the artifact. Misery sings "drowningly," forecasting the sea and sea-change of Book III.

Perhaps Endymion's "homeward fever" intimates a newly aware **valuing** of the earth. A kind of Antaeus myth may be perceived as

underlying much of Keats's verse, an intuition that the periodic return from imaginative vision to an easeful and earthy perception of the known is needed to renew self-regard, thereby making possible further creative flight. So revitalized, Endymion envisions the natural unity of Adonis' garden, and realizes sexual union with Diana.

As preparation for the Glaucus episode, in which self-recognition will earn the communal vision of Erotic unity, Keats inserts a scene of ad hoc mythology. The Alpheus-Arethusa dialogue is a dramatized plea for self-integration, naming fear as the agent of what Hartman calls "the crisis of separation." Expanding upon his source,²⁰ Keats iterates, in Alpheus' pleadings, the invitation to a wholeness of amatory vision through a dismantling of defenses: "Stifle thine heart no more, nor be afraid," "fear no more," "doff all sad fears." Fear is identified with self-disguise, and can be shed at will. So informed at the distance of "overhearing," Endymion shall engage in more direct perception and participate in the conversion of estrangement into gratified desire.

Book III of Endymion opens with a tirade against those "who lord it o'er their fellow men/ With most prevailing tinsel." Yet it is granted that not all "regalities" are "gilded masks," particularly within the imagination. Powers of desire unbound to

social influence may fill "every sense" with "spiritual sweets to plenitude." Of these, the moon is declared most potent, yet as the narrative of Endymion's quest resumes, the moon is found pining "for one as sorrowful," her cheeks "pale/ For one whose cheek is pale." For Cynthia is an aspect of Endymion's own consciousness. Book III will trace the development from despondency and the display of vanity to the extension of sympathy and a climactic rebirth of Eros.

The water-world of Book II is rich and complex; its semantic intricacy invites the simplification of speaking of Glaucus as if he were a character external to Endymion's psyche. Such speech in the subsequent analysis is intended as a shorthand notation for psychomachia. Glaucus and the figures he tells of encountering may all be read as aspects of Endymion's self-disclosure.

Book III is a region of intensified vision, where the hazards of consciousness glimpsed in Endymion's initial despair (Book I) and sporadically imaged thereafter are explored with greater rigor. Fears of loss and fragmentation, abandonment and isolation, aging and dying, all are given dramatic urgency. Endymion immerses himself, though by way of a somewhat vicarious rite of empathy with a projected alter-ego, in the perception of defeat and of the tenuousness of imaginative survival.

In Endymion, signs lead not only to other signs but to essential significations, to origins. Roaming with only the "hollow vast" surrounding him, Endymion comes upon relics of prior lives and purposes: anchors, rudders, scrolls, and skeletons. "Signature of all things I am here to read," as Stephen Daedalus says; as in the Proteus chapter of Ulysses, the art of reading presides over the Glaucus episode, which pivots upon the surfacing of a scroll symbolic of unsubmerged potentiality. Endymion must find the key to self-translation, learn how to decipher these hieroglyphs and make these bones live. Ushered in by an estrangement of signification, Glaucus appears as the seer who, with Endymion's participation, will correlate the planes of expression and content, death and life. The old man is marked and inspired by extremity, in the tradition of the Ancient Mariner and the Leech Gatherer; Prospero and the Wanderer provide additional attributes for the characterization. Glaucus is met suddenly and "fortuitously," as in the encounters Wordsworth dramatizes. Such accidents of unpremeditation, although conventional to fictive universes, may signal in Endymion the naturally provident operation of mind. Belief in growth through personal contact, another Wordsworthian element crucial to the Glaucus episode, may be taken to signify the uses of self-communion and self-recognition.

"Is the old man a ghou1, and will he regain his youth by feeding upon Endymion after the fashion of Blake's Mental Traveler?" Blackstone asks.²¹ Will Endymion be caught in a consuming round of insight and blindness, potency and impotence? Glaucus begins and concludes his hailing of Endymion with the definitive claim, "Thou art the man." Intent upon hiding from exposure, Endymion lords it over Glaucus -- "I care not for this old mysterious man"(III,280) -- failing thereby to recognize and care for himself. He would remain in "the Chamber of Maiden Thought" where "we see nothing but pleasant wonders," preferring the safety of surface identity and Romance to the mind's "dark passages" where "we see not the balance of good and evil."²²

Communication presupposes a prior meeting of heart, the listener/reader first caring to know and then entering into the tale of another as a shared possibility; extension of concern makes possible the disclosure of personal history. The paradigmatic context for such narration is the one-to-one encounter. As in Book I, where Endymion's expression of memory and hope follows upon Peona's care, kinship figures the ideal closeness of listener and teller, poet and reader. The metaphor is extended to Glaucus and Endymion, who are declared "twin brothers"; their fraternity, furthermore, presages the jubilant fraternity of arisen lovers with which Book III closes.

Twinship may be taken to image that intimacy of regard out of which is born the dialogue of self and soul. When Glaucus weeps at Endymion's show of pride, Endymion responds with an identical sensitivity; "O weep no more," the old man declares, a surrogate Lycidas embodying the promise of rebirth.

. . . Be not afraid
For thou shalt learn this secret all displayed
Now as we speed toward our joyous task.
(III, 307-10)

Abjuring fear, the self discovers its resources of joy. Time is perceived as a subjective variable and age as the disguise of stifled awareness. A "young soul in age's mask," Glaucus begins his tale.

Before we interpret this history, the significance of such telling itself merits consideration. A recurrent motif throughout the Keats corpus linked to the poet's focus upon the struggle with time, memorial telling occurs with especial frequency in the reflexive terrain of Endymion. It is the central act of self-recognition arising from the faith that through language experience may be given a human frame and comprehensibility. Like an analysand, Glaucus locates his identity in the process of verbal recollection, and thus creates a personal truth in the order of words and private myth. By imaginatively reconstructing the past, he projects the cause of his inertia in a

mode of completed experience -- the palpable form of narrative poetry -- so that he may come to terms with it and regain an open perspective. In the flexibility of experience-as-recalled, time is reclaimed from the order of nature, where it was seen as an oppressive datum. With the past no longer usurping the future, Glaucus rediscovers time as his own.

Cleansing perception, Glaucus "breathes away" the "thin-pervading scum" of his lapsed vision -- much as Lamia shall breathe upon the eyelids of Hermes so that the unseen nymph may be perceived. Objective time dissolves away as youthful vision is recovered, enabling Glaucus to begin his tale.

I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures:
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.

(III, 338-42)

This isolate and uncreative youth images that absence of communication of one never in touch with his own senses or imagination. Apprehension of the sea-mew's "discrepant plaining" suggests an askew and rejecting outlook; a corresponding perspective imposes the discrepancy between sky and earth which leads Endymion to bifurcate his love into the figures of Diana and the Indian Maiden.

Glaucus is trapped in subjectivity, his "desert shores" the

landscape of sterile consciousness at the edge of solipsism. The "utmost quietude" which Glaucus desires may be contrasted with the uneaseful soul-making quest; it is a longing for that absence correlative with his soul, which has lost its footing in the world. His is the "weariness which wants to reach the ultimate with a single leap, with a deathleap, a poor ignorant weariness which no longer even wants to want."²³ Aware only of desperation, Glaucus plunges into the sea like a Narcissus leaping into himself. Unprepared for the deep element, lacking an orientative insight, Glaucus falls in love with Scylla as his own distorted image. The discrepancy between desire and gratification intensifies as she reflects his self-rejection by refusing his advances. Hunting Scylla, Glaucus dramatizes a frantic grasping for possession, the mirror extreme of his indolence. Beneath the hunt may lie Tooke's description, in The Pantheon -- a volume with which Keats was very familiar -- of Scylla as the victim of Circean transformation, her canine lower anatomy reflecting the self caught in snarling self-pursuit. The desperate quest soon grows "too fierce agony to bear" and Glaucus gives up on consciousness. He goes to Circe.

Circe was the first satirist, reducing men to their lowest natures. As the "arbitrary queen of sense," she is the temptation to a diffuseness and involution of regard. Glaucus declines into the stupored and regressive perspective of Circe, spatialized as

an inverted bower. Realization of deformity emerges in a scene of wallowing beasts, their multiplicity imaging Glaucus' own fragmented insight and obsession with degradation. (A multiple mirroring of soul of a very different tenor will come to be evidenced in the shipwreck episode.) Overwhelmed by abasement, Glaucus can only pray "to die or be delivered from this cumbrous flesh," the dismissal of the senses finding as its end the attraction of death. Absorbed in the perspective of denial, Glaucus finds his love dead, as the knight-at-arms in "La Belle Dame" and Lycius in Lamia find their loves vanished. His mind despairing to its limit of contraction, Glaucus undergoes a Dantesque transformation into the outward embodiment of his inward state:

. . . scathing dread
Met palsy halfway: soon these limbs became
Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd,
and lame.

The accumulation of disfigurements reflects an obsessive shame and guilt. Decrepitude is the image of an inwardly directed savage indignation, a state of mind befitting Circean transformation. The Circe episode, then, may be taken to illustrate the need to affirm the self and to take responsibility for its creation; for we are shown that the worth of a man is "not a given element in his nature, but a possibility in his function, and could be forfeited as well as fulfilled."²⁴

On another level of reading, we may identify the sickness of despair with a self-loathing rejection of sexuality. As a Platonic metaphor of the spirit degraded by the folly of desire, Glaucus' vision of swinishness might suggest an awareness of the ruinous effects of passion; the Circe myth is, in fact, interpreted by Sandys -- as Keats was well aware -- as the slaying of the spiritual ideal by sensuality. Identification of Circe as the mind's tendency toward an indolent diffuseness, we note, would also cast the scene as a deterrent myth. We may adopt a far less moralistic approach, however, interpreting Circe as Glaucus' own sexuality, variously perceived. Simply pleasurable at first, gratification soon is rejected from the vantage of conventionality; joy is lost through the heightening of a sense of guilt. In a vision of bestiality, flesh appears a "gross, detestable, filthy mesh"(II, 552), as Glaucus comes to scorn himself:

. . . disgust and hate
And terrors manifold divided me
A spoil amongst them.
(II, 562-4)

Circe mocks at emotion -- "adieu, sweet love, adieu" -- for Glaucus, identifying sexuality with deceit, finds himself incapable of any genuine feeling or response. His subsequent withering away incarnates his prurient self-loathing, an impotence of

desire. The final achieving of a deeply affirmative vision of sexuality is figured by the episode's Erotic climax. Read in this fashion, Keats transforms a traditional deterrent myth, with its implicit vision of sense experience as alien to man's nobility, into a subjective calculus of the perceiver. By this metamorphosis, I would maintain, Keats presages his inversion of that conventionally forbidden and forbidding figure of deterrent myth, the lamia.

Glaucus' perception develops through a lengthy period of torment and hopelessness corresponding to the Circean levelling of all to tooth-and-claw. Keats utilizes the aid of Coleridge, Shakespeare, and perhaps Dante, to retrieve his character from stagnancy. As "all knowledge takes its place within the horizons opened up by perception"(Merleau-Ponty), a sail proceeds to "grow up from the horizon's brink," the point from which pre-sencing begins. Glaucus' vision arises from the edge of consciousness, the extremity of his experience and desire. Keats adapts the Elizabethan dramatic commonplace of the shipwreck to deliver Glaucus from a self-pitying stasis; the wreck images his drowned capacity for a wholeness of outlook. As in the Ancient Mariner -- and perhaps echoing the descent of the sinners into Dante's Hell -- the crew goes down "by one and one to pale

oblivion"(III, 666). Glaucus watches the dispersion of his mind, estranged from self-awareness. This is a crew of lovers, however, symbolic of the potential for mutuality within the self; the lovers' watery grave is fulid with latency. As in Lycidas, water is transformed from the symbol of death to the symbol of rebirth, and we enter the order of a sea-change. Much as in The Tempest, shipwreck is the agency for ending isolation, for bringing the self home to a resuscitated integrity of vision. After the wreck, an old man's hand emerges from the sea with wand and scroll; that is, with the courage of emergence in hand, the victim of Circe's enchantment may now enact his own recovery. Through the insight of words, he may come to terms with traumatic experience.

O what a load of misery and pain
Each Atlas-line bore off.
(III, 684-5)

Words unburden -- as Glaucus verbally unburdens himself to Endymion. Yet an attenuated period of alienation and discontinuity must be endured before the vision of self-loathing is at last relieved. Such a pre-requisite passage demonstrates that time may not intercede in the swiftly reliable manner attributed to things of beauty in the Endymion introduction. Perhaps the extended wandering of the narrative itself suggests a corresponding doubt as to the efficacy of deliverance through time.

Long adrift in despair, Glaucus begins to show a quickened mastery, giving to the sea a human shape by disposing of the drowned in "silent rows." If the scattering of the shipwrecked lovers imaged a dismemberment and displacement of the psyche, this careful structuralist ceremony evidences a reclaiming of control through aesthetic intentionality. It marks a new dispensation of the formless world of experience, the sea of indiscrimination, by an act of mind. Cognate to this ordering process, we may note, is the storytelling of Glaucus, through which the weight of personal history is redeemed in the order of language.

As Glaucus ends his tale by expressing belief that self-revulsion and fear can be transmuted into youthful potency, Endymion responds that they "are twin brothers in this destiny." Indeed Glaucus and he are identical twins, for Glaucus has embodied Endymion's own impulses toward a despairing solipsism, a debilitating indolence, a reductive misprision of his own worth and potential. Real listening/reading for Keats involves the negative capability of entering into another's personal history as one's own; after such involvement in Glaucus' tale, Endymion is literally absorbed, acting to complete the narrative. Implicit is the converse formulation: that all literature is the reader's personal history in his act of perceiving himself, that the uses

of literature are not versions of retreat but infusions of awareness which energize relations with actuality; words come home to self-recognition, character change, and action.

Preliminary to their task of devising a satisfactory closure, Glaucus and Endymion perform rituals of time. The scroll of personal history is torn to pieces and scattered like the body of Osiris; much as Glaucus' death was imaged earlier in the death of Scylla and in the multiple drownings of the shipwreck, so the extremity of dying into life is now transferred to writing, the torn scroll of a life. Words intercede as atonement and as the seeds of future growth, ending the sterile duration of self-consciousness. An analogy might be drawn between the vicarious verbal death that Glaucus undergoes and the empathetic listening through which Endymion experiences the tragedy and near-death of Glaucus. Implicit is the need for psychical distance, which is best supplied by literature; for writing offers a "space of life between," interposing a saving perspective upon what Jung calls "the terrible ambiguity of an immediate experience."

Endymion performs the second time-ritual, a scattering of leaves which disperses the fertility of nature while telescoping its transience and dissolution. As Endymion strews the fragments of leaves upon Glaucus and then upon the shipwrecked lovers, the

old man sheds his years and all the drowned are re-animated. Endymion thereby frees himself from a perspective of suspended animation, the mind frozen in fear. Rather than looking "too deeply into the sea," a prospect of paralyzing dread which marks the failure to see deeply enough into human possibility, Endymion creatively affirms the inward union of spirit and flesh, no longer abandoning the body as fallen. A sensual resurrection follows, embodying the vital plenitude of Eroic vision. Book III ends with a "mighty consummation" of desire, multitudes of lovers rising en masse from their watery graves and taking sweet delight. Joy surfaces into the light of comprehension in an archetypal vision of the self's achieved task of integration.

The most successfully sustained episode of Endymion, the encounter with Glaucus dramatizes the hazards of negative perception attendant upon the perplexity of experience. A positive view of the self is imperilled, we are shown, even within a redemptive entelechy. Book IV marks the return from the visionary landscape of the sea; it is dedicated to the lesser gods, the "muse of my own land," a localization recalling the anchor "our own green vallies" provided at the outset of composition, and perhaps suggesting as well the presiding spirit of Wordsworth. Introduction of the Indian Maiden initiates a local human drama, a further humanizing of regard,

and freshly perplexes the unity of mind and heart, the divine and the human.

Sound of human sorrow -- not unlike Glaucus' "discrepant plainings," but now perceived directly -- turn Endymion from airier matters, much as Lycius shall be recalled from the self-absorption of "Platonic shades" by way of Lamia's plea. The Maiden's lament inspires in Endymion a "kindred pain" of self-cognition; her "lovely eyes in swimming search/ After some warm delight" are the image of Endymion's own heated vision of his quest, a perspective rich with confused desire. The diachronic narrative halts briefly to accommodate the singing of personal history. In the tradition of Ophelia's laments and Desdemona's "Willow Song," the roundelay of the maiden suggests spontaneous utterance, for song implies the genuine expression of feeling and thus certifies the venting of anguish as heartfelt. Furthermore, music -- "our myth of the inner life"²⁵ -- transforms private emotion into a power that opens an interpenetrating world. We may contrast the self-reflective mode of soliloquy with the self-presenting impulse of song.

In the face of present sorrow and the lingering ambiguity or enigma of sexuality, the Maiden's presentation of Bacchus is surprisingly benign. There is no deterrent myth being dramatized nor any warning being announced of the temptation to self-compromise informing bodily pleasure. Bacchus, the emancipatory power

of sensuality, roams the earth displacing the repressive sway of disembodied creeds; and so, for example, Brahma "from his mystic heaven groans/ And all his priesthood moans." Life's intoxication perceived as joy usurps more cautious and doctrinaire response; as Bachelard observes, "by causing our reason to wander Bacchus prevents the ankylosis of logic."²⁶ Yet logic enacts its own self-enclosed and objective assurance, while wandering offers little security. The intensity of the moment lived on the pulses easily gives way to second thinking. Perhaps from the sobering fear that, as a "ranger/ In search of pleasure throughout every clime," she had too long been "wandering in a barren dream" ("On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Again"), the Indian Maiden grew sick-hearted. Lost in a weary self-consciousness, she is able only to invoke the comforts of sorrow and masochism, intimating their leech-like ingratiating: "like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast." In Isabella, we might note, Keats will play upon such a self-pitying image of motherhood, depicting the perversion of erotic vision which may accompany the consciousness of loss.

The roundelay expresses Endymion's own contradictory outlook upon a life of sensations. A different order of intercession is needed than in the Circe episode, a deeper will to integration.

Rather than performing as a surrogate magician enjoying thaumaturgic control, Endymion must act the lover, exposing his vulnerability. As report verges into drama, and without the supportive paraphernalia of hierophany, Endymion must open to his sensuality and emotions; fearful of such a whole-hearted self-confrontation, however, he hides from unitary vision by assuming his loves discrete. That is, Endymion chooses to perceive the flesh -- for the Indian Maiden is in the flesh -- and the spirit -- for Cynthia is the spiritual ideal -- as irremediably opposed. For Keats, who holds a unitary and palpable outlook, such bifurcation of "the Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination"²⁷ betrays self-division.

"I must not think," Endymion declares, prescribing the cure for those self-same sorrows distracting the maiden and himself. "Thinking" here signifies a fixation on the past that obscures and wastes away the present. Endymion must pass "beyond the brink of recollection," the trap of personal history as regret, to enjoy a Bacchic intoxication with the moment, an erotically immersed perception of the here and now.

Even as the maiden sleeps by his side, however, thoughts of division intrude upon Endymion: "I see my spirit flit/ Alone about the dark." Wholeness dissolves like moonlight beneath the weight

of alienated regard, until only the solipsistic husk of desire remains:

He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd
 her wrist;
It melted from his grasp; her hands he kiss'd
And horror! kiss'd his own -- he was alone.

(IV, 507-10)

Endymion retreats from the intensity and extremity of the vision of experience into the ambiguous Cave of Quietude.

I would approach the episode of the Cave and the subsequent narrative of Endymion's quest as a single complex, a series of rather incompatible solutions to the dilemma of divisive self-perception. The scope of alternative positions is adumbrated, terms turning into their own inversions according to the altering eye of self-examination. Perhaps because it is an isomorph of the skull and thus a "natural" image of the mind, the cave seems to provide Keats with a kind of license for generating this range of orientations which dissolve in "quick counterchange," traversing many of the poet's major motifs and concerns.

First encountered as the region of consciousness at the center of sorrow and turmoil, where "the pierce/ Of new-born woes" is unceasing, the cave images both that deeply humanized vision which would immerse in the ardent strife of the heart and the

negative pole of such responsiveness, an incapacitating acquaintance with grief. Foreshadowed is Moneta's praise of those "to whom the miseries of the world/ Are misery, and will not let them rest" (The Fall of Hyperion), and the "dead eyes" of Isabella after the "pierce" of knowledge leaves her in a world of "atom darkness" and unrelieved misery. The need to explore "dark passages" shades into the attraction of morbidity and that devaluing regard which casts a pall over all that is perceived.

Keats proceeds to posit an essential repose at the heart of agitation (IV, 524-30). Signification ranges from the salutary retreat to an absolute insentience, from the source of a "more unalarmed" outlook to the closure of a hollow-eyed apathy. We find a Wordsworthian serenity, a central peace at the heart of agitation, where the regenerative principle of inner repose becomes manifest;

O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth.

(IV, 543-5)

As Murry observes, a profound content is provided in which the whole being is reborn.²⁸ With self-interrogation suspended, timely relief is found from the drive to settle things to the

mind. A "wise passiveness" in accord with Keats's pronouncement that "we should rather be the flower than the bee" displaces all fretting after knowledge and irritable reaching after fact and reason.

Yet, as Bush observes, Keats dwells "more on misery and apathy than on renewal."²⁹ Of the Cave we read that "there anguish does not sting nor pleasure pall," for "all is still within and desolate." Not only the anxiety of thought but the life of sensation, the perspective of receptivity itself, is shut out. Like Madeline, whose chamber is set at the eye of the storm and thus "beset with painful gusts," Endymion is havened from the turmoil of the senses, blinded from the elements -- but his is a "dreamless sleep" as well. Not a philosophy of negative capability, which would value a radical openness and sensitivity to the world undulled by self-consciousness, but a fear of felt experience and the consequent abdication of perception would seem in force. The shadow-side of the cave is a delimiting of horizon, a vision of ironic self-detachment which so chastens the perceiver that inertia, the "repose that ever is the same,"³⁰ appears to be the most inviting prospect.

Keats would once again "try out" the possibilities of imaginative vision. The "lulled soul" of his apparently insentient

protagonist suddenly is "upborne, with dangerous speed," suggesting the divisive apprehension expressed in "God of the Meridian" and the Highlands poem. Yet the flight of Pegasus in "Sleep and Poetry," and the ascent upon "the viewless wings of Poesy" in "Ode to a Nightingale" are also analogues.

"Fine relish" of the "high feast" of free imagining is forthwith renounced: "I have clung/ To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen/ Or felt but a great dream!" Having strayed beyond his proper bourne, the visionary will perish from "too thin breathing," his starved lips attesting to self-betrayal. The mortal earth and present joy are to be loved to the exclusion of the ideal, Endymion pronounces; "never more/ Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore/ Of tangled wonder." A reflexive reading might suggest itself: having begun his poem quite spontaneously, Keats finds Endymion adrift in the stream of consciousness, and would make an end to the "entangled" enterprise by denouncing the visionary, in this way admitting his procedural error and dissociating himself from further invention. As in "Ode to a Nightingale," the "cheating" fancy is being envisioned and dismissed reductively. The narrator, however, turns on such a partial solution, finding it "vain and crude." A tranquility purchased by half-hearted vision is not needed, but rather a redeeming union

of contrary visions of desire. Overcome with awareness of self-contradiction, Endymion lapses into despair, an indolence of outlook ("he did not stir/ His eyes from the dead leaves") which foreshadows the stillness of Saturn, the "dead eyes" of Isabella. He blindly proposes a pious resignation to fate, the renunciation of the senses, and the retirement from the world.

Citation of Matthew x.29 by way of Hamlet -- "there is no little bird/ Tender soever, but is Jove's own care" -- clarifies the positive aspect of this solution, a faith to "let be" in recognition of benign workings. Yet negation, a colorless apprehension of the given, would seem more primary, as the "void white Chastity" is foreseen presiding over a life dedicated to the values of exhaustion: weariness and orthodox humility, submission and self-abnegation.

Renouncing experience "for very fear," Endymion would still sidestep complexity "by thinking it a thing of yes and no." External compulsion is deferred to in a projection of predestination -- "are not our fates all cast?" This debased perception of human freedom, which so compromises the ethos of potentiality and the aspiration to Divine Humanity impelling Endymion's quest, soon leads to a mocking of self and surroundings. At last, a somewhat more active stance is assumed: "I would have command/ If it were heaven's will/ On our sad fate." Perhaps this utterance may be

interpreted as indicating the desire to "take command" rather than to "be commanded," thus marking a chastened yet firm determination to take responsibility and no longer cede the future to destiny. Perhaps, much as Hamlet and Endymion alike are written in the interrogative mood, Keats's protagonist is following Hamlet's lead in choosing to forswear obstinate questionings, to no longer brood upon the multivalence of identity, the instability of perception. In the accepting of human contradiction, action becomes possible. Neither surrendering to a vision of helplessness nor imposing upon things by way of knowledge, Endymion assumes a new depth of reconciliation and control. The Indian Maiden, image of a prior duality of regard, is unmasked as Cynthia. "In her eyes a brighter day/ Dawned," and in this fresh clarity of vision, the unclouded and thus undivided perception of Endymion himself, the divinity of the human is realized. For the artificial bifurcation of the flesh and the spirit had caused the maiden and goddess to appear as discrete persons, opposed principles of beauty. The quest for an imaginative wholeness of vision is fulfilled in the final undisguising of the deep unity "of the Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination."

Despite the thematic justification presented above, the conclusion of Endymion remains conceptually problematic. Perhaps

Keats's recourse to lendings in his effort to resolve a wandering narrative underlies the confusion. The unmasking of the heroine is a device imported from Shakespearean comedy, or perhaps more directly from Drayton's neo-Platonic allegory of *Endymion*, in which the goddess descends as a nymph, receives Endymion's declaration of love solely for the divine, and overjoys him by revealing her true identity. A comedic conciliation arising from an exposure of vanity and the Platonic apotheosis indicative of fidelity to the ideal agrees uneasily with the unitary idealism pervading Endymion, the enthusiasm that "nothing less than All satisfies man." Similarly, the notions of human limitation and the necessity for submission to the inscrutable "decrees of fate" would seem to compromise the generous vision of possibility that Keats would celebrate. The apparent agent of Endymion's redemption is neither Eros -- the operative force in the Glaucus episode -- nor, in any unequivocal fashion, human choice itself. The hand of man surfacing with book and wand emerged as the ruling metaphor of self-realization in the earlier encounter; here the hand of Jove -- "heaven's will" -- is deferred to, self-effacement serving as the password for entry into the climax of transcendence. Perhaps Keats's aspiration to be included in the Spenserian tradition obliged an encoding of the erotic, a more devious route to

redeem the fallen bower of Spenserian imagining. As Frye observes,

It would be inconsistent with everything we know of Keats to assume that we ascend from the body into a higher world of the soul, abandoning the sexual basis of Eros.³¹

Yet apotheosis and the ostensible means by which this translation is earned are not unacquainted with such an exclusive dualism.³²

Although the resolution of Endymion would appear conceptually muddled, it is clear that Keats wishes to circumvent the tragic perception of human powerlessness and waste, the didactic vision of irreparable limitation. He would maintain faith in his postulate that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." He would demonstrate, in terminus, the full potency of a provident outlook. Finally, "some shape of beauty moves away the pall/ From our dark spirits," exposing the tragic as an incomplete form of the vision of beauty, and resolving the seeming collision of desires by unveiling the oneness of the ideal and its incarnation. Wholeness of vision is achieved in an instant of superlative intensity felt so deeply it remains a perpetual joy.

Rather than closing with the apotheosis of Endymion, Keats shows us Peona returning home "through the gloomy wood in wonderment." Perhaps the wedding guest of the Ancient Mariner is being recalled -- though without the morning hangover of piety -- as Keats sidesteps the autotelic impetus of narrative and signals that the work remains open. Left like Peona in the absence of Endymion's narrative, the reader is being directed back to the obscure wood of latent perception, of dimly realized possibility, the "o'erdarken'd ways/ Made for our searching" through which the self-realizing quest for clarity of vision must proceed.

We turn from our extended thematic interpretation of Endymion to a complementary structural reading of the poem, and to a brief generic consideration that shall introduce the aesthetic dimension of "being seen" in the Romance. The structure of Endymion may be approached by way of the "narrative grammar" that Greimas has formulated.³³ According to this code, narrative is a network of relations between actants (Subject-Object-Opponent), whose intersections articulate a dialectic of desire. Actants may be related by functions of doing and being, the former of these constituting the major enoncé (or elemental narrative unit), the latter manifesting predicate enoncés. When we examine Endymion from this perspective, we find that the poem

is chiefly "predicative." The participation of its prime actant, its persona, rarely involves "doing" in the sense of active confrontation; relations between Endymion and subsidiary actants are less often a version of dramatic conflict than of vicarious influence. Typically the spectator in the model Keats advocates for the ideally engaged reader, Endymion opens to receptivity and immerses himself in the vignettes and tales he observes, overhears, or is told. Through these indirect modes of involvement, he comes to acquire an inner comprehension.

The insignificance of external compulsion in Endymion, be it physical coercion or material interest, biological need or the weight of mortality, may be more usefully attributed to generic affiliation than to the poet's own cloistered immaturity. The first allegiance of the Romance writer is not to realism or verisimilitude but to imaginative reality; "in lofty and elevated language he describes what never happened nor is likely to happen."³⁴ The subjective flexibility of space and time in Endymion, therefore, is in full agreement with the genre of Romance, where natural law is characteristically suspended. We might find generic license as well for the poem's sudden happy ending. Although possibly reflecting an error of haste upon completion of a prescribed number of lines, and perhaps standing as "a most improbable deus ex machina,"³⁵ the abrupt

closure evidences the providential order conventional to Romance. Furthermore, the improbability of miracle, underscored by an awkwardness of narrative timing, fortifies such proof, enforcing a model of discontinuous change seemingly alien to natural process and thus suggesting supernatural intervention.

An absence of external opposition as the compelling force of narrative continuity finds as its correlative a structure with minimal reliance upon causal succession. In place of teleological progress, Endymion demonstrates the perpetual expansiveness of analogy. We find a series of like episodes which seem to fit into an unexhausted field of possible scenes, the initiation of Peona's quest at the close of the poem underscoring the impression that closure is a principle of organization foreign to Endymion. Rather than following a linear progress, the Romance unfolds basically as a pattern of nodal points -- a multiplication of epiphanies -- threaded together by association; this disposition tends to thin and obscure the narrative line. An unusually spontaneous or ad hoc mode of composition seems apparent, a wandering of the mind in the text-making act from one moment of inspiration to the next. The resulting profusion of detail and incident along a somewhat tenuous storyline creates the impression of homogeneity and redundancy. Wanting a more formal hierarchy of significance, elements lose

definition and come to appear rather transferable.

While the Romance tradition sanctions a proliferation of incident and fancy, of ad hoc mythologizing and digression, it encourages as well an indulgence in lush description. So encouraged, conceiving of poetry as the occasion for making "beauty" through intoxicating language, Keats strives for luxuriance in every line. In Shelley's phrase, treasures are "poured forth with indistinct profusion."³⁶ Perhaps the plethora of unusual word-forms, densely sensuous imagery, and richly limpid sound, all of which retard narrative flow as the reader is detained among novelties and "sweets," points toward the legacy of Hunt. And Hunt's Rimini, in which Dante's spare account of Paolo and Francesca is elaborated into a narrative of over 1700 lines, may well have offered Keats the most directly persuasive model for composing Endymion as a test "chiefly of Invention": to "make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with poetry."³⁷

Despite the structural weaknesses of Endymion, attributable in part to an infatuation with Romance, what might be termed the generosity of the genre merits primary emphasis. As a fledgling poet self-conscious of the reader's critical eye, Keats found in mythopoeic Romance an open invitation to explore and display the full gamut of his creativity, with relatively little pressure

to refine and polish each couplet he composed. As a trial of invention rather than craft, Endymion could be written with fluency and without what Reynolds was to call "that eye to the littlenesses which the world are so fond of excepting to."³⁸ The breadth of Romance, with its encouraging space for spontaneity and its valuing of imaginative vision, may well have eased the young poet's hesitation when engaged in his first major effort. Perhaps the specifically mythopoeic variety of Romance which inspired Keats offered as well a benign model of poetic tradition as an inspiring continuity and a kind of welcoming host that would usher him into its house of fame. The providence of the past is implicitly affirmed in Keats's choice of subject matter; for the old myth of Endymion may yet serve as the generative impulse for personal creativity, may yet "call up a thousand thoughts to envelop/ Those who would watch" (I, 336-7). It is in Greek mythology that Keats finds those elements most decisive for his own mythmaking in Endymion: the freedom of metamorphosis; the proffering of a plurality of powers or influences, a polytheism of options in place of One compulsory belief; an anthropomorphic perspective that reveals the lucid joy of the senses. Greek mythology becomes for Keats the region where his own imagination discovers its resources. But the mythic poet is not put exclusively in a posture of indebtedness or subservience to the past. For the mythic tale not only

inspires fresh imagining but is dependent upon such creative response, surviving as each of its narrators informs it with contemporaneity, adding the dimension of his personal self and the character of his age to flesh out the basic narrative grammar he inherits. Past and present come to enhance one another in a mutually fertile reconciliation of the ancient tale and the modern poet, a union creative of a new fullness.

Wishing to situate his composition within a benign aesthetic, Keats begins Endymion with a general assertion of the benevolence of the artistic past: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" and thus "all lovely tales that we have heard or read" are "an endless fountain of immortal drink," a constant source of inspiration. The wreathing of relationship and organic rhythm of increase insisted upon in the introduction might be read reflexively as images of the vital continuity of poetic tradition. More specifically, we might identify Endymion as an organic member of the literary set announced by the genre-marker Romance. The "green world" of increasing loveliness would obtain for the open-ended field of Romance, unified yet dynamic, expanding diachronically to include Endymion. In complement, Keats's Romance might itself be considered inclusive, its generic precursors numbered among the vital "surroundings" or experience assimilated within its

achieved identity. The creative adaptation of old tales and myths in much of Keats's major poetry may point toward the fertility of these models.

Severn records Keats's belief in "the Religion of Joy . . . all that incarnate Delight" of Greek mythology³⁹, and Endymion opens with the pronouncement that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." We might find in these statements an aesthetic principle that applies to Keats's Romance. As both a "lovely tale" (and thus a thing of beauty of the highest and most potent order) and the poet's own imaginative world of Greek mythology, Endymion must impart joy to the reader. Whereas a formalist aesthetic would reify the poem as discrete and autonomous, or perhaps the member of an autonomous set, Keats offers instead -- and for his own poem, if Endymion may be taken to supply reflexively its hermeneutic -- an instrumental poetics centered upon affect. Keats validates art as profit by revaluating the conventionally didactic exchange rate. In place of the moral theory of literature -- sweetened messages acclimatizing the reader to limitation and denial -- Keats maximizes the aesthetic significance of pleasure. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Behind this stance may lie the neo-Platonic endorsement of Joy as the Highest Good, a position variously echoed by the Romantics, with the "Dejection Ode" of Coleridge perhaps

offering the most familiar instance. For Keats, art is Coleridgean joy, that "sweet voice" that lifts the "smothering weight" of consciousness and the world, returning us to a nuptial universe by reviving our "Genial spirits" and "inspiring us to rejoice" in ourselves. Art celebrates life, transforming modes of response and deepening the capacity for delight, not for the sake of ulterior doctrine but for joy itself as end and means.

Accordingly, Endymion is to be perceived in terms of affect, the ability of the poem to inspire aesthetic joy. Poetic identity is being constituted as dependent upon the reader, who is being enjoined to open himself to joyful involvement before imposing an intellectual analysis. Keats is asking of the reader an emotive and co-creative sharing of the work. This status is given further breadth as Keats broaches the issue of inspiration and composition in the reflexive introduction to the Romance. Not only is a creative involvement being requested for the written text, which must be activated or made animate by the responsive reader; a co-authorial concern is being enlisted as well for the writing process itself, and even for the poet's generative state of mind. Through such involvement the reader will be participating not only in the creation of Endymion but also of Keats's professional identity, the coming into being of an accomplished poet and, per-

haps, the consequent public recognition of his name.

Well aware that Endymion shall be reviewed by "men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature," as is declared in the preface to the Romance, Keats introduces his tale in a manner intended to instill in the reader a personal regard.

. . . 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own vallies: so will I begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
Hum about gloves of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end.
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:
There let ist trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.
(I, 34-62)

The poet responds to his world with a heightened sentience, his finer-toned sensibility finding expression in the self-realizing act of writing. Having supplied this context, Keats directs attention to the composition of Endymion itself, the subjective determinants of this poetic act being explicitly announced within the text. Keats's aesthetic enterprise is stationed within the "green world" of growth, natural encouragement, and assured inspiration -- a terrain which might even be taken on a deeper level as a desire-fulfilling trope for the writing of Endymion itself as a sustaining process of joy. With an endless fountain (l. 23) as the emblem of imaginative energy, "o'ershadow'd ways" of apparent literary unproductivity shall prove to be fallow spaces of nurture vital for composition. The systole-diastole rhythm of inspiration upon which Keats must depend is enclosed within a larger organic rhythm of increase.

Announcing his own inspired condition, Keats projects the creation of Endymion as an externalizing of self. For Endymion has become assimilated into his own identity -- "the very music of the name has gone/ Into my being." Conversely, the poet inhabits the world of his persona -- "each pleasant scene/ Is growing fresh before me" -- acclimatized by a progressive intimacy with the tale.

Presenting his poetic enterprise as the natural outgrowth of

a self-generated "green world," Keats proceeds to amplify the metaphor of seasonal correspondence between nature and the mind; it is a motif to be found throughout the Keats canon. As imaginative scenes are declared to be growing like grass in "our own valleys," the reader and the poet are pronominally linked in a common love of hearth and home. Keats taps the confidence of assured relationship and shared comradeship, thereby involving the reader in the poem's intentionality. Endymion is implicitly proffered as "a movement of sympathy between two subjects," as Keats encourages "a literary empathy in which the reader takes on or assumes the author's exploration of his universe."⁴⁰

By invoking scenes of "our own valleys" Keats is also engaging in the Wordsworthian strategy of placing his poem under the influence of the local gods; personal creativity and the promise of genius are conjoined with the genius loci, the indwelling spirit of place. "Home," the originary summons, anchors that settling of "wilderness" (l.59) symbolic of poetic composition. By imparting personal meaning to an as yet indeterminate matrix -- rather in the grand Hesiodic mode of generating the cosmos out of chaos -- Keats would articulate his inchoate potential as a poet, and thereby come to inhabit his professional identity. As Keats asserted in a letter to Hessey, "that which

is creative must create itself."⁴¹ The quest for self-definition is a finding by making, for "the Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man."⁴² In Endymion, therefore, Keats "leaped headlong into the sea"⁴³ so that he might "become better acquainted with the soundings" and, in the actual process of writing, disclose his creative capacities. "Was there a Poet born?" Keats asks at the conclusion of "I Stood Tip-toe"; in the ambitious scope of Endymion he would elaborate a reply that should convince those "men who are competent to look, and do look with a zealous eye."

If the introduction to Endymion is a self-affirming act intended to encourage composition and to instill in the reader a positive regard for the forthcoming narrative, the preface to the Romance is a negative review of the finished product and of its creator. The Coleridgean procedure of referring the work back to the poet's generative state of sensibility, and the Wordsworthian image of the self as the subject of the poem have grown onerous. The intimacy between poet and poem, initially celebrated as creative, comes to inform the preface as a reflection of anxiety and a strategy of excuse. Seen as the product of a prior stage of mind, Endymion is declared "a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished." Keats generalizes

his unease into an hypothesis of psychological development contrary to the promise of speedy self-correction given in the introduction:

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted; thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of [the zealous-eyed critics] must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

The "incompletion" of Endymion betrays its generative region, the unsettled stage of adolescence during which "health and quiet breathing" are relatively absent; so shifting are the foundations of Keats's "undisciplined youngster" -- as Endymion is personified in the Preface -- that no present "castigation" or revision would avail. Keats declares in a letter to Taylor, "I am anxious to get Endymion printed that I may forget it and proceed"⁴⁴ -- with the self-creative task of writing verse that is "fit to live"(Preface).

In the original preface to Endymion, which was never appended to the published poem, Keats acknowledges:

Before I began I had no inward feel of being able to finish, and as I proceeded my steps were all uncertain. So this Poem must rather be considered as an endeavor than as a thing accomplished.

The uncertainty apparently increased as composition proceeded; the inviting prospect of composing "from one bare incident" and simply letting the fancy roam presented its negative face, the quandary of negotiating a "wide wilderness" without "prop or stay." (As we suggested earlier, the Cave of Quietude may be taken to acknowledge such mounting difficulty or confusion.)

In his first (unpublished) preface, Keats is as yet unhesitant to declare the aggrandizing aim:

I have written to please myself and in the
hope to please others, and for a love of
fame.⁴⁵

This love, repeatedly voiced in Keats's early letters and incessantly reinforced by his friends, is the Renaissance virtue of ambition born of self-confidence and fostering a triumphant communication of personal vision. By the self-conscious time of the published preface to Endymion, however, doubt ("which is self-contradiction") and anxiety at the prospect of exposure to public scrutiny have begun to shroud such expression and expectation. Fixed upon the public he hopes to please and impress, meanwhile thinking too precisely upon the "failure" of Endymion, Keats's awkward prefatory bow inclines from the adopted convention of humility, an iteration of the expected social-surface talk, toward concern about humiliation. We shall find in Isabella a correspondent self-consciousness pervading the text and

negating confidence both in a vision of empathy, on the thematic level, and in personal achievement, on the reflexive plane.

Marxian analysis may elucidate a facet of the complex of fear and ambition expressed in the Endymion prefaces. The published preface may be seen as reflecting Keats's ambivalence toward an upward social mobility latent in his aspiration to be included in the tradition of English poetry, among its pantheon of luminaries. We may extend Barthes' observation concerning the relation between belles lettres and society in the Enlightenment, noting that, in Keats's age, literature by and large remained a "socially privileged mode of transaction,"⁴⁶ the demotic poses of Romanticism notwithstanding. Indeed, this contention is supported by the allusion to class in many contemporary reviews of Keats's own poetry, which engage in ad hominem abuse by reviling or ridiculing Cockney origins.⁴⁷ Although perhaps subjacent to its Preface, consciousness of class and its exigencies is rarely made apparent in the poetic text of Endymion, except for a conventional nod to natural aristocracy in the initial presentation of the protagonist, and for a rhetorical moralism in the tirade directed against "those who lord it o'er their fellow-men," which opens Book Three. Class is an overt and pressing aspect of Isabella, however, and underlies the familial feud in St. Agnes,

where the plot borrowed from Romeo and Juliet is specifically altered to broach this social issue. Neither is class a consideration absent from Lamia, with its hero who strays from social rectitude into the arms of an unplaced and unnamed woman.

An exacerbated cognizance of the disadvantages arising from class may help explain Keats's deep response to the plight of Burns and Chatterton, the latter of these poets best exemplifying Keats's own fear of lack of recognition -- that is, the apprehension that he would be seen as low and coarse, and thus excluded from the company of famous poets. As a result of Keats's concern with social station, Chatterton assumes a looming presence in the Preface to Endymion. He is envisioned as the archetypal victim of society's prejudice and indifference, an emblem of genius driven to death by poverty and neglect. Chatterton supplies Keats with a model of tragic waste conducive to a self-indulgence in pathos and morbid projection. Inscribing Endymion "to the memory of Chatterton," Keats identifies self and poem -- "it is only that this youngster should die away" -- with Chatterton's death. Keats recognizes his dependence upon critical approval to make a life as a poet, a dependency only heightened by his grandiose dream of fame. Freshly aware of subordination, he feels anxious and threatened; and he therefore assumes -- not without cause -- that a class of judgmental fathers waits to castigate his poem, to

impose a dismissive moralism.

Keats hastens to interpose spaces of excuse and pity between the defects of Endymion (of which he has become so aware), the wrath of "zealous-eyed" critics, and his own professional capability. The goal of staking a niche within the English tradition of greatness lies distanced by fears of unworthiness and belatedness:

I hope I have not in too late a day touched
the beautiful mythology of Greece and dulled
its brightness.

(Preface)

Beside the conventional public deference lies Keats's private unease. Perhaps Endymion is an index only of his own inadequacy, highlighted by his ambitious choice of subject. Perhaps mythicized experience, particularly antique mythology, can no longer elate or console an audience. For "the world of Arcady is dead/ And over is its antique joy"; a "thing of beauty" may neither increase in loveliness nor keep its potency in the face of contemporary disregard. An era impoverished of imagination and belief may receive myth only as dead metaphor, and poetry merely as decor; "And what are poets for in a destitute time?" as Hölderlin asks in "Bread and Wine." Perhaps Keats's poem, his future poetic capacity, and his age all are unequal to desire, the time of beauty having fled. And perhaps time itself is no

qualitative structure of growth and intensity, as "dreamers" surmise (with the poet of Endymion numbered among them), but an automatic empty bracketing of experience and possibility.

"If Endymion serves me as a Pioneer perhaps I ought to be content,"⁴⁸ Keats wrote to Taylor as he began the fourth Book. Having untethered fancy, however, Keats may have found himself less at home in an expansive visionary landscape than in the less ambitious space of a human drama, engaged in portraying "the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow."⁴⁹ Putting aside invention and much of the naive faith in personal vision that informs Endymion, Keats comes to enact in Isabella a contraction of poetic field and of human potentiality. By way of a Janus-faced patterning, a vision of unity that constitutes the world as a metaphor of correspondences is revised into its own parodic abstraction, and the perception of aesthetic value put into question in the process.

CHAPTER I:
FOOTNOTES

¹"Preface," Endymion, Keats's Poetical Works, ed. H. W. Garrod, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 54.

²The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, 184. All subsequent quotation from Keats's letters is from this edition, hereafter cited as Letters.

³Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p.15.

⁴I paraphrase Bachelard's account in The Right To Dream (N.Y.: Grossman, 1971), p.165.

⁵See Geoffrey Harman, Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

⁶Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p.58.

⁷From Goethe's characterization of Winckelmann as quoted by William Worringer in Abstraction and Empathy (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1967).

⁸John Jones, John Keats's Dream of Truth (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1969), p.109.

⁹Ibid., p.138.

¹⁰Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power (N.Y.: Random House, 1967), p.210.

¹¹Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1954), p.5. The reader is referred to Eliade's discussion of concentricity and the sacred.

¹²As a nature deity, Pan ranges in conception from a local protector to a universal principle, in such works with which Keats was familiar as the Homeric Hymn to Pan, Virgil's Third and Fifth Georgics and Fourth Eclogue, Wordsworth's The Excursion, Lempriere's Classical Dictionary, Tooke's The Pantheon, and Thomas Taylor's

(note 12) translation of the Orphic Hymn. Spenser and Milton, we might note, directly theologize Pan as Christ, the paradigmatic shepherd. See Patricia Merivale's study, Pan the Goat-God (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

¹³As quoted by Sarah Lawall in Critics of Consciousness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.79.

¹⁴Northrop Frye, A Study of English Romanticism (N.Y.: Random House, 1968), pp.163-4.

¹⁵Bernard Blackstone, The Consecrated Urn (London: Longmans, 1959), p.154.

¹⁶Bachelard, The Right to Dream, p.195.

¹⁷Letters, I, 194.

¹⁸M. A. Goldberg, The Poetics of Romanticism: Toward a Reading of John Keats (Ohio, 1969), p.132.

¹⁹Mario D'Avanzo, Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967), p.133.

²⁰Keats is expanding upon Ovid's account in the Metamorphosis, Book V:

I from the bottom heard an unknown tongue
And frightened to the hither margin sprung.
Whither so fast, O Arethus! twice
Out-cry'd Alpheus, with a hollow voice.

²¹Blackstone, The Consecrated Urn, p.154.

²²Letters, I, 281.

²³Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1974), p.59.

²⁴Thomas McFarland, Tragic Meanings in Shakespeare (N.Y.: Random House, 1966), p.37.

²⁵Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p.208.

²⁶G. Bachelard, The Psychoanalysis of Fire (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 87.

- ²⁷Letters, I, 184.
- ²⁸John M. Murry, Keats (N.Y.: Octagon Books, 1975), p.170.
- ²⁹"Notes," John Keats: Selected Poems and Letters, ed. Douglas Bush (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p.324.
- ³⁰The phrase appears in Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty": "I feel the weight of chance desires/ My hopes no more must change their name,/ I long for a repose that ever is the same."
- ³¹N. Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, p.145.
- ³²Neither is the closure of Endymion unrelated to what Keats calls the "little circumscribed notion" of "the misguided and superstitious" that this world is "a vale of tears from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to heaven." Letters, II,102.
- ³³See A. J. Greimas, "Narrative Grammar: Units and Levels," MLN, No. 86 (1971), pp.793-806.
- ³⁴From Clara Reeve's definition of Romance in The Progress of Romance (1785), as quoted by R. Kellogg and R. Scholes in The Nature of Narrative (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.61.
- ³⁵W. J. Bate, John Keats (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.191.
- ³⁶Keats: the Critical Heritage, ed. G. M. Matthews (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971), p.123.
- ³⁷Letters, I, 171.
- ³⁸The Keats Circle, ed. H. Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), I, pp.43-4.
- ³⁹William Sharp, The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn (London: S. Low, Marston, & Co., 1892), p.27.
- ⁴⁰The poetic of Poulet, as cited by Sarah Lawall in Critics, p.124.
- ⁴¹Letters, I, 374.
- ⁴²Ibid.
- ⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., I, 239.

⁴⁵Critical Heritage, p.76.

⁴⁶Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero (N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1967), p.3.

⁴⁷See the comments by Lockhart, Croker, and Byron, as recorded in Critical Heritage, pp. 104, 111, 129.

⁴⁸Letters, I, 239.

⁴⁹Letters, I, 218-9.

CHAPTER II

ISABELLA:

PERCEPTION AND NEGATION

In Isabella, the fact and the prospect of being seen assume central significance, overturning the vision of Eros and severely contracting the freedom of aesthetic creation. Much as the quest in Endymion for a wholeness of self-regard finds as its emblem the benevolent "thing of beauty," the reductive dialectic of perception in Isabella finds as its figure negation itself.¹ An internal thematics of negation directs the tale toward self-parody and inversion; negation permeates the language and style of the poem; a complexly negative interchange marks the relationship between Isabella, its major source, and Keats's earlier poetry, tracing as well an implicit revision of the poet's role and the possibilities of his art.

While Endymion unfolds organically, its pattern of wreathing accumulation informed by the insight of mythopoeic imagination, Isabella advances by way of opposition, an arrangement in conformity with the outlook of reason. We might begin by examining the macrostructure of antithesis which bisects the poem. At the middle of his tale, Keats reflects a Janus-faced image of the whole; as Lorenzo and the brothers of Isabella ride into the "dismal forest-hearse," they pass a mirror of water:

. . . Sick and wan
The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo's flush with love.

(11.213-15)

Isabella is disposed according to a like structure of contrary movements, antithetical ways of seeing: a personal world of unity envisioned in "Love's eye"(1.2) is juxtaposed with and then overwhelmed by the social world of use and division, the emptying apprehension of "hollow eyes"(1.110), from which it seemed wholly removed and to which it proves totally vulnerable. An act of perception is the critical narrative event underlying this inversion, for the brothers' covertly piercing glance exposes and comes to unrealize the lovers' intimacy.

We first enter a space of mutual regard and courtesy where the vision of Eros encounters no external impediment. Here deference is no smug insignia of breeding, no fawning or hollow gesture; it serves, instead, to communicate a genuine concern and respect:

. . . I would not grieve
Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
Thine eyes by gazing.
(11.61-3)

In what Yeats calls the "old high way of love," personal being is idealized as a reciprocity admitting no encroachment or imposition. Specifically, the question of seeing and being seen is broached in a reassuring manner; acknowledgement of the vulnerability of perception is countered by the promise that exposure to another's sight will not be used to selfish advantage.

In spying out the lovers' private intercourse, the brothers of Isabella will bring to bear a contrary perspective upon relationship reflective of their own less selfless calculus of value.

For the original Boccaccio lovers, the forebears of Keats's personae, it was "no great while before taking assurance, they did that which each of them most desired"²; the immediate source for Keats, however, was the anonymous translation of 1620, a version of the Italian tale which deviates from the original text to provide a less brusque consummation.³ This idealizing (or lyricizing) tendency is extended to new lengths as Keats, in the spirit of Romance amplification, supplies his lovers with generous opportunity for sighing and wasting away. Their attenuated deferral of speech, we note, attests to character within a standard rhetoric of worthiness: the reticence of Lorenzo and Isabella, so unlike the glib wit of the brothers, is an index of sensitivity and sincerity, for fineness of soul and intensity of emotion stifle the easy articulation. The love-sickness which follows upon such repression is an analogous sign -- within this same code -- of the depth and authenticity of passion. When Isabella falls ill "within the rose's just domain," no hint is given as yet of the blight of concealment which the rift between public and personal value entails, the inward corruption of the sick rose. The lovers are never presented as self-deceived in their silence, but grow ever more

conscious of their passion and more intimately aware of one another. Their reciprocal perception comprises a heightened if incomplete mode of communication; thus,

Lorenzo knew whose gentle hand was at the latch
Before the door had given her to his eyes;
And from her chamber window he would catch
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies.
(11.17-20)

Temporality and distance present themselves, in this first movement of the poem, as malleable and subjective vehicles of the beloved's presence, love adding a precious seeing to the eye. "Wed/ To every symbol" on Lorenzo's face, Isabella's "quick eye"(1.51) discerns the distress beneath his mask of silence and, prompted by this fineness of vision, names her love; as Lorenzo's face "speaks love-laws"(1.39) to her attuned senses, so Lorenzo is able to read the true voice of feeling in Isabella's "tone and look"(1.56). Disclosure is necessarily outside the scenario of greeting each lover had planned, for the heartfelt meeting and taking of assurance must display an immediacy of intuition, a happy chance, undimmed by calculation. (In a similar vein, Porphyro must conceive his amorous strategies spontaneously -- "sudden a thought came like a new blown rose" -- so that the contagion of calculative thinking is avoided and the ideal of unreflecting love vital to St. Agnes is reinforced.) Declaring themselves, Isabella and Lorenzo complete their union, conjoining perception with sense in the immediacy of unselfconscious joy. The hazard of such openness, such simple unity, will be ex-

posed in the second antithetical movement of Isabella, where masks are not to be seen through and exchange no longer reveals the economy of the heart.

As the perception of the lovers converges in their shared vision of longing and belief -- "constant as her vespers would he watch/ Because her face was turned to the same skies"(11.21-2) -- the lovers' identities converge as well, with sexual union as the central act and metaphor of oneness. The opening stanza already demonstrates this pattern of unification: each of the lovers is first named and characterized in an end-stopped line; this initial bipolarity is then resolved by the absorption of adjacent subjects into a single pronoun -- "they" of lines 3, 5, and 7 -- indicating a shared singleness of desire and response. Throughout the first movement of the poem, the lovers patly mirror one another, coming to seem almost interchangeable. Rather than emphasizing Keats's apparent failure to realize the dramatic uses of individuation, we might approach this identity as a means for suggesting total reciprocity "in Love's eye," the sharing of a plenary vision which (to paraphrase line 10) fills all the seeing.

The converging perception and interpenetrating awareness of the lovers make the world appear a vehicle of their passion; dis-

tance, for example, signifies only in terms of their need to "be the other by," a means to coordinate their growing closeness. While subjectively constituting their world, the lovers are also in solidarity with nature, most especially with a deep rhythm of increase that runs through all being. The metaphor of seasonal correspondence, so central to the introduction of Endymion, is once again in force, pointing toward a primal sympathy and synchronization:

"Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
Lady! thou leadest me to summer clime,
And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time."
So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:
Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.
(11.65-72)

The progress of love toward gratification exemplifies the common indwelling life and drive toward fruition which binds man and nature, a harmony that gives the ripe moment its depth of resonance. As verbal disclosure, the personal contact of speech, is answered by immediate sensible gratification, so the expression of desire leads to the vision of a personal and benign cosmos, the answering counterpart to aspiration. Lorenzo climbs to the top of a hill, the expanse of a new world opening all before him; "Love's eye" and the sun seem one cosmic image, kindly overseeing while illuminating. In an idiom of natural immediacy -- as if language interposed no distance, had no capacity to alienate the perceiver from

that which is perceived -- Lorenzo "bids the sun farewell," a lived ritual of joy performed by one confidently at home under the sun "born over and over," an affectionate leave-taking which welcomes in the night of love. Man and nature appear attuned in a vision of plenitude and correspondence.

Whereas the first movement of Isabella, rather like Endymion as a whole, enjoys the benign influence of Eros,⁴ the poem's counterface is fixed beneath the jealous eye of social displacement. This turning of Isabella upon itself ostensibly traces a widening of perception: the narrative angle of vision has retracted from its service as subjective camera for the lovers' onesightedness, revealing a world no longer theirs. Personal being, in the wake of such recontextualization, is exposed nestling within the negative and encroaching order of society. Only at the sentimental conclusion of his tale does Keats invoke the comforts of communality so much more native to Endymion, where benign surroundings and a cosmos of empathy are the rule. Throughout the second movement of Isabella, on the contrary, negation enforces its sway. The content previously given to nature, to communication, and most essentially to perception itself, is reviewed under the aegis of demonic parody -- an elaborate structure of qualification. Or rather, believing that "the real structure of the human

body, of human cognition, and of the events cognized is erotic creative self-enjoyment,"⁵ Keats isolates the reality of an intimate world "all eyes"(1.83) without narrative qualification in the opening panel of Isabella, deviating from his source to amplify its scope. Thereafter, he exposes the vulnerability of Erotic vision to unrealizing forces, to the social enforcement of failed perception which finds its essential emblem in the metonymy of "hollow eyes"(1.110). Schematic antithesis is directed, then, less toward a relativizing or realistic "debunking" of value -- on this point my emphasis would differ from that given by Stillinger in his revisionist reading⁶ -- than a negative resolution of the dilemma to which Keats will constantly return: how can love and beauty be perceived in the face of inauthenticity, unbelief, and fear, in a world "full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and Oppression"?⁷

Keats intensifies the formal and thematic bipolarity of his tale by the belated conveyal of basic narrative information. Boccaccio opens with the governing socio-economic context ("In Messina there dwelt three young men, Brethren, and Merchants, by their common profession, who becoming very rich by the death of their father, lived in very good fame and repute"), and pre-

sents Lorenzo in terms of socio-economic role ("A proper youth, being a Gentleman born in Pisa, and named Lorenzo, as a trusty factor or servant, had the managing of the brethren's business and affairs.")⁸ All mention of business, of position, of class, or even of any others beyond Lorenzo and Isabella, is deferred by Keats until the union of the solitary lovers has been sealed; only then (though as an implicitly retroactive presence) do the brothers introduce in epitome the alien face of social being. Such a discrete and ideological bifurcation may be contrasted not only with the Decameron tale but with another poetic imitation of this source contemporaneous with Isabella. In the Sicilian Story Barry Cornwall [Bryan Procter] expands upon the tendency of the 1620 Boccaccio translation to vouch for the lovers' worth by citing pedigrees. Whereas Lorenzo is simply introduced as "a youth of Pisa" by Boccaccio, the anonymous translator declares him a "proper" and "trusty" young "Gentleman"; Campbell proceeds to specify that the lover comes "of a line of fame."¹⁰ Omitting the feature of social station, Keats, on the other hand, would place his lovers apart from all such secondary consideration, for he would locate value as quite distinct from class and lineage. To explore the heightening of dialectical opposition between the personal and the social, which distinguishes Isabella both from its source and from the Cornwall imitation, we shall proceed from

the economics of alienation to its psychology, directing particular attention to the estranged perception of nature, space, and time.

Keats occasioned the wrath of his contemporary critics by blackening Boccaccio's portrait of the brothers and their values. John Scott, for example, is quite typically appalled by an "extravagant school-boy vituperation of trade and traders" which evidences "idle hostilities against the realities of life"; "as if lovers did not trade -- and that often in stolen goods -- or had in general any higher object than a barter of enjoyment!"¹¹ the critic exclaims with comparative maturity. By this line of reasoning, Scott offers an unwitting explication of Keats's strategy in Isabella; indeed love and business are analogous modes of exchange -- in a structure of reductive parody. The mutuality of innocence is inverted to the divisive uses of experience. On one level this bipolar structure clarifies allegiances and places Isabella, as an exposé of the damage levied by social living, within the Romantic opposition to a worldliness "too much with us." At the same time, a thoroughgoing inversion tends to make the process of mundanization appear inescapable or inevitable, and the Romantic faith in man's unfailing potentiality sadly naïve.

We might turn to Greimas' narrative grammar as a resource for clarifying the structure underlying a surface of multiple event, character, and rhetoric. According to this code, personae

are assigned the roles of Subject, Object, and Opponent, and the narrative action defined in terms of the interplay between these forces. The first movement of Isabella might be translated into the pattern of Subject and Object, with interfusion unobstructed by any opposing "actantial" force. As division is the heart of social being in the poem, the second movement conforms in its narrative grammar to the paradigm of Subject/Object vs. Opponent, with the force of the Opponent dominating all relationship. This pattern first appears in the thematic opposition of capital and labor:

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enriched from ancestral merchandize,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quivered loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip; -- with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath
And went all naked to the hungry shark;
For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark.

(11.105-18)

The cloven vision of enlightened self-interest -- I/it, master/
slave, user/used -- apportions reality into fractions of domination. Even kinship enforces an internal sexual hierarchy, by which

Isabella is adjudged her brothers' inferior, naturally subordinate to their "trade designs." With human relationship a function of economics, everything ceases to be valuable for itself, and only by virtue of external accreditation, the market price of a commodity, may the worth of a person be measured. To extend Marcel's terms, the outlook of having has displaced the insight of being as the way of the world.¹² Eros is socialized into the greed for mastering objects, the lechery of money; the lurid imagery of loins melting from stinging whips, of naked divers gushing blood, may point toward the perversion correlative with this displacement.

The fall in perception is crystallized in the image of "hollow eyes," capable of projecting only an empty world. Homologous to the earth rifled of ore, "hollow eyes" recall in antithesis the "quick eyes" of the lovers, alive in the present joy and projecting upon the future "all the bliss about to be." Such informing of the world with an Erotic vision of wealth is countered by a parasitic model of relatedness: one's vital substance, the animating spark, is depleted for another's profit. In place of an interchange of identity generative of a mutual self-completion, the human is devalued to the utility of a tool. The displacement

of the "quick eyes" of Eros by the "hollow eyes" of experience reveals that while being remains a question of perception, personal vision may be overwhelmed and the potential for modifying the world into a structure of living meanings be negated. In accord with the conventional metaphor of eyes as the mirror of the soul, "hollow eyes" attest to the soullessness of the victim, whose outlook is devoid of hope and desire. Life-time -- the lovers' abundant leisure to play and be, to "joy their fill" -- has contracted into work-time, an enforced impoverishment of freedom and dignity. The affection of handicraft, as in Isabella's embroidery (1.16), is usurped by the division of labor; fulfillment is sacrificed to the inauthentic rule of commercial possibility. Keats would concur with Holcroft:

Men do not become what by nature they are meant to be, but what society makes them . . . generous feelings are, as it were, shrunk up, seared, violently wrenched, and amputated to fit us for our intercourse with the world, something in the manner that beggars maim and mutilate their children to make them fit for their future situation in life.¹³

Since "the increase in the worth of a man issues from the worth of his acts,"¹⁴ each of the brothers, weighed according to the maimed values of the market, is found "richer by his being a murderer."

Despite the leisure of their privileged station, the brothers share the "hollow eyes" of the exploited workers. "For them," an

echoing Selfhood in the stanzas quoted above (p.91), clears no space of exemption from the constraining hollowness of society; while the world would appear to revolve in obedience to their whims, the brothers are themselves subservient to a "vision covetous and sly"(l.141). They are their own overseers; strapped to the wheel of emulation, the imitation need and satisfaction of ownership, they cannot see beyond compulsion. Their having is only a wanting, the "hungry pride"(l.130) of the appetitive self, hopeless of satiety as Milton's Death. Self-centered and enclosed without a personal center by their confining outlook, the "paled-in" brothers scatter themselves outward to acquire valuables; the geographic scope of their business interests signals this externalization of identity, a dark parody of the Romantic quest for self-worth through a ranging exploration of experience.

The irony of "for them" in designating those driven to evade the personal and blind to the wealth of Erotic perception is accentuated by the reversal of roles: these sharp-sighted "hawks" of predatory control must "look behind as doth the hunted hare" (ll. 133 and 144), pursued by anxiety and guilty fear; and though they turn an "easy wheel" the leisure-class brothers are "mules for ducats" (ll. 119, 134), beasts of burden subordinate to money, the alienated essence of their lives. As a unity of perspective

characterizes personal being in the first panel of Isabella, the poem's second face exposes the alienation of regard as the common denominator of social living. The economics of exploitation, which hollows out the sight, foreshadows the deep inward estrangement, the "dead eyes," of Isabella.

Nature as well as society is a force and symbol of alienation in the landscape of experience. We recall that the lovers' bliss "grew like a lusty flower in June's caress." While the brothers plot murder, the lovers remain wedded to their goodly universe, revered in Isabella's matin-song and enjoyed by Lorenzo as he leans into the sunrise, body and world interfusing in "a knot of living meanings."¹⁵ Such solidarity or identification has a less auspicious side, however. We have noted the homology of hollowed eyes and an exnavated earth; in the ecology of greed, man and nature alike are raw material to be exploited and violated. Made to share the debased status of an object, man and nature are yet opposed to one another within the context of labor. No longer seeming to offer itself freely, a "ready wealth/ Our minds and hearts to bless," the world is experienced as the arena of toil and hardship. Furthermore, seasonal correspondence, which signified the rhythm of increase impelling natural/human fruition, turns onerous; as the barren "breath of winter" follows upon

"June's caress," so "sweet Isabel/ By gradual decay from beauty fell" (ll. 255-6). Implicit in this fall, which appears synchronized with seasonal decay, is the rift between cyclic renewal and human mortality, an irony aggravated both by Lorenzo's lament (stanza 39) for the natural "sounds of life" buzzing afresh yet grown "strange" in the distance of human discontinuity, and by the recycling of sorrow into vegetative growth, the abundant interchange between Isabella and her pot of basil.

The ironic otherness of nature extends beyond that of a cyclic temporality askew from human time. On a "pleasant morning," the sun smiling down upon human affairs, Lorenzo is led to the slaughter across the threshold of Arno's stream, that gurgles and fans itself "with dancing bulrush." Amid the carefree personification, the travelers' faces are seen -- or rather, exposed from behind the masking social smiles -- and the murderers' swords are subsequently dipped. If the stream is oracular, however, it tells the secret of the brothers' intention only to the reader, underscoring the impotence of Lorenzo (and of the onlooking reader, with his useless knowledge) to avert the impending catastrophe. A quiet forest is reserved for the deed. Keats is invoking the traditional obscure wood while playing off of the dim forest of self-discovery in Endymion, the "green world" of freedom adapted

from Shakespearean comedy. Critical response has tended to stress pathetic fallacy, Gilfallen, for example, interpreting the wood as appropriately hushed and prepared for "dumbly sympathizing."¹⁶ Viewed as a whole, however, the setting for the murder might rather be taken to parody a conventional "solemn sympathy" and substitute a conception of nature as merely a dumb mirror, a silent surface of unconcern, another "hollow eye." Gaiety and muteness are allied to suggest that there is no greeting of spirit or common life between man and nature. The world, instead, is an amoralized landscape indifferent to the human.¹⁷ While Keats indulges in elegiac apostrophe, invoking in Echo (stanzas 55 and 61) the naturally sympathetic resonance of things, the poet's choice of a rhetorical form mimetic of direct address comes to underscore self-enclosedness: the impassioned appeal to a personified nature calls forth no apparent reply. Such unresponsiveness, while distancing the poem from a pastoral vision of things, contributes to the larger pattern of estrangement from a cosmos of Erotic regard that marks the second movement of Isabella. The otherness of nature, as presented in Eve of St. Agnes, shall make it clear that correspondence isn't simply woven into the fabric of things: the world must be given meaning by the engaged imagination.

Levelled to the datum of a material universe, nature takes its place within the negation structure of Isabella, and finds,

in the image of the basil pot -- Keats's poison tree watered by frustration -- its most literal emblem of that perversion of organic growth and fulfillment which is native to the state of Experience. A counter-foil to the spring-flower symbolic of young love, the pot condenses the murderous wood and the fruitfully multiplying earth into a paradigm of parasitic relationship. As the economics of exploitation sets mind over matter, emptying the earth of value, interchange with the substitute object of affection traces a complementary reduction in reciprocity: with its decomposition, human consciousness -- the tearful madness of Isabella, the morbid enrichment supplied by Lorenzo -- fertilizes a luxuriantly vigorous shrub. The Romantic interiorization of nature is grotesquely parodied in the plant feeding on human sorrows and fears, flourishing at the expense of human life.

We turn more directly to the essential category of perception, approached in terms of space and time, knowledge and mystery. In the first movement of Isabella, the lovers personalize space by investing distance with lines of perceptual force. As Isabella and Lorenzo grow closer, space becomes the modality of intimacy. United, each lover enjoys as well an internal space of wholeness, a perfectly full and sufficient happiness. Division

and loss, contraction and incarceration, dominate the space of the poem's second movement. The model of a solitude shared by two with all the world is replaced by that of social isolation extending to the earth's periphery.¹⁸ The opening outward to new lands and landscapes, evidenced in the brothers' mercantilism and their forest outing, clears no room for growth, only excluding the possibility of untrodden green in the preserve of freedom. As it is occupied, space becomes property, or a means for pre-determined ends, and thus becomes lost to the exploration of human potentiality. Rather than a process of self-discovery, the journey enacts the crisis of separation. Neither does an afterlife project upon the future an open space of union beyond "leaden-eyed despair"; while defining existence solely in terms of this life, Lorenzo's ghost, exiled "on the skirts of human nature," provides a spatial metaphor of the psychic estrangement imposed by the brothers' reality. The center of being-in-the-world becomes void, as victim and victimizer alike, at home neither in the world nor in their selves, are rejected "to the exterior . . . outside and opposite things, opposite the world, opposite man."¹⁹

With her lover lost to her, Isabella is left without the illuminating perspective of Eros, and may only strain after comprehension, asking after Lorenzo with an "eye all pale, striving

to be itself." Answered by the vision of her murdered lover, Isabella engages love's insight -- or rather, a grave parody of such clairvoyance -- to burrow beneath the forest floor and clearly perceive the death below. She subsequently nurtures the basil with tears "from her dead eyes" (1.453) and, thereafter, "looks on dead and senseless things" (1.489) with a correspondent vacancy. For Isabella, as for Theotormon in The Visions of the Daughters of Albion, "the night and morn/ Are both alike; a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears."

The unmooring of identity in madness is marked by a collapse of horizon, of lived space and interior distance, which banishes the world:

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not.

(11. 409-16)

For "blindness is the distinctive characteristic of madness,"²⁰ the "dead eyes" of Isabella signifying her absorption into an order of non-being, a perspective of ultimate negation.

Whereas Endymion opens with a protagonist who is lost in self-consciousness, heedless of surroundings "like one who on the earth had never stept" (I, 404), the hero soon emerges from

this "fixed trance" to resume the quest for an enlargement of vision through the successive exploration of all phases of experience. Despite the somewhat chastened perspective that is reached prior to apotheosis, Endymion embodies a type of Romantic exaltation of the self. Isabella traces the negation of this pattern and ideal. Its lovers display a pre-reflective contact with the earth, a vision of unity "rich in the simple worship of a day" ("Fragment of an Ode to Maia"), as they greet the rising and setting sun. Yet Lorenzo is soon slain and Isabella left, in the middle of her story, to shrink from all contact. The faith of Romanticism that subjectivity shall fashion a route back to a conviction in reality is undermined as Isabella is cut off from the humanly-perceived world. Divided from her senses, her eyes grown hollow from the extremity of experience, Isabella is left to mirror the fragmentation of a transpersonal realm and the evacuating of meaning from space.²¹ Her decline to the fixity of an emblem not unlike that of the flowering basil she comes to nurture is already implicit in the burial scene; "upon the murderous spot she seemed to grow"(1.365), a Wordsworthian immobility rooted in the trauma of violation.

The brothers remain walled within their exclusive province until they flee self-exiled by their guilt. The space of inner

and outer necessity in which they are bound finds its most condensed expression in their sister's own imprisonment within a consciousness dispossessed of itself; lust for material acquisition correlatively finds its limit of contraction in Isabella's pathological attachment to the pot of basil. The cherishing of the pot, moreover, may be read as a rich if mordant commentary upon the Romantic ideals of retreat from the world into the soul's riches; of the self-creative projection of imagination upon the natural world, investing neutral space with human meaning; of the absorbed intersubjectivity of lovers who, sharing the gift of heightened sentience, make their enclosed world all-sufficient. Absorbed in a ritual of loss, Isabella is incapable of self-recovery, lacking the inner space of restitutive awareness so amply available in Endymion. Identity spirals toward a static center of blind absence.

Time, the dimension of promise and presence, is also emptied of value in the second movement of Isabella. We recall the lovers' attentive orientation toward seasons of the day -- the shared prayers of evening, the morning steps so intently listened for, and finally the meetings "all close" at dusk. Departing with the brothers, Lorenzo assures Isabella: "we'll gain/ Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow"(11.205-6). The lovers still are confi-

dent that time is theirs, and therefore they anticipate an uncircumscribed present enlarging its dimensions to the intensity of their passion. In the anti-world of Experience, however, time is not an inwardly expanding ripeness but an externally measured sentence of sorrow, attrition, and prospective death. The projected exchange of hours cannot be realized, for just as Lorenzo will not return, time will not be regained. Hope that would cast back meaning upon duration becomes an "accursed band"(1.230) exchanged by necessity for a thoroughgoing obliviousness to natural cycle. As the lovers' special cognizance of the day's seasons is inverted, the subjective eternity of love is parodied: the organic rhythm of increase, "each moment sweeter than before," falls to the redundantly successive apprehension of despair and melancholy, the empty time of "dead eyes."

Isabella and her brothers come to experience an analogous duration, a depletion of the present not unrelated to the death-in-life of the dehumanized workers. For the brothers, time is devouring and obsessive, with pride and greed objectified as the forces of necessity. Hunted by past and future, the brothers glance furtively behind and ahead of themselves. While less frenetic, Isabella's time is similarly unlived, slowing to stasis until the pot is stolen. With the possibilities of the present

destroyed by the inevitability of the past, and with the future all but forgotten, perception is made inert and the past that is clung to grows morbid and privative. Memory and personal history, salutary bowers in Endymion which foster the return to ardent experience, are predatory spectres in Isabella that feed on the spirit and hollow out the present. Broken by the consciousness of loss without recompense, Isabella -- after a final period of frenzied and futile action -- wastes away into a memory of pathos held and sung by others.

Isabella's break with the perceptual world is motivated less by the simple fact of loss than by the trauma of knowledge. While Endymion and the first movement of Isabella respectively trace an unfolding awareness of self and the gratifying disclosure of love, this optimism toward exposure is inverted in the second movement of Isabella. Neither growth nor deliverance from self-division is the fruit of revelation. As truth will out, a "sense of real things," the reality of violation, is unearthed, and empties the soul of sense. Romantic faith in intensive encounter finds its dark corollary: experience may damage beyond repair the capacity to give personal value to phenomena.

Encomia to sleep fill Keats's early verse -- "care-charming" sleep that brings visions unoppressed by dull mortality. The

counterpart of the lovers' nightly dreams to one another, of Adam's prefigurative vision of Eve, Isabella's dream of truth enacts the fall from innocence: "I knew not this hard life/ I thought the worst was simply misery"(11.329-30). Having schooled Isabella's "infancy," and thus cast her out of "the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think," the ghost of Lorenzo bids "adieu" -- like the ghost of the elder Hamlet, like Circe in Endymion, and like Keats himself in "Ode to a Nightingale," who respectively reveal the weight of violation, abasement, and lost vision. Lorenzo leaves "the atom darkness in a slow turmoil"(1.322), an atmosphere of lost connections.²² The rounded easeful bower of a world where lovers "see the brightness in each other's eyes" ("I Stood Tiptoe," 1.233) is fractured into an obscure and turbulent space where life is only atomistic data, a meaningless jar of discrete particles, a frenzy of matter. Existence is stripped of the lovers' shaping unities, their defining synthesis, and left "all in pieces, all coherence gone"(Donne). As the phenomenal field, devoid of a humanly intended structure, is hostile and bewildering, Isabella watches "the spangly gloom froth up and boil" (1.326) and experiences time, specifically the interval of sleep, as a restless discontent.

The "pierce" of knowledge (1.271), an image to return in Lamia as the "sharp spear" of Apollonius' eye, arrests the soul

in horror with a shock of disorientation so intense that becoming is fixed as death-in-life. Underlying is the myth of Medusa, to which Keats alludes in the negative Miltonic manner (that is, by means of the strategy operative in "not the fair fields of Enna"): "with duller steel than the Persean sword/ They cut away no formless monster's head" (ll.393-4). Lacking the Persean mediation of a shielded encounter, the vision of defilement freezes Isabella to the bone. In the face of extremity, the only response possible is the abdication of perception, the "dead eyes" of senselessness. Vision withdraws, as in the image Keats so admired from "Venus and Adonis," deep into the "dark caverns" of the head, the self lost in subjective isolation.

Knowledge is so petrifying because it exposes, along with an act of horror, a radical inability to account for or explain away the etiology of evil. Rather than helping "by widening Speculation to ease the Burden of the Mystery,"²³ awareness only installs the spectre of fear, of an enveloping unknown, "the baffling multitude of an alien world."²⁴ To give this blindness receding depths, Keats stresses the inscrutable pride of the brothers and the mystery of their capacity to spy out the lovers. Apparently neither the world nor human nature is deeply intelligible, and recognition of this unintelligibility only adds to

the burden of consciousness. In the first movement of Isabella, naming brings about mutual recognition; the second movement is under the aegis of nameless powers, of inscrutable fate. The nature of things resists comfortable myths of human intention, and knowledge of the way things are only points to the incomprehensibility of why they are so.

While the deep truth cannot be grasped, surface meaning is itself enigmatic or misleading. In the poem's first movement, the world, like Lorenzo's face, seems a "sphere of felt expression"(Bachelard). In the second movement, however, surfaces can no longer be trusted to give away truths; more often than not they are masks to obstruct comprehension. The days of joy and slaughter are sunny alike. Much as the face of nature is no simple axis of orientation, the brothers' faces smile and smile, an impervious masquerade. While the lovers lack the will to dissimulate, wishing only to be what they are, their antagonists, who would master and appropriate, use secrecy, calculation, and deceit as the levers of power. The brothers' act of spying is in fact the turning point of the lovers' story, for the inversion of gratified desire -- the murder of Lorenzo, the wasting away of Isabella, the cherishing of the pot -- may be traced back to this initial inversion of regard. The space of concealment and indirection which divides impulse from action

marks not only the brothers' spying but their whole approach to experience, a reflection of the discrepancy between inward and outward selves. Such is not the emphasis of Boccaccio; although the lovers are defeated by way of being seen, the brothers responding with a calculated belatedness, Boccaccio tends to stress a wise prudence, a sensible concern for appearances. No admirer of the handmaiden Prudence nor of the perpetuation of family honor, Keats suggests the deviance of the brothers, implicitly counterposing the mutuality of the lovers' tryst with the perverse fraternal plotting:

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone.

(11.169-70)

Calculative thinking, which quantifies response and suppresses immediate gratification to make a purchase upon the future, easily defeats the open spontaneity of love. Drawn into a self-alienating circle of response, Isabella devises how she "might secret to the forest hie" (1.338), and forthwith removes the "jewel" in "anxious secrecy," finally reburying the "prize." Her enterprise parodies the brothers' mining projects, their guile and greed, their fear of exposure. Perhaps the deeper impact of deception is absorbed by Isabella as well, the internal canker of concealment marking her decline.

The absorption of Isabella into the hollow values of her brothers is paralleled by the fall of the lovers from an elaborate-

ly redundant mutuality of perception and desire to a more parasitic relationship premonitory of Isabella's interchange with the pot of basil. The spectre of Lorenzo is gladdened by the lady's paleness which warms his grave, her wraith-like beauty which grows upon him and restores feeling (stanza 40). The sado-masochism to which the love of Lycius and Lamia degenerates, and the vampire-like morbidity of "This Living Hand," are both foreshadowed. Perhaps the decadence of Isabella itself is suggested as well; for it is a poem in which misery is exploited as an object of aesthetic regard, making of sorrow a spectacle of pale beauty.

As calculation distances perception from response, and concealment distances surface from underlying truth, communication is estranged from felt expression. In the initial section of Isabella, speech precipitates joy, illuminating emotion. The lovers still are conversing as Lorenzo prepares to depart, yet speech is no longer reserved for clarifying mutual attraction or sharing truths. In accord with social milieu -- linguistic and monetary exchange being analogous systems of commodity -- words are used for what can be got out of them, as the currency of gossip, wit, and deceit. Discourse reflects the negative value

of imitation satisfaction, "idle ears" finding pleasure in the woe of others. As Keats remarks in a letter to Haydon: "conversation is not a search after knowledge but an endeavor at effect"²⁵; it is the index of pride, the craving to be confirmed by others. In a prior letter, Keats identifies social talk as the superficiality of wit, which "makes one start without making one feel." Out to impress, the brothers shine as "great wits"(1.136), their glib chatter the counterfoil of the lovers' earlier struggle to speak personal truths. The witty brothers are adept as well at manipulating language to mask and misrepresent emotion, as in their decorous invitation to Lorenzo (stanzas 23-4). Neither this glozing parody of the lovers' courtly language of respect, nor the subsequent lies regarding Lorenzo's travels, may be easily seen through. Unintended for direct communication, speech is refrained from when deception is no longer requisite: Lorenzo is stabbed "without any word" (1.296), silence being the most alienated form of revelation.

Yet silence is also a negative rhetoric of action and as such, in the context of act as violation, seems the least compromised mode of language. Silent Dido (1.99) speaks deeply to the heart of love's sorrows, perhaps attesting to the mute truth that sorrow is itself the heart of love. And Isabella, tending her own garden, forgets

communication as she forgets perception. While bespeaking the isolation of madness, her silence reflects the necessity to hide and stifle the impulse to tell: in an arena of hostility and fear, where being seen and being heard are versions of perilous self-exposure, survival depends upon a "dumb forgetfulness" of one's situation and sensitivity. As Keats wrote to his friend Reynolds, "a man should have the fine point of his soul taken off to become fit for this world."²⁶ Only after the basil-pot is stolen does Isabella resume the attempt to communicate, and the helplessness of her situation is underlined by the futility of these speech-acts. With the pathos of Margaret in The Ruined Cottage, Isabella asks travellers where and why the pot has been hidden. In an ironic displacement of belief in finding meaning through personal interview or encounter, of recovering self-awareness through the recitation of personal history (ever a dependable method in Endymion), the redundant question itself is its only answer, the travesty of a satisfactory reply.

As fraud is so easily spoken and so efficiently opaque, language seems to lend itself to duplicity. Perhaps in a mimesis of this inclination, Keats uses double-meaning, and echoes words in antithetical contexts²⁷; he illustrates thereby that language is not comprised of univocal semantic signs which might embody a

determinate signification; while making a partiality manifest, words exceed their context, intruding their own multivalence and bringing to bear a more protean viewpoint.²⁸ This is the case in the first movement of Isabella, where the linguistic mode of presentation diverges from the narrative content to place the unitary vision of Eros within a wider perspective. To this micro-structure we now turn, analyzing the dialectic of style as negation.

Negation is the dominant linguistic feature of Isabella, the modality of a pervasive sign-structure with a significant semantic as well as ornamental function. In global terms, it operates within the context of authorial self-consciousness and self-qualification surrounding the poem, a context that we shall suggest is founded upon Keats's concern with "being seen." Before offering such speculation, however, we shall look to the text itself for evidence of the frequency of negation as a local feature. Already in the opening stanza we find its multiple presence:

They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
But to each other dream and nightly weep.

In three figures which share an identical two-sided pattern of negation -- for "but" and "without" reduce to "not" in an "If not A, then not B" configuration -- terms are yoked together by a causality more binding than a simply affirmative construction would generate. Marking propositions by double negation, Keats

extends each of their features to its limit or margin of possibility, the point where defining identity is inverted. Relationship between terms, when they are placed on this common edge of extremity or dissolution, collapses toward interchangability. The binding of terms is made to appear compulsory. Negation seems to imply, moreover, that the full scope of the positive has been traversed and known. Thus the feature may contribute its implicit breadth to reinforce superlative constructions:

He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;

negation buttresses the lovers' full coincidence of identity.

The extremity of negation may enrich love's hyperbole in an optative as well as indicative mode:

"O may I never see another night,
Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune."

"Never" claims all time as its province, the inclusive and consuming intensity of desire. But time may also be emptied of a wished-for fullness, as in "honeyless days," where negation adds the fact of a withholding of what is thereby made to appear the "natural" feature that "should" be there.

So once more he had wak'd and anguished
A dreary night of love and misery.

The scope of the action described in the remainder of stanza eight is enlarged by the counterpoint of negation, a counterfactual con-

ditional summoning a world of anguish on the shadowside of joy, an inverse possibility to intrude upon love's simply resolution. Similarly, lines 61-4 bring to bear an anti-world in which attention to reciprocity is absent and lovelessness or lack of gratification not an unfamiliar pattern:

. . . I would not grieve
Thine hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live
Another night, and not my passion thrive.

Abundant negation helps station love and its survival on the thin edge of possibility -- the superlative bourne of the chief intensity -- surrounded by a host of contrary conditions and eventualities. This precarious status is underscored by the specification, "unknown of any," to designate the lovers' safety. Cited as descriptive, the phrase nevertheless implicitly sets a limit of improbability for enduring love. Negation shadows the idyll of Lorenzo and Isabella with the imminence of reversal and division.

While creating thematic complexity and narrative premonition, the microstructure of negation which we have isolated in the initial section of Isabella functions as well on a stylistic plane. Negation takes its place as a rhetorical figure within a poetic texture antithetical to Romance spontaneity. Such an inversion of style points to the general intertextual relationship of negation

by which Isabella "supercedes" Endymion. As early as 1851, Isabella was cited as a stylistic watershed, E. Moir praising the new selectivity that had displaced Keats's earlier "indiscriminate pouring forth": some lingering "faults of affectation and quaintness" notwithstanding, Keats "triumphed over his earlier besetting frailties . . . want of precision and carefulness."²⁹ Although this triumph might be adjudged a very mixed blessing, the fact of Keats's intentional turnabout in style remains crucial. Determined not to create another "undisciplined youngster," another mirror of a mind "like a pack of scattered cards,"³⁰ Keats imposes ordering principles from without. Rather than relying upon the diffuse and prolix organicism of Endymion, Keats would forego a poetry that comes "as naturally as the Leaves to a tree."³¹ He adopts instead a consciously willed and collective style, turning away from a headlong art with its oneiric arbitrariness of image and sequence. Seen in a less positive light, this shift in style might be aligned with the rejection of an art mimetic of creative perception. Rather than suggesting a continual opening of horizon, the style of Isabella seems to reflect the closed field of programmatic vision. Critical judgments notwithstanding, it is clear that Keats has exchanged the method of composition by association and discovery in the writing act, with its attendant valuing of self-

expression and emotive overflow, for the arts of formality and calculation; repetition, rhetorical inflation, and devices of economy (particularly allusion and irony) become the central stylistic choices in Isabella, as stylistics itself becomes a kind of rhetoric. We shall examine these formal strategies in detail, and subsequently suggest their place within a poetics of being seen, an exacerbated consciousness on Keats's part that Isabella is an object of critical regard.

The choice of stanza first signals a new formal discipline, as Keats adopts the constraining ottava rima of Fairfax in place of Hunt's loosely enjambed couplet -- or rather, in place of the predominance of the loose couplet, for Endymion admits some heterogeneity of form, while there is no stanzaic deviance in Isabella. The visual appearance of a uniformly apportioned page supplants the variable shape of irregularly long verse paragraphs. The flowing continuity of aural structure is now chartered, amplifying the danger of forced and stale rhyme to which Endymion, despite its less demanding scheme and more relaxed approach to end-stopping, often succumbed. Whereas the open couplet lent itself to a flexible accommodation of thought and syntax, which often overflowed the envelope of rhyme, the ottava rima stanza, in its elaborate pre-established order, places a greater premium upon

craftsmanship. A triple accumulation of interlocking rhymes capped by a closed couplet invites an entwined coherence and enclosed summation (or the seal of an epigrammatic twist). Keats favors the neat fitting of syntax and thought into predominantly end-stopped lines -- and almost uniformly end-stopped stanzas; we find the tidy conjunction of syntax, meter and rhyme.

If Endymion displays a youthful effervescence, Isabella demonstrates a rigor toward form that places structural elements in the foreground. One aspect of this orientation is the deepened interest in the musical properties and effects available to verse, to be investigated "by ear industrious and attention meet" ("On the Sonnet"). Keats may be applying "the principle of melody in verse" upon which he discoursed to Bailey³², when he experiments with a densely redundant field of sound; using a plethora of internal rhyme that revolves especially around the set recurrence of end-rhyme, Keats restricts and binds the phonic web of Isabella.

Perhaps Isabella might usefully be approached in terms of the Formalist aesthetic as encapsulated in two familiar pronouncements. If, as Mukarovsky maintained, "the function of poetic language consists in the maximum foregrounding of utterance" -- for its own sake as linguistic form rather than as referential vehicle -- primarily by means of highly patterned language, then Isabella

would appear remarkably functional ; and, following Jakobson, if the "poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection on to the axis of combination," organizing in sequence linguistically related units, Isabella would be multifariously poetic.³³ For the phonic dimension of repetition cited above comprises only a narrow aspect of the operation of recurrence in the poem. Identical phrases, as well as single words, often are iterated in structurally identical positions. Use of parallelism extends both to the balancing of shorter units within adjacent lines and to the widescale arrangement of content according to the pattern of anaphora.

As the reinforcement of end-rhyme lends a kind of stability to the latter portion of the line, anaphora contributes a stiffness to line-openings. Keats is, once again, constraining the fluidity and sense of possibility which are evidenced in his earlier style. He is foregoing a fidelity to the energies of sensuous imagination as the method for discovering a principle of poetic form, in the interest of craft and control. Yet the syntax of oratory too often prevails in Isabella, as does a rather automatic redundancy which points to rote composition or the primacy of stylistic obligation rather than semantic necessity.

Expected forms are rather the rule than the exception in Isabella, which leans as a whole toward a predisposed uniformity of structure, the homogeneity and monotony of its linguistic surface distracting the reader from full attention to the tale at hand. If poetry "should be great and unobtrusive," as Keats declared in a letter to Reynolds,³⁴ Isabella is found wanting. With antithesis as a dominant norm of the text -- and, as Fogle observes, Isabella is "sometimes so directly antithetical as to proclaim 18th Century models"³⁵ -- matter is set into stock juxtapositions, a notional balance and tired equilibrium which misses the sudden illumination of contrast. Unreserved for special effect, parallelism tends to level content in its pat symmetries, depleting impact and significance. Considered from a broader perspective, the relative unsuccess of linguistic and syntactic repetition in Isabella is a function of an indiscriminate use. Iteration becomes a pervasive gesture without real expressive work to do. To borrow Keats's terms of evaluation for Miltonic verse, Isabella is written in an "artful humour" and therefore displays the "false beauty proceeding from art."³⁶ Conversely, there is little "native with the warmth" about the poem,³⁷ and perhaps little conviction that an instrument of truth might be found in its presiding art of rhetoric. A dulling luxury of set

forms might be designated as the counterpart in Isabella to the profuse sensuous embellishment (and structural laxity true to the mind's divagations) of the earlier verse. While perhaps nodding to the Enlightenment virtues of measure and proportion, Keats constructs a style that tends to devitalize and violate these same values by its excess, its mechanical redundancy, its woodenness.

Keats is perhaps truer to the declamatory side of the Classical inheritance with his frequent incursion into theatrical rhetoric and exclamatory inflation. Success is limited, however, as style tends to become a ponderous armor. Other textual features might also be ascribed, in part, to the influence of a neo-classical poetic, among these the use of abstraction, allusion, figuration, and irony.

Fondness is shown for personified Abstraction. Although qualifying as personification, however, a phrase like "hungry death" or "selfishness, Love's cousin" does not in fact tend to animate or humanize its field of influence, at least in the sense of bestowing individuated personality. Instead it points to a timeless state, a measured portion of the emotive or experiential spectrum exempt from the mutability and unpredictability of psychic variety. As such, categorization of this kind appears in

harmony with a worldview in which the possibility of personal vision is strictly delimited from without.

Requiring modes of amplification for his borrowed tale yet intent upon restraining invention, Keats compresses the roaming fancy and fulsome ad hoc mythologizing of Endymion into the leaner device of allusion. Analogous tales are no longer the points of departure for imaginative embroidery, but the points of reference for terse citation. Perhaps the Classical assurance of a common store of knowledge, or even a fund of shared beliefs coextensive with man's social nature, lends itself to the strategy of allusion. For allusion confidently bypasses the idiosyncrasy of individual reverie, the streaks of the tulip, in favor of traditional authorities, customary types and examples. In place of the liberality of expression and digression in Endymion, Keats achieves a kind of compact and impersonal extension of range, as he invokes Dido, the Persean sword, Hinnom's vale, and Theseus' spouse. Lengthier allusions, on the other hand, seem forced and indulgent; the Gothic simile intended to amplify Lorenzo's spectral voice (stanza 36), for example, or the exotic simile imported to inflate the savagery of sudden knowledge (stanza 34), though sanctioned by Homeric license, fails to register fully. Despite Keats's considered stylistic preferences, the effect of "singularity" rather than a "fine excess" is achieved.³⁸ More concise

figures prove a happier resource, as in the Shakespearean name-calling by animal metaphor through which the brothers are deftly tied to a menagerie of hawks, mules, cats, bloodhounds, hares, and sharks. Successful as well is the resolving metonymy to capture their alienated essence: "moneybags." For temporal condensation we may look to the striking prolepsis, "their murdered man" (1.209), binding Lorenzo to his fate with an abrupt prematurity.

Irony may also be considered a mode of condensation insofar as it is born of the compressed yoking of contrary visions. Moreover, irony customarily aligns with the aesthetic of craftsmanship evident in Isabella, as it claims precedence for artistry over personality, for literature as product rather than process. While the macrostructure of Isabella is disposed in terms of thematic negation and conforms to Tieck's conception of Romantic irony, beauty exposed and defaced by experience, the poem's pervasive texture of ironies suggests an Augustan legacy. The range of irony, however -- and we find urbane mockery and dramatic irony, incisive correspondences and glib or trivial cleverness -- tends not to suggest a corresponding normative superstructure.

The jostling of perspective which characterizes irony -- and the discrepancies between ironies -- informs as well the

narrativity of Isabella, particularly as it intersects the negations of style and influence. We have analyzed Isabella thematically as a simple two-sided figure conforming to a narrative grammar of Subject-Object/Subject-Object-Opponent. We have shown that on either side of this bipolarity the content of key existential categories -- particularly the perception of nature, space, and time -- is found to correspond by way of antithesis. Such a disposal of content, while suggesting a more synchronic than diachronic order, nevertheless projects the given sequence of a logical formula. In terms of plot development, the poem's first movement is constructed around a transparently attenuated complication, the convention of unrequited love giving the narrative some tension as it loiters toward expectation. The second movement seems impelled by a different kind of causal inevitability, almost a "consequitive reasoning" that will grind down all possibility in its mechanical progress. But such an abstract and singleminded treatment of subject-matter, which follows the law of demonstration and bars all irrelevancy from its path, agrees uneasily with a dominant focus upon what Greimas calls modal enoncés, functions of being rather than doing. Outward events are clearly not the basic unit of consideration in the tale. If Isabella is "feebly conceived," as Matthew Arnold observed,³⁹ and "weaksided," as Keats himself conceded,⁴⁰ if it is a poem

that is lacking in adequate dramatic externalization, the subordination of action to character may be attributed in large part to an overriding concern with psychology and emotion, a typically Romantic preference for interior happenings. Poetry is "to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves."⁴¹ Form and content, however, are not in mutual harmony with this preference, for the style of Isabella is ill-suited to the primacy of subjective states, its rigid formality discouraging empathy, distancing the claims of personal history and de-authenticizing emotion. The heavily textured surface places its own design in the foreground, stresses its own status as literature and set-piece, according the subject a remoter presence. In structuralist terms, the elaborately redundant system of signifiers calls attention to itself at the expense of the signified. Rhetoric, furthermore, is a mode that abstracts what is private, that demystifies interiority. And indeed Keats does stand at cross-purposes in this regard, constructing both a narrative of pathos and an exercise in irony, both indulging and somewhat mordantly demystifying the beautiful private soul.

If each author "provides an implicit set of directions concerning the distance from the object at which the read must stand,"⁴² Keats supplies conflicting pointers indicative of his own unsettled

stance. Armored in a decorous style stiff with calculation, Isabella yet pretends to be a simple tale of the heart. At the same time, its narrative singlemindedness of an almost naturalistic causality is riddled by a whole spectrum of authorial points of view, contrary signals concerning aesthetic or psychological distance.

Simplicity of plot distinguishes Isabella from Endymion. As Keats eschews the direct transcription of proliferating association, and a consequently rambling episodicity, he constructs a tighter story with fewer incidents and the careful subordination of parts under the control of a leading plan; but narrative is unexhausted by this structure. As Paul Goodman observes:

The formal property of all narratives is that there are two plots interacting: the narrated action in the 3rd person, and the narrator's plot, i.e., spoken or constructed, in the 1st person. There is the description and the system of hypotheses, the story and the commentary.⁴³

Complexity shades into confusion, however, as Keats so variously violates the illusion that art is life in Isabella that the depth of engagement required of the reader is constantly shifting. In the story (as distinct from the commentary) a predominance of third-person narration is joined by the quotation of thought and speech, a mimesis of immediacy which draws the reader inward by

its impression of shared subjectivity and direct participation. Authorial commentary meanwhile is posted throughout the text -- as if Keats were determined to intercept responses and interpolate defenses against them; or perhaps the frequent and disorienting remarks reveal Keats's desire to underscore his own dilemma in the writing itself. With the levels of engagement so juggled by the narrator's plot, the illusion that the stability of a "proper" reading distance might be found appears belied.

While point of view is moored securely in the first movement, as befits the inward and clearly reliable world of Innocence, the text fills with commentary as we enter the narrative space of Experience. The reader's immersion in the unfolding tale is disturbed in a complexly various manner by means of foreshadowing, allusion, stock apostrophes, rhetorical questions, literary invocations, direct appeals to critical judgment, and the juggling of tenses.

That the narrative so profusely calls attention to itself and to the act of narrating may be taken to reveal an extreme self-consciousness on the part of the poet, which in turn reflects upon Keats's relationship to his source and to the tradition of sentimental narration with which Isabella is affiliated. For the reflexive dimension of exposure, of being seen -- that is,

the poet's cognizance that his art is the object of critical regard -- seems to obtrude upon both the style and the content of Isabella, suggesting that a consideration of how Keats envisioned his own act of creation is vital to an understanding of the poem. We turn to a close examination of the relevant passages of commentary, beginning with the two-stanza apostrophe to Boccaccio:

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
Now they can no more hear thy glittern's tune,
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
Shall move on soberly, as it is meet;
There is no other crime, no mad assail
To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet:
But it is done, succeed the verse or fail,
To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet;
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

(ll. 145-60)

Apology is couched in archaism, and appears by and large the neutral and decorous voicing of humility appropriate to convention. Perhaps the display of contrition ("ask forgiving boon" and "grant thou a pardon") and the surprising mention of "crime" and "mad assail," however, might appear excessive enough within an allegedly benign context to suggest that Keats is not wholly

comfortable in the position of respectful subservience. Quite revealing in this regard is the letter to Taylor in which Keats expresses the "hope" that he has "friends who, if I fail, will attribute any change in my life and temper . . . to a cowering under the wings of great Poets rather than to a bitterness that I am not appreciated."⁴⁴

As the grounding of Isabella in a sense of poetic vocation is obtrusive, Keats chooses to situate himself in the Chaucerian manner within a tradition of auctoritee, with Boccaccio as the master to whom homage is due in the form of the followed example, the humble imitation. Isabella, we are told, is solely a selfless enterprise, an act of praise, which neither claims nor aspires to surpass an honored original.⁴⁵ Dependence upon the past and indebtedness to tradition are not given primary stress, however, as Keats presents himself engaged in spreading the fame of his precursor through the infusion of his own vitality. Despite this less self-effacing image, Keats poses as unengaged in a fame-making project for his own name; he would not outdo his original, but rather "stead" Boccaccio -- be of service and benefit by giving his "famed" precursor a refreshed currency. The parenthesis, "succeed the verse or fail," suggests the comfort and convenience of this stance: Keats may write with relative impunity, his poem's

success purportedly dissociated from his own career. Yet we might observe that, in the act of protesting motivation and denying a competitive relationship with "eloquent and famed Boccaccio," Keats directs the reader away from the tale, delaying its plot to place in the foreground, in effect, an extended reminder not only of homage but of the underlying reality of authorial rivalry. A subsequent intrusion of commentary more clearly betrays this reality:

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance?
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak: -- O turn thee to the very tale
And taste the music of that vision pale.

(ll. 385-92)

Tone is no longer simply decorous, gesture plainly exceeding the expected code of deference; the simple categorization of Isabella as an act of Romantic celebration of continuity will not suffice. For the benign aspect of imitation, as a mode of self-instruction and self-discovery which inspires a self-surpassing music, appears to have been eclipsed by the anxiety of influence. Perhaps grown self-conscious of the reader as an onlooking critical presence, Keats would "forestall criticisms"; I borrow the phrase from the Preface to Endymion, where it was couched in denial, to summon up

the whole earlier context of self-doubt regarding professional competence. Keats is once again writing for "men who are competent to look and who do look, to the honor of English literature." The poet would intercept and redirect back to the original text ("O turn thee to the very tale") the questioning glances of such discriminating readers, beneath whose zealously critical regard Isabella might well be found wanting.

Although the preferability of gentle Romance is asserted, the limitations of this priority are implied as well. "Lilies that do paler grow" in the initial apostrophe are exposed in the subsequent invocation to Boccaccio as emblematic of a "vision pale." Keats is reading his original reductively as a somewhat etiolate anachronism to which Isabella stands not as an echo the re-enlivens but as a more salient and fullblooded alternative. That Isabella might appear to the reader less appealing than the tale by Boccaccio is only by virtue of its refusal to evade the darkness of experience. Sung "in the northwind" (l.160), in the harsh unsheltered climate of experience, Keats's tale will surpass his original not in sweetness but in truth, penetrating beneath that simplicity of the world which characterizes the cloistered perspective of the narrative of pathos -- and of "poor simple Isabella" herself. And so, the second apostrophe to Melan-

choly, Music and Echo (stanza 61) is a turning upon the first which banishes the traditional voices of elegiac consolation as unequal to the actuality of desolation.

As an aspect of his attempt to influence the reader's perspective, Keats invokes Melpomene, suggesting for his own poem a tragic dimension lacking in the "simple plaining" of his precursor. The relationship between source and "echo" is being translated into Keats's favored progress in maturity, the movement beyond "golden-tongued Romance with serene lute" to the more agitated and significant poetry of the human heart. Keats's quarrel, viewed from this perspective, would not appear to be either with Boccaccio, hardly a sentimentalist, nor with the unknown translator of 1620 who tended to soften the Italian original, so much as with the generic "lovely tale" itself, a further instance of what Hartman calls "the struggle of the romantic poet with Romance."⁴⁶

Yet the relative reconception of Boccaccio as sweet and light is not only a sign of unfamiliarity or misunderstanding -- for Keats had not read Boccaccio in the Italian -- but an act of self-authorization as well. That is, in addition to a somewhat self-contradictory stand regarding the uses of pathos, Keats is ambivalently engaged with his precursor in the apportionment of writing space. Room for original composition is being wrested

in the usual manner: one wrongs (or simplifies) the past, declaring its art over-idealized, and then proceeds to settle one's own claim to an art that gets away from art (or, at the least, more openly acknowledges its own artifice), and is thus more tough-minded, real, and true. We may conjecture that the prospect of rewriting a master of Boccaccio's stature was intimidating to Keats, particularly in light of the young poet's aspiration to be included within the tradition of greatness, to be numbered among the poetic luminaries. The scope of competition which informed the rewriting project may well have compounded the self-doubt Keats expressed in the Preface to Endymion; for, in the act of composing Isabella, Keats was, in a sense, placing himself not only beneath the critical anticipatory glance of the reader, but also beneath the encouraging and reproving eye of his famous precursor. Furthermore, in composing not from "one bare circumstance" but from a finished text, Keats no longer enjoyed the open invitation to "let the fancy roam" and invent freely outside an immediate context of competition. Perhaps the chosen tale from Boccaccio was of a specificity more onerous or incapacitating than richly suggestive; for such a fully realized text, so unlike the brief legend and single paragraph which subsequently inspired St. Agnes and Lamia respectively, might have

inhibited transformation of the given material, offering little opportunity for creative intercession on Keats's part. The original tale may have seemed, instead, to press for a simple reproduction of its many features, thus confronting Keats with an uncongenially straitened task through which he would become merely an echo of another's voice.

The apology for "syllables that ill beseem" (l.151) might be taken to indicate (in light of the subsequent stanzas of apology): a sincere recognition of impropriety, the failure of decorum (a failure that Keats would no longer wish to blame upon immaturity, the covering excuse of the Preface to Endymion); the frustration of finding no personal space for seemliness; the overshadowing fear (implicit in Keats's Preface to Endymion) that no proper work remained for him to do.

"It is our veneration for what has already been created . . . that petrifies us," Artaud observes. Such a perspective might illuminate various aspects of Isabella, chief among these being the impression of a self-conscious exercise from which the poet distanced himself during composition. A thematics of morbidity which Keats himself questions ("Wherefore all this wormy circumstance?"), while it may comment upon the moribund nature of poetic tradition and the decadent status of belatedness, might also be taken as

the byproduct of a strained remoteness, a withheld or repressed involvement with the poem. Rigidity of style may similarly reflect the confinement and crossed purposes of imitation. Such a stylistic feature as the surfeit of allusion in Isabella might be approached accordingly in terms of Keats's complex position in relation to his own text; for, like the act of imitation itself, the use of allusion is ostensibly an expression of humility within an aesthetic based upon psychological distance and the continuity of tradition; yet the confident invoking of other works to complement one's own seems foreign to the strained procedure often evident in Isabella. Perhaps when one's tale is not one's own, when one is composing at the distance of a reflection, allusion may become a means to find personal space, to express personality and originality, to refer to one's self, through the indirection of borrowings twisted into idiosyncratic conceits.

The question of the precursor is aligned with the whole problem of genealogy. In the tale, we recall, lineage is a divisive social code rather than a means of harmonious community. When we learn belatedly of the brothers, we discover as well that Isabella is "enriched from ancestral merchandize," the common inheritance encroaching upon her innocence, her exemption. It is

almost as if she were tainted by heredity, receiving the negative riches of original sin. Perhaps poetic lineage, too, is being found not unburdened by debt, violation, and guilt. Keats sends the reader back to the original tale, writing in homage to Boccaccio yet recognizing in Isabella a less than wholly affectionate regard; he is apprehensive that, beneath the strain of a great name and authority, he has engaged in an act of negation. It is not only that writing is itself (in the phrase made familiar by Russian Formalism) a creative deformation of language that subverts a given vocabulary; nor even that the poet finds, in the act of imitation, that his given vocabulary is not only common or poetic speech in general but also the actual text of the precursor. While imitation might well appear to involve by definition the usurping of a prior text, a de-composition that imposes alien meanings, Keats finds that he has not only supplanted the old tale he would honor but intruded upon it "all this wormy circumstance." As such, his writing is both parodic of and parasitic upon the host in a fashion that Cornwall's Sicilian Story, for example, is not, as self-appropriation is informed by the anxieties of indebtedness, misgivings concerning his adequacy as a poet entangle with Keats's uneasy sense of the misdirection of Isabella itself.

The negation of influence embraces Keats's own poetic his-

tory. Looking back at Isabella Keats remarked: "in my dramatic capacity I enter fully into the feeling; but in *Propria Persona* I should be apt to quiz it myself." Such questioning is already apparent in the text, which purports to be not only a simple tale of sentiment but -- to apply Keats's phrase for his own necessary artistic development -- an account of "the agonies, the strife/ Of human hearts." As such, Isabella is richly divided against itself, now acquiescing in a far more expansive and elaborate fashion than its source to the enticement of Romance, the ease of pathos and pity, now evidencing disaffection with such a mode or perspective. Perhaps we might say that Isabella, while not simply an "anti-romance" as Stillinger contends,⁴⁷ is an outgrowing of the sentimental tale in part by way of discoloring or decomposing its "sober-sweetness."

Keats ends his poem with a pat concession to the gentle formulae of old Romance:

No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast.
And a sad ditty of this story born
From mouth to mouth through all the country passed:
Still is the burthen sung -- "O cruelty,
To steal my Basil-pot away from me!"

Deviating from the Boccaccio, Keats has installed the refrain earlier in his text as Isabella's spontaneous lament. Echoed at

the end as aesthetic indirection, a cushioning space is fashioned between violation and response. Whereas as the burden itself dramatizes the other in the guise of encroachment and theft central to Isabella, the final stanza transplants into the poem a model of social intercourse recalling the community with which Endymion opens. A rather alien poetics of empathy emerges at the close of Isabella, the reader drawn into the pitying chorus, with art as the agent of reconciliation to a common and caring humanity, the means of catharsis through which misery is transcended and a natural tranquility restored. Life is made to coincide with the sentimental code: sorrow is productive, a humanizing force for personal growth and fellow-feeling; "out of human suffering" springs a soothing kindred world, by way of the complementary Romantic conviction of poetry as an instrument of human betterment. But meaning is not located at the end of a narrative, rather traversing the text. The resolution of Isabella would appear incompatible with a world where grief grows morbid and affectionate communality is a mask of self-interest, where social isolation and exploitation are the rule. Keats indulges in the tears of an 18th Century sentimentalism, the stock elegiac interest in bereavement -- and perhaps such indulgence is not uninvolved in a

concession to the general reading public, to the easy emotionalism of popular art which would facilitate a recognizing of the poet and his acquiring of fame. Yet Keats also undercuts the pathos of his narrative, for he wishes to respect more than the decor of emotion. He therefore sets the basil-pot feeding on human sorrow, disturbing the prettier joys of pity.

Unsatisfied with the literary conventions of pathos amply imported to lengthen an already sentimentalized original, Keats is yet unsure where else to situate his tale:

Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
Too much of pity after they are dead,
Too many doleful stories do we see,
Whose matter in bright gold were best be read.

Valuing sensuality as the natural order of health and joy, Keats would disavow the hugely dominant literary tradition of love as entailing disorder and sorrow, a fatal attraction doomed by life itself. This repudiation is, in part, strategic, a "pseudo-parody to disarm criticism"⁴⁸ and to reinforce the authority and truth-value of Isabella. The subsequent convoluted re-inclusion of the poem in the tradition of fatal love, as one of the high exceptions in a class with the tales of Dido and Ariadnes, points to this narrow reading. Nevertheless, the act of exposing the artifice of accustomed response clarifies as well a desire to confront more of

experience than Romance (in the restricted sense Keats gives to the term) would readily allow. Furthermore, in the attempt to mirror more directly the texture of real life, Keats would circumvent the secondary position of the imitator.

The desire to confront human actualities in Isabella is evidenced by a politicizing of the original tale that, as we have noted, struck close enough to home to offend many 19th Century critics. The intention to depict a reality to which Romance is conventionally blind is further indicated by the pervasive medicine and disease imagery in Isabella, a feature of the text commented upon at length by Ward⁴⁹; such imagery, we might observe, hardly validates the consoling alliance of love and death in the romantic imagination. In this context, Stillinger's thoroughgoing revisionist reading of the poem might be mentioned: Isabella is approached as a rigorously toughminded recast of its source, in which Keats (under the aegis of a cynical realism) inverts the cliché of Petrarchan love-sickness into a clinically progressive derangement.⁵⁰

In line with the questioning of Romance, the thematic turn of Isabella upon itself, according to the parody structure elaborated at length in the initial section of this essay, may be

taken to reflect the turning of Keats upon his earlier vision and style, with its indulgence in fancy and its faith in subjectivity, imagination, and growth. Isabella is in many ways a revaluation -- a negation -- of the openness and optimism of Endymion. The process of Soul-making is usurped by external compulsion, the subject contracting into an emblem. Style, too, no longer overflows with spontaneity, but turns rigid with distance and artifice, a deliberate restriction of autographic potential. Keats would show a loyalty to the intelligibility (or perplexity) of his own time: behind the enterprise of the brothers lies the menace of contemporary exploitation, the malignity of the Industrial Revolution, an order beneath which the fear of chaos and fragmentation is wedded to the prospect of mechanization, the personal world desecrated, the person reduced to a thing. Protest against this dehumanization, however, never resolves into more than an implicit politics. Still masked by what Nietzsche calls the "philosophy of disappointment" which "wraps itself so humanely in pity and looks sweet,"⁵¹ Isabella finally reverts to the tired and regressive consolations of sentiment.

A further dimension of the complexity of influence may be discerned, a feeling of loss or betrayal of a mythic past in exchange for the meaner truths of the present, and the consequent

subsumption of art as a fallen mode of experience, a hollow-eyed vision of things as they are. If the past is associated with a confectionary poetry unresponsive to the fever and fret of modernity, it is also metaphorically identified as the Golden Age, an ideal world of innocence. We recall the apology prefacing Endymion: "I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness." The modern poet may be in a grimly literal line of descent. Keats writes, on one level, from the perspective of regret: "O for the gentleness of old Romance,/ The simple plaining of a minstrel's song" (ll.387-388). The "songs of Grecian years," the antique vows, the promise of a saving and surviving beauty, the plenary potentiality of the Human Form Divine, all have fallen to the hungry generations, among which Keats is numbered. If the grotesque is an agent through which the simplicities of a prior art and ethos may be undermined and surpassed, this mode of escape entangles the poet in violation.

Relinquishing the provident myths and anchor of the past, Keats finds his artistry thrown into a "purgatory blind." He proceeds to subordinate useful form to the beauty of rhetorical ornament, displaying in Isabella a lack of negative capability in the face of uncertainty, a retreat from the struggle to find his own narrative voice. On the level of content we find, in analogue,

that "dead eyes" negate all human choice and possibility -- a perspective underscored by the surfeit of "wormy circumstance" in the narrative. Within this reductive vision, we may discern a correspondently ungenerous conception of art as itself compromised and suspect.

The fallen state of words in the second movement of Isabella was earlier commented upon. As a worn coinage unequal to the intensity of emotion and as a ready vehicle of deceit, language cannot be depended upon for revealing truths. Rather than providing a sacred bond with others, words conventionalize and institutionalize experience. Neither is poetic language, or the act of poesis, exempt from the usage of alienation. The plot of Isabella may be read as a reflexive commentary upon artistic growth, which traces the fall from innocence to experience. Keats's early poetry manifests an aesthetic of empathy based upon the reciprocity between reader and text, for which the shared mutuality of lovers -- the consummated relationship of Isabella and Lorenzo -- may be taken as an analogue. But art in Isabella risks falling into versions of insentience reflective of the estrangement of "dead eyes" and "hollow eyes":

a) cold pastoral, involved only with its autonomous and irrelevant

gestures, a rigid facade of conventions to elicit only stock response;

b) the ironic artifact, evasive, noncommittal, and self-contradictory, lacking a personal vision or center of belief;

c) the frozen mimesis which, incapable of transforming experience through creative illumination, merely reflects the surface of things as they are; this ineffectual outlook finds its emblem in the river-image of the travellers' faces (stanza 27), quoted in the very beginning of our analysis; we might invoke as well the failed myth of the Medusa ("with no Persean sword"), in which art cannot provide that restorative distance between the self and experience which would make possible the creative assimilation of surroundings, the self-renewed immersion in ardent perception.

The reductive dialectic of perception enforces its sway in Isabella, with compulsion serving as the basic model of interchange. In The Eve of St. Agnes Keats reopens the question of how the vision of beauty may survive in an oppressive world. The constitutive powers of imagination are turned to as a potential resource for coping with the dilemma of maintaining an affirmative personal regard.

CHAPTER II:
FOOTNOTES

¹My focus upon negation in Isabella is indebted to Todorov's theory of figuration, by which a text is defined as a multilayered system determined by a particular rhetorical structure. See Tzvetan Todorov, Poétique de la Prose (Paris: Seuil, 1971).

²Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron (N.Y., 1947), p. 215. A literal translation of the Italian original.

³Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron (London, 1891), p.135. The text of the 1620 translation.

⁴While the negative face of Eros is suggested by the Glaucus episode, a renovated vision of Eros supplants such negativity; the episode comes to affirm a wholesale transformation and re-birth of perception.

⁵Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1959), p.237.

⁶Stillinger interprets Isabella as a hardboiled recast of Romance, in which Keats is interested primarily in exposing the genre's inadequacies ("Keats and Romance: the 'Reality' of Isabella," The Hoodwinking of Madeline, and Other Essays / Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971-7).

⁷The Letters of John Keats, ed. Hyder Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, 281.

⁸The 1620 translation of Boccaccio is quoted in the text.

⁹Barry Cornwall, A Sicilian Story (London, 1820).

¹⁰Ibid., p.11.

¹¹Keats: the Critical Heritage, ed. G. M. Matthews (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971), p.222.

¹²Gabriel Marcel in Being and Having (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1965) and Homo Viator (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962).

¹³The Life of Thomas Holcroft, written by himself, continued to the time of his death from his diary notes & other papers by William Hazlitt (London, 1825), Volume II, p.82.

¹⁴Paul Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p.177.

¹⁵Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p.177.

¹⁶Keats: the Critical Heritage, p.305.

¹⁷In Cornwall's A Sicilian Story, nature shows a similar indifference; Lorenzo's "pale face," in death, stares "upward to the careless day/ That smiled as it was wont."

¹⁸For the original model of ideal relationship, see Keats's early sonnet, "To Solitude."

¹⁹Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p.162.

²⁰So the Encycopedie maintains, as quoted by Michel Foucault in Madness and Civilization (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1965), p.105.

²¹Cornwall's A Sicilian Story provides an interesting contrast; while his Isabella also "forgets" ("She did not heed/ The seasons and their change"), she is accorded the grand Romantic treatment (ala Childe Harold or Alastor) which Keats conspicuously avoids; she is given all space as moralized landscape, fleeing "to the distant woods/ And cavern'd haunts, and where the mountain floods/ Thunder unto the silent air"; "into the dreary wilderness/ She went alone, a crazed heart-broken thing," yet she returns to die tranquilly (a concession to popular taste which Keats does not make), landscape apparently having served as catharsis or exorcism (Keats's Isabella is given no space in which to breathe and be restored to peace).

²²Cf. Trotsky's observation that "bourgeois society broke up human relations into atoms," replacing a "primitive unity of consciousness" with the division attendant upon individualism (Literature and Revolution / Michigan, 1971/, p.242.

²³Letters, I, 277.

²⁴M. A. Goldberg, The Poetics of Romanticism (Ohio, 1969), p.25.

²⁵Letters, II, 43.

²⁶Letters, I, 188.

²⁷Regarding Keats's use of double-meaning, exemplification might be useful: "close" first images the lovers' intimacy -- for they meet "more close and, fully united, "all close" -- and then indicates the brothers' economically-based self-enclosedness ("as self-retired . . . as two close Hebrews"); Isabella and the paranoid merchant both are called "fair" (compare stanzas 1 and 14 with stanza 18); and Lorenzo's voice is a "continual" delight to Isabella, as her subsequent tears are a "continual shower."

²⁸The doubleness of words often serves Keats as the fulcrum or pivot for shifting perspective; for example, consider the use of "forlorn" in "Ode to a Nightingale."

²⁹Critical Heritage, p.351.

³⁰The two phrases appear respectively in the Preface to Endymion and in a letter to Shelley (Letters, II, 323); in both, Keats displays his characteristically acute and rather harsh self-judgment.

³¹Letters, I, 238.

³²Keats Circle, ed. Hyder Rollins (Cambridge, 1969), Volume II, p.277.

³³I take the Mukarovsky and Jakobson quotations from Jonathan Culler's Structuralist Poetics (N.Y., 1975), p.56.

³⁴Letters, I, 224.

³⁵Richard Fogle, The Imagery of Keats and Shelley: A Comparative Study (Chapel Hill, 1949), p.101.

³⁶Letters, I, 238.

³⁷The phrase is taken from Keats's unrhymed sonnet, "What the Thrush Said."

³⁸Letters, I, 238.

³⁹Critical Heritage, p.327.

⁴⁰Letters, II, 174.

⁴¹Cited by Harold Bloom in Ringers in the Tower (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p.49. Cf. Wordsworth's citation of a feature distinguishing the Lyrical Ballads "from the popular poetry of the day":

The feeling therein developed gives importance
to the action and situation, and not the action
and situation to the feeling.

⁴²D. Daiches, A Study of Literature for Readers and Critics (N.Y.: Norton, 1964), p.63.

⁴³Paul Goodman, Speaking and Language (N.Y.: Random House, 1971), p.193.

⁴⁴Letters, I, 239.

⁴⁵Keats and Reynolds had planned a joint volume of poems based upon Boccaccio's tales; in a letter to Reynolds, Keats observes: "the Compliment is paid by us to Boccaccio, whether we publish or no." (Letters, I, 274).

⁴⁶G. Hartman, Beyond Formalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p.311.

⁴⁷Jack Stillinger, The Hoodwinking of Madeline, pp. 31-45 (the phrase "anti-romance" appears on page 37).

⁴⁸W. Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral (N.Y.: New Directions, 1968), p.52

⁴⁹Aileen Ward, John Keats: the Making of a Poet (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1963), p.174. "A string of images of medicine and disease runs through the poem like a dark vein through marble," the critic observes, and proceeds to enumerate these images and to emphasize their "biographical" origin.

⁵⁰Stillinger, "Keats and Romance: the 'Reality' of Isabella, Hoodwinking, pp.31-45.

⁵¹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power (N.Y.: Random House, 1967), p.50.

CHAPTER III

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES:

PERCEPTION AND SPACE

And on the one hand you contemplate
 the beginning of the world,
And on the other the night
 of frightened windowpanes.

Huidobro

In The Eve of St. Agnes, Keats affirms the potency of Erotic vision, weaving into a richly layered narrative structure the force of negative regard so integral to Isabella, and the variability of point of view so central to Endymion. It is as if Keats finds his own narrative voice in the act of generating character and structure alike out of the perceptual resources of space. Space supplies for St. Agnes a "first principle" at once naturalistic and symbolic. The basis for a mimesis of verisimilitude through localization, it accommodates variously creative apprehensions of this local sphere, mapping the boundaries of alternative modes of vision. It is the means for embodying and elucidating the dynamics of aesthetic or psychological distance. It is the vehicle of plot progression and provides an enclosing outline and orientation for the narrative as a whole.¹

We turn to a detailed textual analysis, beginning with the movement by way of character and correspondent space through alternative visions of human possibility.

St. Agnes' Eve -- Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold.
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer
he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees;
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black purgatorial rails;
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by, and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

The Beadsman is first encountered as the encroaching cold of "limping winter" finds its essential emblem in his numbed fingers. To a mind of winter there is no joy in touch, no gratifying contact with the world; the pain of sensation usurps and dulls response to a frozen grief. As counterimage to the metonymy of numbed fingers -- and to the ritual immobility of the Beadsman's initial posture -- the frosted breath of prayer ascends "past the Virgin's picture," evanescent into thin air. Incense-like yet odorless, lacking the sensual richness of desire which shall fill Madeline's room with fragrance, the penitent's smoke-breath flees upward away from the body huddled in the cold, tracing a model of transcendence that we may set against the Keatsian ideal of intensity experienced on the pulses. Rather than "burn through" the "fierce dispute" of the human condition, the Beadsman would sever spirit from sense, "taking flight for heaven without a death." Dispersing into the infinite, the common breath of winter and prayer suggests a process of spiritualization arising from belief in an invisible and ungraspable deity, while appearing to trace in its vaporizing motion the ineffectuality of this model for human ful-

fillment. Bodily discomfort and disembodiment are sole alternatives for the Beadsman, all the "honeyed middle" of sense and imagination having been bypassed.

Rising from his knees, from a stasis and self-contraction for which the surrounding cold is an apt symbol, the Beadsman takes his lamp, the adjunct of his own artificial enlightenment, and "back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan." Direction of progress indicates the dull round into which becoming has been contracted. Portraiture, an itemizing of deficiencies, appears to follow the lead of Boccaccio, who described the back-returning ghost of Lorenzo as "pale, meagre, and starving," in the Decameron tale that inspires Isabella.² The Beadsman, too, is distant from life's natural warmth and fullness. Proceeding barefoot by the slow degrees of an inverted pleasure thermometer, the Beadsman dramatizes in his movement the experience of life-time as a painful and extended pilgrimage, a span of suffering to be measured by winters, to be endured rather than imaginatively explored. The cringing contact of skin and stone -- recalling the hare that "limp'd trembling through the frozen grass" -- argues against Fogle's reading of the opening cold as "an object of aesthetic regard, without the pain of direct sensation."³ Contact is, of course, attenuated by the infirmity of age; while the

Beadsman attracts our sympathy or pity, the discomforts of age having a special evocative privilege, "ancientness," like winter itself, suggests a constriction and impotence of outlook. We recall this symbolism applied in an overtly physical fashion to Glaucus, who aged abruptly after losing belief in life's purposes, bodily decrepitude imaging the "gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame" wisdom of despair (Endymion, III, 638).

His mode of apprehension defined by the setting he traverses and by the manner in which this setting is traversed, the Beadsman slowly returns down the straight and narrow church-aisle, flanked by the sculptured dead. Time is distended into a redundant and forbidding space that stretches backward, the space of history as a procession without meaning or end, stocked with the dead forms of social permanence and continuity. The statues are a character reference, the massively inert and spectral images of the Beadsman's own "emprisonment in black purgatorial rails"; as Leigh Hunt observed, in his excellent critique of St. Agnes, the railing "shadows forth the gloom of punishment"⁴ -- and, we might add, the whole enoncé of a Vengeful God which inspires "that fear of Hell which blasts the life of Man from its very foundations"(Lucretius).

The scene makes palpable a dwarfing apprehension of human

potentiality as encroached upon by the weight of the past and the overwhelming prospect of a harsh and deterministic end. Rows of ancestral statues, like the admonitory kings and princes of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (and perhaps like the "ancestral voices prophesying war" in "Kubla Khan"), attest that the human has a set form beyond which one cannot go: "our children will see nothing fresh, just as our fathers too never saw anything more than we" (Marcus Aurelius).

Death is made to appear a function of paralysis, and fixity a function of self-enclosure, as the sculptured dead huddle in "icy hoods and mail." The narrator's animistic attribution of sense to the statuary is soon shown to reveal the Beadsman's own perspective, into which the narrator has entered: the sculptures "seem to freeze" because the Beadsman's "spirit fails/ To think how they may ache."⁵ Intent upon saving the Beadsman from an adversely critical press, Judy Little, in her recent study of narrative in Keats, cites this reaction as evidence that "his empathetic response to his surroundings is a very sensuous one" like "Keats's own capacity to respond to, and imagine the feelings of inanimate objects."⁶ Hardly a hero of negative capability, however, the Beadsman is "keenly and imaginatively responsive"⁷ only in the restricted field of his own distressed condition,

an aching in the cold, which is projected onto the sculptured dead in an objectification of self-pity.⁸

The dimensions of enclosedness are tested by space and movement: the Beadsman turns "through a little door" into a sudden opening of horizon (and transgressing of limit), as music -- the true voice of feeling, of an expanding inwardness -- evokes spontaneous response and personal awareness that eludes censorship. But the sudden sense of release and emergence from the orthodox scope of self-definition is compromised by an anxious consciousness of disorientation. At the threshold of an alternative vision, an unmediated self-comprehension, the Beadsman assesses his position and retreats into the confinement of accustomed ritual, the "rehearsal of right attitudes" (Susanne Langer). Feeling is subordinated to "knowledge," and time invoked as the category of alienation, identification with death emptying the present of authenticity. Exclamation marks the authoritative intrusion of the prospect of last things: "But no, already had his deathbell rung" -- not an authorial expression of Truth, but a reflection of character-as-negation, which clarifies self-denial as death-in-life. The image of the deathbell returns in the "Ode to a Nightingale" and in Lamia --

"forlorn, the very word is like a bell" and "a moment's thought is passion's passing bell" -- to signal the loss of heightened consciousness, the abrupt fall from sensual and imaginative intensity into the habitual sole self.

Choosing to read his life as a closed book, a past tense, the Beadsman subscribes to a determined "posthumous" identity, thereby excluding himself both from the company of others and from personal freedom. We might note that the prudence to withdraw from responsiveness is not unrelated to the insurance which beadcounting affords the sinner. Whereas Porphyro will offer Madeline a warm home, the Beadsman, for the sake of his soul, will have "no home in this world." Such an exile which follows upon the conception of the self as a result rather than a source, accords with a religion that belittles the human, dispossessing it of real worth; that reads life as a penal regime, transferring value to an Other world; that installs moral judgment to turn man away from the will to existence, predestination to relieve him of the power to choose and create. Guilt for past sin and terror of future punishment leave no time for personal being. Counting "link by link" his "chain of grief" -- as did Endymion in a less socially formalized fashion (I, 978-9) -- the Beadsman retreats

from temptation into the redundant confines of a stock role. Returning to the cell, a final place of confinement, he sits among rough ashes (indicative of the uncongeniality of sense) and grieves all night for sinners. Left like an emblem of himself enclosed by residue, he is not met again until the final couplet of the poem:

The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

His negative reading of life and rejection of the Human Form Divine seem epitomized by his fate, while belief in a compensatory afterlife finds no reinforcement. That the Beadsman "soon found himself at the sunny gate of heaven," as Leigh Hunt sentimentalizes, is belied by the critic's own more accurate observation: "there is to be no comfort in the poem but what is given by love."⁹ Having followed the wrong text, the Beadsman endures an unasked-for end which "confirms" his debased vision of earthly life. Human nature is reduced to the remains of matter, a cold circle of ashes.

We enter the poem by way of the Beadsman's vision of a hostile and forbidding world of fact from which distance must be maintained -- an initial climate of opinion that clears no room for present joy or future growth, instead isolating the self-as-victim from any heartfelt involvement with existence. This vision

finds its inverse formulation as we are ushered into the revelers' perspective. For the Beadsman's retreat to an enclosed austerity is juxtaposed with the wide-open space of festivity, busy with scurrying, where trumpets snarl and eager-eyed carved angels lend support. A preparatory setting is being utilized once again to foreshadow character as existential condition. The revellers presently burst in, a swarm of "tiptoe" cavaliers -- tiptoe rather like the erect pinkie of affected class than the posture of extended desire¹⁰ -- who eagerly approach and "back retire" from Madeline, inscribing a characteristic to-and-fro motion. Forms of negative vitality, they flit and sweep by with an aimless and mechanical redundancy.

Although we have named the Beadsman and the revelers inverse forms of the same vision, antithesis first comes to mind as the apt figure, with the dichotomy of soul and body, reason and instinct, restraint and intemperance as the opposing terms. For the level chambers hold "barbarian hordes" that howl curses in "hot-blooded" fits; untamed by age, "more fanged than wolves or bears," these "hyena foemen" are yet at the mercy of their own excesses, falling into a group stupor from immoderate drink, a condition summed-up by "the Porter in uneasy sprawl." Keats is indulging,

not without some measure of tongue-in-cheek excess, in a Shakespearean strategy of character assassination, echoing Hamlet's commentary on the wassails of Claudius (the citation of kettle-drums, braying trumpets, and "draughts of Rhenish" in Act I, Scene iv), importing the stewed porter from Macbeth, and engaging in the tactical application of animal imagery for purposes of phylogenetic demotion. (We might recall, to this point, the menagerie by which the proud brothers of Isabella are identified, and the brilliant scene of Circean reduction to the bestial in Endymion with Glaucus' consequent rejection of himself as a "gross, filthy, detestable" animal.) The shallow sensuality of the revellers resolves itself into a Circean languor, an insentience accompanied by nightmare obsession with death and decay. This anxiety for the future, emerging from beneath daytime consciousness, binds the revellers to the Beadsman: the social turned self-indulgent and drunken in flight from all universals, like the private turned self-denying and rigidly ritualistic in flight from all response, would evade coming to terms with human time. As life is reduced to wormy circumstance, the skull beneath the mask, the revellers' morbid dreams prefigure (or are answered by) the Beadsman's end; complementary visions are united at the close of the poem.

Antithesis would once again appear the appropriate figure were we to map the movement of personae: the Beadsman either creeps or adopts a stiff sepulchral attitude, while the revelers swirl and flit; the Beadsman bypasses the revelers' open space, translating into motion the improbability of reconciling the contrary sides of human nature. Yet we might discern a more essential pattern of agreement, the converging identity of antithetical terms and codes. Much as the Beadsman is first encountered in a pose of ritual immobility, the sculptured dead soon reinforcing this image of frozen stasis, the revelers are represented by carved angels with "hair blown back" and folded wings; like their "wind-blown" statuary, mimicking a joyful freedom, the revelers adopt the pose of romantic abandon yet embody only a basic fixedness of possibility that precludes imaginative flight. Much as the Beadsman is identified by his evanescent breath, the intruding revellers are associated with shadows.¹¹ This lack of "firm tactility"¹² in the atranscendent landscape of St. Agnes signals a correspondent lack of intensity and depth of feeling. We find a concurrence of opposites, of the ossified and the ephemeral, in an echoing depiction of character, the Beadsman and the revellers sharing a similar rigidity and insubstantiality. The revellers swarm to and fro, as if theirs were

an accelerated version of the Beadsman's forward-and-back-returning "progress." Repetition of movement, like the identity of prayers ("a thousand aves told") counted upon identical rosary beads, traces an enclosedness of identity that bars all transfiguration. In their buzzing and distracted activism, the innumerable revellers add to this image of confinement and choicelessness a frenetic quality which may reflect the scattered and fragmented character of multiplicity; or perhaps the unrest of social being, in which show and wit displace inwardness and personal interchange, is being indicated. Movement swarms in a circular purposelessness that excludes relationship; a surface vision of life is acted out, a serial shadowplay of moments and contacts uncharged by significance. The revellers almost seem to illustrate the threat of random flux underlying orthodox prescription and renunciation.

A latent presence that occasionally intrudes upon the love-narrative,¹³ the revellers come to reassume a more central position as the poem ends. A communal stupor appropriate to the dullness of the group is succeeded by communal nightmare. The revellers are haunted by a worn currency of Gothic images, their dream parodying the revitalizing impetus of sleep and imagination, the lovers' shared vision of Eros, and the gratifications of mutuality.

The interpolation of Madeline amid the festive scene enlarges the poetic world of St. Agnes beyond the cloven fiction of Beadsman and revellers. Keats deviates from characterization through setting to introduce a new dimension of interiority. We observe a singular space of self-absorption which opens inwardly, relativizing surroundings and clarifying the interdependence of seeing and being; the externally given may be annuled or transcended according to the perceiver. "Let us . . . turn sole-thoughted to one Lady there," Keats advises; approaching Madeline through an altering of vision, the reader participates in the displacement of things as they are, the poem's universe as an arena of concrete fact, by things as they are seen. For the exhibition of process is combined with an analogue to the processes of vision. Furthermore, as an act of will is explicitly required of the reader, narrative subsequence is made to appear dependent upon his choice of focus, his acceptance of complicity in the creative act itself. To adapt Poulet's term, a genetic reading is being called for: the act of overcoming initial distance through a "movement of sympathy between two subjects, a literary empathy in which a reader takes on or 'assumes' the author's exploration of his universe."¹⁴

Announcing a methodology of kindred feeling, Keats turns us away from the many who comprise a busy surface to the one who is to be seen with that directed intensity correlative to her own inwardness and self-regard; by such sympathetic focus, we may share the personal space of her desire and belief, where Christian legend is transformed into a context of fulfillment.¹⁵ A more palpable version of the twice-told superstition is conceived: foresight of a future spouse invites the prospect of "adorings . . . upon the honeyed middle of the night." Time is eroticized into place, an unbound middle of immeasurable delight. Anticipating "all the bliss about to be," Madeline unlocks the closed system of superstition, translating the safe distance of signifiers into the immediate presence of the signified. "Hoodwink'd with faery fancy," Madeline brings to the ephemeral shadow-play of Romance her own sensual need for incarnation, informing her dream with a palpability richer than the phantom revellers or meager Beadsman can conceive of. But the intimacy of imagining is also a kind of distance not unrelated to the exclusive one-sightedness required by the Agnes-rite (ll. 53-4). Entranced with the prospect of the "breathless honey-feel of bliss" (*Endymion*, I, 903), Madeline has retracted from present surroundings; "her heart was elsewhere" and thus her eyes have become blind to the revellers. Still among

scattered movement, "regardless" amid assorted social looks, silent amid assorted social noises, Madeline lingers as an absent center. In this obliviousness, this suspended animation, we may discern both a rich latency -- Madeline herself as the "honeyed middle" -- and, in undertone, a self-enclosed insentience.

Left as an underpresence as the text turns to Porphyro's quest, Madeline re-emerges in a setting of personal space which serves as an index of her concentered perception. The hall, with its wide-open doors, is displaced by the "maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste," its door shut to the outer world. While rooms and nests -- for Madeline soon lies down in "her soft and chilly nest" -- suggest the psychical values of intimacy and openness, these images are informed as well by the contrary intimations of confinement and feared exposure. Thus the doubleness of Madeline's introversion, as a state of interior riches and self-contraction, is reflected by her room.¹⁶ Isolation rather than security or peace is initially emphasized: the closed chamber is linked by analogy with Madeline's body as an impervious wall sealed to silence, with expression so shut up that not a single straining word can escape. While depicting an internal eloquence, repetition -- "to her heart her heart was voluble" --

underscores as well the absence of communicative space. Although a truer communication than the social discourse of whispered gossip or the religious invocation of stock redundancy, volubility to one's heart alone is a stifling of performative speech (that would unite desire and action), and thus might be taken as a version of repression. (We recall, in analogue, the struggle of the lovers in Isabella to speak their passion, a topos that authenticated emotion and yet prolonged separation.) Although a sign of intensity to convey the power of held expressiveness, the image of self-contained volubility invokes as well a very different context; Madeline's swelling muteness summons the myth of Philomela, with its presiding image of identity as cut off from completion, incapable of effecting its own integration.

A counterimage of the self as a comprehensive sufficiency is provided by the casement window. The process of interiorization is telescoped as we move from the carvings of natural fruition which frame the stained glass -- artwork so unlike the sculptured dead and secularized angels -- toward the midmost emblem "among thousand heraldries." We might read the multiple recess through which the window's still center is reached as figuring the process of focussed perception, an act of clarification which excludes the peripheral, or as imaging the process of viewing in

general, which defines value by setting frames around that which is seen. Analogous to the creative act of perception is the literary rite of transforming the real into the depicted. If Madeline, rather like her window, turns inward and becomes an ornament of an ornament, an otherness that appears as impenetrable as a picture, desire prevents the total conversion of the organic into angelic decor. Hence, the sensual metamorphosis of "rosebloom" (1.220), the image of stifled passion pressing outward.

Madeline's window looks in contrary directions. Facing an interior world, the surface so elaborately decorated with heraldic device shields consciousness from the raw edge of experience, interposing the glass of habits, cloistered virtues, substitute gratifications. (The Agnes rite itself exemplifies such distancing, complete with fixed rules -- "or all the charm is fled.") Facing the exterior, the window admits an alien reality beyond the frame, beyond the safety of the known. Moonlight, which both passes through and is transformed by the window, may also be taken to be two-faced, a rich symbol illuminating the ambiguity of reflection. The lunar light of the imagination which repeats the given in a tone aesthetically refined in luster and softness is also borrowed light which, as Barthes

observes, admits darkening implications of authenticity and coldness, "warmth reduced to its deficiency."¹⁷ Rising from her circle of moonlight, Madeline undresses, loosing constraints and freeing herself of disguise; we may set in contrast the armored dead, the swaddled owl, and the costumed revellers. Undressing suggests self-exposure, a more thoroughgoing encounter of the mind with its own complexity. Naked, Madeline lies perplexed by contradiction at the uneasy threshold of consciousness. With her bed at the spatial and stanzaic center of St. Agnes, Madeline in her sleep realizes the limit of self-centered vision. Two images underscore the ambiguity of such regard. "Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray," Madeline is once again associated with warmth and spatialized as a site of exemption from alien surroundings, the added element of danger (the precarious contiguity of the prayer-book and the unbelievers) enhancing her special value. ("In the midst of all this cold and darkness I was warm," Keats declared of his erotic dream-vision of Paolo and Francesca,¹⁸ a correspondent imagining of contrastive setting and the central intensity of passion as measured by the pleasure thermometer.) The consecrated center of purity amid pagans, Madeline reclines much as she earlier stood amid the revelrous "barbarian hordes," perfectly self-possessed, an absence or "otherwhere" clasped inwardly and sealed from response. Having found no family of affection

and fellow-feeling, Madeline wholly withdraws from outwardly directed sentience into the deep resources of self-regard. An undertone of privation, however, is suggested as well by the centripetal retreat. The self as a closed book -- a book closed up within the book of the poem -- may admit no experience to be shared on the pulses. With imagery similar to that of the clasped missal, Bailey moralized in his orthodox fashion upon the understanding, naming it "a clasped volume, a closed eye, which the hand of religious humility can alone unrivet and open."¹⁹ Recognizing the need to "unrivet and open" the "closed eye" of interiority and preferring a carnal holiness to abstinence or abasement -- in contrast not only with Bailey but with the solutions ostensibly offered at the close of Endymion -- Keats provides for an awakening embrace, the self-enclosed word made flesh. But the negative aspect of withdrawal is first developed in the image of Madeline "blinded alike from sunshine and from rain/ As if a rose might shut and be a bud again." Despite the organic impulse to unfold from within, an enthralled Madeline would forego change and growth, would foreclose identity as an outgoing and ongoing process, enjoying "sweet adorings" without risk, never coming to terms with the dark puzzle of sexuality. Hers is the blind insularity which simplifies and perhaps inten-

sifies gratification by the chaste withholding of contact. While her self-contained vision seems absolute, "impossible to melt as iced stream," this image itself serves notice of integration within the scheme of nature: the seasonal rhythm of increase promises that inaccessibility is temporary, for much as the earth which appears irretrievably lost in winter is reborn, human nature will emerge from an enclosed self-regard, the "locked and frozen" eye awakening to perception. Like Juliet (Endymion, II, 27-8) Madeline will wean "her fancy from its maiden snow." The breaking of the ice is no simple renunciation of inwardness; instead, the model of self-completion has been transformed, with interiority seen as finding its fullness outside the confines of solitary dream or self-sufficiency, beyond the exclusive visionary bourne of sleep. As in Isabella, disclosure is the critical step, a process of expression which brings into speech the stifled volubility of the heart. Exposing her need and dependence in terms of spatial imagery -- "If thou shouldst die I know not where to go" -- Madeline urges Porphyro to "give her those looks again," that vision of Eros undistracted by mortal fears which shall enable him to rise to the intensity of her dream of desire. As frozen reserve is put by, vision and reality, wish and incarnation, melt together in the lovers' embrace.

The "solution sweet" of lovemaking is transitory; Madeline awakens to a self-consciousness of vulnerability. Having cast Porphyro as the villain, Stillinger finds Madeline's condition "pitiful yet at the same time reprehensible."²⁰ Yet Madeline, who has not been simply hoodwinked into immorality and early sorrow, need not be pitied or reprimanded for impetuous sinning -- growth and sexuality are not anathema to the value structure of St. Agnes. Rising to the complex occasion, Porphyro offers a reassuring prospect of fullness. Although still "beset with fears," Madeline leaves behind the sleeping dragon-world of Romance; the promise of a real home, a locus of mutual intimacy, directs the final movement of emergence into the landscape of experience.

From the held image (not unlike the freeze-frame in cinema) of Madeline oblivious to the revellers in her entranced state of anticipation, Keats turns at once to Porphyro, who thus materializes as the reply to his lover's vision of desire, substantiating the promise of Adam's dream. Porphyro traces a parabolic movement into and beyond enclosure comparable to that of Madeline, yet evidencing a clearer directionality, a more active surpassing of concealment and fear. Met by the portal door at the threshold of his entrance, Porphyro cuts an unheroic figure: "Buttressed from moonlight" and then shielded "behind a broad pillar," he

would stay out of sight, the fear of being seen causing him to perceive space as menacing ("for him those chambers held barbarian hordes"). While Angela soon endorses such apprehension, the locatives "beside" and "behind" tend to station Porphyro as dwarfed by design, in contradistinction to forthcoming motions "into," "above" and "beyond." The circuitous route to Madeline's chamber marks a shift in dependency and the correspondent shift in outlook: led by Angela through winding passages until her room is gained, Porphyro then assumes the lead, directed that he be guided "in close secrecy" to Madeline's chamber and there be hidden in "such privacy/ That he might see her beauty unespied." The dramatic spontaneity with which this stratagem is conceived appears intended not only to make Porphyro seem less calculating but also to bestow upon the narrative an appearance of "responsive" organic structure unsettled to the poet's will beforehand. The stratagem itself might seem less than self-aware in its emphasis upon concealment; if Madeline would enjoy a night of love yet would not apprehend the perplexing consequences of sexuality, Porphyro would espy yet remain unexposed, evading a mutuality of regard. For both lovers, however, the process of seeing naturally leads to an improvement of sensual enjoyment that serves self-revealing ends. To "gaze and worship all unseen" fosters the re-

ciprocal vision of Eros.

If openness is the deeper impulse, the robes of an Iachimo are nevertheless borrowed as Porphyro adopts a plan of indirection. With Madeline asleep, a serpentine hero emerges from hiding to creep "noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness," space being perceived as a precariously unbound expanse; we might think both of the Arab dream in Book 5 of The Prelude, in which anxiety is objectified in the desolate boundlessness of sand, and of the wasteland and gloam of "La Belle Dame," a sterility and murkiness of outlook that lacks all inward "prop or stay." With Madeline awakened, the amorphous landscape of fearful apprehension takes on its counterguise of frozen contraction. Porphyro sinks to his knees, "pale as smooth-sculptured stone." We might recall, in analogue, Madeline kneeling in prayer, speechless so as not to break the spell of erotic disclosure. Such a subtle drawing of correspondence marks a considerable advance over the method of characterization employed in Isabella, where the lovers' acts are so redundant that they seem a reflex mimicry.

If Porphyro "fearing to move or speak" recalls a heart-stifled Madeline, the accompanying myth of Philomela also is suggested; that both characters fill the victim's role may point

toward the violation myth so revised that a mutual vision may supplant the prospect of desertion.²¹ A second myth may be discerned underlying the narrative: the Orpheus legend of inevitable loss, the impossibility of maintaining a lasting wholeness of regard. Once again, a revisionist reading is suggested, a qualified solution to the dilemma of discontinuity. Porphyro's quest traces a descent through chill passages into the sealed casket of an other world (the otherness of dream, where Madeline lies like Eurydice "all amort" to the external world), an awakening of love by means of music (the countercharm to unconsciousness, which seemed to be "a charm impossible to melt"), and the successful redemption of the beloved into the emerging daylight world. Madeline is redeemed by passing through the surrogate death of unconsciousness and the loss of virginity, a dying into life that sacrifices the perspective of innocence of the chaste maiden for a more womanly apprehension. Angela may be read as a kind of psychopomp for the initial stage of the Orphean underworld journey, her words appropriately filled with forebodings of death.²²

The beldame and the Beadsman are of a kind, we observe, and not only in their closeness to death, their sharing of a grave vision. Both rise beyond self-enclosure into an unaccustomed

affirmation of intensity that is vicariously aroused; both are then overcome by a self-consciousness of trespass beyond a proper bourne, and hastily retreat back to an habitual level of regard. Withdrawal to safety follows a "realistic" appraisal of possibility, with the imminence of death functioning as the all-negating factor. The correspondence between the personae is underscored, we might note, in the revised ending of the poem, a more explicitly detailed closure in which the Beadsman comes to incarnate, in his death, Angela's vision of feeble laughter-unto-death.²³

An obsession with death does not evidence the clearsighted recognition by Angela and the Beadsman that they "are no longer physically able to grasp their happiness," as Judy Little sympathetically contends²⁴; the elders are symbolic as well as pathetic figures, weak in soul as well as body, with failed spirit as the root of infirmity. With a reductive literalness of vision that admits neither metaphor nor metamorphosis, Angela views time as attrition and the anticipation of joy as delusion. Consigning herself to the grave, she chuckles over Madeline's naive faith in life as magical and fulfilling:

. . . my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to
grieve.

Unilluminated by desire, languid as the bloodless moon, Angela laughs feebly -- like a poetry of irony hobbled by its dismissive perspective which at last reflexively consumes itself. As life is invested with such meager hope, freedom must be projected elsewhere. Angela anticipates, though not without an anxiety expressed in terms of spatial confinement, an orthodox hereafter where the checks and balances of moral prescription still hold sway:

. . . Ah! thou must needs the lady wed
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.

Dying "palsy-twitch'd with meagre face deform," the beldame becomes her literally morbid vision. For Little, the death "only confirms Angela's clearsighted knowledge of herself"²⁵; I would stress instead the fear and deformed expectation to which her end corresponds. Perhaps Keats is questioning that brand of clear-sighted thinking -- "spear-vision" in Lamia -- which would mock at and strip away illusion; and perhaps, as well, the "unhoodwink'd" life itself is being found meager and wanting.

As Angela indulgently mocks Madeline's conjuration, rejecting that child-world of prescribed rite and alertness to "signs" which projects upon time a sacred (contractual) reality, Porphyro engages in a contrary attempt to decipher:

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book.

Such a studying of the face, we might note, is central to the action in both of the Hyperions and the culminating dramatic encounter in Lamia. The image of the shut riddle-book points toward the metaphor of Madeline "clasp'd like a missal," soon to be looked upon by Porphyro and her heart unlocked by desire; in both instances, Keats is converting a scene at hand into its essential emblem, an enigmatic icon rich with secret potency, the contemplation of which is a process of deepening comprehension. For Angela, in contrast to Porphyro, dreams and acts are alike illusory and futile; the book is shut, the paucity of meaning pre-determined from without. Yet "riddle" is derived from the same root as "read," as if a radical promise of solution were embedded in the word; Porphyro as the surrogate puzzled child too young to lack faith in the power of words is attuned to such etymology, and affirms a promising alternative to Angela's position. Intent upon seeking a message to make sense of that which is perceived, Porphyro finds the face of things enigmatic, a riddle-book open to interrogation, from which meaning and direction may yet be derived by reading in terms of personal significance. He shall come to

embody, in his subsequent reading of the riddle-book storm, the capacity to rise by creative interpretation above the encroachment of dumb fact and implacable loss.

As the vision of human inadequacy sets one against one's surroundings, a revitalizing of the natural might first be needed to return the body from self-concealment to pleasurable interchange. Porphyro emerges from his Iachimo status, from the insularity of the spectator (or the passive reader, by extension), and prepares a love-feast to counter the profane revels below and the sacred appetite for death adumbrated by Angela and the Beadsmen. All things most desirable are brought forth in a palpable rite of Erotic vision that surmounts the standard antagonistic compartmentalization of sense and spirit. Narrative progress is suspended as delicacies are enumerated in a feast of words, the mimesis of a suprabundant festive earth. The barren inhospitality of winter is forgotten as the world is reconceived as an arena of joy, a home that fruitfully offers itself up. Vital bodily functions are consecrated, as bodily need, an aspect or ratio of helplessness in the alien space of Necessity, becomes an index of fulfillment.²⁶ Reconciling the opposition of center and circumference -- an effort by which Romanticism itself has been defined²⁷ -- the feast brings together exotic foods of all seasons from all

corners of the globe, and their intermingled fragrance, in turn, irradiates outward, filling the cold room and inviting an awakening of the senses. As the emanating feast eroticizes surroundings, space is redeemed as an outgoing dimension; an alternative is provided to the withdrawal of the self -- the more spacious solution of personalizing the world by way of sensual apprehension.

The room is "made to glow into an island of bliss," Trilling observes. I would stress, however, as the "ultimate dramatic purpose" not a revelation of "the infinitude and cruelty of the surrounding darkness,"²⁸ as does Trilling, but rather the reconception of the world as adequate to desire, and the revelation of that inward vision by which such a world might be apprehended. As an offering is according to the giver, Porphyro, like the fertile earth, "brings forth"(1.264) an endless store, as if all that he would give and could imagine had instantly materialized. For, in addition to the vital continuity of things, the process of imaginative creation unfolds as the total gift of oneself.

The "heap" of wished-for gifts is "heaped" by Porphyro, verbal iteration calling attention to the movement from thing to deed, from the passively natural -- what is already there -- to the humanly arranged. As the word returns upon itself, calling attention to its presence defamiliarized from a usual transparency as

the bearer of meaning the poetic act also is set in the foreground: the transformative enclosing of the natural within language, the illuminating intervention upon the given word and world. Heaping delicacies "with glowing hand/ On golden dishes and in baskets bright," Porphyro illuminates the object-world, which reflects back the light of his lavishing act. With the feast is brought forth an imaginative receptivity to the natural and the correspondent invitation to corporealize dream, to rise into a full contact with that which is palpable. Porphyro emerges from the seclusion of the onlooker to provide the occasion for a shared meeting of appetites at the fine point of relish. A personal rite of abundance is set forth to complete upon the senses Madeline's rite of abstinence, an obediently supperless retirement. Self-absorbed insight finds the model for its redemption in a fully realized concreteness.

As the outgoing or Erotic dimension of space has been delivered by the feast, it is further humanized and animated by a "tumultuous" music; for Porphyro takes up the hollow lute homologous to Madeline's unawakened body, and sets the instrument vibrating. Keats utilizes a standard Romance prop, with its conventionally embedded trope (to play upon the heartstrings). At the same time, he alters the ostensible radical of presentation

within the poem, perhaps thereby implicitly proffering himself as a performer who directly sings truths to the reader, the remoteness of typography being bridged by the seeming immediacy of voice. In the contrast between Porphyro's private song and the encroaching public noise of the revellers, Knight's polar opposition of tempest and music might come to mind; for a space of harmony and renewal through the expression of inward energy is being cleared in the midst of discord and fatality.²⁹ Yet Porphyro's song, while distant from the snarling dissonance below, ³⁰ is itself the overflow of tempestuous emotion designed to encroach upon Madeline; furthermore, the chosen lyric -- "La belle dame sans merci" -- would seem alien to an easy euphony, the prospect of sorrow, loss and cruelty perhaps shadowing the invitation to lovemaking.

The song is one semantic unit of the larger pattern or recurrent theme of violation, of which the growth attending disenchantment is the positive aspect; as lover and interpreter, Porphyro exposes a hidden life, profaning and redeeming inwardness by putting it into words and bodily acts. Creating song and feast with "glowing hand," Porphyro has emerged from cover to become an irradiant center, while Madeline remains a closed figure of indrawn circumference, shielded from her lover's ad-

vances as she was protected from the trivial assault of the revellers. The positions of power held by the sleeper and the observer appear reversed, as the relative omnipotence of the intruder over a passive and vulnerable object of espial is displaced by a consciousness on the viewer's part that he is excluded from another's interior privacy. The witty metaphor of the "iced stream," however, reveals that inaccessibility will thaw according to the seasonal nature of things -- and in line with the conventions of love-poetry, for the image of melting naturally emblemizes the change from indifference or reserve to demonstrative affection.³¹ "O for a Morphean amulet!"

Porphyro had exclaimed, seeking to be bound to a potent mythical system not unlike the superstitious arrangement chosen by Madeline, with its reassuring pedantry (no syllable or glance behind "or all the charm is fled"). The hero would no longer compel by magic but rather demystify the charm of distance, releasing Madeline from the spellbound solipsism of dream. Yet, when she is jarred awake, Madeline finds Porphyro fallen "pale as smooth-sculptur'd stone." While offering a stock validation of intense emotion, such fainting takes its place as well within two intratextual networks: the repeated lapsing of characters into interiority throughout St. Agnes; the imagery of stone, Porphyro recalling the revellers' angels and the Beadsman's

sculptured dead. Petrified by fear, Porphyro has fallen into the remoteness of an object, as if Madeline, in the guise of Circe or Medusa, had bewitched him. In light of such role-reversal, Madeline must repeat the act of rousing a lover from enclosedness in order to realize the interrupted dream of desire. Porphyro is implored to become the lover who brings forth "all the bliss to be." Transformed by Madeline's "voluptuous accents," he rises "above a mortal man" -- much as Madeline will "follow at his words," rising from her incapacitating sorrow and fear to flee the castle world that is haunted by the consciousness of mortality.

We might consider Madeline's initial response upon awakening, her exclamation of the sorry change when dream is displaced by reality, in relation to the not uncommon critical position that pathos and loss are at the core of Keats's vision. For such a reading, the lament "how changed thou art!" would serve as a fit epigraph, specimens from the Odes (inclusive of the serene "Ode to Autumn" -- "where are the songs of spring?") being marshalled in evidence. Yet the theme of loss fuses in Keats's poetry with the concept of an other dimension that intrudes upon and distracts the mind's eye from a lived present. In such expressions as "but to think is to be full of sorrow" and "a moment's thought is passion's passing bell," pathos is not solely

a function of mortality but of that mode of seeing that would reason and compare at the expense of immediate comprehension. In St. Agnes as in the "Ode to Autumn," the intrusive "other-where" that "affrays" the understanding is accommodated within a thereby enriched resolution. "Give me that voice again," Madeline implores, requiring the voice that endears "that inanimate cold world allowed/ To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd." Rather than giving pathos the last word, Keats gives "a generous credence to growth, development, and possibility."³² Like the feast that raises wintry nature to a delightful garden, the self may surpass its orthodox dimension of limit and substantiate an abundant life.

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose,
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet, --
Solution sweet.

In contrast with Angela and the Beadsman, victims of set visions of identity, Porphyro rises to embody the Romantic conception of man as "an infinite reservoir of possibilities."³³ Through the self-transcendence of passion, the real and the imagined are reconciled. Self-consciousness and discretion, fear and stealth -- all the faces of withholding -- dissolve in the sexual submersion

of individualities. "Solution" points both to the theme of problem-solving, the riddle-book of things, and to the imagery of states, specifically of ice that melts to water, ensuring that the potential for warm transformation is in the nature of perception. Discontinuity has been resolved, the "icy stream" and "sculptur'd stone" released from inanimacy. The lovers' solution, the meeting-point of distance ("far," "star") and intimacy, of agitation ("throbbing") and serenity ("deep repose"), is reached at the center of convergence: the honeyed middle of the night, the spatial apex of the castle, the midmost stanzas of the poem. At this origin, space and time grow fluid, released from the narrative language of consecutiveness, the historical unrolling of cause and effect.

The indrawn center is too enclosed a solution to last. Sleep engenders a subsequent expansion of circumference; for it is "at once a magic release and an outpouring of health for daylight living."³⁴ And so, as Bachelard expresses it, "the imagination of concentration is replaced by the will to irradiation."³⁵ The incarnation of dream clarifies that the dream, as in Endymion, is of self-realization, of a wholeness of self-regard beyond a merely painless unconsciousness. Centeredness is found inadequate, its isolation incompatible with Erotic vision. The lovers

cannot remain unawakened to consequence and responsibility of choice. For the transgressing of social custom -- and the act of entering into the perspective of intimacy itself -- is not "without a death," a violation to be recognized. The emergent perplexity of identity that has opened to such apprehension finds its spatial correlative in the rising storm.

Frye speaks of the analogy of innocence, citing the romance values of chastity and magic³⁶; this is the sphere that, as Keats declares in "Sleep and Poetry," must be passed beyond in order for the depth of the heart to be comprehended. Accordingly, in St. Agnes, the moon of innocence and illusion must set, and with it the delicate and evasive light of dreams. Madeline passes beyond the inner circle of virginity where reflection encloses the subject in an aura of etherealization. The guise of Cynthia has been shed; Madeline has "put the goddess off," as Lamia shall do, and become an active and vulnerable sensual woman. No "angel" apparelled in "a glory like a saint," Madeline is no longer simply moonstruck by dreams; her rapt introversion has been penetrated. With space, by extension, no longer appearing invested with St. Agnes' care, the perceived world seems depopulated of protective power; the storm of experience rises. In the

heightened encroachment from without, a positive dimension may be found: the vacancy and stasis of the silent frozen world with which St. Agnes opens, the space of empty apprehension has given way to a climate suddenly complex and vital, a space of agitation in agreement with a vision of the universe as energy and with a Romantic valuing of emotional turbulence over reserve and complacency. The enlivening of perception fills a previously impoverished and determinate field with a human reality. The glass that formerly admitted a soft religious glow is struck now with increasing force, the sequence of verbs (pattering, quick pattering, rave and beat) perhaps suggesting the lovers' accelerated heartbeat. The tempest is passion's inner landscape, an identification made explicit in the Dante sonnet composed two months after St. Agnes, in which lovers are whirled about "in the gust, the flaw/ Of rain and hailstone," weathering their own "melancholy storm." "On a Dream" traces a theme familiar throughout Keats's writing, and particularly evident in St. Agnes -- the escape from the dragon-world of Romance into the sphere of experience.³⁷ Having awakened from a bower where, "intoxicated with the light and atmosphere," they saw "nothing but pleasant wonders," Porphyro and Madeline are thrown into "the fierce dispute" of consciousness, where "the balance of good and evil" is unsettled.³⁸

The atmosphere of passion is charged with rather than purified of contraries, thus becoming in interrogative rather than a normative space. The lovers emerge from their dream-cocoon into the storm which dramatizes sexual identity and self-recognition as "impure," no dream "free from mortal taint" but rather a bitter mystery that confounds Mars and Venus, Eros and aggression.

In complement with an interpretation that emphasizes the turbulent climate of experience, the rising storm may be read as reflecting Madeline's perspective of anxiety. St. Agnes is aligned with the dominant literary tradition of analogizing the natural and the human; the agitation of climate is employed in the standard symbolic fashion to image inner turmoil. We may recall a related metaphor in Isabella: when the cloistered world of innocence and trust is discredited by Lorenzo's visit, coherence suddenly is fractured, leaving "the atom darkness in a slow turmoil" -- as when, deprived of sleep, one sees "the spangly gloom froth up and boil." Awakened to consciousness, Madeline finds herself, like Isabella in a "Purgatory blind" with no meridian or standard law to which she may refer.³⁹ Lacking the continuity implicit in the bond of kinship, Madeline perceives herself as exiled in a valueless order of things that excludes and yet encroaches upon her. Solidly dependable surroundings become a

chaos of moving particles, a torrent of data. Anxiety is projected as an external spatial threat; as identity earlier was tied to a sense of place, and place to emotive orientation ("if thou diest I know not where to go"), fears of abandonment and exposure now arise. Stichomythia, the technique of abrupt dialogic juxtaposition, serves to dramatize a state of inward conflict or self-division, in which desire for love and openness strikes against an awareness of attendant dangers. The rhetorical figure, like the storm itself, gives form to the dynamic of opposition and attraction when the inherited screens of a closed world have been broken open and the subject left exposed to a lived complexity;

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline."
'Tis dark; the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! and woe is mine!"
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine."

If it is read as the figure of ambivalence, stichomythia may be interpreted not only as tracing a divisive perspective regarding sexuality, but also as setting up the contestant discourse of two interlocking codes, the clash or tension between the realism attuned to societal probability and the idealism reflective of existential possibility. No longer immersed in lovemaking, Madeline

comes to brood upon loss. Indeed she has jeopardized her standing within an accustomed context of belonging; consciousness of being naked follows upon the transgressing of social contract, the violation of a closed morality that supplies norms of respect.³⁹ If stichomythia reveals Madeline's double outlook in this position, fear and lament are promptly given the upper hand.

Identity is restabilized by devaluation, the self apprehended as the victim of an alien world. Life is but a vale of tears -- rather the perspective of Angela -- and Madeline is fated, like Isabella before her, to waste away alone. The image of Philomela, paradigm of female helplessness, returns. The self is a violated object, a "weak deceived thing," the phrase recalling Angela's self-characterization as a "poor churchyard thing." Madeline's expression of pathos is, of course, what one made dumb with grief would be past managing; hers is finally a literary pose. That is, Keats has Madeline convert dilemma into manageable proportion by borrowing the role of the hapless Romantic heroine, investing energy in the known goods of disillusionment. The "melancholy storm" of disorientation is thereby stylized and distanced. Already associated with books of Romance and identified as a clasped missal, Madeline would return to literary outline and be simplified into a flat character, with the dangers surrounding womanhood

absorbed into a stock plot: the betrayed innocent robbed of her maidenhead and deserted to her grief. The tired imagery with which Madeline is provided -- she names herself, for example, "a dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing" -- tends to cast into question the adequacy of pathos, and to belie the widespread critical view that pathos is central to Keats's vision. For the plot of sensibility which St. Agnes might seem to be unfolding, that of the ethereal girl who is tarnished and discarded, is displaced by a storyline truer to the amatory tradition of rebirth born out of love.

If stichomythia serves to dramatize a clash of perspective -- and, by extension, of prospective storyline, the narrative stalled at this crossing point -- repetition of the phrase "no dream" underscores the rift to be bridged, the transformative act needed to move on. The dilemma and the solution once again are spatially conceived. For Madeline, "no dream" signifies the emptying of personal space, the negating of a joyful world; in an arena of loss and ~~shame~~, self-transcendence is no longer possible, and only "that pale sustenance, despair" may console. For Porphyro, "no dream" does not summon a stifling consciousness of fact that paralyzes response, the fatalistic scheme identified by

Brustein as underlying the whole dominant "Western literature of guilt."⁴⁰ "No dream" instead announces that the lovers need not feed merely on dreams, their realization of desire proving the reality of time as promise, of the self as creative. The residual shame of the Christian vision is left behind and experience (inclusive of sexual experience) is projected as valuable.

To ease Madeline's fears and offer an alternative myth to that of the desolate heroine, a more spacious and nurturing fiction, Porphyro first must change his own role. The waning guise of an abject Romantic lover, and the imposing stance of a spying Iachimo and proud-plumed intruder, are images unsuited to the assurance of a future of belonging and self-realization. To rise "above a mortal man," above the victim of time and circumstance, involves the reconceiving of self, a process that in turn requires a new conception of the world. The model of awareness must shift from that of introversion to the moving center of expanding consciousness, from centripetal to centrifugal vision.

To answer the isolation of "no dream" Porphyro first offers the reinforcing prospect of conventional role and personal commitment, and then proceeds to redeem surroundings. Addressing Madeline as his bride, proposing to be both husband and vassal,

Porphyro extends the shield of Romance and the security of familial respectability. Possessive pronouns -- "my Madeline" (ll. 326 and 334), "my bride" (l.326) -- enclose a dispossessed Madeline, while the subordination of individuality is checked by an insistence upon indebtedness. Having been saved by Madeline, Porphyro is now interceding, first imploring consent in a fashion that clothes the beloved in the ceremony of courtly love. To the hierarchic and coercive shape of castle society is opposed a model of relationship based upon mutual dependence and gratification. By these means, a conventional space of respect is restored to Madeline.

The lovers' place and possibilities require a more widescale redemption; as meaning arises from the relationship between terms in a system, Porphyro must recontextualize "no dream" outside the value structure of pathos which Madeline has envisioned, thereby enticing her into a more positive outlook.

"Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise -- arise! the morning is at hand;
The bloated wassailers will never heed:
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.

"Reality is a cliché from which we escape by metaphor,"⁴¹ Stevens observes. Suspending commonsense assumptions about reality as the

external and objective arena of "grey Truth," Porphyro projects a mythic engagement with the world below all "haggard seeming," and transforms circumstance into opportunity. A mythological universe, Frye notes, is "a vision of reality in terms of human concerns,"⁴² a form of imaginative thinking that legitimizes life. Identifying the storm with faeryland, Porphyro humanizes the Cartesian verities of extension and motion, easing the sense of homelessness and the self-consciousness of exposure that weigh upon Madeline. As a world of potencies rather than things is perceived, and becoming is envisioned as continuous with human desire ("a boon indeed"), a fundamental sense of belonging may be felt; the atom turmoil of experience begins to be settled to the imaginative mind.

Is the invoking of faeryland a reversion to the mystification of Romance. While fancy, sentiment, and heroic gesture are variously mocked in St. Agnes, a need for illusion as well as exposure is assumed, so that unbelief and fear which would otherwise stifle perception might be counteracted. A critique of ossified reality and the reality principle, faeryland nevertheless does stand as a compensatory, wish-fulfilling sphere. Yet we might ask what ends are served by Porphyro's mythmaking, and judge this fiction in

context according to its instrumentality. Allusion to faeryland is first of all a strategy to deal with the phenomenal world so as to tranquilize Madeline's anxiety. Here is no memorial gesture, that nostalgia for a lost past that endorses a retiring passivity. The unknown is domesticated by an imaginative act. Space as performance is created, a binding of space to action that facilitates the movement out into experience. Porphyro's mythmaking at the decisive moment is in direct response to an immediate dilemma rather than an indulgence in reverie. As such, it reveals that the model for identity has shifted from that of passive reception -- "we should rather be the flower than the bee" -- to the creative act.⁴³ Interpretation now is primary, for meaning is to be personally derived and not simply perceived; the world is to be read according to need and not submitted to as a material datum. Stepping back from the status of one impelled and imposed upon, the interpreter interposes a symbolic and instrumental projection of self-definition.⁴⁴

In a letter to Bailey, Keats declared: "our minds are able to consecrate whatever they look upon."⁴⁵ Imagination consecrates by giving meaning to that which is perceived; as intelligibility depends upon what is made of the given, and not upon the given "as such," when the world is read as intelligible its determinism may

be restructured by human freedom and a context created in which man no longer appears de trop. The theme of the riddle-book and its reader returns on a comprehensive scale; by the ascribing of significance, which is a kind of violation of the given, a personal space of meaning is found. Read as a text of potentiality, an enabling fiction, the storm is identified as the means by which self-fulfillment may emerge.

In Endymion we are informed programmatically that surroundings lead to a vision of joy -- though the evidence supporting this premise unravels in a meandering fashion. In Isabella, on the other hand, surroundings prove stifling as negation determines outcome. Finally, in St. Agnes, a kind of unsentimental synthesis is constituted, a fullness of vision coming to depend upon the conversion of alien surroundings by the mind. Mention of faeryland promises no intercession of "deities" that "will shade us with their wings," as is guaranteed in Endymion. Facing a world of Necessity, Porphyro (to use the phenomenological term) "intends" a more congenial order, solving the enigma of otherness by reading into things a "unitary and relational ontology."⁴⁶ Out of the storm he generates an auspicious chance, making of inner necessity a saving situation, redemption no longer a

product of benign surroundings or watchful deities but of pure self-assertion.

As Porphyro's hand glowed as a feastmaking source, so his mind now illuminates possibility by creative perception, the poet's primordial role. If his mythmaking, like Madeline's identification with Romance plot, diagrams ambiguity rather than remaining amid uncertainty, it does so more in the manner of poetry than of imitation, morality, or sentimentalism. Imaginative misprision not only charms but resettles by means of words that "mediate between the profane world of event and the sacred world of belief."⁴⁷ What Schiller isolates as the goal of art is being attained: "to recover the world by making us see it as if it had its source in human freedom." In place of the poetry of fate (envisioned by Madeline and evidenced by Isabella) or of imported salvation (the terminal faith of Angela and the Beadsman, the orthodox citation and deus ex machina of Endymion), the mythmaking persona substitutes a poetry of self-conceived providence, extricating the human from external causality. Citing "the before unapprehended relations of things,"⁴⁸ Porphyro aestheticizes reality into "that universe of hidden affinities discovered by Romanticism,"⁴⁹ while he avoids indulging "the desire to impose elegantly symmetrical patterns on an untidy mass of facts."⁵⁰ Space is

not charted and explained away so much as opened to an exploratory greeting of the spirit, For the poetic imagination works "in alliance with the works/ Which it beholds," neither rejecting the world, the Christian solution personified by the Beadsmen, nor exalting a pensive immobility, the solution of bower-verse personified at many points by Madeline (and by Porphyro). An intimacy is affirmed between phenomena and consciousness that constitutes a vision of continuity and metaphor. Neither uninvolved in surroundings nor a passive subject dictated to by objects and capable only of recording their empirical dominance, the poet converts the literal into the figurative, and uses such symbolization to generate response. If poetry is a Morphean amulet, then, its mystifying design finally delivers an expanded consciousness prepared to act. As Alpheus urged Arethusa in Endymion to "doff all sad fear," to "stifle the heart no more nor be afraid," Porphyro urges Madeline to come forth from the respite of dream and leaden-eyed despair which "makes a stone of the heart." Keats is turning his personae away from the Romantic identification with sleep, an idealization of unconsciousness as the gateway to reality which is intertwined with the cliché of life's inadequacy.

There will be no "spying out" of the lovers, as in Isabella; the threat of being seen has already been absorbed by Porphyro,

who initially appropriated the dramatic role of the spy and subsequently rose above such a one-sided mode of perception, turning from the posture of the voyeur to that of the creative perceiver who shares his vision of a human world. As the lovers flee, the drunken revellers remain unconscious, insentient, and the Beadsmen "awake all night for sinners' sake to grieve" is lost in his dream of dogma, soon to be succeeded by death. Only for the lovers is the dawning of a bright vision at hand. Madeline remains fearful, for the world being entered is yet a dark puzzle. Hers is a "fright of dim espial" recalling Angela's apprehension; there are "dragons at glaring watch perhaps with ready spear" -- a projection of being seen as self-exposing, for Madeline's earlier blindness to the revellers' assorted looks and her prior exclusivity of "upward eyes" requiring heaven's intercession have become displaced by self-consciousness. The lovers' direction of movement is nevertheless to freedom and not to banishment, an emerging from the narrowminded world of the past, with its spectres of authority and guilt. The open door becomes the border image of entrance outward into the warm fellowship of an inviting world. We recall the vision of bliss as a place ("the honeyed middle of the night") and the subsequent emphasis upon disorientation ("If thou diest I know not where to go"; "lost with sick unpruned wing").

In the face of such dislocation of the psyche, Porphyro affirms the discovery of a sufficient space, promising a place of intimacy and shelter amid benign surroundings. The home Porphyro offers is notably southern, the sign (in special, for the English) of positive relationship with the world, and perhaps -- to judge by Keats's naming of Burns's disposition as "southern" -- an unrepressed relationship with one's self. Flight into the storm, not unlike the pattern of expulsion from Paradise as a result of sexual transgression (Porphyro has "stolen to this Paradise" of Madeline's chamber, we recall), is converted into the prospect of a paradise far happier than the limited joys of the past.

With somewhat of a nod to Romance, the conventional need for stealth and secrecy, Keats has his lovers cautiously descend the wide stair in a direct path outward that is so unlike the tortuous route earlier followed by Porphyro or the circular movements of Angela, the Beadsman, and the revellers. Madeline hurries at Porphyro's words. The negative reading, that hope and happiness are merely verbal figures, perhaps survives as a latent complexity, but the primary meaning is nevertheless affirmative: the creative potency of language to constitute living space, to impel self-transcendence by incarnating the vision of Eros.

From an analysis of characterization as a function of perceptual space, we turn to the uses of perceptual space for narrative

sequence and structural cohesion. We might first observe that St. Agnes is far more successful as a narrative than either Endymion or Isabella, uniting richness of texture with a temporal impetus that appears almost self-propelling. An abiding by the dramatic unities and, especially, a narrative use of space, lie behind this achievement. Unity of time and action link the personae in relations either of opposition or collaboration, as unity of space focusses attention upon setting as a complex arena of perception. Opportunity is given both for close description, the mimesis of a "full" world, and close discrimination, the concentrated zonal ordering of terrain, in which contrasting spheres of vision meet on common edges, difference clarified by proximity. Such layering is at the service of temporal progress as well as theme; while moralized setting and movement are used to illuminate character and discriminate between alternative ways of seeing, as is shown in our analysis above, the symbolic crossing of space and character provides the means for generating narrativity. That is, St. Agnes is made to appear propelled less by authorial sleight of hand than by the self-generated intersections between characters.

Encountered rather than formally introduced, as were the personae in Isabella, and hence less explicitly the product of

the poet's intervention, the characters of St. Agnes seem to create the narrative motion within which they participate. When the frozen setting that opens the poem is compressed into the static figure of the Beadsman, his rising into movement seemingly releases the tale. Proceeding down the narrow chapel aisle and into the suddenly open space of the revellers, the Beadsman takes the reader through a ritually-confined outlook into the contrary perspective of a second narrative circle; he then retires having fulfilled his function as guide for the unfolding tale, which might be described as a series of antithetical modes of regard through the reader is led in sequence. "Glowing to receive" its guests, the second space or sphere of the poem readies the reader for the revellers' entrance. Personification -- for the room waits with eager-eyed anticipation -- generates in the reader a like outlook of expectation; the feeling of suspense draws the tale on, as description, the enriching details of which ordinarily might simply retard narrative flow, is enlisted for narrative ends. By way of metaphor, the preparatory mention of "old Romance" (in addition to the overt invitation, "let us turn") the reader is led to one absorbed in Romantic reverie. The guests inscribe a diffusely swirling orbit around Madeline, the still and oblivious center of attraction, whose

sole-thoughted inwardness is set against their externality. Amid the revellers' circle, Madeline remains exempt from surroundings, her heart "therewhere." Correspondingly, physical movement, the crossing of characters, is displaced by the mental dimension of forward dreaming as the underlying principle of narrative sequence. Madeline's rapt anticipation of her lover's visionary appearance leads to Porphyro's entrance and forthcoming quest. That is, eventuality is not only made wish-fulfilling in a generally benign fashion that confirms the ontology of desire along the plotlines of Adam's dream, but the character's reverie is made to appear the immediate source of narrative progress.

The freeze-frame of Madeline lost in dreams dissolves into the equivalent static shot of an inert Porphyro "beside the portal door." His path to Madeline retraces the perspectives already traversed by the reader: Porphyro sidesteps the revellers (in predatory guise), using to advantage the fear and sympathy of a surrogate Beadsman (for Angela, to, is old, poor, and obsessed with death), while evading his guide's hobbling realism and anxiety. Narrative event once again unfolds according to character movement. A two-stage ascent to Madeline's chamber is made to appear less an authorial choice than the reflection of

the hero's chosen revision of stance. A follower: furtively removed from danger and deposited in Angela's waystation cell, where his love-quest (and the storyline) are left suspended, Porphyro proceeds to convince his guide to follow his directions, thereby assuming control of the plot. Such taking charge of the given as a resource for personal action might be compared to the adaptation of an old wives' tale for personal ends by Madeline -- and by Keats. The appearance of character determining narrative subsequence is conveyed by Porphyro's generative stratagem.

The meeting of Porphyro and Angela is named a "happy chance," suggesting that the beldame's arrival is granted by authorial contrivance. The encounter of Porphyro and Madeline, on the other hand, seems to materialize by way of the characters themselves, as hero awaits heroine until an attenuated anticipation (which the reader is made to share) is realized in person. The resulting intimacy marks the withdrawal from consecutiveness into the ahistorical depth of dreams. Narrative resumes as the lovers emerge from this bower, awakening to the opposition of inner and outer worlds. Madeline's rose-colored glass, which earlier faced the enclosed nest, admits now the turbulence of the outside. To acclimatize this sudden expansion of frame, and to

move the tale outward, Porphyro proposes a benign reading of surroundings that converts unpromising circumstance into opportunity. Narrative action is thereby regenerated, Madeline hurrying at Porphyro's words (as if he rather than Keats were the poet of their escape), and following him outside the frame of the poem.

While space and character appear to propel St. Agnes, we may discern structural patterns that contribute to narrative cohesion, lending even by sheer iteration an appearance of authenticity to narrative event. For example, the motif of the perilous journey is dramatized by such personae as: the Beadsman, for whom the temptation to feel is the turning point of his progress; the beldame, who rises to become the lovers' accomplice and yet remains filled with the "busy fear" of transgressing social codes; Porphyro, who must pass through chambers which, to him, "held barbarian hordes"; and Madeline, who flees from a castle full of "sleeping dragons" into the perilous storm. More central than the journey motif is the structure of empathetic vision -- a progressive intimacy of regard, which is followed by the retraction from such an immersed perspective -- informing the spatial and psychological presentation of character and shaping the poem as a whole. Keats will return to this structure of deep-

ening involvement and subsequent distancing as the basic principle of organization both for the "Ode to a Nightingale" and the "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

To examine the pattern of empathetic vision in St. Agnes, we might first turn to the dramatic personae, and consider the shape of their spatial routes. Angela and the Beadsman traverse analogous paths: each proceeds from a peripheral locale (the chapel; the area adjacent to the castle entrance) to a higher or more inward circle (a "northward turn" to the ballroom; an ascent to Madeline's room), and then retreats back down to a space of diminished intensity ("another way," which leads to the penitent's cell; the descent to a "safe, level matting"). Porphyro and Madeline likewise trace a similar pattern of movement: Madeline advances from the ballroom up to her proper sphere, guiding Angela away before herself entering the central or apical space of the poem; and Porphyro enters from outdoors through the castle portal, moves on to the beldame's room and finally up to this same nucleus -- or rather, to that closet adjacent to Madeline's chamber, from which he will emerge to gain the innermost point. Together the lovers reverse the centripetal progress, hurrying back downstairs and outside of the space circumscribed by the narrative.

The parabola of movement which we have traced as a common spatial figure may be perceived not only as the characteristic mental figure that plots the centering/decentering progress of personae, but also the poet's presentation of a deepening empathy with or personalization of character and the subsequent withdrawal from such closely involved treatment.

Met performing the stock function of his titular name, the Beadsman briefly opens into a figure of emotive complexity ("flattered to tears") at the apex of his progress, then backtracks once more to the habitual attitude of the literary type. Although primarily a plot device for uniting the lovers, Angela gains a certain rounded depth through this same interior pattern: from a solely fearful and passive stance as one who mocks at Romantic illusion ("feebly she laugheth in the languid moon"), she rises to the role of go-between, actively catering to young love before scurrying back to form. Empathy is most conspicuous in the case of Madeline, though the parabolic shape of immersion, an entering into and retraction from involvement, is perhaps less apparent in a character initially introduced in terms of undivided attention and rapt introversion. Directed to approach Madeline with that concentration fitting her inwardness, the reader yet finds her introversion deepening until its center is attained within her realized dream, the paradoxically indrawn fullness

of shared intimacy. Her subsequent awakening and flight into the storm traces a kind of retraction from self-coincidence and the chief intensity of Erotic vision -- or at least from the simplified solution to identity offered by dream and innocence, and from the unreflecting perspective of enchantment -- in reaction to the divisive pressure of fear. We find a correspondent withdrawal by the narrator from a close delineation of her responses as the escape is effected. With Porphyro, despite a similar final withdrawal of authorial involvement, the parabolic pattern appears surmounted: the proud Italianate lover and voyeur comes to remove his costumery, consummate his quest, and yet rises to a deeper creative awareness and more active responsiveness, thereby lending a forward direction and promise to the lovers' flight.

The structure of empathetic vision informs not only the progress of individual characters but the general shape of the narrative. Arranged like "a Ptolemaic universe of spheres,"⁵¹ St. Agnes contracts in a mimesis of focussed perception from its widest and outermost spatial circle toward its innermost point. The nucleus is attained in the middle stanzas of the tale, space folding in upon itself and forming an enclosing space for the central act of union. From this point, the parabolic figure is

completed in an unfolding movement as the narrative accompanies the lovers in their centrifugal escape.

While informing St. Agnes with a structural unity, the spatial progress of the narrative may be taken as well as a feature of an instrumental poetics, a strategy for manipulating the reader's intimacy of perspective, his variously close reading of the text. We might contrast the shapely purposiveness of such manipulation in St. Agnes with the rather awkward intruding of commentary and self-conscious juggling of point of view in Isabella.

The structure of empathetic vision affords the carefully articulated space of St. Agnes a narrative coherence and development absent from Endymion and Isabella. Under the impetus of internalized quest, setting in Endymion tends to be as protean as free association. While the clear continuous spatial progress of St. Agnes is as foreign to the early Romance as is its simple condensed plot, we do find an inward and downward movement ordering various episodes in Endymion. A cyclic pattern of empathetic vision might therefore be designated as the poetic substructure. Furthermore, while the Romance is devoted almost exclusively to an exploration of its protagonist's consciousness, this inward focus is framed by introductory sections and a final

retraction from the persona's tale. To this extent, Endymion conforms as a whole to the parabolic pattern of a deepening and then retreating angle of perception which we have discerned in St. Agnes.

Turning to Isabella, we find that space is given more than a mental reality yet is never very closely or clearly defined; two basic regions are distinguished, the indoor space of the lovers and the brothers' outdoor domain. The initial arena, identified solely with the lovers, is abruptly recontextualized upon the brothers' initial appearance and the report of their wide-ranging sphere of influence. Personae are then directed across a widened narrative space, the brothers journeying with Lorenzo, and Isabella retracing their steps with her nurse. Upon Isabella's return, poetic space by and large contracts to the heroine's room, the negative face of intimacy finding its image in this contraction. There are, however, brief excursions for reporting the brothers' flight and narrating Isabella's mad emergence from seclusion to question passersby; in the latter of these episodes, an expansion of space underscores self-enclosedness, the stifling isolation of the private soul. Attenuated rather like its heroine's suffering, Isabella finally closes with a somewhat self-contradictory retreat from its eponymous center into the consolations of communal art. This resolution may be contrasted with an open-

ing that avoids any placement of the lovers within a wider social context. Apparently the sole personae in their narrative, at least until the brothers make their unprepared entrance in stanza 14, Isabella and Lorenzo assume a singleminded unawareness of danger. So unsuspected, they prove an easy prey for their belatedly introduced opponents, who almost seem to be abetted by the poem's structural oddity.

The structure of St. Agnes, in contrast with that of Isabella, would appear to provide its favored personae with a narrative position more tenable to their survival. Porphyro and Madeline are introduced as already within a context of opposing forces, through which the hero must pass in his quest, and which the lovers together must bypass in their escape. The danger of surroundings is admitted to begin with, not belatedly acknowledged in the manner of Isabella, where frames of opposition suddenly materialize after the lovers unite. Taken into account all along by the reader and by the personae, counterforce may be met with a ready awareness, narrative structure abetting (or lending credence to) the overcoming of obstacles.

We find in St. Agnes a further protective structure, a general pattern of empathetic vision within which the lovers enjoy

a privileged place. The use in *Endymion* of initial and terminal frames -- the reflexive introduction, and the "ongoing" tale of Peona after the hero's apotheosis -- is creative of aesthetic distance and a kind of envelope of exemption for the protagonist. Such a strategy finds a more narrative adaptation in the pattern of authorial involvement traced by St. Agnes. Beginning and end are occupied with outer environment and peripheral figures that are presented in a relatively rapid, skimming, and, at times, impersonal fashion; the lovers' desires and perceptions, on the other hand, are entered into in the enclosed middle of the text with that elaboration of detail and slowness of narrative time appropriate to intimacy. A hiatus in consecutiveness is opened at the narrative center, a space more lyrical than narrative which corresponds to the lovers' perception of an eternal present. From this still point at which the perpetual and self-perpetuating vision of Eros is realized, the tale resumes and quickens its linear flow until extension darts out of dimension. Space is translated into the void of the storm, and time blurred into the indeterminate recession of "ages long ago."

Although St. Agnes is capped by a terminal disposing of space and time as reductive material ratios, Porphyro and Madeline are exempted from the brusque negative summation. Per-

haps the most interesting strategy for "redeeming" the lovers and opening a qualified, tenuous space of escape within the narrative itself is the curious double ending of the poem, which resolves the general pattern of empathetic vision by tracing the final movement of retracted gaze.

They glide like phantoms into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch they glide;
Where lay the Porter in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one and one, the bolts full easy slide:
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

In these accomplished stanzas there is a double movement of the narrative outward, with the lovers vanishing and all other personae abruptly summoned back to be disposed of. The fairytale reversion to "once upon a time" is in one sense a mystification that points to its own unreality, an ironic strategy that isolates the lovers on the level of literary artifice, the obligatory happy ending of Romance. The sophisticated poet is implicitly acknowledging

to his audience that St. Agnes is finally to be seen as merely a poem. From this perspective, the phantomizing of Porphyro and Madeline would likewise be read as a strategy of insubstantiation to suggest the idealized fantasy and illusion informing the lovers and their escape. To judge by the more recent criticism, such an approach is prevalent. My analysis will lean another way.

That the lovers "are gone . . . ages long ago" not only appears to discredit an historical actuality but also to assure an immunity to time and the mind's arguments. Porphyro and Madeline enter into "once" as a kind of saving bower where time is redeemed, an arena by definition outside the scope of empirical competence or comparative reason, where the lovers and their tale may survive the cold eye of fact, the critic's reductive and dismissive judgment. That no account or summation of the lovers' future is given accords well with the idealization of love central to St. Agnes. Just as consequence is kept outside the reader's knowledge, for there is nothing given in the plot which might be used by the reader to determine the lovers' outcome, so love remains an ongoing and apparently self-creative way of seeing that stays forever new.

With the lovers' tale unfinished, moreover, the necessary

exclusions and requisite finality of an ending are evaded, the narrative sidestepping its own enclosing constraints. The fixity of the written appears circumvented, an impression abetted by the sudden amorphousness of time and space that accompanies the lovers' disappearance.

The lovers' escape might also be read in more thematic terms as the culminating stage of an awakening from sleep and dream into a fully palpable comprehension. For the final decentralization is to step outside the shadowplay of art. Such a metanarrative leap would naturally appear a facile denial of the identity of St. Agnes were no contrary ending provided to satisfy the recognition of the tale as a verbal construct. Furthermore, St. Agnes must be specifically committed to a temporal disposition to retain its status as a narrative; yet space and time are all but cancelled in the lovers' dispersion. We observe, however, that this amorphousness of dimension and blurring of focus is succeeded by an immediate deictic relocalization of the tale -- "that night" is specified -- and a detailed summing up of consequence.

To narrate is to end, a feature that must spread its contagion to character. For the plot of narrative is a metaphor of history, and its personae are the victims of time. That closure

required by narrative and yet anathema to Eroic vision, with its subjective eternity, must be accommodated; the idea of death or ending pervades St. Agnes, and is personalized in the figures of Angela and the Beadsman. To narrate is also to expose, and exposure need not conform to the idealistic intuition of beauty beneath appearances. As Lamia shall illustrate, a critical regard may rather strip away the illusion of value, leaving behind "nothing but pain and ugliness." We might even hypothesize that narrative by its very nature tends to align with such a contraction of perspective toward the limiting case of the "naked truth," a vision empty of beauty or delight. In St. Agnes the revellers and, more particularly, Angela and the Beadsman absorb the reductive fate or truth of narrative, that time as negation usurps in the end. As in Isabella, the demand for closure translates into the constrictive logic of fatality. But whereas Isabella and Lorenzo are the victims of this logic while the brothers go free, the lovers in St. Agnes sidestep the narrative sequence which is then passed upon those personae whose outlook conforms to this textual revenge, whose narrow perspective upon reality finds a not inappropriate emblem in dissolution. Whereas the pre-Romantic courting of mortality as the supreme warrantor of pathos, and the welcoming of death as a tranquil answer to

life's rapacity, do still lie behind the final solution in Isabella, neither of these approaches nor a Romantic exaltation of death as the supreme heroic break with an established order is essential to St. Agnes. Death is rather a morbid fact, a reality more tritely grotesque than pathetic -- and perhaps, as such, the figure of social being and the established order of hollow vision.

By returning to and disposing of all other personae after the lovers have escaped, Keats gives to his poem a sense of autonomous completion. Such self-containment, we might note, is in agreement with the self-generative appearance of St. Agnes, the impression given by the tale that its unfolding arises from the physical/perceptual progress of the personae themselves. This illusion of "naturalness" and its possible relationship to Keats's relative unconcern with "being seen" might be illuminated by way of a brief comparative review of the narrativity of Endymion and Isabella.

In the love-feast prepared by Porphyro we might find a condensed image of the structure of Endymion; like a heaping of delicacies in a profusion of detail, Endymion proceeds by a proliferation of "luxuries." The texture is organic, but in a very different

fashion than in St. Agnes, for the adventures of the protagonist follow no impelling linear progress. Analogous episodes appear strung together by authorial association and comprise a distinctly wayward storyline, lacking in suspense and urgency. Having indulged invention and generated "four thousand lines of one bare circumstance,"⁵² Keats ties loose ends together in a somewhat frayed and arbitrary resolution.

In Isabella it is not an excess of room for invention but a paucity of space that seems to shape the narrative. In deliberate reaction against the fluidity and scope of Endymion, Keats is doubly confined by a stifling position in relation to his source. Structure, theme, and style are of a piece, alike determined by these constraining factors. Even as Keats imports a fully detailed storyline he establishes a rigid structure of negation. Instead of giving the tale an illusion of process, the world of the poem is presented as an arena of fatality, of preordained and schematic event. Rhetorical device meanwhile arrests a paltry linear impetus, a surfeit of disorienting allusions and belabored authorial commentary distracting and alienating the reader from involvement in the tale by continually breaking the illusion of "natural progress."

If the anxiety of influence may be taken to shadow Isabella,

the position of precedence would appear to be benign for St. Agnes. Burdened neither by the spectral review of a famed precursor in adapting an already finished product, nor by the obligation for continual invention and consequent difficulties in structural coherence, Keats could freely reconceive and flesh out a folkloric kernel into the brief love-narrative. Adopted from Isabella is the clear and simple storyline that so distinguishes that poem from Endymion, with its rambling episodcity. St. Agnes in fact marks a further condensation or simplification than is evidenced by Isabella, for the unities are followed and a single dramatic episode is utilized as the central focus. The more oppressive features of Isabella are dispensed with, however; the interpolated allusions and commentary indicative of a poetics of self-consciousness are an infrequent resource which, used in a limited and discriminating manner, becomes a special device for intensification. In place of continual imposition from without, St. Agnes embodies an aesthetic of negative capability. Apparently confident in the ability of his tale to "tell itself," Keats is unobliged to interrupt the narrative flow and the reader's immersion (or suspension of disbelief) for the purpose of explanation. He thus avoids calling attention to askew levels

of discourse and the artifice of literary mimesis. The poem is permitted to stand alone with neither an apologetic preface nor the overt intrusion of guiding commentary "to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature." The Eve of St. Agnes is Keats's most uniformly assured and accomplished longer poem.

Although St. Agnes unfolds in a fashion suggestive of diachronic self-generation, the common critical observation that the poem is "rather a picture than a story"⁵³ retains its validity. For a pervasive richness of description entails the presentation of scenes so elaborately particularized that narrative flow is almost suspended as the locus of the poem as a full space is realized. Even the choice of the weighty and stately Spenserian stanza contributes to the impression of a spatial rather than temporal world. Furthermore, character interaction traces a tapestry of conflict rather than an actual drama. Applying Greimas' narrative grammar,⁵⁴ we may locate as the central action of St. Agnes a reconciliation of Subject and Object (represented by Madeline and Porphyro), with the Opponent (a category represented principally by the revellers) as a latent presence by and large sidestepped in the tale's unfolding. While space is utilized for physical and symbolic movement, it is also disposed in

concentric circles, discrete and self-enclosed planes of being. This rather abstract disposition lends its stasis to the narrative, promoting a lack of interplay between alternative levels. As the tale progresses, characters are left behind in their respective circles as underpresences that give a density and, perhaps, a simultaneity to the poem. Angela and the Beadsman, the "go-between" personae, quickly retreat to their accustomed level, holding the pattern of discreteness intact. First Porphyro and then the united lovers pass through the outward circles of opposition, eluding all confrontation in the process. Alternative modes of vision are never really engaged in the dispute of Experience.

As in Isabella, a simple binary opposition is the basic narrative structure of St. Agnes, although a less schematic progress by way of incidental oppositions minimizes the impression of abstraction; thus, the Beadsman finds the wintry climate with which he is symbolically identified as less than compatible with his comfort, and Angela who is finally of the revellers' world opposes them in aiding Porphyro. Nevertheless, the poem does resolve in the end into two camps, with the lovers set against all hostile otherness and the Beadsman and Angela included in the

figure of the Opponent; the vision "in Love's eye" is finally being set against the impoverishment of all other perspectives.

In contrast with the structure both of Isabella and especially Lamia, the clash of opposing visions is never broached. Different levels of apprehension pass without establishing contact, hence without collision. Only with the stichomythia and the rising storm is the counter-pattern suggested of direct conflict between antithetical modes of seeing. Conflict is internalized rather than dramatized, however, with focus being directed to what Greimas specifies as modal rather than action enoncés -- primarily a gaining of perceptual competence through an expansion of consciousness, a rising to the creative apprehension of the human world. For the Opponent set against the lovers is at last the perspective of negation -- the climate of vision of the frozen winter, of time as loss and death, of social identity which exalts a superficial pride and that fear of change which adores subservience to the past. And the lovers' escape finally is an internal event, a question of personal vision. As such, it evidences the poet's focus upon the subjective constitution of that which is perceived, according to the principle that "as the eye is, so it sees." In The Eve of St. Agnes warmth of imagination is given the potency to evade or even to transform negation

to its own advantage so that a prospective space for beauty and affection may be found.

Despite the assurance of St. Agnes, its solution to the dilemma of negative regard appears too partial and easy. There is too much wishing away of disagreeables. In Lamia Keats shall generate a more rigorous model of interchange between anti-thetical modes of vision, a model in which confrontation is not evaded and qualified affirmation is earned only in terms of a deepened dramatic complexity.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

¹For the general emphasis in this chapter and for some more specific aspects of the interpretation presented below, I am indebted to and following the lead of Arthur Bell, to whose article, "The Depth of Things: Keats and Human Space," Keats-Shelley Journal, Vol. 23 (1974), pp.77-94, the reader is referred; the critical studies of Bachelard (particularly, The Poetics of Space /N.Y.: Orion Press, 1964/ and Poulet (particularly, Metamorphosis of a Circle /Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966_/ lie behind the rather phenomenological approach and focus upon space evidenced in this essay.

²That is, Keats follows the phrasing in the anonymous translation of 1620, which was his immediate source for Isabella.

³Richard Fogle, The Imagery of Keats and Shelley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p.73. Perhaps this interpretation is motivated in part by the critic's desire for a tidy contrast between Keats and Shelley, with the latter rejecting that coldness which the former accepts as "a pleasurable part of the wholeness of sensational experience"(p.76). Fogle continues: "Keats does not, like Shelley, contrast and oppose to each other heat and cold as Evil and Good, but accepts them as equally good, interesting and desirable"(p.77). While one would not wish to label Keats a moral allegorist, this critical interpretation remains misleadingly schematic and proves less than useful for St. Agnes, in which a discriminating of value is linked to relative temperature; the pleasure thermometer obtains.

⁴Keats: the Critical Heritage, ed. G. M. Matthews (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971), p.276.

⁵I would place an implicit comma after "fails" and interpret the ambiguous phrase as signifying not an insentience, a failure to think or notice, but a penetrating response so deeply felt that spirit is cast down or overwhelmed.

⁶Judy Little, Keats as a Narrative Poet (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p.96.

⁷Little, p.96.

⁸W. J. Bate glosses the stanza by citing "the phrase Keats so liked in Shakespeare's sonnets, 'death's eternal cold'" (John Keats / Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963-/ , p.442).

⁹Critical Heritage, p.277.

¹⁰"I Stood Tiptoe" would, of course, come to mind; perhaps we might discern a mild self-mockery in the satiric adaptation of this favored unstable posture for characterization of the superficial revellers.

¹¹The image of "shadows hunting faerily/ The brain, new stuffed in youth," which is used to introduce the revellers, might be compared to the image of "crowds of Shadows in the Shape of man and woman" from which Keats would turn (Letters, II, p.146).

¹²Fogle, Imagery, p.125.

¹³I am thinking, for example, of the revellers' music, the dissonance which "affrays" Porphyro and briefly distracts him from the quest.

¹⁴Sarah Lawall, Critics of Consciousness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.124.

¹⁵For Madeline, we note, the folklore of St. Agnes is a "religion of joy -- all that incarnate delight" -- the terms in which Keats described to Severn his own response to the mythology of Greece (William Sharp, Life and Letters of Jos. Severn / London, 1892-/ , p.279).

¹⁶Arthur Bell observes that "Keats consistently associates feelings of fulfillment, security and peace with confining and sometimes almost smothering spatial surroundings" ("The Depth of Things," p.74); however, the inner circle of Madeline's room, which is an image of her own containment, the perfection of self-centered form, has the trap as its dark aspect, which here comes into the ascendant.

¹⁷Roland Barthes, S/Z (N.Y.: Hill & Wang, 1974)(translated by Richard Miller), p.24. "The moon is the nothingness of light . . . it illuminates by mere reflection without being itself an origin."

¹⁸Letters, II, 91.

¹⁹Cited by Wasserman in his article, "Keats and Bailey on the Imagination," MLN, 68, 364.

²⁰Jack Stillinger, The Hoodwinking of Madeline, and Other Essays (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p.86.

²¹The analogous responses and poses given to Porphyro and Madeline argue against Stillinger's insistence that the lovers occupy antithetical spaces within the poem's moral landscape (for example, "the lovers, far from being a single element in the poem are as much protagonist and antagonist as Belinda and the Baron, or Clarissa and Lovelace" Hoodwinking, p.82).

²²One local detail would seem to invoke the Orpheus myth in an especially overt fashion: Madeline must not "look behind" (stanza 6) and, again, "dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled" (stanza 26).

²³The revised ending concludes as follows:

The Beadsmen stiffen'd -- 'twixt a sigh and laugh
Ta'en sudden from his beads by one weak little cough.

²⁴Little, p.99.

²⁵Ibid., p.98.

²⁶That "there is more than a suggestion of pagan sensuality" in the love-feast would not prove Keats's distaste, as Stillinger suggests (Hoodwinking, p.79); the poet would rather be "a pagan suckled in a creed outworn" than a pious Christian if the former is alive to a world made flesh and the latter is trapped in the prison-house of self-denial.

²⁷Poulet, Metamorphosis; this is the central thesis of the chapter on Romanticism, pp.91-118.

²⁸"Introduction," Selected Letters of John Keats (N.Y.: Ferrar, Straus & Young, 1951), p.17.

²⁹Clifford Adelman, in his fine article on St. Agnes, stresses the contrast between Porphyro's song, the human synthesis of language and music, and the revellers' "reliance on instruments" which reveals a "neglect of the human capacity to create and

(note 29) harmonize in song" ("The Dangers of Enthrallment," The Eve of St. Agnes: 20th Century Interpretations, ed. A. Danzig / N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971-/ , p.110).

³⁰We note that the revellers' music reproduces "the barbarous dissonance/ Of Bacchus and his revellers" cited by Milton (Paradise Lost, VII, 32) and linked to the death of the archpoet Orpheus.

³¹For example, in Theocritus' Second Idyll, the lover (engaging in sympathetic magic) exclaims, "with help from the goddess, I melt/ This wax, and so may Delphis/ Of Myndos quickly melt with love." We note that Porphyro's heart "on fire for Madeline" is a fit imagistic means for unlocking the "frozen stream" of his lady's heart, Keats applying Petrarchan imagery in a deft and witty fashion.

³²"Introduction," Letters, p.41.

³³I am adapting the following observation by Wimsatt in The Verbal Icon (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), p.145:

The classical view of man as a "fixed and limited animal" against the romantic "infinite reservoir of possibilities," was baldly represented in T. E. Hulme's famous essay, "Romanticism and Classicism."

³⁴G. W. Knight, The Starlit Dome (London: Methuen, 1959), p.262.

³⁵G. Bachelard, The Right to Dream (N.Y.: Grossman, 1971), p.175.

³⁶Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp.151-3.

³⁷The storm might also be interpreted reflexively as imaging the agitation of Keats's turn from idyll, the bower of pastoral versification, to a poetry of dark passages, as dramatizing the aesthetic quarrel between the "solution sweet" of the early verse and the thematic of process more deeply immersed in doubts and uncertainties toward which Keats develops.

³⁸Quotations are taken from Keats's letter to Reynolds of May 3, 1818 (Letters, I, 281), and from the King Lear sonnet.

³⁹A familiar pattern in Keats's poetry, "God of the Meridian" presenting an especially vivid version of such disorientation; the paraphrase given here is after the "Epistle to Reynolds" (ll. 78-82).

³⁹Taking a lover, and more particularly an outsider as her lover, Madeline has betrayed both father and tribe; we might read the feud which Keats derives from Romeo and Juliet as a translation of close-kin endogamy. St. Agnes in its spatial progress may be seen as violating such tribal (or class) exclusivity, the closed world of social stratification finally being escaped from, with the outside (the realm of the outsider or outcast) finally redefined as the space of warmth and possibility, the prospect of "home."

⁴⁰Robert Brustein, "Drama in the Age of Einstein," New York Times, Section II, 8-7-77, p.1.

⁴¹As cited by Terence Hawkes in his study, Metaphor (London: Methuen, 1972), p.57.

⁴²Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.14.

⁴³Letters, I, 231.

⁴⁴Perhaps a broad historical analogue might be found in the development from pre-Romantic sensationalism (or associationism) and the literary reflex that counters this newly dominant empirical worldview, the cult of sensibility, to mythopoeic Romanticism, a far less etiolated alternative vision.

⁴⁵Letters, I, 243.

⁴⁶Cf. Don Ihde, "Singing the World: Language and Perception," The Horizons of the Flesh, ed. G. Gillan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), pp.61-77; the cited phrase appears on page 67.

⁴⁷So Kellogg and Scholes define narrative itself, in The Nature of Narrative (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.16.

⁴⁸Porphyro's mythmaking is, in a sense, a defense of poetry as the means of affirming experience rather than as the license for withdrawal from contact.

⁴⁹Octavio Paz, "Introduction," Anthology of Mexican Poetry (Indiana, 1965), p.31.

⁵⁰So Frye characterizes Bacon's "idol of the theatre, or aesthetic thinking," in Spiritus Mundi (Indiana, 1976), p.68.

⁵¹Roger Sharrock, "Keats and the Young Lovers," Review of English Literature, II (January 1961), p.85.

⁵²Letters, I, 171.

⁵³Leigh Hunt, in an early article on Keats, first made this point in passing; the original review is reprinted in Critical Heritage, pp. 165-77, the quoted phrase appearing on p.172.

⁵⁴A. J. Greimas, "Narrative Grammar: Units and Levels," MLN, No. 86 (1971), pp.793-806.

CHAPTER IV

LAMIA:

PERCEPTION AND DRAMA

"Why wilt thou examine
every little fibre of my soul,
Spreading them out before the sun
like stalks of flax to dry?
The infinite joy is beautiful,
but its anatomy
Horrible, ghast and deadly. Nought
shalt thou find in it
But death, despair, & everlasting
brooding melancholy."

Blake, Vala

"That which is creative must create
itself"

Keats, Letters

In Lamia, antithetic modes of vision are given a heightened clarity of definition as they are set in dramatic conflict. This thematic strategy of confrontation culminates in the extended scene of exposure which resolves the narrative. A parallel structure of stylistic antithesis gives elucidative form to the complex position of art itself. We shall first examine the thematic operation of perceptual opposition and then turn to the related aesthetic consideration.

Existence, in Lamia, is presented as a function of seeing and being seen. To highlight the central role that perception plays in his narrative, Keats prefaces the account in The Anatomy of Melancholy which served as his principle source, opening with a series of recessive frames that lead into a mythic quest for the fulfillment of desire made visible.¹ It is the dual perceptual dilemma of seeing and being seen which initiates the narrative. Hermes would possess an unseen nymph, yet his mythic antecedence to the woodland purges that Keats has enumerated (Lamia, I, 1-6) apparently does not ensure the leisure for sexual opportunity. To seek out the nymph, Hermes first must evade his father's eye:

From high Olympus had he stolen light
On this side of Jove's clouds to escape
the sight
Of his great summoner.

The amused tone notwithstanding, an ardent pursuit of personal vision is implicitly found deviant or transgressive even in the Golden Age. A prevailing context or ethos of social duty makes being seen a potential version of compulsion, perhaps of accusation or judgment. This darker aspect of exposure shall prove critical in the climactic scene of the poem, in which Lamia is stripped of her fair presence by the piercing eye of Apollonius. More escapist than defiant, Hermes' light-fingered act agrees with the traditional conception of the deity as not only the Olympian messenger and herald, but the god of cunning and theft as well. Nevertheless, when nonconformity in authoritarian Olympus is made manifest by the theft of light to illuminate desire, the Prometheus myth is suggested, with its sexualization of fire.² Perhaps Burton's observation, in the section immediately preceding his discussion of lamias, that "some think it Love is the self-same fire Prometheus fetched from heaven," might be taken to support such a reading. We are being ushered into a tale that shall be informed by the saving yet illicit vision of Eros.

While the "theft of light" provides Hermes with a space of exemption from the piercing eye of Jove, complete illumination remains obscured: "the sweet nymph might nowhere be found." She is as hidden from Hermes' sight as from the enflamed per-

ception of the lovesick fauns and satyrs. Her invisibility marks the retreat from exposure carried to its visual extreme, the consummate strategy for keeping beauty "unaffronted, unassailed/ By the love-glances of unlovely eyes." In the double sense of the phrase "the way they look," "unlovely eyes" are "unloving," their vision inadequately sensitive and fine. Viewing the nymph as a prize made desirable by the rude adoration of the wood-gods, "ever-smitten Hermes" shares in the satyrs' blunt ogling that disregards reciprocity. Whereas Lorenzo assured Isabella, "I would not fear/ Thine eyes by gazing" (*Isabella*, ll. 62-3), "unlovely eyes" would indiscriminately devour the other as an object, quite oblivious to the imposition. Perhaps the nymph's invisibility, then, might be read not only as a retreat from exposure but also as a reflection of the insentient nature of lust, dulling the eyes of Hermes and the wood-gods alike; "lascivious Fauns, Satyrs" is, in fact, the phrase Burton employs in the paragraph preceding Keats's source-tale.³

Much as the protagonist's identification with Glaucus was requisite for the vision of Eros in Book III of *Endymion*, Hermes must show kindness for the insight of love to uncloud his blind gaze. Roused from self-pity by Lamia's complaint, Hermes turns attention to her plight. Found in a dusky brake suggestive of a

shadowy identity, Lamia projects the wealth of contrary clues of a fabulous perceptual enigma. Yet the whirling surface of far-fetched color and design implying disparate selves resolves into the description of a woman's mouth and melancholy eyes, the complementary features of a singular identity, perhaps of a genuine inwardness.

Her head was serpent, but, ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.

As acknowledged and linguistically figured by the oxymoron "bitter sweet," the elaborate portrait exposes a basic contradiction: Lamia is both the snakeskin of flashing illusion that tantalizes and evades the grasp of perception, and the soul of a woman clearly intent upon "the ruddy strife/ Of hearts and lips." that her eyes were "born so fair," however -- "fair looking" in the kind of double meaning we have ascribed to "unlovely eyes" -- suggests the prior claim of unperplexed human beauty in Lamia's double nature. Unlike Burton's sorceress, Lamia is first of all a woman. Despite the dangers of exposure to indiscreet enquiry, the risk of perhaps awakening "a weeping Magdalene," Lamia would put by dissimulation and incognito to emerge from a protective chameleon self. She would reassume her woman's shape, would be

seen and would see herself as fair. To this end, she barter clarity of vision with Hermes.

There is an uncanny exchange of features in the presentation of Hermes, Lamia, and the nymph, an intricate mirroring of character and act which plot contrivance cannot easily account for. As Lamia sends her dreams abroad at will, while her true nature remains concealed beneath an enigmatic appearance, her nymph wanders about invisible and "free as air," safely blending with and enjoying life at one remove. As Lamia would have her woman's form, she restores the nymph's visible form. As Hermes takes on the power to see the nymph, Lamia is given the power to transform herself into a woman. As the nymph is placed before Hermes, hesitates, then "gives up her honey to the lees," Lamia assumes the power to place herself before Lycius, soon "throws the goddess off," and loves unreservedly. Hermes' quest for unclouded perception intertwines so intimately (and insistently) with Lamia's virtual appearance and self-perception as a woman that we might even approach the nymph and Hermes as mirrors of Lamia reflecting the realization of her "fairness."

Examining the climax of the Lamia/Hermes negotiations from this perspective, we note that both protagonists come to perceive

the nymph simultaneously after quite an involved interchange. Hermes has sworn upon his serpent's rod and upon Lamia's eyes, the serpent-woman in turn breathing upon his eyes. The caduceus introduces the serpent as an emblem of health and, by extension, of a redeeming self-regard antecedent to the Christian de-grading of snake and sexuality alike; Hermes returns to the serpent-woman her good name. Swearing upon Lamia's "fair" eyes, Hermes affirms their womanly truth; as his own eyes are breathed upon and thus opened to Lamia's inspired lucidity, the nymph, Lamia's second self, is instantly revealed. The scene might be glossed with Glaucus' rhetorical questioning of whether it is possible,

To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,
And one's own image from the bottom peep.
(*Endymion*, II, 330-2)

The answer is a declaration of total recovery through the cleansing of perception:

I am no longer wretched thrall,
My long captivity and moanings all
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum
The which I breathe away, and thronging come
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.
(II, 333-7)

That the nymph "like a moon in wane/ Faded" at Hermes' approach underscores the interchange between seeing and being; for the image tends to demystify invisibility, pointing beyond the magical (Lamia's

citation of "weird syrops," for example) to the metaphoric and psychological: invisibility is an index of fear and the correspondent desire to remove oneself from apprehension. "Self-folding like a flower/ That faints into itself at evening hour," the nymph recalls Madeline, self-enclosed "as if a flower could be a bud again." Each naturally unfolds according to the organic rhythm of increase, the idyll of Hermes and the nymph resolving openendedly, rather like Erotic vision itself:

Into the green-recessed woods they flew
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Is the lengthy mythological scene which Keats appends to the Burton tale intended primarily to dramatize the disjunction between the immortal and mortal, to expose the disparity between that which is desired and that which is real? Such is the basis both of Wasserman's reading of Lamia, in which the binaries are doubled, spirit being equated with immortality and flesh with mortality,⁴ and what might be called the Harvard Keatsian interpretation, in which there is less spiritualizing of the poet, a greater emphasis being placed instead upon a growing maturity of disillusionment and a deepening admission of limitation.⁵ While the Romantic preoccupation with the gulf between the ideal and the actual is in evidence in Lamia, I find the desire to

bridge this gap more central to the poem than the tragic irony of an irreconcilable distance. The intensity with which reconciliation is being sought is figured in Lamia's dramatic metamorphosis. Before we turn to this second scene or poetic region, however, Keats's unusual use of "mortal" and "immortal" deserves mention. Although not wholly free of the conventional denotations, these terms are employed primarily as human modifiers that mark the positive and negative poles of human awareness. Brooding upon transience and the blank inevitability of death, the "mortal" eye sees through life -- rather as Apollonius will see through Lamia -- until pain and ugliness present themselves as the only perceivable horizon. Such a leaden-eyed despair, which perplexes and retards desire, sinks all values to nothingness. Being "mortal," then, would signify the negative limit of what it means to be human. As Hermes descends from Olympus to the enchanted wood, Lamia will descend from the realm of the demi-gods to the reductive vision of mortality, recreating herself from this margin of unseeing and non-being. As the nymph becomes visible to Hermes in terms of a rather simple and idealistic notion of exposure, which would equate beauty with truth as the naked face beneath appearances, Lamia will become visible to herself by way of a darker and more radical passage, a less

sentimental and "smokeable" conception of nakedness. Nevertheless, the larger pattern of concern remains constant, whether we turn to Hermes' quest or to that of Lamia, the doubling of Cynthia as the Indian Maiden who has entered into the heart's grief or the "redeeming" of the angelic but icily removed Madeline, the embodiment of human sorrow writ large in the composite figure of the Titans or the "dying into life" of Apollo: Keats would bring the divine down to earth to clarify his sole interest in the drama of the human condition, to find within an atranscendent perspective an abiding space for human joy.

Lamia's metamorphosis is the second scene of perception that Keats creates as the basis for the narrative that he shall take from Burton. In place of simple deception reflecting demonic purposes, Lamia's assuming of a woman's shape is recontextualized and affirmed as the recovery of an apparently more genuine self. Such recovery is achieved by way of a thoroughgoing annihilation of reptilian identity, the protective guise of imposture.

Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix'd and anguish drear,
Hot, blaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one
cooling tear.

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain;
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;

Made gloom of all her freckling, streaks and bars,
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.

We are the spectators to an act of self-transgression that eliminates the superfluous, the costumery and makeup of a compromising show.⁶ Lamia would emerge from the multi-faceted disguise of the snakeskin. To be perceived solely as a woman, however, she must first become wholly visible to herself as a serpent. Through such extremity of perspective, all trace of her prior reptilian nature may be exorcised, the burning away of the serpentine finally dramatizing the process of relentless self-scrutiny. Human features, therefore, are profaned into those of a snake, taking on the burden of the transformation: the "woman's mouth" grows virulent, spewing a venom of self-loathing to wither away disguise; the eyes that wept "that they were born so fair" flash self-immolating sparks and, with "lid-lashes all sere," become a serpent's lidless eyes that stare blankly "without one cooling tear." We might interpret these details as signifying that the penetrant eye of Lamia stares through her prior multiple self in a purgative regimen unallayed by self-pity.

All "milder-mooned" graces are consumed. As in The Eve of St. Agnes, the moon has set, the sign of magical and artful illu-

sion, quicksilver change, and the passivity of dreams. The self is no longer shielded from contact and exposure. A volcanic stripping of surface ensues until Lamia is wholly "undrest" of her prior richness. Madeline's undressing is perhaps recalled, the removal of her "wreathed pearls" and "warmed jewels" conversely foreshadowing the immolation of the bejewelled snake-skin. Rather than naked beauty emerging from beneath borrowed robes, however, the burning away of the mask unveils no secure or absolute underlying meaning. The epoché of self-confrontation exposes no Husserlian eidos or Shelleyan white radiance of the Open, but only a discolored void at the heart. It is not the nature of things so much as the place of both creative and uncreative perception which Keats is revealing. Self-purgation descends into a vision of deficiency, the "foul rag and bone shop," the cold truth that pain is never done. Exposure carried to the limit case eradicates all value. In an excess of renunciation, Lamia sees clear through to the nadir of "mortal" vision, what William James called "the irreducible brute facts" of reality. Such a perspective does not bare the Truth, for the skeleton is no truer than the flesh, nor irony, which would "stare down" all meaning, the last word on human potential. Despair is rather a stage of a developing process than its end, in a poem heavily

weighted toward value and desire. The revelation of pain and ugliness underneath might even be taken to expose the inadequacy of an eye that simply negates, peeling away the layers of illusion. As there is no ultimate or pristine meaning independent of human investment, we are shown that "where man is not, nature is barren," that existence unveiled of human category, like Peer Gynt's onion, is merely an absence at the core. Freedom from disguise requires an answering freedom to renew value from within. Quite without the immanence of mytho-historical Necessity enjoyed by Apollo in Hyperion, Lamia undergoes the grave vision and, passing through such extremity, "dies into life." A new integrity of identity is constituted ex nihilo from the empty point "where all the ladders start."

"That which is creative must create itself," Keats wrote to Hessey.⁷ "For the creator himself to be a child newborn, he must also be willing to be the mother and endure the mother's pain," Nietzsche observed.⁸ The violence of self-dispute in Lamia's metamorphosis attests to an intense desire to be born and the willingness to assume an actively creative role. Having endured what we may take to be a Gorgonizing vision of self-consciousness, with eyes "in torture fixed and anguish drear," Lamia arises from

fixity, the limit of contraction of her former contemplative self. No longer perplexed by the self-contradiction intrinsic to unacted desire, Lamia now hastens to affirm her "fair" image. Rather like Milton's Narcissistic Eve, and recalling as well the God of Genesis who reviews his creation to see that it is good, Lamia flies "to a pond wherein she passioned/ To see herself." The redressing of identity concludes in the look of approval, clarifying the impression that metamorphosis was itself an agon of perception, with self-affirmation as its end. Thus Lamia is shown to us as a woman only after she has seen herself -- that is, as she sees herself.

The act of self-reflection might further be glossed with Lacan's observation that the experience of the mirror is constitutive of identity, the "double" serving as an initial phase of relationship with another.⁹ Making visible a "fair" self, furthermore, is not unlike the unperplexed perception of one's desire emerging from a formerly serpentine intricacy of resistances.

Having passed through the undifferentiated perception of pain and ugliness, a waste expanse without interval, Lamia would actively intervene upon the nature of things, creating meaning through the personal discrimination of value. This end may be accomplished in a finer tone by one "deep learned" in heart-knowledge:

Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact and swift counterchange;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art.

The witty passage defines a kind of ideally informed consciousness, an acuity of creative perception rather than a talent for dissection. Embodying the essential compatibility of feeling and thought, Lamia proceeds from an inclusive perspective that does not dismiss out of hand but takes value into account, fosters its emergence, and clarifies its outline. Knowledge takes on a central role in Soulmaking. The self, having lost the original unity of a pre-reflective cogito, having passed beyond the stages of thoughtlessness and pleasant wonder, need not be "lost in a mist."¹⁰ For an antidote to oppressive self-consciousness is found in consciousness itself, as the negative aspect of mind -- that "a moment's thought is passion's passing bell," that "everything of which we become conscious is a terminal phenomenon"¹¹ -- is perceived as strictly subordinate to the creative working of the intelligence. Contending needs may be unconfounded by a more precise examination of ambiguity or ambivalence; such a process reflects the metamorphic ordeal of self-examination through which Lamia burned away contradiction and made the hidden and unconscious

conscious and visible. While it is acknowledged that "joy and woe are woven fine," the possibility is affirmed that the enigmatic human condition may be articulated, that the "gordian complication of feelings"¹² may be "unperplexed." The coinage is taken from Donne's "The Exstasie," in which a passionate desire for the intellectual clarification of emotion is expressed:

"This Exstasie doth unperplex (we said)/ And tell us what we love."

By an improvement of sensual perception, Lamia would chart the maze of thought and feeling, illuminating the atom turmoil of dark passages. The given chaos is declared "specious"; it is not that life's richness is being compartmentalized, as in Apollonius' sterile philosophy, but rather that the muddiness of daily vision is being refined by "sure art," so that "unperplexed delight and pleasure known" may be enjoyed. Yet Lamia's Euclidean skills, while they facilitate a deepening of enjoyment, operate at the distance of disciplined regard, so that the self is not overwhelmed by forces raging from without and within. Finely attentive and positively capable of acting upon that which is perceived, the "sciential brain" grasps the virtual bliss at the heart of the human situation, "where our joy is, or not at all."

Having made her inwardness visible and having approved the new image, with a discriminating eye for the lineaments of desire, Lamia is well prepared to see and to be seen. The narrative according to Burton finally commences, as Keats dramatizes the encounter between Lycius and Lamia. Emphasis is placed upon an opening of perception through self-exposure, the lovers coming to share a vision of one another which fills all their senses. Such perceptual development is made particularly evident in the characterization of Lycius, who executes a complete turn-about of regard from his initial blind self-abstraction;

His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near --
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood; he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle.

Lamia shut up in the serpent-prison is recalled -- though not without the thought of her subsequent dismantling of defenses. In addition, the final wrapping-up of Lycius' corpse is foreshadowed ("in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound"). Perhaps the student's pre-occupied alienation from surroundings foreshadows as well his instructor's viewpoint, which disposes of immediate data in categories of "foreseen" judgment. "Platonic shades" suggests

a murkiness of vision, while the secondary signification of "shade" -- that of "spectre" -- clarifies the disembodiment endemic to such a perspective. To apply the Sartrean antinomy, Lycius is lost in the solipsistic shadowplay of pure (or intransitive) consciousness, as contrasted with a "consciousness of" the world, the latter mode exemplified by Lamia's own palpable discernment which inclines toward expression. In its lack of clarity and connection, the easeful mindscape of abstract thought is less substantial than the realm of imaginative response. While Keats's aim may be to expose Romantic love as simultaneously "a personal discovery of value and a surrender to phantoms," as Sharrock contends,¹³ I would stress the poet's primary interest in the former end, and would point to Lycius' undiligently indolent wandering "in the calm twilight of Platonic shades" as illustrative of a more unequivocal "surrender to phantoms" than is his subsequent attachment to Lamia.

Perhaps, as Wasserman maintains, Lycius "must seek his vision of perfect beauty in the privacy of his self";¹⁴ indeed the personal is opposed and Romantically preferred to the social throughout Lamia. But to find Lycius, in his wrapped introversion, "divinely prepared for the meeting with Lamia" would appear excessive¹⁵; such a worshipful identification belies the importance accorded exposure, as in Lamia's simplifying of an ambiguous

identity by "throwing the goddess off." Shrouded in his mantle, Lycius must be recalled to perception. We note that the name Lycius is itself etymologically promising of such enlightenment. Much as "bright planet Hermes" was awakened from pensive self-centeredness by Lamia's voicing of distress, and thus brought to perceive the desired yet "unseen" nymph, so "Lycius bright," whose indifference makes Lamia quite "unseen" (and we note the pointed verbal echo), is turned back to cognizance by the request that "pity" be shown. Kindness in the double sense of recognizing relation and of acting with sympathy serves as the requisite mediation for comprehension. In looking back and discovering Lamia by the wayside, Lycius physically demonstrates the protean and constitutive nature of perception: seen with a fresh alertness, the field of vision bypassed as blank is no longer the same field, a richness that went unnoticed suddenly emerging. Behind Keats's use of the clever if less than original dramatic contrivance of the missed encounter lies the suggestion that outlook transforms experience and determines presence, that nothing is but seeing makes it so.

The scene of greeting is centered upon the look of love;

And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full.

Love's oxymoron is the paradox of perception itself, or rather of that undistracted and unreserved intensity of regard which looks into rather than looking through or away. If the perceived is neither negated by the viewer, as in Apollonius' "spear-vision," nor dismissed by a withholding or averting of the eyes, as when Lycius checks his love-trance to solicit another's look (II, 241), then seeing may be a continual revelation of the "forever new." The onesighted infatuation of Lycius is centered upon a vision of total acceptance undimmed by comparative reason. Bewilderment is the sign of an experience unclassified in "the catalogue of daily things" which flaunts the conventional laws of logic and contradiction rather than yielding to discursive solution. Hence the metaphor of the overflowing cup for an intoxicated vision which appears perpetual and wholly sufficient to desire. The inebriated eye, freed from meddling intellect and constraining propriety, is flooded by the consciousness of beauty. Lamia's words seem to have been loved "a whole summer long," time extending as personal and benign, quite exempt from the spectre of attrition, as life is perceived as a fullness to be celebrated. Lycius' festive insight is not unrelated to the soul-searching regard of numerous Keats personae, who fall, like Hamlet,

"to such perusal" of another's face in the effort to unperplex the enigma of human nature. The motif finds its culminating instance in the figure of the poet reading in Moneta's "planetary eyes" the deep truth of what being human entails. Such a comprehensive perspective, which sounds the depth of misery, might be contrasted with Lycius' love-vision, in which another's beauty is perceived with an intensity that "overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration."¹⁶

The brief courtship between Lamia and Lycius, however, opens quite sinuously. We are no longer in the simple world of Isabella where lovers "tell their hearts all plain," and Keats acknowledges (with considerable charm) the game-playing of the averted look, the sexual politics of withholding, which obtain in social relations. Yet, upon rousing Lycius from a swoon that (conventionally) attests to his sincerity, Lamia unperplexes his apprehension by throwing "the goddess off," dispensing with the gestures of coyness designed to disguise true feeling. She assures Lycius that she will not leave, for "the self-same pains/ Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his." The encounter comes full circle in this acknowledgment of kindness. With vulnerability mutually exposed, the lovers assume a reciprocity of perception, seeing only one another. The way to Corinth is made

short by the "spell" of undistracted intersubjectivity, for time and space present themselves as they are experienced. Simply being within the present, "blinded" Lycius never thinks to know how the city is reached.¹⁷

The Corinth way of seeing constitutes a confused and insubstantial dream of living. Nevertheless, Lycius muffles his face to avoid notice by the representative of this immaterial reality, shrinking into his mantle as he passes Apollonius' "sharp eyes." Fearful of being seen, or of perceiving himself with disapproval, Lycius covers his own eyes, and assumes the guilty posture of one already shrivelled by a cutting glance. The whole cluster of associations between invisibility and fear arises and is underscored by mention of Lycius' palm "dissolving in dew" beneath the self-contradictory pressure of concealment. The lovers enter their "unknown" palace, first passing through an elaborately detailed marble threshold (lls. 380-6) which itself illustrates that the most objectively real and heavy fact is deeply enigmatic, something rich and strange¹⁸; Lamia and Lycius are left at the close of Part I amid the busy-ness of Corinth, "the world forgetting, of the world forgot."

As Part II of Lamia opens, the stolen light of desire with which the poem as a whole began is displaced as the ruling nar-

rative sign by the glaring eye of Jealous Love, a demonic image of exposure beneath which all precious seeing will be lost.¹⁹ Scene four (II, 16-105) traces in miniature this perceptual deformation, clarifying the theme by way of an envelope structure. Contrary experiences of sleep mark the boundaries of the scene: first met enjoying a prelapsarian leisure that reconciles the virtues of consciousness and dream, of serenity and unrelaxing attentiveness, the lovers are left at terminus in a state of "blind and blank" unconsciousness. This polar opposition, in framing a storyline that details the admission of the world into the lovers' perspective, implicitly comments upon the intrusion rather as a contraction of awareness than as an expansion of scope. From a love that fills the eye, obliterating all consideration, Lycius regresses to a self-alienating concern with being seen that reinstates supervision from "beyond" as the measure of worth. Far more central to Lamia than an exposing of the blindness of "the heart that lives alone/ Housed in a dream, at distance from the kind," the reading Perkins offers,²⁰ is precisely this depiction of the self-negating outcome of external review.

The initial setting of repose reflects the openness of Eros. Like the poet and unlike the dreamer, as these figures are distinguished in The Fall of Hyperion, Lamia and Lycius cannot sim-

ply shut their eyes to reality and flee into an Hermetic enchanted wood. To invert the escapist terms of Keats's early sonnet, "To One Who Long in City Has Been Pent," the lovers must live within and illuminate the "dark city," creating "'mid contradictions" a space for abiding beauty. Airy and exposed, its twin pillars "unveiling" the sky, the urban palace of the lovers would seem to answer the need for a preserve of freedom amid the confines of the social, a breathing space within the apparent poverty or claustrophobia of dailiness. Conversely, the curious roofless architecture brings inner experience and the outer world into an harmonious continuity. The fane of "Ode to Psyche" is, perhaps, recalled, with its "casement ope at night/ To let the warm love in." We might also bring to bear, especially in light of Keats's historicist research for the narrative²¹, Eliade's observation that "the most ancient sanctuaries were 'hypaethral,' or built with an aperture in the roof" symbolizing "communication with the transcendent"²² -- in our poet's atrascendent locus, communion with the highest human potentiality. Despite the unfortunate opportunism of phrasing, Lamia's "purple-lined palace of sweet sin" (II, 31) is not constructed as an enclosed bower of bliss or brothel of clustered transgression, for the vision of lovely eyes is being reflected, the perspective of Eros which

would not conceal sexuality in shame but would openly affirm the gratification of desire. As the palace opens to the sky, so the lovers' eyes remain open "that they might see each other while they almost slept," a liminal vision that mediates levels of consciousness and reconciles the Beulah world of ravishing calm with an unlapsing acuity of awareness. The lovers' "half-slumbering" might also be viewed in terms of a motif recurrent in Keats's poetry: the Renaissance topos of ripeness that couples watchful energy with ease.²³ Rather than a Classical repose, however, the lovers display an intensity of desire like that of Chaucer's love-birds, that "sleepen all the night with open yē." With no safe distance from feeling, the mind's eye is engaged, exposed and vulnerable. If the palace relieves the "worldly heart," then, it is primarily an habitual shallowness of perspective and dullness of response, an anxious blocking or veiling of perception, which is being surmounted. The point is clarified when Keats invokes his familiar motif of seeing "beyond the bourne." Such an extending of vision characteristically diminishes scope and intensity, its disregarding of attentive focus finally unrealizing the perceived and the perceiver. Endymion's declaration comes to mind:

There never lived a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starv'd and died.

(IV, 646-8)

In these lines might be found a foreshadowing of the "starv'd lips" of the visionary turned spectral in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Hamlet's ruminations regarding "the undiscovered country from whose bourne/ No traveler returns" (III, i, 79-80) underlie the Keatsian motif of straying "beyond the bourne." Yet the sleep of phantoms displaces the literal death signified in the drama, as Endymion inveighs against an overvaluing of vision at the expense of present joy, a losing of oneself in the disembodied airlessness of exclusively internal events. The Harvard Keatsian reading of Lamia tends to interpret the palace itself as such a "beyond," which Keats would expose, pointing us toward the moral of acclimatization, the need to enter the common life fully cognizant of human limitation.²⁴ We note, however, that Keats's actual phrasing directs us toward a counter-interpretation. For Lycius' spirit is said to "pass beyond its golden bourne" after it has been distracted by a "thrill of trumpets." That is, the outer world is now the disorienting "beyond," and the palace the rich center of human relation which cannot hold when a restlessness of vision depletes it of value.

In Lamia as in "Staffa," the "stupid eye of mortal/ Hath passed beyond the rocky portal." It is not precisely that Lycius must "shut the windows of his imagination, for the power to see

beyond one's bourne will spoil the pleasure of all sensation,"²⁵ the reading Reiman offers. As the images of the perpetually full cup and the hypaethral palace suggest, a full openness of vision would not appear to lead one beyond the bourne but rather to fill all one's seeing with the here and now. Neither does the opposition of flesh and spirit that Endymion draws in the quotation above obtain for Lamia in a manner which would argue the need to pass beyond ethereal illusion. We are closer to the context of St. Agnes, where "the boisterous, midnight festive clarion" (so like "the thrill of trumpets") announces a surface and insentient society. Distractive dissonance is set against the pursuit of love, which opens the sensual imagination rather than shutting the mind's eye. In Lamia, as in St. Agnes, Keats is first of all affirming the deeper vision which informs unqualified and unreflecting love, alive wholly in the present joy; Lycius' musing "beyond" this sensual grace marks his fall into the self-divisive outlook of dull mortality. Ceaselessly swept beyond himself, the reflective thinker fails to inhabit his world. A "moment's thought," particularly in the sense of second thinking or reconsideration, proves fatal to passion insofar as it effects a withdrawal from presence, a seeing beyond the other which is also a blindness to one's own authenticity.

("La Belle Dame" may be read in terms of this same scenario of objectification.) Wasserman identifies the buzzing in Lycius' brain which follows upon the brass alarum as "the tug of mortality that draws man out of his visions of a beauty that is truth, a bliss that is unperplexed from pain," returning him to his sole self.²⁶ While the inevitability of loss may be of less central moment to Keats than Wasserman maintains,²⁷ the fact of self-exclusion involved in seeing beyond one's bourne is critical, as the divided subject, in the act of experiencing, observes and judges himself from the outside. Such review from an "objective" beyond will culminate in Apollonius' scrutiny of Lamia, which might be interpreted as the projection of Lycius' own second thinking.

Lamia laments "dismissal" (II, 44), an analysis of relationship extending to Lycius' situation alike: estranged by memory and reason from that onesightedness that burns away disagreeables and keeps identity whole, Lycius has revised his unquestioning intimacy of view regarding both Lamia and his own acceptability. An elaborate protestation of innocence marks this revision:

Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?

How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?

The imagery is decadent, the unnaturally "unbudded rose" recalling Madeline's (very temporary) self-contraction. In place of a vision that unveils the sky and opens the self to a more natural prospect, Lycius foresees an interiority of intricate snares, as if relationship were a serpent prison, a perverse game of mastery to be savored through concealment. Although "mirrored small in paradise," the full status of the subject still reflected in Lamia's eyes, Lycius has grown self-conscious of the dependency upon the constitutive act of others, upon their approval and recognition. The unseen palace does not offer concealment enough to obscure the realization that he is the object of the regard of others and that, to adopt Sartre's terminology, his own objecthood is the content of shame. Far more deeply than in his earlier narrative poems, Keats acknowledges that the social order becomes an internal environment critical to one's self-conception, and that the need to reach an authentic self related to -- but not subjected to -- outer reality, is a dilemma admitting of no easy solution. With a buzzing in his head perhaps suggestive of social gossip regarding impropriety, Lycius abandons a personal truth justified by faith alone to go "buzzing after knowledge" of his own worth, and to confirm from "beyond"

subjective intercourse his reputable status. Creating a spurious ad hoc self, he would be seen and thus perceive himself in the light of approval. "You invite in a witness when you want to speak well of yourself,"²⁸ Nietzsche's Zarathustra observes; an act of publicizing and merchandizing the self might be yet more successful. Since shame and pride are near of kin, Lycius, impelled by "an anxiety principle masquerading as a reality principle and identical to the ego's self-love,"²⁹ would "confound" and "abash" all "ther men" with the sight of Lamia's beauty. Love is reduced to the contingencies of reinforcement, a prize to be trumpeted for reputation's sake. As her bridal car "wheels round its dazzling spokes," Lamia will circulate as display rhetoric, the dazzling vehicle of Lycius' self-acclaim. Meantime the status quo will be served, the lovers wheeling toward wedlock, the public oratory of the trionphe coupling with the holy vows of legitimacy to silence all whispers and regain for Lycius a sanctioned footing within the group. That marriage may be a stock and frozen securing of relationship from "beyond its golden bourne," that "social forms mystified into natural relations oppose themselves to man,"³⁰ enforcing a dead language of acceptability, goes unregarded in the heat of insecurity. Much as naming may level identity to a type-cast formula, Lycius would formalize his inter-

course with Lamia by the adoption of matrimonial roles. With the projected use of Lamia as a display object, the reciprocity of "lovely eyes" is lost; "when the freedom of the other is downgraded or denied, the game of love is over and a power game of suppressing authentic existence ensues." And thus,

. . . in self despite
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.

.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent -- Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny.

Upon perceiving oneself as an object of perception, a delusory "out" may be found in dominating and objectifying others; as Lycius would be master of how he is seen, he would master all of Lamia, perceiving her solely as a love-object, the body beneath his control. But sadomasochism reflects the dispute of inner and outer, of private and public, and thus is itself a reversible fraction that notates the complementary faces of repression. Hence, the metaphor of the snake returns, suggesting a fallen forbidding vision of sexuality. Treated as less than human, Lamia is symbolically identified with rather than exposed as a serpent. A demonically reductive outlook gains mastery.

The devaluing regard finds its closing emblem in the apparently innocent request for a "mortal name." While love affirms the other's uniqueness, naming delimits the many senses of the given to an outworn fixity. Thus the fane in "Ode to Psyche" is dressed with "buds and bells and stars without a name," the profusion of defamiliarized terms comprising a "language strange" that remains fresh and new. A named thing, on the other hand, is evaluated and explained away in the denominating, its presence annihilated by an abstract sign; as Sartre observes, "anything which we name is no longer quite the same: it has lost its innocence."³¹ Writing itself enacts this fall, as language banishes or effaces the referent and thus constitutes an order of absence. Lycius' request for a fit "mortal" referent underscores the significance of naming as de-finition. For, while mortal and immortal both are human modifiers in Keats's lexis, the latter indicates a vision of the self as an exalted mystery. Lycius would prefer enclosing and controlling Lamia's identity. Not only is the social pattern of dominance/subservience being reinforced; it is as if Lycius, by bestowing upon Lamia a set and limited nature, would thereby restore stability to his own image. Having identified himself as a mortal -- "what mortal hath a prize?" -- he would place Lamia, by means of a "mortal name," within the

same set, as if to reinforce his own inclusion. Lycius would exchange intimacy for the security of a "good name" in the public eye.

Scene four traces the fall of Lamia as well as Lycius. "Ever watchful, penetrant," she looks into her lover's eyes and finds her own absence there, the space of abandonment growing with her apprehension of no longer filling Lycius' sight and at last becoming quite unseen by him.

"You have deserted me; -- where am I now?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go
From your breast houseless.

While a despairing prospect of isolation is the shadowside of exposure and openness, unreflecting love in its heightened sensitivity is particularly susceptible to all impressions and thus particularly open to corruption. Closeness to Lycius draws Lamia into a love of "tyranny," the answering counterpart to Lycius' cruelty. Masochism is succeeded by concealment: Lamia asks that she be "hid" from Apollonius, then shrinks from inquiry, "feigning a sleep." We recall Lycius shrinking from the sight of Apollonius, and note Lamia's recourse to a snake-like duplicity. In its extreme character of withholding, furthermore, the disguise of insentience points back to the nymph's invisibility. As Lamia mimics sleep, Lycius "to the dull shade/ Of deep sleep in a

moment was betrayed"; while the solipsism of "Platonic shades" is recalled, Keats may be alluding to the betrayal of human choice and consciousness in the postlapsarian sleep of Milton's Adam and Eve.

Whereas scene four dramatizes the decline of love's acuity to a perverse revision of focus "beyond" the subject, a farsightedness that finds as its limit of contraction a dull insentience, scene five (II, 106-45) is a kind of answering interlude in the linear narrative, a free space in which the creative potential of personal vision is reaffirmed. Not that affirmation is unqualified, for Lamia is left to "dress/ The misery in fit magnificance," perhaps merely an interior decorating of the inevitable, a pleasing surface exercise that, as Auden says of poetry, "makes nothing happen." Yet the dressing of the marriage chambers is shown in such a fashion that the compromised act appears redeemed and redeeming. To dress, we might note, is in itself a postlapsarian endeavor: with no absolute essence or pure innocence to be stripped down to, exposure alone will not serve as an ideal that sustains human nature. Such a recognition is already implicit in St. Agnes, where Madeline's nakedness, once the aura of dreams has set, must be covered with Romance reassurance; the point is made quite explicitly in Lamia, we recall, as the ser-

pentine self is burned away until "nothing but pain and ugliness were left." Scene four might also be taken to illustrate that exposure is an inadequate model for human truth, and that a solely negative capability betrays a similar insufficiency. Unveiled to the sky, a pensive Lycius takes in the distracting noise of his prior life, defenseless against the incursion, and Lamia, naked to her lover's responses, despairs and defenselessly takes on the role of the victim who prizes abuse. With a realization of extreme vulnerability, of the misery or amorphousness that underlies the human, Keats proffers in Lamia as the essential perspective not "to open ourselves and be receptive"³² but to invest the given with value. Such investment is depicted less as the flight beyond nature or instinct approved by social forms than as a recovery of the natural in a finer tone, humanized by an endowing act of vision. Unlike Wasserman and Perkins, who find the decorated palace a factitious hothouse simulation of the "green-recessed woods," an illusory and morally suspect Bower of Bliss,³³ I would read Lamia's decorative efforts as symbolic of the potential for creating beauty within the confining landscape of experience. I would suggest, furthermore, that Keats mystifies this creative enterprise, concealing its source and its

workings, not so much to convey an impression of dubiousness or falsity as to suspend an obstinant questioning of real or unreal, good or evil. Unbound by such cloven fictions, imagination assimilates the natural to its own creative ends.

Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on;
From either side their stems branch'd one to one
All down the aisled place;

and, more remarkably,

Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first
Came jasper panels; then, anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of sligher trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.

The former lines echo a passage from Burton immediately prior to the source-tale:

In vegetal creatures what sovereignty love hath
by many pregnant proofs and familiar examples
may be proved, especially of palm trees, which
are both he and she, and express not a sympathy
but a love-passion, as by many observations have
been confirmed. Boughs live for love, and every
flourishing tree in turn feels the passion: palms
nod mutual vows, poplar sighs to poplar, plane to
plane, and alder murmurs to alder. Constantine
gives an instance out of Florentius his Georgicks,
of a Palm-tree that loved most fervently, and would
not be comforted until such time her Love applied
himself unto her; you might see the two trees bend,
and of their own accord stretch out their boughs
to embrace and kiss each other.³⁴

That the pathetic fallacy is subjacent to the passage suggests a universe of correspondences. The wreathing of relationship which

opens Endymion is recalled, as the profusion of woven imagery in Lamia enforces the impression of intertwining continuity. Lamia's "secondary" decoration (lls. 138-41, the latter passage quoted above) extends to this vision a perpetual fecundity, the endless generation of possibility within possibility. Such fertility, however, is not simply the given and evident nature of things, rather depending upon the beholder's eye. Lamia's decorating act may be taken to reveal the potential qualitative richness of perception itself.

"A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees"³⁵; nor, as St. Agnes illustrates, do the eyes of fear and of anticipation perceive the same storm. The virtually inexhaustible object must be made to emerge from what Bachelard calls its "objective Inertia," much as the objecthood of another must be re-envisioned as the Thou of intersubjective relations. Opacity is less a question of the perceived than of the perceiver, whose eye is locked in customary disregard. The analogue of a deepening vision, Lamia's jasper panel "come" and imagery "burst forth" as if in response to a sharpening of focus, as if in evidence that the process of making visible is itself the process of becoming. In place of a certain world as horizon is "a field structure where every surface prolongs itself into depth, where every

configuration prolongs itself in the expanse of time and space into a dimension."³⁶ A Blakean amplitude obtains in which, the doors of perception having been cleansed, everything appears as infinite. The perceived emerges "untrammelled and in its full significance,"³⁷ an unlimited and unreserved fullness not unrelated to Lycius' vision upon first encountering Lamia.

In liberating perceptual play, Lamia reveals the deep unity of the mind "both within itself and with what was at first outside."³⁸ This oneness depends upon a positive capability to interpret subject and object as a living whole, to "half-create" the world with a willing eye according to intentional structures of meaning. Constitutive as well as receptive, perception informs the flux of experience with coherence. That life can be given an increasingly articulate presence is underscored by the expanding clarity and refinement of detail in the secondary decoration. From an initial blankness ("marbled plain at first") space is made visible and its continuity made sensible. Lamia demonstrates that, despite the emptiness left behind when the gods and their sanction from "beyond" evanesced, and without recourse to moral generalization that dulls response, a richness sufficing to desire may yet be constituted.

Before standing as the figure of creative perception, Lamia's decorative act is an aesthetic project displaying the natural plenitude of imagination. As space appears to expand inwardly, "the inexhaustible reserve of latent life"³⁹ is imaged; we observe consciousness in the process of uncovering its own resources, the infinite extension of the internal being. Imagination, furthermore, demonstrates its inclusiveness as the composite function of articulate energy. Much as Lamia reconciles Euclidean and Erotic skills, her decorative art unites a dynamic organicism and a geometric formalism. Feeling and reason, discipline and spontaneity, are revealed as mutually completing structures, as a unified whole of minute particulars is created.

Despite its plethora of specular imagery, to interpret the decorated palace as a kind of Crystal Cabinet emblematic of visionary self-absorption would appear less than warranted by Keats's presentation; neither does the position that Keats would expose the imagination as flawed and lacking in scope receive much corroboration in the fifth scene of Lamia.⁴⁰ What Blanchot calls "the experience of stark existence"⁴¹ is supplanted by a lush proliferation of image, as Keats honors the creative impulse by inserting a lengthy scene of artmaking unprecedented in the earlier narratives.

Inclusion of the scene may also indicate the self-creative responsibility incumbent upon the personae in Lamia. Whereas the passivity of letting be, faithful that god or nature will provide, appears advocated at the close of Endymion, personal authenticity must be constituted in the later narrative. Art becomes a vital emblem of the integrity of identity, "not only a manipulation of the world but an adventure in selfhood."⁴² Despite its conspicuous ironies, Lamia reflects the conventional "Romantic reaction to the problem of self-consciousness" -- an "aggrandizement of art" as "the means to convert self-consciousness into the larger energy of imagination."⁴³ The weight of mortality and the dismissive moral judgment are escaped in art, which brings to light the idealizing powers, redeems experience, and introduces value; "we possess art lest we perish of truth."⁴⁴

The creative process receives primary emphasis in Lamia's decoration, unfolding according to an aesthetic of virtuoso performance; we observe a visual event of willed imagination, of magical gesture, that makes visible a hitherto unapprehended reality. Distrust for the imagination's "false shows" is undercut as we are drawn into a participative regard, illusion regaining its root meaning of "in-ludere," in play, as the game of art absorbs our attention. Lying "outside the antithesis of wisdom

and folly,"⁴⁵ of truth and falsehood, having no moral function, but satisfying "in itself," art represents the mind "in the act of defending us against itself."⁴⁶ Reading is, by extension, accorded a like privileged position and implicated in creativity as itself a version of insight that penetrates beneath the surface to create a deeper legibility.

While a dynamic process, Lamia's decoration stands as well as the finished product for which a formalist poetic obtains. As such, it shows art to be the revelation of visible structure unseen by the quotidian eye. Rather than a naive mimesis, a verbatim transcription of the natural, art makes formal sense out of becoming, giving to experience a finer lucidity. The redundancy of image in Lamia's "logical picture" -- the pairs of palms and plantains, the iteration of "creeping imagery" -- suggests a self-referential system of relations, an autonomous "concord object" so unified by the principle of correspondence that a world is inscribed in which everything is potentially identical with everything else.

Lamia's interior decoration might also be taken as a metaphor of poetic language itself, in which the word is removed from a functional (representational) transparency and made visible

through the "decorative" advent of form. Defamiliarized, stripped of the dullness of everyday currency and recharged with a fresh formal and semantic density, words assume unaccustomed resonance and value. Lamia's artwork, when approached from this perspective, and particularly when the profusion of specular imagery is taken into account, would point to the reflexivity of poetry both in form and content, the frequency of aural repetition and the richness of allusion which may be taken as characteristic of creative writing.

Finally, a holistic model of creation might be found illustrated in Lamia's art. Process and product, motive, act, and goal, are shown to be in continual agreement. Rather than a dialectic of contrary codes in which form is the postponement or repression of energy -- and we might think of the Freudian distance of censorship between the energetic and the semantic of desire -- Keats depicts the seamlessness of idea and incarnation, of fact and value. The dance of energy finds its logical articulation in the game of form, contradicting in the process the morphology of irony.

Perhaps the aesthetic game-system need not be interpreted as a self-enclosed perfection "beyond" social realities , but

may rather be perceived, in its high degree of unity, as a Utopian reconstruction of human interchange as total communication and mutual fulfillment.⁴⁸ Lamia's decoration would then serve the status quo in a subversive capacity, offering a deviant model of relationship founded neither on concealment nor on hierarchy.

We have noted that Lamia's decorative transpires in a pocket of time recessed from the diachronic impetus of the main narrative. Linearity is in a sense suspended to admit the efflorescing of detail. As forms within forms emerge and instantaneous apprehension is reconstituted as an ongoing disclosure, the moment dilates into an infinitely deep space. Participating in Lamia's creative act, the reader is drawn into an experience of art as visual process and synchronic form. A spatial rather than sequential world, to be grasped in a single act of vision, expands in complexity the more deeply its field is penetrated. With duration indefinitely opening inward, time itself appears saved, the present tense of art enclosing its whole amplitude. And Lamia, engaged in a project that appears to surmount transience, reveals the artist's kinship with divinity. What Abrams calls the heterocosmic analogy⁴⁹ is made explicit as Lamia, like the God of Genesis, reviews her work, sees that it is good, and bestows a finalizing approval (II, 142). Hers is not the reproving eye of a

Jealous god, but the "immortal" look that blesses what is looked upon, affirming its reality. This vision Lamia would share with the marriage guests, thereby revising her marriage into a rite of desire, and reconceiving social being itself as erotic blessing.

A reprise of the narrative as a whole, scene six depicts the expansion of imaginative sense and the subsequent casting out of such insight. The guests are first ushered into an improvement of sensual enjoyment, a return to bodily spontaneity. For the feast realizes the unrepressed vision of plenty suggested by Lamia's decoration, the celebration of an abundant world that, in Lamia's phrase, gratifies "all the many senses." Fullness presides, the guests enjoying "a store thrice told/ Of Ceres' horn, and in huge vessels, wine." With biological need raised to a joyful activity, the world offers itself in full concreteness as an overflowing cup; it is the palpable version of Lycius' "cup-vision" of Lamia, a perpetually fulfilling perspective. The guests are initiated into such responsiveness by "ceremonies meet" (II, 194) to cleanse the bodily eye -- "the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed" and "fragrant oils" poured on the hair. The latter of these rites recalls the steeping of "weird syrops" in the nymph's hair to keep her loveliness invisible, an act of con-

cealment diametrically opposed to the present aim of liberation from restraint and emergence into full visibility.

Under the influence of wine, each guest who, upon entering the halls, questioned "whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring," relaxes his busy material brain, no longer fretting after knowledge nor estranged from the moment at hand. The "demon" Lamia has fashioned a feast illustrative of the infernal proverb, "the road to excess leads to the palace of wisdom." With "every soul from human trammels freed" -- released, in particular, from moral rule and the "mortal" obsession with passing time -- "Elysian shades" come to appear "not too fair, too divine." That is, an unafraid rejoicing in the present brings the bright gods close, the guests, their "bright eyes" grown "double bright," coming to recognize their own divinity. Garlands appear "to suit the thought of every guest" so that each "as he did please/ Might fancy fit his brows"; here is a catering to the imagination as well as the senses, a luxury of mind and body alike. In place of obedience to One Law, the individual opens to his own delight in the context of a permissive communality. That Keats is fundamentally involved in questioning the value of pleasure and finding that "there is something perverse and self-negating in the erotic life" seems as doubtful reading in light

of the affirmation of sensuality that informs the text.⁵⁰ Despite the less than benign resolution of Lycius' affair, Lamia is not primarily a deterrent myth to frighten the reader away from carnal pleasure into the frigid arms of the reality principle.

The description of festivities is followed by the rainbow diatribe, an authorial intrusion that juxtaposes antithetical modes of vision and declares the perspective of "cold philosophy" rather a Negation than a Contrary. The centrality of perception is underscored as the new social dispensation of the feast assumes mythic form. For the post-diluvian covenant against destructive judgment is being drawn upon -- that Biblical development analogous to the passage (in belief) from the Furies to the Eumenides -- in which Jehovah the Accuser is reconceived as God the Loving Father, The impending negation of an omnipotent eye is thus averted and replaced by the pledge of kindness between the human and the divine. Communion is the corresponding social model; the glance of disapproval or exclusion having been dispensed with, desire may be freely gratified and the covenant of shared joy fulfilled. This covenant, however, lacks the Biblical solidity of an objective code; as an agreement of the heart, it depends upon constant personal renewal. Distance is, therefore,

an abiding possibility; the "stupid eye of mortal" may pass beyond the intensity of immediate experience to glance back from the outside and trivialize that which has already been lost.

Keats polarizes perception as either an informing of the given with value or an unrealizing of the perceived, and labels the latter perspective "cold philosophy." Hardly the generous discipline of the "human friend, philosopher" who "by widening speculation" would "ease the burden of the Mystery,"⁵¹ Apollonian philosophy substitutes a dull abstraction for the beauty and mystery of concrete perception, discrediting personal experience felt on the pulses by renaming it illusion. With "Truth" revaluating a life of sensations, the rich variety of possible worlds open to manifold acts of construal contracts into a grey world of fact disposed by Ratio. The heart no longer leaps up; for, as Keats reputedly declared at Haydon's "immortal dinner" and later wrote in a review of Kean, "the rainbow is robbed of its mystery."⁵²

The two ways of seeing which Keats clarifies by juxtaposition in the rainbow digression already are suggested in the contrary visions of Apollonius and of the wedding guests upon entering the marriage halls. In a section of the first draft of Lamia

which was transcribed in a letter to Taylor, Keats indulged, with Shakespearean license, in an elaborate lampoon of the coarse "herd."⁵³ The Corinthians as they appear in the printed version of Lamia have been reconceived in a far less dismissive fashion. The change is of thematic as well as aesthetic significance: in place of a rather glib set-piece that retarded narrative flow, Keats addresses the issue of perception as value. Whereas scorn for the "low" as rude and bestial tends to reinforce a moral as well as social hierarchy, a debasement of the flesh along with the unmannerly crowd, Keats chooses to identify the guests with a more positive notion of sensuality; the Corinthians are drawn into Lamia's self-respecting celebration of the body, a perspective which not only relishes the moment but accepts the rich mystery of the given. Apollonius is isolated from and opposed to the lovers and the crowd alike, enforcing a negative insight which extinguishes all "bright eyes double bright." While fineness of vision remains a significant value, and thus some anti-prosaic commonplaces are retained in the text, the opposition of coarse and fine conventionally linked with the dualism of flesh and spirit is not of central moment to Lamia. The center is occupied, instead, by a perceptual antagonism between the intimate vision of sensual imagination and the cold stare of uncreative judgment.

Perhaps wishing to confirm a morality somewhat alien to Keats, Wasserman finds the inevitability of loss prefigured in the compulsion to make the visionary physical, the sensual marriage feast enacting the Fall. I would argue instead that the feast is by and large affirmed despite the preliminary mention of "revels rude" and "dreadful guests," that the Corinthians as described "in person" actually prove less compromising to the lovers' vision than in agreement with this same point of view; neither does Keats assume action to be, by definition, a corruption or a falling off of desire. Even the noisy raucousness of the guests is presented in a positive light as, first of all, an index of unaccustomed freedom. For the highminded either/or of duty or sinful self-indulgence does not legislate the value-system of Lamia.

The opposed visions of Apollonius and the Corinthians already are made apparent as the marriage-halls are approached. Whereas the Corinthians look wonderingly at the palace and, seemingly "capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts,"⁵⁴ enter with enthusiasm despite the perceptual enigma facing them, Apollonius stares coldly at the edifice, reaches after fact and reason, and fixes the unknown in his set categories. With a "look severe"

that will come to dominate the final scene, Apollonius enters
mocking,

As though some knotty problem, that had daft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt: -- 'twas just as he foresaw.

If loving eyes would penetrate to possibilities and affirm uniqueness, Apollonius' eye, an "organ of fact,"⁵⁵ would look through experience as a riddle to be solved. Although the Corinthians recall the street "without a gap" -- the gaps in one's vision are hardly evident -- their entry remains open-eyed. In the philosopher's closed system of enquiry, however, foreseeing determines the seen. For Apollonius embodies "the cold, narrow, lifeless spirit of modern philosophy" replied to in The Excursion, much to Hazlitt's approval. Such an outlook, as Wordsworth notes, ignores that the real is equivocal and our epistemological modes quite primitive. Apollonius' truth might further be associated with what Coleridge calls "abstract knowledge," the "science of mere understanding" deriving from the illusion that the world is perceived objectively, and that reality can therefore be measured in abstraction.⁵⁶ Such a perspective, aligned with a secular faith and pride in reason, threatens to degenerate into "the anti-existential worship of order for its own sake,"⁵⁷ a callous unconcern for human need and response. In an aggressively analytic

guise, the rational murders to dissect, disintegrating purpose and dessicating value. The ambiguity of the given may be veiled behind a monolithic truth, which displaces palpability and humanity with empty certainties and a stifling complacency. Such is the scenario enacted in the sixth scene of Lamia: the vision of sensual delight is cast out by the reasonable Moral Eye of "cold philosophy."

"One all eyes" -- and we might invoke, along with this brief and unflattering portrait of the philosopher, Wordsworth's notion of vision as the most "rational" of the senses -- Apollonius places the perceived in the light of unrelieved interrogation. His negative regard becomes the central focus of the final scene.

. . . The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her
sweet pride;

and, as the lovers expire,

. . . his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov'd . . .
. . . the sophist's eye
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging.

The "Indian pierced by the spear of knowledge" in Isabella, and the "glaring watch" with "ready spears" of St. Agnes are recalled and explicated: spear-vision represents that deflating outlook which sees through the given and would make a casualty of experi-

ence. Such a devitalizing perspective is identified with morality, which glares down in accusation, reviewing the perceived as "deviant" and thus worthless. A rather Nietzschean critique obtains: Virtue -- the uninvited guest at a celebration of bodily joy -- comes to power by means of persecution and mockery, denying natural process, passing sentence, and staring down the will to existence. That passion "is the essence, the chief ingredient in moral truth," as Hazlitt maintains,⁵⁸ is undreamt of in Apollonius' philosophy, which is "judged and condemned from the point of view of life."⁵⁹ For the destruction of what may be, in a sense, illusion, only substitutes an emptiness. Like the face of Medusa, with its authority of terror, Apollonius' eye petrifies response, effacing the sensual imagination.

The feast of plenty becomes the arena of inquisition, where the negative wisdom of "nothing too much" is exacted with a vengeance. Keats underscores the progress of negation as a kind of inverted "pleasure thermometer":

The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths,
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there.

In the silence of humiliation of a world "all eyes" the lovers and Corinthians alike are called upon to judge themselves wanting. They are caught in a self-relation that is in the order of transgression,

an anonymous relation to others that is in the order of shame.

The negation of sound assumes a secondary guise -- the "positive" negation of the renouncing word. Apollonius applies generalizations of moral reason to fix Lamia and Lycius in formulaic roles, the "serpent" and the "fool." We might contrast the proliferation of minute particulars in Lamia's artwork, rather a different direction of concern, with the philosopher's discrediting process of generic identification. As language governs human interplay, and naming enforces prestige, what Wallace Stevens calls "the murderous alphabet of Zeus"⁶⁰ gains the ascendant.

"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov'd; "from every ill
Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"

The personal possessive obtrudes -- "I preserved thee" and "shall I see thee." Rather like the Jealous God that would have no gods before Him, or the jealous Love beneath whose "terrific glare" Lamia, Part II, is stationed, Apollonius would keep his student in his place, distant from passionate illusion. With the selflessness of vested interest, the philosopher would confirm his own rightness, imposing a prophylactic vision of life that prefers preservation to experience, brands pleasure a sin, and atrophies the potential for wholeness. We have entered the moral

politics of the fallen social world, with Apollonius as the authority figure of a "sustaining" orthodoxy. Concern is fragmented and lives are preserved on borrowed identities, as existential meanings from the personal world are shut out. The overriding pressure of being seen is internalized as a conformity of self-regard, the belittling and thus indecent bite of conscience, which sets one against one's own acts, degrades natural dignity, and makes all value seem derived from social sanction. Lamia is perceived as offending the accepted version of reality that lies beneath such a psychology of normality. Hers is the position of Oothoon, in Blake's Visions of the Daughters of Albion, who is declared a whore by the "father of Jealousy": beauty fades from off her shoulders, she is darkened and cast out, "a solitary shadow wailing on the margin of non-entity."⁶¹

Reviewing Keats's poems in 1820, Conder observed that the story of Lamia is "not without a moral; though Mr. Keats does not make use of it."⁶² Certainly Burton's conventional exposé of the dangers endemic to intercourse with the supernatural is not being echoed. A moral consonant with the rainbow diatribe might be discerned, however -- the defense of passional seeing, as victimized by the narrowminded regard of social propriety.

Such an inversion of the moral is underscored by an emphasis upon inverted roles, particularly in the case of Apollonius.

That Lycius must turn "into sweet milk" his instructor's "spleen," an allusion to "Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy," from Romeo and Juliet (III, iii, 155), prepares us for the inversion pattern. Subsequently, Apollonius assumes the image of the lamia whose "unlawful magic and enticing lies" conventionally seduce and destroy the perceiver. He is the siren and magus of disembodiment, whose spear-vision makes a ghost of sensual delight. In place of the traditional deterrent myth perhaps cautioning against illicit sexuality, Keats appears to be exposing as illicit and unnatural that perspective which would overturn and blacken the Original law of gratified desire, substituting the "enticing lies" of virtue and reason. It is once again a question of vision, as the imagery clarifies:

"Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
Turn them aside, wretch or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
Of painful blindness;

and,

Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch!
Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes!

Apollonius turns reptilian, his "lashless eyelids" recalling the "lid-lashes all sere" of Lamia as she burned through a serpentine vision. With "juggling eyes" that overturn what is vital -- and Burton, we might note, characterizes the immoral priests that pimp for devils as "juggling"⁶³ -- Apollonius imposes the "dissembling virtues" of reasonableness, objectivity, maturity, and restraint.⁶⁴ He rather than Lamia enthralls with "demon eyes," the evil eye of judgment which creates a shadow-world of distortion, the spectral landscape of the cold hillside barren of beauty or value.

A striking coincidence of features might lead us to interpret Apollonius as an inherent faculty of Lycius. Declamation against "proud-heart sophistries" rings hollow from one who engineers a public display for the sake of pride. We perceive the devaluing of Lamia only after Lycius has checked his love-trance, the averting of an absorbed attention functioning as the dramatic fulcrum for the final scene;

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him.

The image of the full-brimmed cup ironically underscores an in-

version of viewpoint from Lycius' intoxicated vision of Lamia --
"and soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up/ Leaving no drop in
the bewildering cup/ And still the cup was full." When looked to
and pledged, Apollonius demonstrates an alternative one-sighted-
ness, his eye fixed "full" on Lamia, admitting no fellow feeling.
Upon perceiving his bride as the object of inquisitorial regard,
Lycius first addresses her as "Lamia," perhaps thereby casting
her identity within the typecast inferiority of the generic name.
The label is repeated and its assumptions implicitly confirmed
as Lycius exclaims, "begone foul dream," envisioning his bride
as demonic.

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot
Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
More, more he gaz'd; his human senses reel:
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
There was no recognition in those orbs;

and soon afterwards, with

. . . no passion to illume
The deep-recessed vision: -- all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.

Gazing into Lamia's eyes, as does his instructor, Lycius
finds "no recognition," perhaps a reflection of his own inability
to recognize either his love or his loving self that once
was seen "mirrored small in paradise." Lacking an illuminating
passion, he has grown incapable of that greeting of the spirit

upon which the survival of Erotic vision depends. "Deadly white" is the skeletal vision of reality uncolored by sensual imagination, a pallor of blankness beneath the rainbow hues of informing value. To invoke the curse of the gods, as Lycius does at this point, is to reinforce an Apollonian theology of Vengeance from beyond the bourne of human contact or control -- as if the gods weren't human creations residing in the human breast. No deus ex machina of the kind available to Endymion is forthcoming. Neither can righteous indignation, characteristically Apollonian, be turned against the moral philosopher. An appeal to the Corinthians for anti-authoritarian public scrutiny naturally goes unheeded in the arena of experience, where inauthenticity and fearful conformity are the rule. Lamia closes with the triumph of the sterile vision of Apollonius, which winds the body in a shroud, leaving the human form terminally estranged from delight.

A final word on the "moral" of the poem might be useful. While Keats is true to the narrative convention of fatal love, he would not serve as the apologist for a philosophy of adjustment to the mixed blessing of social maturity. His primary aim in Lamia, therefore, is not the exposure of visionary imagination and the sorry "consequences of being a dreamer," as Perkins maintains.⁶⁵ If "nothing is clearer in Keats's maturing philosophy than the rejection of the imaginative world in favor of the

everyday one in which we all live," as Haworth asserts,⁶⁶ Lamia would seem poor testimony to such clarity, rather prizing the infusion of the imaginative than its rejection. Such is the case as well, we might note, in "Ode to a Nightingale," despite the reductive reading of imagination that Keats incorporates into his own text -- the partial perspective that "the fancy cannot cheat so well," which has tended to receive excessive critical acclaim as the poem's "message."

Keats may be acknowledging in Lamia that Truth and Beauty are finally "sheer antipodes." The collision of these principles is not depicted, however, within a Hegelian scheme of antithetical yet equally desirable "goods." While the tale may be approached as psychomachia, the intestinal warfare of visions within Lycius himself, to emphasize "the struggle of the soul of a man who clings to the false at the same time as he desires the true, who aspires after the ideal even whilst he is unable to relax his hold of those very shadows, not realities, which he knows well enough to despise,"⁶⁷ suggests a hierarchy of values on the critic's part that Keats does not seem to share. For, when we examine the changes Keats brought to bear upon his source-tale, we find that Burton's Apollonius is depicted as a saving influence, whereas Keats reconceives the philosopher in a decidedly unattractive fashion, altering the received plot so

that the "good instructor" dramatically effects the death of his student. Despite the admission of considerable complexity and ambivalence, Keats weighs his poem toward value. And value in Lamia is not associated with a moralistic outlook, the cloven fiction of right or wrong which negates that which is perceived. Life-affirming value is found instead in an Erotic vision of things which creatively informs its world with festive insight.

The drama of perceptual opposition central to Lamia, and its implication regarding aesthetic concerns, might be clarified by way of a brief examination of the poem's style and structure.

To begin with the largest formal feature of the narrative, Keats utilizes bisection to highlight the question of seeing. A single paragraph in Burton is amplified and reconstructed as a tale in two parts, each of which is set beneath a contrary sign of vision. As we earlier observed, Part I of Lamia is illuminated by Hermes' theft of fire, the light of desire, as it were, directing the narrative progress; whereas Part II is presided over by the glaring eye of Jealousy, beneath which joy is disembodied.

In addition to a basic binary disposition which recalls the negation structure of Isabella, Lamia unfolds according to that parabolic shape of narrative central to The Eve of St. Agnes. A series of temporal and mythological frames leads the reader

from an initial external overview into a more recessed and immersed perspective. This movement inward culminates, on the thematic level, in Lamia's undressing of surface identity and the subsequent opening of the lovers to an undisguised, unreflecting intimacy. With Part I closing on this accord, the inmost space of intersubjectivity appears to go unwritten in the narrative proper, rather nestling "between" the two halves of the poem. Part II begins after such an implicit lyrical interlude, the narrative resuming to show the unweaving of interiority by an outward-directedness of vision. The reader is led through an analogously centrifugal progress: at first a seeming participant in narrative event, the absorbed reader, like the banquet-guests who are his surrogate presence, soon is removed to the distance of silent witnessing, and his estrangement subsequently made complete as he is cast out from a drama which, like Lycius' corpse, has been neatly wrapped up.

Within the total perceptual parabola of distance/immersion/distance, which functions both in terms of theme and the reader's involvement, the thematic progress of perception might be charted in a more precise structural fashion. We have found that the two-part tale is disposed into six scenes distributed equally on

either side of the medial break; when the relationship between numerically correspondent scenes is examined, a kind of schematic inversion pattern becomes evident. Whereas scene one depicts the movement from invisibility to full visibility and the apparently coordinate gratification of desire, scene four (that is, the first scene of Part II) traces the fall from full erotic visibility to a distracted and alienated regard, for which the insentience of sleep serves as the closing emblem. Scene two focusses upon the deconstruction or stripping away of a former intricacy of surface until "nothing but pain and ugliness remained," and ends with the sudden emergence of a self-approved nakedness of identity. Scene five, on the other hand, depicts aesthetic creation ex nihilo: bare walls effloresce with decor in an ever-enriched fertility of invention, which fills all blank space and is sealed with self-approval. The meeting of contrary perspectives in scene three reveals the potential for transforming a self-involved disregard of the other into an intensity of erotic regard that fills the eye; scene six, which begins with a communal intensification of Erotic vision, dramatizes the vulnerability of such vision when confronted by its negation. Taken as a whole, the rather intricate structural

strategy of opposing correspondent scenes within the two-fold format brings into focus alternative modes of perception and calls attention to their "swift counterchange."

Keats fabricates an additional dichotomy by prefacing the Burton narrative with an original mythological tale. Overtly juxtaposing two contrary modes of writing, Keats directs the reader to questions of aesthetic perception. Lamia is introduced as a species of "golden-tongued Romance" stationed within the long-since-banished realm of "Flora and old Pan." The metamorphosis of the serpent-woman, however, while mediating between the original mythologizing and Keats's recounting of the Burton tale, serves as the figure of an aesthetic reversal: the poetry of mythic fantasy is being "eclips'd," like Lamia's "milder-mooned" grace, by a poetry of experience that will present more directly "the fierce dispute/ Betwixt damnation and impassioned clay." Keats is adapting once again the Wordsworthian model of poetic development as the turn toward exploring "the agonies, the strife/ Of human hearts." For Keats to dramatize such a progress, we note, is simultaneously an engaging in self-dispute of the kind announced in the King Lear sonnet, the exposure and annihilation of that former style and content found in the poet's earlier verse. To restrict ourselves to the major narratives,

the weight of self-rejection would most obviously appear directed against Endymion, in particular because the Hermes tale and Endymion have in common an elaborately mythological cast; St. Agnes, with its "faeryland" storm, might also be recalled. The Hermes tale concludes open-endedly, as favored personae escape beyond the reader's sight; precedent for this rather paradoxical strategy of narrative resolution is found in Endymion and St. Agnes, with the apotheosis of the lovers in the former poem and the flight of the lovers in the latter. In all three instances, furthermore, the elusive outcome follows upon a characterological shift or manipulation of vision to affirm the given in a finer tone of perception. As Hermes comes to see the nymph, Endymion realizes a wholeness of regard for Cynthia/Indian Maiden, and Porphyro encloses the storm within an aura of opportunity ("of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed"). In removing personae from our sight into a kind of indeterminate recess perhaps not unrelated to their attaining of "immortal" perception, Keats ends his tale while evading the autotelic and deterministic nature of narrative.

The sidestepping of closure aligns with a poetry evasive of the directness of drama, keeping confrontation offstage and re-

verting to reportage when crisis is acknowledged at all. In Isabella, the murder of Lorenzo, an action critical to the tale, goes undescribed as well as undramatized. The lovers of St. Agnes effect their escape by gliding past the revellers; it is as if Porphyro and Madeline were in a dimension all their own. Perhaps the specifically phantom-like departure suggests that such a singular absence of dramatic crossing, such a partisan wishing away of conflict, is too insubstantial for unqualified belief. Suggested as well is the complexly qualified reality of myth-making ("it is a storm from faeryland") -- perhaps of all narration -- and the association of Romance with the impalpability and remoteness of a kind of Symbolist aesthetic. In Lamia, Keats would turn from escapist myth to the narrative exploration of "dark passages," and would further this end by creating a poetry that is clear in outline, tangible and orderly in detail and sequence.

Availing himself of dramatic resource, Keats creates scenes of confrontation to amplify the reader's perception of significant events. It is not that a merely outward comedy of exposure is being shown, as John Jones maintains.⁶⁸ Interior happenings remain central, yet they now are projected in act and gesture,

highlighted by means of crucial encounters or conflicts of personal interest. Once again, the Hermes episode and the Burton tale provide the telling contrast, with Lamia's wholly visible onstage metamorphosis marking the aesthetic turning point. We might clarify differences by applying Greimas' narrative grammar to both sections. In the prefatory tale, Hermes is cast in the role of the Opponent, from whose eyes the narrative Subject Lamia would keep the narrative Object, an invisible nymph. All opposition collapses, however, as Hermes is inducted into the Erotic vision of Lamia, the nymph and Hermes thereby coming to recognize their self-completing unity as Subject and Object. Comparable is the unified perception of Endymion which resolves the earlier poem. There is no such assimilation of the Opponent in the Lycius tale; while Lamia and Lycius, as Subject and Object of the narrative, do transform the seeming opposition of the Corinthians by way of sensuality, Apollonius remains unmoved and, in a fully dramatized encounter, imposes his own point of view.

The final scene of confrontation might be aligned with Keats's conception of narrative itself. Whereas the poet associates myth with Romance as the projection of a wished-for world

(reflective rather of the passive principle of Beulah than of the active principle of Jerusalem), narrative is conceived of as the unrelieved exposure of things as they are. Unlike a poetry of fanciful invention ideal for a leisurely wandering of the imagination, the poetry of reality is confined and tested by verisimilitude, the text's veracity to the way things actually happen. Thus, in Lamia "the flutter-winged verse must tell/ For Truth's sake what woe afterward befel" even though "'twould humor many a heart" to falsify or omit the unfortunate outcome. Shifting from the mythic to the human tale, Keats re-replaces his poem within history, leaving behind the illud tempus of the enchanted forest to make sense of the time-bound here and now.⁶⁹ Keats confines himself, accordingly, to a "mortal" organizing of apprehension, the closed system of narrative. It is a not unproblematic choice. For narrative may well be perceived as enforcing the sentence of time and causality, installing a kind of truth that is at the expense of beauty and of our experience of the way things actually transpire. With continuing possibility denied admission into the pre-ordained order, the inwardly expansive lyrical vision is levelled, the erotic richness of the moment is emptied of delight. Making a virtue of barren necessity, narrative would naturally be allied with the covering cherub of

Lamia, Part II, the eye of Jealousy that looks through experience until all value is discredited, all affirmation is lost. Or perhaps a rather less demonic image might be culled from the storyline of Lamia: operating like the proposed marriage, narrative factualizes relationship within set forms, thereby externalizing and explaining away inner realities.

To write a poetry that is true to experience, Keats would let the story stand alone with minimal authorial interference, neither intervening upon its outcome nor interpolating subjective commentary. Such is the achievement in "La Belle Dame," where brevity facilitates the creation of a perfectly self-contained tale that is its own meaning and moral. In Lamia, however, due to the length of the poem, the confinement of authorial space inherent in the retelling of a given tale, and perhaps a conception of narrative as itself not merely neutral but the accomplice of attrition, impersonality is imperfectly maintained. That is, the facade of objectivity is broken at various points, most conspicuously in the rainbow diatribe which precedes the denouement. Lacking the effective means employed in The Fall of Hyperion for entering into his own fiction, Keats simply dispenses with the pose of uninvolved characteristic of omniscient narration. He obtrudes upon the continuity of the story-

line to announce opinions in his own voice. Perhaps this overt ideological clarification of preferences is motivated by Keats's sensing that the briskness and wit of the narrative tend to obscure feeling and diffuse the reader's sympathies. And perhaps the imperial Apollonian perspective of omniscient narration is itself being found suspect.

The strategy of direct comment is less than effective, and might be said to border upon self-contradiction. First of all, Keats himself observes in a letter to Reynolds, "we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us."⁷⁰ When an unfolding dramatic tale is halted for the sake of authorial attitudinizing, the design is particularly evident. Such an intrusion, in a sense, questions the adequacy of the narrative line while it disturbs a continuity linked up with the reader's suspension of disbelief. Furthermore, commentary occupies a divergent plane from the unfolding tale itself and conveys little illusion of following naturally from the events that precede it -- unlike the mimesis of naturalness conveyed by the developing storyline. Finally, the direct expression of opinion tends to burst in upon the tale and upon the reader's position of involvement, not to mention his freedom of judgment, rather as Apollonius intrudes his uninvited presence upon the guests. Authorial commentary, then, although

personalizing the narrative, functions more basically as a kind of alienation device not unrelated to the values Keats seems to be opposing in his tale.

If the joint presence of impersonal narration and authorial intrusion suggests a somewhat self-contradictory complication in point of view, the style of Lamia is of a piece with such perplexity. As the stress on Lamia's sciential and decoration talents implies, Keats would write a poetry that unperplexes human emotion and is itself a demonstrative instance of clarity, precision and concision.

Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas of his coinage.

The aesthetic ideal announced in "To the Sonnet" would appear realized in Lamia, a "well-proportioned and close-knit articulation of structure" supplanting the effusive emotionality and digressive indulgence which characterize Keats's early verse.⁷¹ There has been a tightening of the integrity of the line; the pervasive use of long vowels that so often were cloying in Endymion has been suppressed; substantive and modifying clauses are carefully balanced and convey the impression of distance and control.⁷² Returning to the couplet form for the first extended

application since Endymion, Keats conspicuously deviates from a prior fondness for feminine rhyme and enjambment, formal elements that stand as the figure of an overflowing of mind in a seamless license of self-expression. Lamia is disposed in crisp and pointed units, the couplet no longer a usefully minimal structure sanctioning a relaxed and continuous stream of consciousness. The binary nature of the couplet unit is, instead, attended to, with the second line often used to comment upon and undercut its counterpart. At times a lancet-edged effect is achieved which, in concert with the impression given by the dominant presence of what Dickstein calls "disintoxicated language,"⁷³ lends to the poem a hard cold surface. A certain ironic detachment is thereby suggested. Such an impression is amplified by the prodigal distribution of wit throughout the narrative, a feature that recalls the frequent straining after satiric effect in Isabella. Moreover, the wit of Lamia, like the floridity of rhetoric in the earlier narrative, tends to distract and impede the reader from grasping the significance of events. The flashy style calls attention to itself, impressing with its "fire" and cleverness,⁷⁴ making of Lamia a perceptual or semantic enigma not unrelated to the image of the serpent-woman whose surface dazzles comprehension. Like irony itself, such a poetic style is, in a sense, self-neutralizing and, ultimately, self-consuming.

The stylistic features to which we have pointed may be attributed, in the main, to Keats's resolve that his poem be perceived as neither naive nor "smokeable," that Lamia be fully capable of withstanding a worldly reader's sober (and reductive) outlook. Yet, perhaps because he is so mindful that the tale cannot be addressed "to the lover's ear alone" but must stand as an object of critical regard, Keats seems overly intent upon creating a sophisticated and worldly artifact. There is a jarring complacency of tone, for example, in the passage which begins

Part II:

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is -- Love, forgive us! -- cinders, ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.

A heartfelt intensity appears displaced by a Byronic glibness, a slickness analogous to the falsely mannered ease of social relationship. A kind of "Drydenesque brilliance"⁷⁵ displays its own kind of indirection which is less than compatible with the value of undisguised and non-conformist perception that Keats dramatizes and would seemingly wish to espouse. Self-contradiction is compounded when Lamia is seen as the display-piece through which the poet would popularize himself, in part by

donning the costume of a cynical sophisticate. The storyline of the narrative might be read as a reflexive presentation of the author's compromised situation: dependent upon the approval of the public and perhaps "teasing the world for grace" the poet crosses his imagination in "fit magnificence" to court acceptance and adulation. He engages in a sophisticated act of self-insistence through public scrutiny, a performance which in the end proves self-defeating.

It is not only the act of parading one's talents to "make a name" which is being questioned, but also the nature and place of art itself. Regardless of its creator's motivation, art may be merely a pleasing and inconsequential backdrop to things as they are, an ancillary pursuit capable, at most, of prettifying the public domain; such is the apparent position of Lamia's decoration, which is an order of deepened unity yet cannot intervene upon events and avert an anti-aesthetic outcome. Furthermore, art may be interpreted as the exposure of interiority, rather usurping and removing the presence of the subject than realizing the potentiality of inwardness. Made verbal and public, the private may be demystified and profaned, the personal truths of experience withering into conventional fact. Not irrelevant to

such a perspective would be the Derrida notion of the ineluctable difference between word and sense,⁷⁶ the Lacanian insistence upon the gap between signifier and signified.⁷⁷ The depersonalized distance of an ironic style might be read as the formal representation of this breach.

We should note, however, that in Lamia the negative implications of art are an aspect of its bipolarity, and tend to be embodied in the antinomy of the linear narrative process and the open-ended lyrical or mythic impulse. While truth-telling narrative enforces a kind of generic determinism made doubly binding in Lamia by the belated status of the twice-told tale, Keats would surpass the static iteration of a given quantity and would admit the survival of creation and beauty as a potential of perception. Thus, Lycius' intoxicated vision of Lamia accommodates the receding depths of Eros, Lamia's aesthetic insight generates the self-sustaining impetus of her decorative handiwork, and the sensual eye of the lovers offers to all the cornucopia of the marriage feast.

Lamia is an art of various perhaps contradictory truths: the capacities of the heart, and the predicament of internalized social values; the resource of imaginative vision, and the writer's politic truth of social pleasing and accommodation; the compromise

of art, and the beauty and potency of imaginative vision which survives compromise. These complexities are further enriched by the ironic structure within which Lamia unfolds. In particular, the questioning of art and its place is extended by a complex of frames which initiate the poem and perhaps recall the ending of St. Agnes. The narrative is set within a multiply recessed dimension of mythological history. While conveying an impression of worldly-wise qualification, this structure would seem to situate both time and knowledge (or at least that variant of knowledge identified with the clear light of common day) as the antagonists of poetry. The impulse to begin with "once upon a time" might suggest, as well, the belatedness both of the individual poet and of his art itself fallen upon unimaginative days. Hazlitt's lament, to be echoed in Keats's rainbow diatribe, already is intimated: the progress of knowledge "has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination, and to clip the wings of poetry."⁷⁸ The poet is confronted by the blankness of unbelief, the cold stare of reason beneath which art is seen through as illusion. For art, in modern times, has become extruded from reality and, as MacCauley observes, the phantoms which "the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter."⁷⁹

Rather than the priest of imagination or the legislator of mankind, the poet becomes merely the merchant of dreams. And yet, to begin with layers of qualification prior to the tale of Lamia may be a means for deepening perception and freeing disclosure -- much as dreams may be such a revelatory resource. Within a bower of ambiguous reality recessed from the accustomed outlook of the everyday, perhaps more of conflict and ambivalence may be explored and made visible. Furthermore, an initial admission that art is not quite real, and therefor must be set at the distance of mythology, may absorb the reader's own disbelief or close-mindedness, while clarifying the fact that poetry requires a personal greeting of the spirit to become wholly real. For art is a possible world both unreal and in a finer tone of reality, which the perceiver may enter into by choosing to suspend the ordinary utilitarian mode of apprehension, the pragmatic "reaching after fact and reason."⁸⁰ In a double vision of skepticism and belief, Keats clears a complexly qualified space for poetry, a space of affirmation where imaginative perception may find its answering counterpart.

CHAPTER IV:

FOOTNOTES

¹Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Dell and Jordan-Smith (N.Y.: Tudor Publishing, 1927), p.648.

²See G. Bachelard, The Psychoanalysis of Fire (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 7-12 and 43-58.

³Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 648.

⁴See E. Wasserman, The Finer Tone (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp.158-74.

⁵Such second generation critics of this school as Perkins and Stillinger are particularly bent upon "reconceiving" Keats as an ironic and realistic poet.

⁶Cf., Jerzy Grotowski's conception of theater as communal psychodrama, as presented in Towards a Poor Theatre (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1968).

⁷The Letters of John Keats, ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, 374.

⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1974), p.111.

⁹J. Lacan, Ecrits I (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 89-97.

¹⁰Letters, I, 281.

¹¹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power (N.Y.: Random House, 1967), p.265.

¹²Letters, I, 341.

¹³Roger Sharrock, "Keats and the Young Lovers," Review of English Literature, II (January 1961), p.86. While this position is in the mainstream of Keats criticism, Sharrock may be directly following Bush, who identifies Lamia both as a "beautiful woman who loves and should be loved, and an evil embodiment of the

(note 13) wasting power of love" (Myth and the Romantic Tradition / N.Y., 1963_/, p.110). Despite the complexity or ambiguity of the portrait of Lamia, we shall suggest that some features are more equal than others and thus that the positive dimension of the figure is given predominance.

¹⁴Wasserman, The Finer Tone, p.164.

¹⁵Ibid., p.165.

¹⁶Letters, I, 194.

¹⁷While limitation of the kind indicated by the image of Madeline "hoodwink'd by faery fancy" is an aspect of Lycius' perceptual solution, far more primary is the deep vision of unreflecting love, which fulfills the advice of the thrush -- to "fret not after knowledge" for "He who saddens/ At thought of idleness cannot be idle/ And he's awake who thinks himself asleep."

¹⁸John Bender, in Spenser and Literary Pictorialism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), speaks of the "pillared porch" in Lamia as the "representation of a fully imagined perceptual enigma" (p.62).

¹⁹Marvell's lines may lie behind the demonic image:

For Fate with jealous Eye doth see
Two perfect loves; nor lets them close.
Their union would his ruin be
And his tyrannick power depose.

²⁰David Perkins, "Lamia," Keats: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. W. J. Bate (N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp.143-53. The essay ends with the Wordsworth quotation.

²¹Finney and Bate in particular inform us of Keats's interest in achieving an historical precision in his presentation; for information concerning ancient customs, for example, Keats consulted John Potter's Archaeologica Graeca.

²²Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 57-8.
Cf. Jane Harrison's observation in Themis that the hypaethral temple is "built in communication as it were with the source of their mana, their sanctity, which might pour in upon them anew any time."

²³See Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1968), pp. 89-99.

²⁴Stillinger is especially emphatic in this regard. See his chapter on the "comic irony" of Lamia in The Hoodwinking of Madeline (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

²⁵Donald Reiman, "Keats and the Humanistic Paradox: Mythological History in Lamia," Studies in English Literature: 19th Century, Vol. XI, Autumn 1971, No.4, p.66. An interestingly and refreshingly ambitious interpretation.

²⁶The Finer Tone, p.170.

²⁷Ibid. Identifying as exclusive choices a life empty of spiritual values and the visionary life which torments our earth-boundness, Wasserman laments "the necessary weakness inherent in Lycius, as it is inherent in all mortals" (p.170).

²⁸Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, p.87.

²⁹Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest Romance," Romanticism and Consciousness, ed. H. Bloom (N.Y.: Norton, 1970), p.12.

³⁰George Lukacs, Marxism and Human Liberation (N.Y.:Dell, 1973), p.43.

³¹As quoted by Arthur Danto in Sartre (N.Y., 1975), p.33.

³²Letters, I, 232.

³³Wasserman, for example, finds that when "the union of Lycius and Lamia" degenerates into "only a mockery of the union of Hermes and the nymph," the palace likewise "becomes a mockery of the green-recessed woods into which the immortals fled" (The Finer Tone, p.173).

³⁴Anatomy of Melancholy, p.645.

³⁵One of the "Proverbs of Hell" in Blake's A Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

³⁶Alphonse Lingis, "Being in the Interrogative Mood," The Horizons of the Flesh, ed. G. Gillan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), p.86.

³⁷The phrase is W. J. Bate's, and appears in his essay, "Negative Capability," Romanticism and Consciousness, p.327.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹G. Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p.61.

⁴⁰D'Avanzo adopts the contrary position; having identified Lamia as the poetic imagination, this critic finds "the artistic lavishness of the palace indeed represents the ideal poetic structure in its fullness, finish, and intricacy" (Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967-/, p.149).

⁴¹As quoted by Sarah Lawall in Critics of Consciousness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.126.

⁴²Robert Penn Warren, Democracy and Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p.72.

⁴³Geoffrey Hartman, Beyond Formalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p.305.

⁴⁴Nietzsche, The Will to Power (N.Y.: Random House, 1968), p.435.

⁴⁵J. Huizinga, Homo Ludens (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p.6.

⁴⁶Wallace Stevens, "Adagio," as quoted by Hartman in Beyond Formalism, p.302.

⁴⁷Susanne Langer speaks of art as a "logical picture" in Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p.188.

⁴⁸I am paraphrasing and summarizing the conclusions of Jean Duvignaud in The Sociology of Art (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 143.

⁴⁹M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp.272-85.

⁵⁰Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture (N.Y., 1965), p.66.

⁵¹Letters, II, 159.

⁵²See Haydon's Autobiography, ed. A. Huxley, I, 269, for an account of the "immortal dinner"; for the Kean review, see Keats's Complete Works, ed. H. B. Forman (Glasgow, 1901), III, 232.

⁵³Letters, II, 158-9. The passage, which opens, "The herd came," concludes:

A Glutton drains a cup of Helicon,
Too fast down, down his throat the
 brief delight is gone.
"Where is that Music?" cries a Lady fair.
"Aye, where is it my dear? Up in the air?"
Another whispers "Poo!" saith glutton "Mum!"
Then makes his shiny mouth a napkin
 for his thumb.

⁵⁴Letters, I, 194.

⁵⁵John Jones, John Keats's Dream of Truth (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1969), p.252.

⁵⁶I am paraphrasing Terence Hawkes' account in Metaphor (London: Methuen, 1972), p.57.

⁵⁷Murry Krieger, The Classic Vision (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p.5.

⁵⁸"On Reason and Imagination," The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P. P. Howe (N.Y.: AMS, 1967), Vol. 12, p.46.

⁵⁹Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p.152.

⁶⁰I am adapting Wallace Steven's phrase, which designates those impoverishing fictions that present "heavenly texts" that banish the senses.

⁶¹As in Lamia, the teacher's perspective estranges and blackens the given; thus the reply:

Father of Jealousy, be thou accursed from the earth.
Why hast thou taught my Theotormon this accursed thing.
Till beauty fades from off my shoulders, darkened and
 cast out,
A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of nonentity.

⁶²Critical Heritage, p.234.

- ⁶³Anatomy of Melancholy, p.650.
- ⁶⁴The phrases are taken from Thomas McFarland's study, Tragic Meanings in Shakespeare (N.Y.: Random House, 1966), p.111.
- ⁶⁵Perkins, "Lamia," p.150.
- ⁶⁶Helen Haworth, "Keats and the Metaphor of Vision," JEGP 67, 389.
- ⁶⁷De Selincourt's interpretation, taken from his introduction to his Keats edition: The Poems of John Keats (London, 1920), xlii.
- ⁶⁸John Jones, pp.252-3.
- ⁶⁹See Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (N.Y.:Harper & Row, 1961) and Cosmos and History (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1959).
- ⁷⁰Letters, I, 224.
- ⁷¹M. Ridley, Keats's Craftsmanship (Nebraska, 1933), p.254.
- ⁷²W. J. Bate, The Stylistic Development of Keats (N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1963), p.233.
- ⁷³Morris Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry (Chicago,1971), p.233.
- ⁷⁴When labeling Isabella "too smokeable" and "displaying too much inexperience of live, and simplicity of knowledge," Keats asserted that "there is no objection of this kind to Lamia." (Letters, II, 174). He later cited in Lamia "that sort of fire . . . which must take hold of people in some way and give them pleasant or unpleasant sensations" (Letters, II, 189).
- ⁷⁵Jones, p.254.
- ⁷⁶J. Derrida, L'Ecriture et la Difference (Paris: Seuil, 1967).
- ⁷⁷J. Lacan, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," Structuralism, ed. J. Ehrmann (N.Y., 1970), pp.101-37.
- ⁷⁸As cited by M. H. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp, p.311.
- ⁷⁹"Milton," Select Essays of MacCauley (N.Y., 1891), p.8.
- ⁸⁰Letters, I, 194.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

- Abrams, M. H. (ed.) English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- _____. The Mirror and the Lamp. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Allen, Glen O. "The Fall of Endymion: A Study of Keats's Intellectual Growth," K-SJ, VI (1957), 37-57.
- Armstrong, Edward A. Shakespeare's Imagination: A Study of the Psychology of Association and Inspiration. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963.
- Auden, W. H. The Enchafed Flood. N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1967.
- Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Reverie. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- _____. The Poetics of Space. N.Y.: Orion Press, 1964.
- _____. The Psychoanalysis of Fire. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.
- _____. The Right to Dream. N.Y.: Grossman, 1971.
- Ball, Patricia. The Central Self: A Study in Romantic and Victorian Imagination. London: Athlone Press, 1968.
- Balslev, Thora. Keats and Wordsworth. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962.
- Barron, David. "Endymion: the Quest for Beauty," AI, XX, 21-47.
- Barthes, Roland. S/Z. Translated by Richard Miller. N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1974.

- Barthes, Roland. Writing Degree Zero. N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1957.
- Bate, W. J. John Keats. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- _____. (ed.) Keats: A Collection of Critical Essays. N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964.
- _____. Negative Capability: The Intuitive Approach to Keats. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939.
- _____. The Stylistic Development of Keats. N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1963.
- Bayley, John. "Keats and Reality," Proceedings of the British Academy, XLVIII (1962), 91-125.
- Beach, Joseph W. The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1966.
- Bell, Arthur. "The Depth of Things: Keats and Human Space," K-SJ, Vol. 23 (1974), 77-94.
- Bender, John. Spenser and Literary Pictorialism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Beyer, Werner W. Keats and the Daemon King. London: Basil Blackwell, 1963.
- Berger, Harry, Jr. "Spenser's Garden of Adonis: Force and Form in the Renaissance Imagination," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXX (1969), 128-49.
- Binswanger, Ludwig. Being-in-the-World. N.Y.: Basic Books, 1963.
- Blackstone, Bernard. The Consecrated Urn. N.Y.: Longmans, Green, 1959.
- Blake, William. The Complete Writings, ed. G. Keynes. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Bloom, Harold. The Visionary Company. Garden City: Doubleday, 1961.
- _____. Ringers in the Tower. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

- Bloom, Harold. The Anxiety of Influence. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- _____. (ed.) From Sensibility to Romanticism. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- _____. (ed.) Romanticism and Consciousness. N.Y.: Norton, 1970.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. The Decameron. London, 1891. (The text of the 1620 translation -- Keats's immediate source for Isabella).
- Bodkin, Maud. Archetypal Patterns in Poetry. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Bostetter, Edward. The Romantic Ventriloquists. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963.
- Bowra, C. M. The Romantic Imagination. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Brooks, Cleanth. "The Artistry of Keats," The Major English Romantic Poets: A Symposium in Reappraisal, ed. Thorpe, Baker, and Weaver. Ill., 1957.
- Brown, Norman O. Life Against Death. N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1959.
- Brustein, Robert. "Drama in the Age of Einstein," New York Times, Section II, 8-7-77, p.1.
- Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- _____. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,, 1941.
- Burton, Robert. The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Dell and Jordan-Smith . N.Y.: Tudor Publishing Co., 1927.
- Bush, Douglas. John Keats: His Life and Writings. N.Y.: MacMillan, 1966.
- _____. Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry. N.Y.: Norton, 1957.

Bush, Douglas. "Notes on Keats's Reading," PMLA, L (March 1935), 785-806.

Byron, George Gordon, Lord. Poetical Works. London: Oxford University Press, 1945.

Caldwell, J. R. John Keats's Fancy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1945.

Cassirer, Ernst. Language and Myth. N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1953.

_____. The Philosophy of the Enlightenment. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

Chayes, Irene. "Dreamer, Poet and Poem in The Fall of Hyperion," PQ, XLVI (1967), 499-515.

Clapp, Edwin R. "La Belle Dame as Vampire," PQ, XXVII (1948), 89-92.

Coleridge, S. T. Biographia Literaria. Ed. John Shawcross. Oxford, 1907. 2 Vols.

_____. Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism. Ed. Thomas Rayso. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930. 2 Vols.

_____. Poetical Works. Ed. E. H. Coleridge. London: Oxford University Press, 1912.

Colvin, Sir Sidney. John Keats: His Life and Poetry. N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1957.

Cornwall, Barry. A Sicilian Story. London, 1820.

Croker, John W. "Endymion: A Poetic Romance," Quarterly Review, XXXVII (April 1818), 204-8.

Culler, Jonathan. Structuralist Poetics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

Daiches, D. A Study of Literature for Readers and Critics. N.Y.: Norton, 1964.

- Danzig, A. (ed.) The Eve of St. Agnes: 20th Century Interpretations. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971.
- D'Avanzo, Mario. Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967.
- Derrida, J. L'Ecriture et la Difference. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967.
- de Ullmann, Stephen. "Romanticism and Synaesthesia: A Comparative Study of Sense Transfer in Keats and Byron," PMLA(1945), 811-27.
- Dickstein, Morris. Keats and His Poetry: A Study in Development. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Dodds, A. E. The Romantic Theory of Poetry: An Examination in the Light of Croce's Aesthetic. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1962.
- Dunbar, Georgia. "The Significance of the Humor in Lamia." K-SJ, VIII (Winter 1959), 17-26.
- Duvignaud, Jean. The Sociology of Art. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972.
- Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred and the Profane. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1961.
- _____. Cosmos and History. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1959.
- _____. Myth and Reality. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1963.
- Empson, William. Some Versions of Pastoral. N.Y.: New Directions, 1968.
- Ende, Stuart. Keats and the Sublime. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Enscoe, Gerald. Eros and the Romantics: Sexual Love as a Theme in Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. Paris: Mouton, 1967.
- Evert, Walter. Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Fairchild, H. N. The Romantic Quest. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1965.

- Fausset, Hugh. Keats: A Study in Development. Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966.
- Finney, C. L. The Evolution of Keats's Poetry. 2 Vols. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1963.
- Foakes, R. A. The Romantic Assertion. N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971.
- Fogle, R. H. The Imagery of Keats and Shelley. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1949.
- Ford, George. Keats and the Victorians. Connecticut: Archon Books, 1962.
- Foucault, Michel. Madness and Civilization. Translated by Richard Howard. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1965.
- Frye, Northrop. Fearful Symmetry. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- _____. The Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- _____. A Study of English Romanticism. N.Y.: Random House, 1968.
- _____. The Secular Scripture. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Garvin, Kathryn. "The Christianity of St. Agnes' Eve," Dublin Review (1960), 356-64.
- Gerard, Albert. "Coleridge, Keats, and the Modern Mind." Essays in Criticism, I (July 1951), 249-61.
- _____. "Romance and Reality: Continuity and Growth in Keats's View of Art," K-SJ, XI (Winter 1962), 17-29.
- _____. English Romantic Poetry. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.
- Gibson, Gail. "Ave Madeline: Ironic Annunciation in Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes,'" K-SJ, XXVI (1977), 39-50.

- Gillan, Garth. (ed.) The Horizons of the Flesh; Critical Perspectives on the Thought of Merleau-Ponty. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973.
- Gittings, Robert. John Keats: The Living Year. N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1954.
- _____. John Keats. Boston: Little, Brown, 1968.
- Gleckner, Robert, and Enscoe, Gerald. (eds.) Romanticism: Points of View. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962.
- Goldberg, M. A. "The Fears of John Keats," MLQ, XVIII (June, 1957), 125-31.
- Goodman, Paul. Speaking and Language. N.Y.: Random House, 1971.
- Gordon, R. K. "Notes on Keats's 'Eve of St. Agnes'," MLR (1946), 408.
- Gras, Vernon W. (ed.) European Literary Theory and Practice from Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism. N.Y.: Delta, 1973.
- Greimas, A. J. "Narrative Grammar: Units and Levels," MLN, No. 86 (1971), pp. 793-806.
- Gross, Barry. "The Eve of St. Agnes and Lamia: Paradise Won, Paradise Lost," BuR, XIII, 11, 47-57.
- Grotowski, Jerzy. Towards a Poor Theatre. N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1968.
- Haber, Tom B. "The Unifying Influence of Love in Keats's Poetry," PQ, XVI (1937), 192-209.
- Haefner, Paul. "Keats and the Faery Myth of Seduction," REL, III, 11, 20-31.
- Harrison, Robert. "Symbolism of the Cyclical Myth in Endymion," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, I (1960), 538-54.
- Harrold, William. "Keats's Lamia and Peacock's Rhododaphne," MLR, LXI, 579-84.

- Hartman, Geoffrey. Beyond Formalism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.
- _____. Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
- Havens, R. D. "Unreconciled Opposites in Keats," PQ, XIV (Oct. 1935), 289-90.
- Hawkes, Terence. Metaphor. London: Methuen, 1972.
- Haworth, Helen. "Endymion and the Redemption of Cynthia," Humanities Association Bulletin, XVIII (Fall 1967), 80-91.
- _____. "Keats and the Metaphor of Vision," JEGP 67, 389.
- Hazlitt, William. The Complete Works, ed. P. P. Howe. N.Y.: AMS Press, 1967.
- Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962.
- Huizinga, Johan. Homo Ludens. Boston: Beacon Press, 1950.
- Hunt, Leigh. Imagination and Fancy. N.Y., 1845.
- Husserl, Edmund. Ideas. N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1931.
- Jack, Ian. Keats and the Mirror of Art. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- James, D. G. The Romantic Comedy. London: Oxford University Press, 1967,
- _____. Skepticism and Poetry. London: Allen & Unwin, 1937.
- Jones, John. John Keats's Dream of Truth. N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1969.
- Kauvar, Gerald. The Other Poetry of Keats. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969.

- Keats, John. Keats's Poetical Works. Edited by H. W. Garrod.
2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.
- _____. The Poems of John Keats. Edited by E. De Selincourt.
London: Methuen and Co., 1920.
- _____. Selected Poems and Letters. Edited with an introduction and notes by Douglas Bush. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959.
- _____. The Letters of John Keats. Edited by Hyder Rollins.
2 Vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- _____. Selected Letters. Edited with an introduction by
Lionel Trilling. N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951.
- Kellogg, Robert, and Scholes, Robert. The Nature of Narrative.
N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Knight, G. W. The Starlit Dome. London: Methuen, 1959.
- Krieger, Murry. The Classic Vision. Baltimore: Johns
Press, 1971.
- Kroeber, Karl. Romantic Narrative Art. Madison: University of
Wisconsin Press, 1960.
- _____. (ed.) Backgrounds to British Romantic Literature.
California: Chandler, 1968.
- Lacan, J. "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious,"
Structuralism, ed. J. Ehrmann. N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1970.
Pp. 101-36.
- _____. Ecrits I. Paris: Seuil, 1966.
- Langer, Susanne. Feeling and Form. N.Y.: Scribner, 1953.
- _____. Philosophy in a New Key. Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1957.
- Lawall, Sarah. Critics of Consciousness. Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1968.

- Little, Judy. Keats as a Narrative Poet. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975.
- Lowes, J. L. The Road to Xanadu. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930.
- Lukacs, George. Marxism and Human Liberation. N.Y.: Dell, 1973.
- Macksey, Richard and Donato, Eugenio, (eds.) The Structuralist Controversy. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972.
- McFarland, Thomas. Tragic Meanings in Shakespeare. N.Y.: Random House, 1966.
- Marcel, Gabriel. Being and Having. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1965.
- _____. Homo Viator. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962.
- Matthews, G. M. (ed.) Keats: the Critical Heritage. N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971.
- Merivale, Patricia. Pan the Goat God. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. Phenomenology of Perception. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.
- _____. Sense and Non-Sense. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- Miller, Bruce. "On the Meaning of Keats's Endymion," K-SJ, XIV (Winter 1965), 33-54.
- Muir, Kenneth. John Keats: A Reassessment. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1958.
- Murry, John M. Keats. N.Y.: Octagon Books, 1975.
- _____. Keats and Shakespeare. London: Oxford University Press, 1925.
- _____. Studies in Keats, New and Old. N.Y.: Haskell, 1966.

- Nietzsche, F. Thus Spake Zarathustra. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1974.
- _____. The Will to Power. N.Y.: Random House, 1967.
- Norris, Edward. "Hermes and the Nymph in Lamia," ELH (1935), 322-6.
- Norris, Marjorie. "Phenomenology and Process: Perception in Keats's 'I Stood Tiptoe'," K-SJ, XXV (1976), 43-54.
- Patterson, Charles. The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970.
- Perkins, David. The Quest for Permanence. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- _____. "Keats's Odes and Letters: Recurrent Diction and Imagery in Keats," K-SJ, II (Jan. 1953), 51-60.
- Pettet, E. C. On the Poetry of Keats. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957.
- Polanyi, M. Personal Knowledge. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Poulet, G. The Interior Distance. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959.
- _____. The Metamorphosis of the Circle. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966.
- _____. Studies in Human Time. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956.
- Prickett, Stephen. Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Read, Herbert. The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry. London: Faber and Faber, 1968.
- Ricoeur, Paul. The Symbolism of Evil. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Ricks, Christopher. Keats and Embarrassment. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

- Ridenour, George. The Style of Don Juan. Connecticut: Archon Books, 1969.
- Ridley, Maurice. Keats's Craftsmanship; a Study of Poetic Development. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1962.
- Roberts, John H. "Poetry of Sensation or of Thought?" PMLA LXV (December 1930), 1124-39.
- Rollins, Hyder. (ed.) The Keats Circle. 2 Vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948.
- Routh, James. "Parellelisms in Coleridge, Keats, and Rossetti," MLN, XXV (1910), 33-7.
- Sadler, William. Existence and Love: A New Approach in Existential Phenomenology. N.Y.: Scribner, 1969.
- Scheler, Max. The Nature of Sympathy. Connecticut: Archon Books, 1954.
- Schultz, Max. "Keats's Timeless Order of Things," Criticism, II (1960), 55-60.
- Seronsky, Cecil. "The Concluding Stanzas of The Eve of St. Agnes," K-SJ, VI (1957), 12-3.
- Sharrock, Roger. "Keats and the Young Lovers," Review of English Literature, II (January 1961),
- Sharp, William. The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn. London: S. Low, Marston & Co., 1892.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. The Complete Works, ed. Roger Ingpen and W. E. Peck. N.Y.: Gordian Press, 1965.
- _____. The Poetical Works of Shelley, ed. Thomas Hutchinson. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- Sherwood, Margeret. "Keats's Imaginative Approach to Myth," Undercurrents of Influence in English Romantic Poetry. N.Y., 1971. Pp. 203-64.
- Slote, Bernice. "La Belle Dame as Naiad," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LX (1961), 22-30.

- Sperry, Stuart. Keats the Poet. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Spurgeon, Caroline. Keats's Shakespeare. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- Starr, Nathan. "Negative Capability in Keats's Diction," K-SJ, XV (Winter 1966), 59-68.
- Stephenson, William. "The Performing Narrator in Keats's Poetry," K-SJ, XXVI (1977), 51-71.
- Stillinger, Jack. The Hoodwinking of Madeline, and Other Essays on Keats's Poems. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971.
- _____. The Texts of Keats's Poems. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- _____. (ed.) Twentieth Century Interpretations of Keats's Odes; a Collection of Critical Essays. N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Thorpe, Clarence. The Mind of John Keats. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1964.
- _____. (ed.) The Major English Romantic Poets; a Symposium. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. Poétique de la prose. Paris: Seuil, 1971.
- Trawick, Leonard. (ed.) Backgrounds of Romanticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967.
- Trilling, Lionel. "The Poet as Hero: The Letters of John Keats," Cornhill Magazine, CLXV (Autumn 1951), 281-302.
- Utley, Francis. "La Belle Dame sans Merci and the Inferno of Lucretius," ELH, XXV (1958), 118.
- Valery, Paul. The Art of Poetry. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1958.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. "Keats's Myth of the Hero," K-SJ, III (Winter 1954), 7-25.

- Vogler, Thomas. Preludes to Vision. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Ward, Aileen. John Keats: The Making of a Poet. N.Y.: Viking Press, 1963.
- Warren, Robert Penn. Democracy and Poetry. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Wasserman, E. R. The Finer Tone. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.
- _____. "Keats and Benjamin Bailey on the Imagination," MLN LXVIII (1953), 361-5.
- Webster, Grant. "Keats's 'La Belle Dame': A New Source," ELN III, (1964), 42-7.
- Whiteley, M. "The Tragic Ending of Keats's Eve of St. Agnes," MLR (1947), 123.
- Williams, A. H. "Keats's La Belle Dame: The Bad-Breast Mother," AL, XXIII, 63-81.
- Wilson, Katherine. The Nightingale and the Hawk: a Psychological Study of Keats's Ode. London: Allen & Unwin, 1964.
- Wimsatt, W. K. The Verbal Icon. Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1954.
- Wind, Edgar. Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance. N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1968.
- Woodring, Carl. Politics in English Romantic Poetry. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Worringer, W. Abstraction and Empathy. Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1967.

Wordsworth, William. Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, ed. Paul Zall. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

_____. The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.

_____. The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. de Selincourt. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Wright, H. "Has Keats's Eve of St. Agnes a Tragic Ending?" MLR (1945), XL, 90-4.