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Epic and pastoral traditions in the poetry of John Keats

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City University of New York, 1993

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EPIC AND PASTORAL TRADITIONS IN
THE POETRY OF JOHN KEATS

by
GREGORY WASSIL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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1.

Camoens

Restless, Restless, craving rest,
Forever must I fan this fire,
Forever in flame on flame aspire?
Yea, for the God demands thy best.
The world with endless beauty teems,
And thought evokes new worlds of dreams:
Then hunt thy flying herds of themes.
And fan, yet fan thy fervid fire
Until the crucible ore shall show
That fire can purge, as well as glow.
In ordered ardor nobly strong,
Flame to the height of ancient song.

2.

Camoens in the Hospital

What now avails the pageant verse,
Trophies and arms with music borne?
Base is the world; and some rehearse
How noblest meet ignoble scorn.
Vain now thy ardor, vain thy fire,
Delirium mere, unsound desire:
Fate's knife hath ripped the chorded
lyre.
Exhausted by the exacting lay,
Thou dost but fall a surer prey
To wile and guile ill understood;
While they who work them, fair in face,
Still keep their strength in prudent
place,
And claim they worthier run life's race,
Serving high God with useful good.

Herman Melville, Last Verses, 1890

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation locates the basis of Keats's poetics in his crucial concept of Negative Capability, "that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (I. 193);¹ it finds the origins of this concept in Keats's reading in and rewriting of pastoral and epic poetry. I emphasize genre since the extent to which a poet experiments with genre, "a conceptual syntax derived from earlier examples and applied to modern conditions,"² strikes at the center of his access to and appropriation of literary tradition. The question of Keats's relation to tradition has been productive of a critical controversy, my response to which was the origin of this dissertation.

On the one hand, some critics see the works with which Keats allied himself--epics, romances, dramas--as instructing him in his apprenticeship, and Keats's masterful readings of these works in turn, as opening them up to new meanings. This vision of the life and poetry is best expressed by such critics as Lionel Trilling when he says Keats "at every moment took life in the largest possible way and seems never to have been without the sense that to be, or to become, a man was an adventurous problem" and that he "passed beyond all self-conscious hesitation about

looking deep into life and himself, about propounding the great questions and attempting the great answers."³ An opposing view is derived from Jerome McGann's requirement that critics of romanticism not incorporate Romantic ideologies into their own readings of Romanticism and thus absorb "Romanticism's own self-representations";⁴ it holds that the very ease with which Keats signals his generic affiliations to canonical works and incorporates them into his own poetics betrays a "bad access" to the poetry of the past. Instead of seeing Keats as a masterful, capable poet, critics who take this view see Keats as a masterful producer of "texts" which in their surface ease belie their origins in the anxieties of an emergent lower middle class full of dis-ease with its new existence and desiring the authenticity, the sense of social respectability, that ostentatious familiarity with such works was thought to offer. Such a reading sees the canon Keats worked with as an agent of oppression and Keats as finally coming to a bitter understanding of his place in a world of rigid class structures.

This controversy is instanced in the difference between such critics as Morris Dickstein, who argues that Keats journeyed from the poetry of the bower and its "alluring surfaces" of an escapist poetic to a more mature approach to "the great questions ... the great answers," and Christopher Ricks and Marjorie Levinson. Emphasizing the poetry of alluring surfaces, Ricks finds a new poetry of embarrassment rooted in that awkwardness, which he connects to representatives of a newly created social

class. For Ricks, Keats is the poet of adolescence, the poet of the blush, who captures that brief moment on the cusp of waxing experience, that gesture of self-awareness, which is a constant reproof to people's sense that they belong to the world.

Marjorie Levinson reads Keats as undermining an authoritarian tradition while inscribing its damages and ravages on the very fibers of his brain.⁵

My own reading is that Keats views the tradition as much more accessible, affecting, and transforming. I think Keats's use of traditional genres opens the world to be experienced in a way that generates satisfaction, contentment, and happiness. I focus on the alluring surfaces of epic and pastoral genres and the transformation they undergo in Keats's poetry. While I disagree with the ultimate conclusions of such critics as Levinson, nevertheless, like such critics, I see the ideal of Life ("the great questions ... the great answers") as disjunct from the experience of life in Keats's poems and I see Keats's poem as derived from awareness of this disjunction. I argue that the sense of disjunction is given structure and expression by the phrase "negative capability," which describes action poised between ideal and real, between thought and deed.

As an element of Keats's poetic, negative capability is supremely suited to the modern condition, which developed under the influence of reforms in politics and economic practices giving rise to a greater movement of people and their productions from one part of the world to an alien other, and in turn,

establishing the fact of otherness within their own national borders. I see the traditional genres of epic and pastoral, romance and lyric as offering patterns, the employment of which accentuates disjunctions and, at the same time, a continuity of patterning, a shared and satisfying acknowledgment of past human endeavors, the attitude Keats invokes when Ruth is placed in the corn hearing the nightingale.

EPIC

Romantic Epic

The Romantic epic mode is said to shift away from action towards that moment of illumination, a mental act. Thomas Vogler in Preludes to Vision, The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats and Hart Crane, acknowledges that a focus on the moment of illumination is ultimately a lyrical rather than an epic mode. The Romantics, he writes, translated a desire for epic comprehensiveness into the lengthy "preludes to vision," poems that attempt epic comprehensiveness but fail to achieve epic closure; these preludes in turn exert a force on the shorter lyrical forms where the visionary experience manifests itself. This epic mode or impulse, this abstracting from a genre its quintessential quality, is an attempt to reclaim past experience and announce a new program, a piecing together of the human past, a process that reveals and liberates the present.

Perhaps revealing the ambivalence with which the Romantics received epics, it was said that Keats's Hyperion was a great fragment of an epic adhering to the "rules" of epic poetry,

existing like a ruin in the desert, remote and removed from the necessities of the moment. Indeed, the concept of the epical was in such a state of flux that Endymion, Keats's first "long poem," had also been compared to the epical. One reviewer wrote that, it "will be seen that here is a rich fund of materials, fitted up for almost every variety and degree of poetical power to work upon [and] is at least well adapted to the airy and fanciful beings who dwell in it, as a regular Epic Palace with its grand geometrical staircases, its long dreary galleries, lofty state apartments, and its numerous sleeping rooms is to its kings and heroes."⁶ Epic was one of the major Romantic genres; Byron reflects upon its ubiquitous presence when he refers to "an epic from Bob Southey every spring" (Don Juan. III. 97: 4). In the 1790s, a time of political upheaval, a revival of interest in Milton, of an epical poem "exemplary to a nation," had produced such poems as Robert Southey's Madoc (1805), Joseph Cottle's Alfred (1801), and John Ogilvie's Brittania: A National Epic Poem in Twenty Books (1801). At the turn of the century, as political discord created disagreement about what constituted national unity, Southey turned from Aztec and Welsh heroes in Madoc to a French hero in Joan of Arc as the subject for an epic, celebrating the antithesis of British anti-Jacobinism and growing conservatism.⁷

The epic tradition concerned as it is with interpreting past events and promoting a vision of the future, invites the subversive rewriting of its own exemplars; indeed, this

subversive relationship to epic predecessors is a major component of the epic genre.⁸

Such a critical perception, that poems no longer need to be seen as fitting rigid classifications but may have a looser association with a repertoire of shared characteristics, reflects a dynamic relationship to tradition. Yeats says of great artists that they "look backward to a long tradition, for being without fear, they have held to what ever pleased them"⁹ and returned a sense of reckless excitement to their art and manner of living freely, yet freely with knowledge of the rich traditions. As critics, we must become more sensitive to poets' sense of generic possibility, as Stuart Curran argues; and instead of viewing genres as catalogues of features, we must see poems as having affiliations with a repertoire of characteristics shared by many other poems. What a poet does that is significant is choose and accentuate possibilities within a repertoire, making choices of coloration and emphasis. With a history of use behind them, the poets take the repertoire, interpreting and transforming it. Poems like Don Juan become valuable, Alastair Fowler says, in so far as they "vary or depart from ... generic conventions, and consequently alter them for the future."¹⁰ One might say that just as Milton subverts the type of hero celebrated by epic, so the very focus of the epic shifted in the Romantic period as well, replacing epic action with visionary experience. An example of such a shift can be seen in Joel Barlow's Columbiad (1787), which opens with Columbus in prison while Hesperus

reveals the future of the Americas.

It is within this renewed tradition of the visionary epic that Keats shifts from the action of Hyperion as the subject of epic to the subject of the visionary experience in The Fall of Hyperion. Eschewing Miltonic cadences in Hyperion does not mean Keats abandoned his wish to write epic. Indeed, Keats's desire to write a "long poem ... a test of invention" is expressed in the poems of his first volume of poetry, each poem of which reflects the problems or fears concomitant with assuming a heroic stance.¹¹ Endymion brings to the forefront an attempt to revise epic and romance genre. Keats pairs the title "Endymion" with the phrase "A Poetic Romance" and an epigraph reading, "The stretched metre of an antique song." The title page suggests the poem's subject is about the encounter with genre and all the implications of taking on such a task. Keats brings into tension the epic unity implied by the title, the challenge implied by the further ranging subtitle, "A Poetic Romance," and the context of the epigraph from Shakespeare's sonnet XVII wherein the power of poetry to preserve in its forms the truth of a person's beauty is challenged by referring to the actual relief of the human face. Thus, on the very title page of his "long poem," Keats brings out into the open his concerns about the value of verisimilitude, the conflict between the importance of art and its relation to the actual events of life, his abilities as a poet, and his affiliation with the origins of myth. Infusing mythical elements into a poem that concerns the origins of poetic creation shifts

the emphasis of epical concerns from what is "exemplary to a nation" to the workings of the imagination. These concerns are the focus of the poem, and the visions of Endymion become the subject of Keats's epic poem. Keats's affiliation with a genre which invites subversion of previous exemplars at once distances him from his own particular experience and gives him a perspective on it which liberates while allowing the poet to assume a greater awareness.

The Romantic visionary epic formulates a response to the anonymity and depersonalizing forces unleashed by modern social and political movements. William Blake transformed the conventions of epic and drama, making of his "brief epic" Milton, "an instant of illumination" according to Northrop Frye.¹² The main constituent element of the "brief epic," Joseph Wittreich says somewhere, is its dramatic moment, a moment of direct apprehension, almost pure voice.¹³ It is by means of such dramatic directness that Cleanth Brooks, writing of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," justifies the lines " 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' " by arguing a principle of "dramatic propriety" found in the poem as a whole and for which these lines provide a culmination and fulfillment.¹⁴ Who speaks them? Yet the lines enact the drama of the Urn.¹⁵

Keats's brief epic, Hyperion, the last poem of the Lamia volume of 1820, suggests such an epical aspect in a moment of illumination. In the opening lines of Hyperion, "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale," the mental space is introduced which

had been explored in preceding poems of the volume. Just as the opening poem of the volume "Lamia" begins "Upon a time, before" establishing temporal depth, Hyperion establishes mental or spatial depth, in vales of the mind explored in earlier poems in the same volume such as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode to Psyche."

The project of locating an epic mode within the processes of mind, within a moment of illumination, has been carried out by Stuart Curran and Edward Engelberg, who have studied the relationship of shorter lyrics to greater designs in the poetry of Shelley and Yeats. Their readings suggest that the epic mode comes to reside in the shorter forms.¹⁶ Rosalie Colie writes of the Renaissance adage that it is similar to the "sententia, [a] quotation from an authoritative source ... which sums up a mass of experience in one charged phrase, demonstrating the community of human experience."¹⁷ If we think of the proverb or epigram as a compression of a great body of common experience, Keats's statement that proverbs are not real until experienced upon the pulses suggests that he sees the experience of poetry, feeling the range of human events on the pulses, as an extension and preservation not only of isolated consciousness, but of the experience of the race, which is renewed in people's lives and perpetuated in song. Using Colie's idea, I argue that for Keats, lyric poetry is a means by which human history is comprehended in a word, a phrase, a name and expresses this epic mode.

Composite Forms

Wordsworth initiated the phrase "composite form" as a way of looking at the collected works of a poet. He says of his own work that all the shorter poems would be arranged as "little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses" around an ante-chapel (The Prelude) to the sanctuary of a Gothic Cathedral (The Recluse). Building upon this concept, Stuart Curran argues that the poet is able to achieve "a new mode of apprehension created through the assimilation" and rewriting of more conventional genres. Not wishing to emphasize completed action but rather to create a sense of ongoing mental process in the reader, Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, according to Curran, creates a pause and dislocation in action so that "not the action but the psychic motivation or consequence becomes the dynamic in poem after poem."¹⁸ It is such an emphasis on deflection of action toward some other point in Wordsworth that perhaps suggested to Vogler that the Romantics were unable to bring epic closure to their "preludes to vision." Yet it can be seen that this deflection from completed closure and action and an emphasis on the open-endedness of human thinking and the promoting of thought as an ongoing process rather than an end-game is a "truer" (the word is Curran's) sense of epic possibility; the "composite form" is the rewriting by the Romantics of the epic genre.

Keats's lyric poems can be seen as little dramas within an overarching context of epic concerns which aim for a moment of total illumination. The epic mode, the desire for expression of a

certain magnitude, heroic in scope, comprehending past events and projecting a new order, can be found in Keats's lyrics, letters, verse tales, and fragments. Keats's desire for epic amplitude exerts tension on the confines of smaller forms such as the sonnet and thus his collected works form a composite poem. I see Keats as echoing Wordsworth's idea of the composite form, an idea amplified and reiterated by Shelley when he says of Milton, "he conceived the *Paradise Lost* as a whole before he executed it in parts." (509)¹⁹

Shelley's concept of the "great poem" includes the idea that all poems are fragments and isolated portions of one poem, "episodes to that great poem," which is always being constructed. The elements of the great poem are arranged "according to the laws of epic truth; that is, according to the laws of that principle by which a series of actions of the external universe and of intelligent ethical beings is calculated to excite the sympathy of succeeding generations of mankind" (505). Epic for Shelley is the supreme expression of that which all true poetry does, as stated at the outset of his Defence: "But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which ... produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them" (489). Shelley's sense of epic includes the idea that there is an intensity of expression that is supremely voiced. The fact of epic poetry "conferring upon modern mythology a systematic form," or having a certain form, is

of secondary importance; indeed, these criteria are merely the "mask and mantle" (504) in which the poets disguise their experience of truth which can reveal itself in a sentence and even in a word. But the emphasis that Shelley places on intensity of expression shifts the grounds for any discussion of epic.

Speaking of Milton, Shelley says that another epic quality is present, namely, "a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religious and political conditions of the age in which he lived and of the ages which followed it: developing itself in correspondence with their development." The requirement that epic not only include the knowledge, sentiment, religion, politics, of its own particular time but look forward to all these in future ages and different cultures as well is a demand that is consonant with the idea of the one great cyclic poem increased by the additions of all poets. Shelley maintains that epic does what poets generally do, that is, the poet "not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present ... his thoughts are the germs and the flower and fruit of the present time" (491).

Implying that some pattern can be discerned in his miscellaneous poems, William Wordsworth affixed a preface to Poems published in 1815 describing the various kinds of poetry and the six faculties of the mind that are necessary to the poet. These powers are those of observation and description, sensibility, reflection, imagination and fancy, invention, and

judgment. Of these, judgment determines what the appropriate "graces" are for each "species of composition." Judgment also determines which powers of mind will be exerted and prevalent in any one kind of composition. Each faculty is represented in the 1815 volume by an ordering of poems which exemplify that faculty. Though there are headings for Imagination, Fancy, Sentiment, and Reflection on the Affections, poems would be shifted from one category to another. The idea that Wordsworth develops is that the ordering of the poems in his volume corresponds "with the course of human life, and for the sake of exhibiting in it the three requisites of a legitimate whole, a beginning, a middle, and an end" (802).²⁰ Wordsworth affiliates his entire corpus with epic since the corpus was to be arranged in such a manner as to include all the poems and exhibit the powers of all mental faculties, thus suggesting amplitude and range. Moreover, it is the Imaginative faculty above all others which is the subject of Wordsworth's "epic" scope. It is the Imagination and the "exertions of this faculty upon its worthiest objects, the external universe, the moral and religious sentiments of Man, his natural affections, and his acquired passions which have the same ennobling tendencies as the productions of men, in this kind, worthy to be holden in undying remembrance" (805). The Imagination is the great unifying force that "draws all things to one; which makes things animate or inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects with their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect" (804).

The epic overtones of this project can be heard in the comparison Wordsworth makes between the reconstitution of every poem in his own corpus and Milton's idea of the construction of the Temple in "Areopagitica": "There must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built ... that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall arises the gracefull symmetry" (555).²¹ Wordsworthian Imagination, the creative power, an analogue to Milton's Truth, reveals itself through the momentary vision of its power allowed by the fragments of poetic utterance, the Romantic epic mode.

Drawing upon Wordsworth's concept of epic poetry, I argue that there is less an epic paradigm than a power that is exerted in poetry generally. Casting doubt upon the discernment of his own contemporaries and looking with some envy upon Milton's own position as preeminent poet of the Puritan revolution, Wordsworth allows that Milton's contemporaries discerned these powers of Milton in spite of their partisanship and shared political ideas (810). The faculty which merits appreciation is the faculty of imagination. Wordsworth locates the essence of strong poetry not in its generic affiliation but in its expression of passionate remembrances. He condemns Macpherson's Ossian for the empty form in which the poem was clothed: "All hail, Macpherson! Hail to thee, Sire of Ossian! The Phantom was begotten by the snug embrace of an impudent Highlander upon a cloud of tradition--it travelled southward, where it was greeted with acclamation and

the thin consistence took its course through Europe, upon the breath of popular applause" (813). In Romantic Poets and the Epic Tradition, Brian Wilkie says of the epic tradition that within the tradition itself is the convention of challenging the epic poems of the past; Wordsworth could thus be seen as challenging the idea of epic poetry usually practised as form and rule and thus clearing ground for his own version, suggesting not a specific form or genre that reveals epical qualities, but actions of imagination manifested in poetry. Wordsworth's discussion of the critical vagaries of opinion dismantles the idea of an epic genre, calling the tradition as it is usually thought of a cloud of thin substance. In dissociating form and content, the poem and the window it offers onto a continuous power separate from the poem, Wordsworth increases the possibilities for poem to become "the very thing," in the words Byron used to refer to his own epic.²² Wordsworth's ongoing arranging and rearrangement of his poems, the discreet desiderata of the imagination, are expressive of an epic mode.

The concept of epic poetry as the fullest expression of human aspiration and as comprehending human society, politics, and history goes through a significant change in the Romantic period. Epic comes to symbolize the entire course of a poet's development, the infancy, youth, middle, and old age "commencing with childhood, and terminating with Old Age, Death and Immortality." Small poems for Wordsworth then compose "an entire work within themselves" (802). Such epic comprehensiveness would

also be carried out by Walt Whitman whose own innovation and whose own process of endless revision of his poems reveals the creative ferment of this conception:

I seek less to state or display a theme or thought, and more to bring you reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought--there to pursue your own flight ... I had a desire to attempt some worthy record of that entire faith and acceptance ('to justify God's ways to man' is Milton's well known and ambitious phrase) which is the foundation of moral America.²³

Epic and Pastoral

Epic and pastoral concerns are embraced by Keats and interfuse his poetic vision. Keats achieves a richness from a mixture of forms and of genres. Keats's desire to write a long poem brings a tension to the genres that he employs. Such tensions in the Romantic poets are discussed by Michael Cooke in Acts of Inclusion, where he writes of the Romantics' sense of the collapse of a coherent philosophy. Their response to this loss of coherence is reflected as cultural vandalism, a reworking and recombining of traditions. Cooke illustrates his concept of Romantic acts of inclusion as a kind of reformulation of genre. As an example he discusses the elegy which "contains and controls modes we usually treat as distinct from it (namely prophecy and satire)."²⁴ In a period of such transition and tension, a form such as pastoral would regain strength since it so readily

provides what Harold Tolliver calls "a perspective of incongruity" and thus infiltrates and "gnaws" away at all other genres.²⁵

This fluidity of characteristics exemplified by the pastoral and heroic or epic genres becomes of paramount importance to Romantic poets who, perhaps, in taking their cues from Milton, seek to repair the fracture of consciousness, and, through their experiments with genre and form, recombine disparate fragments into unity. The field of "literary relationships" discovered by reconsidering the use of genres provides insight into the act of creation itself. One such affinity that I will examine here is the relationship between pastoral and epic, two forms usually held to be at opposite ends of the spectrum of poetic achievement: an opposition seen positively by Vergil who began with pastoral and moved onto the higher form of epic; seen in a negative light by Samuel Johnson who claimed pastoral was easy and suited youth since it required no experience of life in its production. In spite of these contradictory views, there is a connection between the two. The very simplicity of limited pastoral themes, labor, seasonal rhythms, love and desire, evokes myth and people's relationship to eternity, themes which have the amplitude and seriousness suited to the epic. Such a compression of "infinity to manageable finitude" has made of pastoral the fair seed-time for poets and serves as a way of writing not only about these larger concerns, but about the very process of creating poetry and perceiving the world, the Romantic

epic impulse.²⁶

The contrast between pastoral and heroic poetry is obvious: the former deals with rural subjects, the latter with conquests and adventures. The retreat into a locus amoenus in pastoral and the contemplative mode associated with this retreat is in stark contrast to the active life of epic poetry. However, as we have seen, the tensions that exist between the two genres exert a force that attracts them. Charles Segal comments on the antithesis between pastoral and activism and says of Theocritus' Idyll 7 that it is "a symbolic reconstitution of the opposites that intersect at the beginnings [he is referring to forces unleashed and creative of life] as well as an accomplished exemplar of [the Idyll's] perfections."²⁷ An example of this observation in another context would be that of the Forest of Arden in Shakespeare's As You Like It, which is a place where both the hatreds and fears of the courtly world enter in and are resolved, yet is also a place by its very nature touched by danger and poverty. However, the pastoral becomes richer for this intermixture.²⁸ William Empson says putting the "complex into the simple" is one function of pastoral. Building upon Empson's idea of the comprehensiveness of pastoral, Elinor Leach writes that instead of seeing pastoral as a "gratification of man's longing for nature," readers in the last two hundred years "subordinate this impulse to other ends: to some experience of knowledge or discovery."²⁹ This relationship is acknowledged by attempts to classify pastoral and epic by Minturno and Quintilian

who noticed the closeness of the forms: pastoral lyric was at first composed in the same verse form as epic, dactylic hexameters.³⁰ The two forms are linked thematically, as well, and pastoral's "Intimation of greater things," of a poetry "of the cosmos, of myth, of heroes," reveals an affiliation with the epical.³¹

Yet despite such associations, some problems of defining pastoral too narrowly persist. Renato Poggiolo in The Oaten Flute argues that pastoralism is merely a retreat from the world. Thomas Rosenmeyer claims that it is an ethos, an expression of a joy of life, a rejection of mutability and disturbance. To argue that pastoral affirms one way of life or another takes up cudgels for one party, prevents us from seeing that certain aspects of pastoral such as the atmosphere of naivete or ignorance are resources for poets which can be utilized in other forms. Indeed, it is the very presence in pastoral of this relationship between "dramatic pretences and dogmatic assurances," in the words of David Wagenknecht, which has made pastoral the rich source for poets' meditations on an essential human conflict between eros and thanatos.³² As Leach says, pastoral is a "displacement of simple gratification, a turning aside of the original pastoral impulse into some more demanding form of intellectual or emotional activity, inspired by proximity to nature, yet based upon recognition of the futility of the pastoral ideal."³³ Instead of viewing Milton's mixture of satire and social criticism in his "Lycidas" as a double violence at

worst and a literary mistake at best, as Poggioli does, we can view pastoral as focussing these concerns in an elemental way which can then be drawn upon by poets.

Such a use can be seen in Milton's "Lycidas" where political and worldly concerns are brought forward within the conventions of the pastoral form. The poems to Edward King, of which "Lycidas" is one, also constitute a funeral rite. The poem's context within a funeral rite reflects the poem's affiliation to the Book of Revelation which aggressively promulgates the promise of a renovated earth. Such a joining of political and larger social concerns with pastoral can be seen in Lyrical Ballads, where the rural, pastoral setting allows for the presentation of the world in its harshest manifestations. We can see that political and worldly concerns intrude into the pastoral form; indeed, the pastoral is fertile ground, the paradise into which the fall intrudes.

If pastoral can be seen to accommodate the repertoire of satire and extend itself to include politics and prophecy, the epic form can be seen as similarly shifting its boundaries to include different elements. Within Milton's Paradise Lost is a consistent downplaying of one element of epic poetry, the epic hero, which is then employed satirically by its association with the devils. Indeed, the devils of Pandemonium create the classical heroism that is the subject of earlier epic and this "epic" style is contrasted with God's plain style:

No more talk where God or Angel guest

With man, as with Friend, familiar us'd
To sit indulgent, and with him partake
Rural repast, permitting him the while
Venial discourse unblam'd; I now must change
Those notes to Tragic; foul distrust, and breach
Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt
And Disobedience ... Sad task, yet argument
Not less but more Heroic then the wrauth
Of stern Achilles.... (IX. 1-15)³⁴

The fit subject for epic is "the better fortitude/Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom/Unsung" (IX. 31-33). Thus, through the rhetorical figure of litotes, the epic impulse finds its affirmation within a negative song of heroism.

The epic convention in the hands of Milton is enlarged to bring into play the way in which the readers' minds interpret events, exercising their capacities. This exercise of mind itself becomes a subject of epic. Milton wrote in "Areopagitica" "that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service & assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest" (513). For Shelley, "epic truth" is a "principle" that will arouse "sympathy" in successive generations. The actual machinery that conveys the "principle" will rely on future commentators who will explain "the religion of ancestral Europe" for its elucidation. "Epic" then in the hands of Shelley is come to be associated with the subject of sympathy, love, and liberation.

Self, Gender, and the Epic Hero

The radical transformation of self can be traced through generic transformations. This disjunction is related to a peculiar form of modern anxiety, restlessness, loss of center. The metamorphoses that Keats engenders within his negatively capable heroic are various, and Keats's poetic finds its expression in a host of grotesqueries, for example, those so well discussed by Ricks in relation to Endymion.

Such a transformation of self has led me to inquire into gender differences. Negative capability invites such evocations of alterity within the individual, and I argue that Keats derives some of this from his readings of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, where the parameters of gender are what separate the worlds of Egypt and Rome; the orientalism and luxuriousness of eunuchs, images found not only in Shakespeare but in the Bible as well; the commentaries on the sexual ambiguity of the inhabitants of the New World to which Keats was affiliated through his sonnet on Chapman's Homer and readings of Robertson, Marmontel and others; and from the pastoral tradition itself which includes homoerotic accent.

I view Keats as promoting a radically different heroic which is a consequence of disjunction. Yet the recognition of this disjunction is a step toward a recuperation of wholeness. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, within the context of 18th and 19th century English novels, has inquired into the causes and consequences of the fracture in the male homosocial continuum she sees manifested

in the distinction in our culture between men promoting male interests and men loving men's genitals. She has argued that the embedding of homophobia within men, an uncertainty about one's orientation, interests, relationships with men that might at any time be labelled homosexual, and the consequent fear of arrest, beatings, or contempt for acts of desire which accompany such a dislocation, has deprived men of a base of sensual, psychical wholeness, the deprivation of which creates a shell of a man, "a mere murderous potential, violent against women and men alike, and capable of being seized and used by and in the service of any social force."³⁵ Deriving this idea from a reading of James Hogg's Confessions of a Sanctified Sinner (1824) and other examples of the Romantic Gothic such as Caleb Williams (1794) and Frankenstein (1818), Sedgwick argues that the psychological complexity, the doubling, the projection of male fears of disenablement exhibited by such novels reveals social preoccupations with gender construction and transactions of power at a time of immense social change. Such an arrested development exemplified by the main characters of these novels reflects a culture of alienation and oppression of difference.

In light of these theories of society and psychology, Keats's negative capability, which I argue has its origins within a eunuch figure, an incomplete man, can be seen as an attempt to regain psychical wholeness. The type of effeminate man that Keats puts forward as the exemplar of negative capability, Jesus, Alcibiades, Mark Antony, Apollo, serve as illustration for the

recuperation of experience. I see Keats as utilizing a realm of experience possibly derived from these very social conflicts Sedgwick alludes to, including, but not limited to, the alienation of labor, money, to reconstitute a human continuum. Negative capability, with its origins in the abject degradation and disenablement of castration, is one means by which experience is reconstituted. It is from within the very paradox of disenablement that Keats reconfigures experience. My argument offers a new way of entering the poetry of Keats that trains a light on the historical and psychological aspects of the "text" without reducing poetry to ideology.

I find the origins of Keats's genre transformations, and especially his transformation of the epic hero, in his reading of general histories of the Conquest of the New World including such books as Marmontel's The Incas (1778), Robertson's History of America (1777), Voltaire's Essai sur le moeurs (1754), and Mickle's translation of Camoen's Lusiad (1789). The new world and its "realms of gold," first becomes the site of the contradictory poetics of negative capability. A popular History from which Keats probably derived his spelling of "Cortez,"³⁶ William Russel's History of America (1788), claims that "the gold and silver imported from the New World into Spain, entirely changed in a few years, the value of money, and price of labour all over Europe." Keats's advice to Shelley, "load every rift with ore," is written with the same spirit Keats wrote that poetry must come naturally as leaves to a tree, or that he

despised poetry the purpose of which has been to labored at. All the histories linked the richness of the new world to a population of Indian men too full of languor and effeminacy to work, who merely picked gold off the ground. Within this set of contradictions between action and indolent richness, Keats begins his transformations of gender and genre.

Equally important to these first loci of his poetics was Keats's response to the very violent upheavals of the preceding generation in France and the Napoleonic wars--almost twenty years of incessant warfare attended by social agitation in England, carried on throughout most of Keats's lifetime. Trafalgar, The Peninsular Campaign, the destruction of Napoleon's army at Leipzig and again at Waterloo form part of the background to Keats's transformation of the idea of heroism.³⁷

Other Romantics rewrote the epic hero, and Keats would find material for his concept of the hero in the post-war devastated European landscape described in such works as Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1812) with its pessimistic treatment of the heroic ideal. Set partly in Spain where Goya contemporaneously etched his Disasters of War series (1810-1816), Childe Harold reflects the unsatisfying results and messy entanglements of contemporary action. The poems of Wordsworth about people who suffered the dislocations of war, unemployment, and abandonment, would also feed into Keats's developing of an heroic alternative to one which results in the disruption of social concord. A parallel to Keats's questioning of the heroic ideal is Mary

Shelley's Frankenstein (1818): the desolation of human communities and institutions described there compels one to rethink the possibility of action in a world fraught with consequence and significantly to rethink the heroic ideal embodied in the Promethean or Faustian urge represented by Victor Frankenstein. Keats's own skepticism couched in a specific reference to the Conquest of the New World is revealed in "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil" where Keats writes of the brothers' greed and how for them

... many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud quiver'd loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip;--with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich or'd driftings of the flood.

(107-112)

This background provides me with material with which to read Keats's own engagement of the heroic and his formulation of Negative Capability as an alternative. But a negatively capable heroic is not *sui generis*. As demonstrated above, the concept has a rich provenance in both philosophy and literature, specifically in pastoral and epic works.

The Poetry of the Letters

In a letter to John Reynolds Keats writes of "every department of knowledge ... excellent and calculated towards a great whole"; and within these good-humored comments are

references to Paradise Lost and the consequences of the theft of knowledge: "one would think there has been growing up for these last four thousand years, a grand child scion of the old forbidden tree, and that some modern Eve has just violated it; and that there was come with double charge, 'Notus and Afer black with thunderous clouds, from Sierra-Leona'" (I. 276). These references to knowledge continue: "An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people--it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery" (I. 276). Knowledge gives us the sense that we are "fledged and go through the air and space without fear...it is impossible to know how far knowledge will console us for the death of a friend and the ill 'that flesh is heir to'" (I. 277-278). In relation to all this "painful" accession of power is a fragment of an Ode, "Mother of Hermes," which expresses a desire to sing in the pastoral vein, "in earlier Sicilian."³⁸

Only a few ears will hear and understand and the speaker's poem thus spoken will die "content as theirs. / Rich in the simple worship of a day." Of course the context of this poem's simple worship of a day, of this pastoral vision, is a letter in which every conceivable reference to human dissolution occurs, beginning with the specific reference to brother Tom's feverish prelude to his final act, to more general accounts of life's potentiality for meaninglessness and dissolution. Keats takes a pastoral form and the desire for the green world and, as Wordsworth does in the Lyrical Ballads, places it in the context

of human suffering. The poem survives as a fragment of an Ode, as Keats calls it; however, the poem exists as a sonnet with only line six and seven breaking the usual rhyme sequence and with a definite turn in the sestet. No other Ode adheres to the form of the sonnet as closely as this opening except the third stanza of "Psyche" which has a less regular rhyme scheme. I would venture to say that in taking the sonnet as Ode and placing it in a letter that has as its subject a descent into knowledge, and references to the world's fall into disharmony, and speculations about Wordsworth's "epic passions" and whether he martyrs "himself to the human heart," Keats is applying a great stress on the confines of the sonnet form and attempts to express an epic mode within a compressed form.

Following the trajectory of earlier poets such as Vergil and Milton who became poets of comprehensive powers and assumed an epic voice, Keats must master the pastoral form. It is within the conventions of pastoral that Keats develops the theory of negative capability as an approach to gazing upon the misery of the world. It is within pastoral and what Keats derives from its conventions that I begin.

1. All references to letters that follow will be indicated in the text and refer to The Letters of John Keats, edited by Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 2 Volumes.

2. Stuart Curran, Poetic Form and British Romanticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), page 4.

3. Lionel Trilling, The Opposing Self (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pages 4-5.

4. Jerome McGann, Romantic Ideology-A Critical Investigation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pages 1-2. According to McGann we must examine the particularities of any given unit of time and perpetuate the differences and disjunctions which delineate one period from another.

5. I owe the origin of my ideas to Marjorie Levinson's Keats's Life of Allegory (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1988). The introduction to her book outlines the trends in Keats criticism which I have used here. Levinson discusses the language of "dis-ease" employed by Keats, a language through which Keats tries to adopt the tradition of classical learning. Levinson examines Keats's statements about feeling the heart of humans, the theories of negative capability and the poetic character which has no identity, placing these statements and ideas in the context of Keats's position in an emerging middle class uncomfortable with its new skin, a class which comes to the tradition of classical learning through translation, a "bad" access at a remove from the authorizing and authoritative original language. The Keats who emerges from this critique is a Keats who captures perfectly this "dis-ease," a poet of adolescence, masturbatory, unable to enact desire. Indeed, for Levinson, Keats does not mature as a poet until he ceases to write poetry altogether. Such a reading is in accord with Jerome McGann's argument in The Romantic Ideology that as critics we must isolate the ideology of the Romantics rather than accept at face value their statements about such things as the creative potential of the mind, the poetic character, and negative capability. According to McGann, we must see these ideologies as historically specific rather than universally applicable. Only when we distance ourselves from the romantic ideology will we uncover what is truly human about their poetry, their sense of isolation and solitude.

In spite of the strictures of F. R. Leavis and Lionel Trilling that Keats's poems, not his letters, are the important documents (The Opposing Self [New York: The Viking Press, 1968], page 3), I illustrate my points by moving freely between letters and poetry because the interplay between Keats's poetic and prose urgencies is productive of the richness of both poems and letters, the letters being at times first drafts as well as containing first drafts of the poetry. For a discussion of this

way of viewing the letters see Greg Kucich, "The Poetry of Mind in Keats's Letters," Style 21 (Spring 1987), pages 76-94.

6. P. G. Patmore, "Review of Endymion" in The Young Romantics and Critical Opinion 1807-1824, edited by Theodore Redpath (London: Harrap, 1973), pages 482-487.

7. Stuart Curran, Poetic Form and British Romanticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); see his chapter on the epic form.

8. Stuart Curran, Poetic Form, page 167.

9. William Butler Yeats. "Poetry and Tradition," in Essays and Introductions, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1961), page 251. Quoted in Joseph Wittreich, Angel of Apocalypse. Blake's Idea of Milton (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), page xiv.

10. Alastair Fowler, Kinds of Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), page 23.

11. See the first chapter in Jack Stillinger, The Hoodwinking of Madeline (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

12. Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, A Study of William Blake (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), page 324.

13. Joseph Wittreich, Angel of Apocalypse (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

14. Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian," in English Romantic Poets, edited by M.H. Abrams (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pages 425-435.

15. The ambiguous relationship to the epical and its shifting emphases is illustrated by Don Juan. Critics of this encyclopaedic poem asked "what is it." While Byron ridiculed the epic pretensions and mystifications of Wordsworth's The Excursion, he plainly set out his own heroic intentions, though jestingly, in Don Juan:

Most Epic poets plunge "in medias res"
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before by way of episode...
That is the usual method, but not mine.
My way is to begin at the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning.
(I. vi-vii)

Within the shifting Romantic sense of epic possibility, the epic does not reveal itself in a form but rather in a feeling or impulse. Or as Melville in the two poems serving as epigraph to this introduction suggests, the image of the refining crucible of

verse expresses the epic essence "in ordered ardor nobly strong."

Romantic transformation of epic can be illustrated also by the passage from Byron; he dispenses with the epic commonplaces by marginalizing them in quotation marks and parentheses, " 'in medias res', " "(Horace makes this ...)," and a figurative parentheses, "when'er you please." Rather than relegate his epic journey to episodes, displacements of time and consequently of narrative voice, displacements that deemphasize the voice and emphasize action, Byron develops a mode by which his very voice becomes the enactment of the epic. Oscar Wilde displaced certain features of the drama and, as Byron did with the epic, "took drama, the most objective form known to art, and made of it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet, at the same time that [he] widened its range and enriched its characterizations...[he] summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram" (Oscar Wilde, "Letter to Lord Douglas," in Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], page 194).

16. Curran, in Shelley's Annus Mirabilis (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1975) examines the epic impulse in the shorter forms of Shelley's oeuvre, particularly the Odes, which express a concisely rendered version of the duality existing in the universe, a theme treated in the longer "epic ventures" such as The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound. The ode's dialectical nature, its choric and dramatic origins, make it the perfect vehicle for Shelley's representation of duality. The structure of the ode with its strophe and antistrophe provides a model for life where universal contentiousness is countered by an "epode" or "way out." Recognizing this duality and conflating it within the ode form "is a test of Promethean intellect, will, and endurance. Between the absolute certainties of heaven and hell lies the no-man's land of purgatory, the region in which what destroys and what preserves are equivalent, inseparable: a single dialectical force. The imperative for the skeptical poet is to learn to live in that fluid realm between certainties and from that ground to exert his own weight upon the dialectic" (page 155).

Edward Engleberg, in The Vast Design. Patterns in W.B. Yeats's Aesthetic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964) argues that Yeats joins "the strength of the epic with the sweetness of the lyric, the power of the dramatic intensity with ecstasy of personal suffering" (page 32). In the marriage of Yeats's "vast design" in a "single image," Yeats attempts to develop an aesthetic that combines an expansiveness and impersonal quality with an image of "still intensity," the lyric poem. This tension between the conception of a "vast design" and his lyrical intensity led Yeats to develop an aesthetic that could contain both in a single image. As Engleberg writes, "through that single image, vastness could become as intense and as focal as a lyric poem" (page 4). However, Yeats did not always succeed in writing poetry as one "single, long, structured

poem" since each poem is derived from a separate occasion and lacks the epic unity of poem like The Iliad. Though Yeats realized that the grandeur of epic lay no longer in the size and quantity of events that are usually associated with the epic, the vast design and single image, which compress epic unity, could be established through "allusion and suggestion, symbol and emblem" offered by the lyrical form (page 6).

17. Rosalie Colie, Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), page 33.

18. Stuart Curran, Poetic Form, page 182.

19. Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry" in Shelley's Prose and Poetry, edited by Donald Reiman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), page 509. All quotations from Shelley refer to this edition.

20. All quotations from Wordsworth's poetry and prose are taken from The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, The Cambridge Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982).

21. All quotations from Milton's prose are taken from Complete Prose Works of John Milton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), volume II.

22. Byron writes to Hobhouse, Is not Don Juan "the very thing?" referring to the poem's treatment of "life."

23. Walt Whitman, The Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman, edited by Louis Untermeyer (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), pages 516, 519.

24. Michael Cooke, Acts of Inclusion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), page xvii.

25. Harold Tolliver, Pastoral Forms and Attitudes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pages vii, 1-20.

26. Charles Segal, Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) page 5.

27. Charles Segal, Poetry and Myth, page 8.

28. Helen Cooper, Pastoral: Mediaeval into the Modern (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), pages 169-178.

29. Elinor Winsor Leach, Vergil's Eclogues, Landscapes of Experience (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), page 33.

30. Thomas Rosenmeyer, The Green Cabinet; Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), page 14.
31. Patrick Cullen, Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pages 7-8.
32. David Wagenknecht, Blake's Night and the Idea of Pastoral (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), page 33.
33. Leach, Vergil's Eclogues, page 36.
34. All quotations from Milton's poetry taken from The Poetical Works of John Milton (London: Oxford University Press, 1946).
35. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men. English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), page 114.
36. Carl Woodring, "On Looking into Keats's Voyagers," Keats-Shelley Journal XIV (1965), pages 14-22.
37. For a good discussion on art and society see Marilyn Butler, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries, English Literature and its Background 1760-1830 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Carl Woodring, Politics in English Romantic Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970). For English responses to Napoleon, see F.J. Maccunn, The Contemporary English View of Napoleon (London: G. Bell & Sons, LTD., 1914).
38. Laurence Lerner in The Uses of Nostalgia Studies in Pastoral Poetry (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pages 218-219, calls this poem "Perhaps ... the most perfect pastoral poem ever written" because it is nostalgic though "there is nothing sad or explicitly nostalgic about it." Yet the context of the poem is explicit and reveals pastoral's self-conscious "knowingness," a feel that is utilized by Keats.

Chapter One:

"A Profound Verdure": Keats's Pastoral and Negative Capability

From the outset, Keats's poetry reflects his interests in intermixing pastoral and heroic modes. "Sleep and Poetry" (1817), for instance, provides the poet an opportunity to bring forward the opposition between the two genres; speaking of the pleasures of pastoral, Keats writes "And can I ever bid these joys farewell? / Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life, / Where I may find the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (122-125). Eschewing chronological order, Keats, in "Ode to Apollo," (1817) groups three epic poets, Homer, Vergil, and Milton in stanzas 2-4, and then groups the poets of "The Passions," Shakespeare, Spenser, and Tasso, who "melt the soul to pity and to love." Yet it is Apollo in whom the two great styles mix when "the Powers of Song combine" to create "dying tones that fill the air." In the verse epistle "To My Brother George" (1816), Keats juxtaposes the literary easiness of romance and pastoral and literary combat, "white coursers ... bestridden of gay knights, in gay apparel / Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel ... bowers, / Of which no mortal eye can reach the flowers" (26-28, 43-44), with a more public "posterity's award" derived from a poetry through which "the patriot shall feel / [the] stern alarum ... the senate thunder out

[the] numbers / To startle princes from their easy slumbers" (74-77). In a letter which touches upon pastoral and epic concerns, Keats finally rejects the epical Milton for Wordsworth's composite form and Wordsworth's martyrdom to the human heart that sings an "epic passion." It has been said of Keats that "the true imagination can encompass both epic and pastoral, can possess both the visionary ether and the natural pleasures of the bower."¹ Though we generally see Keats as eschewing the bower poetry of his youth and assuming a more austere stance,² the two modes intersect throughout the canon, and are juxtaposed, abstracted and further mixed.

This juxtaposition of two separate genres creates an atmosphere in Keats's poetry productive of the concept of negative capability. At the heart of negative capability lies contradiction. It is within certain aspects of the traditions of pastoral and epic that Keats finds the contradictory tendencies which nourish his poetry. Keats's use of seasons, flora and fauna, meads, mythological figures, all signals of pastoralism, exemplifies this contradiction. One of the most acknowledged figures representative of this Keatsian contradictory poetic is the knight-at-arms of "La belle dame sans merci," a figure of "psychic, social, and physiological contradiction."³ The knight-at-arms, a potentially epic figure, is the embodiment of negative capability, a character emptied of personality in a landscape equally emptied: a cold hillside, a mead, a grot, an autumnal setting, all strangely evocative of a silence and absence.

Keats utilizes the pastoral tradition and certain of its features, notably landscape, to enact essential human dramas. The open air of Wordsworth's pastoral was the place where simple people expressed the strongest feelings in direct ways; defending the simple diction of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth writes of his peasant subjects that "such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived."⁴ He could be echoing Duke Senior in Shakespeare's As You Like It, who speaks of the freedom of the woods and people's essential experience felt there:

Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference; as, the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
'This is no flattery: These are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.' (II. i. 5-14)⁵

The pastoral tradition by the time it came to Keats incorporated the lives of rude country people, clowns, and fools, all of whom could speak the truth because they had nothing to lose. The democratic potential of pastoral invites the treatment of serious kinds of human experience as well as life's pleasures. Erwin Panofsky's essay on pastoral aspects of Poussin, "Et in Arcadia Ego," is a fine meditation on the appearance of melancholy and death in the pastoral setting. Incorporating and expanding Panofsky's inclusive view, William Empson in Some Versions of

Pastoral includes the figure of Death as particularly suitable to the tradition because of death's coyness and ambiguous sexual nature, being but a slim-waisted skeleton; this ambiguity allows death to move freely between the different levels of society and the different sexes leading everyone, men and women, rich and poor, to the precipice.⁶

The pastoral tradition can stretch to include a wide range of experience. The mixture of high and low in pastoral provides a texture of irony within the poetry which gives to an audience a pleasure of having two or more windows opened on any particular problem or situation.⁷ In his discussion of pastoral and heroic mixtures, the doubling of the plots in Shakespeare by means of various levels of perspectives by different orders of characters, Empson argues that the "value of the state of mind which finds double irony [the multiple viewpoints held by the audience] natural is that it combines breadth of sympathy with energy of judgment."⁸ This double irony is an ever present theme in the poetry of Keats, attached to a tradition that allows Keats to describe the "poetical Character" as "everything and nothing ... It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er; delights the camelion Poet" (I. 387). Keats's use of irony, of which negative capability is a type, incorporates ideas about the nature of poetic genius, the value of gusto, the place of art in the world, themes touched upon in the pastoral of Endymion and carried forward throughout Keats's career.

Richard Cody calls the tradition of paradox imbedded in

pastoral "the platonic celebration of the poet's inner life."⁹ Keats mines this tradition for its poetry, and the paradox of negative capability affirms that it is a state of mind through which something essential about the human condition is most completely felt. It is through negative capability that the outer world, instead of being the objective sphere of activity, is brought inside the mind. The vessel of experience becomes his experience, and human desire instead of being viewed at one remove is felt more immediately. Keats utilizes the device of the oxymoron and brings to it a modern flavor. Levinson argues that the illogic of the oxymoron is the most obvious development of a poet representative of a new social class for whom desire and its object are ever disjunctive.¹⁰ Instead of viewing the oxymoron as evidence of disbarment from life, I see it as an engagement with the paradoxical aspects of life. Rather than embroiling language in the vexation of non-signification, Keats exploits the possibilities within language to flesh out these paradoxes. The hunger expressed by Keats gives a rich humanity and adds a new chapter to the use of paradox. Petrarch, translated in numerous editions; Chaucer ("If no love is, O God, what fele I so ... For ay thurst I, the more that ich I drinke," Troilus and Cressyede); and Shakespeare ("She makes hungry where most she satisfies," Antony and Cleopatra), are the models for the sparse fare of Keats's heroes who dine on single grapes of joy, or relishes that but garnish a hunger never to be sated.

The endless permutations of views on love create the oxymoron

of Petrarch, a device embedded in pastoral poetry of the Renaissance. A common Petrarchan formula would be to equate the female with death and the unrequited lover with death in life. Keats extends this formula and in such poems as "La Belle Dame" recognizes the eternal otherness of the lady and, in a poetry of decorum, sings of the disability of unrequited love.¹¹ Paul Valery writes "the more restless and fugitive the prey one covets, the more presence of mind and power of will one needs to make it eternally present in its eternally fleeting aspect."¹² What John Jones calls somewhat disparagingly "a nameless sensual pungency," and Marjorie Levinson the hungry spaces of middle-class consumption, may ultimately have its origin in the felt experience of literature brought to life and breathed by another human being whose imagery of wreaths and bands and trellises of flowers, vines, and branches, derived from earlier poets, evokes the fugitive and indirect apprehension of experience. It is through the richness of the convention of pastoral and the Petrarchan formula therein embedded that Keats manifests himself and his vision.

Keats's poetry will continue to haunt people because of its suggestive promise of radical oneness not achieved but touched momentarily before disappearing. Indeed, Keats, in his intention to feel life in its precarious sensual and intellectual fulfillments, could be seen to counter an absolutist philosophy that finds fulfillment through one doctrine or another. The negatively capable person is not one who mindlessly gives themselves over as a vehicle for the power of the great god Pan

like the bacchante, but one who feels the mystery of Pan, who, as I will show, embodies the inherent contradiction between desire and fulfillment, interfusing their being yet allowing them to act accordingly with the conviction of an individual. I will touch upon problems of the amorality of this doctrine when treating Emerson in the following chapter, but my point is that the peculiar stationing of the negatively capable person does not deny personality and conviction.

Negative Capability is active. Keats seems to think that the creation of the world and its fall are co-extensive. Each moment of pleasure is wound up with pain. To separate the two for any length of time is to suspend time and space. These two moments, feeling the pleasure and the pain separately and feeling the two bound up together, are creative of the moment of negative capability. The idea of the sacrificial, that to prevent chaotic violence some kind of limited ritualized violence against a sacrificial victim is needed to appease the angry gods, comes into play here.¹³ Keats's negatively capable person is a person doomed, a sacrificial victim, for example, to "be among her [Melancholy's] cloudy trophies hung"; yet this "victim" is fully aware of their place within the continuum of innocence and guilt and through negative capability extends their life. Thus, the pastoral vision of the happy place becomes modified. Not only is the garden foredoomed and loaded with imagery of this doom, but moments of despair hold out the promise of comprehending passionate experience where individuals most fully realize their existence. Lyric intensity and epic

comprehensiveness are thus joined.

Endymion

Endymion provides a starting point for my reading of the poetry. The juxtaposition of the human and the inhuman, of age and youth, of life and death, creating the landscape of oxymoron, is immediately perceptible in the first two books. In the following discussion of Endymion, I make several points regarding Keats's imaging forth the contradictions of negative capability. As I move through the first two books, I examine the intermixture of the genres of epic and pastoral; I examine Keats's pastoral landscapes, the manner in which a tension interfuses them and creates the negatively capable space; such a space allows the suspension and exquisite sensual comprehension of fulfillment in the knowledge of loss. The god Pan is the paradoxical image of this moment and, appearing at the outset of Keats's career, will also appear at its close comprehending the figure of Autumn. Thirdly, I introduce the nature of the negatively capable hero and begin to argue that the "ardent listlessness," the full and undifferentiated poised comprehension of several experiences at once, of the negatively capable hero, is derived from productive readings of the homo-erotic traditions of pastoral, certain epical and heroic poems, and the contradictions inherent in the condition of the eunuch, a figure related to homo-eroticism and also to the fullest comprehension of experience by virtue of his incapacity.

The imagery of the bower can be seen at once to encounter the tragic consequences of human existence. The pastoral landscape,

the "green world" (I. 16), contains "the sun, the moon, / Trees old, and young sprouting a shady boon / For simple sheep" (I. 13-15). Spenser's Shepherd's Calender with the image of the old tree and the young vine, youth and age, comes to mind, as well as Wordsworth's "The Oak and the Broom." The imagery of breath that takes in the air, "wreathing / A flowery band to bind us to the earth" (I. 6-7), implies a necessity to the development of the poetry that follows, with its double binding of body and word to life. The image of wreathing here and the double binding in "band" and "bind" is serpent-like. Since the landscape is the fallen world of "gloomy days, / ... unhealthy and o'er darkened ways / Made for our searching" (I. 8-11), Keats resurrects one of the most ancient images of endless cyclicity, the uroboras, the snake biting its own tail, symbolizing the One and the All, and its complete circularity and self-containment within several lives comprehends many states of being. This serpent image of the beginning in the end is brought forward in a specific reference to the life of the mind when Endymion encounters Cybele, the goddess of death and renewal, after his sojourn in the garden of Adonis; here amidst " ... caves, and palaces of mottled ore, / Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor" (II. 594-595) Endymion "beholds / New sudden things [and] casts his mental slough" (II. 638). In evoking a symbolic encounter with death, Keats exploits the feel of such a liminal state. Endymion "that moment felt endued / With power to dream deliciously; so wound / Through a dim passage searching till he found / The smoothest mossy bed and deepest" (II. 706-710). The

serpent imagery looks forward to Lamia and her wreaths and the dead body of Lycius "in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound" (II. 311), and suggests the circularity of Keats's technique in the pattern of repetition that Levinson finds in the structure of "La Belle Dame," and the trope of reduplication that Vendler finds in "Ode to a Nightingale." Yet Keats is not content only to exploit the mystery of the interfusion of powerful mythological and religious figures and allusions; he intermingles literary conventions as well. The tragi-comic aspect of pastoral is noted; though this is the fallen world we bind ourselves to the earth, "Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth / Of noble natures" (I. 8-9).

In exploiting pastoral convention to project the ideal landscape of negative capability by means of the oxymoron, Keats allows for death but not as an overwhelming force. Nature is present in its darker manifestation as destroyer, but it is the green world and "the grandeur of the dooms / We have imagined for the mighty dead" (I. 20-21), the works of nature and the art of people in nature, that keeps a "bower quiet for us, and a sleep / Full of sweet dreams" (I. 4-5). Both imagination and the objective world are emphasized here; Keats's allusions to the different genres of heroic, tragic, and the pastoral are creative of the most comprehensive means with which to feel the peculiar position of people fully conscious of their temporary place in the world.

The intertwining of tree and vine, the beneficent shade they cast upon people who are like simple sheep, the equal pleasures

given by the beauty of florae and the tales of doom, the intermingling of nature and "temples" or the religious impulse, the seasonal antiphon that in the opening of the poem is juxtaposed with the speaker's own fulfillment of his poetic enterprise are productive of the negatively capable moment of richness made richer by its juxtaposition with the potentiality of loss. The end of the poem, when Autumn "With universal tinge of sober gold" (l. 56) will surround the speaker, takes on a hint of sadness in completion; the sobriety which is "universal" in the image from "To Autumn," "close bosom-friend of the maturing sun," is such another image of empathy. "Ripeness is all," says Lear, because at that moment we most feel our mortality. And for Keats the negatively capable person will be most ripe when "The passion poesy, glories infinite, / Haunt us till they become a cheering light / Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast / That ... / They always must be with us, or we die" (l. 29-33). Without this ripeness (and since Keats's underlying image for his entire poetic endeavor is to send, like Saturn, "Strange musings to the solitary Pan" [Fall of Hyperion. l. 411], the god behind Autumn and its ripeness) there is, properly speaking, no life; for in ripeness is readiness for whatever possibility awaits us. The readiness and ripeness of Bottom the Weaver from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream comes to mind as well, a reference suggested by Keats's employment of imagery evoking the "mazy world" (l. 460) of Shakespeare's play and its dreams "that never tongue, although it overteem / With mellow utterance ... / Could figure out" (l. 575-578) that specifically

recall the fairy world of Shakespeare's play and Bottom's dream that was beyond the wit of man to know what his dream was.¹⁴

There is a difference between Keats's negatively capable landscape and a Wordsworthian reciprocity with nature, a relationship suggested by the lines from the "Intimation Ode": "the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." The inexpressibility of "thoughts" "too deep for tears" and Endymion's "solitary thinkings ... such as dodge / Conception to the very bourne of heaven / Then leave the naked brain" (I. 294-296) are comparable. But the intensity of "naked brain" and of sensual experience which scores people's bodies making them ripe, so to speak, is all the difference. Wordsworth rejected his own philosophy in Keats's "Hymn to Pan" as "a very pretty piece of Paganism." Keats's Hymn is a development of the bower-poetry which treats of a problematic happiness, of a pastoral setting juxtaposed with the seeds of its own disintegration. The erotic aspect of Keatsian nature suggests that in human sexual pleasure people's true predicament is most fully expressed. The last lines of the Hymn, those which would stick in Wordsworth's mind, "Be still a symbol for immensity ... An unknown--but no more," could be understood to be a criticism of a known egocentric's desire to be all and say all. ("And he who understands it would be able / To add a story to the Tower of Babel," says Byron of The Excursion, suggesting the foundation of intellectual pride on which this poem is built.¹⁵) Wordsworth's criticism of Keats is more a reaction to a young protege's ability to duplicate

the master but duplicate with a difference.

Keats works different types of poetry into this pastoral setting. One of Keats's more radical creation myths can be found in the description of the altar where the people of Latmos congregate for their May revels. This lawn of sacrifice is in the mighty forest where lost lambs are never found, but if they find their way to Pan's secret flocks, the shepherd of the lost lamb will prosper. The altar as focal point of worship is in a very special place, the center of a negatively capable worship. The trees, lawn, sky, and altar form one seamless "swell / Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell / The freshness of the space of heaven above, / Edg'd round with dark tree tops?" (I. 83-86). Keats utilizes the tradition of the aubade in his description of the bower. The previous evening's dew has either strewn "fairy phantasies" upon daisies or the dew appears like daisies so that the bower catches the light of "Apollo's upward fire" (I. 95). Each cloud that stands to the east near the sunrise is made "a silvery pyre / Of brightness" (I. 97). Sun, brook, flower, dew, and man's voice cause nature's wonders to pulse "tenfold" (I. 105). Yet at the core of this description is the image of a melancholy spirit who "might well win / Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine / Into the winds" (I. 98-100). The image of oblivion juxtaposed with perfect unity and the melancholy produced by such possibility seems to me connected to such another aubade with similar juxtapositions. Milton invokes the radiance of God so that he might write of Heaven and of things invisible to mortal sight: "Hail,

Holy Light, Offspring of Heav'n first-born / Or of th' Eternal coeternal beam" (Paradise Lost III. 1-2). Yet the certainty of this light is only confirmed by his absolute blindness, and he asks that he sing what the sighted cannot see. In arguing a relationship between these two texts, I mean to compare the melancholy and desire for oblivion, the desire that one's essence melt into that of another in Endymion, with similar concerns in Milton. Milton works to distinguish the two kinds of light that of course in heaven are all part of one Undifferentiated Being: "Bright effluence of bright essence increate" (III. 6). The only way people know is through differentiation, both between the different sexes and different intellectual stances. The Keatsian altar to oblivion sets up a like contrast between what it is for people to "feel" their lives and what it is like to "melt" into oneness or to have their breath taken into the quiet air as in "Ode to a Nightingale."

In marginalia to Milton's Paradise Lost, and specifically the marginalia to this section of the poem, Keats calls the "managment of this Poem ... Apollonian." What he means by Apollonian is that the poet is "all-seeing": "we see the great God and our first parent, and that same satan [sic] all brought in one's vision ... we feel the great Authors [sic] consolations coming thick upon him at a time when he complains most--we are getting ripe for diversity."¹⁶ This Apollonian inclusiveness, this getting ripe for diversity, this getting consolations in the midst of the greatest agony, is the state of negative capability. Negative capability is

to feel in a single moment the fracture that exists between the differentiation of experience which is how people know their lives and the nameless oblivion of desire which has no beginning and no end and for which human individuals are seemingly sacrificed and hung like trophies.

There are epical intrusions into the pastoral scene. Within this pastoral edenic setting of the May revels there is a note of discord when the sound image of wind in trees is likened to the sound of waves:

... a faint breath of music
Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.
Within a little space again it gave
Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking
Through copse-clad vallies,--ere their death,
o'ertaking

The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea. (I. 115-121)

The end of fullness will come and what will replace this fullness is the death and "surgy murmurs of the lonely sea." The image again looks forward to "Ode to a Nightingale," where the song of the Nightingale haunts the poet with promise of undifferentiated commingling. The sheep of Latmos "Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge / Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn" (I. 203-204) again looking forward to the differentiation which intrudes itself into the landscape with the word "forlorn." "Forlorn," a word that makes its appearance in "Ode to a

Nightingale" and creates a tension between pastoral freedom and historical necessity, is a recollection of an earlier poet's similar use of the nightingale and his hearing of its music in darkness to signal the tension between pastoral and epic ascendancy. Milton had compared himself to "the wakeful Bird / [that] Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal Note" (P.L. III. 38-40). Yet he claims this voice sings "other notes then to th' Orphean Lyre" (III. 16). In combining the Nightingale or traditional Orphic / Pastoral voice with epic, Milton prepares the way for Keats to resurrect the Nightingale as an image of epic impulse, that is, the Nightingale is for Milton epical and sings now of "Things Invisible to mortal sight" (P.L. III. 55). Keats's use of nature and its pastoral promise as the place where people are reminded of their moment in history, as well, is further developed when he asks for "ethereal dew [to] / Fall on my head, and presently unmew / My soul" (I. 131-133) ("mew" is a hawking term and refers to covering the head) so that he too may "dare, in wayfaring / To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing" (I. 134-135). The Nightingale for Keats represents this undifferentiated essence which people can only touch in the state of negative capability. In Endymion's "fellowship with essence" speech, he compares the Nightingale, a female voice singing to its love, to the self-absorption of the hero who in his state of highest bliss in "ardent listlessness" (I. 825) is unaware of the danger all around him. The Nightingale sings "nor e'er conceives / How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood" (I. 830-831).

Night is a lesser danger than death, but, nevertheless, night is presented as holding a hood, an image of darkness and muffled oblivion, a cover which "mews" the soul thus preventing the figure so covered from aspiring to soar dangerously. In a like way the Keatsian lover must love intensely though in so loving he gives up the world. But being human necessitates acknowledging the hood of night which is held temporarily in abeyance for people.

Keats sexes his bird female, thus maintaining the association of the nightingale's song with the tragedy of Procne and Philomela. The song of the nightingale, a vehicle for the promise of undifferentiated experience, thus suggests this other, human sorrow, just as the song of Isabella in "The Pot of Basil" reminds the people of her sorrow. In "The Nightingale, A Conversation Poem," Samuel Taylor Coleridge sexes his nightingale male, because there is a masculinist urgency in Coleridge's desire as a father to introduce young Hartley, whom he holds in his arms in the poem, to a surrender to an absolutist nature, a nature which holds no misery for people. It is only when the child, who will grow to be a poet, fully comprehends this masculinist identity descended through the father and a male bird that he can lose his more limited fearful individuation and, melting into nature, "surrender his whole spirit." Keats rejects such absolutism and his criticism of Coleridge that he "would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery" in his search for the absolute is to the point (I. 194). For Keats, to fade away with the Nightingale is to become a sod; on the contrary, to live and

die is the only way to become like the bird's "high requiem." To live intensely in the world is to know intensely its differentiation.

The juxtaposition of the epic and the pastoral found within such images as the Nightingale result in a tension which is the ideal space of negative capability. Keats also accentuates other aspects of the traditions, intermingling them to further his design. A tension between genres can be translated into a tension between genders; negative capability expresses necessary alterations to the self just as it implies necessary alterations to the concept of genre. One aspect of pastoral Keats employs in recasting the epic hero as the negatively capable hero is its homoerotic tradition. For Keats, the "ardent listlessness" of such figures as Endymion, Antony, and Alcibiades offers a reformulated kind of undifferentiated experience where males are able to touch upon the wider field of experience offered by the paradox of negative capability. In putting forward such an idea, or imaging forth his negatively capable heroes in non-traditional gender roles, Keats disrupts the ordinary distinctions between men and women and offers each the capacity of greater experience.

Endymion enters the negatively capable bower, "His youth ... fully blown, / Shewing like Ganymede to manhood grown" (I.169-170). Keats is not representing Platonic homoeroticism of such texts as Shakespeare's sonnets: Endymion is "fully blown" rather than the age just before manhood.¹⁷ Instead, Endymion has lived through that period and is more full for the experience, has become a fuller

man, a king no less. Yet this is the strange figure of the negatively capable poet, a boy not a boy, a man not a man, a king not a king. Perhaps Keats is trying to redeem the most obvious implications of his negatively capable poet by forcing the issue of effeminacy head on.

Invoking the homoerotic tradition of pastoral, Keats merely carries negative capability to logical ends. Endymion, with its Miltonic echoes of harkening to epic ascendancy by means of the pastoral, is a development of the Miltonic hero who encounters the radical differentiation of homoeroticism, a theme embedded in pastoral traditions. Milton had utilized this tradition in the banquet scene where Satan tempts Jesus in Paradise Regained. Louis Crompton suggests that Milton's scriptural source for this scene conflates the stripling youths of Milton and the curaedus or "stripling clad in loose attire," who remained with Jesus after his disciples had run away: "And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked" (Mark 14. 50-52).¹⁸

In Milton's poem, Jesus is tempted by Satan with a feast set out by nymphs as well as "Tall stripling youths rich clad, or fairer hue / Than Ganymede or Hylas" (III. 352-353). Satan claims that boys not girls will appeal to Jesus because Jesus is more glamorous and complicated than the ordinary men who are usually satisfied by Belial's women. This possibility offered by Satan is merely that: a possibility suggested by the conventions of the

pastoral. Yet that homosexual imagery intrudes in this manner suggests Milton has other motives.¹⁹ Similarly, the conventions of pastoral allow Keats the opportunity to incorporate as many possibilities of experience out of which to form the negatively capable character. Keats comments upon Milton's pastoral play Comus around the time of Endymion's publication, arguing that the masque's militant chastity is a reaction to an age represented by "cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces" including sexual violence, burnings at Smithfield, and political intolerance (I. 281). The dismissal of cod-pieces is not a dismissal of sexuality but a particular kind of sexuality. These references occur in the letter where Keats charts out the concept of human life as a "large Mansion of Many Apartments" including the "Chamber of Maiden Thought." Though the feminine here is in passive contrast to fanatics (represented by cod-pieces) that burn heretics, it is from this feminized space that we "feel the 'burden of the Mystery'" (I. 281). The negatively capable poet represented by Endymion, the rapted/sodomized Ganymede, in his maturity and the image of negative capability in the Maiden Chamber seem to argue for a plenitude of representations which literary traditions allow Keats: a field of many choices.²⁰

Just how suggestive these traditions within pastoral are is apparent in Keats's placement of homoerotic material within *Latmos*. Keats juxtaposes undifferentiated time and place and tales of undifferentiated sexuality with the seeds of more intense, differentiated experiences. In placing his pastoral in a post-

Edenic world (we are in a place of "Time's sweet first fruits" [I.321] and young people whose "children's children bred / Thermopylae its heroes--not yet dead / But in old marbles ever beautiful" [I. 317-319]), Keats relies upon that peculiar past perfect tenseness of alluding to a time beyond more recently past event and a compression of all time in the present moment. The supreme example of this is in the Invocation to the edenic Book IV of Paradise Lost:

O for that warning voice, which he who saw
Th' Apocalypse, heard cry in Heaven aloud,
Then when the Dragon, put to second rout,
Came furious down to be reveng'd on men,
Wo to the inhabitants of Earth! that now,
While time was, our first Parents had bin warn'd.

(IV. 1-6)

This condensation of future events and distant past into the present moment now sets forth the model for Eden itself as a fragile distant place inhabited by mythological beings, yet containing the seeds of its own dissolution. In his marginalia to Milton, Keats says of these opening lines that "the point of time is gigantically critical--the wax is melted, the seal is about to be applied."²¹ The finality of sealed documents affords the opportunity for Milton to exercise the "Grandeur of Tenderness," or a quality Keats calls the "sublime pathetic." This "delphic" moment is that moment when the intensities we experience only in passing and in temporary guise are personified in the immortals,

"Demons, fallen Angels, and Monsters."²² We see the partial embodiment of these passions which are creative of the moment of negative capability confirmed by poets like Milton. The immortals are not for Keats the opposite of humans but represent the feelings of humans "living in and from their immortality." One such instance is the figure of bereavement embodied in Ceres as she searches the world over for Proserpina (Paradise Lost, IV, 268-272).²³ Other instances are Caliban who sometimes hears " 'a thousand twangling instruments' &c. In Theocritus--Polyphemus--and Homer's Hymn to Pan where Mercury is represented as taking the 'homely fac'd' to heaven."²⁴ All confirm the "sublime pathetic" required of the poet who is "ripe for diversity" and who has a "delphic" Apollonian nature, in short, the negatively capable hero and poet. It is relevant as well that it is in the pastoral form that this diversity is most fully acknowledged--the negatively capable landscape where pleasures and sorrows most fully exist.

Within this place Keats introduces a more volatile homoerotic element: the death of Hyacinthus, later a vegetation god, at the hands of Zephyr who, jealous of Apollo's love for the youth, sent a quoit into the boy's head, killing him. This is no doubt one of the "strange [histories] potent to send / A young mind from its bodily tenement" which the youth of Latmos gather round to hear (I. 325-26). This "penitent" Zephyr subsequently, with the aid of Apollo, "Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain" (I. 331). If Hyacinthus and the worship around his memory is represented by flowers and especially the petals of the Hyacinth marked with "AI,"

the exclamation of woe, Keats has fully condensed a perfect image for the oxymoron: a beloved male flower, fondled by male hands, which flourishes only in the sobbing rain yet withers in the summer sun of Apollo. Yet this interchange between people and gods, between genres, is not limited to men or the homoerotic only; juxtaposed to the rather fertile sterility of three males is the image of the stone, the weeping Niobe (I. 338), fecund mother deprived of all her offspring. These are disastrous mementoes of relationships between gods and people, between non-differentiated absolutism and differentiated being.

Peona interprets the negatively capable Endymion in a negative way. She mocks his experience: while she thinks he merits an epic strain as "one through this middle earth should pass / Most like a sojourning demi-god," she scorns him that he should but "achieve / No higher bard than simple maidenhood" (I. 722-726). Peona ridicules that love which "scathes" the "gentle heart" and the whole effete literary treatment of unrequited Petrarchan love. In spite of this masculinist argument from his sister to "Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,- anon / Among the winds at large--that all may hearken" (I. 737-738), Endymion responds with his "fellowship with essence" speech, but only after he is fondled and urged to speak opening his eyes as "Zephyr bids / A little breeze to creep between the fans / of careless butterflies" (I. 763-65).

Peona recollects epic concerns to Endymion, and Endymion must overcome these concerns. Peona presents a masculinist strategy, setting up a dichotomy between pastoral landscape and epic action.

Endymion's speech resolves two disparate genres, forging a juxtaposition of genres. In Endymion's description of the degrees of happiness, each degree is marked by a special poetry; first "old songs waken from enclouded tombs" (I. 787); second, "Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave" (I. 789); next, "Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit, / Where long ago a giant battle was" (I. 791-792). But the highest form is that which is "More self-destroying" (I. 799) and creates an "ardent listlessness" (I. 825). Keats posits a transcendence of forms and an apotheosis in a state of being rather than in any particular form. The state of being suggested by the negatively capable "ardent listlessness" becomes a more vital and versatile poetic than the forms to which Peona refers. Yet it seems that the pastoral and epic cannot exist one without the other and are fused in Keats's mind. In Book II, the figure of Ulysses who "tortured from his slumbers / The gluttoned Cyclops" is contrasted with "Juliet leaning / Amid her window-flowers" and other lovers for whom we have strong fellow feelings. Meanwhile, historical, epical figures like Ulysses and events like "the death-day of empires" are relegated to some "backward corner of the brain" (II. 1-43). But the epic Ulysses "tortures" the figure of the pastoral, "Cyclops," as the figure of Diana "tortures" Endymion with "renewed life" (I. 919) as Venus does Adonis (I. 528). In this meeting, the historical and the epical are necessary counterparts to the ahistorical and pastoral. In Keats, the epical, in a sense, will shatter the pastoral buds as Autumn's fruits extrude the blossoms of spring.²⁵

Such a focus on reconciling two genres I hope will underscore the seriousness with which Keats approached writing his lines on the degrees of happiness and how essential this juxtaposition of genres is. Keats writes to Taylor of the lines about the region "wherein lies happiness" (I.777) that they "are my first step towards the chief Attempt in the Drama--the playing of different natures with Joy and Sorrow" (I. 218-19).

The homoerotic and deviant sexual practices associated with the landscape of Latmos, the character of Endymion, and the nature of the "chief intensity" which "genders a novel sense" (I. 800, 808), are all derived from Petrarchan oxymorae and embedded within pastoral forms. Yet Keats's well-bred shepherds rise to something more than mere noble nativism. Just as Keats's employment of the mythological genders a novel sense, he must also create a new genre, a composite order. In his compression of epic and pastoral traditions, the inclusion of specific epical material and allusions, he distills an essential mode from both literary traditions, fusing two different and incompatible genres. He gives new life to these forms at a time when there is no courtly audience to enjoy the allegory of platonic aesthetics in pastoral, and no epic heroes, founders of new nations and social conditions for epic.

Keats's reworking of a new heroic for his new composite order of poetry can be seen embedded in Endymion's defense of "A fellowship with essence" (I. 779) and its allusion to Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Keats's heroic partakes of the sexual

ambiguity imaged forth in the play. One example of the ambiguity is created by means of Enobarbus's oxymoron when he says of Cleopatra that "She makes hungry where most she satisfies" underscoring the paradoxical nature of sexuality of a very used woman and an aging hero whose potency is undermined by the younger Augustus. However, Antony says to Cleopatra, "I found you cold upon dead Caesar's trencher," implying that his own sexuality gave to her a rebirth. Keats writes of

Life's self ... nourish'd by its proper pith ...

Aye so delicious is the unsating food,

That men, who might have tower'd in the van

Of all the congregated world, to fan

And winnow from the coming step of time

All chaff of custom ...

Have been content to let occasion die. (I. 814-822)

Shakespeare's Antony is introduced by his friends:

Nay, but this dotage of our general's

O'er flows the measure ...

... his captain's heart

Which in the scuffles of great fights has burst

The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,

And is become the bellows and the fan

To cool a gipsy's lust. (I. i. 1-10)

That Keats values this "effeminacy," or mines it for the possibilities it offers to image forth his oxymorae of the heroic individual in the throes of negative capability, is underscored by

his pairing of Antony and Cleopatra's names with that of Alcibiades; Keats writes to Haydon of Haydon's painting, "Christ Triumphant":

I am nearer myself to hear your Christ is being tinted into immortality--Believe me Haydon your picture is a part of myself ... I know not your many havens of intenseness--nor ever can know them--but for this I hope nought you achieve is lost upon me: for when a Schoolboy the abstract Idea I had of an heroic painting--was what I cannot describe I saw it somewhat large prominent round and colour'd with magnificence--somewhat like the feel I have of Anthony and Cleopatra. Or Alcibiades, leaning on his Crimson Couch in his Galley, his broad shoulders imperceptibly heaving with the Sea. (I. 264-265)

Endymion echoes Antony's "ardent listlessness" in the letter's description of Alcibiades, "his broad shoulders imperceptibly heaving with the sea" (reminiscent of Keats's own imitation of a whale throwing the waves from off his back when reading Homer with Charles Clarke). Keats finds within the ambiguity of these men the ideal vehicle for his concept.

This vehicle strikes right to the core of Keats's interfusion of the pastoral and epic in the creation of his new heroic of negative capability. If Keats's "To Autumn" is the supreme expression of the negatively capable imaginative encounter with nature, we must notice the sexual ambiguity of the figures

associated with Autumn. Ostensibly, a female figure, Ceres, guides the poet in the ode, though this female is not aggressively sexed. However, the relationship of the figure of Autumn to Keats's ambiguous male characters is as strong. In Dryden's Plutarch's Lives, Dryden, translating Plutarch, writes in "all the ages of [Alcibiades'] life ... in the peculiar character becoming to each of the periods, gave him, in every one of them, a grace and charm. What Euripides says, that 'Of all fair things, the autumn, too is fair' ... happened so with Alcibiades."

The "fellowship of essence" speech, one of the clearest statements of the Keatsian poetic, utilizes as its vehicle such references to gender thus reworking traditional epical concerns and developing his heroic. The image of Christ, enlarged with his association to Antony, Cleopatra, and Alcibiades (and "tinted to immortality" by Haydon) is brought forward as an equivalent to Cleopatra's "unsating food" in the image of the Pelican: "Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith, / And we are nurtured like a pelican brood. / Aye, so delicious is the unsating food" (I. 814-816). Milton's thoughtful hero of Paradise Regained and the banquet set out by stripling youths provides the prototype for Keats's own connections between Christ, Antony, Cleopatra and Alcibiades. The paradox is made complete as the chiefest intensity nurtures people at the expense of its life.

Keats would have access to other examples of this homoeroticism with which to imbue negative capability. The image of a cross dressing Antony and Cleopatra can be related to the

image of Hercules at Omphales loom variously interpreted by Antony's men as "dotage" but by others as the manifestation of the mystery of strength in weakness.²⁶ In Guarini's "Il Pastor Fido," Linco upbraids the reluctant lover Silvio who would rather pursue the manly sport of hunting than that of loving. Referring to his heroic descent, Silvio says:

That monster-taming King,
From whom my lofty pedigree I bring
Had never grown so valiant, nor so fam'd,
If first the monster Love he had not tam'd.

On this idea Linco heaps scorn:

See foolish youth, how idly thou talkst now!
Had great Alcides been no Lover, how
Hadst thou been born? Rather, if he orecame
Monsters and men, to Love impute the same.
Knowst thou not yet, that to comply with fair
Omphales humour, he not only ware
(In stead of the fierce Lions rugged skin)
Womens soft robes, but taught those hands to spin,
And hold a feeble distaffe, which did bear
The knotty Club? His interludes these were
Between his Acts; And when his ribs were beat
With dear-bought Counquests, he would then retreat
Into her lap (the bay of sweet delight)
As in Love's port to be new built for fight ...
For as the iron, of it self too rough,

And of a harsh unmalleable stuff,
Softned with fire, and gentler metall, strength
From weakness gathers, and becomes at length
Fit for noblest use.²⁷

Available in Fanshawe's translation, but also a part of the general Romantic revival of interest in Italian poetry and translated in 1782 and 1808, Il Pastor Fido would be familiar to Keats.²⁸ Though unfamiliar to Keats, but nevertheless relevant, Velasquez, in a painting of Mars, captures the beauty of strength and power on the cusp of degenerating into atrophied muscles in the body of middle-aged man in distinct opposition to the usual image of the god. The rich pink and soft blue robes which cover the man as he leans on his shield is the perfect image of Keats's meditative figure who in the Autumn is "contented so to look on mists in idleness" ("The Human Seasons"). Keats thus interfuses the pastoral with images derived from the epical and historical to create the intensity and density of figures representative of negative capability illustrated by the sonnet on the human seasons and such poems as "To Autumn."

Keats's use of shifting gender that the pastoral tradition allows can better be understood by contrasting Shelley's conception of gender. In Adonais, Shelley writes, "To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear / Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both / Thou, Adonais" (XVI). The homoerotic love of one male for another is one kind of doubling in the reference to Phoebus and Hyacinth; a further intensification of such singleness is suggested by the

image of self-contemplation in the Narcissus image. A further final image or refinement of this idea is found in the phrase "both / Thou, Adonais" where double singularity gives the "Thou" a new birth. This image of eternal undifferentiation of which the mortal Adonais was but "a portion" (340), is an instance of the homoerotic as suggesting the undifferentiation of the eternal source.

Shelley's "Epipsychidion" suggests a similar movement from differentiation in this life back to the undifferentiated whole. Shelley writes in fragments that were rejected:

And others swear you're a hermaphrodite;
Like that sweet marble monster of both sexes,
Which looks so sweet and gentle that it vexes
The very soul that the soul is gone
Which lifted from her limbs the veil of stone.

The hermaphrodite is tantalizing though it cannot be got at in its promises of complete self-realization since it is both sexes. The figure of the hermaphrodite is a conception of a poet who drew it forth from a "veil of stone." But in the act of bringing the hermaphrodite forward, the image of total self-realization, the undifferentiated soul faded away; such an idea occurs when Shelley compares his own poem to the "flowers of thought, the fading birth," suggesting that as the poems realize themselves and become differentiated their relationship to the true source dissipates and they become vexing fragments. In "Epipsychidion," Shelley wonders how he and Emily will become one but retain differentiation: "One passion in twin hearts, which grow and grew, / Till like two

meteors of expanding flame, / Those spheres instinct with it become the same, / Touch, mingle, are transfigured" (575-578). Other echoes of Shakespeare's sonnets and Plato's "Symposium" and the paradoxical nature of the love they speak of suggest Shelley's own interest in homoerotic themes as examples of total self-realization though these references are marginalized.

The negatively capable hero is not only imaged forth through the potentially deviant practices of homo-eroticism but through traditional forms available through conventional myths as well. Keats's "Hymn to Pan" was said by Shelley to be a "promise of ultimate excellence."²⁹ Its subject has been seen as a description of the vital force of nature, and the poem has been seen as a precursor to the Odes. Yet the Hymn has also come to be seen to represent Keats's ultimate practice in art. On the one hand it has been read as a "mystic oxymoron"³⁰ in Earl Wasserman's phrase, and, on the other hand, Marjorie Levinson argues, the very richness of the poem reveals Keats as a "purveyor of substitute pleasures: real signs provide lacks and differences."³¹ However, the ideal / material critiques are both subsumed by the very nature of this ideal and eroticized landscape of Latmos where Keats exploits the possibilities of pastoral and within the Hymn, the poetry of Petrarchan oxymoron.

Walter Jackson Bate writes that the final lines of "Hymn to Pan" look forward to Keats's letter to Reynolds about the "Chamber of Maiden Thought" (3 May 1818). As this chamber darkens "at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open--but all dark-

-all leading to dark passages ... We feel the 'burden of the Mystery.'" If the project of *Endymion* is to search out "o'er-darkened ways" (I. 10), Pan is a means, a "Dread opener of the mysterious doors / Leading to universal knowledge" (I. 287-288). Bate persists in seeing Endymion as a lesser poem that anticipates the fuller flowering of these buds. Yet Bate allows us to make those connections between the pastoral tradition as a means to knowledge--or as the ideal landscape in which to work out and stage the drama of negative capability. Here it is important to restate the nature of Pan who, in Wasserman's words, is the "perceptible reflection of the imperceptible."

The first stanza of the hymn invokes Pan "By the trembling mazes that [Syrinx] ran" (I. 245). Invoking the presence of the god through the image of his lost love suggests the deity's all-presence is known by the felt perception of his loss. The people of Latmos are not invoking an absent deity, and this is no skeptical invocation. However, Pan is more than an interfusion of the divine and the human, as Wasserman suggests; he is the essence of poetic fleetingness or the fragility of poetic intensity in experience. If he is the model for successful interpenetration of divine and immortal, then that most successful interpenetration is, in the words of "I Stood Tip-Toe," "full of sweet desolation--balmy pain" (163). These words describe Syrinx's "lovely sighing" which is heard more deeply, but through the concatenation of the senses a mournfulness is felt by "poor Pan" (159). This is a development of Petrarchanism from the mere equation of love and bitter death or

love as voluntary death. Here the very god himself is revealed as a culmination of feelings available to humans.

Pan is representative of the negatively capable moment of fullness that comprehends both ripeness and readiness for differentiation. That Pan incorporates the full and the empty is suggested by his songs that are associated with "The dreary melody of bedded reeds" (I. 239) that "wither drearily on barren moors" (I. 287). The "solitary Pan" of "The Fall of Hyperion" to whom Saturn sends his "strange musings" (I. 411) combines the completeness of self with the desolation of solitude. It has been said that Pan, like Autumn, comes to represent the essence of poetry, but he is a figure ripe, ready to successive waves of experience and is thus the vessel of negative capability. In one sense he is an incomplete lover, melancholy after losing Syrinx; yet he is also an image of Christ, Christ who by his association with the ambiguous figures of Antony, Alcibiades and his own nature as the wounded lamb in Isaiah's prophecy, is the figure of the Eunuch, "tinted to immortality." Bailey's New Universal Dictionary, a copy of which was among Keats's books, says of the death of Pan, that it "happened at the time when our Saviour suffered on the Cross, who was the true God Pan and shepherd of our souls."³² This concept of the god, a god centered in a pastoral bower which, interfused with a sense of its own undoing, is the perfect vehicle for negative capability: "O thou, to whom / Broad-leaved fig trees even now foredoom / Their ripen'd fruitage" (Endymion. I. 251-253).

Keats borrows from epic and pastoral to accentuate his poetic of negative capability. Book II opens with the contrast between epic and love poetry: "Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers / The gluttoned Cyclops, what care?--Juliet leaning / Amid her window-flowers ... Do the more avail than these" (II. 26-30). The images of epic, "stiff-holden shields, far piercing spears, keen blades, / Struggling, and blood, and shrieks" (II. 9-10), give way to "The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet" (II. 13). Yet the word Keats has chosen to suggest "embrace," "close," is a word which comprehends struggle and entrapment as well. The word Keats chose comes from the scene in Shakespeare's eponymous play where Troilus and Cressida's assignation takes place. Pandarus says:

Alas the day, how loath you are to offend daylight!
an' twere dark, you'd close sooner. So,
so; rub on, kiss the mistress. How now! a kiss in
fee-form! build there, carpenter; the air is
sweet. Nay, you shall fight your hearts out ere I
part you. The falcon as the tercel, for all the
ducks i' the river: go to, go to."

(III. ii. 40-63)

Once the source of Keats's image is discovered in this grotesque display, the "gilded cheat" (II. 15) which history presents to us becomes a richer source for Keats's negatively capable poetics. Troilus and Cressida picks up on a tradition of viewing Homer and his epic in a skeptical light, and this view is picked up by Keats in his choice of this image to denote a love

which is, as in the play itself, a "grief" and a "balm" (II. 1).

The awakening of erotic passion in Troilus and Cressida, Juliet "weaning / Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow" (II. 28-29), the silver tears of the chaste Hero who awakens to erotic love, and the grand guignol of Imogen waking near the headless corpse of Cloten which she believes to be the body of her husband, all point out the tragic consequences of love that must, by our natures as human in a fallen world, develop paradoxically out of fear.

Imogen says "I tremble still with fear; but if there be / Yet left in heaven as small a drop of pity / As a wren's eye, fear'd gods, a part of it" (IV. ii. 303-305). Christopher Marlowe describes Hero after she has accidentally revealed her passion to Leander with the words "Come thither":

And here and there her eyes, through anger,
ranged.

And like a planet moving several ways
At one self instant, she, poor soul, assays,
Loving, not to love at all, and every part
Strove to resist the motions of his heart.

(I. 360-364)

Juliet, as well, fears she has weakly revealed her passion:

Thou knows't the mark of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight.

(II. ii. 85-87)

The source of the mistress's "rich anger" in Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" is revealed as a fear out of which love grows--an image reinforced by the power of Death to intensify beauty. These stories of a fine Keatsian conception of love that grows more fully out of fear, are the subjects which one should "brood on with more ardency / Than the death-day of empires" (II. 33-34). Negative capability as an heroic stance attempts to comprehend the full range of this experience of love. A final epic borrowing and fusion of an epic impulse in the pastoral found in this section is the martial imagery that describes the speaker of Endymion who "Fearfully ... has dared to tread, / Without one muse's smile, or kind behest ... to up rear / Love's standard on the battlements of song" (II. 34-41).

Throughout Book II of Endymion, Keats plays the pastoral mode off against a severer epical mode. Book II opens with an "invocation" to love decked out in the martial qualities of epic: "So once more days and nights aid me along, / Like legion'd soldiers" (II. 42-43). In the very structure of the poem, a similar composite order appears. In the opening action of the poem, following upon the invocation, this composite order can be seen taking shape. Here, the "brain-sick" Endymion "with fevrous fingering / Stems the upbursting cold" of a "shady spring" (II. 53-55). He plucks a bud from a wild rose tree and dips its stalk in the water where "It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight" revealing a butterfly in its center on "whose wings / There must be surely character'd strange things" (II. 61-63). Endymion chases

this butterfly until it disappears into a fountain and reemerges as a nymph. Thus, Book II opens with a motif of seemingly random wandering, of ascents and descents, that reinvigorate the pastoral with epic affiliations.

One such mixture is found in the image of the butterfly which serves at once as a condensed image of pastoral and epic suggestiveness. The history of such use was available to Keats. Spenser exploits the mock-epic possibilities of gilded butterflies such as Clarion entrapped by the spider Aragnall, in "Muiopotmos: or the Fate of the Butterflie" in a volume called Complaints. Containing, sundrie small Poemes of the World's Vanitie (1591), a book with which Keats was familiar. Another reference to martial butterflies is found in an image of the butterfly "afraid to smutch / Even with mealy gold the waters clear" (II. 90-91). Keats exploits an image taken from Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida where Achilles comments upon the relativity of personal honor which must be reflected by others:

'Tis certain, greatness, once fall'n out with fortune,
Must fall out with men too: what the declin'd is
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall; for men, like butterflies,
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,
And not a man, for being simply man,
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours
That are without him, as places, riches, and favour.

(III. iii. 75-82)

Underlying the speech is a skeptical treatment of an epic theme. A third image of the butterfly as a suggestive of epic and pastoral intermixtures is found in Wordsworth's "To a Butterfly" (1802, 1807). The lines "Much converse do I find in thee, / Historian of my infancy" and "Dead times revive in thee" are suggestive of a Keatsian "sylvan historian," that oxymoron comprehending the eternal cycles of nature and related to the dead closure of human history. Finally, Keats, in "Ode to Psyche," represents the fuller development of the mind, a dramatic treatment of the ideas concerning the pastoral vale of soul-making written in the letter, by the means of Psyche, always represented with the wings of a butterfly (the Greek word for butterfly and psyche are the same). Thus Keats's image of the butterfly draws upon a rich history of use of these elusive creatures.

In Book II of Endymion, the butterfly / nymph says, "I am but as a child / To gladden thee" (II. 120-21). She dwells, like a "cold pastoral" element, alone saying "Farewel! / I have a ditty for my hollow cell" (II. 130). For Endymion, however, the encounter with the elusive butterfly / nymph takes on a different meaning. First of all, the rich charactery on the wings which tell of "strange things" signals the elusive quality of the pleasures of earth. The rich textures of Lamia's tapestried sides, the strange hollow songs of La Belle Dame, the unheard melodies of the pipers depicted on the Grecian Urn, Mnemosyne's face, "large as that of Memphian Sphinx" (Hyperion. I. 31) are similar images of this elusiveness. Yet for Endymion, the butterfly becomes an image of

an epic search as well:

Whoso encamps

To take a fancied city of delight,
O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more vile:
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;
Another city doth he set about ... the wars, the deeds,
The disappointments, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human; bearing themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence, and to shew
How quiet death is. (II. 142-159)

The butterfly / nymph represents both the cold hollowness of pastoral and "Imagination's struggles," an epic passion.

The landscape through which the butterfly flits comprehends epic dimension within a pastoral setting by means of contrastive views: "O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun...One track unseams / A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue, / Of ocean fades upon him" (II. 72-77); the "green evening quiet in the sun," a pastoral image of the green shades, gives way to an austere silence in the image of "snow-light cadences."

The very randomness of the butterfly's flight can be equated to the unplanned quality of Endymion as a whole, a randomness interfused with the necessary impulse to get the thing done. The

seasonal imagery accompanying the conception of the poem also reinforces the idea that Endymion is a "sylvan historian," a mark of man upon the endless recurrence of nature.

Having experienced the elusive chase of the butterfly and reflected upon "Imagination's struggles" as a counterpoint to the quietus which is death, Endymion desires release from these struggles. "Where soil is men grow, / Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me, / There is no depth to strike in" (II. 159-161). Yet once the "bars / That kept [his] spirit in are burst" (II. 185-86), his "spirit fails" and he fears that the "gaping air" into which he has imaginatively soared will "gulph" him (II. 193-94). This spiritual ascent, this existence on a disembodied plain, prevents fuller development. And the thwarted ascent into some absolute unity, a cessation of human feeling, is counterpoised by a voice which calls out "Descend, / Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend / Into sparry hollows of the world" (II. 202-204).

Keats juxtaposes physical natures and spiritual aspirations. Endymion is compared to Orion, whose lust made him drunk and indirectly caused his blindness, a blindness cured by the sun's aspirant rays thus making him "hungry for the morn" (II. 198). Endymion is also compared to "Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood" (II. 197). Deucalion's goodness permitted him to escape the destruction of the flood, yet the current race of people he created by casting the bones of his mother, the stones of the earth, are flawed and limited, being part earth.

Having exploited pastoral elements for their passionate

essences, Keats is able to juxtapose pastoral elements with epic concerns. The heroic aspiration to stand silent "upon ... this misty peak, / With not a thing to sigh for" (II. 166-67) is a figuration of romantic solitude found not only in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," but in such artists' works as the paintings of Caspar David Friederich of people gazing out upon the expanse of sea or alpine solitudes, and Benjamin Robert Haydon's portrait of Napoleon on St. Helena. The voice says to Endymion that in earlier sorties with Cynthia into heaven he had dipped his "arms/Into the deadening ether that still charms / [the] marble being" of icy pinnacles but now "as deep profound / As those are high [he must] descend" (II. 208-211). In this paradigm of imaginative ascent and descent, from spiritual wanderings to the "journey homeward to habitual self" (II. 276) to which this descent leads, Keats queries one of the great romantic commonplaces spoken by Endymion just before, namely that "Imagination's struggles, far and nigh, / All human; bearing in themselves this good, / That they are still the air, the subtle food, / To make us feel existence" (II. 153-158). Imagination's struggles both lead us to terrifying dizzying heights, and can become as well "A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf, / Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettlebriar, / Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire, / Into the bosom of a hated thing" (II. 276-280).

The "deadly feel of solitude" (II. 284) which is the mortal condition and which the negatively capable Endymion experiences, by its very nature of absence and silence, a "noisy nothing," calls to

mind all the particular pleasures of nature which re-invigorate and develop people; the cavern, the "rapacious deep," in which Endymion finds himself is a place of contradiction. It is neither "Dark, nor light ... nor bright; nor sombre wholly"; it is a place where "silence dead" is "rous'd" by Endymion's "whispering" footsteps (II. 267-68), where negations are accentuated and made to flourish through negation. When Endymion cries out "No! ... why should I tarry here?" the cavern echoes the "No," and within this negative, the seeds of action and movement are planted. After deriving a sense of urgency from speaking "No," Endymion begs to be delivered from "the deadly feel of solitude," the "obstinate silence" of the "rapacious deep" surrounding him. The silence, the "dismal elements" of the cave, give way to a more complex experience. The ground begins to put forward flowers which are like the "short-lived foam" that rolls with a "wayward indolence" down the back of a cresting wave (II. 348-350). An environment of mutuality is created; "so anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes / One moment with his hand among the sweets" (II. 353-354). His very excitement seems to have brought forth the music which seemingly tortures him into life where pleasure and pain are commingled:

... 'Tis the pest
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest;
That things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,
By one consuming flame: it doth immerse
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.

... 'Twas even so with this
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear;
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten
Vanish'd in elemental passion. (II. 365-375)

This passage looks forward to Clymene's description of Apollo's song which fills her with both a sense of pleasure and utter abandonment and loss, a sensation which confuses the "elemental passion" of the undifferentiated Titans.

The conflation of epic and pastoral concerns allows Keats to create an environment of negative capability wherein humans can most experience their nature as mutable creatures. Book I gives us images of the negatively capable landscape and the hero; Book II gives us the action of such a hero who descends into the depths of the self only to find the problematic possibility held forth by oblivion and cessation. At the other extreme, an ascent to the ethereal holds out its own dangers of total absorption in a regressive, "elemental passion" where there can be no change. Keats's negatively capable locus amoenus of pastoral and epic interfusion creates a poetry that best expresses the dual nature of people juxtaposing people's rich imaginings of themselves as immortal gods, and the mutability of their own lives.

The garden of Adonis and the music which issues out of it is one such meeting place of the mortal and the divine. On one hand, the mixture of mortal and divine would be the absorption of self by other and the oblivion held forth by "elemental passion" (II. 375). The "immortal bower" (II. 438) must be a place of stasis as when a

"serene" Cupid "kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings, / Muffling to death the pathos with his wings" (II. 420-421). The suffocating quality of this line and the image figured forth join "death" and "pathos," oblivion with human feeling, through the "th" sound. The undifferentiated quality of the garden is figured forth by its pleasures: "here, undimmed / By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums / Ready to melt between an infant's gums" (II. 449-451). If we look forward to "Ode on Melancholy," we will find the supreme figure of "pathetic" man able to vigorously crush Joy's single grape against a "palate fine." In the parallel image in *Endymion*, many blooming plums could "melt" within the undeveloped mouth of an infant underscoring a lack of differentiation of the garden. Yet juxtaposed to this undifferentiation is differentiation, an awakening from a suffocating slumber into the sharp measures of differentiated experience. Keats achieves this juxtaposition by condensing the Adonis / Venus story in an important way. The Cupid says of Adonis, "I was half glad, / But my poor mistress went distract and mad, / When a boar tusk'd him: so away she flew / To Jove's high throne" (II. 472-474). In Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis," the death of Adonis is described in great detail as is Venus's mourning of his death. Keats instead emphasizes the awakening of Adonis. "His hand mov'd convuls'd," and when Venus arrives, "Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd / A tumult to his heart, and a new life / Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife, / But for her comforting! Unhappy sight, / But meeting her blue orbs" (II.527-531). Keats emphasizes the essential aspect of

Adonis's awakening as an ascension through pain. Just as Endymion, an analogue to Adonis, is tortured into life by Cynthia, or just as the Cyclops, the figure of pastoral, is tortured into life by Ulysses, the figure of epic, so too is Adonis awakened into a "tumult" and a possible "miserable strife."

In a state of solitude is possible redemption. Endymion resumes his journey into even remoter recesses of his negatively capable mind. "Swifter than lightening went wonders rare" (II. 621). He comes upon Cybele, the mother of the gods, "alone--alone" (II. 640) surrounded by darkness and silence. The myth of Attis is encoded in a reference to Cybele; suggesting it, Keats images forth an encounter with the liminal state between feeling and extinction of feeling. Indeed, by referring to Cybele, Keats conjures up the self-wounding, self-castration of Attis and the whole priesthood of Cybele known for their flagrant and deviant sexual practices (Keats would find material for "Ode to Psyche" in Addlington's translation of Apuleius' Golden Asse wherein these priests figure).

Thus situated between the figures of Venus and Adonis and the imagery of waking into pain and moving into transcendence, and Endymion's dream embrace of Cynthia, lies the image of the eunuch, that liminal figure who represents negative capability. After his encounter with the figure of Cybele, and the liminal existence between death and renewal which she symbolizes, each sense of Endymion's "had grown / Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head / Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread / Was Hesperean; to his capable ears / Silence was music from the holy spheres" (II. 671-

75). The image of the mother of the gods in her solitude is like one of the "isolated verisimilitudes" which Keats says Coleridge would let go by struggling as he does to comprehend an absolute truth (I. 193-194). Faced with such solitude, people manifest a trust; that is all they can do, and Endymion "Without one impious word, himself flings, / Committed to the darkness and the gloom, uncertain to what pleasant doom" onto the back of an eagle (II. 659-661). In this state of trust in solitude, of negative capability, Endymion becomes "capable" (II. 674); "His every sense had grown / Ethereal for pleasure." Silence becomes "music from holy spheres" (II. 675). In this state of being "sad, melancholy" yet feeling "immortal," Endymion has a vision of Cynthia. But Keats, the poet, withdraws from describing the scene and instead invokes his own belatedness: "O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon! / That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er / These sorry pages" (II. 718-720). Other contradictions are apparent. Cynthia is referred to as "O Known Unknown" (II. 739); she is said to have "smooth excess" of hands (how can one know an excess of featurelessness?); "surer, surer / How can we part" suggests intense closeness yet also distance. The "slippery blisses" of kissing lips also suggests a touch but one which might slip away as well. In a culminating image of these contradictory tendencies, the imagined Cynthia, in her ecstasy, says " ... now while I clasp / Thee thus, and weep for fondness--I am pain'd, / Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd / In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?" (II. 821-824). Another instance of this intermixture is in

the description of Endymion's "tread ... Hesperean" (II. 673-74). The adjective "Hesperean" denotes a garden in its idyllic situation. However, just as Milton interfused the awesome into the fragility of Eden by reference to the "amiable" Hesperean fruits (IV. 250), so too Keats, by using this image, conjures forth the potential power of disruption imaged forth in the myth when the gods fight one another over these fruits.

The introduction of Book II describes a pastoralism enhanced with epic intrusions, a pastoralism that is tortured to reveal a more complete experience just as the loves of Juliet, Hero, and Imogen are enhanced and developed by their experience of fear; such an enhancement is again emphasized in a Keatsian aside to the narrative of Endymion and Cynthia:

... The legend cheers

Yon sentinel stars; and he who listens to it

Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it:

For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,

Made fiercer by a fear lest any part

Should be engulfed in the eddying wind. (II. 841-46)

The imagery of the aside situates the reader in a place of extensive vistas. The image of sentinel stars introduces solitude and immense distances; the image of a heart that fears being "engulfed in the eddying winds" suggests an eagle-like isolation on some precipice. After Cynthia leaves the sleeping Endymion, her departure signals a curious image of the "gusty deep" (II. 853). From the sentinel stars and eddying winds, Keats drops to the low

place in "gusty deep"; this tale is made "fiercer by fear." The tale is negatively capable because it is a "strange voice ... upon the wane" and is "echo'd from departing sound" (II. 849-850). Its power is in its liminal quality, and, in turn, its peripheral location becomes a center.

Keats utilizes the epic and pastoral blend throughout the poem to create the geography of negative capability, that place where people most feel their experience as fully conscious creatures in a world that promises continuity in its treatment of nature but delivers only extinction to humans. Keats creates this state of full awareness, and at once interfuses it with the sense of ideal undifferentiated experience but permeated with potential and necessary mutability and differentiation. Toward the end of Book II, Endymion reflects upon his love for Cynthia:

Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
All depths are shallow: essences,
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,
And make my branches lift a golden fruit
Into the bloom of heaven. (II. 904-909)

The sensuality of "earthly root," the lower half of people, juxtaposed to the "golden fruit" of the mind ("branches" looks forward to Keats's "branched thought new grown with pleasant pain" and "wreathed trellis of a working brain" in "Ode to Psyche") reinforces the Keatsian paradigm of pleasure leading to a more complete experience, an etherealization of experience, or

sensations in a "finer tone." In such a conception, the fruit of the mind and the blossom of heaven, the Autumn and the Spring, are coextensive and provide, once again, an image of negative capability, or imaginative comprehension of the dual nature of people. Yet this state cannot last, and the image of the immortal thirst after immortal consummation in the desperate chase of Alf and Arethusa which follows these lines closing Book II conjures up the opposite side of Spring and Autumn, hand in hand, and that image is, after Milton's Eden, the figures on the Grecian Urn, eternally parched and forlorn.

Fairy Motifs and Negative Capability

Caroline Spurgeon has argued the influence of four of Shakespeare's plays, namely The Tempest, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Measure for Measure, and Antony and Cleopatra, on the writing of Endymion. She emphasizes Keats's study of The Tempest in March and April in relation to the inception of the figure of the god Pan.³² Yet it is not so much words and phrases which Keats exploits but Shakespeare's fairies and spirits, which are for both Shakespeare and Keats the haunting figurations of the poetic. Milton, who uses the "fear and wonder" such creatures evoke and whose devils are the inventors of traditional epic poetry, has the devils shrink themselves "like that Pigmean Race / Beyond the Indian Mount, or Faerie Elves, / Whose midnight Revels, by a Forrest side / Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees, / Or dreams he sees, while over head the Moon / Sits Arbitress" (Paradise Lost. I. 780-785). Such a conflation of devilish epic and fairies supplies the danger Keats

requires for figuring forth poetic urgency. His interest in Shakespeare is evident in the allusions to A Midsummer Night's Dream and Antony and Cleopatra and an atmosphere, an overabundance of nature, or, in the words of Titania and underscored by Keats and commented upon in marginalia, "the middle Summer's spring." It is this peculiar "overwhelming" overplus of nature that Keats recreates in Endymion. But to what effect? I believe that Keats utilizes this particular aspect of Shakespeare's overabundance to recreate that moment of love experienced by people before the necessary negatively capable undifferentiation of Autumn brings a different kind of experience. The speech of Titania and its reminiscence of "middle Summer's spring" occurs in the context of unseasonable damps and fogs, autumnal weather; the "middle Summer's spring" is recollected in all the passion of the "forgeries of jealousy" and in the midst of the violent passions expressed by Oberon and Titania who both charge each other with causing human infidelities among their favorites, Theseus and Hippolyta. Keats creates this tempest tossed luxury, of the luxury of undifferentiated love in the midst of passions which undo these pleasures. This Keatsian commonplace looks forward to much in the poetry based on such dreams as that one inspired by Dante's description of Paola and Francesca in Canto V of Inferno and written about in a letter to the George Keatses of 16 April 1819:

I floated about the whirling atmosphere as it
is described with a beautiful figure to whose
lips mine were joined at it seemed for a age--

and in the midst of all this cold and darkness

I was warm. (II. 91)

Keats in his marginalia to the Shakespeare folio calls this "overabundance" a piece of "profound verdure."³³ The figuration of one of the most Keatsian paradigms, the coexistence of Pain, Sorrow and Pleasure dangerously intermingled, is to be found in one of its earliest inceptions derived from the pastoral of Shakespeare's fairies and spirits and, as we shall see, in the forests and meads that provide the pastoral background for these actions. Though classical pastoralism does not include fairies, the tradition does invoke cycles of nature. It is this "nature" to which the fairies of Shakespeare belong and that constitute an adumbration of the tradition.

In utilizing Shakespeare's fairies, Keats is able to embody the most delicate traceries of pure imaginative desire and its barely perceptible trace or "feel." The fairies and spirits are figurations of the poetic which haunt people by their in-between status--they have no human form, yet are full of human desires; indeed, the poetic as embodied in fairies could be said to hunger for fulfillment in the life of humans, while humans, in seeking the promise of undifferentiated oblivion, seek the solace of forgetful passionate love of the "middle Summer's spring" and must live with this experience of love through its inevitable unravelling. It is when the experience is about to come into existence or pass away forever that the poetic urge is seen to expend its most beautiful, strong, poignant energy. Summers of

contented involvement and Autumns of dissolution of the fully ripe experience each require expression. The negatively capable poet must hold these two movements at one time, and in so doing, fuse two genres, the pastoral and the tragic, creating a moment of calm. Fairies are to some extent figurations of this dangerous poetic, moving as they do between the two worlds. Lamia is an example of one such complex figuration of this in-between status, once a woman, now an immortal, emphasizing a problematic in-betweenness when she says, "When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake! / When move in a sweet body fit for life, / And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife / Of hearts and lips!" (I. 38-40). If Lycius and the spent knight of "La belle dame" are negatively capable, the disembodied desire expressed by the Lamia figure and, as I will argue, the "fairy's child" of "La belle dame" are part of the same equation; the unvoiced poetic urgency given body and denied body: in one instance in the cry of Apollo at the end of Hyperion where body and poetic finally merge in painful consummation and in another in the ghost of the once human Lorenzo in "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil" and in the last cries of Lamia and Lycius as the poetic is destroyed by cool reason.

The negatively capable composed of inhuman / human and the bodiless, rootless, urge and structured expression, the "sylvan" and the historic, is but known when these components come undone and unravel. Only then is the mere human elevated to the human divine. This is the Petrarchan oxymoron in all the bitter controversy of its two parts. The richness of Keats's concept is

evident in the various exemplars of the negatively capable extending from loitering knights and prostitutes of Corinth, the origins of Lamia, and fairies, to its fulfillment in such figures as that of Cleopatra, the "great fairy" and Apollo.

"Had I a man's fair form" is an example of Keats's attempt to utilize generic conventions to image forth the negatively capable state of mind. It is through the voice of this imagined creature that Keats queries the genres of heroic and pastoral verse in a tentative way: "But oh! I am no knight whose foeman dies ... / I am no happy shepherd of the dell." In spite of this inconvenience the speaker must nevertheless "dote" on the beloved. J. Burke Severs argues the relationship of the speaker of this sonnet to the fairies of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream but offers no possible reason Keats would write such a poem (it has been interpreted as stemming from Keats's problem with himself as a short man, an anxiously late poet, or, recently, a representative of the growing middle class who, without knowing what they are, foolishly create simulacra of themselves in such a nonsense poem like this).³⁴ But if we recollect the tradition in which Keats is writing and the tradition alluded to by the phrase "Yet must I dote on thee," we can see Keats's potent ferment in creating the concept of negative capability.

"Yet must I dote on thee" is spoken by a figure in the context of a fairy situation that has been traced to Keats's reading of Shakespeare. This phrase can only bring to mind the sadder aspects of Titania's doting on the transformed mortal, Bottom. Oberon

explains the magic of a western flower to Puck "the juice of [which] on sleeping eyelids laid / Will make or man or woman madly dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees" (II. ii. 170-172). Later Oberon says, "I wonder if Titania be awak'd; / Then what it was that next came in her eyes / Which she must dote on in extremity" (III. ii. 1-3). Upon finding Titania entwined in a bower with Bottom and saying "O! how I love thee; how I dote on thee!" Oberon remarks "Her dotage now I do begin to pity" (IV. i. 51-53). Yet Titania's dotage entails a terrible loss and underscores a darkness that exists in this fairy world when she loses her changeling boy to Oberon. In addition, Titania is forced to repudiate the object of her love in the figure of Bottom and in giving up her "power" over him and over the changeling boy must return to the power of Oberon. This dark sense of loss is present in Keats's sonnet. The object of the fairy's passion is "sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses / When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication." Yet the speaker of these lines can do nothing but "taste that dew" experiencing his love at such a remove. Indeed the experience is even further removed from any actual consummation by the necessary incantation the fairy must make to create this dew, a thorough pseudo experience of the beloved. Yet it is this very effect which Keats attempts to raise in his readers: the impossibility of desired consummation in love. In the incantations of fairy songs, the just palpable promise of poetry is a double intoxication. The falling off of the sonnet, the odd sense of open-endedness, calls into question the problematic quality of

fancy's reproduction of reality. Keats is creating the feel of intangibility of this experience, utilizing the rich lore of Shakespeare's pastoralism. The person or poet tasting such dews as these will never arm themselves for passionate "enterprize" but will work themselves into a fine frenzy; we are such stuff as dreams are made of, and in utilizing this pastoral tradition, Keats creates that peculiar haunted feeling of longing which never will give what it promises.

Keats returns to fairy land over and over again in his poetry. I have illustrated how he uses the tracery of a fairy's voice to figure forth a type of negatively capable person who instead of swelling with passion for physical consummation feeds on "dews sweeter than Hybla's roses," or the art of poetry, and in such a state of persistent arousal without consummation fixes or stations himself under the moon filling the image with such power that we are teased, as it were, into a frenzy.³⁵

In the Spring of 1819 Keats entered the last five months of his writing. His biographers agree that he was in a ferment of irresolution about money, his future, his health, and Fanny Brawne. Yet he seems to have become fixed to act and it is in the journal letter to the George Keatses of March, April, May 1819 that his state of mind is filled out in prose and poems. However, the burst of activity that initiated months of final work and the achievement of the great odes is marked by a diverse treatment of fairy and pastoral motifs derived from Shakespeare and from Dante as well. Such poems as "Why did I laugh tonight," "When they were come unto

the Faery's Court," "He is to weet a melancholy Carle," "As Hermes once took to his feather's light," "La belle dame sans merci," and "Song of four faeries" are all integral in Keats's notion of negative capability and one of its modern manifestations, disinterestedness.

The problem Keats has been developing through his career, the "hardly palpable" desired touch of undifferentiated beauty (referred to in Endymion as desire that is "half-graspable" [II. 673]) and the inevitable denial through pain and suffering of this promise and the poetic treatment of this situation, receives new vigor in Spring 1819. At this time occurs a meeting with Coleridge, and one topic of conversation is "a dream accompanied by touch." This topic brings to the foreground Keats's own interests. How can we have the feel of our inability to touch what is absolutely other than ourselves yet conceive of this absolute at the same time?³⁶ A sense of touch in a dream, or a memory of a touch, is one such possible mode of knowing this concept and knowing the experience.

A real-life pain created by his thwarted affair with Fanny Brawne caused Keats to return to fairy land and utilize the more dangerous and grotesque potentialities of a world which is like "the fierce vexation of a dream," of translated people, and the darker side of fairy lore. "An Ape, a dwarf, and a fool" are three such translated figures who transgressed fairy law and who make an appearance in the poem "When they were come unto the Faery's Court." Gittings argues that this poem and the sequence following

it in the journal letter show Dante's influence on Keats.³⁷ What I see as important here is Keats's adaptation of Dante to his own recurrent paradigm: the tragic consequences of the "fairy power of unreflecting love" and the equally barren aspect of human life when the high danger of such entrancement is denied. We must remember that all these fairy pieces are reproduced in a letter whose context is a pastoral vision of the Vale of Soul Making, a concept that Keats develops after this series of poems.

In the poem a "fretful princess" on a Mule and her entourage, an Ape, a dwarf, a fool, "come unto the Faery's Court" only to find no one at home. Impatient, the princess orders the door broken down even though her courtiers warn her that only terrible transformations occur behind the door. The dwarf explains his and the ape's and the fool's own transformations for similar transgressions. Nevertheless, the Princess persists and picks the lock and enters followed voluntarily by the other three. Meanwhile the Mule, once the king of "Otaheite," thinks to himself that now he "would not give a sixpence for her head" and frees himself of bridle and saddle and trots away.

Frederick Page makes a convincing if not watertight argument for the poem's being an allegory of the making of poetry, in one sense a poem which feeds upon the vapors of poetry. The princess is the false Florimel of poetry, a figure to which Keats alludes five or six days after the composition of this poem in relation to Reynolds's satire on Wordsworth's Peter Bell. In Page's view, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats are, respectively, the ape, fool,

and dwarf of the poem, though Keats is also represented by the Otaheitan mule. His bridle represents the constraints of a poetics based on spinning matter from rhymes only, and the monkeys that filch the bridle from the apparently sleeping mule are the critics. Page's assertion that this poem is connected to Spenser's Faerie Queene does not rule out that the poem can be read as a commentary on other poems as well. Though given such divisions as "end of Canto xii" and "Canto the xiii," the poem shows no more affiliation with the numbering of sections in Faerie Queene than the mock heroic style and use of heroic couplets shows a definite connection to Dryden. Instead of seeking mere resemblances and intrusions of influence to "picklock" the poem, I would rather rest my interpretation on the allusiveness of the poem to a field of possible interconnecting meanings. Yes, the poem resembles the mock-heroic of the Augustans; yes, it owes something to Spenser and false Florimels; yes, it mirrors readings of Dante and has biographical significance as well, but the context of the poem in the life and poetic of Keats transcends any one of these connections.³⁸

The poem carries forward Keats's employment of pastoral, and specifically fairy motifs in representing his poetics of negative capability. The Faery Court represents the stasis of oblivion. It draws people to itself yet people cannot achieve the union and their attempts make them into "Fortune's fools." The princess has great beauty, but her beauty is of no value or consequence unless it is revealed in some manner. The deforming practices of fairy

courts are places where people's beauty is revealed in its essentially human aspects: people gain recognition and become differentiated through their degradation. The figures all transgress voluntarily.

The entire situation is permeated with sexuality and the excesses of sexuality. Bate and Ward have brought the poem down from the abstractions of an allegory such as Page suggests to reflect the real torment Keats was experiencing with his love for Fanny Brawne. The ape, the dwarf, and the fool, according to Bate, are the three brothers who have all been caught up in the imbroglios of love, Keats with Fanny, George with his marriage and the key that he carries around in his ape jaws, and Tom fooled by the execrable hoax of the so-called Amena letters. I would further elaborate upon the rich biographical material Bate has brought forward and venture to discuss the poem in terms of the problems Keats's reading of Dante emphasize, namely, that problem which Keats had written about on his Scottish tour in reference to Burns, about rioting in things attainable so that one does not go mad after things which are not.

The poem opens with the juxtaposition of opposites: fairies who are "lovers true" and humans "lone and wild." Present is the Shakespearean motif of the woods wherein lovers are lost and magical transformations occur: "Out of this wood do not desire to go," replies Titania to Bottom who says, "If I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve my own turn" (IV. i. 156, 159). The very juxtaposition of true union and love and

wilderness is most evident in this pastoral setting. Yet any contact between the two worlds has the most melancholy consequence of transforming the human into something more / less than human. We must remember that it is in the woods where Bottom's transformation makes him more bestial and sexual and monstrous at the very same time he has the experience with Titania; Bottom's experience is a combination of a sense of touch in a dream that allows him, the lowest of the low, to experience an event which places him in relation to the mystery of Pan and elevates him, by use of an oxymoron, to the "bottomless." Bottom is dimensionless at this point and says, "I will call [my dream] Bottom's dream for it hath no bottom," an image similar to that of the dwarf in Keats's poem who after entering fairy court becomes "topless." In a relationship to the absolute, people touch the dimensionless and the timeless, the unattainable. It is this touch of nothing which Keats's poem is about. Such a promise is the pastoral vision, yet the pastoral remains only a dream. Keats employs fairies and low comedy and juxtaposes them with transforming love thus exploiting the high and low within the pastoral genre. The princess herself, human beauty in the full measure of its self-absorption in seeking to touch the unattainable, to consummate itself--gains nothing. The princess represents the thriftlessness of beauty which must act without recourse to the wise sage sayings of the dwarf. For human beauty to be perfectly beautiful it must spend itself; this is the nature of beauty, "the more beauty, the more fortune too" even though in the words of the mule we are "Fortune's fools."

This irony and juxtaposition of high and low is derived from an equally profound juxtaposition of pastoral low and tragic high in the mule's allusion to King Lear and specifically that scene where Gloucester is led to Dover cliffs, thinks he has leapt off, then meets the mad Lear in the meads who gives his "Let copulation thrive" speech. In Lear's terrible speech every manner of sexual excess is brought forward; Gloucester, whose sexual incontinence has been tempered by this blindness, and Lear, whose virile kingliness and rational qualities have been levelled by madness, are brought together and Lear speaks of the genitals of women as "presaging snow" (IV.vi. 121), and of their riotous appetites (IV. vi. 125): "Down from the waist they are Centaurs" (IV. vi. 126). Keats evokes irony in the spectacle of royal madness when he has the Mule in his poem quote, " 'Ay every inch a king'"; thus Keats brings to the lightness of his poem a dark vision of sexuality. People must riot in things attainable yet to do so, or because of their very natures, people are brought up short--the end result is death. Perhaps the reason this section of the poem is numbered "canto xiii" by Keats is that in Dante's Inferno, in Canto XIII, the inhabitants of that particular circle are the suicides, particularly the suicide Pietro delle Vigne. Pietro who "held / Both keys to Frederick's heart, and turned the wards, / Opening and shutting, with a skill so sweet" influenced Keats stylistically,³⁹ but also thematically. The princess in persisting on entering the doors is a kind of suicide--yet she must enter. It is her nature to do so, as it is all people's. Keats is transforming a pastoral

element here; one needs only consider Touchstone in the pastoral forest of Arden and his melancholy complaint, "From hour to hour we ripe and ripe, / And then from hour to hour we rot and rot, / And thereby hangs a tale" (II. vii. 26-28).

Keats transforms elements found in pastoral exemplars and presents a new type of heroism, one which touches upon recognizable modernist absurdity and the difficulty of applying absolute standards to the situations people find themselves in. People don't merely die, Touchstone and the Mule seem to say; people continue to live a little after the burden of beauty has been removed. The mule exemplifies this necessity and plays a trick on the monkeys who, thinking the mule values his bridle, steal it away and "off he went run, trot, or anyhow." People are all conspirers in their own lives. When Edgar deludes Gloucester into thinking he has killed himself (the same scene from which Keats derives his allusion "Ay, and every inch a king," reinforcing the theme of the problem of suicide in his poem) Edgar says, "I know not how conceit may rob / The treasury of life when life itself / Yields to the theft; had he been where he thought / By this had thought been past. Alive and Dead?" (IV. ii. 42-44). This is pragmatic advice. People cannot argue the rightness or wrong-ness of deceit when used to preserve life. Such a theme is touched upon by Keats's concept of the "camelion poet" who takes as much delight in an Iago as an Imogen. Edgar exemplifies this intermixture deriving something good through deceit and the necessary intermingling of these modes could not be lost on Keats who propounds the idea of the world as

a vale of soul making, an acknowledgement of the paradox that good and evil are real entities in the world and must be encountered. In this nightmare, this fierce vexation of the dream of people's lives, people touch this goodness. It is after the refreshment of self-pity that Gloucester says "Henceforth I'll bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself / 'Enough; enough' and die" (IV. vi. 76-77). Though people lose their lives and in a sense gain nothing by ex-pending their beauty but the weight of sin and become but dwarves, apes, and fools, there is still a life to be lived. It is the mule who shows the way in a bit of comedy as "off he went run, trot, or any how--." The moral sphere into which Keats has been propelled has its roots in the fairy lands of Shakespeare and the promise of beauty and union held out by the vague tracery of poetic feeling such imaginary creatures represent. It is through the pastoral language of fairies that Keats arrives at a consummate pastoralism, the vale of soul making and a new heroism which touches upon the absurd.

The interchange between the poetic and the life are consistent. At the same time he is writing these fairy poems, Keats writes of Dilke's excessive concern for "his Boy ... With all this he has no notion how to manage him O what a farce is our greatest cares! Yet one must be on the pother for the sake of Clothes food and Lodging" (II. 85). That the things we deem most important to us have an absurd farcical air about them does not lessen the real value: the absurd is necessary "for the sake of Clothes food and Lodging."⁴⁰

Throughout the letter, a dichotomy is set up between what we desire and the problems of achieving that desire. In a piece of balanced Johnsonian prose Keats treats of this reality rhetorically when he speaks of the frowardness of the actor Kean in refusing to act in a bombastic play by Charles Buck: "Keans fault is a want of genteel knowledge and high Policy--the former [Charles Buck, the playwright] writes knavishly foolish and the other [Kean] silly bombast ... Drury Lane had the Policy to bring it one and Kean the impolicy not to appear in it--It was damned" (II. 85). This damned play is the consequence of not realizing the "farce of our greatest cares," and farce is dramatic. Farce is the low comic element which intrudes into all aspects of Keats's poetry. Keats is most Shakespearean when he utilizes the double irony of Shakespearean pastoral, in Empson's words, and intersperses low comic elements amidst high tragedy. The taunts of the English audience, "Buck, Buck, how many fingers [horns] do I hold up," is little compared to the more costly consequences of the ignorance of the absurd mixture in life of farce and tragedy. Keats illustrates these consequences by juxtaposing the taunting English audience and its vaguely sexed innuendos about the limp play (the gestures representing the coxcomb / playwright and his wife / play),⁴¹ which was passed from hand to hand with the far more terrible consequences of ignorance in the double murder-suicide of the German playwright Kotzebue and his assassin, Karl Sand, who cried out, "Germany, Germany" as he killed Kotzebue and then himself. Keats is here undercutting with the use of farce the very nature of our aspirations: " 'No one at

home'! the fretful princess cry'd / 'And all for nothing such a dreary ride ... No one to see my persian feathers toss / No one to see my Ape, my Dwarf, my Fool.' "

Keats utilizes the fairy way of writing in a satire on his friend Charles Brown, a merchant in St. Petersburg, a wealthy agent of the East India Company, a bon vivant, a "full blooded Regency gentleman."⁴² Solidly of the world, Brown forms the perfect foil for Keats as the pure Wordsworthian nature worshiper living off "water brooks ... and ... woodland air." We have seen Keats juxtaposing contrasting world views--Kean and Buck, Kotzebue and Sand, and in the extempore verses "When they were come into the Faery Court," a more fully worked out juxtaposition of people's hopes and expectations and the reality that we are but "fortune's fools." In describing Brown by listing what he certainly was not, "to weet a melancholy Carle," Keats is able to elaborate Brown's character more fully, giving to him a life he would otherwise not know. The immediate resemblance to the play between Falstaff and Prince Hal comes to mind, where each portrays the other in terms of opposites. The play on logic in the play-within-the-play points to the instability of identities. That Keats would use these identities that push themselves upon us in his own farcical way is borne out by comments on Brown's nephews whose "voices are like wasp stings--'Some times am I all wound with Browns'" (II. 90). Though the poem is but a light piece, it is related to important concerns in Keats already alluded to in these parts of the journal letter, including the poems. The shadow of the "full-blooded

Regency gentleman," his doppelganger, is his opposite, a melancholy Carle.

This Carle is the figure of the man who is undifferentiated yet by experience. His hair is like "the seeded thistle when in parle / It holds the Zephyr ere it sendeth fair / Its light balloons into the summer air." The stillness of this "parle," the undifferentiated homoeroticism suggested by the male thistle and male Zephyr is a moment of quietude, undevelopment. "No care had touch [sic] his cheek with mortal doom." The excessive sexuality of "When they were come unto the Faery's Court" is here muted. The austerity of the carle who neither indulges in "lewd ribbalds," "fish or flesh or fowl/And sauces," nor the "wassail bowl," is the Wordsworthian primitive especially when the carle's only sustenance is derived from water brooks and woodland air "though he would oftentimes feast on gilliflowers rare." All the passions of intemperance that would lead the cheeks to flower with "mortal doom" are thereby included in the carle's double, the living Brown.

The verbal doubling of the flesh and blood Charles Brown is one level on which the poem works. Within the context of other poems the satire offers us an image of humans in stasis--a static entity which can be juxtaposed to the transformed people in "When they were come unto the Faery's Court," the poem preceding it, and to the poem following it, based on a dream after Dante, "As Hermes once took to his feather's light." This later poem is about the intensity of the experience of hetero-sexual love, the transforming and differentiating experience by which Keats images forth the

complement to the negatively capable. Keats records his dream about floating in a "whirling atmosphere and couching on flowers" (II, 91).

What separates these two short poems is a short account of the hoax perpetrated on Tom Keats relating to the forged love letters which excited in Tom hopes which came to nothing. Aileen Ward and Walter Jackson Bate have written of the Amena episode as integral in the composition of the melancholy "La belle dame sans merci" and the sense of betrayal and death the poem represents. However, the connection between the whole series of poems beginning with "When they were come unto the Faery's Court" and ending in "Chorus of Faries [sic] 4" deserves this interpretation together.

The first connection between "When they were come unto the Faery's Court" and "La belle dame" is the "lone and wild" landscape. In the Faery's Court the solitude is denoted by the image of "Even the Robin feels himself exil'd"; in "La belle dame," this same image of solitude is reworked and, exiled, "no bird sings." "When they were come unto the Faery's Court" has as its central image men transformed into creatures less than men after an encounter with the "Faery Court." The knight's haggard condition, and the "pale kings and Princes too" are, as well, transformed after their encounter with the "fairy's child." In addition the ape, fool, dwarf, and mule of the earlier poem were all princes and kings before their transforming experience.

The connection between "He is to weet a melancholy Carle" and "La belle dame" is subtle but no less important; the wretched wight

and the carle both have mediaeval overtones. The carle is described in his carefree aspect: "No care had touch [sic] his cheek with mortal doom." He thus shadows forth the full-blooded Regency man who does carry on his cheek the color of his "mortal doom." It is the knight-at-arms in "La belle dame" whose cheeks best carry the color of his "mortal doom" as the narrator says, "I see a lily on thy brow / With anguish moist and fever dew, / And on thy cheeks a fading rose / Fast withereth too."

With "As Hermes once took to this feathers light" the imagery of pale lips and kissing fair forms creates an undeniable link between the two poems. Influenced by the Paolo and Francesca episode in Dante's Inferno, Canto V, the poem and the visions offer different emphases which are not in Dante. The first emphasis is that of giving divine connotations to the power of dreaming. The poet's "idle spright," like Hermes, "steals" away to the second circle of hell. The stealth of Hermes is important to "Lamia," a poem related stylistically and thematically to this group of fairy poems. Secondly, the image of rest in the dream, "even flowery tree-tops sprung up and we rested on them sometimes," though not replicated in the sonnet, is embedded in the sonnet as an originating theme. "I tried a Sonnet upon it--there are fourteen lines but nothing of what I felt in it--O that I could dream it every night" (II. 91). The poem itself is but a tracery of the feel of the dream, the touch of which is barely palpable in the sonnet. Such a detail is not apparent in Dante as the spirits are ceaselessly swept along and "hope of rest to solace them / Is none,

nor e'en of milder pang" (Inferno. V. 45-46). Where does Keats derive the image of flowery tree tops? Among the other figures in the second circle are "[Dido who] in amorous fury slew herself, / And to Sichus' ashes broke her faith. / Then follows Cleopatra, lustful Queen" (V. 60-62). This image of Cleopatra calls forth Keats's memory of Shakespeare's play and Antony's vision of an after world as he prepares to slay himself:

Eros ... I come, my queen ... Eros! --Stay for me,
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with one sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:
Dido, and her Aeneas, shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours. (IV. xii. 50-54)

Dante's second circle and Antony and Cleopatra's haunts merge here in Keats's dream vision. The associations of this poem to "La Belle Dame" and to Antony and Cleopatra link this poem to the problem of negative capability. The "Hermes" poem and the theft of love (Paola and Francesca are an adulterous pair) bring forward the possibilities that inhere in such dangerous experiences.

The journal letter itself is an in-vitro expression of the fairy motifs of the poems. To Georgiana he writes, "I want very very much a little of your wit my dear sister" and then proceeds to what may appear as mere whimsy but in its relation to the earlier poems and the figure of La belle dame which follow takes on somewhat more interest when we see in Keats's wordplay something of the idea of negative capability. It is Georgiana of whom he had said that "to see an entirely disinterested Girl quite happy is the

most pleasant and extraordinary thing in the world." That such disinterestedness is representative of the Keatsian poetic can be seen by the worldly Abbey's appraisal of the whole lot of the Keats family and their projects as the work of "Don Quixotes."⁴⁴ Yet such a disinterested quality in a woman does not require complete passivity. The letter alludes to quibbles and puns the two will send across the Floridas. Keats asks minutely and jokingly about "any flowers in bloom ... any beautiful heaths--Any Streets of Corset Makers." He refers to Georgiana's small feet, whether she rides, and, if so, where, what she eats and drinks, depicting the girls tipsy with drink and lost in the woods. The lightness of all this is fairy like. Keats then goes on to describe tricks and pranks Georgiana could play upon the sleeping George: "give him a cold Pig [bring a boar home] serving up the hoofs garnished with bristles and a grunt or two to accompany the singing of the kettle...put a hedge hog into George's hat--pour a little water into his rifle--soak his boots in a pail of water--cut his jacket round into shreds like a roman kilt ... sow off his buttons" (II. 92-93). One is reminded of the domestic pranks of Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream of whom one of Titania's consorts asks:

... are you not he
that fights the maidens of the village;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometimes make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm.

These examples of puckish pranks suggest the degree to which Keats at this time was steeped in the relationship of one aspect of English pastoralism to his own ideas of negative capability and one of its manifestations, disinterestedness, the expression of which touches upon the nature of laughter.

Pranks which cause us to laugh at our own harm and the treatment of this farcical aspect of experience take on a more somber tone in the sonnet "Why Did I laugh tonight" and Keats's treatment of laughter and pranks and jokes not in an organized theory but, rather, poetically. Laughter, not the laughter of derision and scorn, according to Kant, is the explosive consequence of expectations which have come to nothing. In the sonnet, a moment's laughter leads Keats to attempt to render poetically the nothingness which lies behind all our activities. Yet the comic and the absurd element is strikingly brought forward by Keats in all these fairy poems and to an extent, in such poems as "Why Did I laugh tonight?" The absurdity of Lear on the heath, Edgar's saving the life of Gloucester though he accomplishes this salvation through deception, the mule's comic escape though transmuted, the play on Charles Brown's character, and the quibbles over Florida are all part of a rich texture of poetry which attempts to feel the passion of a moment that exists on the edge of nothingness. "La belle dame sans merci" is an outgrowth of work already done by Keats, and mulled over for weeks.

In his review of Reynold's satire on Wordsworth's Peter Bell,

Keats extends negative capability to encompass not only pranks but literary reviews as well. Keats writes "I keep clear of all parties. I say something for and against both parties--and suit it to the tune of the examiner--I mean to say I do not unsuit it--and I believe I think what I say nay I am sure I do--I and my conscience are in luck today" (II. 94). The play here between suiting and unsuiting, saying something for and then against, to "think what I say nay I am sure I do," all add to a syntactical melange of playfulness bordering almost on non-signification in language--delivering nothing in a suggestive and complicated way. "I and my conscience are in luck today," he says, because there has not been such an extended period of wit and playfulness in the letters.

The puckish manner in which life is exhibited as more intensely felt on the cusp of fading into nothingness in the letter to Georgiana is carried over into Keats's review of Reynolds's Peter Bell. Keats sketches out this larger idea in the specific instance of Wordsworth and draws attention to the intermingling of the absurd (the non-signifying) and the meaningful (the intensity of experience) in Wordsworth: "The writer ... has felt the finer parts of Mr. Wordsworth <Poetry>, and perhaps expatiated with his more remote and sublimer muse; <who sits aloof in a cheerful sadness, and> This as far as it relates to Peter Bell is unlucky. The more he may love the sad embroidery of the Excursion; the more he will hate the coarse Samplers of Betty Foy and Alice Fell; and as they come from the same hand, the better will be able to imitate

that which can be imitated." Keats is saying that one of the two Peter Bells, the one which pretends to satirize the other, fails because it has become "in parts the very Man" of Wordsworth's own Peter Bell. That which attempts to set itself over and against its opposite derives its very being from the thing it opposes. How is there then any advancement in the world? Why do people laugh? Because in the expectation of differentiated and disparate feelings of passion, anger, love, jealousy and pleasure people find a fiercely energetic coexistence which Keats renders through the use of oxymoron. It is "La belle dame sans merci" that presents one of the most accessible treatments of this "ardent listlessness" derived, as I have shown, from Shakespeare's fairy lore.

That this poem echoes so much in poetry generally is borne out by the effort that has been put into fixing the poem's borrowings and echoes of other poems and attempting to tie the poem down in some manner. This excessive interpretive activity seems foreshadowed by a fellow poet, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who said that the poem should not be touched. "La belle dame" is everything and nothing, and my enterprise here has been merely to bring out La Belle Dame-like concurrences within the poems and prose of the journal letter of which "La belle dame sans merci" forms such a significant part. Like Henry Aston Barker's panorama entitled "North Coast of Spitzbergen," which Keats viewed the Saturday previous to the Wednesday jottings, of which "La belle dame" seems to be a part, the place of the poem "is impossible to describe." However, the original of the feeling of the poem, as I have

indicated, can be found in the pulse beat of the journal letter; this poem is but another beat continuous with the heart of the entire letter.

A poem which echoes "As Hermes once took to his feathers light," and which Stillinger groups with these fairy poems, is the "Bright Star" sonnet. Though not peopled by fairies, the poem nevertheless looks forward to the image of the Queen Moon "Cluster'd round by all starry fays" in "Ode to a Nightingale" and is, therefore, a poem the main image of which is associated with the fairies. In the sonnet, Keats contrasts the natural and human worlds. Undifferentiated nature is cold, priestlike, and likened to an eremite, while human life is ripening, soft, swells and falls. The desire for a "sweet unrest" and yet to be "still, still" links the two realms in that the desire to be in a continual state of consummation, "sweet unrest," is punctuated by the necessary human "swoon to death." We can thus see where the early image of "the feel of not to feel it" from "In Drear-Nighted December" is enlarged and eroticized.

Keats's use of the oxymoron allows him the ability to define an active suffering, an activity which brings full knowledge of one's being, an "ardent listlessness" which "tints people to immortality." Haydon's particular intensity was in his ability to "tint" such heroes as Christ, Antony and Alcibiades. Wordsworth writes that "Passion, it must be observed, is derived from a word which signifies suffering; but the connection which suffering has with effort, with exertion and action, is immediate and inseparable

... To be moved, then, by a passion, is to be excited, often to external, and always to internal effort" (815). Keats in a letter to which I have frequently alluded (3 May 1818) propounds his idea of the mind as a "Mansion of Many Apartments." It is the action of moving through these apartments which reveals to Keats Wordsworth's superiority to Milton. As one breathes the brightness of the second chamber, it darkens and sharpens "ones [sic] vision into the heart and nature of Man--of convincing one's nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression"; this more felt action and consequent vision of passion or of suffering constitutes Wordsworth's "epic passion." Milton's epic qualities, on the other hand, show that a "mighty Providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being," and Keats shifts the boundaries of great heroic poetry to encompass all of Wordsworth's poems. Keats aligns himself with the internal exploration of those dark corridors that lead from the second chamber of maiden thought to the world of passion and suffering ("if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them").

A year later Keats wrote a journal letter to George and Georgiana in which he makes statements relevant to the question of his epic concerns which have so much interfused pastoral motifs. The remarks were made while Keats was coming to the end of Hyperion as we know it. The discussion centers around the disinterested spirit and the figure of the creature that "has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it." Though seemingly appreciative of this creature's intensity, Keats contrasts this creature with the

disinterested spirit in only whom "there is continually some birth of new heroism." The two examples of the disinterested persons are Jesus and Socrates. Keats contrasts himself with those austere, remote figures: "I myself am pursuing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal." The dichotomy between Jesus / Socrates and Keats is echoed in the dichotomy between philosophy and poetry, between the detached and the strongly attached; it is this dichotomy that Keats "relishes" and feels that he is struggling with in conceiving a style and approach to Hyperion. This epic struggle finds a condensed expression in a sonnet composed for the letter called "Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell."

This sonnet, written with "knowledge when pushed to the point though the first steps to it were through my human passions--they went away and I wrote with my Mind," contains concerns that are heroic in scope yet located within pastoral meads.⁴⁵ In the second chamber of thought described in the earlier letter, the light is breathed and likened to an intoxicant; in this later letter, with its reference to "straining after particles of light in the midst of a great darkness," Keats attempts within the sonnet, just as Wordsworth did in his poetry, to cast a light into one of the dark corridors. Such an attempt announces Keats's affiliation with Wordsworth's own "epic passion" and "exertion to internal effort," as Wordsworth puts it. At this point an interesting transference of epic power occurs in Keats's mind between Milton and Wordsworth. It is Wordsworth to whom Keats opposes the "creature that has a

purpose in his eyes"; it is Wordsworth who has epic austerity and disinterestedness. The sonnet "Why did I laugh tonight?" occurring in the context of these concerns, is therefore descriptive of these concerns, in the sense that Wordsworth includes the sonnet in his classification of Idyllium, "descriptive ... of characters, manners and sentiments ... in conjunction with the appearance of nature, as most of the pieces of Theocritus, the 'Allegro' and 'Penseroso' of Milton." To read the sonnet in this context is to dispute views of its expressing a death wish, or as an expression of stoical calm or even nihilism and to locate its origin within a generic intermixture.

It cannot be denied that the atmosphere of the sonnet creates an austere, remote and above all private and solitary atmosphere. There is "No Voice" to respond to the narrator's queries, neither does the narrator's heart respond. But if we keep in mind Keats's reference to the necessity of "feeling" experiences on our own pulses before they become real, the sonnet presents solitary humans faced with death's oblivion. The presence of the oblivion urges us to live more intensely; in the very "meads" of Death is life most intensely felt; as Keats says, "until we are sick, we understand not" (I. 279). We can see Keats attempting to strengthen the epic passion as passed down from Wordsworth, of writing with mind, to explore the dark passages.

In the summer of 1818 Keats travelled to Scotland carrying three volumes of Cary's translation of Dante in the "aptest corner" of his knapsack (I. 294). One of the ways in which Keats begins to

revise Dante is his rejection of aspects of Christianity that deny experience in favor of an "abstracted Pleasure" or, its opposite, "sufferance" (I. 320). In one of the very few references to Dante in the letters of the Scotch tour, Keats alludes to Dante in the reference to the question of thrift among the Scots. Thrift is both a blessing and a curse:

These kirkmen have done Scotland good they have
made Men, Women, Old Men Young Men old Women
young women, boys, girls and infants all careful ...
such a thrifty army cannot fail to enrich their
country ... These kirkmen have done Scotland wrong--
they have banished puns and laughing and kissing.

(I. 319)

Keats brings to the foreground the problem of "the doctrine of thrift" and then makes a specific allusion to Inferno V when he writes of Burns:

how sad it is when a luxurious imagination is obliged
in self defense to deaden its delicacy in vulgarity,
and riot in things attainable that it may not have
leisure to go mad after things which are not. No
man in such matters will be content with the experience
of others--It is true that out of suffrance [sic] there
is no greatness, no dignity; that in abstracted
Pleasure there is no lasting happiness: yet who would
not like to discover over again that Cleopatra was a
Gipsey, Helen a Rogue. (I. 320)

Here, reiterated several times, is the ambiguous nature of human desire and experience brought forward. Does the poet, like Cleopatra, Helen, figures seen with Francesca and Paolo whose "Reason by lust is swayed," (Inferno. V. 40) grapple with love, or does the poet enact austere thriftiness? This tension between spending oneself to "riot in things attainable" or saving oneself and "go mad after things which are not" is the tension that the poet relishes and is the heroic experience of Cortez and a Ulysses. It is unfortunately not the experience of the dead for whom human "sounds grow strange" : " 'I know what was, I feel full well what is / And I should rage, if spirits could go mad,'" says the ghost of Lorenzo, conceived several months earlier echoing Francesca's lament: " 'No greater grief than to remember days / Of joy, when misery is at hand.'" People must be thrifty or they are cast out of society, but there is no true happiness in a "riot in things attainable;" yet people will "go mad after things which are not." The ambiguous relationship between people and their desire is brought forward.

Keats would sympathize with Burns's observation that it is due to circumstances that we do not have opportunity to Vice--the negative of active contempt of vice:

Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many of his virtues are owing to constitution and education; how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but from want of opportunity, or

some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weakness's of mankind he has escaped because he was not out of the line of such temptation ... any who can thus think, well scan the failings ... of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.⁴⁶

The prominent place this problem of prodigality and usury hold in the seventh circle of Dante's Inferno in which the violent exist was recreated by Keats. The slight reference to Dante in the context of waiting on line at a bank can be deepened by examining the emotional aspect of the business of a loan to Haydon referred to in a letter of 10 January 1819 where Keats writes:

I shall have a little trouble in procuring the Money
and a great ordeal to go through ... I mean I shall have
to go to town some thrice, and stand in the Bank an
hour or two--to me worse than anything in Dante.

(II. 32)

The last sentence of the letter reads "do not let there be any mention of interest, although we are mortal men--and bind ourselves for fear of death." Here Keats reiterates the problem addressed in the references to thriftiness: "Were the fingers made to squeeze a guinea or a white hand?" (I. 320). Just as the references to thrift turn upon a larger problem of people's relation to experience and, in particular, to the problems inherent in consummating physical love, so, too, the simple reference to interest is enlarged to include an eschatology: a commercial "Bond" is transmuted into the "binding" of humans to life itself

and the squeezing of a guinea. Not only is the reference enlarged in this way, but Keats also mentions his "agonie ennuiyeuse" and "what is to be done, and how it is to be done, should I ever be able to do it." In referring to his writing, Keats is joining two important topics which are central to Dante's Seventh Ring where exist the violent against others, the violent against themselves, and the violent against Nature, God and Art. Usurers in particular are considered in opposition to the artist. Whereas art is the "right source of life and excellence" after "imitative Nature" that "takes her course / From the celestial Mind" (Inferno. XI. 102-103), the usurer breaks the artist's bond with nature and, squeezing a guinea, trusts in his wealth rather than in nature. That Keats is mulling over the relationship of money and writing as he is composing Hyperion is evident in another letter to Haydon about the same loan in which he says he is "about nothing; being in a sort of qui bono temper, not exactly on the road to an epic poem" (II. 42). In considering what profit there is in composing such a poem, Keats is formulating a strategy that will realize the problematic relationship between the "luxurious imagination" that riots "in things attainable that it may not have leisure to go mad after things which are not" (I. 320). That Keats is at the level of Dante in considering art "the source of life and excellence" is evident when he writes "with respect to my livelihood I will not write for it" (II. 43).

Haydon responded to these allusions in a like manner and writes in answer to Keats's letter about the interest that the

" 'agonie ennuiyouse' you talk of be assured is nothing but the intense searching of a glorious spirit; & the disappointment it feels at its first encounter with the muddy world--but it will go off--& bye & bye you will shine through it with 'fresh legerity'" (II. 32). Keats's references to sufficiency around this time are all negative. A month after his letter to Haydon, Keats denounces the "peculiar diabolical self sufficient iron stupid expression" of parsons (II. 63), and he quotes Hazlitt a little later who says of the critic Gifford that he possesses "impenetrable dullness, bare faced impudence, pragmatistical self-sufficiency" (II. 72). Self-sufficiency is holding onto a guinea and failing to relish the feel of relinquishing the guinea and trusting, in Dante's terms, God's love, and, in Keats's words, "the Mystery."

Indeed, the entire episode of the loan is couched in terms that extend far beyond mere lending of money. When the loan agreement fell through, Haydon brought up the topic of being misled and of his hopes having been aroused fraudulently to which Keats responded by saying that he was "maimed" and that he had wasted his substance thus bringing up images that are associated with the seventh ring of Dante's *Inferno* where the suicides, usurers, and spendthrifts waste their talents in "reckless lavishment" (*Inferno*. XI. 47).

Keats's sonnet, "Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell," most clearly shows Keats's reworking of Dante's material to bring forward Keats's own concerns, namely, the relishing of the cusp of oblivion; relishing the cusp adds to life and Haydon's reference to

"fresh legerity" and the context of that phrase which speaks of the serpent's new skin, "to gather honey from the weed / And make a moral of the devil himself" (Henry V. IV. i. 11-12), is relevant. In treating the poets of antiquity the way he does, Dante presents himself, one of the blessed, as capable of redeeming their voices and visions and of belonging to their company: "but greater honour still / They gave me, for they made me of their tribe; / And I was the sixth amid so learned a band" (95-97). For Keats, on the other hand, there is no voice to greet him: "No voice will tell: / No god, no demon of severe response / Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell."

The sonnet offers a bold corrective of thrift to the luxurious rondeau of two months previous beginning "Bards of Passion and of Mirth." In that poem found after a quotation from Hazlitt concerning the genius of Godwin and the effect of Caleb Williams "made out ... by an imagination projecting itself into certain situations, and capable of working up its imaginary feelings to the height of reality" (II. 25), the spirits of dead poets, "Seated on elysian Lawns," recalling the poets of limbo, are quite voluble teaching to "mortals of a little week" their sorrows and delights, their Passions and their spights, their glory and their shame. The very form in which the two poems occur is peculiarly suited to the subject and effect of each poem; in the rondeau "you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet" (II. 26). That the rondeau and the sonnet are thus paired, the one associated with the imagination working itself up

"into certain situations, and capable of working up its imaginary feelings to the height of reality," while the other is a kind of hand squeezing a guinea, show that Keats is in no way eschewing thriftlessness for thrift; that is, he is offering the complex entirety of human feeling that is an intermixture of joy and suffering, a vision of life that is growing intenser not less complicated as his work progresses through the help of Dante.

In the discussion of figures remote and austere, we see Keats deriving from Dante an image of the hero. Wordsworth, Kean, the Soldan, remain unmoved, distant, figures of the disinterested "epic passion." "Why did I laugh tonight?" was "written with (the) Mind" and, in its remoteness, echoes the austere vision of Dante's meads of hell. The New Monthly Magazine writes jestingly of the neglected artist:

genius must undergo a purgatory of neglect
and must pay its visit, like Dante, to the
infernal regions of oblivion ere it can
reach the Paradise of lasting fame.⁴⁷

What Keats forcefully rendered has become a jest, yet has been incorporated into the contemporary artist's "modern pilgrimage."

1. Stuart Sperry, quoted in Morris Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry, page 49, from Literary Monograph, edited by Eric Rothstein and Thomas K. Dunseath, 1967, pages 124-35; 153-54.

2. Morris Dickstein, for example, sees the bower poetry as a critique of the Faustian/Promethean urge, and argues that Keats replaces this destructive aspect of the heroic with a more passive experience modelled on nature's cycles -- an ideology ultimately rejected, Dickstein argues, for a more tragic conception of the human predicament.

3. Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory, page 45; Levinson argues that the poem is not simply Keats's critique of escapist poetics, a critique that many critics read into Keats's entire poetic progress. Instead, she sees Keats's poetry as creative of a special kind of escapism, the escape from the decisive closure of history and time, a closure which would engender a complete, full, participatory and authentic experience, and in Keats's case, an about face and attack on the rigid social institutions which thrust him into a strange twilight life, the determining characteristics of which are a lack of money, privilege and access to empowering cultural signs. The pale kings, princes, and warriors of the knight's dream vision are those who have had the fullness of la belle dame's offerings and represent a kind of revenge Keats has exacted from a class of people to which he has no access; instead, he privileges the masturbatory, eternally waiting, knight whose loitering is creative of time out of time. Indeed, according to Levinson, the entire poem is a heroic representation of a bourgeois in-between status, a relationship to "things" which uses as its intermediary, money. The materialism of the bourgeois experience is reflected in Keats's "translations" of original texts and appropriation and substitution of his translations for the originals, giving us bogus Chaucer and bogus mediaevalisms which out-Chaucer Chaucer.

Levinson's entire critique is based upon a notion that the bourgeois experience is a shadow-life of sorts, preoccupied with its own inauthenticity or uneasily intuiting that the forms of material display have replaced a more real/spiritual/authentic existence. Levinson sees Keats as creating an originating myth of independence and eternality by means of this materialism which has separated him from, say, the ease of the landed aristocracy. Keats, in possessing the materiality of poetry, its ostentatious effects, its authenticating originals via translations, possesses the means by which to create texts. Within these texts, Keats privileges the myths, fantasies, of his own material being, and since this being is inherently contradictory (money never unites with the thing it buys) his disjunctiveness is represented by disjunctiveness and the oxymoron of negative capability.

To recognize the discontinuity of history, its radical

closures, its dead past tenseness, its methods of control, coercion, oppression, is a means by which people can then consider their own period and its equally oppressive structures of control and seek to refine those structures or remove them. The written word, tropes, poems, novels, the Canon, have all been seen as structures that dispossess and misappropriate individual experience. My reading of Keats sees negative capability as an expression of contradiction. Yet I do not view negative capability as a stable entity within the poetry but rather as a brief moment of poetic stasis linked to a complex experience which results in completion, fulfillment, and an absolute end for any particular individual. Negative capability is one sort of absolute experience, a little death, through which Keats poetically renders the energy and tension of people's experience as they progress in life. My reading sees the poetry as Keats's expression of life and a mode through which life might be lived; Levinson sees the poetry as Keats's expression of death and a mode through which life, consisting of a rise, consummation, and fall, is denied.

4. William Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads, 1805, edited by Derek Roper (London: Collins Publishers, 1968), page 21.

5. All quotations from William Shakespeare, The Oxford Shakespeare, edited by W.J. Craig (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

6. William Empson, Some Versions of the Pastoral (New York: A New Directions Paperbook, 1968), page 14.

7. William Empson says that "the fundamental impulse of irony is to score off both the arguments that have been puzzling you" (Some Versions, page 62).

8. Empson, Some Versions, page 64.

9. Richard Cody, The Landscape of the Mind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), page 10.

10. Marjorie Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory, passim.

11. Marjorie Levinson argues that it is the royal ghosts of the poem who have eaten royally and fully of the lady but in only one way while the knight-at-arms having eaten only partially retains his quality of longing and hunger. Yet whether this elusive quality is due to a combination of artistic, intellectual, emotional choices got by trial and error and reflects the real felt experience of desire which is the experience of poetry or is the organizing trope of the rising bourgeoisie and their eternally hungry consumption needs is a question that should be rephrased: What is manifested about the human condition by hungry consumption needs and how is the poetry of this manifested hunger related to traditions? And if that new poetry is fully derived in every way

from past traditions, how is that poetry without true substance, provenance, and, as a consequence, voiceless? Here I echo Mario Praz in The Romantic Agony who, commenting on an attack on the decadence of Romantic morbidity says "it is much easier to label as monsters certain writers who were tormented by obsessions, than to discern the universal human background which is visible behind their paroxysms." Levinson argues that Keats's trope of masturbation, the signifying sign of the middle class becomes an obsession in nineteenth century bourgeois literature. Yet such an emphasis on the social aspect of Keats's poetic denies his creative use of traditions of poetry that gave him better understanding of his existence.

12. Paul Valery, quoted in Helen Vendler, The Odes of John Keats (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pages 8-9.

13. Rene Girard, Violence and the Sacred, translated by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974), see chapter 1.

14. Caroline Spurgeon argues the importance of Keats's reading of Shakespeare and especially his reading of The Tempest as he wrote in April and May 1817, Keats's Shakespeare A Descriptive Study (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pages 1-57.

15. All quotations from Lord Byron The Complete Poetical Works, edited by Jerome McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), Volume 5, Dedication. iv. 30-31.

16. John Keats, edited by Elizabeth Cook (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), page 342.

17. It is the age just before manhood which holds the charm the sonnets of Shakespeare allude to. Byron in his description of his love for Edlestone in the verses "To Thyrza" echoes this more ordinary convention of love which is limited to "the sight, the touch, the kiss, the embrace." Louis Crompton, Byron and Greek Love (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1985), pages 104-105. The verses from Byron read:

Ours to the glance none saw beside;
The smile none else might understand;
The whisper'd thought of hearts allied,
The pressure of the thrilling hand;
The kiss so guiltless and refin'd
That Love each warmer wish forbore;
Those eyes proclaim'd so pure a mind,
Ev'n passion blush'd to plead for more...

18. Louis Crompton points out that Jeremy Bentham's argument for lessening the penalties for homosexual acts is based upon Jesus saying nothing in reproach of homosexuality in any of his teachings; in addition, Bentham argues that the inclusion of this

sexual element in such an awful scene as that of Jesus's betrayal by the disciples adds pathos since a boy prostitute stayed with Jesus when he was abandoned by his own disciples.

19. Gregory Bredbeck, "Milton's Ganymede: Negotiations of Homoerotic Tradition in *Paradise Regained*," PMLA 106 (March 1991), pages 262-276.

20. Potter's Antiquities in a chapter on "The love of boys" praised this "excellent passion." The love here is de-eroticized, though. Shelley's essay "Discourse on the Manners of the Antient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love" argues for an understanding of the homosexuality of the Greeks of "The Periclean Age" as necessary to the "Exact and comprehensive conception of the history of man; for there is no knowledge concern' ~ what man has been and may be from partaking of which a pers can depart without becoming in some degree more philosophical, tolerant, and just" (quoted in Crompton, page 288).

21. Elizabeth Cook, Keats, page 343.

22. Cook, Keats, page 341.

23. Cook, Keats, page 343.

24. Cook, Keats, page 341.

25. The image is taken from Herman Melville, Pierre or the Ambiguities (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1930). In young men the love for woman is said to displace the love of boys as the hard fruit of autumn extrudes the blossoms of spring.

26. For a brief discussion of the Herculean and Antoninean effeminacy, see Gordon P. Jones " 'The Strumpet's Fool' in Antony and Cleopatra," Shakespeare Quarterly 34 (1983), pages 62-69.

27. A Critical Edition of Sir Richard Fanshawe's 1647 Translation of Giovanni Battista Guarini's Il Pastor Fido, Edited by Walter Staton, Jr. and William Simeone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), I.i. 281-305.

28. R.W. King, "Italian Influence on English Scholarship and Literature in the 'Romantic Revival,'" Modern Language Review 20 (1925), pages 48-63.

29. G. Matthews, Keats and the Critical Heritage (London: 1971), page 124.

30. Earl Wasserman, The Finer Tone (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), page 15.

31. Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory, page 17.
32. Warren U. Ober and W.K. Thomas, "Keats and the Solitary Pan," Keats-Shelley Journal XXIX (1980), pages 96-119.
32. Caroline Spurgeon, Keats's underlinings in Shakespeare, page 9.
33. Cook, Keats, page 334.
34. See particularly Marjorie Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory, pages 232-235.
35. Marjorie Levison writes of this poem that "The sensible ejaculate of logically abstract but verbally material activity, emerges as the subject Keats has been seeking from the outset ... By the meet-meat pun, we learn ... [that the] drama of this poem is that of a man eating himself alive: consuming his own words in order to bring himself to life, a certain kind of life" (Keats's Life, pages 232-235). That erotic frenzy is part of Keats's project here is confirmed by Keats's contemporaries who would see, as Marjorie Levinson argues, the masturbation trope embedded in the image of "[Mount] Hybla's honeyed roses / When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication" adumbrated by the detail of masturbators consuming their own ejaculate. Here Levinson argues that like masturbators who excite themselves through their desire to make love, so Keats makes poetry out of his desire to make poetry, a thorough pseudo-experience of love and poetry. Though I would argue a connection between eroticism and this poem, where I differ from Levinson is in her dismissal of this poem as nonsense; through the argument of reductio ad absurdum she dismisses a poem which addresses a long tradition of poetry which expresses an obsessive longing for the immaterial and the paradox of becoming satiated too soon by having what one wanted. Love is longing; it is Tantalus.
36. The line in "In Drear-Nighted December" reading "the feel of not to feel it" sometimes read as a wish for the "feel of insentience" (Dickstein, page 10) is also suggestive of the paradox of negative capability. Keats's entire poetic is an attempt to achieve the expression of the "feel of not to feel it."
37. Robert Gittings, The Mask of John Keats (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pages 5-44, passim.
38. Frederick Page, "Keats and the Midnight Oil," Dublin Review CCI (1937), pages 87-97.
39. Robert Gittings, The Mask of John Keats, pages 32-33. Gittings calls this poem "Extempore."

40. An illustration of the modern uneasiness at the idea of autonomy and the fine line between meaning and absurdity is Napoleon who upon arriving at the Polish border with his army after the disastrous retreat from Moscow left them to hurry on to Paris by sleigh and coach. Upon meeting his counsellors in Warsaw he quoted Voltaire's "Le Mort de Cesar": "From the sublime to the ridiculous is only a step." [Vincent Cronin, Napoleon (Glasgow: William Collins, 1971), page 331]. The Faustian bargain is fully struck in the figure of Napoleon who is making a casual remark upon the end of campaign that cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of men.

41. The reviews of this play, The Italians, point out the play's ambiguous and contradictory tendencies which make it the appropriate symbol of a "farce of our greatest cares." A review in The Examiner, April 4, 1819, describes how the crowd ridiculed particularly the fay-like Improvisatore, a male-character, who becomes fondly attached to the hero: "But the Author seems more calculated to receive impressions, than to express them: he has quite sensibility enough for the one; but he seems to be deficient in power for the other. There is, in short, something like weakness in his writing,--a want of knowing what to say and what to omit,--and a feeling of nature and originality perpetually recurring to commonplaces for assistance to bear the burden. It is this that turns the indignant chieftain Albanio, who thinks that the destruction of a whole city is not too great for his revenge into the martyr of feeble notions; and that makes our little friend the Improvisatore somewhat too lackadaisical and chamber-maid-like...The author, we suppose, was afraid of hurting the originality of his character by making a female of him; yet this is what the audience must expect." The audience made so much noise that they wanted the play to be performed again, and when the management complied with their wishes and avoid a riot, the crowd "mockingly approved" all the worst parts of the play.

42. Aileen Ward, page 256.

43. Aileen Ward, page 188.

44. The last line of the poem in the journal letter reads "Deaths is lifes high mead" while the poem has always been printed "Death is life's high meed" suggesting Keats's acceptance of the harshness of life. Eve Leoff, " 'Mead' or 'Meed' in Keats's 'Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell,'" Philological Quarterly 71 (Winter 1992), pages 120-26, argues for retaining mead both as suggesting an intoxicating beverage and as a place of encounter.

45. Robert Burns's Commonplace Book, 1783-1785, edited by David Daiches (London: Centaur Press, 1965), page 7.

46. Paget Jackson Toynbee, Britain's Tribute to Dante in Literature (London: Oxford University Press, 1921).

Chapter Two:

"On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and Keats's New Heroism

One aspect of the epic which undergoes an especially important reformulation in the poetry of Keats is that of the hero. By the Romantic period, epic has come to embrace, represent, and dramatically express a mental state that perceives the world as a place of ongoing development. What such a state requires is a hero whose "identity," in Walter Reed's words, "is never completely fixed but is in a process of evolution or devolution." The Romantic hero in this search for a relationship to a certain "metaphysical or ontological ground" represents a society which itself requires such a fluid identity.¹

I will argue that Keats's concept of the negatively capable poet is one such reformulation of the epic hero. The idea of negative capability ("when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason") (I. 193) need not mean that the person who possesses this capability lacks all conviction. In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's formulation of the poet who can assume the identities of others, there is a sense of a greater conviction in exercising negative capability than uttering so-called convictions:

The great Poet must be, implicate if not explicit,
a profound Metaphysician. He may not have it in
logical coherence, in his Brain and Tongue; but

he must have it by Tact: for all sounds, & forms
of human nature he must have the ear of an Arab
in the desert, the eyes of a North American Indian
tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves
that strew the Forest--the Touch of a Blind Man
Feeling the face of a darling Child.²

In offering Socrates and Jesus as figures of true disinterestedness, a manifestation of negative capability, Keats has used as examples two people who lived lives based upon the absolute belief in their convictions, who may not have asserted their beliefs doctrinally, but, by constantly eroding the beliefs of those with whom they argued, allowed their interlocuters into the process of creative thinking.³ The elasticity of such a mind has as its manifestation a "more radical and widely distributed will," to quote Michael Cooke speaking of Keatsian will in "To Autumn." This will is distinct from the brilliant self-asserting will in the headlong and defiant heroes of Byron.⁴ Keats sets up against the Byronic type of active hero his own concept of action, when he criticizes Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime" (I. 387) or writes of Byron that he "cuts a figure --but he is not figurative" (I. 67).

The first question to ask about the Romantic hero is, What is the hero to do since he no longer fulfills a national history? As a representative of the gradual improvement of human capacity to live as human in a world which annihilates the individual, how does the new hero act, what does he accomplish? Since the new hero does

not have traditional methods of organizing experience, he is required to find new order for himself. The Byronic hero, who fully embodies the tragical nature of humanity, the propensity to soar and then expose his essential weakness, a paradigm of the Miltonic fall and classical idea of hubris, does not serve as a model for Keats. Viewing the Romantics as continually offering a revision of themselves and each other, we might see Keats actively engaging Byron's poetic figures. Rather than accepting the Byronic hero's ennui at seeing all his endeavors come to nothing, the Keatsian hero inhabits that fine line between intensity of feeling and utter loss, and relishes that line. Keats adds to the Byronic emphasis on feeling an equal emphasis on non-feeling, disinterestedness, the negative of action, the negation of the traditional hero's purposefulness. The "slow time" of the Keatsian hero, his encounter with that line between action and inaction, satiety and cloyingness, intensity and non-existence, becomes for Keats the ground of his own poetic relishing; this ground is developed quite early by Keats, and becomes an heroic stance.

It is the genesis of this "new heroism" that I will trace in this chapter. The rich poetry originating in this experience shows Keats undermining the traditional hierarchical formulae of epic and locating epic in the capacity to feel one's humanity at its most human, on the edge of annihilation. I locate the originating geography of this action in the new world, a zone of contact, in the words of Mary Louise Pratt, where the sense of otherness, an essential component of Keats's heroic, is represented by

"copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings."⁵ The whole history of domination, suppression, and resurgence of interest which mark European practices in the new world is subverted by Keats who valorizes and redeems the silent agonies of a dead past and creates from this silent history his own negatively capable heroic.

One such subversion of this purposefulness is found in Keats's use of the trope of masturbation, which may not have a classical provenance but had become by Keats's time a signifier for unacted desire (and Byron's play on John Keats / Jack Ketch, the figure of self-strangulation and masturbation, illustrates the prevalence of this trope), found within such poems as "La belle dame sans merci" and for which Keats was excoriated not only by poets like Byron but critics as well. Yet one source of Keats's use of masturbation as a trope of enablement might be found in Abbe Raynal's addition to the querelle d'Amerique, the argument about the supposed decadence of the new world with which Keats was familiar. Just as the Hebrews masturbated onto the earth rather than bear their offspring in slavery, so did the Indians, Raynal writes, and the "earth was soiled twice over, with the blood of the fathers and the seed of the sons."⁶ Keats's trope does not encode a passive response to debilitating social limitations, but rather the trope represents a negatively capable act of subversion of dominant economic practices, an experience of endurance in the face of annihilating disability, that enlarges Keats's range of material from which to create a new heroism.

Keats's concept of negative capability has its origins in his reading about and then remaking of the usual depiction of the epic heroes' purposefulness. One aspect of this rereading is Keats's exploration of the possibility for the new heroism in unlikely candidates for heroism. I argue that his reformulation is based upon a response to the antique notion of heroism that flourished during the Napoleonic era, drawn certainly from his readings of Byron, but from his readings in the history of the discovery of the New World as well. Keats's ideas about identity and difference have much to do with encountering one of the more brutal aspects of European ascendancy, the Conquest of the new world. With a generation of European warfare coming to an end, the idea of what made one a European came under scrutiny as well. Perhaps an interest in establishing a nationalist identity is evident in the Spenserianisms of the early poetry and the life-long love of Shakespeare. An English Jerusalem might be the English response to French or German nationalist movements. However, there is at the same time, for Keats, an impetus away from such self-absorption, and, instead, an attempt to comprehend other worlds and participate in them. For him, modern Europe and the modern European come to represent a cumbersome identity--and such a realization is cause for Keats's investigation into the possibility of other worlds and other modes of being. In so establishing his negative counterpart to the self-aggrandizement of the Euro-centric intellectual and economic colonization of Africa and the new world, Keats offers a destabilising and creative alternative which utilizes the tropes of

epic discovery yet redirects them to illuminate a mental space.

Tzvetan Todorov has said in relation to the Conquest of the New World that not realizing or discovering the Other turns people toward destructive erring in the world. He calls on us to desire equality without "its compelling us to accept identity" and to desire real difference without its "degenerating into superiority / inferiority."⁷ Keats's negatively capable poet of a poetry that has "no palpable design on us" but is unobtrusive is representative of the new man, or as Todorov calls him, the modern exile. It is Keats's poetic rendering of this exile from the identity of the self which is so compelling a thing and has allowed him to be read as the poet of adolescence or the poet of the middle class. But it is not the limiting material aspects of Keats's life, his lack of money and the consequences of such a lack, which have written the poetry; rather, it is Keats's imaginative encounter with epic heroes and the felt experience of this poetry in his life which produces the strange quality of "double exteriority"⁸ in the poems. This double exteriority, or modern exile from identity, and Keats's poetic rendering of this modern exile coincides with and is a response to the exploitative policies of European expansionism in Africa, Egypt, and the Far East, an expansionism typified by an earlier destruction of the new world and its cultures, a particular history to which Keats was attached by his reading. This expansionism was manifested in the formation of new genres of travel writing, totalizing systems of nature, and universal histories of human progress that culminate in the establishment of

modern European economic practices throughout the world.⁹

The social setting provided by English policy in the New World and the success of the Triple Alliance also feed into Keats's development of the negatively capable hero and the poetic treatment of the problem of the hero. The more ambiguous nature of heroism which Keats expresses is reflected in his image of Cortez "silent upon a Peak in Darien" and the Egyptiana of such poems as "To the Nile" and Hyperion, A Fragment, as well as the figure of Cleopatra which Keats uses in contrast to both Napoleon and Nelson. Indeed, Keats's spiritual home is in the midst of the Other as he admires the self-possession of the "east-Indian" Jane Cox, cousin to the Reynolds girls, who was compared by Keats to a Leopardess, a Charmian and a Cleopatra. She is also the figure for the poet in the character of Isabella in Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil "sweet with the dew of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby / And divine liquids come with odorous ooze / Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully" (409-412), and is a contrast to the rapacity of the brothers' economic practices.

Keats's use of Egypt and India is no mere oriental interlude or exoticism but rather part of an entire poetic project. In shifting his geographical locus from West to East, from Darien to Egypt, Keats can be seen as revealing the necessity of a new way of looking at the world and as the East and West open up to each other and there occurs a shift in European interests from dreams of wealth in the new world to domination in the East.¹⁰ Keats pinpoints the axis of such interests when he writes:

The worst thing he [Napoleon] has done is, that he has taught them how to organize their monstrous armies--The Emperor Alexander it is said intends to divide his Empire as did Diocletian--creating two Czars besides himself...Russia may spread her conquest even to China--I think a very likely thing that China itself may fall Turkey certainly will. (I. 397)¹¹

Though Keats himself had little contact with the new world, it is in the new world that his reputation as a brilliant letter-writer has its inception, at least in bibliographical terms. Lord Houghton writes:

The journal-letters to his brother and sister in America are the best records of his outer existence ... when it is remembered how carelessly they are written, how little the writer ever dreamt of their being redeemed from the far West or exposed to any other eyes than those of the most familiar affection, they become a mirror in which the individual character is shown with indisputable truth and from which the fairest judgment of his very self can be drawn.¹²

James Freeman Clarke, a Louisville Transcendentalist, published parts of Keats's correspondence in the Western Messenger in 1836, writing of these extracts that

there is in them a depth and grasp of thought; a

there is in them a depth and grasp of thought; a logical accuracy of expression; a fulness of intellectual power, and an earnest struggling after truth, which remind us of the prose of Burns. They are only letters, not regular treatises, yet touch upon the deepest veins of thought, and ascend the highest heaven of contemplation ... We feel a little proud that we, in this Western Valley, are first to publish specimens of these writings.¹³

One theorist of the transcultural exchange between the Americas and Europe has argued that Romanticism and its literature must be seen as forces which are "sui generis" and project the values which are developed within their peculiar discourses outward, "re-inventing" the world in their own image. In turn, European interaction with otherness in such places as the new world, Africa, and India also resulted in the appropriation of cultural and geographical materials from the peripheries; Romanticism itself may be said to have originated in these peripheral zones.¹⁴ In one sense, Keats's career has its bibliographical inception in the new world; in the same sense, his poetic expression of negative capability has its inception in the ambiguous geography, archaeology and history of the New World. It is good then to seek further for the books and ideas that were creative of Keats's heroic.

The poem which most clearly establishes Keats's relationship to the new world is "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer." In this sonnet the poet identifies himself with "stout Cortez ... with

its references to Cortez reflect Keats's adolescent reading around in works about the Discovery, namely, Robertson's America (1777), Marmontel's The Incas (1778), Voltaire's Essai sur les moeurs (1754), and Mickle's translation of Camoens' Os Lusíadas (1789). These inspired the poet who recaptures the golden age of discovery, much as an equally miscellaneous collection of works such as Baldwin's Pantheon, Lempriere's Classical Dictionary, Potter's Grecian Antiquities, Adam's Roman Antiquities, and Chapman's translations of Homer inspired the poet who recaptures the splendor of Greece.¹⁶

One of the first places Keats locates heroic action is in the New World, a place of ambiguous new beginnings and of a personal relevance to Keats since his brother George moved there. The "invention" of America by its European discoverers, its position as "virgin," free of the encumbrances of corrupt political systems and social limitations that fettered and burdened Europe, allowed it to become the image of Europeans who projected into it their own vision, a totalizing experience which prevented Europeans from really perceiving the true "otherness" and difference of geography and indigenous culture. The "reinvention" of America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by such figures as Alexander von Humboldt in his Views of Nature (1806) creates the sense of a primal nature that despite three hundred years of European colonization still offered "virgin" territory, passive and open to European transformative practices.¹⁷ There is also a tradition of the ambiguity of this place in the books Keats read, in the

the ambiguity of this place in the books Keats read, in the difficulties of establishing colonies, of the outright barbarism in doing so, and in the very nature of the people and the geography itself. Keats might be seen as rewriting the hero of such an encounter and in so doing creates a hero suited to the modern condition where improvement is understood to mean violent replacements of one culture by another. Keats thus resurrects the new world not as a passive geography open to exploitation, but as a new geography through which the poet gains access to interior realms of vastness and possibility.

The negatively capable hero has his origins in two geographical locations: the new world and Egypt. "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" is a culmination or fulcrum of new world themes while the "Hyperion" fragments, like gigantic fragments in a desert, as Jeffries called them, culminate an Egyptian theme. Keats's sonnet, which places Cortez in the strange posture of waiting, is an image originating not only in Keats's readings about America and in epic but also in the history of English interest in establishing its trading empire on the coasts of a liberated South America. The ultimate failure of English policy in the West Indies and its shift to India and the East is the historical background for Keats's own shift from the Apollo of "Western Halls of Gold" to an Apollo more oriental in appearance who arises from the Egyptian ruins of Hyperion.

V.S. Naipaul has written of the British adventure to establish a trading port with a South America liberated from Spanish

insularity and the failure of that adventure as a continuous episode in the ongoing search for El Dorado. Instead of turning Port of Spain, Trinidad, into an emporium, the British ended up haphazardly setting up a plantation system as Trinidad became but a small insignificant part of the Empire. The entire English project stretched over three centuries, beginning with Sir Walter Raleigh's sixteenth century account describing his pirating exploits on the coast of South America in The Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, and culminating in the failed expedition of Francisco de Miranda, an aristocratic Venezuelan of Creole background, who sought to begin a successful revolution in Venezuela financed by the English.¹⁸

Keats's access to new world themes is not limited to older texts but is a consequence of a resurgence in travel writings, histories, and studies by naturalists. However, a brief resume of this history will provide a fuller context for his new world interests. The English attitude toward the Spanish adventures in South America gave rise to the "Black Myth" of Spanish brutality put forward by Raleigh, who allied himself with Indians to attack the Spanish at Trinidad. Keats would later read a more balanced picture of Spanish heroism and disappointment as well as brutality in Robertson, Voltaire, and Mickle, the translator of Camoens' Os Lusíadas. The sentimental tale and partial history, The Incas, by Marmontel would also provide a series of ambiguities concerning this conquest. This background of heroism, brutality, and the ultimate failure of intentions is a theme reiterated in the history

light of Keats's development of his new hero.

The history of the English treatment of the Spanish in the New World reflects the history of English alliances with and against Spain. Integral in this changeable view is the figure of Bartolome de las Casas whose account of the Spanish conquest was highly critical of the cruelty of the conquistadors. It was Las Casas's defense of Indian culture, repudiation of violence as a means of controlling the Indians, and desire to establish Indian-controlled provinces which became a subtext for subsequent writing on the Spanish in the new world. Those who wrote against Spanish interests cited Las Casas's testament of the brutality and horror of what happened, while those who favored Spain wrote against Las Casas.¹⁹

Las Casas was first translated into English in 1555 in Richard Eden's The Decades of the Newe World or West Indies, a compilation of other writers' work on the Conquest as well as the work of Las Casas. In this book Eden expresses admiration for the activities of the Spanish and urges the English to follow suit in colonizing the rest of the New World. This admiration reflects Mary Tudor's marriage to Prince Phillip of Spain.²⁰ Under Elizabeth twenty-three years later, the political climate had changed. Las Casas's Brief Account was published as a complete book in 1583 and was from that time used as evidence for the so-called Black Legend, the depiction of Spanish atrocities and genocide in the new world, along with such works as Michel de Montaigne's essay "On Coaches," which argues that the cruelty of

the Spanish was exercised against a people "not at all behind us in natural brightness of mind and pertinence."²¹ Robert Burton, in Anatomy of Melancholy, also writes of the folly of the times where the Spanish "in the West Indies ... killed up in 42 years (if we may believe Bartholomaeus a Casas, their own Bishop) 12 millions of men, with stupend and exquisite torments; neither should I lie (said he) if I said 50 millions."²² Samuel Purchas's Voyages (1613), closely read by Coleridge, makes extensive use of Las Casas and the historians of the conquest.

A mixture of political motives as well as the development of Enlightenment beliefs in the progress of human civilization led to an equally mixed yet fertile treatment of the Conquest in the eighteenth century, in the works of Voltaire, Robertson, Marmontel, Raynal, and De Pauw. On the one hand, Voltaire modelled Alvarez, the hero of his Peruvian Play, "Alzire," on the character of Las Casas (translated in London editions in 1791 and 1805). However, Voltaire tended to doubt the extent of Spanish atrocities while at the same time he deemphasized the violence of Indian customs like human sacrifice and cannibalism. Voltaire's downplaying of extreme behaviors reflects a contradiction that sets values on civilization but ignores its costs in real human suffering, a contradiction lost in Voltaire's rhetoric: "It is to these discoveries of the Portuguese in the old world that we are indebted for the new, if we call the conquest of America an obligation, which proved fatal to its inhabitants and at times to the conquerors themselves ... Whatever had been esteemed most great or noble before, seemed

absorbed in this kind of new creation."²³ This ambivalence about the contradiction inherent in human commercial and intellectual progress is echoed in Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes" where the sad consequences of human pride are the same for all people from "China to Peru." Voltaire's muted criticism of the disastrous consequences to Indians is part of the Enlightenment trend to view the conquest in the context of civilization. Indeed, to see the conquest in light of the progress since the conquest allowed writers to recreate pre-Columbian societies in very negative lights. Cornelius De Pauw, a Prussian, in his Recherches philosophiques sur les americains (1768) emphasized the decadence of pre-Columbian civilization and accused Las Casas of fomenting a Jesuit conspiracy to control New Spain. De Pauw argued that the new world was a decayed shadow of the old, not only in the flora and fauna; among examples of the decadence in the Indians themselves, he noted the "predisposition" to pederasty, human sacrifice, and cannibalism.²⁴ Guillaume Raynal, though not as virulent as De Pauw, argued a similar decadence in the new world but argued for a humane approach to people struggling against terrible odds. His more ambivalent attitude is seen when he argued that though commerce followed the expansion of civilization, commercial expansion cannot be the final arbiter of human affairs; he held that "everything has changed; and must change again. But it is a question whether the revolutions that are past, or those which must hereafter take place, have been, or can be, of any utility to the human race. Will they ever add to the tranquility,

the happiness, and the pleasures of mankind?"²⁵ W i l l i a m Mickle, in his translation of Camoens' Lusiad (1789), a copy of which was among Keats's books, calls Camoens' the epic of commerce. Prefacing his translation of the poem with a civil history of mankind, Mickle writes, "Imperfection if not necessary to humanity, is at least the certain attendant on everthing human."²⁶ He describes creative and destructive examples of commerce in the world, concluding that the "absolute outcome must be discovered before a judgement can be made ... the great and flourishing empires of Mexico and Peru, steeped in the blood of forty millions of their sons, present a melancholy prospect ... Yet such desolation is not the certain consequence of discovery ... If Mexico is not so populous as it once was, neither is it so barbarous."²⁷ William Robertson, who was closely read and reread by Keats,²⁸ echoes all these concerns when he writes of the contradictions of nature's productions in the new world:

Nature seems here to have carried on her operations upon a larger scale, and with a bolder hand, and to have distinguished the features of this country by a peculiar magnificence ... The uncultivated state of the New World affected not only the temperature of the air, but the qualities of its productions. The principle of life seems to have been less active and vigorous there, than in the antient continent."²⁹

The results of this intemperance are large quantities of insects, reptiles, toads, bats, and poisonous creatures of every sort. It

is a place of strange contradictions. There are "birds of dazzling hue, but no sound."³⁰ The Indians themselves are beautifully proportioned but have absolutely no strength or endurance. (This required the importation of black Africans to work the plantations.)

The mixed emotions aroused by the new world are apparent in such poems as Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" where the inhabitants of the village have been forced

To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe ...

Those matted woods where birds forget to sing.

Keats's "cold hill's side" where "no birds sing" in "La belle dame sans merci" is a recollection of this new world theme of ambiguity and as we will see feeds into the character of the knight as well.³¹ Wordsworth's Solitary in Book III of The Excursion, seeking "Primeval Nature's Child ... along the side / Of Mississippi, or that northern stream / That spreads into successive seas" finds only "A creature, squalid, vengeful, and impure; / Remorseless, and submissive to no law / But superstitious fear, and abject sloth" (III. 913-955).

Keats read specific works dealing with the Conquest and the new world, yet those he read represent but a fraction of the material available. They offer a variety of views dependent upon political forces and intellectual trends, a state of perpetual

unrest in regard to the new world creative of the special ambiguity suited to the Keatsian heroic. Helen Maria Williams' Peru (1784) describes the beauties of pre-Columbian Peru, the terrors of the conquest and the destruction of a noble people, but ends on a note of hope for the restoration of free Indian and Creole states. William Blake, working on etchings to illustrate John Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam (worked on through the late 1780s and early 1790s when Blake assisted on the etchings but published in 1796) derived certain imagery of oppression and restriction which he then turned back into his own Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1792). In that poem, America, the place of liberty and slavery, becomes for Blake the type for the paralysed human and the threshold place of fullfillment, a state of being denied by self-imposed laws and limitations. Oothoon, "the soft soul of America," is raped by Bromion and rejected by her lover Theotormon; claiming that she remains still pure, she appeals to Urizen the creator, whose acts of creation set up boundaries and limitations.³² Joel Barlow's Columbiad (1787) argues that Columbus "opened way for the most extensive career of civilization and public happiness" in spite of his sad end; yet the poem hardly touches on the actual results of the conquest and, instead, uses the argument of Columbus's imprisonment and Hesperus arriving to reveal to him the whole of world history with his feats a culmination. Marmontel's The Incas (1797) makes of the priest Las Casas who accompanied Cortez a hero who teaches the Indians and counsels Pizarro, who is portrayed as

a misled rather than savage person.

The new world was portrayed not only in epic and lyric poetry but in histories and drama as well. A work by Francisco Saverio Clavigero, translated from the Italian, The History of Mexico (1807), refutes most of De Pauw's and Raynal's assessments of Indian barbarity, especially charges of cannibalism and pederasty. Las Casas's Brief Account was published in a London edition, in Spanish, in 1812. That the New World continued a focal point for larger political issues in England can be discerned in the reviews of Washington Irving's massive volumes on the Spanish explorers and his Life of Columbus, published in 1828. A review of the book reads:

New illustrations of the history of man-especially on this point, that the gregarious principle cannot be acted upon so far as regards progressive improvement and solid happiness, except in a state of civilization. It is merely that of savages, from whom nothing could be learned, and of civilized Europeans labouring to overcome physical difficulties. It appears, too, that Providence does not permit populations to increase in a state where land is not reduced to private property, and cultivated. In short, all the progressive conditions of man are exhibited in the history of America, as if it had been intended for a series of philosophical and political illustrations. And as to Literature, the Life of Columbus is and can be no other

than a Robinson Crusoe for philosophers, upon a scientific scale.³³

This continuing interest in the new world as a field of enterprise is reflected in Baron Humboldt's travels through Mexico and Peru, translated by Helen Maria Williams, which were excerpted for a handbook for English mining operators. Both Mickle and Robertson put forward the value of commerce as a consequence as well as impetus for civilization. The heroic possibility of new world themes is reflected by the librettist Victor Etienne Jouy, who wrote the libretto to Fernand Cortez (1809), a subject suggested by Napoleon and set to music by Spontini. Jouy also wrote the libretto to William Tell (1829) and set to music by Rossini.

It is within such a rich bibliography of poetry, drama, history, and biography that Keats places the image of Cortez silent upon a peak in Darien and in that image comprehends a vision of a new heroism and the geography, "realms of gold,"³⁴ in which that heroism asserts itself.³⁵ The encounter with the otherness of Indian cultures, the ambiguous place and consequences of these encounters and the possibility of new "Indian" states rising from the collapse of an old empire all feed into Keats's tentative conceptualization of heroes.

Images from the new world were familiar to Keats and appeared not only in poems such as "Chapman's Homer" and "Isabella" but gratuitously as well; for instance, the impulse to compare being "on a Gridiron, and [frying] with great complacency" (I. 162) rather than be in debt may derive from the image of Quatomozin, who

was placed on an iron grill over fire with his treasurer in an effort by the Spaniards to find out where his gold was hidden; he turned to his complaining subordinate and asked complacently if it seemed that he himself were lying on a bed of roses; this anecdote was available to Keats in Marmontel and Voltaire and numerous other histories. Southey's Madoc, (1805), an epic poem about the Welsh prince Madoc and his encounters with a proto-Aztec people in the region of the Gulf of Mexico, picked up on one of the mysteries thought to be held within the interior of the new world: a white tribe. Coleridge was going to write an essay on epic poetry and attach it to Southey's poem, which represented a reflection of his own interests in "The Rime of the Antient Mariner." The anti-heroic concept is at the heart of the Mariner's inception; the ambiguity of the New World and the atmosphere which the New World lent to poetry of exile and travel affects at least two major poems of the period. It is within this tradition that Keats works.

One of the figures who exemplifies the new style of heroism was Francisco de Miranda (1750-July 14, 1816). Miranda's life took him through all the courts of Europe, put him in the center of revolutionary French politics, and gave him access to the highest levels of British and American governments. An adventurer, he was a shadowy figure whose life exemplifies more than any other the changing fortunes of modern political figures. Though Byron only probably heard of Miranda when considering his own emigration to Venezuela in 1819 and 1820 and meeting the American adventurer Somerville, one of Simon Bolivar's mercenaries, Miranda's career in

Europe bears a remarkable resemblance not only to Childe Harold's but to Don Juan's career as well. Miranda's relationship with Catherine of Russia, his journey to Turkey and Greece, his failure to establish the revolution he much wanted in Venezuela, and his death in the confines of a prison in Cadiz all provide a prototype for the adventurers that Byron envisions. Miranda's efforts on behalf of the revolutionary forces under the generalship of Demouriz, a French revolutionary general in charge of the campaign into the Netherlands, almost cost him his life; this suggests the uncanny resemblance to the ultimate end to Don Juan's career Byron imagined, having him die at the guillotine.

Miranda travelled to Europe in the 1770s where he studied and then joined the Spanish army. He was a soldier, diplomat, general under the French Republic, solicitor to Pitt for funding the emancipation of South America. He travelled extensively in America and Europe in the late 1780s, becoming a favorite with Catherine the Great of Russia, who allowed him to travel incognito under a Russian passport since Spanish agents were following him. He travelled through France, which was allied to the Spanish through the Bourbons, one step ahead of the secret police. His private journal records all his observations and the incidents he encountered.

In 1790, after safely arriving in England, he submitted his plans to Pitt for the emancipation of South America. The plan for occupation was to focus on Darien, "The Isthmus of Panama, that will facilitate Commerce of China, and the South-Sea with

innumerable advantages for England and America."³⁶ The point of attack at the slender waist of America never came, since Pitt was awaiting provocation, and Spain did not offer an opportunity. Miranda then crossed back to revolutionary France to apprise the French of the plan for liberating their colonies in the West Indies. Upon the founding of the French Republic, Miranda was made a general under Brissot, a leader of the Girondists, who said of Miranda that with "his courage and genius the chains forged by Cortez and Pizarro will easily be broken."³⁷ However, the campaign into Holland in the winter of 1792-93 was not successful and Miranda suffered a defeat and was denounced as a traitor. At his trial he impressed everyone with his dignity: Helen Maria Williams wrote of him that he "pleaded his cause with such sublime energy, as proved that his powers as an orator were not inferior to his talents as a general."³⁸ He was defended by such witnesses as Thomas Paine and Joel Barlow. He was exonerated but remained in Paris, meeting Napoleon and exchanging letters with Madame de Stael, but eventually was forced to leave France disguised in a "wig and green spectacles,"³⁹ arriving once again in England to pursue his plans. In 1804, war broke out between England and Spain, arousing Miranda's hopes once again for English funding. But funds were not forwarded so Miranda travelled to the United States and was partly funded by merchants and the government and outfitted a large vessel and two smaller ones.

In 1806 The Leander touched Trinidad, and with the aid of English ships Miranda landed some men in Venezuela, but after small

success in getting a toehold he was forced to set sail again and his men dispersed. In 1809, with the help of Sir Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington, Miranda convinced the English to assist fully in his South American project. But the resistance that the Spanish began to manifest against the French made them allies again of the English. However, the forces under Wellesley intended for the South American campaign were instead sent to fight in Spain.

The peninsula was seen as the place where the future of Napoleon would be determined, a painful ulcer that would eventually destroy him.⁴⁰ With the drawings and paintings of Goya, Spain becomes the terrordrome of the nineteenth century just as Paris during The Terror was for the eighteenth century. "Blanco" White in letters to London journals described the massacres in Madrid signalling the beginning of the popular uprising against the French in May 1808 later represented by Goya in his painting "The Executions of the Third of May, 1808." In 1811, White compared the anarchy and oppression resulting from the French Revolution with the cruelties inflicted upon Spain during the Peninsular war.⁴¹ Wordsworth's prose piece on the convention at Cintra (May 1809) where the English made a short-lived peace with the French, denounces this betrayal of the basic rights of man: "Doubtless there is not a man in these Islands, who is not convinced that the cause of Spain is the most righteous cause in which, since the opposition of the Greek Republics to the Persian Invader at Thermopylae and Marathon, sword ever was drawn."⁴² Robert Southey

in his massive History of the Peninsular War (Volume I, 1823) remarked upon the original impression made on the English by the Spanish insurrection against the French in May 1808 and wrote "Never since the glorious morning of the French revolution, before the bloody cloud had risen to overcast the deceitful promise of its beauty, had the heart of England been affected with so generous and universal a joy."⁴³ When affairs in Spain gave to the colonies more independence and Venezuelans met to form their own revolutionary councils, Miranda went there to assist in the drafting and adoption of a constitution. However, royalist forces attempted to regain their control and a civil war broke out. Eventually Miranda, betrayed by the new generation of younger revolutionaries such as Simon Bolivar, was captured and sent to Spain where he perished in the prison of Caracca at Cadiz.

Given the ambivalence of English policy the events in Spain form an interesting background for meditations on the hero. Byron uses Spain as a beginning for the journey through a post-war devastated Europe by a hero of a family who "were of a fame, / And had been glorious in another day" (I. iii).⁴⁴ Keats had given Endymion a Byronic malaise in such lines as "Where soil is men grow, / Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me, / There is no depth to strike in: I can see / Nought earthly worth my compassing" (II. 159-62).⁴⁵ Endymion's solipsistic ennui is thus linked to an aristocratic ennui derived from, among other things, the destructiveness of war. The wastefulness of war is imaged in an unholy trinity, which levels the oppressor, the victim, and the

ally:

Three hosts combine to sacrifice
Three tongues prefer strange orisons on high;
Three gaudy standards flout the pale blue skies;
The shouts are France, Spain, Albion, Victory!
The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
That fights for all, but ever fights in vain,
Are met--as if at home they could not die--
To feed the crow on Talavera's plain,
And fertilize the field that each pretends to gain.

(I. xci)

There are no heroes here: "Enough of battle's minions! let them play / Their game of lives, and barter breath for fame" (I. xliv). It is only the maid of Zaragosa (I. liv-lvi) who seems most admired by Byron. The figure of powerless woman moved by passion to exert herself, dressed in military regalia by Spanish generals and walking upon the battlements of Seville where Byron saw her, is a figure of undifferentiated sexuality like Childe Harold, a new type of hero who all but disappears in the final two cantos of his poem. In the middle of this description of a power that is best manifested in the figure of the female, Byron introduces the theme of eros and death in the description of the bull-fight. In spite of the terrors of war and the senseless slaughter or because of it, another power asserts itself: "Such ungentle sport that oft invites / The Spanish maid, and cheers the Spanish swain" (I. lxxx). The dance of the bull fight, the dance of death, arouses desire and

love between the maid and swain. In both the bottom of despair which death is and in the persistence of woman, is found people's greatest resource, love. One could argue that Donna Julia's letter to Juan is another instance of this strength.

The forces evident in the Spanish landscape contrast with the background of Childe Harold himself who represents "Pleasure's pall'd victim!" (I. lxxxiii). Pleasure here lives for itself and not in relation to death, and its expenditure becomes habit and loses its sharpness, dulls sensations and, existing as a self-sufficient thing, removed from the bite and tartness its proximity to death would give it, becomes a vice burying itself like a worm in the flesh of life and offering nothing but the bitterness of desire without hope.

In his disgust with the inborn perversity of the world, Byron writes of the Spanish fighting "for freedom [and] who were never free ... Her vassals combat when their chieftains flee" (Childe Harold. I. lxxxvi). Yet the people fight their French "liberators" only to restore their chains. In reference to South American emancipation, had they freed themselves they had freed:

More than her Pizarros once enchained:

Strange retribution! now Columbia's ease

Repairs the wrongs that Quito's sons sustained,

While o'er the parent clime prowls murder

unrestrained. (I. ixix)

Byron returns to this theme in Canto III in an extended meditation on the battlefield of Waterloo.

In considering either emigration to Venezuela or assisting the Greek rebels, Byron brings to a very personal level the ambiguity with which the times cloaked the New World schemes in possibility and uncertainty. It would not seem that an interest in Venezuela was the consequence of a visit by the young American adventurer Somerville on May 12, 1819, who must have discussed his adventures with Bolivar and the famed Miranda. Rather, Byron's ongoing belief crystallized in such poems as "Age of Bronze" (1823) where he writes "the sparks awaken'd--lo! / The swarthy Spaniard feels his former glow ... Where Cortez and Pizarro's banner flew, / The infant world redeems her name of 'New.'" In "The Deformed Transformed" (1824), Byron conflates imperial Rome, "Earth's Lord," and papal Rome, "Lady of the old world," in the image of the "Hermaphrodite of Empire." Yet this "half" world of "changing sex" gave name to a "whole new one," seeing an image of its own dazzling self, as it were, in the new world's "rich harvests, new diseases, and gold." The combination of wonder, fornication, and decay implied by this imagery underscores the ambiguity with which new world enterprise was met. The wanderer over the fields of Waterloo in Canto IV of Childe Harold can say of his projected emigration that "Europe's grown decrepit--besides it is all the same [thing] over again--those fellows are fresh as their world and fierce as their earthquakes ... I will possess myself of the pinnacle of the Andes--or a spacious plain of unbounded extent in an eligible earthquake situation."⁴⁶ Byron writes, "I am not tired of Italy--but a man must be a Cicisbeo and a singer in duets and a

Connoisseur of operas--or nothing here--I have made some progress in all these accomplishments--but I can't say that I don't feel the degradation.--Better be a[n] unskillful planter--an awkward settler--better be a hunter--or anything than a flatterer of fiddlers--and a fan-carrier of a woman."⁴⁷ Byron's contrasting Europe and America is explicit in Don Juan where his description of the Battle of Ismail and its wastefulness is juxtaposed to the creative energies of the new world Washington:

The drying up of a single tear has more
Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore
And why? --because it brings self approbation.

Wars like that at Ismail are

Nothing but a child of Murder's rattle.
And such they are.-- and such they will be found:
Not so Leonidas and Washington,
Whose every battle-field is holy ground,
Which breathes of nations saved, not worlds undone ...
... Such names will be
A watchword till the future shall be free.

(VIII. iii-v)

Ultimately Byron chose Greece, probably rejecting his proposed emigration into a country perpetuating slavery.

I had, and still have, thought of South America, but am fluctuating between it and Greece. I should have gone, long ago, to one of them, but for my liaison with the Countess G[uicciol]i; for love, in these days, is

little compatible with glory. She would be delighted to go too; but I do not choose to expose her to a long voyage, and a residence in an unsettled country, where I shall probably take a part of some sort.⁴⁸

In this fine self-creation, Byron meditates from a position of disability some plan of action. The echo of Bottom the weaver who says "Love and reason keep little company these days" is heard in Byron's description of the comedy of Italian manners, the absurdity of his own position as "intriguer, husband, and now ... Cavalier Servente."⁴⁹ Byron's stop and go approach to Greece is reminiscent of the stop and go ineffectuality of Miranda--reflecting the complexities of third-world entanglements and the problems inherent in this particularly modern development. The Byronic hero fully fleshed out in Byron, a clown, a body of reduced potency, all played out in the letters detailing his grandiose schemes of self-assertion, is thus able to enact a wish and criticize the very things that have both disenabled and enabled him to act. The East/West axis of Byron's playing out the heroism within himself (he did die doing something which required a great deal of persistence and fortitude in a very dangerous part of the world) is a geographical axis on which Keats also locates himself as he touches upon the ambiguity of the new world in his most haunting image of the poet / hero, the figure of stout Cortez.

To understand the development of the negatively capable hero of which Cortez is an example, it is helpful to look at the problem the New World presented to the English. The history of English

policy toward Miranda's plans for the liberation of South America revolves around not only the balancing of powers in Europe but the lucrative trade that would open up to England by an emancipated South America, the lively history of which is neatly narrated by V.S. Naipaul in The Search for El Dorado. Untouched by Naipaul but relevant to his argument were the investment opportunities that culminated in the Loan Bubble of 1822-1825 when £20,000,000 in bonds placed in Latin American Countries went unpaid precipitating a collapse and the ruin of thousands of investors.⁵⁰ Because of the recession which followed upon this failure, Washington Irving lost his own money and, in need of immediate funds, took upon himself, at the invitation of friends, the translation of Columbus's journal. Upon arriving in Madrid and finding a wealth of documentation at his hands, he wrote, instead, the biography of Columbus, an immensely successful undertaking which instituted the nineteenth century hagiography of Columbus.⁵¹

The focus of English trading interests was not Trinidad only but Darien as well. A review of "Lettre aux Espagnols-Américains" by the Peruvian Juan P. Viscardo y Guzman written for the Edinburgh Review by James Mill sets out the advantages of South American trade. The review, written in collaboration with Miranda, was also published by Miranda and Jose Antepara with other documents concerning the efforts to liberate South America in a book called South America Emancipation:

The brilliant prospects which seem to be opened up for our species in the New World, and the cloud which still

thickens over the fortunes of the old, present, at the present hour, a subject of contemplation to the thinking part of the British people; than which, excepting the great question of slavery or freedom, we know not if one more interesting can be imagined.

The most brilliant of these prospects is the opening of a canal at Darien.

In enumerating, however, the advantages of a commercial nature, which would assuredly spring from the emancipation of South America, we have not yet noticed the greatest perhaps of all,--the mightiest event, probably, in favour of the peaceful intercourse of nations, which the physical circumstances of the globe present to the enterprise of man. We mean, the formation of a navigable passage across the isthmus of Panama,--the junction of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Darien is then not a dividing line only but a great junction and pivot of modern trade: " The riches of India and China would move towards America. The riches of Europe and America would move towards Asia."

For Leigh Hunt, the emancipation of America has more to do with opening up a channel for new exertion that will develop human capacities. In an article that names Miranda and gives a concise biography, as well, he writes:

In these views, no European nation is so interested,

with regard to influence, advantage, and social feeling, as Great Britain; and any new account even rumour, respecting the above mentioned event, ought to excite a powerful sympathy in everyone of us,--in our merchants, for its prospects of great and laudable acquisition;--in our military and naval men, for its prospects of that greatest of rarities in history--an unexceptionable field of exertion ... and in a word ... for the dawn of a new era in history, calculated to awaken all his speculation, to throw new lights upon systems, and to finish what has little more than commenced in human knowledge,--the education of experience.⁵²

The language at the close of this passage reminds me of Chapman's "Loud and Bold," the excitement of discovery, and the promise in the eagle eyes of Cortez. The concept of the "education of experience" which new world exploits offer people attests to the epic quality of these endeavours. Yet Keats presents us at best with the ambiguity of heroism in the modern age. In so doing he represents another prevalent set of attitudes, which was articulated in other works Keats read.⁵³

The new world becomes a crossroads for concerns about advancement and adventure; it is a place of possibility and of experiment as well as a place of disappointment and failure. It is a place where humans stand in their solitude most starkly and where the "education of experience," in Hunt's phrase, can be carried

out. It is in such a place teeming with oppositions that Keats locates himself in his poem on Chapman's Homer.

In this sonnet Keats transforms and translates into lyric one aspect of epic poetry, the nature of the heroic character and consequently the nature of that character's actions. The ambiguity of action in the world is brought to the foreground. Keats foregrounds the solitude of contemplation, the aloneness of individuals in the midst of the huge world--the physical and psychical weakness in humans in the face of their great desires.

In his "Lectures on the English Poets" given at the Surrey Institute beginning in January 1818 (one year after agreeing with Hunt that "Chapman's Homer" "announced the new poet taking possession"), Hazlitt speaks of the solitude of Robinson Crusoe "the English adventurer in his solitary place of confinement."⁵⁴ The quotation which Hazlitt uses to illustrate Crusoe's solitude, "the very beatings of his heart" that become audible in the "eternal silence that surrounds him," is one Hazlitt used to describe Odysseus weeping for his homeland outside Calypso's cave.⁵⁵ These concerns about the essential solitude of people even in the supposed fulfillment that accompanies discovery is a theme which Keats's sonnet echoes. Keats's echoing of a tradition associated with epic bespeaks an effort on the poet's part to develop and express an emerging vision of epical heroism as an "education of experience," in the words of Hunt. The poem expresses not Keats's isolation from the normative influence of easy social intercourse but the larger theme of the thwarted attempts of humans

to exert power in the world. This is announced through the repertoire of epic possibilities.

Keats's use of the New World as the geographical setting for the image of the poet in this most pivotal poem should not be seen as merely one item among others gleaned from adolescent reading. His adolescent reading gave him access to the tradition of the epic hero and the ability to synthesize a concept of an "education of experience." Thus, the experience of reading becomes a topic of epic, and can itself enter into an ongoing tradition of exploration and discovery--the consequences of which are ambiguous.

The sonnet projects a new image of the hero, the newness of which becomes more apparent when we consider its first published appearance. Hunt published the sonnet in The Examiner, 1 December 1816, having previously announced it in an earlier number. The sonnet, which Hunt was to say later was "epical in the splendour and dignity of its images and terminating with noblest Greek simplicity,"⁵⁶ was received as expressive of an essential aspect of human endeavor and feeling. The same number of The Examiner includes a sympathetic account of Buonaparte's arrival in the place of his last exile in St. Helena in the South Atlantic which had occurred the previous October, 1815.⁵⁷ The account stresses the dignified restraint of Buonaparte, the thoughts of the conqueror-hero turned tyrant encountering the obscurity of his new situation. In a letter to Haydon, 11 May 1817, Keats intimates that "Buonap" bears his fate better than Antony, another hero whom the billows swallowed figuratively at Actium (II. 100).

The sonnet's juxtaposition with the account of Buonaparte's exile and its theme of human endeavor on the threshold of new experience suggests that Keats is writing under specific historical influences which his poem reflects. His method of conflating hero and place is evidenced in the sonnet on Chapman's Homer. In the sonnet it is not "Buonap" but Cortez, the conqueror-hero, who sees a new ocean. Why Keats substituted Cortez for Balboa is anybody's guess. "Cortez" is integral to the closing four lines of the poem, since the sound of the name picks up the "t" sounds of "stout" and looks forward to the short "e" sounds in "men" that initiate the final sound in "silent upon a peak in Darien" (would the poem strike a chord were it written "or like broad Balboa ... and his band ... Breathless upon a peak in Panama"?). Cortez is a stand-in for all the discoverers and heroes to whom Keats could wish to allude. It was Balboa who discovered the Pacific in 1513, Pizarro being among his men; Cortez was to have accompanied him but was held back by sickness.⁵⁸ In shifting place, time, and explorer, Keats suggests the ambiguous nature of past heroic actions, yet also foregrounds his own concerns with the solitude of the hero, "the very beatings of [whose] heart" become audible.

Throughout Robertson is the implicit idea that though Columbus, Pizarro, Cortez, displayed courage, their actual exploits represent the spirit of the age, and this somehow lessens their achievements:

Columbus' discovery of the New World was the effort
of an active genius, enlightened by science, guided

by experience, and acting upon a regular plan, executed with no less courage than perseverance. But from this adventure of the Portuguese, it appears that chance might have accomplished that great design which it is now the pride of human reason to have formed and perfected. If the sagacity of Columbus had not conducted mankind to America, Cabral, by a fortunate accident, might have led them, a few years later, to the knowledge of that extensive continent.⁵⁹

Sidney Hook also, much later, argues that these explorers were not heroes "in the sense of eventful or event-making figures because they cannot be considered as having been indispensable to the discoveries with which their names are linked."⁶⁰ This heroic ideal that is not heroism is a continual theme with Keats who writes 21 April 1819 about Pizarro / Cortez / Balboa / Keats:

I have been reading lately two very different books
Robertson's America and Voltaire's Siecle De Louis XIV
It is like walking arm in arm between Pizarro and the
great-little Monarch. In how lamentable [sic] a case do
we see the great body of the people in both
instances...the whole appears to resolve into this--
that Man is originally "a poor forked creature" subject
to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest,
destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind
or other (II. 100).

The poem "La belle dame sans merci" appears for the first time in

this journal letter, just previous to this entry and links the anti-heroic figure of the loitering knight to Keats's new world imagery.

At a time when Europeans are poised upon a radical expansion into India, Africa, China, Australia, and South America, Keats's conquerors and heroes reflect a peculiar modern identity crisis. Well aware that greed tainted all European discovery, Keats critiques the practical consequences of these discoveries. In "Isabella" he writes of the brothers' greed and the "proud-quiver'd loins" that "all day in dazzling river stood, / To take the rich ored driftings of the flood" [109-112], recapitulating the Conquest while the brothers' greed is extended universally into India (Ceylonese pearl divers) and the North West Passage (seal hunters and "the seal on the ice with piteous bark/Lay full of darts"). Keats locates his problematic negatively capable heroics, represented by such figures as Cortez, within the unknowableness, the uncertainty, of the consequences of progress.⁶¹ A modern reader of Columbus's journal has pointed out the mystery of the journal's real origin, emphasizing all the ambiguities of a text, its transmission, vagueness, contradictions, which was to become one of the primary documents of nineteenth-century Europe's expansion.⁶² Another writer has argued that the original conquerors of the New World created an imaginary world of the wondrous and the marvelous which served to deny the reality of the destruction they caused.⁶³ Exposed as he was to the ambiguities of conquest, Keats recreates the discovery of inner solitudes. Such

travelling, Stephen Greenblatt argues, returns oneself to what one already has, "what you could have--if you could only strip away the banality and corruption of the everyday--at home."⁶⁴

Discounting the heroism of any one of the discoverers of the New World, Sidney Hook observes that "heroic action can count decisively only where the historical situation permits of major alternative paths of development."⁶⁵ In his continuous development of the concept of negative capability and the hero open to an elemental contradiction in existence, of living on the line between satiety and cloyingness, Keats echoes in a sensual way Goethe's idea that there is a demoniacal force, "something which manifests itself only in contradictions, and which, therefore, could not be comprehended under any idea, still less in one word."⁶⁶ This force within contradictions which is neither good nor evil reveals the profound metaphysical provenance of negative capability. But in seeking to render this contradiction poetically, Keats does not offer his heroes as figures to emulate; rather, they express an ambiguity in eventful lives that are not event making, that leave no necessary impression. These are heroes who are, after everything, creatures of silence, songs of a demoniacal Nightingale that when completed leave us looking out "on the foam/Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."⁶⁷ Coleridge had anticipated such ideas about the ambiguity of the hero and transferred New World imagery to underscore an affinity between Napoleon and New World projects. Writing in 1800 of the coup d'etat of Brumaire which won Napoleon the consulship, Coleridge says that though Napoleon

created necessary dangers, he was a despot, not a tyrant; he was firm, but had to suppress vice. Voicing the ambivalence of such modern political necessity, Coleridge wrote of Buonaparte that he was become "an isthmus of Darien beat upon by the two oceans of Royalism and Republicanism." ⁶⁸

The sources and reception of "Chapman's Homer" suggest that Keats conflated past and contemporary heroic endeavors to project a universal heroic stance adapted to a world in which ambiguity is an essential aspect revealed in the paradoxical image of "faery seas forlorn." This image is the inception of the poem. It was the description of Odysseus shipwrecked on the Phaecian shore that elicited shouts of delight and recognition from Keats when reading Chapman's Homer with Clarke:⁶⁹

... falt'ring both

His strong hands hanging down, and all with froth
His cheeks and nostrils flowing, voice and breath
Spent to all use, and down he sank to death.

The sea had soak'd his heart through. (V. 451-63)

It is the image of the wanderer soaked through to his heart that stays with us as we then read Odysseus's account of his journey to the Cyclops, the land of Aeolus, Circe, the land of the Cimmerians and his epic descent into Hades where he encounters not only his lost friends and mother, but a recapitulation of the punishments of the Titans as well. After he has retold his adventures he is transported to Ithaca in a Phaecian ship. Indeed, having the sea soak his heart through gives to Odysseus a dignity and humanity

that is evidenced in his weeping at the tales of his lost comrades retold by the Phaeacians' minstrel. It is by entering the sea that humans are transformed: "For to my mind there is naught worse than the sea to confound a man, be he never so strong," says the son of Alcinous.⁷⁰ Considering Odysseus / Ulysses as an originating hero for the Cortez figure suggests another source for Keats's sonnet: Dante's treatment of Ulysses' last voyage in Inferno XXVI. In Dante, Ulysses sails West to the Atlantic and, catching sight of the mount of Purgatory, is swallowed up by the waves. Dante, in resurrecting Ulysses as a tongue of flame, is not condemning Ulysses but finding the perfect image for man's "enormous imaginative ambition."⁷¹

The relationship between Homer, the Cortez / Keats figure in "Chapman's Homer," and Dante's Ulysses illustrates Keats's use of tradition and his divergence from it. William Hayley had used an epic simile, the vehicle of which was Columbus, to emphasize the value to the modern epic poet of studying epic predecessors: the modern poet should do "as th'advent'rous Seaman, to attain / That bright renown which great Discoverers gain, / Consult[s] the conduct of each gallant name / Who fail'd before him in the chace of fame" (Essay. I. 439-442).⁷² In a similar process of building upon past treatments of epic material, Keats scales the visionary mountain, emphasizing the aspects of sight and expanded vision. Keats revises "Low-brow'd Homer," in the first draft of the poem, and writes "deep-brow'd Homer"; "Yet could I never judge what Man could Mean," in line seven, is revised to "Yet could I never

breathe its pure serene"; and the image of Cortez's "wond'ring eyes" becomes "eagle eyes." These revisions underscore the visionary experience. The word "deep-brow'd" gives to Homer a profounder quality of judgment and measured thought, emphasizing the assumption of specifically visionary powers that surpass judgment. This assumption of visionary power through the image of breathing will come to be more fully developed in the image of the mind as a mansion of many apartments where one becomes intoxicated with the light and "among the effects of this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the ... nature of Man" (I. 281). The inner eye that is actively drawing in vision as the lungs draw in air is also used in "Ode to Psyche" where the bright wings of Psyche, her "lucent fans," are breathed in by the poet who is by his "own eyes inspired." The shift from breathing in Homer's pure serene to a creative act of the inner eye is the visionary transformation, just as in Hayley's image, the eye of Columbus was sharpened by reading the books and charts of his predecessors. In a similar revision toward more active sight, Cortez's eyes are described as not "wond'ring" but as "eagle eyes" thus setting up a distinction between two kinds of vision. In the literary domain there are metaphors of "realms," "states," "kingdoms," "fealty," and "desmesne." The transformative vision of Cortez, though, occurs in the New World "upon a peak in Darien." This peak is a center, a dividing line that separates not only two continents, but two oceans, an axis of separation that both situates and isolates Keats in relation to visionary tradition.

The stationing of Cortez upon the peak is an attempt to fill the poetic moment to an overabundance. Keats's own image for this stationing, in his marginalia to Milton, is pouncing upon the poetic quarry and then gorging it to produce essential poetry.⁷³ The stationing of Keats's hero seems less a duree than an attempt to make the spirit "ache," to become "dizzy" with the "feel" of another person's experience.⁷⁴ The stationing dissolves the distance between observer and narrator; it creates a "dramatic vastness,"⁷⁵ is a moment of illumination where an intermediating narrating voice disappears and the image in all its negative capable power pounces on and gorges the reader.

Yet the assumption of this visionary sight and the breathing of a pure serene are poised upon a potentially disruptive fault line between what people desire and what thwarts their desires. This visionary mountain is set atop a fault line full of possible danger. Coleridge's image of Buonaparte as the isthmus of Darien emphasizes this aspect. M. Marmontel's The Incas or, the Destruction of the Empire of Peru (1778) with its roots of its action in Darien places the discovery and conquest in a context of fanaticism and its excesses:

Half the globe oppressed, laid waste by Fanaticism ...
But those crimes of Fanaticism bear a stamp upon them
which keep authority, force and opinion in
subjection; a religious respect guards them from
punishment too often ... Fanaticism takes upon himself
the office of the exterminating angel. (I. 2)⁷⁶

Marmontel's work is offered as a kind of historical novel or philosophical romance: "There is too much truth in it for a mere Romance, at the same time there is too much fiction to admit its being stiled a History" (I. xxxi). It is a resume of Cortez's conquest, the governing of Darien, with Pizarro's conquest of the Incas the main event. Interspersed are vignettes concerning fanaticism and religious intolerance, the destructiveness of greed, vignettes of Indian customs, and a description of an earthly paradise. The story of Cora and Alonzo, of love between Spaniard and Inca, developed here (and later by Kotzebue in Die Spanier in Peru, adapted by Richard Binsley Sheridan in Pizarro [1799] which was performed frequently on the London stage) is an example of cross-cultural sympathy and the possibilities for a steady improvement of the race inherent in such understanding. Though said to be among the juvenile reading of Keats, this book has not received the attention it merits. Because it focuses on concerns of the difference between unreflecting love and the desire for choice and glory, because it deals with the evils of fanaticism, because it points out the disastrous consequences of one type of discovery and the recuperative and redeeming consequences of another, the book does deserve more attention as a precursor to Keats's ideas of disinterestedness.

Marmontel describes the brutality of the conquest and the single vision of the Spaniards, who view the Indians as the Hebrews viewed the Amelekites. Inscribing an apocalyptic myth upon the conquest of the Indians, the Spaniards wreak havoc. But in

destroying the Indians they destroy themselves. There are several points of contact between the book and the development of ideas and themes expressed in Keats's poetry, namely, its graphic descriptions of the results of religious fanaticism and meditations on pain and suffering, and its juxtaposition of fame and glory and the consequent diminishing of the value of the bliss offered by an earthly paradise. It is usually thought, for instance, that Keats was instilled with religious skepticism through his acquaintance with Leigh Hunt, expressed in his sonnet "In Disgust at Vulgar Superstition." However, the opening attack on fanaticism and the destruction of domestic peace in Marmontel's The Incas would have influenced Keats's valuation of friendship and community found in earlier poems and verse epistles and assisted him in establishing his problematic heroic figured forth by such adventurers as Cortez, Ulysses and Napoleon. For example, in the invocation to "The Fall of Hyperion," Keats speaks of "fanatics" and "savages" who, in contradistinction to poets, fail to "save / Imagination from the sable charm / And dumb enchantment" (I. 9-11). In a gesture embracing all humanity, Keats pledges "all the Mortals of the World" (I. 44). Conflating fanatic and savage, oppressor and oppressed, as reflections of each other, Keats champions the insubstantiality of "Poesy alone" and its "shadows of melodious utterance," its "fine spell of words" which haunts all people. Though written in 1778, The Incas would bring to the early nineteenth century overtones of the problems of colonization in general.

The Orient, not the New World, was opened up for "discovery" by Napoleon. Egypt, represented by the negatively capable Cleopatra, as well as the ambiguous nature of the Napoleonic conquest, becomes for Keats a figure of the new geography of discovery. The "effeminacy" of Egypt bears similarity to the life of the emotionally expressive Indians of the New World represented by Marmontel and the homoerotic overtones of this openness represented by others. Yet it is not mere commonplaces that Keats takes in when reading Marmontel but an ideology that is drawn from reaction at seeing the destruction wrought by empire and the disastrous results of the clash of two cultures:

Inconceivable are the torments; unheard of are the deaths the avarice of those monsters has invented. Ingenious to the last degree in combining and prolonging the various modes of sufferance, it gives to theatre a thousand horrible shapes with which Death herself was unacquainted ... But the most shocking and incomprehensible feature in their whole character is their utter insensibility. By the fires in which a whole family are consuming, in the midst of a village in which the blazing roofs are tumbling in upon a company of pregnant women, of helpless old men, of children at the breast, at the scaffold on which a mother and her son are broiling over a slow fire, one may see these monsters, one may see them laughing and insulting the victims of their fury (I. 80).

The stress of Marmontel is on the destruction of social and familial bonds, bonds which are recreated in the younger generation through miscegenation, the marriage of Cora and Alonzo.

The negatively capable poet has located for himself in Darien, the isthmus that joins two continents and separates two oceans, a dual image of jointure and division, an antithesis which renders neutral and haunting the discovery of new oceans by Cortez.

Meantime the Isthmus was a prey to the most
inhuman of tyrants. Davila was the name of this
Barbarian. His cruelty had rendered him the terror
of those nations who inhabited the mountains that
joined the two Americas. Over rocks, forests and
precipices, his soldiers with their devouring dogs
were let loose upon the savages. Their destruction
cost him nothing more than the trouble of finding
them out and butchering them. Thus was the passage
opened from the Atlantic to the Pacific (I. 90-91).

Cortez stands in for Balboa in Keats's sonnet perhaps because Balboa's character is too contradictory; Marmontel says he was worse than Davila and Pizarro, while Robertson says he was a victim of Davila. Given a set of ambiguous and conflicting interpretations of the heroes of the conquest, Keats comprehends in that figure all these readings.

Keats, in his sonnet, does not merely reproduce the evil of conquest and the goodness of primitivism. The undifferentiation of primitivism has its allure but also its limitations. Rather, it is

in the New World that Keats finds the contradictory geography that is developed into the landscape appropriate to the actions of the negatively capable heroic. European views of the inhabitants lend themselves to such an interpretation. That the indigenous male population was given over to homosexual practices was a commonplace derived from the ongoing argument about the nature of the New World, an argument summarized by Gerbi. Though Gerbi does not treat the topic of homosexuality, such a topic was a subtext for any treatment of the inhabitants and finds especial mention in De Pauw's and Raynal's arguments about the decadence of the New World. Washington Irving, in an account derived from Herrera's history, writes of Balboa's encounter with some warriors in Darien: "They were clad in robes of white cotton. Either from their effeminate dress, or from accusations of their enemies, the Spaniards were induced to consider them guilty of unnatural crimes, and, in their abhorrence and disgust, gave them to be torn to pieces by the blood hounds."⁷⁷ In his *History* (1807), Clavigero denies "the four principle vices with which [De Pauw] charges the Americans; gluttony, drunkenness, ingratitude, and pederasty." The intensity of Clavigero's denial extends to denying this practice even took place in Europe; he says that it is only practiced by "Turks of a certain profession ... who are held by that nation in the light of saints and receive the highest marks of respect and veneration," a description which seems more a defense of pederasty than a condemnation.⁷⁸ Keats evokes ambiguous sexual roles for negative capability in his figuring forth Endymion, Antony, Alcibiades, and

Christ; this edge between an identity that notices its own limitations and interests and a disinterestedness that does not recognize differentiation becomes a source for poetry.

Another such place and similarly strange sexual practices is found in Marmontel. There is an island off the coast of Peru upon which the Spaniards, lost at sea, make landfall. It is inhabited by a tribe of Indians whose character is marked by manly effeminacy (most commentators remark upon the hairless physiognomy of the males, the uniformity and beauty of their limbs and their total unsuitability to hard physical labor). On this island paradise the youths and maidens assemble every evening upon the meads engaging in free love:

One of the tenderest marks of affection a girl
among these Islanders could give her lover, was
to engage her acquaintances to make choice of him
in their turns ... The more grateful he showed himself
when he came back to her.

The Spaniards are delighted with this custom, exchanging women
until

The following day beauty resumed its rights
and was for choosing in its turn. Then it was
that that fantastic caprice engendered by our pride,
which we call love; that gloomy, unquiet, restless
passion, began to instill its poison into the souls
of the Castilians: they took upon them to infringe
the liberty of choosing and to engross that

privilege to themselves (I. 243).

Because the Spaniards refuse the freedom of no choice, the Indians eject them from their island and the Spaniards say,

Life without glory is no life at all. To men like us, it were as well to be buried underground as buried in oblivion. No; let us go in quest of adventures that will at least leave some trace of us behind them. That mode of life by which a man may exert some share of influence over the destiny of the world, is the only mode of existence he can pursue with honour; the only one it can be in character for us to relish (I. 249).

Keats finds in Marmontel's narrative the problem of being absorbed by an absolute, either fanaticism or unreflecting love, and the absolute freedom of choice which can only be maintained if one chooses not to choose, which is not a choice, and the more lived experience of choice and the necessary limitation of freedom such lived experience gives to people, a great deal of unhappiness, but a degree of glory, fame. It is within this adolescent reading that the pastoral vision, the perpetual spring of free love, abandonment to nature's endless cycles, is experienced by people as non-existence. Thus at an early stage, Keats understands that the pastoral vision unravels itself, reveals the dangers of absorption into undifferentiated being.

The origins of the negatively capable heroic have been placed within the sexual practices found in the New World. The actions of

the negatively capable hero are also derived from Keats's reading in texts treating the Discovery. Keats internalizes the age of discovery, transforming the epic material of that age to the discoveries the mind makes of its own nature and its place in the world. At the same time, through the use of Cortez and the myth of discovery, he calls into question this myth of the creative mind, its capacities and limitations. Hazlitt writes of the age of Discovery that "Fairy land was realized in new and unknown worlds."⁷⁹ He illustrates his conclusion that "Fancy's air-drawn pictures after history's waking dream shewed like clouds over mountains; and from the romance of real life to the idlest fiction, the transition seemed easy" with a quote from Spenser's Faerie Queene:

Where is that land of faery
Which I so much do vaunt, but nowhere show,
But vouch antiquities, which nobody can know.

But let man with better sense advise,
That of the world least part to us is read
... And later times things more unknown shall show.⁸⁰

Hazlitt's argument is that in the age of genius and discovery, poets copied from the living principle of nature: "It is the effort we make, and the impulse we acquire, in overcoming the first obstacles, that project us forward; it is the necessity of exertion that makes us conscious of our strength."⁸¹ The shift from external discovery to singing the "epic passion" of the human

heart, to create a true copy from the exploration of the dark corridors that lead from the chamber of maiden thought, becomes Keats's epic theme to be pursued throughout his career.

The negatively capable Cortez has interesting antecedents in Keats's poetry. In a poem written in his nineteenth year, Keats brings to the foreground his concerns with discovering a mental and poetic stance with which to replace the traditional action of the hero. "Fill for me a brimming bowl" was written after Keats watched a woman ungloving her hand at Vauxhall. Aileen Ward suggests that the idealization of the woman reflects Keats's "struggle with physical insignificance" although he was "a good-looking young man."⁸² The epigraph to the poem is taken from Terence's comedy Eunuchus and are the words of a man disguised as a eunuch who, upon first seeing the girl he loves, says, "What wondrous beauty! From this moment I efface from my mind all women." Ward connects this quotation to Keats's own experience of seeing a beautiful woman. But unlike Terence's Chaerode, who proceeds to consummate his desire, Keats remains, so to speak, in the Eunuch's guise. Other notable eunuchs whose images influenced Keats include Mardian from Antony and Cleopatra, his favorite play, and Peter Abelard to whom Keats compared the orator of Peterloo, Henry Hunt, whose triumphal entry into London and appearance reminded him of Abelard's college dress and "fine mouth" (II. 194-95).⁸³ This search for the peculiar characters embodying this heroism was not lost on the reading public. An article in Blackwoods five years after Keats's death read, "He outhunted Hunt in a species of

emasculated pruriency, that ... looks as if it were the product of some imagining Eunuch's muse within the melancholy inspiration of the Haram."⁸⁴

But forgotten by that writer is the special significance of the eunuch in Christian history. The Eunuch of great authority under Queen Candace of Ethiopia was reading a passage from Isaiah, the paraphrase of which reads:

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and
like a lamb dumb before his shearing, so opened
he not his mouth ...
In his humiliation his judgement was taken away;
and who shall declare his generations? For his life
was taken from the earth (Acts 8: 26,33).

The eunuch is moved by these mysterious words and asks that the apostle Philip teach him their meaning and is consequently baptized. The chapters from Isaiah from which the Eunuch read deal with Christ, the Scapegoat, who "was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53: 5). The equation of Eunuch and Christ elevates the Eunuch who is no longer a "dry tree" (Isaiah 55: 5). Indeed, it is the Eunuch to whom God will give his house "and a name better than of sons and daughters: [He] will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56: 5). The paradox of the Eunuch apotheosized is brought forward by Matthew where Jesus speaks of the married state as somewhat limiting to those who

partake of it. Eunuchs, little children, the poor, and the disciples shall bear the word and sit in judgment upon Israel (Matthew 19:12).

In the first verse paragraph of Keats's poem is expressed the desire of a "brimming bowl" of liquor that will efface the memory of a woman. The image is of brimmingness without ultimate release. This brimmingness of the liquor which must annihilate desire effectively excites a desire, providing intensity without context, desire without consummation, laughter when expectation is disappointed, the perpetual cock-tease, images of negative capability, introduced by the reference to the Eunuch. Keats's use of oxymoron has already revealed its origin, not in the unconscious tendency to overplump verses and gain an ease of expression as materialist critics would argue, but, rather, in taking the experience of a sexually and emotionally interested and "good-looking young man" encountering the life of another and in writing poetry that intensifies through teasing the very disenablement and dis-ease of difference and otherness, a creative act of reinterpretation and reintegration of the tradition of the eunuch, the true negatively capable hero of the Christian epic.

Through the image of the eunuch, Keats examines the peculiar stance of the modern hero's place in the world. His reintegration of this tradition is creative of the focus of his poetic, to express that line between intensity and emptiness. Such a place is described by Mardian who says to Cleopatra,

Mardian: What's your highness' pleasure?

Cleo: Not now to hear thee sing: I take no pleasure
In aught a Eunuch has: 'tis well for thee,
That, being unseminar'd, thy freer thoughts
May not fly forth of Egypt. Hast thou affections?
Mardian: ... Not in deed, for I can do nothing
But what indeed is honest to be done:
Yet I have fierce affections, and think
What Venus did with Mars.

Cleopatra plays upon the all in nothing a eunuch has when she says "I take no pleasure in aught a Eunuch has" comparing his emasculation and disenablement that prevent him from thinking of someone outside Egypt to her own thoughts of Antony in Rome, her "nothing in all." Mardian states "Yet I have fierce affections and think what Venus did with Mars" giving to the female Venus the power of action--it is she that "did" Mars. The creative play such an exchange allows interfuses the entire play. Cleopatra and Antony exchange clothes; in the first scene, Antony is mistaken for Cleopatra and later she dresses in his sword and buckler while he wears her "tyres and mantles." It is such an atmosphere of oxymoron and deviance that is creative of negative capability. The all in nothing of the eunuch becomes a source of the rich oxymoron of the "joy of grief" in Keats's early poem.

This earlier imagery derived from courtesans and eunuchs is later revived in such figures as that of Lamia, a figure representative of loitering females of Corinth taken from the miscellany of Potter's Antiquities, and suggests the extent to

which Keats mixes low, comic elements with the high, tragic and epical concerns of a different tradition, achieving what Empson has called the "double irony" so prevalent in Shakespeare's pastoral vision. Keats' lyric voice then is less private, personal and more dialogical in the sense that he appeals to the comic grotesque,⁸⁵ and in such a posture undercuts the high tragical bringing it into the realm of his new heroism which is open to all.

"Fill for me a brimming bowl" thus contains the genesis of the idea of Negative Capability: the fruitfulness of the apparently empty gesture, the laughter, which according to Kant, is expressed when our expectations come to naught. If justifying God's way to men through showing men the open-endedness of God's plan is Milton's epic theme, Keats's epic theme is to justify man's fruitfulness to an empty nature, or to celebrate man's fruitfulness in spite of an empty nature.

A series of poems written in January and February 1818 bring the problem of fruitlessness and silence to the forefront, interfusing the lyric form with the heroic ideal. The sonnet beginning with "Time's Sea" was written five years after seeing the woman at Vauxhall who inspired "Fill for me a brimming bowl." The two poems inspired by the same woman are also united thematically, and by extension, the poems composed around "Time's Sea" are united to this earlier poem. These other poems written in January and February 1818 include "In Drear-nighted December," "Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair," "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Again," "When I have Fears that I may cease to be," "Lines on the

Mermaid Tavern," "God of the Meridian," "Welcome Joy, and welcome sorrow," "To the Nile," "Blue--'tis the life of heaven, the domain," and "O thou whose face hath felt the winter's wind." Each poem adds to Keats's developing concept of the new heroism.

These poems occupy a place between the completion of one epical work, Endymion, and the inception of Hyperion. The theme of these short poems written in two months is the theme of the poet as hero; more exactly, the theme of each poem suggests the value and strength that is derived from examining memories. The poems attest to the creative potential of a place of disinterestedness and interest, of the dead closure of the past and its constant resurfacing throughout people's lives; Keats writes to his brothers, "I cannot bear to be uninterested or unemployed, I, who for so long a time, have been addicted to passiveness" (I. 214). "Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb" deals with the memory of a woman now five years buried in and receded into memory. Aileen Ward argues that Keats's sexual disillusionment of the previous fall when he completed Endymion revives his interest in that moment of ideal love. Having been told by Reynolds to "emasculate" phrases from Endymion (the word is Ward's) Keats revises those phrases which are celebratory of sexual love, shifting their emphasis. The theme of eager intensity of sexual fulfillment is replaced; there is instead an emphasis on partaking of "a fellowship with essence." Keats's "emasculatation" of his poetry revives another source of poetry which is like sexual arousal, not consummation; it is "a gradual ripening of the

intellectual powers," a gradual feel of one's "brimmingness" to the point of delirium.

"Time's sea" is about denaturing sexual fulfillment, replacing denatured sexuality with memory. Memory of past beauty is like sex without consummation; the past never to be attained retains its powers over the present. This aspect of memory is a negatively capable power. The fact of remembering, though it entails the knowledge of life passing, of life emasculated, is a mental power to be reckoned with. Its exercise entails grieving: "Every delight with sweet remembering, / And grief unto my darling joys dost bring." The "joy of grief" in the naive earlier poem ("Fill for me a brimming bowl") has been transformed into the rich and perverse situation of humans whose only recourse to Time's ever ebbing tide and barren sands that "Long hours have to and fro let creep" is the power of memory which captures time and brings it back to us. Keats, in an image taken from Shakespeare's Egyptian play, writes of an ear devouring the sweets of sound "in the wrong sense," echoing Cleopatra's words "Cram thy fruitful tidings in my ear"; he thus conflates the eunuch's emasculated "all in nothing" and Cleopatra's "nothing in all" which gives to the sonnet its tortured feeling of memory. In "Welcome joy and welcome sorrow," written about the same time and placed by Stillinger just before, the specific reference to "Cleopatra, regal drest, / With the asp at her breast," this condition that brings us to "laugh and sigh, and laugh again," reveals memory's true descent, from the negatively capable geography and heroes of Egypt.

Yet, "Time's sea" with its Egyptian inscription is not the last word on the subject thought about on 4 February 1818. A sonnet written the same day under totally different circumstances answers or offers an alternative vision to the sad spectacle of emasculation in "Time's sea." Keats frequently employed the sonnet, a form developed for silent reading, in a social setting of competitive or joint sonnet writing. "To the Nile" has its origins in such a social gathering of poets, Keats, Reynolds, and Shelley. It uses imagery derived from "Tintern Abbey" 's "inland murmur" and, because of its chronological position in relation to "Time's sea," is an echo of the other poem. It foregrounds the fruitfulness / barrenness motif of the earlier poem and more fully develops the Egyptian theme of "Time's Sea," hinted at in the reference to Cleopatra. The active imaginative memory brings to life the barren wasteland that without memory would be a stretch of sand as the sea of time flowed out. In "To The Nile" memory and the consequent sense of time it brings is fruitful. The Nile does ebb and flow; it is like an inland sea. The Keatsian idea of negative capability is extended into the Orient, the place of Cleopatra and her Eunuch's "all of nothing" and of Napoleon's "conquest" or liberation of Egyptian culture from the Mamelukes--like the discovery of the new world, a destructive heroic enterprise.

There are two versions of "To the Nile." Considered together, they underscore a richer sexual ambiguity productive of negative capability. Woodhouse's transcript of the sonnet reads

Son of the old-moon mountains African!
Stream of the pyramid and crocodile!
We call thee fruitful, and, all the very while
A desert fills our seeing's inward span.
Nurse of swart nations since the world began, 5
Art thou so beautiful, or a wan smile,
Pleasant but to those men who, sick with toil,
Rest them a space twixt Cairo and Decan?
Oh may dark fancies err!--they surely do;
And ignorance doth make a barren waste 10
Of all beyond itself:--thou dost bedew
Green rushes, like our rivers, and dost taste
The pleasant sun-rise:--green isles hast thou too;
And to the sea as happily dost haste.

In Charles Brown's transcript, two spaces were left empty and were filled in by Keats who changed the word "Stream" in line two to read "Chief" and cancelled lines 6-8 in the Woodhouse transcript to read "Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile / Such men to honor thee, who worn with toil." The changes here involve removing the strange appearance of the male Nile, whose beauty may be but a mask hiding its "wan smile," promising pleasure but revealing only barrenness and "pleasant but to those men" of Egypt, and giving to the sonnet a straighter masculinity with only the phrase "Nurse of swart nations" remaining to suggest the original dual sexuality of the river. We see why this ambiguous sexuality of the Nile itself and its negatively capable progeny

become an intensely suggestive image for Keats.⁸⁶

Considering the entire oeuvre of Keats as we usually read him rather than in bits and pieces and fragments, the strange sexuality of the Nile standing for both male and female seems more Keatsian. The male river whose reach stretches over a barren desert is a metaphor for a visionary experience which "spans" the passive mind of the speaker (his maiden chambers of thought?), bringing fruitfulness to the desert of memory and mind. The ordinary masculine endeavors to capture and colonize Egypt in the activities of Napoleon and Nelson would thus be at odds with the Keatsian long view and are themselves barren of issue.

That these issues of conquest are present in the sonnet is evident from the circumstances surrounding its composition. "To the Nile" should be seen in contrast to Shelley's "Ozymandias," written about the same time (though it is not the sonnet which Shelley wrote that day in the company of Reynolds and Keats). Hunt published "Ozymandias" in the Examiner in January, 1818; Keats, Shelley, and Reynolds wrote their sonnets on 4 February 1818. Shelley's sonnet traces the folly of great deeds that come to be faceless in a desert of sand; Ozymandias could be the prototype of Napoleon (whom Shelley detested), whose battles for control of Egypt were fought under the shadow of the pyramids and the sphinx. Keats goes a step further and takes up the theme of the hero by replacing an exterior with an interior power. Shelley's "Ozymandias" figures forth Egypt as a province of male power; Keats offers his virile Nile of "Son" and "Chief" in spite of the Nile's

obvious effeminacy as "Nurse" and coy beauty. Shelley's Ozymandias is a power of tyranny overwhelmed by time and replaced by the new spirit; Keats, on the other hand, examines the terrible desert of ignorance which is crossed by "seeing's inward span." The Nile, a symbol for the negatively capable poet, partakes of both sexes and is a true literary descendent and, at the same time, a progenitor of Cleopatra.

The sonnet which Shelley wrote that day with Keats is also relevant to these issues. The sonnet reads:

Month after Month the gathered rains descend
Drenching your secret Aethiopian dells
And from the desert's ice-girt pinnacles
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
Girt there with blasts and meteors tempests dwells
By Nile's aerial urn, with rapid spells
Urging those waters to their mighty end.
O'er Egypt's land of Memory floods are level
And they are thine, O Nile--and well thou knowest
That soul--sustaining airs and blasts of evil
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
Beware, O Man--for knowledge must to thee,
Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

We learn more of the nature of Keats's awakened mind by the gloss to Keats's poem supplied by Shelley's: that the Nile, born or "Frost and Heat" gives birth to "soul-sustaining airs and blasts of

evil" and to "fruits and poisons." Keats's negatively capable geography through which he knows good through evil affiliates itself with Milton's Eden.

Another sonnet "Blue--'tis the life of Heaven--the domain" treats people's place in the world of elements. The idea in the sonnet is that the blue of the air is an eternal element. But in spite of its eternal aspect and the pleasures it brings, without people it remains "a mere shadow." However, it becomes "great / When in an eye [it is,] alive with fate." Each sonnet works upon a theme of human experiences partaking of the elements around us and our experiences as adding a luster to elements. Each sonnet shows people's fruitfulness in spite of an empty nature. The poetic thus recreates the elemental. The intensity of experiencing the permanent in the transitory is the source of Keats's poetic of negative capability.

Egypt is a rich source for Keats's negatively capable poetics; the extension of that poetic as a critique on the heroic can be seen by Keats's possible employment of accounts available to Keats of Napoleon's conquest and the English expedition into Egypt. We know of Keats's ongoing interest in Napoleon and all his exploits as well as his interest in Egyptian themes. That Napoleon "opened" Egypt very likely brought within the ken of Keats the Napoleonic conquest of Egypt and the images such an encounter would produce. Such accounts that were available would be Miot's Expedition of the French to Egypt, Denon, and Jomard's account in French and Robert Wilson's account of the English Expedition.⁸⁷ Though Napoleon was

said to have liberated the cultural heritage of Egypt, his invasion was marked by violent revolts among the "liberated" Arabs in spite of his propaganda techniques and conversion to Islam. Though the French defeated the Mamelukes and Syrians in pitched battles they never successfully finished off the Mamelukes, who retreated into the deserts or distant provinces.

The "nothing in all" which the French encountered in Egypt is evident in the description of the successful battle with 5000 fierce Mameluke cavalry, when the French fleet was destroyed by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile (Felicia Hemans has the English dead in Egypt buried under the Pyramids, but since theirs was a naval victory, the dead were in fact buried on Nelson's Island off Akoubir). The march to Cairo from Alexandria illustrates the precarious position the French found themselves in and the customs they had to encounter. For example, Miot writes of the homosexuality of the Arab / Egyptians:

We passed many dead bodies of our soldiers maimed and decapitated by the Arabs ... In some melon grounds, on the banks of the river ... I saw the bodies of many Frenchmen, naked and headless, and stretched out with their breasts toward the ground; an atrocious murder being the last outrage they had suffered from an enemy who publicly gratify propensities which nature abhors.⁸⁸

Bourrienne tells the anecdote of Napoleon and the soldier sodomized by the Bedouins. "One grenadier, rather, than submit to the treatment, let himself be killed. Buonaparte disapproved of such

excessive virtue. 'How were you treated?' he asked of the returned captives. The man, instead of answering burst into sobs. 'What are you crying about?' The man told him. 'Well, you big stupid, is that all you are making such a fuss about! You paid the price of your carelessness. You should have stayed with your unit.'"⁸⁹

In this country of Ottoman slaves forming a dynasty of rulers and warriors, of unfruitful sexual propensities, of a fruitful river in a barren wilderness, even the melons are oxymoronic: "Let me here mention the delightful refreshment which we owed to the watermelons. In excess however they are very dangerous, and many of our soldiers died of the dysentery which they caused."⁹⁰ The women are not desirable to the soldiers because they are swart or actually black African and, in any case, unusable:

Our men of course began to take their usual liberties but they discovered that the shiek had secured his women better than his house, for the lower part of their bodies was cased in iron girdles.⁹¹

The sands themselves held mysteries. An expedition into the desert revealed remains of forests and rivers.

There were trunks and branches of trees entire ...

There had formerly existed in this place a forest of considerable extent. Further on was the appearance of the ancient bed of a river ... From the frequent well known local changes in the deserts, an object discovered this day, will be in a short time engulfed in sand, whilst another, sunk to a profound depth,

may by a simple and common cause in Egypt return again to the surface.⁹²

Among the works available to Keats was an English account of Egypt; and though it is not known whether Keats read the text, it has bearing upon Keats's own representation of Egypt. Robert Wilson writes of the view from the pyramids:

The view from hence is frightfully barren; an immeasurable waste of desert is only interrupted by the narrow flat of cultivated land which separates the Deserts of Lybia and Arabia, nor can that arid soil, and wretched villages in the valley, afford any scene picturesque or gratifying. The eye can only rest with any pleasure on the waters of the Nile, the island of Rhoda, and some fine orange trees ... These only can refresh the aching sight; and yet this view has so fascinated, as to make Savary believe that the poets from hence must have formed their ideas of Elysium, and so enraptured him as to excite his regrets that he could not remain during life in this garden of bliss.⁹³

Within this description is the kernel of Keats's own concept of the Nile: the very barrenness it presents teases the mind into creating an Eden. A note to this passage associates the infernal rivers Acheron, Cocytus, and Lethe, with the canals that laced the area of the Pyramids. The origins of negative capability within a contemporary heroics taking place in Egypt also bridges the

difference between the present and the past linking contemporary exploits with the Dantesque overtones of the infernal and purgatorial regions which Egypt embraces. It is in places like these represented in such works as Keats's fairy poems discussed in Chapter One with their references to Dante that Keats brings forth his poetic of negative capability, that versatile poetic bred of epic and pastoral, the hero and the eunuch.

Keats's Nile comprehends a very long view of human existence which all the supposed conquerors of Egypt, Napoleon and Nelson, thought that they were reestablishing. Keats's negatively capable Nile, derived from his reading of Antony and Cleopatra, is only one use of this particular history of the Nile. Yet with the failure of Napoleon and, in the success of Nelson (which might be considered a defeat since it led to Napoleon's return to France and his seizure of French government initiating his attempt to control all Europe)⁹⁴ one sees the truth of Keats's heroic posture and long view. When Nelson won the Battle of the Nile, Lady Hamilton wrote to him from Naples: "If I was king of England, I would make you the most noble, puissant Duke Nelson, Marquis Nile, Earl Alexandria, Viscount Pyramid, Baron Crocodile and Prince Victory, that posterity might have you in all forms."⁹⁵ Had Lady Hamilton been present in Alexandria at Nelson's victory she might have dressed him in her tyres and mantles and worn his sword Phillipan.⁹⁶ William Blake had already undercut the traditional interpretation of heroism by painting "The Spiritual form of Nelson guiding Leviathan" (1809) when designs for a monument to Nelson were being

solicited. Blake's painting shows an apotheosized nude Nelson surrounded by Leviathan in whose folds are held male and female figures. The contradictory nature of such heroism as Nelson represented for Blake is brought forward by the image of the slave upon whose feet he rests and the female forms subdued within the folds of Leviathan deftly handled by Nelson. Blake's representations of aspects of the oppressive male suggests the restriction and limitation of the feminine aspects in the male.⁹⁷ Undercutting the tradition of heroic endeavor associated with the Nile, Keats gives to the river a richer taxonomy, investing it with a "truer" history, than Lady Hamilton and her masculinist Roman diction could comprehend or Nelson's victory might create. It was left to Napoleon to play the Antony to Madame Foures' Cleopatra which perhaps led Keats to equate Antony and "Buonap" who, though he did not kill himself as Antony did, bore the ignomy of exile.

Like the new world, Egypt becomes the geographical locus of negative capability. The image of a fruitful river in a barren waste, like that of laughter at disappointed expectation, suggests coming to a point without irritably reaching after fact or reason. The river and the Egyptian imagery figure forth the open-endedness of experience. Exploration which results in mutilations of the world and people's psyches is analogous to coming to terms with one's own unexplored geography where one most intensely feels. Keats is not inscribing his own sense of alienation from the original, his own felt illegitimacy, but affirming his own sense of his own life in its modern manifestation. The old myths are the

local habitation of a felt experience; though the ancient belief is outworn, the essence is nevertheless present and is expressed in the continuity, in Keats's case, of a poetic tradition.

But Keats's creation is not without a strong sense of the ambiguous nature of new heroic exertion. Keats did not need to look far for the feel of ambiguity in the great person's desire to overcome limitation and the ultimate defeat thus encountered. He could find it in Byron's description of Napoleon:

He who surpasses or subdues mankind
Must look down on hate of those below.
Though high above the sun in glory glow,
And far beneath the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

(III. xiv)

Buonaparte for Keats is the figure of man overwhelmed by accidents, by disjunctions, without a firm rooting in the necessary "epic passion" of his contemporaries. In referring to Napoleon two years after his "Chapman's Homer" and before the publication of "Endymion," Keats writes:

The nature of "Hyperion" will lead me to treat it
in a more naked and Grecian Manner--and the march
of passion and endeavour will be undeviating--and
one great contrast between them will be--that the
hero of the written tale of Endymion being mortal

is led on, like Buonaparte, by circumstance;
whereas the Apollo in Hyperion being a fore-seeing
God will shape his actions like one. (I. 160)

Thinking back over his composition of "Endymion" Keats writes, "I leaped headlong into the Sea; thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings" (I. 374), and, while he was writing the poem, wrote in defense of writing a long poem, "a long poem is a test of invention which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry, as Fancy is the Sails, and Imagination the Rudder" (I. 170). Yet Keats is also referring to his desire to penetrate the Mystery, copy from nature, write with "the Mind" that explores the corridors that lead from the chamber of maiden thought.

This figure of Buonaparte becomes a type of the figure of Cortez who is, in turn, a type of Ulysses figure whose soaked heart was the impetus for "Chapman's Homer." The implications of this image of the hero can also be seen in Keats's relationship with Benjamin Robert Haydon, which commenced just after the composition of "Chapman's Homer" in November 1816. Keats's treatment of the theme of glory and heroism developed more fully as he encountered actual genius in the flesh and the poetic in the forms of the Elgin Marbles.

There are echoes of "Chapman's Homer" in "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," where Keats begins to fill the mind of his staring Cortez hero with a new feeling and new sensations. In this sonnet, the field of history contemplated by the poet hero is vast. The Elgin Marbles represent the battle of the Titans and the gods, various

wars between creatures and human triumphal processions. It is within this vast scheme of time that the hero / poet now must comprehend and take in and feel. The motif reoccurs, notably in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." To view this poem in the usual way as a translation into words of the effects or properties of a work of plastic art is to confine too narrowly the project of feeling human history which Keats has undertaken.

The theme of this poem is the development of genius and its actions, and the way in which the hero / poet grapples with materials at hand. The inception of this poem is involved with Keats's relationship to Benjamin Robert Haydon in the winter of 1816. Haydon's fascination with his own genius piqued Keats's intense interest in genius in general. How does genius express itself, where does it come from, how is it developed? Such questions would have interested Keats who, filled with the excitement of his own work, his meeting with Hunt and Haydon. Their meetings prompted him to write "Great Spirits on Earth are Sojourning" and to write the dedication to Leigh Hunt for his 1817 Volume, published in March. The subject of that book's gathering of poems was Keats's own desire to develop his genius. The sonnet, then, can be seen not as echoing the conventional dichotomy of spirit and flesh, mortality and immortality, but as an essay in the origin of genius, specifically the origin and growth of genius in terms of the vast expanse of divine and human history. The project strains the limits of the sonnet form.

Keats was quite aware of what the marbles represented to him,

calling them after seeing them March 1 or 2, 1817 "incarnate joy" and representative of a religion of pleasure.⁹⁸ Yet his sonnet makes no reference to this idea but instead echoes "Chapman's Homer" to establish his interest in the contemplation of human history and the reasons for genius's development. The titles "On Looking into Chapman's Homer," "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" unite not only the projects of each poem, but the recognition that such artifacts in their very nature but hint at the power which they only body forth and the viewer only partially glimpses this nature, a state indicated by the use of verb markers suggestive of progress. This realization of the fleetingness of these essences gives to Keats a love for these forms and a desire to comprehend more fully the power which created them.

The poem's inception suggests that it is precisely this unsettling contemplation of aspects of power and genius that is the poem's object. Two poems--it is only conjecture which was written first; it is possible that Haydon reversed their order giving preeminence to the second poem bearing his name--were written after Keats's visit to the Elgin Marbles. The circumstances are reminiscent of those under which "Chapman's Homer" was composed, a night of reading followed by a walk home. The transformation of various images illustrates the development of the ideas and sensations of "Chapman's Homer." Cortez's "eagle-eyes," here become from the original "wandering eyes" of the first draft, has been transformed into the image of a "sick eagle looking at the sky." And the poet's voice identifies the speaker of the poem with

the eagle: "I have not the cloudy winds to keep / Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye." The "eagle eyes" of the explorer poet of the earlier sonnet are here no longer filled with potentiality but instead with a melancholy, suggesting the loss of possibility that might have been in the explorer's eyes. To "keep the cloudy winds" in the freshness of the heroic age's first days now seems a "gentle luxury" compared with the hero poet's new responsibility and new awareness in relation to the field of human endeavor that has opened before him. This new terror is the heart's "undescribable [sic] feud." Other reflected images are the "imagined pinnacle and steep," which echo the peaks of Darien and the problematic place of Cortez's vision, and the "billowy main," which is the transferred "wide Pacific." Already these images have become icons for Keats.⁹⁹

Another instance of this sonnet's relationship to the theme of heroes and the development of genius is somewhat oblique but nevertheless worth considering. Haydon's own interest in the origins of genius led him on March 27, 1817 to remark upon the development of Napoleon's genius. A little book entitled Manuscrit Venu de St. Helene, ascribed to Napoleon but later discovered to have been written by J.F. Lullin de Chateaueux, confirmed many of Haydon's opinions about genius. Though Gerald McNiece, in a book on Shelley, calls this publication "trifling,"¹⁰⁰ the interest the book aroused in Haydon and via Haydon, in Keats, is not trifling. In his journal entry of 27 March 1817, Haydon quotes from the book and his comments significantly indicate his particular interests in

the book. Haydon wrote an article in The Examiner of May 4, 1817 concerning the Manuscript to which Keats alludes in his letter of May 1817 to Haydon, written in Margate while trying to begin his own development of genius, Endymion: "It was very gratifying to meet your remarks of the manuscript. I was reading Antony and Cleopatra when I got the paper, and there are several passages, applicable to the events you commentate. You say he (Napoleon) arrived by degrees, and not by any single struggle, to the height of his ambition, and that his life had been as common in particular as other men's" (I. 144). Keats then quotes Shakespeare concerning Antony's commonality with other men ("Let determined things / To destiny hold unbewailed their way"), evoking a stoicism and austere regard for the operations of destiny. Haydon particularly noted in his journal Napoleon's beginnings among the battle with the Piedmontese in their alpine stronghold. It is possible that Haydon's talk with Keats throughout February and March touched upon the battle, inspiring Keats to write of "each ... steep and pinnacle of godlike hardship," an image of that incremental, slow ascent by degrees that is necessary for the genius or hero to realize himself. Indeed, the spirit of Cortez's ascent, and Napoleon's victory among the alpine steeps, is very present in Keats's choice of landscape for the production of his pastoral epic Endymion, a work of genius, development, realization. He writes to Reynolds on April 17, 1817:

Shandlin is a most beautiful place; sloping
wood and meadow ground reach round the Chine,

which is a cleft between the cliffs, of the depth
of nearly 300 feet at least. This cleft is filled
with trees and bushes in the narrow part ... But the
Sea, Jack, the sea (I. 130-31)

Keats incorporates the geography of Margate into his own sense of the geography of his poetic exploration from a peak in Darien to the pinnacle and steeps of Elgin Marbles; of the entire work before him he says to Haydon in the same letter that contains references to the Manuscript Venu and with Napoleon among the outposts of the Piedmontese in the foreground, "I am one that 'gathereth samphire, dreadful trade'; the cliff of Poetry towers above me" (I. 141)

The origins, then, of these images of the hero are found in the image of the Cortez figure of the early sonnet. The hero theme is developed in "Elgin Marbles" and more fully explored in passages such as those in Book III of Endymion, where Keats contrasts the earthly realm of those who rise to "their tip-top nothings, their dull skies, their thrones" (III. 15) with the higher "throned seats" scaled only by poesy and "ethereal things" (III. 23,25). High thrones mounted, senses gorged, and the "undescribable feud" of existence are derived from the earlier image of Cortez on the mountain peak. The final image of Tellus, the mother of Saturn and the other Titans, and her cumbrous load, introduces Keats's epic theme; to be the sequel to Endymion, Keats will lift her "cumbrous load." The Napoleon \ Apollo configuration is not going to be like Endymion hauled around by circumstance but will be like a foreseeing god, the god of the heroic, the heroic ideal. Indeed,

Endymion can be thus seen to be the Cortez figure, the young Napoleon, scaling thrones and pinnacles amongst the Piedmontese before the full maturation of his heroic potential in exploring fully the fierce "undescribable feud," here imaged forth in Tellus and later to be described in Hyperion.

One sonnet in particular traces the heroic ideal. Keats's "Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell" is usually read as the austere and mature utterance of Keats who stoically bears the harsh reality of death and oblivion. Keats is said to realize the intensity of feeling aroused by looking squarely at Death, a juxtaposition that is a great source of poetry. I propose that this sonnet has a very different origin: in Dante's description of the heroes of antiquity in Limbo described in Carey's translation of Inferno, Canto IV. Such an affiliation offers an alternative to the sense of purposelessness usually seen to be expressed in this sonnet and shows the poem to be intimately connected with Keats's ongoing treatment of epic heroism and the new heroism necessary in the modern world.

The thoughts that are expressed in the letter containing the poem form a context of ideas which Keats says are the commentary on his sonnet. These ideas, connected to issues raised by Dante's Limbo, assist Keats in examining disinterestedness and the new heroism of such a refinement, the ambiguity of the new heroism in the world we inhabit which requires interest, and Keats's resolution to this problem in the stress he puts on experiencing this contradiction, "the feel of not to feel it." These concerns

place Keats in a humanist tradition of seeking in the achievements of humans a redemption of loss and the hope of further development and refinement of human feeling.

The letter and the sonnet alternate between bodily and spiritual states and their inter-relationship. The first incident recorded reads,

Yesterday, I got a black eye ... This morning
I am in a temper indolent and supremely careless ...
[this] effiminacy [occurs when] the fibres of the brain
are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and
to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of
enticement and pain no unutterable frown. neither
Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of
countenance as they pass by mee ... This is the only
happiness; and is rare instance of advantage in the
body overpowering the Mind. (II. 78)

From this description of the indolent body moved to action neither by anticipating pleasure nor by avoiding pain, Keats writes of the disinterested Mind which would "reason on the misfortunes of our friends" or pursue the happiness of others because those pleasures or sorrows were their own. This disinterestedness is a sign that there is "some birth to new heroism." Yet the problem of the disinterested mind is that in its most perfect functioning it would do away with difference, with purpose, with life as we know it.

Opposed to this disinterestedness is the necessity of our lives in which "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced."

The problem then, is how does one experience the nullity of experience which is disinterestedness? How does one relish nothing, cessation, indifference, disinterestedness and finally the absolute? Though Keats says that "an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth," we are eagles at best, and sick eagles when best relishing our eagleness. Keats turns to Dante who in Canto IV of Hell describes such disinterestedness in the spirits of heroes of whom Virgil says, speaking as one of them, "we live / Desiring without hope." In fixing this sonnet in contradistinction to the "feel of not to feel it," of the heroes of Limbo "Desiring / Without hope," Keats offers the intensity of lived experience and its value.

Dante's Limbo provides a place for virtuous pagans. Dante stresses the nobility of the poets' art and the dignity of their lives. The poets, "a tribe in honour high / That place possessed"; heaven heard their earthly fame and "holds them thus advanced." They are "mighty spirits" with "semblance neither sorrowful nor glad" (Inferno. IV. 68-79), neither sorrowful because they do not suffer the torment of hell, nor glad because they will never enter heaven. The place these severe and dignified personages inhabit is a "magnificent castle ... Seven times with lofty walls begirt," and within this castle is a "mead with lively verdure fresh" where these heroes live and

... who slow their eyes around
Majestically moved, and in their port
Bore eminent Authority: they spoke

Seldom, but all their words were tuneful sweet.

(IV. 101-102)

Despite the fact that this place is Hell, there is a lofty aspect to the situation, and Dante and Virgil withdraw to "a place / Open and bright and lofty" where they can view each personage on the "green enamel" of the mead with clarity. What Dante has movingly portrayed is that poetry presents light in darkness; this light is not perfect light, but Dante in this passage pays homage to the memory of men and women who valued reason and just actions and poetry.

Many parallels exist between the sonnet and the passage from Dante. Working within the medieval tradition that finds analogues of the sacred in pagan history, Dante redeems the peculiar position of virtuous pagans. He modified the concept of Limbo and placed within its circle the virtuous pagans. Dante's love of Virgil is poignantly expressive of this position when he has Virgil say "the anguish of that race below / With pity stains my cheek" (IV. 18-19). Dante says upon seeing these banished spirits

... Sore grief assailed
My heart at hearing this, for well I knew
Suspended in that Limbo many a soul
Of mighty worth. (IV. 107-110)

The encounter with terrible necessary justice is the central theme of this canto, and Dante's solution to the problem is austere; as Carlyle wrote, "Infinite pity, yet also infinite rigour of law: It is so Nature is made."¹⁰¹ Keats also places a pantheon of figures

within the confines of his ruminations upon the value of disinterestedness and the necessity of individual experience. "I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two--Socrates and Jesus" (II. 80). Keats writes within a humanist tradition as he encounters this problem of living a perfectly disinterested life and by this means coming "to know myself" (II. 81). The importance of individual judgment and exercise of reason that is emphasized in Dante is echoed in Keats's own delineation of the solitary human striving to refine human society through a disinterestedness which can only be known by experiencing or relishing it upon one's individual palate.

Keats describes a state of indolence where "pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable frown ... This is the only happiness; and is a rare instance of advantage in the body overpowering the Mind" (II. 78-79). Life as we know it cannot exist in this state since most people make their way by instinct. Keats in the concluding couplet of his sonnet wrests from Death's oblivion and "slow-chapped power" a basic human experience of intense feeling. This feeling occurs in the very vales of death, in Death's "high Mead." These meads are the "enamel green" and "mead" of Dante's Limbo. However, Keats reworks the meads of Hell and emphasizes their location in the human capacity for feeling. In Limbo there is neither gladness nor sorrow, in life there is both. Another similarity between Limbo and Keats's sonnet can be seen by bringing forward one of Cary's notes:

About this time (1193) died the great Sultan Saladin the greatest terror of the Christians, who, mindful of man's fragility and the vanity of worldly honours, commanded at the time of his death no solemnity to be used at his burial, but only his shirt, in manner of an ensign, made fast unto the point of a lance, to be carried before his dead body as an ensign.¹⁰²

In Keats's sonnet is a reference to the "world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds" which would not only adorn the "magnificent castle" inhabited by the pagans in Dante's Limbo, but would also refer to such ensigns as those of Saladin whose ensign represents an act of defiance in the face of death winning for Saladin a place in Limbo. Keats remakes this anecdote about wresting from the mead of death an intensity of feeling that counters death's limbo of desire without hope, with people's glory and their shame. Verse, Fame, and Beauty and all the poets and philosophers who represent these concepts in Hell's meads, in Keats's poem fade into sorrowful reminders of what is denied people. Here Keats incorporates Dante's vision and presents his own vision of the meads of human experience wherein new heroes representing high feeling, such as Psyche, the sickly knight of "La belle dame," and Lamia, are to be found.

That Keats has been preoccupied with the ideas of this canto is suggested by an earlier reference to it. In his article in the Champion of December 1817, Keats writes of the actor Kean, that he delivers himself up to the intensest feeling,

without a shadow of a thought about anything else. He feels his being as deeply as Wordsworth or any other of our intellectual monopolists. From all his comrades he stands alone, reminding us of him, whom Dante has so finely described in his Hell:

"And sole apart retir'd the Soldan fierce." ¹⁰³

Keats mentions the article in a letter explaining his concept of "Negative Capability, "that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (I. 193). The advance the sonnet makes over "Negative Capability" is that encountering the Mystery develops the soul and prepares the way for the austere vision of the world as a mead, a vale of soul-making.

Another hero from Dante that shows Keats stressing the ambiguity of the hero's situation is the figure of Ulysses. In Canto xxvi of Inferno, Ulysses inhabits the eighth circle where those who misused their mental powers are punished, and Ulysses describes his last voyage beyond the pillars of Hercules and is presented by Dante as a Promethean figure seeking knowledge and disappearing in the trackless seas without a trace.¹⁰⁴

The problematic treatment of the hero within such works as Dante, Shakespeare (Troilus and Cressida), and Camoens allows Keats to rework the idea of the hero and present within this context of rewriting the epic hero as negatively capable. Such a treatment of the heroic is found within Camoens' Lusiad, a copy of which was among Keats's books at his death. Mickle prefaced the poem with

a civil history of mankind which deals with the benefits and destructiveness of commercial ventures. But it is not only the course of discovery and commerce that allow such extremes of evil and benevolence to enter the world, the ambiguous nature of Camoens' project and his relationship to his subject is expressed by Camoens himself which makes for a unique atmosphere in the poem. With Milton, Camoens employs classical machinery, but like Milton he supersedes that machinery to present the truth of Portugal's Christian enterprise. Yet Thomas Greene points out that there is at the very center of this enterprise a questioning of and ambivalence towards this Providence to which the poem is dedicated.¹⁰⁵ When through treachery the Portuguese fleet is lured into the port at Mombassa, Camoens interjects:

O the perpetual danger which attends
The lot of Mortals! O uncertain State!
That, where our trust seems to be anchor'd sure,
We are not safe, although we are secure.
By sea; how many storms, how many Harms,
Death in how many sev'ral fashions drest!
By Land; how many Frauds, how many Alarms,
Under how many wants sunk and opprest!¹⁰⁶

The history which Mickle appends to the poem describes exactly the rise and fall of one governor after another in bloody detail, and Mickle charts the eventual ruin of the Portuguese Empire, as well as describing the dismal end of Camoens himself whose slave had to beg for him in the streets.

Yet not only is Camoens prescient in this case, but he is also expressive of an ambivalence toward exploration which was prevalent in Portugal and in human nature when he describes the parting of the mariners from their homes. A venerable Old man cries "from an oraculous breast" and calls to mind the last voyage of Ulysses:

O glory commanding! O vain thirst

Of that same empty nothing we call Fame!

...What deaths! What dangers! What impetuous storms!

What cruelties on them thy Hand performs!

Fell Tyrant of the soules! life's swallowing wave!

Mother of Plunders, and black Rapes unchaste

There is a tension in Camoens between the glories of achievement and the curses that follow, the swallowing up by waves of men's purposes and the skeptical view of human progress that is really aggravated by Mickle's history. When Milton compares Satan to fleets of ships on the horizon heading toward the Cape with their cargo of spicy drugs he is echoing this ambivalence toward commercial progress. Keats would read Camoens in the context of the destructiveness of modern capitalist enterprise. Murder, slavery, exploitation of every kind is the consequence of Camoens' song of discovery. The ubiquitousness of these concerns about the problematic outcome of Promethean urges especially among the young would seem to be confirmed by the comparison the nineteen year old Mary Shelley makes between the transgression of Victor Frankenstein and the destruction of the Mexico and Peru in the unchecked rapacity for fame.¹⁰⁷

The epic allusions in Keats's sonnet which has its origins not in a bad translation of Homer but in the complexities of human desire and limitation which will occupy Keats for his career, were not lost on other writers. It has been noted that the image of Ulysses and his last voyage is picked up by Tennyson whose poem "Ulysses" echoes "Chapman's Homer," and is affiliated with the earlier poem's epic breath of vision. "Much have I seen and known-cities of men / And manners, climates, councils, governments" says the Ulysses of Tennyson's poem. Keats compares new knowledge to a "new planet that swims into his ken." Ulysses desires "To follow knowledge like a sinking star / Beyond the utmost bond of human thought" intuitively capturing the trajectory of Keats's epic journey. The direction Ulysses sails is West, beyond the sunset. Herman Melville captures the mood implied by the allusions in the sonnet and their implications when he writes in a chapter entitled "The Albatross" about the Pequod's attempt to communicate with a seeming phantom ship, "The Goney," that passes The Pequod in the sea.

Were this world an endless plain, and by sailing
eastward we could for ever reach new distances, and
discover new sights more sweet and strange, than any
Cyclades or Islands of King Solomon, then there were
promise in this voyage. But in pursuit of those far
mysteries we dream of, or in tormented chase of that
demon phantom that, some time or other, swims before
all human hearts; while chasing such over this round

globe, they either lead us on in barren images or mid-way leave uswhelmed.¹⁰⁸

"The Albatross" in Melville appears covered in brine appearing thus inscrutably white. It draws after it a shoal of fish that have accompanied the Pequod leaving that ship utterly alone in the vast sea. The echoes of Coleridge's "Rime" are heard, of a rent in nature. Also present is the reference to Ulysses and the eventual solitude of all people that encompasses their deaths.

In Michael Cooke's terms, Keats's project "is not the silence of incomprehension, but of unmanageable comprehension, of seeing the full import--the consequences--of what one has wanted to do." We can see in Keats's "Chapman's Homer" the same ambivalence, the dread and violation that romantic silence implies."¹⁰⁹ But we can also see that, in affiliating himself with an epic repertoire, Keats fulfills the promise of that tradition in an imaginative transcendence of the limitation of culture. Balachandra Rajan would have us view Keats's use of time as eradicating human activity and as an acknowledging of the falseness of historical narrative. What history offers us is "shapes of understanding ... fragmentary and provisional ... by eradicating the structures of domination which are annexed to those shapes."¹¹⁰ We can modify Rajan's argument, which is made in the context of "Hyperion," by saying that Keats's studied ambivalence toward historical progress can only be fully brought out by an analysis of his relationship to the structures of epic poetry throughout his career. It is ironic that Keats throughout his life would use images of being swallowed

alive and suffocated in a wave or in a tradition such as epic poetry. In Spring 1819 he expressed premonitions of his own death by suffocation brought about by his rotted lungs when he visited Hunt, whose guests were the Gisbornes, friends of the Shelleys. When Mrs. Gisborne spoke of the tenor Farinelli who was able to hold a note indefinitely without perceptibly breathing, Keats murmured that it would be as painful to hear this note as it would be to wait for a diver who dived under the sea to emerge finally.¹¹¹ This anecdote, recorded by Mrs. Gisborne, is telling because it illustrates the essence of Keats's art which is based on an acute sense of actual life: the pretty artifice of singing without perceptibly breathing juxtaposed with the actuality of suffocation. Keats cuts through artifice to nature itself. But it is also true that for Keats the artifice of art was in itself the stuff of life. The oblivion of people's feelings which is captured in the form of art is reinvigorated when we hear Farinelli's voice and become aware of our own suffocation when in fact we are more fully and supremely alive than we might be. Farinelli, a famous castrato, would cohere in Keats's negatively capable mind with images of Eunuchs, in whose disability we feel more strongly our experience. The artifice of art is also the stuff of fear; as Clymene says of Apollo's song, it "did both drown and keep alive my ears" (Hyperion. II. 277).

1. Walter Reed, Meditations on the Hero (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), page 10.
2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 4 Volumes, II. page 810.
3. Gregory Vlastos argues Socrates' convictions based upon his reading of Socrates' "strangeness" and counters prevalent ideas that Socrates merely gave several sides of the argument and let his interlocutors choose whatever one they wished; see Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
4. Michael Cooke, The Romantic Will (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), page xiv.
5. Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1993), page 7.
6. Antonello Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World. The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), page 49. Gerbi quotes Raynal and compares Raynal's observation with woodcuts from contemporary editions of the Haggadah which illustrate the Hebrews' practice and might have influenced Raynal's choice of imagery.
7. Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America The Question of the Other, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1982), page 249.
8. Todorov, page 249.
9. Mary Louise Pratt, pages 23-37. Pratt writes about Linnaeus' Systema Naturae (1735) and Alexander Humboldt's Views of Nature (1806). Such totalizing systems illustrate the European ordering of the entire planet and the subsequent exploitation of its resources.
10. A good introduction to this field is Raymond Schwab's The Oriental Renaissance Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880, translated by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). Edward Said's engaging book on the Western treatment of the East, Orientalism, though bringing to the foreground Middle Eastern and Indian responses to Europe, should be read with a clear understanding of Said's own political program that lies behind his scholarship.
11. Keats is echoing a commonplace developed earlier. See the Edinburgh Review XII (July 1808), page 440: "We cannot see any of the vices or follies of old government creeping into the French military system ... But, alas, the dynasty of Bonaparte is yet too fresh for such blunders as these ... he has a system of policy and

military power which unites in itself almost every benefit of a revolutionary government with a far greater degree of order and regularity than ever before presided over the affairs of the most ancient monarchies."

12. Quoted in The Letters of John Keats, I, 3.

13. Quoted in The Letters of John Keats, I, 3.

14. Mary Louise Pratt, pages 137-141.

15. All quotations from the poetry of John Keats unless otherwise noted are taken from John Keats, Complete Poems, edited by Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

16. It is the miscellaneous aspect of Keats's acquisition of classical booklearning which prompts Marjorie Levinson, in Keats's Life of Allegory, to revive and explore the reasons Keats's contemporaries so harshly criticised Keats's poetry. According to Levinson and Keats's earlier critics, Keats did not capture any splendor of past civilizations, and since he did not know Greek, could not have imbibed the classical culture through miscellanies, dictionaries, and translations of classical works. Keats's claims to authority and affiliation with these works was seen by his contemporaries as simply vulgar presumption. It is this "bad-access and misappropriation" that allows Levinson to read Keats's poetry as the self-conscious, self-reflexive poetry not only of the adolescent but of the emerging petty bourgeoisie, unsure of its claims and awkward in all its new-found finery.

Though Levinson points out a real perverseness in the poetry and writing of Keats which gives to it a warm immediacy of a living hand sometimes lost in more traditional approaches, I think her approach from a late twentieth century perspective to institutional structures such as the University that have only been strong since Keats distorts the real and palpable effects of Keats's own experience with poetry of the past. Her Keats is a Keats who wishes for the "real" life offered by the system or "grammar" represented by the Canon. She sees Keats, who just happens to express this desire in poetry, as representative of a class of people that expresses a similar desire to find authority for its new position in a culture with its antecedents in the elite landed aristocracy. Levinson equates the traditions of poetry with the institutions of oppression within a society. But such an equation denies a poet's developing sense of craft that is learned, at least in early nineteenth century England according to the testimony of the poets' own critiques and the evidence of the poetry and its echoes of antecedents, by a steady application and rewriting of past poetry, bringing one's own times, one's encounter with the times, and experiences beyond time to bear upon traditions. Though I find a perversity in Keats's poetry, I find its expression within a tradition which Keats ultimately strongly controls because he is in possession of poetic urgency, an alertness to life expressed in

language. Levinson's wider-ranging argument reveals itself in such tendentious phrases as "the killing field of the canon," which suggests her interests are in showing the damages caused by holding up false or alien standards as models for variously dispossessed peoples and by extension, models for all of us in our own memory-less pop culture environment. I would argue against Levinson that in Keats's use of epic tradition, in his remaking of the hero, he speaks for his experience of himself.

Since I am writing about Keats's use of miscellanies to create something new, a few words about Levinson's idea that the miscellaneousness of Keats's poetry is what is new and bad. Levinson argues from the following ground. The poem is a standardization, a literary form which commands its participants to see in one way while the "material language of text," those utterances of a unique and ahistorical John Keats, will always speak "John Keats" and not "poem." What this "text" reveals is a Keats compensating for his lower social position, who wants the "real" life offered by the system or "grammar" represented by the works of the canon. This canon is a "weight on the brain of those who inherit it. Or rather, the past imposes a special kind of burden on those individual talents who feel themselves disinherited by the Tradition" (page 10). Keats fills his poetry with images or "forms" of this social grammar but rather than gaining a stylistic and rhetorical ease of presentation or dialogical encounter with his readers, Keats underscores the uneasiness of his position, a sense of inadequacy in his desire to gain authenticity. For Levinson, Keats's lower social position and his misappropriation of forms represents the fantasy of the "perpetual cockstand, that solution to the castration anxiety." In realizing this, we, like Byron, come to "discern the genetic code of the middle class" (page 20), the code of the alienated consumer separated from the thing they desire, a relationship mediated by money which can never coincide with the thing it purchases, "striving toward a structural simplicity it can never realize" (page 261). Such a genetic code in the case of Keats forces him to create a false life or "a real life of substitute things--simulacra" (page 9). Ultimately, Levinson's idea is anti-humanist since holding the idea that real people lead substitute lives is like saying that people don't live.

In arguing a materialist ideology which would allow us to see the real social forces that go into suppressing difference and marginalizing groups of people, Levinson practices the same mystification she claims is the result of the tradition represented by the Canon. For instance, the new series of contradictions of the middle-class that suppress and evade differences of class and sex rather than engaging them is called the "killing field of the Canon" (page 80). "Killing field" refers to an area where animals were once slaughtered to provide food or to prevent the spread of disease. In our own historical moment however the phrase refers to the places in Cambodia where over two million people of every age and class were starved, beaten, worked to death, or murdered by an army of equally mixed ages and classes called the Khmer Rouge. In our own moment the use of this phrase can only conjure up this

place of mass extermination. To compare such a place to a collection of works mostly written by white men and taught at institutions because they represent what is called the ethos of Western humanist and individualistic thought is to wildly, madly suppress difference, a suppression more pronounced than any in the Romantic poets. Indeed, Levinson does not write the "Auschwitz of the Canon" because there is a vocal set of people who actively perpetuate the difference between "Auschwitz" and "Canon."

17. Mary Louise Pratt, page 127.

18. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage; A Study In Romantic Naturalism (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961, [1955]), provides a good source for primary literary works whose subject is the New World. His emphasis, though, is on the idea of the Noble Savage and consequently he dismisses works which have little to add to his idea. The work of Marmontel merits only one sentence and is not related to Keats's ideas at all.

19. Bartolome Las Casas In History, edited by Jaun Friede and Benjamin Keen (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), pages 1-63.

20. Friede and Keen, pages 9-10.

21. Michel de Montaigne, The Complete Essays of Montaigne, edited by Donald Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968) 693-699. The shift in English interest is evident in the title of Eden's translation called The Spanish Colonie or Brief Chronicle of the Acts and Gestes of the Spaniardes in the West Indies, called the newe World, Imprinted at London at the Three Cranes in Vintree by Thomas Dawson for William Brome, 1583. From "Acts and Gestes" in the sixteenth century to The Tears of the Indians being an historical and true account of the cruel massacres and slaughter of above twenty millions of innocent people committed by the Spaniards in the islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, etc As also, in the continent of Mexico, Peru, and other Places of the West Indies, to the total destruction of those countries, London, 1656 is a large step in this direction. It isn't until 1689 that the true political import of this title becomes evident when the book is entitled Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colors: Or a Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and unexampled Masssacres, Buthcheries, and all Manner of Cruelties, that Hell and Malice could invent committed by the Popish Spanish Party on the Inhabitants of West India: Together with the Devastation of several Kingdoms in America by Fire and sword, for the space of Forty two years, from the time of its first Discovery by them.

22. Robert Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, edited by Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1955), page 48. This great compendium acts as a reflection of poeple as they are throughout history and as they are prone to folly and

melancholy.

23. Voltaire, Essai sur les mœurs, in The Works of M. de Voltaire, translated by T. Smollett (London: Printed for J. Newbery et. al., 1766), 38 Volumes, IV. page 183.

24. Cornelius De Pauw, Selections from Les recherches philosophiques sur les américains (Bath: Printed for R. Cruttwell, 1789): The Spaniards "found the men had no beards, their bodies hairless, like those of Eunuques; that they were almost insensible to the passion of love; had milk, or a kind of milky liquid in their breasts" (page 2). Abbe Guillaume Raynal in A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies (Edinburgh: Printed by Mundell and Son, 1804, 6 volumes), writes: "In America the men were in general addicted to that shameful kind of debauchery which shocks nature, and perverts animal instinct. This depravity has been attributed by some to natural weakness, which, however, should rather seem to be contrary then incentive to it. It may rather be ascribed to the heat of the climate; the contempt the men have for the softer sex; the little pleasure that can be experienced in the arms of a woman harassed with labour; the inconstancy of taste; the caprice which excites us in every particular to enjoyments that are least common; and inspires as with certain inordinate propensities to voluptuousness, more easy to be conceived than explained with decency. Besides those hunting parties, in which the men were frequently absent from women for whole months, contributed also to familiarize men more with each other. This vice is therefore in these countries nothing more than the consequence of an universal and violent passion, which even in civilized nations tramples upon honour, virtue, decency, probity, the ties of consanguinity, [sic] and patriotic sentiment; besides, that there are some actions to which civilized people have with reason attached moral ideas, that never have entered into the mind of savages...However this may be, the arrival of the Europeans raised new ideas in the American women. They threw themselves without reluctance into the arms of these libidinous strangers, who had inured themselves to cruelty, and whose avaricious hands were imbrued with blood" (II. 330-331). The entire dispute concerning the origins of the insipidness of all the productions of the New World is set forth in Antonello Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World. The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1973). Gerbi does not comment upon the debate about the homosexuality of the indigenous men.

25. Raynal, I. 1-2.

26. Luis Camoens, The Lusiad of the discovery of India, translated by William Mickle (London: Printed for Lackington, Allen and Company, 1809), 3 Volumes, I. page iii.

27. Camoens, Lusiad, translated by Mickle, I pages iv-xvi.

28. For specific references to Robertson in Keats's letters see Letters. I. page 265n; II. pages 100-101; 156n; and "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."
29. William Robertson, History of America (Berwick: Printed for W. Gracie, 1811, 2 volumes), I. 230; 240.
30. Robertson, America, I. page 243.
31. The source of Keats's haunting landscape has been much discussed but its relevance to Keats's entire new world project as I have set forth has not been noticed.
32. For a discussion of the Stedman / Blake exchange, see Michael Davis, William Blake, A New Kind of Man (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pages 51-54, and a much more detailed discussion in David Erdman, Blake, Prophet Against Empire, A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pages 226-242.
33. Gentleman's Magazine 100 (April 1830), pages 338-39.
34. For a discussion of the association of El Dorado and "realms of gold" see Carl Johnson, "Realms of Gold," Keats-Shelley Journal IX (1960), pages 6-10.
35. Hunt's Examiner presented many articles dealing with Miranda, South American Emancipation, and developments in trading opportunities. It can be seen from glancing at the subject headings of the index to periodicals that articles on South America, its history and contemporary status, were prevalent. This same material was so available that it frequently entered into the private correspondence of Wordsworth, Coleridge, the table talk of Hunt, and the talk and letters of Keats as well.
36. William Spence Robertson, The Life of Miranda (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929), I. pages 101-102.
37. Robertson, Miranda, I. 127.
38. Robertson, Miranda, I. 134.
39. Robertson, Miranda, I. 164.
40. Maccunn, F.J. The Contemporary View of Napoleon (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1914), pages 107-116.
41. "Blanco" White, Letters from Spain (London: Printed for Henry Colburn and Co., 1822), Letters xii and xiii. "A Letter Upon the Mischievous Influence of the Spanish Inquisition" (London: Printed for J. Johnson and Co., 1811).

42. William Wordsworth, The Convention of Cintra (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1809) in The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, edited by W.O.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) 3 Volumes, I. pages 193-366.
43. Robert Southey, History of the Peninsular War (London: John Murray, 1823, 1827, 1836), 3 Volumes, I. page 346.
44. All quotes from Byron's poetry taken from The Poetical Works of Lord Byron. (London: Oxford University Press, 1930). The received text of Cantos I-II and IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, according to Jerome McGann, is good and clear. I have utilized the Oxford edition in my possession. It is the free use of primary documentation which enriches the notes to McGann's edition of Byron's Poetry that makes his edition invaluable. See Byron. The Complete Poetical Works, edited by Jerome J. McGann, Volume II, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980).
45. Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry, page 53n.
46. Byron's Letters and Journals, edited by Leslie Marchand (London: John Murray, 1973-), Volume VI. page 212.
47. Byron's Letters and Journals, VI. page 226.
48. Byron's Letters and Journals, IX. page 198.
49. Byron's Letters and Journals, VI. page 226.
50. See Frank Dawson, The First Latin American Debt Crisis, The City of London and the 1822-25 Loan Bubble (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
51. Washington Irving, The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus, edited by John Harmon McElroy (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), pages xviii-xix. So prevalent was the image of Columbus, that Jane Austen's nephew, in his memoir of Jane Austen (1870), uses an epigraph from Help's Life of Columbus to illustrate the heroism of his otherwise "genteel" aunt: "A man sees something to be done, knows of no one who will do it but himself, and so is driven to the enterprise." Indeed, were this epigraph intended to mirror the nephew's own enterprise of biography rather than his aunt's enterprise at capturing the life of country gentry, he might become a Columbus, but his aunt becomes a New World herself, at once the ambiguous subject of scrutiny and a self-reflection of the discoverer's desires.
52. The Examiner 131 (1 July 1810), pages 401-403.
53. Paul Johnson in The Birth of the Modern, 1815-1830 (New York: Harper and Collins, 1991), covers dates that correspond to Keats's coming of age during this crucial time; my idea incorporates

growing isolation and its consequent reactionarianism, duality, and the bizarre consequences of world democritization.

54. William Hazlitt, The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, edited by P.P. Howe (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 27 volumes, V. page 14.

55. Hazlitt, The Complete Works, V. page 14.

56. Leigh Hunt, Imagination and Fancy (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1870), page 285.

57. St. Helena was the original habitation of the English tailor who was left there for fourteen months in 1591-92, the location of a true-life adventure which one hundred years later formed the basis for Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. On hearing the language of his own countrymen after fourteen months of solitude, the tailor lost his senses and was carried to Trinidad where he died upon arrival. Such a coincidence in the mingling of Odysseus, Crusoe and Buonaparte provides the desiderata linking Keats's New World image to Buonaparte. See V.S. Naipaul, The Loss of El Dorado (New York: Vitage Books, 1969).

58. Balboa encountered inaccessible forests, putrid swamps, and after twentyfive days climbed a steep ascent from whose top he discerned the Pacific. However, after attempting to reach Peru he had to return to the original settlement and regroup his forces. At this time the King of Spain sent Pedrarias to organize an expedition to the renowned land of Peru where the meanest utensils were said to be made of gold. Pedrarias became an enemy of Balboa, who, though a wealthy conquistador was in the the habit of dressing himself humbly in homespun and sandals and thatched his own cottage. Pedrarias succeeded in having Balboa arrested for treason and hung. This melancholy tale is repeated in the life of Cortez. Cortez, who in 1519 conquered Mexico, had aroused the animosity of the governor of Cuba and as his fame increased also raised the jealousy of the court of Charles V. Eventually the conqueror of Mexico, unable to prevent his power from weakening in the face of a growing imperial Spanish bureaucracy, returned to Spain. He was involved in a disastrous expedition against the Algerians and lost his remaining prestige. An anecdote concerning Cortez which does not appear in Robertson but does appear in Voltaire's Essay sur les mœurs and was commonly known exemplifies the ambiguity of the hero's success. One day Cortez forced his way to the doorstep of Charles' carriage. When Charles asked him who he was Cortez replied, "I am a man who has given you more provinces than your ancestors left you cities." Robertson concludes Volume One by writing, "Cortez ended his days on the second of December one thousand five hundred and forty seven in the sixty second year of his age. His fate was the same with that of all other persons who distinguished themselves in the discovery and conquest of the New World" (page 528). Volume Two commences with Pizarro's conquest of

Peru and his subsequent inglorious death. Carl Woodring, "On looking into Keats's Voyagers," Keats-Shelley Journal XIV (1965), pages 14-22, argues such a conflation.

59. William Robertson, The History of America (Berwick: Printed for W. Gracie, 1811), 2 Volumes, I. page 142.

60. Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (New York: The John Day Company, 1943) page 107.

61. Alan J. Bewall, "The Political Implications of Keats's Classicist Aesthetics," SiR 25 (Summer 1986), pages 220-229, writes of Keats's critique of progress implicit in the Hyperion poems, "Rather than depicting history as progress towards increasing light and knowledge, a new sun rising in the West, Keats depicts it as a continuous process of displacement, of one sun supplanting another."

62. David Henige, In Search of Columbus The Source of the First Voyage (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

63. Stephen Greenblatt, Marvellous Possessions The Wonder of the New World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

64. Greenblatt, Marvellous Possessions, page 23.

65. Hook, The Hero in History, page 109.

66. Quoted in Walter Reed, Meditation on the Hero, page 12.

67. Though Keats did not write "Chapman's Homer" for Hunt's Examiner, the use to which Hunt put the sonnet places it in an interesting position in relation to the events in the political realm. Hunt was sympathetic to Buonaparte since Buonaparte challenged the Triple Alliance of 1795. In the essay preceding the essay which introduces the three new poets, Keats, Reynolds, and Shelley, is an attack on the idea of the divine right of kings and legitimacy as defended by the editors of The Times. "Legitimacy" for Hunt is a "bastard interpretation of divine right," a "blasphemy and lie" under which massacres, murders, and rapes become "virtuous massacres, murders, and rapes." Hunt presents a picture of how reform occurs: "The doctrine of divine right and passive obedience, the resistance and rebellion against which, in theory and practice, made the English Nation a race of free men...will reign over France and spread its pestilence in this country" (760). In consequence the people sicken in poverty "crawling above the ground and getting into holes and corners to die, like flies, blind, shrunk, and feeble at end of summer." For Hunt freedom begins at the top and people as a consequence suffer or prosper. This idea of reform does not suit Keats, who stresses a personal, transformative moment of vision. Though Keats and Hunt remained close to each other until Keats's death, Keats's

disagreements with Hunt begin early in their relationship.

The question of private versus public transformative moments is one of the troublesome differences between Hunt and Keats. The tradition of the visionary bard, to which Keats adapts himself in this sonnet which treats of a figure climbing to a mountain peak and encountering a vista which has yet to be expressed, stresses the value of individual moments of transformative vision. It is such a relationship between the visionary bard and those who live on, and presumably carry forward the knowledge the bard brings, that Keats brings forward in this sonnet.

68. Quoted in Maccunn, F.J. The Contemporary English View of Napoleon (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1914), page 46.

69. Aileen Ward, John Keats The Making of a Poet, page 75. Clarke in his recollections wrote: "On an after occassion I showed him the couplet of Pope's upon the same passage:--From mouth and nose the briny torrent ran,/And lost in lassitude lay all the man." Chapman writes: "His toils had rack'd t'a laboring woman's pain." It is this hero wracked by "woman's pain" and his "lassitude" that Keats is also excited about.

70. Homer, The Odyssey, (London: William Heineman LTD., 1976), 2 Volumes, I. viii. 138-39.

71. Odysseus/Ulysses, edited by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1991).

72. William Hayley, An Essay on Epic Poetry, with introduction by M. Celeste Williamson (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars Facsimile Reprints, 1968).

73. Elizabeth Cook, John Keats, page 344.

74. Elizabeth Cook, page 345.

75. Elizabeth Cook, page 344.

76. All quotes from M. Marmontel, The Incas (Dublin: Printed by A. Stewart, 1797), 2 Volumes.

77. Washington Irving, The Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pages 108-109.

78. Abbe D. Francesco Saverio Clavigero, The History of Mexico collected from Spanish and Mexican Historians (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1807), 2 Volumes, II. pages 356; 360. Irving also quotes Peter Martyr that Poncra, a cacique of Darien, mishapen in body, was "a monster of cruelty and as guilty of crimes repugnant to nature," Companions to Columbus, page 122.

79. William Hazlitt, Complete Works, VI. page 187.
80. Hazlitt. Complete Works, VI. pages 187-188.
81. Hazlitt, The Complete Works, VI. page 187.
82. Aileen Ward, page 38.
83. Alexander Pope's Eloisa says, "Guiltless I gaz'd, heav'n listen'd while you sung/And turths divine came mended from that tongue." The mending tongue makes up for the loss of sexual making. The emphasis on the Abelard-like "fine mouth" despite his castration suggests an enablement in spite of disenabling; but such disabled enablement is not merely a state of denial in which the lack of actualized power is replaced by a wish, of an emphasis on the sugared sweets of poetry rather than the sweets of sexuality, the glory of speech and the desire for liberty in the oratory of Hunt in spite of seeming social inequality and the figurative emasculation implicit in Keats's own social position. Instead, such imagery develops from a movement in the literature of sensibility where sexual desire was expressed in a language of pathos and sentiment. The joining of the sexual and the intellectual aspects of love and the consequent sexualization of feeling in such eroticized language is the human attempt to recreate paradise as first figured forth in Milton. Writing to Gilbert Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft epitomized this style when she said, "I like to see your eyes praise me; and Milton insinuates, that during such recitals, there are interruptions, not ungrateful to the heart, when the honey that drops from lips is not merely words." Such a sentiment is derived from Milton whose angels have sex and knowledge intuitively, having qualities of hermaphroditism and undifferentiation, while people must follow Adam teaching Eve who "would intermix/Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute/With conjugal Carresses, from [his] Lip[s]/Not words alone pleas'd" (VIII. 54-57). Thus, well within a tradition of heroism carried forward by Milton, Keats recreates the heroic endeavor in unlikely candidates for such heroism. The connection between Wollstonecraft and Milton is made by Jean Hagstrum in Sex and Sensibility, Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), page 14. The idea that language of sensibility is an attempt to join the physical and sexual aspects of love is found in the introduction to the book.
84. Blackwoods. Jan. 1826
85. It is this perversity of Keats which now looks forward to the absurdity of twentieth century literature where beggars, thieves, and anti-heroes of all kinds flourish.
86. Though twentieth century mythographers claim that Ganymede was made the god of the Nile, the classical sources for this claim remain very obscure. The connection between Ganymede and Aquarius

was a commonplace among mediaeval iconography of the Zodiac and was probably derived from a Roman redaction of many Greek sources in a grammar exercise by Hycinius, a writer admired by Schiller and Goethe. The Nile was seen to originate in rains under the command of Aquarius. The only possibly exact correspondence I was able to find was in an obscure fragment of a poem attributed to Pindar in a mid-nineteenth century edition of Greek fragments collated by a German scholar named Berg; unfortunately the page crumbled as I began to transcribe the text and I was not able to find another copy in New York. In spite of this obscurity, there are references to and classical statues of a male god who is surrounded by various infants representative of the fertility of a Nile scattered all over classical texts such as Apollonius, Ovid, and Plutarch, sources and imagery available to Keats.

87. All quotations from Jacques Francois Miot, Narrative of the French Expedition to Egypt (London: J. Davies, 1816). See also Robert Wilson, History of the British Expedition To Egypt (London: Printed by C. Roworth, Bell Yard, Fleet Street, 1803).

88. Miot, Narrative, pages 167-170.

89. Quoted in Christopher Herold, The Age of Napoleon. The anecdote from M. Fauvelet de Bourrienne., Memoirs of N. Bonaparte, (Edinburgh: Printed for Constable and Co., 1831), 4 Volumes, I. page 129, reads, "One, distinguished from his fellows by his behaviour, was brought before the Commander-in-chief, who wished to obtain some information respecting these half-savage hordes. On the first question, How he had been treated? The man burst into tears, giving to understand he had experienced the treatment so common in the East. "Grammercy! you have now got a good excuse for being on the sick list. No matter, you paid for your improvidence. You ought to keep by your corps. Thank your stars you got off so cheaply." The footnote to this passage suggests that many Frenchmen were castrated and not only sodomized as those castrati created to sing in the royal chapel at Versailles and for the Pope.

90. Miot, Narrative, page 169.

91. Miot, Narrative, page 84.

92. Miot, Narrative, page 84.

93. Robert Wilson, History of the British Expedition into Egypt, page 139.

94. Herold, The Age of Napoleon, 1986.

95. Herold, page 124.

96. Goethe met the twenty year old protege of Lord Hamilton in Naples. She was a prototype of Isadora Duncan and a Cleopatra in her own right: "Standing, kneeling, sitting, reclining, serious, sad, playful, ecstatic, contrite, alluring, threatening, anxious, one pose follows another without a break. She knows how to arrange the folds of her veil to match each mood, and has a hundred ways of turning it into a head dress. The old knight idolizes her and is enthusiastic about everthing she does. In her, he has found all the antiquities, all the profiles of Sicilian coins, even the Apollo Belvedere." The "old knight" and his mistress like "the Apollo Belvedere" in one of her many moods suggests the Cleopatra like mastery of both sexes which Lady Hamilton has. Goethe, Italian Journey. 1786-1788, translated by W.H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982) 200.

97. David Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pages 326, 448-455.

98. Ward, John Keats The Making of a Poet, page 104.

99. We recognize these images so readily with our familiarity with Keats's strangeness that we mis-remember them which might prompt us to feel with Marjorie Levinson the cliched feel of these images in her discussion of the materialist aspect of this sonnet.

100. Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), page 169.

101. Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, and Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), page 94.

102. Cary, The Vision of Dante, page 367n.

103. Elizabeth Cook, page 345-346.

104. In Ariosto's Orlando, Sophrosina shows Astolfo the future; one prophecy concerns the fortunes of Charles V. of Spain:

Yet I forsee many ages pass
New Mariners and masters new shall rise
That shall finde out that erst so hidden was
And shall discover where the passage lies
And all the men that went before surpasse,
To fine new lands, new states, new seas, new skies,
And pass about the earth as doth the Sunne,
To search what with Antipodes is done

(XV. 14).

Cortez as Charles's captain would for the Emperor "keepe those Indies in subjection" (XV. 19). Cortez is seen by Keats not as a figure of heroism but as a type of epic hero here representative of the grandiose plans of Charles but whose sad fate is known to Keats. The marginal gloss to these verses by Harrington reads:

It was thought that Charles meant to conquer all

all the world and then enter into religion and become
Pope and Emperor both, to which this verse seems to
tend, but it was but a vaine conceit of some idle head.

105. Thomas Greene, The Descent From Heaven (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

106. Camoens, The Lusiad, translated by Richard Fanshawe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940) I. 105, 106.

107. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, edited by Harold Bloom (New York: New American Library, 1965), page 54.

108. Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: Random House, 1950), Chapter LII.

109. Michael Cooke, Acts of Inclusion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pages 62,65.

110. Balachandra Rajan, The Form of the Unfinished (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), page 155.

111. Aileen Ward, The Making of a Poet, page 362.

Chapter III:

"A Chaos of Melancholy":

Keats's 1820 Volume and Negative Capability

The journal letter of February-May 1819 provides an introduction to a discussion of Keats's use of negative capability in his conception of a new heroism which is further developed by means of the composite form in the 1820 volume. In the letter, as in the volume of poems, the interrelationship of the various genres becomes the site of Keats's experience and expression of negative capability, just as the interplay between romance, pastoral, epic, and lyric had served to create the landscape and action of negative capability in Endymion. In order to illuminate the play of genres, I will examine poems in the order of their composition and also in relation to the prose and unpublished poems in the letters where they first appear. In addition, I will examine the sequence of the poems as they appear in the 1820 volume. Such an approach gives a double life to the poems; considered in the order of composition, the poems look backward and forward; considered in the order they appear in the volume, they constitute a unified vision and commentary on negative capability. Such a process reflects the manner in which the poems themselves were written and then rearranged, a process by which the cumulative force of vision and revision reveals the comprehensive and composite form of the volume.

Negative capability, an oxymoron and paradox, finds especial

expression in the 1820 volume. Keats's use of paradox, that most self-critical mode of human understanding,¹ has usually been seen as in the service of some other larger concern. Neil Fraistat, for instance, sees Keats working towards a resolution of paradox through generic transactions, and finally rejecting his poetic of illusion and enchantment (represented by his verse romances) and finding some accommodation with the human experience of loss.² Yet the whole nature of paradox runs counter to such oversimplification. If anything, paradox awakens the mind to its own processes of arriving at understanding and knowledge, and consequently at paths of action. In the 1820 volume, Keats employs paradox to project a new heroic which realizes its place in a world marked by melancholy.

Keats juxtaposes illusion and reality in the 1820 volume because they give each other life, depth, complexity, fullness. For instance, in "Ode On a Grecian Urn," the seemingly static, negatively capable space of art, the dead space of undifferentiated experience, is revitalized as the human longing the urn represents is combined with the emergence of necessary human differentiation, the loss and pain represented by the image of the desolated and forever empty town. This balance had earlier been represented by such figures of negative capability as the undifferentiated but melancholy and solitary Pan in Endymion and the sexually undifferentiated and ambiguous figures of heroes found in the poetry such as Antony, Christ, as well as the problematic landscape of discovery located in the ambiguity of

the New World and figured forth in the image of Cortez, all figures with their roots in the contradictory poetics of the eunuch. Within the the sequence of the odes, "To Autumn" contains another such image of negative capability and represents the balance between autumnal richness and passivity of which the "unravish'd" urn is another example. Negative capability is a stage at which a completeness is comprehended, a moment of stasis, a redemptive hesitation, that then initiates an experience of great intensity. Negative capability, derived from the site of the interaction between genres, provides a rich "resource of kind" for Keats's poetic inspiration.

Negative capability is not only derived from the interplay between the different tendencies of different genres. The traditions of love poetry are productive of the poetic of negative capability as well. Drawing upon the richness of traditions handed down from Dante and Petrarch to Shakespeare and Milton, Keats, in transacting the language embedded in those traditions, creates his poetry. Since these traditions express love as accentuating individuation while at the same time holding forth the promise of some kind of final resting place where individuation ceases both love and negative capability are creative of that site where ripeness and dissolution co-exist. Freud was to argue that the sense of differentiation forms the basis of a healthy sexuality; in his critique of nineteenth century bourgeois sexuality, he argues that to separate lust from love leads to the pathology of the dead space of pornography.

This is foreshadowed by Keats's figure of the urn, a dead realm of Art, which seen without the Keatsian poetic of negative capability allows no human differentiation, the natural rise and fall of desire, interest, and love.³

The pornographic is one manifestation of this human need or desire to be fully consumed, occupied, with no sensation of change or development. Yet to see Keats's poems and his expression of desires "half-graspable" (Endymion. I. 673) as possessing a wish fulfilled by the explicit statement of the pornographic, as such critics as Stephen Marcus do, or to see the Keatsian paradox as a state of contradiction caused by material aspects of his life on the margins of social legitimacy, as Marjorie Levinson does, is to miss the tradition and direction of the Keatsian poetic.⁴ Through the use of the tradition of paradox, which he cloaks in his own fabric of negative capability, Keats makes an enquiry into modes of understanding moments that seem to exist on the cusp of annihilation.

"Love being what it is," writes Rosalie Colie, "it is a subject excellently suited to the paradoxical rhetoric. In the first place 'what it is' is far from clear: love encourages the state of nescience so congenial to paradoxes."⁵ The first poem of Keats's volume, "Lamia," with its roots in Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, has been styled an "irreducibly oxymoronic phenomenon."⁶ Burton devotes a third of his volume to the sad state in which "Love [is] ... turned to hate, mirth to melancholy"; this concept forms the basis for "Lamia."

It is not coincidental that the negatively capable in Keats is expressed through an understanding of the paradox of melancholy, the state of mind which touches upon what is immortal and opposite of what people are but draws its meaning only through people's physical limits. Melancholy also arises from their natures as sexual creatures, and the expenditure of energy in copulation gives to sexuality its richness as a type of this other source of melancholy. Keats returns to Melancholy throughout the volume. From the first tale, "Lamia," through the odes that address melancholy and the lesser poems on fancy, Robin Hood, and the treatment of Saturn, the figure of Melancholy, the final image of Apollo, and the Napoleonic and Eastern which he figures forth, Keats's modern treatment of an ancient theme affirms the interconnection of the aspirations of those who live perplexed and bewildered in the world.

Since I argue that Burton is relevant to "Lamia" than is usually acknowledged, an examination of Burton's Anatomy is necessary. After the Introduction by Democritus Junior which touches upon every conceivable destructive human passion, the book itself commences. It is divided into three major sections called Partitions, each of which describes some aspect of human existence and the way in which it reflects Melancholy. The third Partition, which treats of Love, is divided into four sections. The first speaks of love in general; the second speaks of love as the primary cause of melancholy; the third covers jealousy as a consequence of love; and the fourth part speaks of "Religious

Melancholy." All sections are further divided into Members and Subsections.

Throughout The Anatomy the excesses of each kind of love are shown as leading to destruction. The third type of love, the highest, is "Charity ... a sacred communion of friends" and is made up of the other two, love of the "profitable" and love for the "pleasant." Yet this third love, the greatest of all, is unrealizable in our perverse state where we would rather lock up all our riches than give them to those whose need is more. Burton's anatomy is of a fallen world. Even if we do anything good in the world it is a kind of vainglory done out of desire for being remembered. Burton gives case after case illustrating the misery under which people live and asks what it would be like if people realized that "death is over our heads and we must shortly give an account of all our uncharitable words and actions: think upon it, and be wise!"

Since this experience of love is paradoxical, and the paradox is such a self-referential trope, constantly reflecting back upon its own methods, the paradox of love, and the many permutations of this paradox, investigate what cannot be said in any other way, and this investigation, the searching out of many paths by which one attempts to know the incomprehensible, becomes the site itself of discovery.⁷ Keats's 1820 volume is a kind of Anatomy of Melancholy. It treats several cases of love melancholy, yet each case recapitulates in its uniqueness the general condition of human beings as subject to melancholy. The

shape of the volume bears out such a reading. In invoking Burton's *Melancholy*, Keats renders the world's melancholy, an oxymoron, which though inexhaustible, exhausts people and uses them up. Keats's paradoxes generate a poetics which expends itself on the reader and leaves the reader spent.

Another influence on Keats's 1820 volume and its theme of melancholy is Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. References to this play in Keats's letters span the period between November 1818 and on into the spring of 1820, suggesting that the play and its theme of the folly of love and its melancholy aspects were especially on Keats's mind, though Keats had incorporated imagery from the play in *Endymion* (II. 13, 89).⁸ Together with Burton, the play provides a commentary on the folly and impotence of human love and the ensuing melancholy of loving. This play's treatment of the heroic is related to the theme of "Chapman's Homer" and the image of Cortez / Ulysses poised on the peak of action. In the 1820 volume, Keats exhibits the action of the heroic and in having Lycius die at the end of "Lamia," shows its necessary fulfillment. Such a dismal end echoes, if not Burton's account, at least Burton's numerous case histories of those ruined by love.

Though Burton, Shakespeare, and Keats seem to present a hopeless and impossible situation, the fact of people's shared state and the endless permutations of poetry in such writers offers some consolation and the provocative place from which creation develops. Keats writes, "I cannot have enough poetry,"

and in so saying becomes a self-perpetuating, productive creature. Human melancholy and the consequent folly which in turn perpetuates additional symptoms of melancholy become the productive subject matter of Keats's poetry. Negative capability manifested as a state of being in melancholy, has a locus as well. Just as Egypt's vast expanse of desert and rich vein of river creates a problematic image of Elysium for such figures as Napoleon and Nelson and manifests a geography of oxymoron and negative capability, so too does Keats's book of poetry become the site of and the respite from melancholy. Such a process is itself a paradoxical solution to the problem of melancholy, for the unrest which creates the itch to write poetry and make books is the same unrest which leads to an active seeking after some repose, the absorption of difference. Respite in spite of unrest in the very temple of sweet unrest is the core of the paradox, that dividing line between all and nothing where people make their home.

The 1820 volume was greeted by two positive reviews by Lamb and Hunt.⁹ However, it was greeted as "a nosegay of enigmas" as well.¹⁰ The volume contains an advertisement blaming critics and their discouraging reviews of Endymion for the fragment of Hyperion and might be seen as having its origins in contention. Keats, ill at the time of publication, had scrawled beneath the advertisement, "this is a lie."¹¹ The very first enigma of the volume is its status as an incomplete volume, perhaps a fragmentary volume, with a "conclusion in which nothing is

concluded." Thus the volume as a whole in its incompleteness and to-be-continued qualified promise, was seen not as finished but looking forward to better future work. Such is the the world of melancholy and the paradox of human life.

This sense of incompleteness is found in Burton's Anatomy and in Troilus as well. After Pandarus's machinations have fulfilled themselves, Troilus, on being greeted by Pandarus, says, "Hence, broker lackey! ignomy and shame / Pursue thy life, and live aye with thy name." To this Pandarus turns to the audience and laments:

A goodly medicine for my aching bones!

O world! world! world! This is a poor agent
despised. O traitors and bawds, how earnestly are
you set a-work, and how ill requited! why should
our endeavours be so loved, and the performance so
loathed? What verse for it? What instance for it?

(V. x. 33-34)

The contrast between endeavor and performance recalls Troilus's explanations to Cressida concerning the paradox of love: "This is the monstrosity of love, lady, that the will is infinite, and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit." Cressida replies, "They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve ability that they never perform; vowing more than the tenth part of one. They that have the voice of lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?" (III. ii. 81-95). Pandarus's verse on this state of

affairs reads:

Full merrily the humble bee doth sing
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdued in armed tail,
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.

(V. x. 42-45)

The honey bee with his sting among flowers describes the act of sex, echoing Lear's "Let copulation thrive" in a world turned upside down by the Fall of Man. These lines, though obscure, nevertheless convey a tone productive of Keatsian melancholy. Central to the atmosphere of the verse is the oxymoron of a bee's sting and a bee's honey, sharpness and sweetness. When the sharpness is diminished, so too is the honey. The crux here is the phrase "subdued in armed tail." Is this metonymy for dangerous female genitalia, virgin queens, or a reference to condoms and guarded male genitalia? In either case, the tone conveys that the act of sex when subdued robs the world of a rich problematic nature. Sex, fertilization, and disease no longer spread and the whole world built upon this foundation that love thrives on bone aches, disease, and death comes to an end.¹² Keats's own image of a masculine female Melancholy echoes the martial imagery of Pandarus's bawdy in her collection of "trophies."

Troilus and Cressida is a revels play and the character of Pandarus is a type of lord of misrule. The paradoxical nature of this world in which people are expendable according to their

ability to spend, is the source of this imagery of melancholy with which Keats creates a book of poetry, itself an action implausible under such conditions. Keats's vale of soul-making letter of 21 April 1819, written prior to "Lamia" (July 1819), sets out the necessity of such a world full of sorrows and pains from which emerges a viable soul. Keats's own bouts with "bone-ache" and its secondary symptoms extended well into the summer of 1818 when he composed another poem of the 1820 volume, "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil" with the image of "Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers, / Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers."¹³ Burton explains the presence of melancholy as a necessary consequence of the Fall, "a mark of living ... from these melancholy dispositions, no man living is free, no Stoic, none so wise, none so happy, none so patient, so generous, so godly, so divine, that can vindicate himself; so well composed, but more or less, some time or other, he feels the smart of it. Melancholy in this sense is the character of mortality."¹⁴

The "ground work," in Keats's phrase, for "Lamia" is usually found in Burton's account of the story in Philostratus's Life of Apollonius found in Part 3, Section 2, Member 1, Subsection 1. The story of Apollonius is appended to the end of Keats's "Lamia" and the above reference in Burton is cited. However, in the manuscript version of "Lamia," and autograph, at the bottom of page one, a footnote reads, "The groundwork of this story will be found in Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" Part 3. Sect. 3. Memb. 1.' Subj. 1.'"¹⁵ The poem was published with only the

reference to the tale by Apollonius in Burton. Almost two hundred pages of prose lie between Section 2, where the Lamia story occurs, and Section 3, so it is unlikely that Keats would mistake sections spread out over such a large extent of the book. Part I of "Lamia" is about "Love Melancholy" while Part II of the poem concerns jealousy, which is, according to Burton, "an eager desire to enjoy some beauty alone, to have it proper to himself alone," a theme brought out in the marriage sequence of Book II: "Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair, / Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar." Lycius himself ushers in this decline when he says

What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abash'd withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majesticall
And triumphs as in thee I should rejoice

Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice. (II. 57-61)

Once it is known that the true "groundwork" of melancholy lies in its paradoxical mixture of love / jealousy, the enigmatic opening lines of Book II in "Lamia" take on a deeper meaning:

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. (II. 1-6)

The paradox is that for love to prosper it must have the luxury

of full development, extend itself fully. The more full its development the more painful its collapse. The active imagination, fed by books as well as experience, extended as far as possible, can only know more richly and fully the forces which defeat it, an idea fleshed out in one of the fairy poems, "When they were come unto the Faery's Court."

A contemporaneous poem, "Why did I laugh tonight? No Voice will tell," sets up such a paradox: "I know this being's lease-- / My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads ... But death intenser-- death is life's high mead." In this sonnet, the intensities of "Verse, fame, and beauty" make up our consciousness at its most intense peak, a consciousness which is relished all the more because of its proximity to death. Melancholy is the state of our being when we prosper in the full knowledge of our fallen state.

In their desire to participate fully in intensities that dissolve the limitation of self, people touch upon the dimensionless and the timeless which is otherwise unattainable. But in doing so they spend themselves and gain nothing tangible. This is the paradox dealt with in Keats's faery poems such as "When they were come onto the Faery's Court," "When Hermes once took to his feathers light," and "La belle dame sans merci." The primitive potentiality of "Love in a hut, with water and a crust" can hardly get off the ground. Such circumstances create a dead place of nonbeing. Yet if those who deny sensation suffer in ignorance, those who fully live within the possibilities of sensation suffer "more grievous torment."

The idea of this "Love in a palace" harkens back not only to the negatively capable hero and heroine of Antony and Cleopatra but to Troilus and Cressida as well. Just as "Lamia" is built up around the theme of the Hermes' theft of love, Troilus and Cressida is based upon the theft of love, as well. Troilus encapsulates the paradox when he upbraids his brothers, saying, "O! theft most base, / That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep!" (II. ii. 92-93). The paradox of love which promises all and delivers nothing is brought up in a song Pandarus sings for Helen, scored by Keats in his copy of the play:¹⁶

Love, love, nothing but love, still more!

For, oh! love's bow

Shoots buck and doe:

The shaft confounds,

Not that it wounds,

But tickles still the sore.

These lovers cry O! O! they die!

Yet that which seems the wound to kill,

Doth turn O! O! to ha! ha! he!

So dying [sic] love lives still:

O! O! a while, but ha! ha! ha!

O! O! groans out for ha! ha! ha! (III. i. 127-138)

Not only does Pandarus onomatopoeically represent an act of coitus, but he does so by evoking laughter in "ha! ha! he!" "O! O!" is a linguistic zero; its counterpart, "ha! ha! he!," is a psychic zero, the laughter that results when all expectations

come to nothing. The paradoxical nature of love is present here as in Sonnet 129: "Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action, and until action lust / Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame." In the play, when Aeneas arrives to give Cressida to the Greeks after Cressida's and Troilus's night of lovemaking, Cressida, upon hearing the knocking at the door, says to Troilus:

Come you again into my chamber:

You smile, and mock me, as if I meant naughtily.

Troilus: Ha! Ha!

Cressida: Come, you are deceiv'd, I think no such thing."

(IV. ii. 37-40)

Cressida's play on "naughtily / no such thing" negates the entire sexual interlude, a negation emphasized by Troilus's echo of Pandarus's "ha! ha! ha!" But Troilus's response fits dramatically as well since the object of his love will be taken away from him and come to naught. Pandarus repeats the naught of this affair when he says: "Is't possible? No sooner got but lost? ... Ah! Ah!" focussing on the ease with which this gain of nothing with "Ha! Ha!" becomes inverted through the loss of what is intangible with "Ah! Ah!"

Keats's knowledge of Troilus and Cressida and that "O! O! groans out for ha! ha! ha!" carries over into his shorter poems, in this case, "Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell" where an evening's laughter brought up the thought of oblivion. It is in the luxurious growth of imagination that death is most keenly

felt. "Love in a hut ... Is ... cinders, ashes, dust; / Love in a palace is perhaps at last / More grievous than a hermit's fast."

How this should be a "doubtful tale from faery land" is better understood in relation to Burton's Anatomy. I have argued that the Keatsian paradox of negative capability allows the poet to entertain the simultaneity of the high and low points of experience. In acknowledging the inability of people to dissolve into some absolute undifferentiated being, Keats's melancholic negative capability celebrates the intensities of differentiation. In locating his poetics on the precarious margin between intensity and oblivion, Keats offers his "doubtful tale" and joins a tradition of disavowing knowledge which began with Socrates and is carried on by Burton who in a disclaimer at the end of his introduction takes back all he has said:

No! I recant, I will not, I care, I fear,
I confess my fault, acknowledge a great offence
... I have overshot myself, I have spoken
foolishly anatomized mine own folly (103).

Keats's choice of an Eastern tale marks a distinct movement away from New World themes where he had begun to locate the negatively capable heroics. The fusion of the lamia with the Cleopatra figure brings a whole new cosmopolitan atmosphere into the 1820 volume, and it is truly in the Orient of such places as Egypt, Corinth, and Crete that Keats's poetics touch home. Yet Keats's choice of the lamia story can be considered in another light as well.

The dangerous aspects of fairies in general cohere in the image of Lamia. An Elizabethan reference describes "the ladies of the fayry" who lure men carnally, "and after that they be consumed in the acte of lecherye, they ... devoure theym;" an Eighteenth Century reference says lamias "together with the Fauns, the Gods of the woods, seem to have form'd the Notion of Fairies."¹⁷ Edward Topsell's description (1607) begins, "Lamia hath many significations, being taken sometimes for a beast of Lybia, sometimes for a fish, and sometimes for a spectre or apparitions of women called Phairies."¹⁸ In Topsell's account of Lamia and Menippus (Lycius), the philosopher causes the lamia to disappear and then says of the lamia that, "She purposed to use the company of Menippus, and feeds him fat with all manner of pleasures, to the entent that afterward she might eate up and devour his body, for all their kinde love was but onely to feede upon beautiful young men." Topsell's accompanying picture shows a rampant lion's body with scales, and in place of a lion's head, a woman's, and in the chest, a woman's breasts; in addition, the lamia has male genitalia. The lamia depicted in this fashion was in use in such editions of bestiaries as Thomas Boreman's A Description of Three Hundred Animals ... Illustrated with Copper Plates (1795, 1797), and though the pictures were removed from later editions, the descriptions still remained.¹⁹

The hermaphroditic character of the lamia ties into other Romantic and Keatsian uses of the dichotomy between singleness and differentiation. The Shelleyan conception of Adonais

figures forth the hermaphrodite as an imploding singleness: "To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear / Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both / Thou, Adonais." In transforming two already very concentrated images of absolutism, male on male homoeroticism and then the self contemplating the self, into the doubly dense "both / Thou," Shelley conveys a single "Thou" which comprehends these other already dense products of refinement. Keats on the other hand deals more with the irony of such a state of single doubleness; his hermaphrodites and Ganymedes live an explosive singleness. They cannot enclose themselves but are open to experiences. Keats's entire oeuvre is shot through with budding creations which are then passively open to bees droning in and out. Keats's garden images in "Ode to Psyche," his self-reflective flowers open to meddling bees in the sonnet on fame, "How fever'd is the man," and especially the image of Endymion as a "Ganymede full blown," all point to the metamorphosis of a negatively capable receptivity to alterity. "Love grown jealous of so complete a pair" not only refers to the necessary antithesis of love and jealousy, but also the necessary separation of male and female.

The combination of the dangerous poetics manifested in Keats's fairy poems become combined with the figure of the lamia. Perhaps contemporary treatments of the fairy world underscore this danger. For instance, a recent Italian treatment of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"²⁰ focuses on Oberon and Titania as creatures of the earth in endless battle for control over the

powers of generation represented by the female body (the opening scene shows a composed Hippolyta standing on a chair being dressed in white trusses and girdles). In one scene Titania vanquishes Oberon and tears skin from his back in long swaths of red colored crepe paper and leaves him howling and collapsed in pain on stage. Oberon is then revived by Puck, a grotesque puppet, who emerges from a trap door in the stage with a pan of liquid nourishment. The other fairies are small, monstrous, shapeless figures that move across the stage on runners pulled by strings, and the transformed Bottom not only wears an ass's head but possesses a very large erect human penis. At first it might seem that the Italian "fatas" misrepresented Shakespeare's fairy creations. However, Keats's own fairy creations derived from Shakespeare have these same dangerous overtones as seen in the poems that preceded "Lamia" such as "When they were come onto the Faery's Court," "He is to weet a melancholy Carle," and "La belle dame." In fusing fairy lore and lamias, Keats in "Lamia" is able to develop themes found in his shorter poems.

Though the time of Keats's poem is "Upon a time before the faery broods / Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods," it lamia figure has affiliations with these later faery broods and the dangers they represent. She is likened to "some penanced lady Elf"; the story of Lycius and Lamia teaches us the "grievous torment" of love in a palace, a "doubtful tale from faery land." The palace Lamia creates is dream-like with "A haunting music sole perhaps and lone / Supportress of the faery-roof." Lamia is

also related to Shakespeare's "great fairy," Cleopatra, when she is described as "regal drest" (II. 133-34), reminiscent of the lines in the poem "Welcome Joy Welcome Sorrow," composed in early 1818, "Cleopatra regal drest / With the aspics at her breast." Also, like La Belle Dame, she weeps. In the general plot of the story, she is akin to that other fairy-child.²¹

In the 1820 volume Keats turned his attention to the exposition of the foundation of negative capability in melancholy. This, he seems to say, is people's only solace in this world: "Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul ... and what was his soul before it came into the world and had these proovings and alterations and perfectionings?--An intelligence--without Identity--and how is this Identity to be made? Through the medium of the Heart? And how is the heart to become this Medium but in a world of Circumstances" (II. 102-104). Keats accepts Burton's paradox of melancholy: that melancholy is a disease but its own cure as well. To promote one's good health and liberate oneself from melancholic disorders one must contemplate doubtfulness itself: "Hope, Ye miserable,/Ye Happy, Take Heed...Dost thou wish to be free from doubt? dost desire to escape uncertainty? be penitent, then, while sound, of wholesom mind; thou art safe, I tell thee, because thou hast been penitent whilst thou mightest have been sinning: so saith Austin" (971). Keats would echo this when he wrote, "I am however young writing at random--straining at particles of light in the midst of great

darkness--without knowing the bearing of any one assertion of any one opinion. Yet may I not in this be free from sin?" (II. 80). Doubt is implied by the phrase "straining at particles of light in the midst of great darkness." Through this doubtful activity one "pursue[s] the same instinctive course" as other creatures:

Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be
hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the
commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel--By a superior being our reasoning[s] may take the same tone--
erroneous they may be fine (II. 80).

In spite of the darkness, there is a possibility of redeeming oneself.

Towards the end of the journal letter, after the composition of "La belle dame," Keats wrote two sonnets on Fame, "How fever'd is that Man who cannot look" and "Fame like a wayward girl will still be coy."²² These poems also illustrate that what is most desirable has at its core a paradox, of which melancholy is the manifestation. A poem written a month earlier in the same journal letter, "Why did I laugh tonight? No Voice will tell," has been discussed in relation to a negatively capable heroics drawn from Dante's *Inferno*. The poem is also related to Keats's "theology" about the importance of experiencing the intensities of life, which derive their intensity from their juxtaposition to death. Death as an intoxicant is an association Christopher Ricks points out when he says of Keats's use of honey (mead), that it acknowledges "both the inherent precariousness of such

delight and ... the inherent uncertainty of our response to it."²³ We might extend Ricks's insight to the precariousness of intense feeling in light of our ultimate extinction. Keats places at the center of the two sonnets on fame images of the negatively capable individual and the encounter with the problem of fame.

Keats had written just previously to writing "Why did I laugh tonight?," the sentence: "Even a Proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it" (II. 81). A proverb is appended to the first fame sonnet: "You cannot eat your cake and have it too. Proverb." The truth the proverb treats is that we can experience intensities on only one level at a time: Keats seems to say that people cannot have an experience while at the same time abstracting themselves from the experience and then at some remove enjoying their having of the experience. Fame is the enjoyment of their having had the experience, and in attempting to enjoy now what properly belongs to a later date or to another realm of experience, the "Man misled ... Spoil[s] his salvation," a salvation which, keeping the letter's prose in mind, consists of "feel[ing] and suffer[ing] in a thousand diverse ways!" (II. 102). Something like the duck/rabbit paradox is brought forward here, the two figures coexistent but only one image capable of being perceived at a time. The princess of "When they were come unto the Faery's Court," a poem in the same journal letter, also attempts to enjoy her beauty on two levels, a dangerous enterprise the consequence of which will inevitably

turn her into something less than human. Keats must write a poem, or in his own phrase, vex "the leaves of his life's book," and yet retain a kind of ignorance of the act. Just as Burton disavows all knowledge at the end of his book, so Keats in the self-contradiction which forms the core of this poem disavows this way of knowing oneself. This is the topos of the paradox of learned ignorance which implies that, in a maze of contradiction and nothingness, the All is comprehended.

The theological provenance of this doctrine is at the heart of Keats's poem, a poem written after or around the time he was proposing his own system of salvation in the passages on the vale of soul making. Keats's first sonnet on fame in its first draft and its revision is about the fall of man and the consequences of such a fall. The Proverb which heads the poem uses as vehicle the image of satiation: though the cake be consumed, desire is nevertheless unfulfilled. Other words such as "grace," "salvation," "miscreed," and the final image of Luciferian man who "his own bright name deface[s] ... in his selfish fire" all point to this initial paradox and consequence of the fall. The poem picks up on Keats's previous metaphysical musings. We are "Identical Souls of the sparks of his [God's] own essence" (II. 103). This forms an analogue to the idea that in the beginning was the Word which contained all other words and concepts. Keats is dealing with the problem of how poetry can both be the experience and the commentary on the experience. For a poetry to do both is an achievement but only a negative achievement since

the fallen state does not allow the possibility of holding these two states of being simultaneously. Within the tradition of calling doubt upon his own method of arriving at this knowledge, Keats situates the image of self-pollution at the center of his poem: One "who robs his fair name of its maidenhood," is one who acts from Luciferian pride.

I have been quoting freely from both the draft of the poem and Keats's corrections because in a poet like Keats, who at times wrote rapidly, words and phrases grow out of each other, and the poems as we have them are like hard fruits surrounded by the inviting though withered blossom of cancellations. Though one might wonder just what is the final product we as scholars are to examine, I would respond that any final meaning can only be arrived at by examining all the material available. One matter of concern is Keats's replacement of the Luciferean image of "Why should Man his own bright name deface / And burn our pleasures in his selfish fire" (who is doing what to whom? Is this a reference to original sin and Lucifer / Adam's pride that punishes us all? or is the poet merely spoiling our pleasure in his poetry?) for "Why should Man leasing the world for grace / Spoil his salvation by a fierce miscreed?" Though Keats wrote "leasing," the poem is usually published with "teasing." However, I would argue for "leasing" because of its theological ramifications. In "Why did I laugh tonight?," the phrase "I know this being's lease / My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads" grew out of similar religious musings: that at the core of our desire for "Verse,

fame, and beauty" is the great emptiness of death and that while we are laughing the seeds of some future sorrow are sowed in the wide arable land of events. I would gloss Keats's lines as follows: We have leased (rented) this world and paid dearly for it, giving up grace bestowed on Adam. Since we have paid so dearly for it, why follow a religion which teaches us 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" (II. 101-102). Keats seems to be saying, instead, Let us experience the melancholy to which we are born, a melancholy represented by things of the moment like the rose, the clear lake, the plum blossom; only in such transitory perfection can we touch upon our true selves.²⁴

In his second poem on fame, Keats treats of the perverse relationship of the poet to fame, a relationship based on a courtship ritual which might just as well have been taken from Burton's Anatomy. Fame is "wayward," "coy," a "Jilt" to those who accept her alluring promises; she will only come to those who "repay her scorn for scorn"; she is modelled after the dangerous fairies such as La Belle Dame, Lamia, and Cleopatra, "A very Gipsy is she Nilus born." Thus, fame, a self-awareness which in one manifestation can utterly deface and damn us, if pursued by means of self-denial, can elevate people to dizzy heights of intense experience.

A third poem in this group, "To Sleep," provides an inversion to the negatively capable state of being which is so

inviting to fame. Just as in "Why did I laugh tonight?" the essential experience of "this being's lease" is the heightened awareness of its total opposite, death, the essential experience of fame is realized only through experiencing its opposite, sleep. Indeed, the vexations of the first sonnet dissipate in this later poem as the poet asks that sleep "close / In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes." Here the speaker is as a willing victim actively seeking his own dissolution. Yet being a "willing" partner to one's own dissolution allows for a heightened awareness. The awareness of one's doubleness, of being the sacrifice and the agent of the sacrifice, is an infamous solution to the problem of the "curious conscience," but not without a provenance and history.

I wish to discuss these three sonnets in the context of the journal letter and "Ode to Psyche" which makes its first appearance in this letter. Though the Ode is sometimes seen as a counterpart to the prose of the letter, I wish to make more coextensive the prose of the entire journal letter, the other poems in it, the rich readings of Troilus and Cressida and The Anatomy of Melancholy and "Ode to Psyche."²⁵ The sonnets on fame, I have suggested, are about a "curious conscience" and how it can mediate its own pleasures and joys without spoiling them, how it tries to be the experience and yet know that it is having the experience. Keats, in the 1820 volume, seems to say that the art of poetry, art itself, is one such way of initiating this troublesome curious conscience. "Ode to Psyche" is about this

"curious conscience" and the negatively capable brain in which it dwells.

The source of the Cupid and Psyche story and its relationship to the larger themes of love melancholy in Burton and Shakespeare allow us to see "Ode to Psyche" as organic to these other musings. Keats writes to his brother and sister-in-law:

You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist who lived after the Agustan [sic] age, and consequently the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour- and perhaps never thought of in the old religion- I am more orthodox that [sic] to let a hethan [sic] Goddess be so neglected (II. 106).

This is Keats's only reference to Apuleius and his story. Though Keats might only have gotten his information on Apuleius's story from Lempriere, it is probable that Keats would have read the tale of Cupid and Psyche in William Adlington's translation The Golden Asse of Lucius Apuleius (1566).²⁶ The story opens with Lucius Apuleius on the road to Thessaly on a business venture, where he visits a fantastical palace "on top wherof were placed carved statues and images, but principally the Goddesse of Victory was so lively and with excellence portrayed and set forth, that you would verily have thought that she had flyed, and hovered with her wings hither and thither" (37). The description

of the palace is reminiscent of the palace of Lamia in Corinth:

Love, jealous-grown of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

Lucius is warned of a lamia-like enchantress:

For as soone as she espieth any comely yong man,
shee is forthwith stricken with his love, and
presently setteth her whole mind and affection
on him. She soweth her seed of flattery, she
invades his spirit and intangleth him.

Apuleius's tale is about magical transformations, transformations which draw their power from passion and overweening curiosity: the idyllic love affair between Lucius and a serving girl, Fotis, (whose mistake of mixing ointments causes Lucius's transformation from man to ass); the sodomiactal pursuits of the priests of Cybele; and a public exhibition of an act of copulation between the transformed Lucius and a condemned woman of Corinth, the second such act in the story.

The episode of the story which contains the tale of Cupid and Psyche concerns Charites, a young woman, kidnapped by thieves, who desiring to kill her many times over, decide to kill the ass, disembowel him, then sew her up in the cavity and put the carcass in the sun so that

she shall have her members torne and gnawne with
wild beasts, when as she is bitten and rent with

wormes, she shall endure the paine of fire, when
as the broyling heat of the Sunne shall scortch
and parch the belly of the Asse, she shall abide
the gallows when the Dogs and Vultures shall have
the guts of her body hanging in their ravenous
mouthes. I pray you number all the torments which
she shall suffer: First ... (126).

The thieves are thwarted by the arrival of the fiancée' of
Charites who convinces them it is better to sell her to a brothel
and then after much feasting and drinking escapes with Charites
on the back of Lucius when everybody is fast asleep. However,
not all goes well for the newly married pair as a lover of
Charites plots the murder of her husband and executes it. Later
the ghost of her husband appears to Charites saying:

O my sweet wife ... I pray thee for the love which
is betwene us two, if there be any memorie of me
in thy heart, or remembrance of my pitiful death,
marry with any other person, so that thou marry
not with the traitour Thrasillus, have no confer-
ence with him, eat not with him, lie not with
him (151).

Charites wakes and "renew[s] her dolour" and plots her revenge on
Thrasillus with the assistance of her nurse. Thrasillus woos her
and Charites accepts his advances promising to meet him at a
certain place and time. He arrives and while waiting is plied
with drink by the nurse until he falls asleep. Charites arrives

and pricks out his eyes then runs through the streets to her husband's tomb and kills herself with her husband's sword. In providing all these details of the story, I have wished to point out similarities between the comic and grotesque and tragic elements of Apuleius and their place in a story which culminates with the revelation of sacred mysteries of the cult of Isis and Osiris. Keats's 1820 volume and its treatment of tragic themes, its culminating image of "sovrän shrines" in "Ode to Melancholy," of the sphinx-like, Egyptian elements of Mnemosyne, provide a similarly comprehensive treatment of the movement of the soul through the vale of soul-making.

The story of Cupid and Psyche is told to Charites by an old woman who guards her in the thieves' redoubt. Thus the story of Cupid and Psyche usually interpreted as the "longing of the fallen soul for reunion with its Good Spirit (or with the Divine)", a theme which Keats attributes to Plato when he mentions "Apuleius the Platonist," is framed by a story which ends in a destructive jealous passion, itself a part of a larger framework of tales which treat a similar subject.²⁷

"Ode to Psyche" concludes a journal letter which has treated subjects of fairy transformations and offered a system of salvation. Composed several months prior to "Lamia," the Ode is placed after the three narratives in the 1820 volume. Thus although we might look in the "Ode to Psyche" and its sources for the seeds of "Lamia," by virtue of its placement in the volume it serves as a commentary upon the literature of love melancholy and

tales of witchery and enchantment and metamorphoses to which all the poems seem to owe their origins.

The story of Psyche and Cupid forms the basis of Robert Burton's discussion of the nature of the imagination, an ostensible theme in the "Ode to Psyche" with its imagery of a "wreathed trellis of a working brain." Burton writes of imagination that

In melancholy men this faculty is most powerful and strong, and often hurts, producing many monstrous and prodigious things, especially if it be stirred up by some terrible object, presented to it from common sense or memory. In Poets and Painters imagination forcibly works as appears by their several fictions, anticks, images: as Ovid's House of Sleep, Psyche's Palace in Apuleius &c

(139-140).

The paradoxical nature of melancholy as both a symptom and its own remedy is related to the negatively capable poet who focuses on his own suffering and in this pain finds remedy in a quickened perception of his own existence.

Apulieus's tale of Cupid and Psyche offers another model for Keats's own theme of love jealousy and melancholy. In the tale Psyche's sisters, like love in "Lamia," "jealous-grown of so complete a pair," cause Psyche to find out the identity of her husband by breaking his injunction not to desire to see who he is. Psyche, convinced she is sleeping with a serpent, lights an

oil lamp and upon viewing the beauty of Cupid, takes one of his arrows and

prick[s] herself withall, wherwith she was so grievously wounded that the blood followed, and thereby of her owne accord shee added love upon love; then more broyling in the love of Cupid shee embraced him and kissed him and kissed him a thousand times, fearing the measure of his sleepe (105).

The consequence of this self-inflicted and self-generated "broyling" love is Cupid's awakening and flying away from Psyche. Cupid says in reproof to her "I ... did come myself from heaven to love thee, and wounded myne owne body with my proper weapons to have thee to my Spouse" (105). Keats in "Ode to Psyche" presents the abstracted pleasures of poetry which are attempts to fully feel one's experience: "Oh Goddess ... pardon that thy secrets should be sung / Even into thine own soft-conched ear." All these poems are linked by the topos of curiositas; "How fever'd is the Man" and "Ode to Psyche" are about the folly of overweening curiosity. "Lamia" too touches upon this theme: according to Plutarch, the lamia walks about with her eyes in a jar representing the evils of her prying curiosity.

This topos of curiositas links the earlier fairy poems and the theme of negative capability to "Ode to Psyche." "Lamia" begins "Upon a time" placing the events of the poem in a fairy land; Apuleius's account of Cupid and Psyche opens in a similar

manner: "There was sometimes a certaine King, inhabiting the West parts" (89).

The most paradoxical nature of such topoi and themes is Keats's transformation of the disparate lamia material derived from miscellaneous readings. The low vulgar provenance from children's bestiaries and such miscellanies as Potter's Antiquities only fortifies the vulgarity of the lamia itself, associated as she is with prostitutes of Corinth in Keats's imagination. In her we recognize the trulls of the Carisbrook barracks of whom Keats was enamored: "I must in honesty however confess that I did not feel sorry at the idea of the Women being a little profligate--the Wind is sulky fit" (I. 132). We have already seen Keats's transformation of the eunuch figure--that most abject of men who will be granted a greater place in heaven; in "Ode to Psyche" we see the elevation of the foolish, gullible Psyche who was ultimately defeated by her weaknesses and only resurrected by the interest and love of Cupid.

The story of Psyche and Cupid is an antithesis to the story about the copulation between matron and ass. The transformed Lucius wanders through a world which is a human hell of degraded spectacles: thievery, jealousy, rapine, and murder. Jan Kott links the bestiality of Apuleius with Titania's love for Bottom in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.²⁸ Kott argues that the Cupid and Psyche story is the oldest literary version of "Beauty and the Beast." In choosing this tale which rises out of his reading of Troilus and Cressida and Burton, Keats chooses a

tale in which a human's passive beauty has superseded the beauty of a goddess. In the myth, Psyche is likened to a second Venus and is a "new Aphrodite" born of the earth impregnated by dew.²⁹ Thus in "Ode to Psyche" the problems of gods and their generational conflicts treated in Hyperion make their appearance. Here Keats focuses on a myth which truly captures the paradox of the weak inheriting the world which is manifested by the universe being turned upside down.

Critics have seen the Ode as unsatisfactory in several ways. Usually read as the first of the Odes, and thus a prototype, "Ode to Psyche" is said to possess banalities of diction and much material which only serves as filler.³⁰ The Ode is seen as an outgrowth of the Chamber of Maiden-Thought letter of 18 May 1818, indicating Keats's necessary turning inwards and finding new material for poetry in the very windings of the mind's processes of thought. Dissatisfied with what she sees as the simple structure of this Ode, Helen Vendler argues that Keats in the later Odes finds unsatisfactory the "reduplicative mirror-image conception of art--art as wholly internalized," which this Ode symbolizes.³¹ Seen in this way, the Ode is but a finger pointing rather than an experience itself; it is a preparatory observer of its own setting out. In a sense the poem could be seen as meddling with itself, in Keats's phrase.

The violation of self which the Ode inscribes and from which the primary vehicle of the poem is derived (singing one's own songs into one's own ear is to participate in a narcissitic

activity , but the Ode suggests the dual nature of the single self, alterity in singleness) aligning the Ode with the problem addressed in the sonnets to Fame. What are the necessary attributes one requires to experience as fully as one can the "curious conscience" mentioned in "Sonnet to Sleep," the inheritance of the children of Adam?

In an episode in Apuleius's tale of Cupid and Psyche, one of Psyche's trials is to descend into Hell and fetch for Venus a little of Proserpina's beauty, place it in a box and carry it back to Venus. Upon accomplishing her mission and arriving back on earth's surface, Psyche opens the casket "where she could perceive no beauty nor anything else, save onely an infernall and deadly sleepe, which immediately invaded all her members as soone as the boxe was uncovered" (119). Cupid, having recovered from his "Maladie" inflicted by his mother's beating, seeks Psyche and finding her asleep wipes sleep from her face and wakes her with the tip of his arrow. As a preliminary to the union of Psyche and Cupid at the end of the story, this episode serves as a little death from which Psyche is resurrected. Keats's own placement of poems within the volume engages just such a journey. In addition to the volume, the placement of poems within the framework of a more comprehensive journal letter gave Keats the opportunity to treat some peculiarities of the human condition, an encounter with a form of generic trespassing that had significant creative potential as manifested in the fame sonnets.

The very nature of the Ode's structure, a combination of the

sonnet and rondeau, echoes the content. The circularity of the rondeau ("these are specimens of a sort of rondeau which I think I shall become partial to--because you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet") echoes this idea of a double life, a twofold abundance, in the expectant waiting in the last image of "Ode to Psyche." In the 1820 volume, the rondeau "Fancy" follows "Ode to Psyche" as if to underscore this abundance in the Ode.

Predating "Ode to Psyche" and written in late 1818, making its first appearance in the journal letter of December 16-January 4, 1819 as a specimen of a new style of poetry, "Fancy," looks forward to the later Ode. The image of the "mind's cage-door" into and out of which Fancy flies looks forward to the "casement ope at night" of the Ode. The "Beauties that the earth hath lost," which Fancy creates, are remade in Psyche's bower where "buds, and bells, and stars without a name" suggest a new Eden. More importantly, "Fancy" figures forth an active principle which like negative capability holds out the possibility of momentary stasis as Fancy comprehends several seasons in one. With a "still, mysterious stealth," Fancy mixes up all the seasons "Like three fit wines in a cup." One thinks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's figure of imagination in "Frost at Midnight" where the frost "performs its silent ministry" and silently binds the father and child in a greater community that comprehends a rebirth even the depths of winter. "Fancy" is not only a figure of generic freedom ("a sort of rondeau ... [and] one idea

amplified with greater ease and freedom than in a sonnet"), but a process of mental freedom as well.

Fancy is also a type of that infamous double knowledge of self suggested by all static entities. "Let, then , winged Fancy find / Thee a mistress to thy mind." "To thy mind" is not "for thy mind." Fancy will reproduce the mind's own image of itself. The image of a mistress brought forward for this mind, "self-overaw'd," is Prosperpina, "Ere the God of Torment taught her / How to frown and how to chide." Keats poises the mind and its image of itself on the liminal edge of a descent into an intense transformative experience. The self-replicating rondeau allows Keats to replicate endlessly the problem of Fancy. In the beginning of the poem, the image of the totality of winter, experienced through opposition and antithesis, "When Night doth meet the Noon / In dark conspiracy / To banish Even from her sky," suggests its counterpart in an image of its opposite, the eternally undifferentiated springtime of Prosperpina before her ravishment in Enna. The other image of the mind's own self is the hermaphroditic Hebe, "when her zone / Slipt its golden clasp ... while she held the goblet sweet, / And Jove grew languid." The daughter of Zeus (Jove) and Hera, Hebe was conflated with Ganymede, the ravished butler of Zeus, as a protector of youthful manhood (Lempriere has two Ganymede entries, one for the goddess Hebe, the other "the cup-bearer of the gods in the place of Hebe").³² The very "stillness" and stasis of Fancy in the midst of its movement is the perfect image of the negatively capable

operation of a mind infamously "self-overaw'd."

Keats in "Ode to Psyche" uses sexual ambiguity to figure the negatively capable mind as both a forward-thrusting torch and a receptive enclosure, alterity within singleness. A mind "self-overaw'd" by its discovery of necessary change and desire for change (even "Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too ... / Cloys with tasting") now sends forth a part of itself to find a mirror "to" itself in the image of suspended state of being represented by Proserpina. Within the static creations of its own mind, the curious conscience still seeks regeneration; in mutability, some stasis. Amy Lowell wrote that the catalogue of luxuries which the poem contains lacks a "freshness of delight."³³ Her observation intuitively notes the hardness which these lines suggest. The heaviness she feels in both specimens, "Fancy" and "Bards of Passion and of Mirth," is itself part of Keats's recreation of the austerity of negative capability.

"Ode: 'Bards of Passion and of Mirth'" belies the "freedom" of the rondeau whose very structure of looseness and ease brings forward its opposite in the genre of the Ode, a panegyric and elegiac mode. In this poem, the "Bards of Passion and of Mirth" are said to "live on high, and then/On the earth ye live again," living in people when people read them. Yet the very nature of the bards' double existence only more forcefully drives home the state of being "To mortals, of their little week."

The sonnets on Fame, the sonnet "To Sleep," and "Ode to Psyche" together in their inter-relationships present a complex

poem. The first sonnet considered, "How fever'd is the man," asks how a person can have a double consciousness of their experience; how can they know the intensity of the experience and feel completely the experience at the same time? A sonnet written in the autumn of 1818, "And what is Love?--It is a doll dress'd up," describes a "love" which is self aware and "so divine / That silly youth doth think to make itself / Divine by loving." Yet this love of silly youth has all the potentiality for a Keatsian love; the modern lovers love in "idleness ... yawning and doating a whole summer long." The luxury of idleness is associated in such sonnets as "Four seasons fill the measure of the year" with a high point before winter's pale "misfeature" brings people to fully realize their "human nature." Dotage, yawning, and idleness are not of necessity antithetical to love; however, self-aware dotage, yawning and idleness that form commonplace correspondences between "Miss's comb" and "pearl tiara," "common Wellingtons" and "Romeo boots" are antithetical. The abstracted "divine" quality of this love of silly youth is in stark contrast to the Keatsian element of the "agonies" which accompany being caught up in real passion. The evocation of Cleopatra's "weighty pearl" brings in the final stage of passion which becomes more valuable by the very act of luxurious dissolution. Through its evocations, the sonnet shows the achievement of what it ostensibly sets out to deny: "That ye may love in spite of beaver hats." The poem is not fetishistic in that it focuses on the necessary accoutrements of true love; for there is only a

difference in degree between Wellingtons and Romeo boots. Rather, Keats in a satire on modern love shows that all the necessary elements of passion, its infancy, dotage, and agony are all present hovering about people and ready to transform them.

Just as many of the poems reflect or elaborate actual circumstances of the life, so too this poem seems to be derived from the once exciting but by this time banal flirtation with Isabella Jones. Writing in October 1818 to George and Georgiana, Keats describes the elevated tension of a chance meeting with Isabella: "As we went along, sometimes through shabby sometimes through decent Street[s] I had my guessing at work, not knowing what it would be and prepared to meet any surprise" (I. 402). Yet the possibility of excitement is buried by the overwhelming good taste and propriety of modern customs: "Our Walk ended in 34 Gloucester Street Queen Square--not exactly so for we went upstairs into her sitting room--a very tasty sort of place with Books, Pictures, a bronze statue of Buonaparte, Music, aeolian Harp; a Parrot, a Linnet--a Case of choice Liquers etc. &c, &c &" (I. 402-403). Shrinking from a kiss in "all good taste," "she cont[i]nued to disappoint [Keats] in a way which made [him] feel more pleasure than a simple kiss could do" (I. 403). All the elements of this encounter are then transformed by Keats who, declining to ever marry, writes: "The roaring of the wind is my wife and the Stars through the window pane are my Children. The mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness" (I. 403). Keats then

compares himself to Achilles shouting in the trenches and Troilus. Greg Kucich has argued that the domesticity and taste of Isabella's house and manner do not stifle but form the "grounds of Keats's conception [of abstracted love] a necessary first step to a transcendent experience."³⁴ The sonnet on modern love is the poetic expression of this movement; the experience of the banal leads to the passion of such figures of wasting and ennui as Achilles and Troilus in Shakespeare's play.

The "Sonnet to Sleep" alludes to a "curious conscience" which creates the luciferian man in "How fever'd is the man." This sonnet asks that sleep put to rest this consciousness, to "close, / In midst this hymn," the "willing" eyes of the speaker. The dense burial imagery of this sonnet in such phrases as "gloom-pleas'd eyes," "embower'd," "Enshaded," "hushed casket of my soul" and the image of darkness as an earth-like substance through which the "curious conscience" tries to burrow suggests that one solution is being proposed to the problem of luciferian man: self-immolation, self-burial ("close my willing eyes") and self-cessation. The alternative to this one possibility is "Ode to Psyche," grouped with these poems not only because it grew out of them as an exercise in form but in theme as well.

The most memorable image in "Ode to Psyche" is the image of a light in darkness at the end of the poem. The redemptive image of "A bright torch, and a casement ope at night, / To let the warm Love in" looks forward to image of the enclosed garden and womb imagery in "Ode to a Nightingale" where Ruth's human passion

expressed by her entering into a dangerous but finally fruitful exile, can become a vehicle for the divine made manifest (Ruth prefigures the Virgin Mary); yet the flip side of this desire is for the human passion to be made divine, the wish of luciferian man, a wish that inevitably brings forward its opposite, the problematic, negatively capable possibility inherent in "magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

In the volume of 1820, "Ode to Psyche" follows "Ode to a Nightingale" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn" lies in between): the implications of the dangerous aspiration and potentiality of the "sole self" of "Nightingale" requires elaboration. In Keats's treatment of the terrible "curious conscience" of the sonnet "To Sleep," he has utilized a genre that is creative of contrast, though in the Shakespearean couplet resolution is achieved. Yet Keats called such a couplet a door slamming shut, and he turned to another form to balance the problem of the "curious conscience" of which the sonnet was creative, which created the sonnet. Instead of the contrastive structure and mutually exclusive ideas that inhere in the sonnet form, the ode stanza opens up the earlier, shorter form. Offering possibility where the sonnet "To Sleep" only offered closure, "Ode to Psyche" prepares an interior place which is expectant, full of hope, of light in darkness, suggesting a self-aware quality and a potentiality for doubleness.

Keats sings his own Psyche's song into her (his) ear, an

active inversion of the Sleep image in the sonnet. There, the speaker asks that Sleep close, in the midst of its own hymn, the speaker's "willing eyes." In "Ode to Psyche," on the other hand, the speaker's song carries him into his own brain consisting of mountainous involutions, zephyrs, and lit torches. Thus the speaker brings us to what might be the ultimate densely packed earthen place of solitude. However, the "wide quietness" is a rival image, a negatively capable image of potentiality, to the total cessation of darkness in "Sonnet to Sleep." If total cessation was one solution to the curious conscience, Keats's priest of "Ode to Psyche" is a kind of panderer to Psyche and Cupid. In the context of the poem, this is to be a panderer to oneself in the worst-case scenerio put forward in the sonnet, "How fever'd is the man." Yet the resultant infamous self-knowledge leads not to self-pollution but to a creative self-knowledge having all the qualities of solitude, density, but allowing, as well, the alterity in the final image of the ode, an enclosure into which comes the penetrative Eros. Keats has rebuilt the palace of Eros but has inverted it. The palace of Eros was a palace of darkness, of death. Psyche did not know whether she was sleeping with a dragon / serpent, which the oracles had prophesied, or a man. Upon lighting her lamp and gaining luciferian knowledge she lost Eros and made knowledge and suffering identical.³⁵ "Do you not see how necessary a world of pain and suffering is to make a soul," Keats had written just prior to writing this Ode. Psyche pierces herself with Eros's

arrows becoming more self-aware and more passionate at the same time; for the more she is carried away by his beauty, the more sudden his flight when the oil burns him. Keats presents a similar happy wound in the image of his own self-wounding where the more fully self-aware mind builds "a fane ... Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain, / Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind." In an image reminiscent of Hyperion's newly gained abstracted knowledge of his "pure fanes, / Of all [his] lucent empire" gained by experiencing "darkness, death and darkness" (I. 238-242), the image of Psyche's "lucent fans, / Fluttering among the faint Olympians" further develops this new self-knowledge of the mind's potentialities for a multitude of sensations, and the self-awareness of its own exquisite knowledge of its perilous and dangerous outpost on the margin of extinction.

In the 1820 volume, "Ode to Psyche" follows "Ode on a Grecian Urn." One has its origins in a Greek myth while the other originates from contemplating a scene on a Greek artifact. The one is about the negatively capable mind, figured forth in a kind of productive self-ravishing; the other is about an outside object, complete, inviolable. The advance of "Ode to Psyche" allows Keats to unravel the inviolability of the Urn, or to show the alterity that lies within an apparently absolute substance. In placing "Ode to Psyche" after "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in the 1820 volume, Keats allows the reader to see a progression that evolves in the Odes. From the appalling vision of human / divine

intermixture and the dangers of such aspirations in "Ode to a Nightingale," to the capacity for the Urn to figure forth an essential aspect of existence in an apparently inviolable artifact, to the full-fledged human Psyche aware of alterity in singleness, a movement equivalent to that of Adam from innocence to experience is suggested. The myth of Psyche is about a mortal becoming divine, about replacing the angry terrible dark passion of Aphrodite with the more self-aware lucidity of Psyche and Eros.³⁶ The old Aphrodite and her lust for Mars is replaced in the Psyche myth of a new kind of love derived from a self-wounding which is also represented through Keats's negatively capable heroes and fallen soldiers such as Antony, Alcibiades, and Jesus Christ.

"Ode to Psyche" follows upon "Ode on a Grecian Urn" because the new love follows upon the heels of the old.

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

The hidden sexual powers that underlie the pictures on the Urn offer the possibility of metamorphoses; yet the very possibility is fraught with difficulties. "Ode to Psyche" gives Keats's negatively capable self a strong lodgment from which to sally forth; the singular bisexual quality of the phallic torch and open casement, not for a phallic Eros but hermaphroditic "Love" to enter, is replaced in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by a strongly penetrative imagination. Haunting the quiet vestal precincts of

the "still unravish'd bride" of the Urn (and by extension, the unravished, because eternally pursued, "maidens loth") is "our rhyme." In "Sonnet to Sleep" and "Ode to Psyche," we have seen the engendering of self with the rhymes of otherness, while in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" the songs of the Urn will never engender another sense; though "more endear'd," more in-the-ear, the self does not intermingle with some other.

The myth of Psyche treats of the development of a new love based on consciousness of differentiation--to be loved by and to love Eros in darkness is to belong to the old primordial love; to gain knowledge and suffer loss is to develop a new love of "pleasant pain." The Urn is "unravish'd" and the perfection of its dense singularity--its absolutist perfection--seems to resist the speakers' ("our rhyme," "dost tease us out of thought") unwarranted violating interests. The final phrases " 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'" represent the inviolability of the Urn that resists not only the penetrative "our rhyme" but shuts out the penetrative copula as well. The circularity of the Urn and the seemingly absoluteness of its perfect design as a self reflective, oxymoronic "Sylvan historian," with ditties "more endear'd," comes to represent a model of negative capability, of duality in stasis.³⁷

Just as the word "Forlorn" in "Ode to a Nightingale" brings the speaker back to his sole self and the seemingly solipsistic encounter with his own fancy, in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" the line "A burning forehead and a parching tongue," recalls to the

speaker a darker mode that is developed in the fourth stanza, of sacrifice, mysterious priests, and the empty town. Though the town is not depicted on the Urn, its very absence provokes its presence in the mind of the poet; a town is everything that a "Sylvan historian" is not. The town "for evermore / ... emptied" and "desolate" provides the sad human counterpart to the once thought-to-be eternally recurring nature depicted on the Urn.³⁸ After the image of the absent and desolated town brings out the true nature of the Urn's alterity, the Urn is addressed as "Cold Pastoral." The frigid quality of the Urn, its unravishment, its uncoming, its unleaving, is further emphasized by its shutting out the copula in " 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.'" The very coldness of the Urn "tease[s] us out of thought" and allows people to feel their physical presence ("When old age shall this generation waste"), teasing people into the realm of mutability. The Urn represents that edge of desire where desire comes into perfection and is held but for a moment. Its beginning had to be somewhere, and in this instance it began in a haunted town. "Sylvan historian" takes on a new meaning and the forever "leaving" of the urn, perpetually recurring as the urn is viewed by walking around it, indicates that in this perpetual recurrence will always be an eternally empty space, a desolated other. It is in this capacity that the Urn represents negative capability, dissolution in stasis, desire in completion.

The line " 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' " is usually seen as related to Keats's idea of the authenticity of the

imagination:

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the
Hearts affections and the Truth of Imagination.-
What Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth
... compared to Adam's dream.- he awoke and found
it truth. I am more zealous in this affair,
because I have never yet been able to perceive how
any thing can be known for truth by consecutive
reasoning--and yet it must be...O for a Life of
Sensations rather than thoughts! (I. 185).

Keats drew his image of Adam's dream, which then made its way
into "Ode on a Grecian Urn," from Book VIII of Paradise Lost.
There God compares his solitude to Adam's after Adam has
requested a companion. Adam says to God:

Thou in thy self art perfect, and in thee
Is no deficiency found; not so is Man
... No need that thou
Shouldst propagate [sic], already infinite;
And through all numbers absolute, though One;
But Man by number is to manifest
His single imperfection ... his Image multipli'd,
In unitie defective. (VIII. 399-425)

Milton juxtaposes God's perfection "though all numbers absolute,
though One" and Adam's "In unitie defective." Man is to mend his
defect only through amity and mutuality, in combining with
another defective creature and through a mutual struggle between

differentiated beings start the long journey back into oneness with God. In Keats's Ode, the perfection of the Urn and absolute closure in the final phrases necessarily gives birth to history and progress. The Urn remains a "Cold Pastoral" while the Adam of Milton and Keats himself along with such creations as Madeline "Eve of St. Agnes," awaken into defectiveness, and differentiation.

"Ode to Melancholy," composed after "Ode on a Grecian Urn," is an inversion of the stillness of the earlier poem: its energetic "No, no, go not" seems opposed to stillness. Nevertheless, just as the frigidity of the Urn teases people into feeling the little week of their lives more fully, the active ravishing of the harri-dan, Melancholy, offers moments of stasis: "feed deep deep on her peerless eyes," Keats says, when one's beloved rages. "Ode on Melancholy" reveals the real pain of this necessary, defective, mode of feeling truth when pleasure turns to poison as the bee-mouth sucks, revealing a Melancholy who "dwells with Beauty, Beauty that must die." Melancholy, like the Urn, is a dual image. On one hand, it represents potentiality; on the other hand, it represents static undifferentiation. Figurations of the divine, both Urn and Melancholy invite the speaker; images of undifferentiation, they hold out the dangerous possibility of loss of identity, the pleasure of our lives distinct, the pain distinct. Yet as images of divinity, they are images of potentiality as well. The Urn, as "sylvan historian," denies the closure of history by promising the regeneration of

the self. In "Ode on Melancholy," to be human is to be in a world of process, yet to be human also implies the closure and the stuck quality implied by the last word of the Ode, "hung." To experience either, in any of their manifestations, is to feel one's human-ness perversely and fully. Humans, in Adam's words, multiply their single imperfection and are "In unitie defective."

In "Ode on Melancholy," Keats offers an experience of Melancholy through a sexually ambiguous mode which is echoed by a sensual synaesthetics, as well, when, in the last stanza, none can see the shrine of Melancholy "save him whose strenuous tongue / Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine." Keats requires that a sensation of taste which gains admission to this shrine be seen. Yet a reorganization of the senses is accompanied by a refinement of sexuality. Joy is imaged forth as male, "whose hand is ever at his lips." "Aching Pleasure nigh," sipping at flowers and turning their honey to poison, is a phallic image recalling not only Pandarus's song on bone-aches, but the image of Isabella and Lorenzo's love in "Isabella" that prospers like bees in poison flowers, as well. Thus, in a concentrated imagery of male-centered experiences, bursting Joy's grape on his palate fine, Keats exposes the essential "she." How could such a reversal come to pass? What is the nature of "Joy's grape?" The hyperbolic language of transformative experiences ties this poem to Antony and Cleopatra. When Cleopatra prepares to kill herself, she says, "Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have / Immortal longings in me; now no more / The juice of Egypt's grape

shall moist this lip" (V. ii. 281-83). Cleopatra, and by extension Antony, in Egypt, represents for Keats the mixture of joy and sorrow. In the fragment "Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow," the death scene of Cleopatra is brought forward in the lines "Cleopatra, regal drest, / With the aspics at her breast." In the sonnet "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again," the speaker says that he must "once more humbly assay / The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit" linking the mixture of joy and sorrow in the play to the tartness of a grape-like fruit. Cleopatra, the figuration for the dangerous experience, is thus at the very core of a very refined masculinist energy. In addition, Antony and Cleopatra stands at the center of the image of a lover who is told to "feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes." When Antony answers his jealous mistress who wants the messages from Rome read, he says, "our dungy earth alike / Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life / Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair / And such a twain can do't, in which I bend. / On pain of punishment, the world to weet / We stand up peerless" (I. i. 33-40). Here people and animals are composed of earth, but the imaginative act which feeds upon sensation and engenders the dangerous love exemplified by Keats, as well as by Antony and Cleopatra, transforms our earthly beings. Finally, the image of Joy and Pain inextricably joined together finds its greatest expression when Cleopatra says of the asp's bite "the stroke of death is as a lover's pinch, / Which hurts, and is desir'd" (V. ii. 297-298).

Indeed, the metonymic "thingness" of Keats's poem, the catalogue in the first stanza, the itemized list in stanza two, the grape of joy which stands for all grapes, bunches of grapes, grapes in the mouth and in the stomach, Beauty, Joy, Pleasure, Delight, all seem to be an intuitive reading of the materialism of Shakespeare's play where metonymy and synecdoche strive for supremacy as Cleopatra and Antony vie to outdo one another, calling each to each, "My serpent Nile," "Lord of Lords...Infinite Virtue," "Great Fairy," "Egypt." "I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony," says Cleopatra, and the very nature of the world is translated by the passion expressed in these figures of speech.

Neil Fraistat has said of the 1820 volume that it comprises an epic that treats the poet's determination to attain a true poetics that is about the nature of human suffering. In so doing Fraistat aligns himself with the tradition delineated by Vogler, who argues that Romantic preludes to vision necessarily question the possibility that a subjective poetry might project any course of history to a people. The problem with Fraistat's thesis is that his Keats is a poet whose 1820 volume concerns itself with the poet's own voice and the relation of his own voice to the fictions he creates. This is a return to Abrams' image of the solitary poet. Though Fraistat posits the interiorization of human history and an interior confrontation results in poetry about the role of poetry in the poet's life, his idea of Keats rejecting the poetry of romance and illusion for the poetry of

reality oversimplifies the process by which Keats encounters individual isolation and limitation and attempts to overcome the forces of dissolution and enter into a greater participation with the world. I have examined the confrontation of the forces that Keats sees as limiting people but also, if understood, offering greater participation in the world. "To Autumn" offers one such adumbration.

The image of Melancholy, a figuration of the dangerous experience of love, its passion and its mirth, is partly derived from Cleopatra. While Cleopatra makes hungry where most she satisfies, Antony's bounty is "an autumn ... / That grew the more by reaping" (V. ii. 86-88). In "To Autumn," Keats negotiates negative capability in male terms. We have seen above how Cleopatra, Alcibiades, Antony come to be associated in Keats with an explosive singleness, alterity in singularity, as a necessary human differentiation of experience which attempts to touch upon some absolute undifferentiated being. Dryden's Plutarch says of Alcibiades that "each age gave him a peculiar grace and charm"; quoting Euripides, Plutarch writes, " ' Of all fair things, the autumn, too, is fair'... this happened so with Alcibiades." "To Autumn" offers one such moment of explosive singleness; the stasis and potentiality of the twittering swallows at the end gives way to the movement of the companion poem which follows in the volume, "Ode on Melancholy."

Another association of male sexuality exists between "To Autumn" and the last poem of the volume, Hyperion. The central

image of Hyperion, and, by extension, of "To Autumn," is the figure of Saturn, a dual figure like the Urn, like Melancholy, who stands for time before time was, and time differentiated by history. On the one hand, Saturn represents the totality of time that is lost to people; he is the world of Autumn that is static before history begins to devastate the world. Autumn is our lost Eden, pregnant with its own destructive potential. Autumn is the highest moment of plenitude in ripeness and total participation just as Eden and Saturn are. A line from Milton describing the feast with which Adam and Eve greet Raphael before he recounts the war in heaven underscores the lack of differentiation that occurs in Eden and "To Autumn": "And on her ample Square from side to side / All Autumn pil'd, though Spring and Autumn here / Danc'd hand in hand" (V. 393-395). Raynal described the New World as a problematic Eden where "the temperature of the air, and continual, though tolerable heat, preserved th earth in a constant verdure and fertility. On the same spot were seen Trees covered with blossoms, and others with delicious fruits; and the corn that was sown in one field was reaped in another."³⁹ That this "Eden," too, is overthrown by the Spaniards whose arrival the Indians foretold in their apocalyptic vision of the world in collision with celestial bodies⁴⁰ reinforces the New World coda that lies within Keats's theme of the titans in Hyperion. Autumn is the highest moment of plenitude in ripeness and total participation just as Eden and Saturn are. In "To Autumn," Keats brings to the foreground the tension between the undifferentiated

cycles of nature and intense moments of differentiated passion. In recognizing the tragic reality of what Saturn and Autumn and poetry itself represent, Keats sees in the history of human activity not the mere record of an irretrievable past, but in Giuseppe Mazotta's words, a "recollection forward." Visionary poetics has an open-ended quality and carries the suggestion of an ongoing discovery, not a recapitulation of "things done" but, rather, as Fanshawe writes in his translation of Camoens' Lusiad, "this rapture though it have not received the last hand."

The first set of Odes has been discussed in relation to the journal letter and its relation to that letter and its relation to each other. "The Eve of St. Agnes" was composed before the Odes in January 1819 and yet looks forward to problems which the Odes grapple with. Each of the narratives in the volume treats of a tale which is referred to at the end of the narrative as completed: "Lamia" is a "doubtful tale from faery land"; "Isabella" became "a sad ditty ... from mouth to mouth through all the country pass'd: Still is the burthen sung" (501-503); and "The Eve of St. Agnes" ends "And they are gone: ay, ages long ago." The problem Keats treats of in these narratives is the undifferentiated absolutism of the past into which we all proceed, and the promise of the quickening of perception and feeling which poetry and a negatively capable state of mind hold out to people, of intense experience of themselves as mutable parings of the undifferentiated whole. People partake of both a "unitie defective" and "all number, absolute, though One"; how

best can people relish this existence made possible by this curious conscience?

The frozen or "stuck" quality of "The Eve of St. Agnes," its "doneness" suggested by the lines "And they are gone: ay, ages long ago / These lovers fled away into the storm" (370-71), is juxtaposed with imagery of ceaseless becoming, as when the image of Madeline's heart beating against her skin is described thus: "... her heart was voluble, / Paining with eloquence her balmy side; / As though a tongueless nightingale should swell / Her throat in vain, and die, heart stifled, in her dell" (204-207). The frozen stillness of the poem provides a necessary containment. The highly, overly wrought materiality of the poem, the sculpted quality, looks forward to the frieze-like figures of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which provides the best commentary on the narrative. Yet this very materiality and "doneness" allows for the expression of the highest immaterial evocations. Marjorie Levinson argues that we must see in Keats's art a "verbal materialism" which rebels against any attempt to situate meaning in a reading of the rich surface of the poem, a surface which invites and hoodwinks critics to "coordinate the elaborately overwrought surface of the poem with [their] impression of layered, resonant, 'high' representation."⁴¹ Instead, this verbal materialism strives to create its own reality that is free of the truly limiting social features of Keats's station, thus writing for himself the "reality of a shadow life, whose virtue is its virtuality."⁴² Levinson believes that Keats's

manipulation of the canon of "enabling" texts somehow places him at a remove from "real" experience. I have been arguing throughout this chapter that Keats's manipulation of canonical forms allowed him access to experience, both lived and expressed in poetry.

"Ode to a Nightingale" follows upon "The Eve of St. Agnes." Fraistat argues that the song of the Nightingale represents the poetry of romance, which by its nature is escapist and illusory and misleads any and all who trust in it. Fraistat sees Keats as placing the song of the Nightingale in juxtaposition with the groan of humans in the third stanza to show that to escape with the Nightingale is to enter a mind deluded by its own fictions, and to die prematurely without encountering life as it is. But such a reading does not allow for the creation of the new poet of human history that is the triumph of this ode. Without some compensatory way of listening to the nightingale's song, it will only create the awareness of the limitations of loss and suffering. The nightingale becomes like the other subjects of the Odes, a figuration of the negatively capable; it invites, yet repels. The "shadows numberless" onto which this type of hearing must fasten itself consist of a cessation of division, numberless, and represent a totality of time. "Shadows numberless" are without the differentiating numbers of poetry. The sound image in "Eve of St. Agnes" where Madeline is deaf to "music, yearning like a God in pain," (56) suggests the necessary containment and form passion and feeling must take in measured rhyme or song. In

his "The Nightingale," Coleridge listens to the nightingale in an absolutist manner, hoping to dispel the melancholic associations of the bird's song as a way to bring paradise to earth where his son will then be one with nature. The Nightingale in Keats's poem, in contrast, becomes a daemonic force, in Angus Fletcher's sense of the daemonic agent that obsesses the hero, narrowing his interest, so that he "has no life outside an exclusive sphere of action."⁴³ Listening to the nightingale in a sensual manner necessarily brings the contending insurmountable voice of groaning humanity to mind.

However, Keats offers a new way of listening to the Nightingale. Straining for the knowledge or solace the bird offers is a type of listening controlled by a brain that relies on consecutive reasoning. This "dull brain perplexes and retards" another, different Keatsian brain of negative capability. "Already with thee" is an instantaneous shift from sensual listening to a new historical listening. The speaker is projected into a place of process, number, change, where he will "guess each sweet / Wherewith the seasonable month endows." In stanza six, the speaker recapitulates the kind of earlier listening he had experienced and its logical outcome. By confronting history in this new poetry as a path through the centuries, the poet enacts its burden, recognizing that people hungrily possess what has belonged to others. The Nightingale's song is no different in stanzas six and seven, but the listener's state of mind is different, and this change allows the listener

to revise his vision of hungry generations as he considers the continuity of human listeners. The final question of the poem, "Do I wake or sleep?" reminds us of the state of "aching" in stanza one. Now we are full of intellectual musings; we can think about our place here, how we see, what consciousness we have. It is not poetry of enchantment that prevents us from living here, but the sleeping inner eye and ear that are swallowed by "shadows numberless" of undifferentiated nature. The strength of this new number-filled historical poetry--historical in the sense of its awareness of the passing of time--is that it will resurrect the "buried" voice of the bird. It is this confrontation with human history, the passion of one's knowledge of life passing onto another generation, a "recollection forward," that makes this Ode an example of the epic impulse, the creation of the fulfilled and the complete.

Hyperion, the closing poem of the 1820 volume, was composed intermittently from October 1818 to April 1819 and, thus, is contemporaneous to some of the poems in the 1820 volume such as "The Eve of St. Agnes," and the Odes. Other poems of the volume such as "Isabella," written in Spring 1818, and "Lamia" and "To Autumn," written in the late summer and early autumn of 1819, in turn, frame Hyperion. It was perhaps such a chronology and the satire in the last poem of the group, "Lamia," that prompted Jack Stillinger to say of the 1820 volume that it illustrated "a progressive abandonment of the ideal and acceptance of the natural world," a progress which Morris Dickstein points out does

not exist in the sequence of poems in the volume itself, beginning as it does with the skeptical "Lamia" and ending with the more "abstract" Hyperion.⁴⁴

Hyperion, a fragment of an "epic" poem, can be seen as exerting a pressure on the lyric forms to contain an epic impulse. In turn, the lyrics themselves exert a force upon the epic form and tend to interfuse the longer form with the intensity of a moment of illumination. Hyperion does show elements of this condensed moment. The challenge of the Apollo figure is to take the epic comprehensiveness and antiquity of Mnemosyne and comprehend it in a moment of intensity. Keats has Apollo condense this magnitude in a concentrated statement of the argument of half of Paradise Lost, the first half of Milton's poem having been dealt with in the first two books in the fall of the Titans and their councils. Commencing with Raphael's account of creation, Adam's account of his own creation, the consequence of the Fall, and Michael's unfolding of history, the second half of Paradise Lost is subsumed in Apollo's cry:

Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal. (III. 114-117)

It is as if by subsuming the matter of Paradise Lost, of

swallowing the epic tradition in his digestive brain, Keats advances the tradition.

The interfusion of epic and lyric qualities that are present in the 1820 volume is continued in the theme of melancholy as a necessary state of being through which any vision of renovated human experience must be filtered. In Paradise Lost, Adam's burden of knowledge carries him forward into a life of differentiation and active virtue (Raphael begins the history of the future in Book XI and continues it into Book XII). The necessary understanding of the melancholy which marks people's lives on earth, represented in Milton in earlier poems such as the paired "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," is continued by Keats. When he began to compose Hyperion, Keats wrote to his brother George,

No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness
are stationed around me, and serve my Spirit the
office [of] which is equivalent to a king's body
guard--then 'Tragedy, with scepter'd pall, comes
sweeping by' According to my state of mind I am with
Achilles shouting in the Trenches or with Theocritus
in the Vales of Sicily. Or I through [sic] my whole
being into Troilus and repeating those lines 'I wander
like a lost soul upon the Stygian Banks staying for
waftage.' (I. 403-404)

The image of "Tragedy with scepter'd pall" is taken from Milton's "Il Penseroso." The pensive one is empowered to understand life

in a way that joy in "L'Allegro" cannot. In "Il Penseroso," the power of Orpheus's lyre is able to redeem what is lost in the figure of Eurydice, and Orpheus is able to draw "iron tears down from Pluto's cheek/And make Hell grant what Love did seek" (107-108). Facing melancholy will raise the poet's song "To something like Prophetic strain" (174). Erwin Panofsky notes the dramatic aspect of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" in which the "individualities are realized with the utmost vividness." "Il Penseroso" would seem the superior state since she has the last word and if the world is to be redeemed at all, its redemption must be through melancholy.⁴⁵ Keats's rondeau, "Fancy," has fancy assert her powers in a like way within the most melancholy of seasons, winter.

Keats's letter juxtaposes the image of the epical Achilles with that of the pastoral Theocritus. The image from Troilus and Cressida, "I wander like a lost soul upon the stygian Banks waiting for waftage," and by extension the imbedded reference to the eternally waiting souls sung by the poet of Hell, Dante, station Keats in this more difficult poetic realm where the poet creates his poems from a knowledge of despair. Keats further conjures from epical matter a dramatic moment of self-perception, condensing the comprehensiveness of epic into the moment of illumination which marks Milton's "brief epic," Paradise Regained, when he sees himself acting out Achilles shouting in the trenches, or Theocritus's problematic pastoralism.

Keats's intermixture of epic and pastoral has been discussed

in Chapter I. His use of the oxymoron to figure forth the resulting figure of this intermixture that formed the new heroic, the negatively capable hero, was discussed in Chapter II. The 1820 volume establishes the necessary work of the hero who must make the chaos of melancholy, which marks earthly life, yield up some good. Keats's own social and class impoverishment, surely the material realm of melancholy, has been seen as the real impetus behind his creation of an ostentatious ideal and abstracted world of translated identities, a life of allegory, a vision that in the end betrays itself by the very materiality of the text that reveals the circumstances and preoccupations of Keats. Yet seen in another way, this material impoverishment is the starting point, the bare bones reality, from which Keats develops a satisfying claim or concept.

The relationship of progress to Hyperion, which is about an old order giving way to the new, makes Keats's own process of writing relevant. One such example of this is the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" letter that shows his own process of drawing forth from melancholy some benefit. Examining the shape which the letters themselves take, a very self-conscious act, Keats proceeds to statements about the progress of human beings and the manner in which they perceive their lives. Written to John Hamilton Reynolds on 3 May 1818, the letter opens with an "Imprimus" reading, "What I complain of is that I have been in so an uneasy a state of Mind as not to be fit to write to an invalid. I cannot write to any length under a dis-guised feeling.

I should have loaded you with an addition of gloom" (I. 275-76). The letter foregrounds Keatsian tropes, disease, complaints, restlessness, and gloominess. From these opening comments, he begins developing his letter referring to his brother Tom's illness. Next, Keats writes of the weather:

I am glad you blow up the weather--all through your letter there is a leaning towards a climate-curse. and you know what a delicate satisfaction there is in having a vexation anathematized: one would think there has been growing up for these last four thousand years, a grandchild Scion of the old forbidden tree, and that some modern Eve had just violated it; and that there was come with double charge, "Notus and Afer blac with thunderous clouds from Seraleona [sic]--I shall breathe worsted stockings sooner than I thought for. (I. 276)

In elaborating a cliched introduction to a letter by referring to the weather, or "blowing up the weather" in his own manner, Keats could be seen as showing an uneasy access to learning that is flaunted. However, I would argue that Keats's references to weather, Milton, and the new fall of man to which he alludes in the image of a "modern Eve" are on the one hand an instinctive exercise to loosen his imaginative faculties and on the other hand a way to swell his mind and direct the flow of his thoughts into a subject of great importance. The more comprehensive vision which later in the letter is derived from a comparison of

the epics of Milton and Wordsworth has its origins in an impoverished opening to a letter, and from the abjectness of vacancy some solace in creation is derived.

The opening lines of the letter situate the "foot" of the letter in the subject of gloominess and mortality. The closing lines of the letter situate the "head" of the letter in a comic vision in their reference to the "Third Chamber" of the mind with its "wine of love-and the Bread of Friendship" (I, 283). The letter is like a recapitulation of all forms and genres, ending with the wresting from melancholy of a vision of love and friendship. The interfusion of the pastoral mode present in the letter (the reference to the weather, the "pastoral" "Ode to Maia," and the closing image of love and friendship) into epic matter develops further Keats's work with a composite order of poetry which fuses the small and the large, the lyric, pastoral mode, with the epic, historical mode, the comic with the tragic, the momentary with the visionary. Indeed, it is the pastoral vision, or more exactly, the vision of pastoral in spite of the historical, that holds out promise.

Keats, in the letter, continues epic and pastoral intermixtures that affiliate his letter to his new poetic. He writes:

An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people--
it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by
widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the
Mystery: a thing I begin to understand a little, and

which weighed upon you in the most gloomy and true sentence in your Letter. The difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge appears to me this--in the latter case we are falling continually ten thousand fathoms deep and being blown up again without wings and with all horror of a Case shoulderd Creature--in the former case, our shoulders are fledge [sic], and we go thro' the same Fir [sic] without fear. This is running one's rigs on the score of abstracted benefit--when we come to human Life and the affections it is impossible how a parallel of breast and head can be drawn...it is impossible to know how far knowlege [sic] will console for the death of a friend and the ill "that flesh is heir to." (I. 277-78)

The idea of exercising knowledge in spite of doubt and uncertainty is a restatement of the definition of negative capability. "The difference of high Sensations with and without knowlege [sic]" is that without knowledge we are driven as Satan was, and the allusions here to vast distances, to Fir (fire?) and air, suggest Satan's fall from heaven. However, Sensation with knowledge allows us to cross the same space without fear. I think Keats is here suggesting a satanic will and is affiliating himself with a tradition of romantic allusions to this epic figure. But such indomitable will as alluded to here in the figure of a Miltonic Satan is called "an abstracted benefit." Keats seems to be asking how we make head and heart, knowledge

and sensation, intermingle in actual life. "It is impossible to know how far knowledge will console [as] for the death of a friend." What recourse is there? Earlier in the letter, Keats had put forward a simple desire for a pastoral vision in the fragment "Ode to Maia" where the speaker wished to sing in "earlier Sicilian" and then "die away / Content ... Rich in the simple worship of the day." This Keatsian commonplace of desiring the cessation of feeling is a mode which he approaches skeptically. This pure pastoralism of undifferentiated feeling is not available to people just as pure knowledge is not able to assuage the pain felt upon the death of a friend. The phrase "Burden of the Mystery" is taken from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," where a pastoral motif yields up its promise to restore a golden age, but an age which is paradoxically fuller for the knowledge of loss and change. Keats will finally praise Wordsworth as combining head and heart into an "epic passion," a composite order of poetry which Keats's entire poetic attempts to create.

Keats has been playing with Reynolds' idea that there is nothing else but sorrow in life. What is left to people is the creation of a new type of poetry which "martyrs itself to the human heart." This martyrdom to the differentiated experience of mutability is developed when Keats adumbrates Byron's saying that " 'Knowledge is Sorrow'" by saying that " 'Sorrow is Wisdom'... and for aught we can know for certainty! 'Wisdom is folly.'" In undercutting a religious sense here and reducing it to its

possible absurdity, Keats is playing out his negatively capable poetics: that people must act and experience life though they can never know anything but doubt and uncertainty.

After restating a definition of negative capability, Keats looks at the very nature and act of writing letters: "some kinds of letters are good squares others handsome ovals, and others some orbicular, others spheroid--and why should there not be another species with two rough edges like a Rat-trap" (I. 279). Keats plays upon a double meaning for "rat-trap"; on the one hand the two rough edges suggest a snare; on the other, a rat-trap is a set of complicated circumstances, and Keats, in saying that he "must ply [his] vagaries," refers to his own ability to build upon fragments and create an entire web of "intractable" circumstance. He then likens his work to a game of checkers: "I must play my draughts as I please, and for my advantage and your erudition, crown a white with a black, or a black with a white, and move into black or white, far and near as I please" (I. 279). Again the intractable web of human circumstance is reduced to a schematic checker-board, the coexistence of pleasure and pain, good and evil, like white and black, forever criss-crossing and countering each other in a series of "vagaries." Rejecting both a comprehensive knowledge represented by epic and undifferentiated feeling, and the cessation of feeling, represented by pastoral, Keats returns to the psychical and physical difficulties that inhere in the very process of taking pen and paper and writing a letter and from this zero of activity

derives a valuable poetic. Not only do the the larger reckonings concerning the "burden of the mystery" feed into Keats's schematic of the checker-board, but the act of crossing one's letters leads to an engagement with the world. Like the cliché of the weather decked out in fancy references to pastoral motifs and culminating in contemplating the nature of human existence, the cliché of commenting upon one's own letter writing leads on to richer musings. After his dinner break, Keats returns to the letter and makes explicit the larger realm of meaning to which crossed letters refers: "For chequer work leads us naturally to a Milkmaid, a Milkmaid to Hogarth Hogarth to Shakespeare Shakespear [sic] to Hazlitt Hazlitt to Shakespeare and thus by merely pulling an apron string we set a pretty peal of chimes at work" (I, 280). The sexual innuendo of pulling at apron strings and ringing a girl's chimes only strengthens the comprehensiveness of Keats's negatively capable poetics which span from bawdry to notions of the "Burden of the Mystery." From the small to the comprehensive, from the innocent sexual play to creating hungering generations that signal people's decay, Keats's poetic achieves comprehensiveness. Perhaps this sexual innuendo is the origin of the image of the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" which will bring people to feel the full weight of the burden; the simple pleasures develop "sharpening one's vision into the [heart] and nature of Man" (I. 280). At this point in the letter, Keats argues that Milton's epical qualities must give way to Wordsworth's "deepness" or more composite awareness.

Thinking into the human heart, contemplating the endless web of circumstances, writing the "rat-trap" of a letter, contemplating the endless change with which people are faced, Keats, nevertheless, maintains an overarching vision of people's trust in language and in the poverty of their own circumstances. Gabriel Josopovici has written of Kafka reduced in his last illness to occasional jottings on slips of paper to communicate and the trust in such scribblings which redeems the loss of powers they represent. Keats writes a letter, "I hope you may not have the same pain in this scribbling," and from such an action wrests the feelings imaged forth as the final Chamber of Thought after a painful accession stored with "the wine of love-and the Bread of Friendship" (I. 282).

What connects this letter with my discussion of the 1820 volume is that the letter situates the possibility of pleasure in the midst of pain. The despondency of cliched talk of weather and self-reflexive examinations of actual letter-writing promise insight into the condition of people. Where this letter touches upon Hyperion, though written several months before Keats's commencement of that epic, is its projection of "the grand march of intellect," its comment that "a mighty Providence subdues the mightiest Minds," and that ideas can be "too newly born to be doubted" but soon outwear themselves in the endless change that constitutes life.

The checkered web of circumstances which forms the basis of the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" letter is embedded in a vision of

the world as full of change and sorrow. This world demands the full participation of humans. In a bit of grotesquerie aimed at the Jeffrey girls with whom John and his brother Tom had stayed at Teignmouth where Keats wrote the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" letter, Tom writes of a sweet Bun that lost the honor of being "masticated by a pair of Ivory teeth" and "was destined perhaps to some hungry pityless voracious maw"; however, the bun is not to be too pitied since it also rots teeth, prompting Tom to say "Material Bodies sometimes feed upon the things they nourish" (I. 284-85). The reciprocal feeding and mutual devouring to which this passage alludes, though written by Tom, possesses a luxuriousness that John would appreciate. The dubious honor of bursting Joy's grape against one's palate and the consequences can be seen in this quotation. Keats had written a month earlier at Teignmouth of "horrid moods" in the epistle to Reynolds that contains the image of the world as an endless digestive apparatus:

... but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore:--
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction (94-97).

To this luxuriousness that at times borders on the grotesque, as Christopher Ricks points out, can be appended some observations on Hyperion, the culminating poem of the 1820 volume. Luxury has come to be seen as integral in Keats's composition of Hyperion

and the revision in The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream especially in his transformation of Mnemosyne into Dea Moneta, the goddess of money.⁴⁶ Yet Hyperion itself can be seen as Keats transmuting the raw materiality of his impoverishment, rather than the failed enterprise of poet who comes to bitterly realize the limitations of conventions that ignore the reality of poverty and powerlessness.

Dante is generally seen to have influenced imagery in Hyperion. Robert Gittings argues that Keats transforms Dante's imagery and that Keats planned Hyperion by reading "an epic and philosophic poem of the highest class";⁴⁷ he does not follow through with an analysis of how Keats modified Dante and adapted to his own use Dantesque themes, most notably the theme of tragic love as expressed in Inferno. Indeed, Keats's close reading of Dante, beginning in the summer of 1818 and continuing into the following year, coincides with his fully developing a tragic vision of love in such poems as "Lamia," "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," and "Isabella."

In Chapter I, I have discussed Keats's concept of the the necessity of thriftlessness in regard to Robert Burns ("Were the fingers made to squeeze a guinea or a white hand" [I. 320]). It is significant that the image of Saturn in Canto XIV of Inferno is in the center of the three rings of the violent, amidst suicides, spendthrifts, and usurers. The old man of Crete, like the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, represents the ages of man, a type of historical necessity that has violent, thriftless,

undercurrents. Wordsworth had compared Napoleon to such a figure, "a Colossos with feet of clay and trunk of molten brass"⁴⁸ who is immoral and perishable. The thriftlessness of Napoleon is remarked upon again by Wordsworth who astutely remarks to Captain Pasley that Buonaparte "goes about raving for 'gold, gold'" like "the first Conquerors of the New World" and does not care for the "slow but mighty and sure returns of any other produce."⁴⁹ Byron in "The Age of Bronze," the title itself uniting the poem with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, writes of Buonaparte on St. Helena and an observer of him who might "Smile to survey the queller of the nations / Now daily haggling o'er disputed rations" (III); of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, Byron writes, " 'Oh!/My Guard, my old Guard!' exclaimed that god of clay" (X. 58-59). The type of historical figure represented by the Old Man of Crete and by the statue in The Book of Daniel is also found in Ovid's myth of Creation which essentially forms the basis of Dante's use. The four ages of gold, silver, brass, and iron clearly denote the ongoing process of generation where sons destroy fathers.

The progress from clay to gold, to a refining of experience, and the conflicts that arise bring to the foreground the final figure of this process, Apollo who represents for Keats the relation to art that combines the physical and the intellectual. As we have seen in Keats's development of the eunuch hero as an attempt to create an embodiment of language that actualizes thought and feeling, of thinking of the book as an experience of

life in its fullest tension, Keats's idea of gusto is a fuller emotional and phsysical response to the ideal represented in art. The Apollo figure had become such a nexus for a new subjective and emotional response that united with the ideal with which he was associated. Johann Winckelmann initiating this type of response had written of the Belvedere Apollo,

The artist created a purely ideal figure, employing the only material in which he could realize his idea. This statue surpasses all other representations of the god, just as Homer's description surpasses those attempted by all other poets. His height is above that of man and his attitude declares his divine grandeur. An eternal springtime, like that which reigns in the happy fields of Elysium, clothes his body with the charms of youth and softly shines on the proud structure of his limbs. To understand this masterpiece you must fathom intellectual beauties and become, if possible, a divine creator; for here there is nothing mortal, nothing subject to human needs ... Like the soft tendrils of the vine, his beautiful hair flows round his head, as if gently brushed by the breath of the zephyr.⁵⁰

Keats would find such allusions to the Apollo Belvedere in both Shelley, who was familiar with Winckelmann, and Byron, who in

such works as Childe Harold, Canto IV, stanzas 161 and 162 describes the statue through the eyes of a nymph. Such references of a figure of perpetual springtime recalls Keats's own use of such figures in his images of Alcibiades and Antony.

In utilizing such a figure to embody the epic impulse which is contained in his volume of poems, Keats revises and adumbrates earlier epic poets, giving himself opportunities to create poetry and add depth to his own life experiences. It is within the negatively capable space, static yet replete with potentiality, that Keats nests his heroic. Dante added to Keats's life, and Keats's own vision of life as a vale of soul-making corresponds with Dante's Inferno and Purgatorio. If Inferno is a place where people are stationary but exercised by their lavishments, Purgatorio is the place where people are disciplined by their limitations. From Keats's mount in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and the breathing there of a "pure serene," we can see that Keats offers a vision of poetic liberation where people can experience fully their place amidst the oblivion of generations and history. In addressing such large and comprehensive problems and offering his idea of negative capability, Keats is accomplishing the epic poet's special task.

1. Rosalie Colie, Paradoxica Epidemica (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), page 7.
2. Neil Fraistat, The Poem and the Book (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pages 1, 97.
3. See Sigmund Freud, "The Sexual Enlightenment of Children (An Open Letter to Dr. M. Fuerst)," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, James Strachey, Editor, 1953-1974. Peter Gay applies Freud's theories to his discussion of bourgeois sexuality in The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud. Vol. I. The Education of the Senses (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). See especially "Readers in Conflict," pages 358-379.
4. Stephen Marcus, The Other Victorians (New York: Bantam Books, 1967); Marcus argues that such poems as "The Eve of St. Agnes" find logical completion in the pornographic. See his discussion pages 213-24. Marjorie Levinson picks up on Marcus and sees Keats's poetry as a perpetual cockstand, the logical psychic response of the castrating real social situation Keats found himself in.
5. Colie, Paradoxica Epidemica, page 96.
6. Marjorie Levinson, Keats's Life of Allegory, page 258.
7. Rosalie Colie, Paradoxica Epidemica, page 432.
8. Caroline Spurgeon, Keats's Shakespeare, pages 45-49.
9. Aileen Ward, page 363.
10. From a review in The Guardian, quoted in Dorothy Hewlett, A Life of John Keats (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1950), pages 324-327.
11. Aileen Ward, page 363.
12. My reading of this verse is an attempt to reconstruct a nineteenth century range of associations the language of the verse might suggest. Though the bawdy implications to a reader in Shakespeare's age might associate an "armed tail" with a protected female orifice, the range of possibilities to a nineteenth century reader such as Keats, whose own bawdy has a renaissance vitality, would be more extensive. A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue by Captain Francis Grose (1811), edited by Eric Partridge (New York: Barnes and Noble Books,

Incorporated, 1963), page 19, defines "armour" as "In his armour, pot valiant: to fight in armor; to make use of Mrs. Philip's ware. See C-D-M. [cf. Dutch courage.]" Sheaths were used in the 16th century only as protection against venereal disease. Fallopius's treatise, De Morbo Gallico (1564) describes the sheath as an effective preventative of syphilis. The earliest use of the word "armor" to mean condom is in the letters of Mme. de Sevigny (1671), but the connection between blades and sheaths so prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is undoubtedly derived from earlier usages of similar images. Shakespeare's play on "armed tail" could be one such reference. The phallus being "subdued" in a sheath, the active principles of life and decay are also subdued. Armor as both a contraceptive and protection against venereal disease was well established by the 1800s. See Norman Hines, The Medical History of Contraception (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), pages 186-206.

13. Aileen Ward suggests that syphilis caused Keats to consider that he had about three years of life left or 1000 days in summer of 1818. Neil Fraistat makes a comparison between Pandarus's song and this stanza from *Isabella* though he does not comment on the thriving copulation and disease topic in Pandarus's bee-song. Instead, he sees all this as admonitory, warning us from a life of enchantment.

14. Quoted in Rosalie Colie, Paradoxica Epidemica, page, 434.

15. John Keats Poetry Manuscripts at Harvard A Facsimile Edition, edited by Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Garrod also notes this in a footnote in his edition, The Poetical Works of John Keats (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958). Eve Leoff in an unpublished Masters Thesis entitled "From Ballad to Narrative: A Study of 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'Lamia,'" examines the significance of this discrepancy. This emphasis in Keats argues against such critics as Levinson who see the whole poem as being about the commodification of love.

16. Spurgeon, Keats's Shakespeare, page 163.

17. Quoted in Coleman O. Parsons, "The refining of *Lamia*," Wordsworth Circle 8 (Spring 1977), pages 183-192; 190.

18. Edward Topsell, The Historie of foure-footed beastes (London: Printed by W. Iaggard, 1607), page 452.

19. Parsons, page 183.

20. "Sogno di una notte di mezza Estate," di William Shakespeare; adattamente e Regia, Maria Grazia Cipriani; scena e costumi, Graziano Gregori; Il Teatro Del Carreto.
21. Coleman O. Parsons. "The refining of Lamia," pages 183-192; 190.
22. The text I choose is is taken from Letters, II. pages 104-105.
23. Christopher Ricks, Keats and Embarrassment (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), page 134.
24. Marjorie Levinson's argument that the poem's organizing contradiction is that Keats, being a socially marginalized person and thus cut off from the "luxury of full gratification and its natural closures" (page 126), is built up around a reading of the poem in a state that Keats may never have intended it to take. For instance, she reads the printed text "But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,/For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed" without noting that for "feed" Keats had originally written (naturally? instinctively?) "taste." Levinson argues that these lines illustrate Keats's "productively fissured consciousness" (page 128) which because he is frustrated materially, create a psychic intransitivity, ineffectuality, gross passivity (bees fucking flowers / Keats) filled with simulcrae and semblances of real things, not authentic self-possession.
25. Robert Gittings, John Keats (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), says of "Ode to Psyche" that as "a verse counterpart of the soulmaking doctrine, it falls short, as Keats's verse often does, of the sweep of his prose" (page 310).
26. All quotes from The Golden Asse of Lucius Apuleius, translated out of the Latin by William Adlington (London: Richard Lesley + Co. Ltd., 1946). Hyder Rollins says Keats got his reference to Apuleius from Lempriere (Letters. II. 106n). However, Sidney Colvin, in John Keats: His Life and Poetry; His Friends, Critics, and After Fame (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1918), argues for a relationship between Keats's "Ode to Indolence" and Keats's reading of Adlington's translation (page 411n). Robert Gittings and Aileen Ward allow the possibility as well, but Bate argues for a more extensive intertextual play between the "Ode to Psyche" and the Adlington translation (Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963], pages 487-495). The tale Keats took from Apuleius, "Cupid and Psyche," is in the tradition of the Milesian tale, a tradition which includes not only Apuleius's Golden Asse but Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Boccaccio's Decameron, and Dryden's Fables Ancient and Modern. "Lamia," with a verse form derived from Dryden's Fables, Keats's "Isabella," taken from Boccaccio's Decameron, and "Ode to Psyche," taken from Apuleius, all have an

element of comprehensiveness about them. Such a provenance suggests a larger field of reference for these poems, poems that have as their subjects the anatomization of the lives of people from different classes.

27. See Louis Purser, The Story of Cupid and Psyche as related by Apuleius (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, Publishers, 1983), page xliii.

28. Jan Kott, The Bottom Translation, translated by Daniela Miedzyrzecka and Lillian Vallee (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987), pages 29-68.

29. Erich Neumann, Amor and Psyche The Psychic Development of the Feminine A Commentary on the Tale by Apuleius (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), page 58.

30. Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pages 487-493, passim.

31. Helen Vendler, The Odes of John Keats (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), page 48.

32. J. Lempriere, Biblioteca Classica (London: Printed by A Strahan, 1801).

33. Amy Lowell, John Keats (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), II. page 138.

34. Greg Kucich, "The Poetry of Keats's Mind," Style 21 (Spring 1987), pages 85-88.

35. Neumann, Amor and Psyche, page 80.

36. Neumann recounts that Aphrodite is the offspring of a conjunction of the anonymity of the sea and the heavens and combines the dark mysterious powers of the sea; Psyche is the offspring of a conjunction of the dews of the earth and heaven and exists on a higher plane than Aphrodite. Amor and Psyche, page 90.

37. Cleanth Brooks in "Keats's Sylvan Historian," says the urn is an image of negative capability because like the chameleon poet, it portrays bacchanalian sex, but retains an un-ravished purity. The figure of the communal life of the desolated town tortures the urn into a more meaningful artifact.

38. Levinson, argues the absurdity of this image, Keats's Life of Allegory, page 68.

39. Raynal, Recherches, II. page 338.

40. Raynal, Recherches, II. pages 333-335.
41. Levinson, page 101.
42. Levinson, pages 103-104.
43. Angus Fletcher, Allegory, page 49.
44. Morris Dickstein, John Keats and His Poetry, page xiii.
45. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Franz Saxl, Saturn and Melancholy, Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art (New York: Basic Books, Incorporated, 1964), pages 228-229.
46. For discussions of Dea Moneta see K.K. Ruthven, "Keats and Dea Moneta," SiR 15 (Summer 1975), pages 445-459 and Anne K. Mellor, "Keats's Face of Moneta: Source and Meaning," Keats Shelley Journal 25 (1976), pages 65-80.
47. Robert Gittings, The Mask of John Keats, page 11.
48. Wordsworth, Prose Works (London: Oxford Univerisity Press), I. page 163.
49. The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, edited by Ernest de Selincourt. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969), II. page 476.
50. Johann Winckelmann quoted in Hugh Honour, Neo-Classicism (London: Penguin Books, 1988), page 60.

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