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"THE SHORE OF TANGLED WONDER": APPREHENSIONS OF SPACE IN KEATS'S POETRY

City University of New York PH.D. 1986

"THE SHORE OF TANGLED WONDER":

APPREHENSIONS OF SPACE IN KEATS'S POETRY

by

CAROL WHITEHOUSE SHEPKO

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Abstract

"THE SHORE OF TANGLED WONDER":

APPREHENSIONS OF SPACE IN KEATS'S POETRY

by

Carol Whitehouse Shepko

Advisor: Dr. George M. Ridenour

Throughout his poetic career, Keats is concerned consistently with matters of perspective--with the kinds of distance he must assume from experience in order to recreate it poetically. He strives to discover an inner area that would allow for distance from the outer world without diminution of feeling, and closeness without a sense of being suffocated.

Keats treats interior and exterior space as twin mirrors that often are mutually reflective, and that become less and less distinguishable from one another as the poet progresses in his art. The positive force of this lack of boundaries achieves its finest expression in the last stanza of "Ode to Psyche," where the two worlds, barely separated by an open window, merge within the validating intellect of the poet. A very different kind of merging occurs in The Fall of Hyperion with the creation of an incommodious landscape that the mind dreams, but that the mind cannot control.

With love to my parents,

Eugene and Sarah Whitehouse

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My greatest debts of gratitude are to my husband, Stan, for his kindness and patience, and to Julian B. Kaye, my generous mentor and my beloved friend.

> And I am in despair that time may bring
> Approved patterns of women or of men
> But not that selfsame excellence again.

Contents

Chapter 1

Prologue

> If, as Joubert enjoins, "one must provide oneself with distance, create for oneself perspective," . . . it is in order to disengage from its gangue of actuality each particular moment and, having thus set it apart from every other moment, in a solitary region of thought, to render it finally visible and expressible. . . . "Perspective or remoteness is necessary for events, in order for us to be affected (or touched) by them poetically, and in order for us to give them poetic treatment."
>
> Georges Poulet
> The Interior Distance

An early indication of Keats's always extraordinary perceptions of space and distance occurs in a letter of April 1817, written while he was at work on Endymion at Margate. He reports there, "I have been rather narvus --and the passage in Lear--'Do you not hear the sea?'-- has haunted me intensely."[1] The passage to which Keats alludes here is Edgar's deceptive speech to the blind Gloucester who wishes to die. Edgar has pretended to lead his father to the crest of a cliff from which the old man is determined to jump. In order to convince Gloucester that the level ground on which they walk is actually a precipitous cliff overhanging the ocean, Edgar asks him, "Hark, do you hear the sea?" (IV, vi, 4) And once they supposedly have reached the summit, he remarks:

> How fearful
> And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
> The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
> Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
> Hangs one that gathers sampire--dreadful trade!
> Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
> The fishermen that walk upon the beach
> Appear like mice; and yon tall anchoring bark
> Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
> Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge
> That on th' unnumb'red idle pebble chafes
> Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
> Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
> Topple down headlong.
>
> (IV, vi, 11-24)

What Edgar does here, of course, is to describe a mind-created landscape and to people it with the usual denizens of such spaces--sea birds, a "sampire"-gatherer, fishermen, a ship. In addition, he uses language to create enormous physical distances, with a kind of painterly perspective. Edgar must remind his audience some lines later--"Why I do trifle thus with his despair / Is done to cure it" (33-34)--that this steep eminence exists only as his own creation, and has no reality in fact.

In a letter of nearly a month later, Keats is still dwelling on this intensely haunting passage from King Lear. But here, in a remarkable inversion, Keats makes himself part of Shakespeare's mind-created landscape, at what consequently becomes an enormous remove from reality. He refers to himself as "'one that gathers Samphire'"--the figure Edgar had imagined precariously clinging to the cliffside in his deception of Gloucester. And that figure--whose identity Keats now has put on--looks up and sees that "the Cliff of Poesy Towers above me" (I:141). This outrageously imaginative shift in perspective allows Keats to be both within and outside himself, a participant and an observer, a real and perceiving creature, and, at the same time, a figment of a fictional character's imagination.

Keats's posture in his early poetry--and this is underscored in his letters of the same period--is that of suitor for Poesy's favors, a rather insignificant, yet fairly self-assured and ardent young poet with hills to climb and mountains to scale. His efforts toward establishing himself as a first-rate poet are always imaged as physical movements across space and simultaneous upward soarings. As he attempts to develop as a poet, his eye is turned consistently skyward, a recurrent gesture in a large portion of the early poetry. In this context, Keats's mention of Edgar's mental space gains further significance because it underscores a point in Keats's own development when he cannot envision himself as having scaled a height, but only as a rather "dreadful" component of another's landscape, seen from an eminence that further exaggerates his insignificance. In the early poetry, too, Keats is always attempting to place himself, in a very physical way, into an external and pre-existing pattern, either of space, as in "I stood tip-toe," or of literary history, as in "Sleep and Poetry." With Endymion, where dream and reality are brought so much into question, with a kind of perfunctory resolution at the end, Keats begins to investigate, in a more solidly accomplished and conscious way, other kinds of space--the areas of

inner perception that mold and figure and recreate outer reality.

On his walking tour of Scotland in the summer of 1818, Keats physically scales his first mountain. The experience, gruelling though it is, brings with it a "most new" way of seeing (I:354), which becomes incorporated into the odes of the following spring and into Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion. It is in part as a result of this "most new" vision that perspectives change, and that Keats no longer sees himself quite so tentatively. Nor is he now so humble a servant of Poesy as he had been in the early verse and letters.

Contributing, too, to Keats's "most new" perspective are other events of about the same time. Biographically, this period becomes the most significant of Keats's life. George Keats is married and leaves for America with his bride; Tom Keats's condition is deteriorating; when Keats returns from his Scottish tour early, ill himself, he must nurse the dying Tom, who finally dies of consumption in December 1818. There is no question but that the poet who could imagine how a billiard ball senses itself could also imagine--and far more readily at that--how a brother who was suffocating, indeed literally drowning from his illness, would feel. The tension surrounding his own

sensation of being "pressed upon" by Tom, combined with Tom's sense of suffocation, finds its way into the poetry that Keats was writing at this period, and becomes the principal spatial metaphor he employs in almost all the poetry of 1818 and 1819--most notably in the two Hyperions.

If, as Keats suggests, we all recreate the universe --in the sense of establishing our own place and order in it--as "the Spider . . . from his own inwards," spins "his own airy Citadel" (I:231-232), using certain "points of leaves and twigs," certain rather fragile components of "reality" as touchstones, then what is within us becomes the indispensable element in that creative process. Further, the way in which we are able to anchor ourselves, however tenuously, at certain points in the real world--without deceiving ourselves that there is a mooring place when there is none--is a function of how we interpret what is "out there," and how we relate it to, or differentiate it from, what is within. Keats speaks of "resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning," of the relativity and perilous insecurity of all human wisdom and belief; of all the limitations imposed by a temporal reality. At the same time, Keats's mind vacillates between the belief that "there is really a grand march of intellect," and

the conviction "that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human knowledge or Religion." He attempts, too, to convince himself that "--After all there is certainly something real in the World. . . . --I know--the truth is there is something real in the World" (I:282).

But the problem of finding what <u>is</u> "real in the World," the process of choosing the bases on which to construct his "Citadel," is frequently a challenge to Keats, and many of his poems and letters deal with how one may interpret and build upon "reality"--where the fixed points are to which he may fasten his web, and how much the delicate structure of that world within the larger world depends upon the perspective from which he views both. Keats's awareness of his own peculiar ways of seeing informs most of his later poetry. And much of the poetry is an attempt to record what the perceiver sees, as he tries simultaneously to understand <u>why</u> he sees in certain ways. Thus, much of the poetry has as its subject the complex relationships between the percipient and the world he has made; the percipient and the world he, perhaps, never made; and the relationship between those two worlds, together with whatever spatial dimensions those relationships

may encompass. All these connections, or their lack, are preconditioned by the poet's own inner space, which is perhaps best summarized in this way:

> Let us say . . . that a human being is a being who, on the one hand, finds himself inextricably buried in the mass, and who, on the other hand, finds himself mysteriously capable of producing in the interior of himself an open space. Hence, each time he feels himself pressed upon by sensory experience, enclosed within all the simultaneous determinations and the successive enchainments of the actual, it becomes possible . . . to deaden the shocks of it, to extend its frontiers, to establish between all that and oneself a buffer zone, a "reserved" zone, in which there is nothing, literally nothing, except the infinite possibility of molding that nothing to his will, of mentally ordering it in any way whatsoever. Space is precisely that: a hiatus, a cleft or gap that widens between reality and consciousness, the virtual place in which the mind discovers the power to evolve, where, without risk of running afoul of matter and being trapped in the actual, it can "travel the open spaces." Space is freedom of mind.[2]

This inner space, as Georges Poulet describes it, is both created and creative: it is the space which consciousness creates, where perspective becomes possible, and where creation begins. Because there is "nothing" in it except "infinite possibility," it allows ample scope for the consciousness to mold the mass of disorganized and at times inimical impressions that are outside into the ordered and intensely personal world of art. But, by the same token, this cleft between "the actual"

world and the individual consciousness may narrow in such a way that the buffer that separates the self from objects in their disorder disappears, and the mind is deluged with impressions with which it can do nothing because the space in which "molding" may take place is too far diminished. Everything seems to rush at one, to "press upon" one, to use Keats's phrase.

Although it may appear polar, this state is not so very different from one in which the "interior distance" seems to grow beyond the limit in which useful perspective becomes possible. In such an instance, the result is a reflexive looking outward at nothing--a state in which the outer world, at its enormous remove from consciousness, becomes alien, in which the consciousness can light on nothing, and in which one is cut off as much from one's self as from one's surroundings.

If we turn, for example, to Keats's lines written in the Highlands, which begin, "There is a joy . . . ," we become aware of precisely this situation: the poet's consciousness, sensing its alienation from all that surrounds it, is, at the same time, alienated from itself. Nothing in the outer world is coherent, because the inner space in which the mind works on impressions in order to connect them is a huge space with nothing in it --certainly not that "infinite possibility" of which

Poulet writes. Everything is "forgotten"--both inner and outer worlds--as the poet walks "slow across a silent plain." In this poem, Keats emphasizes that one must have a sense of the continuity of one's own life, one's own consciousness, and the unvarying distance that separates him from what he observes if one is to order the outer world and manage it creatively. Without this continuity, in which is constituted the individual's memory, the sense of one's self as a participant in time and space is lost, and the outer world appears as a series of fragments without order or function, because nothing from within is brought to bear on it. The lines written in the Highlands is one of a number of poems in which Keats examines the relationship, or lack of relationship, between consciousness and the universe of things that lies beyond it. Thus, what Poulet calls "the interior distance" provides both the subject and the mode for these lines, as it does for much of Keats's poetry and many of his letters.

It is through writing poetry that Keats hopes to establish a controllable distance, a viable relationship between consciousness and reality. Yet many of his later poems are about his inability to do so. On Keats's return from his walking tour of Ireland and Scotland, which became for the development of his art

such a seminal experience, he returns to a brother who is dying of consumption, and whose "identity," Keats says,

> . . . presses upon me so all day that I am obliged to go out--and although I intended to have given some time to study alone I am obliged to write, and plunge into abstract images to ease myself of his countenance his voice and feebleness-- (I:369)

Later he refers to "the feverous relief of Poetry":

> I have relapsed into those abstractions which are my only life--I feel escaped from a new strange and threatening sorrow--And I am thankful for it-- (I:370)

However, although he turns to writing to "ease" himself of the pressing burden of Tom's illness, what preoccupies him in both Hyperions (at which he was at work during this period) is precisely that sense of being smothered--that asphyxiation--from which he is trying so desperately to escape. The Hyperions, then, concern themselves with an experience that is antipodal to the sense of distance that Keats suffers in the Highlands poem, but that arises from a similar source. The very existence that the Titans have constructed in the bedrock of the real world shows itself finally as nothing more solid than an "airy Citadel" spun from the "inwards" of a spider. The world, though physically unchanged, has gone from their hands. The old, eternal-seeming landmarks are lost, and the old gods must ad-

just to the notion that everything they built was built on sand. Their godhead is less important to Keats than the humanness and universality of their situation. Unused to inconstancy in any guise, they are confronted suddenly with a new world in which nothing may be perceived as once it was. Thus, the two Hyperions illuminate the Titans' struggle to bring into some proximity their old, no longer appropriate self-consciousness and their now almost unrecognizable selves; and simultaneously to open a space between the self and a reality gone berserk--one which underscores the futility of all their former assumptions--and to try to conform to or do battle against the dictates of that reality.

Keats's withdrawal into his own poetry, in this instance to separate himself from the pressure of Tom's identity, is a means he frequently chooses to rid himself of a world of things that he feels will inundate him: "But things," he says, "won't leave me alone" (II:174). At the same time, he recognizes that he is always at the mercy of his own temperament, which alters his perceptions so mightily, that finally "nothing in this world is proveable" (I:242). Near the end of his life, as he leaves England for Italy with Joseph Severn, Keats observes, "Severn now is a very good fellow but his nerves are too strong to be hurt by other

people's illnesses--" (II:349). This observation about Severn's temperament and its consequent coloring of Severn's reality is in marked contrast to Keats's own responses to his brother's illness and to that of his friend James Rice:

> I confess I cannot bear a sick person in a House especially alone--it weighs upon me day and night--and more so when the Case is irretrievable. (II:134)

The very purpose, then, of contemplating and composing his own poetry is precisely to "abstract" himself--to withdraw from worldly things--and thus establish an "interior distance" from the deluge of the outside world, from what Keats calls "the suffocation of accidents" (I:179). At the same time, however, he is concerned that his withdrawal will be too intense, that it will create too great a distance between the conceiving mind and the world outside it:

> . . . I will assay to reach as high a Summit in Poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of Poems to come brings the blood frequently to my forehead--All I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs-- (I:387-388)

Because of the "feverous relief" that composition provides, the inability to write becomes "the beginning of all sorts of irregularities" (I:142). Keats writes to Fanny Brawne during his stay at Shanklin with Charles Brown, while he is at work on Hyperion and collaborat-

ing with Brown on Otho, "Thank God for my diligence! were it not for that I should be miserable. I encourage it, and strive not to think of you--" (II:137). This abstracting of the self leads to a sense in which,

> My own being . . . becomes of more consequence to me than crowds of Shadows in the Shape of Man [sic] and women that inhabit a kingdom. The soul is a world of itself and has enough to do in its own home-- (II:146)

However, Keats is aware of impingements from the outside and the kinds of mental suffering they incur--especially once the imagination seizes them:

> I carry all matters to an extreme--so that when I have any little vexation it grows in five Minutes into a theme for Sophocles-- (I:340)

> Imaginary grievances have always been more my torment than real ones . . . Our imaginary woes are conjured up by our passions, and are fostered by passionate feeling; our real ones come of themselves, and are opposed by an abstract exertion of the mind. Real grievances are displacers of passion. The imaginary nail a man down for a sufferer, as on a cross. (II:181)

> I feel I can bear real ills better than imaginary ones. Whenever I feel myself growing vapourish, I rouse myself, wash and put on a clean shirt brush my hair and clothes, tie my shoestrings neatly and in fact adonize as I were going out --then all comfortable I sit down to write. This I find the greatest relief-- (II:186)

What is this gesture of abstracting one's self, then, if not an effort toward creating a space between con-

sciousness and all that assails one--"real" or "imaginary." And certainly it would require a mind more "consequitive" (I:218) than Keats's--"I would give a guinea to be a reasonable man--good sound sense--a says what he thinks, and does what he says man" (II:168)--to disentangle what is "real" and what "imaginary." Keats's expectations in writing poetry are akin to Marlow's experience in Heart of Darkness. In the midst of a nightmarish reality that lays constant siege on his imagination, Marlow establishes a different reality. He picks up a book entitled An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship. Reading the book is not simply a diversion from the enormous horror outside: more than this, it enables Marlow to regain some measure of balance, to open up a space between himself and the surrounding terror. It "made me forget the jungle," Marlow says,

> . . . in the delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real. . . . I assure you to leave off reading was like tearing myself away from the shelter of an old and solid friendship.[3]

The "shelter" here is another kind of reality that the self creates, based upon the irrefutable ordinary--a mind-created space that allows for a remove from the overwhelming world outside that threatens, or has managed, to get in and gain control of consciousness.

When Keats writes his verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds on 23 March 1818, he speaks of "imagination. . . / Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind" (78ff), alluding to the way in which the "Moods of one's mind" color all outer reality, translate it into a "ravening" universe, and block out every other aspect of human experience. Try as he may, he is incapable of removing himself from this vision of "eternal fierce destruction," and thus of establishing a space between the outer world and his awareness of it. Quite simply, it overwhelms him, and he cannot resort to "the lore of good and ill," which would involve a more philosophical approach to existence--a different and more balanced vision--because he cannot change his consciousness of the world. For Keats, "Things cannot to the will / Be settled." He has, as he tells Benjamin Bailey a few months later, "no sort of Logic to comfort me" (I:293). The snare, then, as well as the escape, lies in the individual human consciousness.

None of these preoccupations alter in the course of Keats's poetic career. And yet, with almost predictable consistency, critics speak of Keats "synthesizing," "resolving," and "transcending," as if problems, ideas, and "speculations" that appear in the early poetry developed linearly and regularly toward solution,

and as if these solutions were evidenced everywhere in Keats's treatment of given themes. But the themes that occupy Keats early in his career have not changed or been transcended: they are as much a part of the ethos of his poetry three years later, and are creative of the same tensions in the more mature poet. However, since there is such prodigious development in mode of expression, from the frequently sing-song couplets of "I stood tip-toe" to the "severely majestic idiom"[4] of Hyperion, there is an assumption that what marked the mind of the earlier Keats has been put by as if by virtue of some magic progress. But if, as Bate suggests, "The problem the Titans [in Hyperion] face is how to meet circumstance. . . . How indeed does one confront the hurt of loss?" then we must remember that "The question had been familiar to Keats since the age of eight"[5] when his father died. The "real antagonist" in Hyperion "was not personal . . . but time itself."[6] And this idea appears in the poetry as early as "I stood tip-toe." After all, what "wonder" of Cynthia's bridal night does Keats celebrate most in that poem but an end to circumstance and mutability? Its treatment there hasn't the multifaceted grace that Keats brings to it in Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion, but that is more a function of Keats's growing ma-

turity of style, his "new level of writing,"[7] than of any prior coming to terms with the subject. He grapples with the same stubborn consciousness--his own--when he stands on the temple's height as he does when he stands "tip-toe upon a little hill." Thus, although resolution of Keats's earliest speculations never occurs, the later poems, exquisite as they are, approach and express these motifs with considerably greater maturity, accomplishment, and effectiveness.

As I have suggested, the concerns that contribute to Keats's need to write poetry are not dropped as writing begins. Rather, they find their way into the very subjects of many of his poems. Much of Keats's poetry involves apprehensions of outer space that are figured by his own lack of inner space, or by a sense of dizzying removal from all that is about him. For these reasons, I have chosen to discuss only those poems with a first-person voice, or those that imply a first-person consciousness. The single exception is Hyperion, and that poem is included because, despite its third-person narrative structure--Keats's efforts in it to examine "the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow" (I:219)--and despite its epic elements, it is, in its subject, imagery, and spatial orientation, inseparable from The Fall of Hyperion. It seems

"to throw a kind of light,"[8] as Marlow says of his "inconclusive" Congo experience--not only on the later Fall of Hyperion, but on the way Keats generally conceptualizes space, on the way he recognizes its implications on the purely human level. Further, Hyperion allows some insight into Keats's reasons--sometimes stated, more often left unsaid--both for reshaping it into the first-person Fall of Hyperion, and for finally abandoning both poems.

The poems discussed in this essay are representative of Keats at several points in his career, which is not, of course, intended to imply that one can so easily subclassify those three fruitful years into discrete developmental categories. Rather, the poems are discussed more or less chronologically, an approach that seemed most useful for purposes of exploring Keats's continually varying "interior distance," the ways in which he conceives space in his poetry, and the way in which particular "Moods . . . of [his] mind" may alter the poet's sense of distance from all objects of perception.

Finally, the essay attempts to elucidate what Keats is trying constantly to achieve in his poetry--and his letters often document and comment on the struggle. Keats strives to discover an area within his own per-

ceptions of the outer world that allows for distance without diminution of feeling, and closeness without a sense of being "pressed upon" and suffocated by the identities of others.

Notes: Chapter 1

[1] The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), I:138. All quotations from Keats's letters are from this edition. Hereafter, references to the letters by volume and page number will be included in parentheses in the text.

[2] Georges Poulet, The Interior Distance, trans. Elliott Coleman (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964), pp. 72-73.

[3] Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness: Backgrounds and Criticism, ed. Leonard F. Dean (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960), p. 31.

[4] Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 389.

[5] Bate, p. 398.

[6] Bate, p. 407.

[7] Bate, title of Chapter XVI, pp. 388ff.

[8] Conrad, p. 5.

Chapter 2

"I stood tip-toe"

As certain as color
Passes from the petal,
Irrevocable as flesh;
The gazing eye falls through the world.

The Poetess Ono No Komachi

The first poem in John Keats's first published volume, "I stood tip-toe" is an examination of more or less natural kinds of space and of the poet's consciousness of them--his initial contentment in participating in them, and his ultimate conviction that they are not enough.

The poem begins with a loving exposition of the minute particulars of a cool early-morning world. Significant in the first twenty-eight lines is the poet's mind at play with certain aspects of space and distance. First, he is aware of his own position: he stands on a slight elevation and slightly elevates himself--both very physical postures. He feels the cool stillness of the air, looks down and sees in detail the beads of dew on small, drooping buds. He looks up and sees domestic clouds, "pure and white as flocks new shorn, / And fresh from the clear brook."[1] Then he becomes aware of silence--"A little noiseless noise among the leaves, / Born of the very sigh that silence heaves." That silence itself intimates immensity. Gaston Bachelard remarks on the expansiveness that is inherent in silence:

> "There is nothing like silence to suggest a sense of unlimited space. Sounds lend color to space and confer a sort of sound body upon it. But absence of sound leaves it quite pure and, in the silence, we are seized with the sensation of something vast and deep and boundless."[2]

In response to his own awareness of silence and his own attention to small details, the poet becomes conscious of enormous distances--of a plethora of sheer physical space. Again, as Bachelard notes,

> Large issues from small, not through the logical law of dialectic of contraries, but thanks to liberation from all obligations of dimensions, a liberation that is a special characteristic of the activity of the imagination.[3]

As a result of this liberation, the microcosm, which initially arrests the poet's eye and in which he so willingly participates, leads the way physically, because imaginatively, to his consideration of spaces and depths of varying proportions. The eye moves as it will, and Keats now sees the "dwindled edgings" of earthly space on the horizon. Bachelard suggests:

> Distance . . . creates miniatures at all points on the horizon, and the dreamer, faced with these spectacles of distant nature, picks out these miniatures as so many nests of solitude in which he dreams of living. . . . Distance disperses nothing but, on the contrary, composes a miniature of a country in which we should like to live. In distant miniatures, disparate things become reconciled. Then they offer themselves for our "possession," while denying the distance that created them.[4]

These remarks form, in essence, the Keatsian vision of space in "I stood tip-toe": no matter its size, space is always commodious, and the perceiving consciousness confronts no difficulties, no disparities between it-

self and what lies outside. In fact, it is content to bring the outside in, to use the outside in such a way that the mind is able to turn inward on its own enlarged self.

Thus, the largeness of his surroundings allows the poet the room to look inward and to "picture out" the intricacies of the "quaint and curious bending / Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending"--of all that expansive and apparently simple space--and to "Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves." This "picturing out" or "guessing," so modestly suggested here, is the province and majesty of the poet--that singular, superior quality of vision--that finally, as Keats reminds us later in "I stood tip-toe," can allow the poet to "burst our mortal bars"--to go beyond nature into a world of pure imagination, and there to recreate the world. Keats writes to Benjamin Haydon, about six months after the completion of "I stood tip-toe":

> I know no one but you who can be fully sensible of the turmoil and anxiety, the sacrifice of all that is called comfort the readiness to measure time by what is done and to die in 6 hours could plans be brought to conclusions,--the looking upon the Sun the Moon the Stars the Earth and its contents as materials to form greater things--but here I am talking like a Madman greater things than our Creator himself made!! (I:143)

In "I stood tip-toe," then, the poet is confronted with intimacy, creates immensity, then recreates intimacy. Beginning at line 29, and continuing through line 92, Keats in his reverie creates a world within nature that conforms to what he observes. Other than his own words in line 93--"Were I in such a place"--nothing separates it from what is "real." The poem moves from the intimacy of its early physical detail, to a sense of boundlessness that only the horizon can delimit, to a created inner intimacy, and finally back out again into a now altered larger world--one in which the poet has created "ethereal things." The contraction into a personal space, which occupies about sixty-five lines, allows for a widening of a different kind of vision, where space takes on a greater density and a temporal aspect as well. Thus, when touched by the human mind, even limited space "accumulates . . . infinity within its own boundaries."[5]

The "posey of luxuries" that Keats plucks (27-28) in the midst of his elation is poetry, and what ensues in the verse paragraphs following is the poet's Kubla Khan-like ordering of an inner world, all the while using the apparently objective materials of the natural space around him. At this point, then, rather than moving beyond nature, he duplicates it. But he also

looks forward, most notably when he addresses the marigolds, to some future time when his imagination will lead him to a more vigorous, more independent vision.

In the ordering of his "tasteful nook," the intimate area that he creates for himself once he has become conscious of the immense space that surrounds him, Keats emphasizes the mutual interdependence of all the vegetative life with which he endows it: the "lush laburnum" shades both bee and flower; grass cools and moistens the roots of the laburnum, and shades the violets, which succor the moss. Thus, within Keats's intimate landscape, created by the mind in imitation of nature, each life depends upon others' for its fullness: everything is intertwined, like the "aged roots" with their "quaint mossiness," and yet everything has room for growth--just as young trees grow from the ancient roots of a long-dead tree. There is a woven integrity to Keats's imagined space--an integrity that is the preserve of art and that denies the randomness of nature. At the same time, the last lines of the paragraph--

> . . . a spring-head of clear waters . . .
> . . . may haply mourn
> That such fair clusters [of bluebells]
> should be roughly torn
> From their fresh beds, and scattered
> thoughtlessly
> By infant hands, left on the path to die.
> (41ff)

--these lines seem to suggest the fragility of this world of the poet's creation, subject as it is, although in a different way, to the same forces that will carry the pristine natural world into death. The thought is a fleeting one, and yet Keats does seem to be asking whether the "posey" he has plucked--the poem he is writing--will be "left on the path to die." At the end of "I stood tip-toe," when he asks, "Was there a poet born?" the question seems to hearken back to these lines. They also bring to mind Keats's preoccupation with his own reputation as a poet--his future fame, about which he writes so frequently in his letters of this period.

With the introduction of the marigolds in the next verse paragraph, Keats brings into the poem Apollo who as both poet and healer so nearly parallels Keats's own preoccupations. The "ardent marigolds" that have not yet unfolded, so early is it, awaken to each new day by opening to the sun god, and replicate his celestial movements. The poet now does Apollo's bidding by praising the flowers and, by extension, all of nature. But Keats hopes that the marigolds, by the same "interchange of favors" that he earlier perceived and celebrated, will benefit him more directly, so that when his imagination pierces beyond this serene, young world--when he is wandering in "some far vale"--a different and mightier

voice of the god of poetry will come to him. Already Keats is looking beyond his present perceptions of nature, and the limited visions those perceptions afford, to something larger, mightier, stranger. He knows that finally, in order to become the poet he wishes to be, he must come to nature with a new eye--perceive it from a perspective of wider experience. At the same time, he knows that he needs nature, that it is in part through her that he will garner that experience.

The "sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight" in the next verse paragraph parallel the poet's own posture. Possessing both wings and fingers, the sweet peas give the impression of flying away from the world, just as they also appear to remain earthbound, "catching at all things." The subsequent act of binding these things "all about with tiny rings" becomes, for the poet, the act of conceptualization. Thus, the grasping <u>at</u> things becomes less important than the ability to comprehend them totally, to control them artistically, to bind them through language. The potential capability of the artist to give form to experience by means of language--to liberate both thought and experience from the individual consciousness by binding them in the more universal "spell of words"--is of ongoing concern to Keats and assumes a crucial sig-

nificance in The Fall of Hyperion, becoming the essential subject matter of that poem.

The long verse paragraph that follows (61-106) begins with the poet's continued ordering of the natural world into an imaginative intimacy. It ends, however, with the manner in which ancient poets expanded and transmuted these same materials into myth and poetry--the new way of seeing that Keats had hoped for when he addressed the marigolds. The motion of the first forty-odd lines of the paragraph is very slow. The lingering poet is content to "watch intently Nature's gentle doings." Keats emphasizes the slowness of the water, its silence, and the slow, silent movements of the blades of grass. So leisurely is process in the natural world that "you might read two sonnets" before a single wave of a breeze reaches the water. Once again, silence serves to expand the poet's consciousness of space and, almost as a consequence, his self-consciousness. The goldfinches of lines 87 to 92 bring Keats back to himself. The goldfinches are winged, like the sweet peas, but they are not rooted in the earth--"little space they stop" there, occasionally "Pausing upon their yellow flutterings." It is with the appearance of the goldfinches that the poet reminds the reader that the world he has presented in the last sixty-five lines has been an inner world, imitative of

nature, but removed from nature by the activity of the imagination. The immense outer world has been recreated by the poet as a physically smaller space, but a larger perceptual one. The lines have involved an exploration of what he has "pictured out" in the "quaint and curious bending" of the apparent infinity before him; of his "guess" as to "where the jaunty streams refresh themselves." Using the perceived world of the first twenty-eight lines of "I stood tip-toe" as a paradigm, the poet has created another, parallel, world of imaginative experience.

The only thing that Keats would allow to "call [his] thoughts away" from this inner experience is the appearance of the maiden who would participate in nature's "gentle doings" by "fanning away the dandelion's down" and "patting" (rather than crushing) the sorrel with her bare feet. The poet watches the face of this creature of his imagination. His dream of her includes his being alive to her life--to her pulse as he touches her wrist "for one moment," and "to her breathing." These convince him of her humanity, of his own ability to "body forth" the human spirit. Nothing is said by the poet or by the poetry-created woman, and yet a message reaches him from her very aliveness that makes him wish to go farther beyond the formerly unpeopled realm of his creation. With

her coming and going, time's tempo changes, and the previously intimate space he had imagined widens to embrace a fuller imaginative expanse.

Now, although the mind may wish to return to its earlier preoccupation of hovering beelike "till it dozes" over "a tuft of evening primroses," it cannot, because "'tis ever startled by the leap / Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting / Of diverse moths." Or, more significantly, by the emergence of the moon. With the appearance and disappearance of the mind-created maiden, morning and afternoon are gone: it is now evening, and boundaries between mind and nature become vaguer. The imaginative space, which previously satisfied the poet, now must be extended as he ponders the mutuality of nature and the human mind in the beneficent natural interchange he had contemplated earlier. Now when the poet's vision ascends, it is not to see clouds that have the familiarity and tameness of newly shorn sheep, but to view the strangeness, forlornness, and majesty of the moon. And not the moon alone, but all the resonances both intellectual and emotional--the poetic past, Keats's own widening imagination--that the moon inspires. So, as time speeds up, space assumes greater amplitude, providing the poet with added scope for his

powers, or at least with the awareness that he has within him a larger region in which to test them.[6]

All this has been made possible by the appearance of the maiden. Yet Bernard Blackstone sees her as inimical. With her appearance Blackstone states, citing the last line of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," ". . . human voices wake us and we drown."[7] But the maiden may more properly be seen as Keats evidently views her--as one of those mermaids who, in singing, awakens the imagination of the poet. However, Blackstone continues to see her as an intrusion of "the human world in its direst guise for Keats's poetry," changing the mood of the poem in such a way that,

> . . . we have left the sphere of detached, impersonal observation (objective we cannot call it, for in Keats's empathy the objective-subjective distinction vanishes) for the sphere of 'lovely dreams'. Immediately the poem forfeits its assurance and becomes troubled.[8]

Blackstone sees this "intrusion" as "gratuitous"; on the contrary, however, the maiden appears to usher Keats out of an intimacy that by now has become too insular, however satisfying it may have been to him earlier. Now the poet's intellect, no longer at rest--no longer, evidently, desirous of rest--finds both new subject and new inspiration in the moon, "Maker of sweet poets," transmuter of nature, soother of humanity, "Lover of loneli-

ness." It is the moon, Keats says, that "has made the sage or poet write." For Keats, the circle of the moon is filled with a mythic and imaginative history which enlarges it. Now it is not the direct apprehension of nature herself that can provide Keats with raw materials for poetry, but rather the peculiar play of light that the moon provides--the way it spangles and mingles with nature to create a vision quite different from that of a world in broad daylight. Thus, it is not only "the fair paradise of Nature's light" that is required for vision, but the paradise, too, of her darkness. The moon redirects the vision, creates its own highlightings, and, at the same time, makes the world conceptually less manageable. There remains a sense of larger, deeper, less visible, more mysterious spaces than those daylight affords. And it is in these spaces that the imagination may work its magic. In an 1817 letter to Jane and Mariane Reynolds, Keats remarks:

> . . . but don't you think there is something extremely fine after sunset when there are a few white Clouds about and a few stars blinking--when the waters are ebbing and the Horison a Mystery? This state of things has been so fulfilling to me that I am anxious to hear whether it is a favorite with you. (I:159)

And in his last letter, Keats writes to Charles Brown about "the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and

shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem" (II:360). Fittingly, it is here, in the moonlight, that Keats begins his discussion of the beginnings of poetry in the mythic consciousness.

In a more general strain, Keats suggests that poetry's enormous power lays before us nature's majesty, security, and joy. But more than simply portraying nature as she is, poetry touches its reader in unaccountable ways. Just when poetry itself seems most dazzlingly free--"moving on luxurious wings"--it causes the reader to lose his "soul . . . in pleasant smotherings":

> Fair dewy roses brush against our faces
> . . . O'er our head we see the jasmine
> and sweetbriar . . .
> While at our feet, the voice of crystal
> bubbles
> Charms us at once away from all our
> troubles.
> (133ff)

Along with initiating the feeling of being smothered, however, poetry also makes its reader feel "uplifted from the world." Thus, there is both a sense in which distance is diminished--the familiar yet enchanting objects of the natural world are crowded around one--and a sense in which, by responding to the "calm grandeur" of poetic language, one is detaching himself from the world. The language of art engages and at the same time

frees us--it wreathes its flowery band to "bind us," and simultaneously gives us "forever"--removes us from both the world and time. Keats envisions himself, then, as "uplifted from the world"--beyond the earth, in one sense--"lost"--and at the same time "smothered" as much by the world as by its more ethereal representation in poetry.

This, Keats tells us, is how the poet felt "who first told" the story of Cupid and Psyche. The feeling may very well be that of the poet inspired until he has, in a sense, disgorged himself of imaginative fullness by mythologizing and simultaneously both objectifying and humanizing the interknitting of his own profound emotion and his subject matter.

The poet "who pull'd the boughs aside / That we might look into a forest wide," and created the myth of Pan and Syrinx, experienced that same uplifted-smothered feeling. The tenuous "half-heard strain" of wind-created music that brings with it "sweet desolation--balmy pain," forms the natural basis for the myth. This is not the "unheard" melody of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," a melody that seems implicit in the object but that the poet must himself create; rather, for the earlier poets, raw materials for their art existed in the natural world, perceptible to them because, as Keats points out

in "Ode to Psyche," of old, the natural world was "haunted," and spoke to the spirit of man.

With his treatment of the myth of Narcissus, Keats shifts the emphasis from "so felt he" and "so did he feel" to "What first inspired a bard of old to sing?" Less important now than the sensations accompanying inspiration are the materials in nature upon which the poet draws to ease the "pleasant smotherings" of that inspiration. The myth of Narcissus is explicable in natural terms: the ancient poet had come upon "a little space," circumscribed by "boughs all woven round"--a space different from the "forest wide" revealed by the Pan poet. The sky is visible in the pool only "here, and there," so "woven" are the "fantastically creeping" tendrils surrounding the pool. The drooping, unmoving flower stirred the mythmaking poet to conceive a secret life for that flower, and, by virtue of his own imaginative leap, the tale of Echo and Narcissus. But Keats recognizes that that "little space" with its reflecting pool is congenial to a narrower, more restricted vision. Narcissus, seeking a thing to love, finds only the outer husk of himself. He is never able to achieve a differentiation between self and world. Echo, seeking to express her passion, likewise becomes simply her own reflection. She loses

the reality of language and fades until she is no more than a meaningless, rebounding voice without identity. With these two mythic figures standing before him almost as exempla, Keats now can recognize the limitations of the intimate space that he had "pictured out" earlier. Only by creating the maiden has he managed to slip out into the larger world of a nature touched by a liberated imagination, one that is not bounded by solipsism.

Keats's description of the poet inspired, and his recounting plausible theories for the origins of the myths of Cupid and Psyche, Pan and Syrinx, and Echo and Narcissus, have involved him in a contemplation of nature and of relatively familiar earthly things. However, when he tries to account for the story of Cynthia and Endymion, it is with the realization that something else, perhaps unaccountable, exists--that less of nature and more of human feeling comes into play. "Where had he been?" Keats asks about the Endymion poet. And the answer is no longer so simple, because it is not where the poet had been that matters, but what he brought with him. The myth of Endymion bodies forth

> Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing
> From out the middle air, from flowery nests,

> And from the pillowy silkiness that rests
> Full in the speculation of the stars.
> Ah! surely he had burst our mortal bars;
> Into some wond'rous region he had gone,
> To search for thee, divine Endymion!
> (186-192)

The "wond'rous region" into which the Endymion poet had gone was himself. And although Cynthia is the exotic, ethereal element in the romance, Keats feels that it is in the creation of a human being for Cynthia to love that the poet's achievement is most "wond'rous" and "divine"--just as for Keats it is the girl he creates that makes achievement possible. In "the speculation of the stars," those vast, silent distances, he came back to himself, just as Keats, in contemplating the vastness and variety of nature, creates from it a more personal space. "He was a Poet, sure a lover too," Keats says of the Endymion poet. And what he did as both poet and lover was to diminish distances and yet deprive them of none of their mystery and fascination. Further, unlike Narcissus, the Endymion poet was able to cull from self something that transcended self.

In his verse epistle "To Charles Cowden Clarke," Keats mentions that Clarke had taught him about

> Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian
> tenderness;
> Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's
> fair slenderness.
> (58-59)

It is always to be the human that holds the greatest power for Keats--not the larger spaces of cosmic war, but the intimate, more intense realms of human feeling. His objection to Benjamin West's Death on the Pale Horse, for example, a painting which he went to see late in 1817, is that it contains "nothing to be intense upon; no woman one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality" (I:192). So here, in "I stood tip-toe," Keats shows how the ancient poet was able to see beyond the old worshipful rites and Cynthia's acceptance of them, to the terrible loneliness of her eternal chastity. It is "in fine wrath" that the poet puts forth his poetry: it is his godlike indignation over her "human" situation that inspires the poet to write.

When Keats invokes the moon for "three words of honey, that I might / Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night," he attempts to concretize those wonders. At the moment before sunset, time stands still as Phoebus "delay'd his mighty wheels" just before slipping beyond the horizon. After that, however, there is no languishing: men step "like Homer at the trumpet's call"; the sick "spring up." All occurs in a moment, but the intensity of "that moment" is such that it lasts in its joy forever. The poet's eye and imagination, formerly

filled with a protean natural world, become centered now on a humanity that is no longer subject to decay and death. The very air becomes curative: the course of dire illness is reversed by the "ethereal and pure" breezes of a world no longer sublunary. Immortal poety is everywhere, and that undying verse has the power to make "silken ties that never may be broken." All is eternalized, resonances of Endymion's and Cynthia's love. In the penultimate line of the poem, with a less evident "modest pride" than he had evinced at the outset of "I stood tip-toe," Keats asks, "Was there a poet born?" and then simply stops the poem.

In "I stood tip-toe," alterations in imaginative and consequently spatial perception follow the appearance of a creature of whose aliveness Keats can be sure. First, the maiden (of lines 93-106) impels a more rapid and enlarged imaginative apprehension of the surrounding natural world--a more impatient looking about--until the appearance of the moon--another, more ethereal woman, one who must be imbued with life through sheer imaginative processes. With her "gradual" coming into view, Keats, stopping time and creating a new space, wanders within his imagination, taking both the natural world and its transmutations by earlier poets with him. He is thus able to see the ways in

which nature--not as an end in itself, but as a metaphor for poetry--may be used; again, not as a "copyist" might use it, but as the poet may, who can at one and the same moment contract the natural world into intimacy and expand it to create something infinitely suggestive.

With the body of Keats's poetry before us, we know, of course, that there was "a poet born." While "I stood tip-toe" is not one of Keats's great poems, it remains an essential starting point for those that follow. In this very early effort, the poet has worked through his relation to nature--has recognized the earth as the place in which, like the sweet pea, he ultimately is rooted; and as the place to which, like the goldfinch, he must return. But nature, as subject per se for his art he rejects. What he establishes in "I stood tip-toe" is a relationship to nature that is dictated by the kinds of distance one's own inner moods create. At the same time, one cannot mold a void: Keats needs, as he notes in a sonnet he wrote at about the same time, "The chain for freedom's sake"[9]--an earth to draw away from, and an earth to draw him back.

Notes: Chapter 2

[1] The Poems of John Keats, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978). All quotations from Keats's poetry are from this edition.

[2] Henri Bosco, Malicroix, cited in Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 43.

[3] Bachelard, pp. 154-155.

[4] Bachelard, p. 172.

[5] Bachelard, p. 186.

[6] Keats's experience of space and time here contrasts strongly with that of the old gods in the Hyperions. Saturn and the other Titans are faced with "moments big as years," which, large as they are, impinge from the outside and seem totally alien to human time. They allow no room for creativity or "godlike exercise," despite their size, because of their vast, slow, inhuman emptiness.

[7] Bernard Blackstone, The Consecrated Urn (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1959), p. 99.

[8] Blackstone, p. 99.

[9] "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning," line 6.

Chapter 3

The Early Verse

The world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

Robert Browning
"Fra Lippo Lippi"

In Keats's earliest poetry, as later in "Ode to a Nightingale," and, in a slightly different way, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the poet is presented with an object or scene that in some way exemplifies an outer reality into which he would like to see more deeply, in which he would like to participate more richly. The principal difference is that in the earlier poetry, the imagination tends to be more mimetic, only occasionally moving beyond the lushness of nature to a state more visionary. At the same time, that vision becomes difficult to sustain. At the end of "I stood tip-toe," for example, the vision comes of a world no longer sublunary, but the poet himself is unable to maintain the heights he has imagined, and returns, as he does in "Ode to a Nightingale," to self-consciousness--"Was there a poet born?"--and perhaps to a recognition that he has overstepped his own present poetic capabilities: "--but now no more, / My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.--"

On the other hand, his admonition to his "wand'ring spirit" may have another purpose entirely, and may arise from a very different conviction. As we read further in Keats's poetry, we become aware of a number of instances where soaring, bringing with it as it does a "most new" way of seeing, a new apprehension of

spaces and distances, becomes terrifying. In "God of the meridian," a poem of early 1818, Keats images Apollo as comprehending all directions and all distances--"meridian," "east and west"--and as being in control of all the space he encompasses. His flight "defies the restrictions of time and space," and thus "serves as an appropriate metaphor for the active poetic imagination, which, like dreams, carries the poet beyond the limits of earthly reality."[1] But, despite these positive connotations of flight, the poet, borne through space by the god, is conscious of "A terrible division"--an inner displacement of "soul" and "body," which finally may be "the cause / Of madness." As he soars through space with Apollo, the poet experiences a "gulf austere," a terrific disjuncture, a space without landmarks, which becomes "fill'd with worldly fear." It is less "a 'terrible division' . . . between the real world and the imagined,"[2] than an intimation of infinite distance, of enormous space both within and without, of an emptiness that fear rushes in to fill. Faced with the sort of vastness that Keats experiences here, consciousness itself never rises above self-consciousness. There is no point of support--"no stay or prop"--either within or in the space surrounding one: all that exists, be-

cause all that the poet is conscious of, are his own dizziness and fear.

In a different context (he is discussing the writings of Guerin), Poulet defines the terror of the poet in "God of the meridian":

> The anguish increases in proportion . . . as the feeling of the space-abyss is accentuated. The gulf toward which and into which one is going is no different from the emptiness one discovers in oneself, or rather between self and self, as if the unrestrained character of the course had caused a split and a growing hiatus between the diverse parts of the being. . . . Simultaneously, one is he who is already hurled into the future ahead of time, and the one who is left behind in the present.[3]

The poet is borne "through sights I scarce can bear," and, at the same instant, is "earthward press'd." He becomes at one and the same moment subject and object, observer and that which is being observed--just as he does when he sees himself as "'one that gathers Samphire'" (I:141). He becomes nothing more than what Moneta calls him in The Fall of Hyperion, "A fever of thyself" (I, 169), and this self-reflecting vision of the universe becomes the huge yet incommodious and suffocating carrier of that fever. His experience is precisely that of Endymion, as the shepherd imagines himself tying "Large wings upon [his] shoulders" and flying with his dream love:

> . . . I do think the bars
> That kept my spirit in are burst--that I
> Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky!
> (II, 185-187)

But this kind of height is an element alien to Endymion's--as to Keats's--"spirit": ". . . my spirit fails-- / Dear goddess, help! or the wide-gapping air / Will gulph me--help!" (II, 193-195) The terror is that of being swallowed up by space. Endymion fears that in assuming the kind of cosmic perspective that flight implies, his "spirit" will be destroyed either by the unmanageable distance or by the lack of control concomitant with sudden descent. One's self is in fragments as it undergoes this two-fold, yet unintegrated experience.

Apollo, Keats's "golden theme," is always for Keats the sure, controlled charioteer, the vanquisher of space, whom we see in the poet's vision in "Sleep and Poetry." There, as in the later "God of the meridian," Apollo is in control of all the reaches of space as he "looks out upon the winds" and brings his chariot "downward with capacious whirl" to earth. He "talks / To the trees and mountains" and "seems to listen" as the human shapes in their variety and "mystery" pass before him, and, as artist, he is able to make use of his surroundings: "he writes" what he hears and sees. Keats's own sense of himself in con-

trast to Apollo appears some 120 lines later in "Sleep and Poetry":

> Will not some say that I presumptuously
> Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace
> 'Twere better far to hide my foolish face?
> That whining boyhood should with reverence
> bow
> Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach?
> How! . . .
> If I do fall, at least I will be laid
> Beneath the silence of a poplar shade;
> And over me the grass shall be smooth
> shaven;
> And there shall be a kind memorial graven.
> (270ff)

In these lines, Keats alludes to himself as Apollo's son, Phaethon, an allusion that is present as well in "God of the meridian." The story of Phaethon, told in Book II of Metamorphoses, concerns the boy "Who drove his father's chariot: if he did not / Hold it, at least he fell in splendid daring."[4] This is the "kind memorial" carved in stone to Phaethon in the poplar grove. Throughout the Phaethon story in Ovid, as in this section of "Sleep and Poetry" (through line 305), are allusions to the enormous stretches of heaven, its dizzying height, and the youthful lack of control felt by both Phaethon and Keats as they face those dimensions with an awareness of their own limitations and disabilities. Thus, at this early point in his career, Keats images huge, unvanquishable spaces that are the more overwhelming because he senses that

he may lack the ability to fill or conquer them imaginatively. While Keats says, in "Sleep and Poetry," immediately after having envisioned himself as a failure in his "huge attempt" (I:139), "But off Despondence!" that feeling is not so easily eradicated. He recognizes his own lack of knowledge of "The shiftings of mighty winds," of "all the changing thoughts of man." He is aware that "no great minist'ring reason sorts / Out the dark mysteries of human souls / To clear conceiving."

The same thoughts receive expression, more than two years after the composition of "Sleep and Poetry," in a letter of March and April 1819:

> 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--though erroneous they may be fine--this is the very thing in which exists poetry; and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy--For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine as a truth--Give me this credit--Do you not think I strive to know myself? . . . --Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced.-- (II:80-81)

Poetry, then, may be lacking in any absolute system, any charted route, but it does provide a broad avenue toward self-knowledge. On the other hand, the kind of applied philosophy that to Keats's mind, comprised eighteenth-century poetry, leads to a product molded

by "A thousand handicraftsmen," and is abhorred by Keats in his indictment of neo-Classicism in "Sleep and Poetry." The kind of narrow thinking that legislates "musty laws lined out with wretched rule / And compass vile," and that systematizes creativity so that "dolts" may be taught "to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit," leads to the manufacture of verse by those who may think, but who do not feel or know. In this connection, Keats's friend Benjamin Haydon records in his diary an event that took place during a rather rambunctious dinner party which Keats attended:

> [Charles Lamb] then attacked me for putting . . . Newton [into Haydon's painting, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem] "a Fellow who believed in nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle." And then he and Keats agreed he had destroyed all the Poetry of the rainbow, by reducing it to a prism. It was impossible to resist them, and we drank "Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics!"[5]

For Keats, poetry may flow simply from the intuition of a moment--from a "hearty grasp"--and is sent "Into the brain ere one can think upon it." It becomes, then, the record of a sudden, intimate, and intuitive understanding, whose measure does not depend upon "a poor decrepid standard . . . / Mark'd with most flimsy mottos." Yet Keats recognizes here, as he does in his verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds:

> Oh never will the prize,
> High reason, and the lore of good and ill
> Be my award. Things cannot to the will
> Be settled. . . .
> (76-79)

At about the same time, he writes to Benjamin Bailey, "I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning--and yet it must be--" (I:185). As a result of his very vision of reality, Keats feels he can discover nothing by means of methodical thought: "There is nothing stable in the world--uproar's your only musick" (I:204). Perhaps, given Keats's insights into the protean nature of the perceivable world, "a truth" arrived at by "consequitive reasoning" seems simply to refine itself out of existence, or to become less valid conceptually than the intuition or imaginative truth of the moment.

While Keats is aware in "Sleep and Poetry" that this view may be indicative of his own "dearth of spanning wisdom," the limitations of his own vision and experience, he is conscious in that poem that,

> . . . there ever rolls
> A vast idea before me, and I glean
> Therefrom my liberty. . . .
> (290-292)

But that "liberty," which derives from Keats's awareness of his own capabilities and his own intuitive perceptions of reality, has its dark side. Just as it

can free the spirit to envision in larger ways, it can also lead to self-destruction and madness (as in "God of the meridian" and Keats's lines written in the Highlands):

> . . . let me like a madman run
> Over some precipice; let the hot sun
> Melt my Daedalian wings, and drive me down
> Convulsed and headlong!
> (301-304)

The fear of freedom--the dread that accompanies flight into large, unknown spaces--persists and is given expression throughout Keats's poetry. Hand in hand with the longing for creative control over all the reaches of experience, is Keats's fear not only of what may be lost in the quest, but of the quest itself. And because he is the most deeply personal of the Romantic poets, and in many ways the most honest, his insights and responses become the more real to us. The sonnet, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," composed in March 1817, is a case in point:

> My spirit is too weak--mortality
> Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
> And each imagined pinnacle and steep
> Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
> Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
> Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
> That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
> Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
> Such dim-conceived glories of the brain

> Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
> So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
> That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
> Wasting of old time--with a billowy main--
> A sun--a shadow of a magnitude.

We have the sense, as in Keats's letter of May 1817, that the entire realm of artistic achievement--not just "the Cliff of Poesy"--"Towers above" him (I:141). In discussing the sonnet, M. A. Goldberg notes that in the poem "the poet's eye is turned completely inward":

> The grandeur of the Marbles recedes before the consciousness of [Keats's] own poetic incapacities. . . . Not the Marbles, but "My spirit" is of the essence here. The Marbles appear to have no reality external to that of the poet's subjective response. . . . This self projected in the sonnet is wholly passive [and Keats] himself appears almost as a receptacle into which external impressions are poured and with which he can do little.[6]

We are aware in examining the sonnet that what Goldberg says is in part true: we do not have the Marbles described in any objective fashion--we do have only the "poet's subjective response." But at the same time, the Marbles always are present. They stand solidly behind the poem as paradigmatic works of art, not simply as occasions for a sonnet. Further, Keats eschewed passionless description as "bad at all times" (I:301)--"For myself," he said, "I hate descriptions" (II:198).

Thus, what we have instead in the sonnet--instead of either description or effusion--are the self-conscious self-observations of a young poet brought face to face with works of art that conjure up images of "pinnacles" and "steeps" that he cannot hope to scale or conquer. In the very spatial imagination of Keats, the achievements of other artists become "imagined" heights at which he can only gaze longingly, "Like a sick eagle." But self-observation does not end there. Rather, Keats examines his own impulses toward those heights and is ambivalent about his desire even to attempt them:

> Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
> That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
> Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.

While Keats regrets that he, perhaps, never will be capable of that "godlike hardship," that labor that accompanies the creation of a great work of art, he is almost grateful that the burden of such striving may not fall to him. This is the nature of the "undescribable feud." Does one, in attempting to become Apollo, master of "pinnacles" and "steeps," run the risk of becoming instead Phaethon, who with "a most dizzy pain" is hurtled back to earth? As Keats remarks in a letter written a short time after the "Elgin Marbles" sonnet, while he was at work on Endymion:

> . . . the Idea has grown so monstrously beyond my seeming Power of attainment that the other day I nearly consented with myself to drop into a Phaeton--yet 'tis a disgrace to fail even in a huge attempt. . . . I see . . . nothing but continual uphill journeying. Now is there any thing more unpleasant . . . than to be so journeying and miss the Goal at last-- (I:139)

These self-doubts are alluded to consistently in the earlier poetry and in the early letters, and are always associated with seemingly insurmountable heights and unmanageable distances. Certainly these are not extraordinary images for attempted achievement, but the fear and ambivalence that Keats habitually brings to them are hardly traditional.

The more accomplished sonnet, "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer," composed less than six months before the "Elgin Marbles" sonnet, is another Keatsian statement about another work of art. Once again, the "I," impressed with the grandeur of what it beholds, sees itself as "some watcher of the skies" or of an enormous expanse of ocean. Suddenly, "with a wild surmise," the consciousness grasps something that hitherto had eluded it. "What is confronted," according to Stuart A. Ende, "is a sublime magnitude that augurs expansion of self. The Darien 'peak' is . . . not only topographical but emotional."[7]

The spatial components that make up the final lines of "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" gain a special relevance when examined in contrast to those that end "When I have fears," composed about a year and a half later. The two sonnets reveal Keats's frequently shifting conceptions of space. "Chapman's Homer" remains the record of a kind of miracle: an expansion of boundaries accompanying the eye as it looks upward or outward. Cortez, standing "upon a peak" and staring at a hitherto undiscovered expanse of ocean, the Pacific, has added to his knowledge and his consciousness, as has the "watcher of the skies" in the lines preceding. In a real sense, both have moved beyond the limitations imposed by a world of "the time being." And Keats himself, reading in Chapman's Homer, experiences an alteration in awareness--is set apart and enriched by participating in Homer's "demesne." Like Cortez, he is situated "upon a peak," suddenly seeing from a "most new" perspective a world he has never before glimpsed.

In the last lines of "When I have fears," however, the ocean upon whose shore Keats stands is an inconstant, watery element:

> . . . --then on the shore
> Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
> Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

Consciousness is aware only of everything being borne away from it and sinking beneath the waves. The voyage of discovery here is characterized by the experience of fronting a fluid and eternally moving formlessness, and becomes a metaphorical death. Neither within nor without is there a "stay or prop," a "standard law," that can support him in his vision. Presented here is an instance of spatial disorientation, in which "There is no longer any inwardness or outwardness." There is, rather, as Poulet says of Balzac,

> . . . an identification of the self and the world, which can as well be expressed under the form of an invasion of the world by the thought, as under that of an invasion of the thought by the world which, in pouring itself into the mind, rids itself of all exteriority. . . .[8]

The new way of seeing here involves a vision that virtually destroys the self: that--far from expanding one's boundaries--confounds and collapses all boundaries.

For precisely this reason, "the social thought" of human ties, of which Keats speaks in the sonnet "To My Brother George," becomes essential to the poet. In that poem, Keats declares, "Many the wonders I this day have seen." He singles out the sun and the ocean with "Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears / Must

think on what will be and what has been." Confronted with this vastness, which brings with it not only thoughts of eternity, but a considerable measure of anxiety, Keats caps the sonnet with the rhetorical question, "But what, without the social thought of thee, / Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?" Thus, his brother represents not simply someone with whom to share these wonders, but an anchor in the midst of change, a rock that offers the assurance of solidity--of something "stable in the world" (I:204).

A similar idea is introduced a couple of months later in the second of two sonnets that Keats addressed to Benjamin Haydon, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning." Here, Keats makes mention of "the social smile, the chain for freedom's sake" (6), a certain "stedfastness," which recalls to the mind of the reader not only the "Bright Star" sonnet, but the "flowery band" that binds us to the earth in Endymion. "The chain for freedom's sake" allows Keats the "liberty" (the word he chooses in "Sleep and Poetry") to take flight with the assurance of safe return.

Other poems of Keats's earliest period reflect the same deep concerns about his distance from objects, from other people, and often from himself--concerns that seem concomitant with his accomplishing "the

deed / That my own soul has to itself decreed." He sees himself in the verse epistle "To My Brother George" bidding adieu to the world's solid reality:

> Thy dales and hills are fading from my view:
> Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
> Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions.
> Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air. . . .
> Could I at once my mad ambition smother,
> For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
> Happier, and dearer to society.
> (104-112)

Despite its component of ecstasy, then, the freedom that Keats imagines here is conducive neither to personal happiness nor to social worth. Keats seems to know that those more earthly joys would come only if he could "smother" his "mad ambition," his "narvus" reaching for a perspective and a consequent poetic voice that would transcend "the narrow bounds" of earthly vision. The sense that Keats has in this verse epistle, that he would enjoy a happiness perhaps less "full," but more bearable, and be of greater social value, if he could deny his longing for poetic ecstasy--which we read as a dream of flight--is premonitory of Moneta's indictment of the poet-dreamer in The Fall of Hyperion:

> What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe,
> To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing;
> A fever of thyself--think of the earth;
> What bliss even in hope is there for thee?
> What haven?
>
> (I, 167-171)

At the same time, amusingly, Keats knows in the epistle "To My Brother George" exactly where he is: "E'en now I'm pillowed on a bed of flowers"--very comfortable in his attachment to the earth. The ascent has not been a particularly convincing one, but the epistle, dating back to August 1816, shows Keats visualizing poetic flight in a far more conventional way than he does in other poems written at about the same time or just a few months later.

These images, undeveloped here, assume greater significance in Keats's poetry of 1818 and 1819. Keats's admonition to his "wand'ring spirit" that closes "I stood tip-toe" resonates in the last lines of Canto I of The Fall of Hyperion. As the poet-dreamer is about to leave "the antichamber of this dream," he finds he "must delay," and, in fact, "perhaps no further dare" (465ff). Always there is a longing for expanded consciousness, greater and greater experience and vision, and at the same time a gaping fear of passing through the portal.

Keats's longing for a poetic voice that would be reflective of this expanded consciousness, this widened perspective and vision, is present everywhere in his early work, but most notably in "Sleep and Poetry." In that poem, Keats is aware that the secret shapes we bring with us from sleep, joined with a more conscious exercise of imagination, are creative of poetry. Even at this early stage, however, it is clear to Keats that he must get beyond nature, and yet that nature is undeniably necessary. From the very start of "Sleep and Poetry" a kind of mental landscape is introduced--images that seem to originate in nature, but as in "I stood tip-toe" (and, of course, much later in "Ode to Psyche") are created by a human hand. Keats asks, "What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing / In a green island, far from all men's knowing?" (5-6). He goes on (in lines 29-31) to speak of poetry as ". . . a gentle whispering / Of all the secrets of some wondrous thing / That breathes about us in the vacant air." As in Shelley's "Mont Blanc," it is the shaping quality of human imagination--the richness of human perception --that fills such vacancy, that peoples it, and makes it creative of wonder. "Sleep and Poetry" moves, in its first two paragraphs, toward an ever-increasing awareness of the bond between nature--even in its ap-

parent emptiness--and the comprehending human mind. Those paragraphs comprise a statement much like the last lines of "Mont Blanc":

> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy.

There are, however, roses that are "born to blush unseen," and these fit, in the present context, with Keats's own fears of obscurity--one of the overriding preoccupations of his early poetry and letters. But once Keats's mind grasps the existence of unseen elements, it attempts to validate them poetically, and in such a way that what seems to lie beyond usual human comprehension becomes a reality that virtually transcends what is ordinarily visible to human perception. This is a very early, yet continuing motif in the poetry. It occurs in Keats's earliest extant fragment, "Imitation of Spenser." The first stanzas of that poem present a natural scene--that of a lake--described quite literally. The last two stanzas, however, involve the imaginative creation of "an isle" where a "rose-tree blows":

> Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle
> That in that fairest lake had placed been
> I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile;
> Or rob from Lear his bitter teen:
> For sure so fair a place was never seen,
> Of all that ever charmed romantic eye.
> (19-24)

And as soon as he wishes for the power to create such an island, the island is there--no longer conditionally:

> It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen
> Of the bright waters. . . .
> And all around it dipp'd luxuriously
> Slopings of verdure.

Poetry, then, becomes a validation of the imagined invisible. And it may have, as Keats wishes it to, the power to ease the burdens of Dido and Lear--the ability, as Keats expresses it in "Sleep and Poetry," "To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man" (247). Poetry, as a way of seeing, has entered already, in "Imitation of Spenser," into Keats's apprehensions of nature. It is a way of seeing and responding that can also serve to reveal the enormous potentiality of apparently empty spaces.

Although it is possible to overload such early images as these with too much baggage, they are reminiscent of the "little town" whose citizens embellish an urn, and whose "streets forevermore will silent be," precisely because they are spaces that have the double quality of being known and unknown. The images carry with them the "unseen flowers" and the "desolate places" of the hymn to Pan in Endymion (I, 235 and 240), and indeed that known-unknown aspect of Pan him-

self. Pan is worshipped as "a symbol of immensity" (I, 299) and as "An element filling the space between" human yearning for comprehension of immensity and human limitation.

The verse paragraph starting at line 47 of "Sleep and Poetry" is a profoundly personal one for Keats and a significant one for readers of Keats in identifying the spiritual sources of his poetry. "Not yet a glorious denizen / Of [the] wide heaven" of poetry, Keats asks whether, instead of holding his pen, he should

> . . . rather kneel
> Upon some mountain-top until I feel
> A glowing splendor round me hung,
> And echo back the voice of thine own
> tongue!
> (49-52)

He answers the question in the next line: rather than entering humbly into the rarefied atmosphere of "some mountain-top," he will stay here, on the ground, and "grasp" his pen. At the same time, he prays to Poesy:

> Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air,
> Smooth'd for intoxication by the breath
> Of flowering bays, that I may die a death
> Of luxury, and my young spirit follow
> The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo.
> (56-60)

The "clear air" that comes to him from the sanctuary of poetry must carry with it, like incense sent downward, "the breath / Of flowering bays," fruit of the laurel. The laurel, associated of course with Apollo and with

great poetic accomplishment, would also bring with it the breath of earth. Poetry's "clear air," untouched by the scent of earthly things, Keats says, would be too ethereal a commodity for him. Thus, while Keats longs for the kind of comprehensive, ecstatic perspective that "kneel[ing] / Upon some mountaintop" or "Swiftly mount[ing] / Far from the narrow bounds of [nature's] dominions" might bring, at the same time, he seeks a kind of middle distance: a privileged but not other-worldly vision. This is deeply expressive of an Antaeus-like "dependency." And that need is reminiscent of the need that Yeats expresses in "To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time": "A little space for the rose-breath to fill," in order that the earth and earthly affairs not be forgotten as the poet steeps himself in "Speculations" and in "ethereal things."

Notes: Chapter 3

[1] Mario L. D'Avanzo, Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1967), p. 67.

[2] Stuart M. Sperry, Keats the Poet (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), p. 152.

[3] Georges Poulet, The Interior Distance, trans. Elliott Coleman (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964), pp. 225-226.

[4] Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1964), II, 326-327, p. 38.

[5] The Diary of Benjamin Haydon, ed. Willard Bissel Pope (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), II, p. 173.

[6] M. A. Goldberg, The Poetics of Romanticism: Toward a Reading of John Keats (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1969), pp. 15-16.

[7] Stuart A. Ende, Keats and the Sublime (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), p. 44.

[8] Poulet, p. 101.

Chapter 4

Poems of the Walking Tour

A space in which there is no place that can be marked by any physical means whatsoever is at any rate a very subtle and abstract idea, and not simply a box into which material things are crammed.

Max Born
Einstein's Theory of Relativity

I

Keats recognizes in as early a poem as "Sleep and Poetry" that "the realm . . . / Of Flora, and old Pan," which the novice poet conventionally must pass through on his way from apprenticeship to full realization as a poet, is an attractive but severely limited area. The very consolation that its limitations offer constricts it still further, to the point that even the maternal nurturing implicit in "the bosom of a leafy world" (119) comprises a sphere that, paradoxically, is not quite small or sheltered enough: Keats must narrow the metaphor still further, until he sees himself and his nymph resting "in silence, like two gems upcurl'd / In the recesses of a pearly shell" (120-121).

As with the intimate space that Keats creates in "I stood tiptoe," the narrow strictures of the shell world invite "day-dreams of refuge."[1] But at the same time:

> A creature that hides and "withdraws into its shell," is preparing a "way out." This is true of the entire scale of metaphors, from the resurrection of a man in his grave, to the sudden outburst of one who has been long silent.[2]

And immediately upon the heels of Keats's recognition that he must "bid these joys farewell" (122) comes vi-

sion. By rejecting the confines of the bower and the shell, the poet becomes capable of envisioning and participating in a larger, more imaginative kind of space. But this is possible only because of the refuge and solace offered by a narrower world--one that readies the poet for vision, although it must in itself be abandoned time and again. The "flowery band" of beauty that binds us to the earth, and that we ourselves wreathe in an act of imagination, at the same time frees us from the earth and allows space for the flowering of the imagination. Thus, both in our attachment to nature and time, and in our liberation from them, we are always acting imaginatively.

This imaginative experiencing of nature is very different from the poet's "sense of real things" in the verse paragraph following his moment of vision in "Sleep and Poetry":

> The visions all are fled--the car is fled
> Into the light of heaven, and in their
> stead
> A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
> And like a muddy stream, would bear along
> My soul to nothingness; but I will strive
> Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
> The thought of that same chariot, and the
> strange
> Journey it went.
>
> (155-162)

The moment following vision, then, is a moment that is "visionless entire."[3] There is no active imagina-

tion at work to transform and beautify "real things." All the poet sees is what the "shape of beauty" had momentarily, yet timelessly, eradicated:

> . . . despondence, . . . the inhuman dearth
> Of noble natures, . . . the gloomy days,
> . . . all the unhealthy and o'erdarkened
> ways
> Made for our searching. . . .
> (I, 8-11)

Yet, paradoxically, it is the imaginative man who has the capacity to experience "real things" in this way, just as he alone dreams of transcending them by means of vision, or wreathes beauty in spite of them. It is only when the transcendent imaginative faculty--that human characteristic that imparts order and loveliness --fails, that the poet is cast into the "muddy stream" that would destroy his soul; at this point, he must, by an effort of will extricate himself from it. This is done by attempting to renew and keep "alive" the memory of the moment of vision, as Keats does in "Ode to a Nightingale." Without that memory, human life becomes restricted indeed, and the human being experiences his life as an unfocused and fragmented series of sensations.

There are a number of instances in Keats's poetry where the higher imagination does fail; where neither memory of vision nor of the "flowery band" that we are

"wreathing" constantly can stand us in good stead--instances where even by an effort of the will we are unable to withstand the disordered assault of "real things." This occurs, among other places, in the two sonnets that Keats wrote to Robert Burns: "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns" and "This mortal body of a thousand days." In both of these sonnets there is a lack of affect--a sense of being present in a place that should have a salutary effect on the imagination, but that instead stultifies it. The first of the two sonnets was originally included in a letter to Tom Keats written during Keats's walking tour of Scotland with his friend Charles Brown. Earlier in the letter, Keats had remarked on the dissimilarity between the Scottish country dances he had seen and those of the English:

> I was extremely gratified to think, that if I had pleasures they knew nothing of. they had also some into which I could not possibly enter. (I:307)

Here he relishes the distance in custom and personality that separates him from what he observes about him, recognizing, too, that

> . . . our continued moving about from place to place will prevent our becoming learned in village affairs; we are mere creatures of Rivers, Lakes, & mountains. (I:307-308)

There is no discontentment attached to such an experience of touring. Yet when he pays homage at the tomb of Burns, the dead poet's "native skies" are alien to Keats. He can establish no kinship--even that of treasuring the differences between them--between himself and Burns. All he can experience is total separateness, not only from the scene before him and from the poet to whom honor is due, but from his own imaginative powers. He can make nothing of what he sees about him, because all that he is feeling is the unending pain of human life, and he cannot free himself from the tyranny of that sensation. He observes to Tom, referring to his sonnet "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns":

> This sonnet I have written in a strange mood, half asleep. I know not how it is, the Clouds, the sky, the Houses, all seem anti Grecian & anti Charlemagnish. (I:309)

The impression one is left with is that Keats's apprehensions of the scene have conspired to remove all traces of European history--in fact, of an entire known world. The "half asleep" state is one in which distinctions between inner and outer are vague and indiscernible. It is as if the self has ceased to exist because it can find no recognizable place in which to exist. At the same time, the place becomes every-

thing. But everything, by being too real, or by conjuring up feelings that are too close, takes on the appearance of an unconnected unreality:

> The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun,
> The clouds, the trees, the rounded hills all seem,
> Though beautiful, cold--strange--as in a dream
> I dreamed long ago. Now new begun,
> The short-lived, paly summer is but won
> From winter's ague, for one hour's gleam;
> Though saphire warm, their stars do never beam;
> All is cold beauty; pain is never done
> For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise
> The real of beauty, free from that dead hue
> Sickly imagination and sick pride
> Cast wan upon it! Burns! with honour due
> I have oft honoured thee. Great shadow, hide
> Thy face--I sin against thy native skies.

"The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun, / The clouds, the trees, the rounded hills," are distant from Keats not only because he is unable to attach himself to the "real" of their beauty, that is, to move outside himself in his "half asleep" mood, but because they are temporally and interiorly remote from him as well. The "dream . . . dreamed long ago"--a psychologically and temporally separate entity, which Keats is trying to grasp but which eludes him--is a dead part of himself to which he can no longer connect. As a result, the landscape of Burns's native land, which now surrounds the poet, is at one and the

same moment too near to Keats and too far from him. The one essential feature of Keats's mood when he wrote the poem is his sense of failure to connect in any helpful way with what surrounds him and weighs on him. It is a kind of passive indolence, what Georges Poulet defines as "the preliminary state of the person who, existing only by means of his feelings, has as yet no feeling. . . . A state of psychological nothingness, like paralysis or sleep."[4]

Keats has written of this state time and again in his letters. This peculiar lack of feeling may be better understood in the light of its obverse--a "delicious, diligent Indolence" (I:231), or the "ardent listlessness" of Endymion (I, 825), in which a winged interknitting of souls is possible, the creative act of connecting the self with another. But, as Keats stresses in Endymion, that motion into connectedness presupposes a "ready mind"--a responsive, open, receptive intellect--not one that is depressed and overwhelmed. By experiencing nature in a sensual way--"Fold / A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness, / And soothe thy lips"--and by being conscious of the harmony that surrounds one in the very music of the air, one penetrates as if with a single sympathetic vibration all the mysteries of time. So it is only

through the mind's readiness to connect that one can "shine / Full alchemiz'd, and free of space":

> Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;
> Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
> Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave
> Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;
> Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
> Where long ago a giant battle was;
> And from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
> In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
> Feel we these things?--that moment we have stept
> Into a sort of oneness, and our state
> Is like a floating spirit's.
> (I, 787-797)

Significantly, Keats feels that it is only during "that moment" of participation that it is possible to transcend the barriers erected by time and space. What Keats experiences in the sonnet "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns" is the antipodes of this experience that he dwells on so lovingly in Endymion. The unready mind in the sonnet can establish a link with nothing it sees or feels. It is aware only of the extreme brevity of summer, with its "paly" tinge of winter, and of the ubiquity of winter itself, that season of "pale misfeature."[5] Keats recognizes in the Burns sonnet that he colors all the visible world with his own paleness of response:

> For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise
> The real of beauty, free from that dead hue
> Sickly imagination and sick pride
> Cast wan upon it!

The important, and in many ways enviable, quality that Keats points to here is the ability to connect one's self in a constructive way with what surrounds one--not to be so overwhelmed by it, so empathically moved by it, that one becomes impotent. In this way, while one is connecting, one is also removing one's self in order not to be violated by a too-strong, uncontrollable response: one is establishing a useful interior distance. Keats comments on the same problem in his verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds, written just four months before the Burns sonnet:

> O that our dreamings all of sleep or
> wake
> Would all their colours from the sunset
> take
> From something of material sublime,
> Rather than shadow our own soul's daytime
> In the dark void of night. . . .
> . . . . --O never will the prize,
> High reason, and the lore of good and ill
> Be my award. Things cannot to the will
> Be settled, but they tease us out of
> thought.
> Or is it that the imagination brought
> Beyond its proper bound, yet still
> confined,--
> Lost in a sort of purgatory blind,
> Cannot refer to any standard law
> Of earth or heaven?--It is a flaw
> In happiness to see beyond our bourne--
> It forces us in summer skies to mourn:
> It spoils the singing of the nightingale.
> (67ff)

The "flaw in happiness" that comes with seeing "beyond our bourne" has to do with Keats's sense that what one sees when he sees "Too far into the sea" (94) is a vi-

sion that eludes definition--a vision that cannot be released in language: "I have a mysterious tale," Keats says, "And cannot speak it" (86-87). Thus, imagination is "still confined." Language, which would serve to fix or define experience, and simultaneously to liberate imagination from its constraints, stays in its "roofed home."[6] Keats's difficulty in the epistle to Reynolds, then, as in the Burns sonnet, is to make use of the poetic imagination in such a way that it does not become "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Keats is envisioning the possibility of an imagination freed from the trammels of the individual's modes of perception--an imagination that is not "confined" to the predispositions of its possessor, but that carries with it its own laws and assures a Minos-like clarity of vision that need not refer back to the "Moods of one's mind." As it is, the imagination, as a psychologically conditioned property of its possessor, may carry one outside the usual realm of human experience and there leave one stranded --in the sense that what is apprehended may not be translated into any universal or useful form: one becomes imprisoned in the experience. There is then, perhaps, little visible recompense for the journey.

At the same time, whatever earthly pleasures exist become spoiled--and, quite simply, by a way of seeing.

The essential, and evidently missing, ingredient is perspective: the ability, "in spite of all," to send our imagination out to enjoy and participate in beauty without ourselves being burdened by the pain of whatever sorrow we associate with that beauty. To use the expression Keats applies in "Lamia," we must "unperplex" the one from the other, so that a true, uncolored response may become possible, and at the same time, forge a fruitful imaginative link with "the real of beauty," without being emotionally overwhelmed by it. In the Burns sonnet, Keats is moved and simultaneously is incapable of coherent response to that emotion. As the poet sends his "herald thought into a wilderness," rather than ordering what is out there, thought itself becomes bewildered, as if there were "no depth to strike in."

II

Keats wrote the second of his Burns sonnets, "This mortal body of a thousand days," at Burns's cottage in Ayr. He had anticipated his visit to the cottage in a letter to Reynolds begun on 11 July 1818:

> One of the pleasantest means of annulling self is approaching such a shrine as the Cottage of Burns--we need not think of his misery--that is all gone--bad luck to it--I shall look upon it hereafter with unmixed pleasure as I do upon my Stratford on Avon day with [Benjamin] Bailey. (I:323)

However, the letter takes on an altogether different tone once the visit has occurred:

> We went to the Cottage and took some Whiskey--I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof --they are so bad I cannot transcribe them--the Man at the Cottage was a great Bore with his Anecdotes--I hate the rascal-- . . . he is a mahogany faced old Jackass who knew Burns--He ought to be kicked for having spoken to him. . . . --O the flummery of a birth place! Cant! Cant! Cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache . . . his gab hindered my sublimity--the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet-- (I:324-325)

Noteworthy here is a remarkable, though lightly worded, anger, born of great disappointment. At the long-awaited end of a much-anticipated pilgrimage, Keats finds the temple desecrated, and the priest, an old bore of a man who had the temerity to associate with Burns, makes Keats's own communion with the dead poet

impossible. Keats had looked forward to an "annulling" of the self, an outward leap of the imagination untethered by any awareness of self. Through his own mind's readiness to join in a "fellowship" with the dead Burns, he had expected to step "into a sort of oneness" and become "like a floating spirit." Nothing more different from what he had hoped for could have occurred: there is nothing "self-destroying," as Keats intends that expression, in his visit to the cottage. Rather, he is keenly aware of himself, especially with regard to the time and space he occupies within the house:

> This mortal body of a thousand days
> Now fills, O Burns, a space in thine own room,
> Where thou didst dream alone on budded bays,
> Happy and thoughtless of thy day of doom!
> My pulse is warm with thine old barley-bree,
> My head is light with pledging a great soul,
> My eyes are wandering, and I cannot see,
> Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal;
> Yet can I stamp my foot upon thy floor,
> Yet can I ope thy window-sash to find
> The meadow thou hast tramped o'er and o'er,--
> Yet can I think of thee till thought is blind,--
> Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name,--
> O smile among the shades, for this is fame!

The poet is conscious of Burns's immortality--his timelessness--as over against Keats's own paltry "thousand days." Keats is aware, too, of his own very mortal so-

lidity and physical presence within a dream-filled space--the space that he as the living poet "Now fills." In the face of the disembodied dreams that surround him, Keats is strongly alert to his own solidness: the warmth of his pulse; his head's lightness; his unseeing, wandering eyes; his ability to "stamp [his] foot upon [the] floor," to open a window, and to "gulp a bumper" to Burns's memory. The only connection that he does manage to establish is an artificial one, accomplished through the mediation of objects. It is Burns's cottage in which Keats drinks, Burns's floor upon which Keats stamps, Burns's window out of which the living poet looks to see the fields that Burns has "tramped o'er and o'er." But there is no real community besides the community of objects, and the separation is emphasized by the use of the personal pronouns "I" / "thou" and "my" / "thy." It is only on the basis of the very physical props and Keats's very physical experience of them that he shares any affinity with Burns in this poem. Every experience of his, both in the sonnet and in the passage from the letter to Reynolds, is remarkably physical: what he experiences is a spiritual "guts-ache." And since "Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal," intellectually Keats can do no more than "think of [Burns] till thought is blind,"

like vision. Of course, the goal of his Fancy was precisely this cottage, but too much has militated against Keats's earlier vision of the place, not the least of all, his own always extraordinary empathy, which is revealed in his letter to Reynolds:

> [Burn's] Misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill--I tried to forget it--to drink Toddy without Care--to write a merry Sonnet--it won't do--he talked with Bitches--he drank with Blackguards, he was miserable-- (I:325)

Incapable, then, of a Minos-like stance, unable to release himself from the "dead weight" of Burns's unhappiness, the paltriness and misery of his life, Keats's only recourse becomes an impotent anger that is neither helpful in forging a creative link between the dead poet and himself, nor conducive to a more benign perspective.

III

"To Ailsa Rock," composed shortly after "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns" and "This mortal body of a thousand days," Keats called " . . . the only sonnet of any worth I have of late written" (I:330). As a prologue to the sonnet, Keats describes his walk through a "magnificent glen":

> At the end we had a gradual ascent and got among the tops of the Mountains whence In a little time I descried in the Sea Ailsa Rock 940 feet high--it was 15 Miles distant and seemed close upon us--The effect of ailsa with the peculiar perspective of the Sea in connection with the ground we stood on, and the misty rain then falling gave me a complete idea of a deluge--Ailsa struck me very suddenly--really I was a little alarmed. (I:329)

One can imagine Keats's prospect as he stood "among the tops of the Mountains" in "a misty rain," the ground falling away from him, and another mountaintop, with its brow above an apparent flood--a mountain growing out of the sea--"15 Miles distant," yet enormous, "close upon us." There are no "dwindled edgings" here, as in "I stood tip-toe." Rather, distance does nothing to diminish size. As Keats and Brown pursue their walk after seeing Ailsa from the mountaintop--"13 Miles" from Belantree to Girvan--Ailsa is "beside us all the way" (I:329).

With Ailsa's great size comes an awareness in the sonnet of its anterior, subterranean existence--an element as "teasing" in its way as the "brede of marble men and maidens" on the Grecian urn. Thus, from description, the mind passes without prelude into memory and imagination. Poulet describes this experience:

> From a certain point of view everything is memory, since everything is directly suggested to the mind by the object.

> Together with its sensory appearance, the object delivers up . . . its historical depth. But from another point of view everything is imagination; since any memory, whatever it may be, is immediately covered by new layers of meaning.[7]

In the sonnet, as in Keats's letter, occurs the identical movement--from physical description to inner response:

> Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid,
> Give answer by thy voice, the sea
> fowls' screams!
> When were thy shoulders mantled in huge
> streams?
> When from the sun was thy broad forehead
> hid?
> How long is't since the mighty power bid
> Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom
> dreams--
> Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams,
> Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid?
> Thou answer'st not, for thou art dead
> asleep;
> Thy life is but two dead eternities,
> The last in air, the former in the deep--
> First with the whales, last with the
> eagle skies;
> Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made
> thee steep--
> Another cannot wake thy giant size!

The rock's enormous size suggests enormous time. And Keats is conscious as he addresses Ailsa, as he was conscious in the two Burns sonnets, of "the catastrophe of time."[8] He sees in Ailsa something utterly cosmic: it becomes macrocosmic man, ascending from the ocean, his past still, and always, hidden fathoms deep within him, and with no comprehensible eloquence

to reveal it--its voice is the inarticulate scream of sea birds. It is only by means of cataclysm that Ailsa has been heaved up "from fathom dreams" into "airy sleep," yet its subterranean--or submarine--existence persists, as if it were growing dumbly in both directions simultaneously.

All the unanswerable questions that Keats poses in this sonnet have to do with the rock's temporal existence, but are inspired by the immensity of its form. "To Ailsa Rock" has been read as a "poetic statement [that] is about as objective as it could be, without losing its poetry."[9] Yet the insensate, overwhelming rock becomes a thing to dream over--in much the same way as do the frozen tree and brook of "In drear nighted December," written about eight months earlier. How does one communicate the absolute inarticulate deadness of a feeling that feels nothing? In human terms, the closest approximation that Keats was able to reach occurs in the "Cave of Quietude" description in Endymion. But he approaches the essence of it in the two earlier Scottish sonnets.

Keats remarked that "A Question is the best beacon toward a little Speculation" (I:175), and the questions he asks of Ailsa lead him, as the two Burns sonnets do, deeper into himself, into a self that can

contemplate the same limitations of understanding and response that beset him in the Burns sonnets. But, because in "To Ailsa Rock" he deals with an absolute physical presence, the poem is allowed to take on a more intellectual tone. Keats brings few of the emotionally charged elements that he brought to Burns's tomb and cottage to Ailsa. But still he is dealing with death, with inertness, with the impossibility of community; with a thing that--regardless of what one may want from it--can give neither answer nor anything else, like the dead Burns. At the same time, Keats is aware that "Immensity is within ourselves,"[10] that he is responding to the "alarm" he felt at seeing the huge rock in juxtaposition with rain and sea and an evident absence of ground.

IV

A compelling and puzzling companion-piece to the foregoing sonnets is the poem that begins, "There is a joy in footing slow . . . ," which Keats wrote in the Scottish Highlands. It is included in a letter to Benjamin Bailey written between 18 and 22 July 1818 from Inverary. Before giving the poem to Bailey, Keats refers to the second of the Burns sonnets, "This mortal body . . .":

> One of the pleasantest bouts we have had was our walk to Burns's Cottage, over the Doon and past Kirk Alloway--I had determined to write a Sonnet in the Cottage. I did but lauk it was so wretched I destroyed it-- (I:343)

Obviously, the sonnet has been preserved, for which we may thank Keats's friend Brown. Keats continues immediately in the letter to remark on the lines beginning, "There is a joy . . .":

> . . .--howevr [sic] in a few days afterwards I wrote some lines cousin-german to the Circumstance which I will transcribe or rather cross scribe in the front of this-- (I:343-344)

The lines, then, "cousin-german to the Circumstance" of visiting Burns's cottage, share in the same psychological orientation as the sonnet written a few days earlier, and shed light on what we may assume has been Keats's frame of mind throughout much of his sojourn in Burns country. The mood here is similar to that of the sonnet "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns": that "strange mood, half asleep." And if the sonnet, "This mortal body . . . ," is full of Keats's consciousness of himself as a physical presence filling a defined space, then for the Keats of "There is a joy," all awareness of space, and, indeed, all self-awareness has vanished. The lines represent a contrasting consciousness to that of "This mortal body," but one that, oddly, expresses the same lack of kinship with the dead

Burns. They form a kind of extrapolation of the feelings that inspired "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns."

The first six lines of the poem describe the sources of the "joy" and "pleasure" one may experience in "footing slow across a silent plain, / Where patriot battle has been fought, when glory had the gain / . . . [or] on the heath where Druids old have been. . . ." The scenes on plain and heath, because of Keats's knowledge of their history, combined with the fertility of his imagination, become suggestive of an historical past. On the now silent plain, the poet is able to imagine the clamor of an ancient battle; he is able to people the isolated heath with "Druids old," to see in detail how their "mantles grey have rustled by and swept the nettles green." Much of his pleasure derives from the fact that although the poet has heard stories of these places "a hundred times," the actual experience of them is "new to the feet." There is a vibrant awareness of an intellectual history on each acre of the ground that Keats's feet touch. At the same time, there is a sense of the self as a continuity from past (he has heard the story "a hundred times") to present (the ground he treads is "new to the feet") in relation to the landscape.

The next lines, however, betray a qualitative difference in response. The ordinary definitions of "joy" and "pleasure" are gone, and those two words take on a far more personal meaning:

> There is a deeper joy than all, more
> solemn in the heart,
> More parching to the tongue than all,
> of more divine a smart.

The admixture of pleasure and pain, so prevalent in Romantic poetry, is evident here--the "joy" is "solemn," "parching," and smarting. There is a kind of perverse pleasure in the lack of physical, emotional, or intellectual link with one's immediate surroundings, "When weary feet forget themselves" in the course of a pilgrimage to the "castle or the cot" of an individual man whom one admires as "great."

Although they occur early in the Highlands poem, the allusions to inner joy, inner pain, and self-forgetfulness, in their curious mixture, already suggest the kind of annulling of self that Keats presents in Book IV (512-548) of Endymion as he marks off "this native hell . . . that deep den of all"--"this Cave of Quietude." In neither the Highlands poem nor in the lines from Endymion is there the sort of positive self-annihilation that Keats envisions as conducive to an "interknitting" of souls, and which he had anticipated as he approached Burns's cottage. Rather, self-

annihilation here is creative not of greater intimacy with another, but of an inner space where "all is still . . . and desolate," a space where isolation is so intense that response becomes impossible. In a sense, Keats's experiences in the Highlands poem are a more "realistic" rendering of the impressionistic detail of the Cave of Quietude. We actually see him "journey[ing] in this native hell," and we see his terror at the possibility of giving himself up to it. He does not trust himself "to save the whole / In [his] own depth." Instead, he feels his self disintegrating and, in so doing, taking its relationship to the living world with it.

The picture of Keats's interior life presented in the Highlands poem is an image of intense, almost irremediable anxiety, of a self-created cage into which nothing can enter, and from which the view of neither past nor future holds out any promise of hope or release. What does save the self, finally, is not the descent into self, but the awareness, "at the cable's length," at the absolute extremity of one's panic, of the "gentle anchor pull" of a formerly habitual world and an "habitual self": the self as it ordinarily exists in its connections to a real and spacious outer world. Thus, the mind's boundaries may be drawn in

indefinitely, expanded indefinitely to encompass nothing, or simply--as with ordinary experience--may be delineated by, and conform to, the mold of an outer world.

But the emphasis now--at this early point in the Highlands poem--is on the poet's sought-after connection with the solitary individual, the "One" who "died of fame unshorn," as over against the plurals, anonymity, and abstractions of the first six lines--those things which carry with them fewer psychological ambiguities.

As the poem proceeds, however, Keats begins to catalogue all those scenes in the external world which he knows exist, but which now carry no meaning for him:

> Light hether-bells may tremble then,
> but they are far away;
> Woodlark may sing from sandy fern,--the
> sun may hear his lay;
> Runnels may kiss the grass on shelves
> and shallows clear,
> But their low voices are not heard . . .
> Blood-red the sun may set behind black
> mountain peaks;
> Blue tides may sluice and drench their
> times in caves and weedy creeks;
> Eagles may seem to sleep wing-wide on
> the air;
> Ring doves may fly convuls'd across to
> some high cedar'd lair . . . .

Clearly, it is as possible for the imagination to empty a rich landscape as it is for it to enrich a heath. Not only do "weary feet forget themselves," but the

"forgotten eye . . . still fast wedded to the ground" sees nothing, the ear hears nothing. The sun may go down, darkness may descend, and still one is unaware of the space surrounding him or of the passage of time. Vision is lost as well as memory of one's own experiences:

> At such a time the soul's a child, in
> childhood is the brain;
> Forgotten is the worldly heart--alone it
> beats in vain.

It is as if the poet has no memory, identity, or origin. His entire being is wrapped up in the emptiness he is now experiencing. There is no past and no future. In fact, there is no physical present, either in time or in space, since the entire observable world lies invisibly outside the poet's "forgotten eye." Georges Poulet describes this state which seems so elusive to description:

> When the mind is stripped of all concrete forms, when nothing remains within it or around it, of the universe of figures and movements which it described over the expanse and the duration, that expanse and that duration continue nonetheless to remain in the mind, as the first and last forms of its intuition, but an intuition which now can no longer be exercised on anything but itself. . . . A terrifying experience in which space is now a yawning gulf, and time nothing else than a continuous shipwreck.[11]

The mind, then, emptied of "all concrete forms," finds only its own terrified expression mirrored in itself.

The formerly peopled "expanse" and "duration" remain as a void that the "horror"-stricken poet now populates "with portraiture intense, / More warm than those heroic tints that fill a painter's sense." With the loss of even the closest relationships one has with the world--"the sight of well remember'd face, / Of brother's eyes, of sister's brow"--what was "constant to every place" now vanishes. Kinship with the living earth outside one ceases to exist, and the mind becomes lost in its own reflections. The familiar disappears, but when that emptiness occurs, the mind begins "filling" it with "shapes of old . . . and visages of old, / Locks shining black, hair scanty grey." It is to the experiencing of these "horrible" sensations that Keats can attribute the beginnings of madness.

In his Essay on the Principles of Human Action, Hazlitt suggests that our sense of the continuity of our own identity through past and present springs from two sources--"sensation" and "memory"--while our sense of future identity arises from imagination--involving in part an extrapolation from prior experience.[12] In this poem, Keats, with his "forgotten eye," "forgotten . . . heart," forgotten feet, plies across a wasteland that is within him: a lack of sensation, a

loss of memory that divorce him from any consciousness of personal identity or of a place in which to exist. The only future his imagination contemplates is that of an extended loss of affect which would annul totally any sense of self as continuous identity. Unreined, his "spirit [has] gone forth . . . beyond the bourne of care, / Beyond the sweet and bitter world--beyond it unaware." Such an experience of being "half-ideot" for "one hour" is so terrifying that it is possible to imagine reading one's "soul's memorial"--the death of the sane and saving imagination--if the spirit were to linger in such a space, empty but for what it crowds, unchecked, into it. There is no touchstone for the straying spirit that is lost in time and space, only the hope that the "cable's length," the sane and "worldly heart" that "binds us to the earth," will be strong enough to pull us back to our former habitual perceptions.

With the blessing of the "anchor pull" that moors the poet once again to a world that seemed to have shifted away from him, Keats utters a final "prayer" which ends the poem:

> Yet be the anchor e'er so fast, room is
> there for prayer
> That man may never lose his mind on
> mountains bleak and bare;
> That he may stray league after league
> some great birthplace to find,

> And keep his vision clear from speck,
> his inward sight unblind.

The prayer is as much for some "length" in the "cable" that keeps him anchored to the earth, some space between himself and "real things," as it is for unsullied inner and outer clarity of perception--for a vision that would allow him to apprehend what surrounds him as something other than "mountains bleak and bare," empty precipices soaring over an abyss. It is most likely this perception of the landscape that comprises Keats's "sin against [Burns's] native skies" in "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns."

The "gentle anchor pull" of earth is not a new figure in Keats's poetry. It is synonymous with the "flowery band [that binds] us to the earth," and it is alluded to, as noted previously, in the early sonnets. It appears, as in the sonnet, "To My Brother George," as "social thought" that makes meaningful the "vastness" of the ocean with its "voice mysterious." In the sonnet, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning," Keats alludes to "The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake," which suggests the need for a considerable amount of slack in the chain, sufficient to allow for a perspective from which to contemplate the things of this world without the busy crowding of the everyday, and yet carrying with it the assurance

that one may never be condemned to the sort of terror that Keats describes so fully in the Highlands poem. Again, it is the same sort of qualification of space that Yeats suggests in "To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time":

> Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,
> I find under the boughs of love and hate,
> In all poor foolish things that live a day,
> Eternal beauty wandering on her way.
>
> Come near, come near, come near--Ah, leave me still
> A little space for the rose-breath to fill!

It is a wish to experience the "rose-breath," as the whisper of empyrean beauty, across "a little space," so that contact with the living world, and with the self in relation to that world, is not lost. This space, perspective, distance--whatever one wishes to call it--is essential to the artist, and Keats examines and reexamines various kinds of space throughout his poetry in an effort to arrive at some way to separate himself from spaces that appear small but lack intimacy, and those that appear large but allow no room or comfort.

Notes: Chapter 4

[1] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 107.

[2] Bachelard, p. 111.

[3] The poet-dreamer's description of Moneta's eyes in The Fall of Hyperion, I, 267.

[4] Georges Poulet, The Interior Distance, trans. Elliott Coleman (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 3.

[5] Keats's reference to the mind's winter in the sonnet, "Four seasons fill the measure of the year."

[6] The Fall of Hyperion, I, 229.

[7] Poulet, p. 141.

[8] Bachelard, p. 167.

[9] Walter H. Evert, Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of John Keats (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), p. 217.

[10] Bachelard, p. 184.

[11] Poulet, p. 179.

[12] William Hazlitt, The Complete Works, ed. P. P. Howe (New York: Ams Press, 1967), Vol. I, 1-49.

Chapter 5

The Odes

I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot
say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place
it in time.

T. S. Eliot
"Burnt Norton"

I

The physical and psychological "symptoms" that Keats suffers at the outset of "Ode to a Nightingale" are the results of an experience with which readers of Keats's poetry and letters are familiar, but which remains elusive all the same: a movement away from the self, away from habitual modes of seeing, instituted by a sudden and intense identification or preoccupation with another object, individual, or "speculation." Keats refers to this feeling in his letters as one of "dissolving," the direct result of being "absorb'd" by another (II:223). The same sensation, however, accompanies his experience of inactivity, restlessness, and isolation during his illness:

> Feeding upon sham victuals and sitting by the fire will completely annul me. I have no need of an enchanted wax figure to duplicate me for I am melting in my proper person before the fire. (II:286)

The vision of self here is that of a shadow keeping watch, as an effigy of itself vanishes before its eyes.

Keats's readings in the great poets of the past produce a similar response, although the origins of the response are vastly different, as are its emotional accompaniments:

> According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily. Or I

> throw my whole being into Triolus [sic] and repeating those lines, 'I wander, like a lost soul upon the stygian Banks staying for waftage," I melt into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone. (I:403-404)

The sensation of "melting," then, may be characterized by a feeling of elation, so long as the intellect is involved, along with the emotions. Keats's feeling at first is that he is "with" Achilles or "with" Theocritus"--an established link that implies some intermediate distance--before he throws himself "into" Troilus. The initial connection is important because it comprises the first step toward a complete opening of the imagination, a movement toward an "annulling [of the] self," which Keats anticipated in his letter of 11 and 13 July 1818 as he and Charles Brown approached Burns's cottage. On the other hand, that "melting" may be quite alarming. Keats writes to Richard Woodhouse in the famous "camelion Poet" letter:

> When I am in a room with People if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of everyone in the room begins to press on me that, I am in a very little time annihilated--not only among Men; it would be the same in a Nursery of children. (I:387)

Once again, Keats becomes either thoroughly self-absorbed--in the sense of being unaware of or untouched

by his surroundings--or he loses himself as he is absorbed by others. This absorption of the self by others leaves Keats without any singleness of vision or consciousness of self as an independent entity in what consequently becomes a hostile, crushing environment. This underscores the extraordinary dichotomy that one finds in both Keats's letters and poems: an admiration for "disinterestedness" and "probity" that the poet points to in, among others, his friend Benjamin Bailey. The quality seems to be concomitant not only with knowing one's self, but with being able to separate one's self in a useful way--a way that allows room for artistic expression--from objects of perception. Keats's admiration for what he sees as Bailey's "Minos-wise" relishing of beauty is placed against his own constitutional habit of mind that requires participation as the touchstone to understanding--so profound a participation in experience that one feels the outer world in his pulses. As a consequence, that world enters, often unbidden, into all the open perceptions of the poet, coloring his vision so totally that "disinterestedness" becomes impossible, though almost always desired.

"Ode to a Nightingale" defines these ambivalences. The heartache and sensual numbness that the poet re-

cords in the first lines of the ode are attributable not to "envy," which would imply contrast between the self and the other, but to "being too happy" in the joy of another--"he has himself entered too deeply into the empathic happiness of the nightingale"[1]--and then becoming conscious of separateness. It is as if the poet were buried in the ashes of his intensity, watching helplessly as feeling slowly dies. But the sense of otherness, the awareness of distance, that is implicit in envy is not present at first. Rather, in a kind of temporal lag, the poet begins the poem as if he were still in empathic contact with the nightingale's song, with no consciousness of intervening distance. As he awakens to the disparity between his own situation and the abandoned joy of the bird's song, he begins to define and qualify the space of the poem's first ten lines. Keats's longing to recapture that experience of oneness with the nightingale, a oneness that is a seamless totality rather than something perfunctorily added on, is the theme of the remainder of the lyric. But, as Earl Wasserman points out, "by beginning with the dissolution itself [the ode] can only trace its further disintegration."[2] Like the persona of Robert Browning's "Two in the Campagna," Keats recognizes almost immediately what he

has lost: "Already how am I so far / Out of that minute?"[3] And, as in the Browning poem, Keats tries to grasp and hold onto that connecting "thread," that tantalizing, intuitive contact with experience, something that he has touched--or that has touched him--only to find it dissolving, moving almost mockingly away from him.

Thematically, then, "Ode to a Nightingale" moves from a consciousness of loss implied in the first four lines--the loss of a state of connectedness that was prior to the poem--through a state of intermediate distance from the longed-for object, a period during which a remelding still seems possible, back to the "sole self" with its recognition of total separateness and its questioning of the earlier sense of union and of the possibility of reunion. As such, the poem contains within its complexity several disparate modes of reality that comment on one another until the very nature of reality comes into question at the end of the poem. These themes coalesce and then disperse as the poet searches for a renewed connection with the unalloyed joy of the nightingale's song.

The heady, sensual wine of the second stanza, with its strong taste of earth and human joys, seems to open a pathway from the depths of the earth to a possibility

of spiritual reunion with the nightingale. The poet looks forward to the moment when his intoxication will be so profound that both he and the world will disappear--he will slip "unseen" out of the world, and the world, a now forgotten entity, will be "unseen." (The syntax of the word "unseen" is ambiguous: it may be a modifier for either "the world" or "I.") No longer burdened by the world's sorrows, forgetful of what the nightingale "among the leaves [has] never known," the poet would also be forgotten by the world, joining the nightingale in some indefinite "melodious plot / Of beechen green and shadows numberless." Like the bird, he, too, would be invisible, identifiable only by his song; similarly, like the bird, he would experience the world as an unknown, something external and therefore inessential to his own being, which would then be immune to change, pain, and death. But as soon as Keats begins to enumerate, in the third stanza, those recognized perils of human existence "here," in this world which lies outside the nightingale's experience, he automatically has rejected one possible link with the bird. The bird is not "here," and Keats recognizes that wine, however richly real or richly imagined, allows little chance for communion: it assures at best only a momentary and incomplete "annulling of self"

(I:323), an "annulling" that Keats habitually sees as creative of unity with another. But wine, as Wasserman emphasizes,

> . . . instead of leading to a self-annihilation through the projection of self into essence, leads only to forgetfulness of self. It is, then, a false sort of self-destruction, for it ends only in that self-destruction and not in an interknitting with life's proper pith.[4]

Thus, "Bacchus and his pards" cannot bridge the gulf for any length of time between reality and desire.

In the next stanza, the "viewless wings of Poesy," recalling the "light-winged" nightingale, serve also as a reminder of the "unseen" I and the "unseen" world of the second stanza. Poesy, a state of active intoxication that is both deeper and loftier than that wine can afford, may be the desired link that will serve to connect the poet to the lost moment of exaltation that has faded before the poem is even begun. But as the poem proceeds, the distance between poet and object widens. As a result, the statement--

> Already with thee! tender is the night
> And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
> Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays. . . .
> (35-37)

--this statement, which has been read as the record of a moment of union with the nightingale,[5] followed by a falling away from union, becomes instead a "guess,"

like the marvelous ones of the stanza following, as to the separate level of being in which the nightingale is participating: the word "haply" indicates that no union has occurred--the nightingale is still an unreachable and discrete entity, a thing to which "the night is tender,"[6] while the poet is earthbound and in darkness within the maze of the mutable, physical world, where "there is no light" (38). Another layer is added to the already dense space that intrudes itself between lover and beloved.

On the heels of the poet's professed inability to see comes a most penetrating vision of the human experience of time and process. Unable to "see," he must "guess each sweet" in the darkened space that surrounds him. Keats "sees," or imaginatively "guesses," not only "what flowers" must be "at [his] feet," but those that are "fast fading" and those that are "coming." Not "set upon a golden bough to sing / . . . / Of what is past, or passing, or to come," which would imply a more transcendent knowledge of cosmic circumstance; not ascending "far from the narrow bounds of [nature's] dominions"; but, rather, penetrating richly and deeply into the very heart of nature's processes, the poet "pictures out" and "guesses" the elements of a physically "unseen" world

with infinitely more skill and voluptuous abandonment than he was capable of in "I stood tip-toe." And far from being "a blind bewilderment, an astonishment that confuses,"[7] it is by virtue of this vision that the poet may be said to be "with" the nightingale. The bird, "singing of summer," becomes emblematic of prophecy and atemporality. It embodies and subsumes all times. The poet, too, for whom, physically at least, the world has disappeared from sight--"I cannot see what flowers are at my feet"--can "guess," prophetlike, and sing not only of what is there, but of what will be there in "mid-summer," the "coming musk-rose." But this ability of the poet to prophesy does not come with the same empathic ease as does the nightingale's song. Rather, Keats brings his creative powers to bear on what he "cannot see," creating the future from the raw materials of his own intense concentration, memory, and imagination.

The only physical sense remaining in the midst of the "verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways" of the poet's all-too-human condition is the sense of hearing. And the fact that the poet listens is as significant as his being in the dark. But Keats would now annihilate that sense as well through the "richness" of death, until once again deflation comes with his

understanding that death would provide him with no "high meed," with no "finer tone"--no immortalizing in spirit of earthly joys--only the uncomprehending state of a "sod." Though consciousness is painful, the poet chooses not to exchange it for "the wide tomb of uncreated night, / Devoid of sense and motion."[8]

There is, then, no escape from his present perspective of unbridgeable space that Keats can control. He can sense with growing despair the increasing psychological distance that makes him more and more remote from the bird's song. He has suggested to himself method after method to establish closeness and failed in each case. And each time he has returned to the differences between himself with his human burdens --mutability and death--and the constancy and immortality of the nightingale. With each of these contrasts, the space between poet and bird increases.

In stanza seven, rather than being able to forge the longed-for connection with the nightingale, the poet becomes aware of the bird's song as a link that connects all the "hungry generations" of mankind, and that "oft-times" reveals the "Penetralium of mystery." One may conclude that it is as much the nightingale's evocation of the mysterious "magic casements, opening on the foam /Of perilous seas," as the word "forlorn,"

that brings Keats back to his "sole self." Those "charm'd . . . casements" may represent Keats's recollection of the opening out that the nightingale's song had promised just before the poem began. But they also suggest an opening inward to unplumbed inner depths. While Jack Stillinger sees the "faery lands forlorn" as "the final emptiness" from which the speaker "does not seem sorry to return,"[9] there is such richness in the image that it is difficult to imagine anything less empty. If we remember back to the earliest poetry, we realize that for Keats, "forlorn" and "desolate" suggest richly evocative possibilities. The "desolate places" in the hymn to Pan of Endymion, for example, create "strange overgrowth." Morris Dickstein remarks that in this section of the hymn to Pan,

> . . . the richness of nature becomes strange and exotic, not quite sinister, but pregnant with a significance that seems just beyond human reach. "Where man is not, nature is barren," wrote Blake. But this is precisely that part of nature "where man is not," and to Keats it is the opposite of barren. These "desolate places, where dank moisture breeds / The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth," seem to embody something of the mystery of life itself.[10]

For Keats there is a potentiality in empty spaces and, as the poet states in his sonnet, "To the Nile,"

> 'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
> Of all beyond itself. . . .
> (9-10)

Forlornness is less a quality of "faery lands," then, than an attribute that the poet brings to them. The poet, alienated now from what he most longed for, can bring no "eye inspired" to bear upon what lies beyond the "magic casements." The place is desolate because the imagination can invest it with nothing. Like the Grecian urn, the scene has that quality that "tease[s] us out of thought."

In his verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats "saw / Too far into the sea," at the same time realizing that what he saw was in part a manifestation of "horrid moods! / Moods of one's mind!" (105-106) Perhaps at this point in "Ode to a Nightingale" he does not see far enough into the "perilous seas," his brain naked of that vast store of invention that promises union and eradication of space. But he does not return to his "sole self" without sorrow, as Stillinger says he does. He is "tolled" back, while the nightingale's song has gone from a "full-throated" paean of summer to a "plaintive anthem."

Clearly, the "I" of the poem is at variance with the "sole self" in which it becomes in part subsumed in the last stanza. The poet who wishes to produce a new

world in which the eternity of the bird's song is possible, is also attempting to reproduce by means of poetry an experience that already is in the past. Thus, the whole nature of the capabilities of art comes into question. The "sole self" of the end of the poem is sensitive to the more worldly notion that even were such a reproduction possible, it would stand in the realm of cheating Fancy. That self, more analytical, more questioning intellectually of the nature of perception, knows--or thinks he knows--what is gone, what cannot be retained or got back. It is as if there is a part of the poet that wishes to verify by means of another reality the values and images that issue from the imagination alone. As he listens to the "plaintive anthem" fading from his senses, he calls into question the whole range of human perception and surmise, and then brings his questions into question. In the last lines of the poem, the poet asks two questions:

> Was it a vision or a waking dream?
> . . . --Do I wake or sleep?

The first seems to ask, what have I experienced? the second, what am I experiencing now? The multifaceted consciousness is able to perceive from any number of perspectives, and we have seen how throughout the ode the relationship between poet and object is changing continually. Now that the poet no longer shares in

the nightingale's song, now that its song is "buried deep," not only "In the next valley glades" but within consciousness itself, the entire experience becomes a subject for doubt. But also brought into question is the present experience of questioning what has happened already. In other words, the poet's present perceptions, involving a more analytical mode of thought, are as inconclusive and suspect as those that preceded them. The fabric of both the waking and sleeping worlds, the visionary and dreaming worlds, the very weave of reality, begins to ravel.

II

"Ode to Psyche" begins with the same kind of questioning as that with which "Ode to a Nightingale" leaves off--

> Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
> The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?

--but the remainder of "Psyche" works toward erasing all distinctions between the dreaming and the "awaken'd" minds. By the end of the poem, the rich inner landscape created by the poet as an environment for Psyche's "rosy sanctuary" seems to have a positive and validating reality. Indeed, as Harold Bloom notes, ". . . it takes an effort to recollect that these

mountains and other phenomena are all within the mind."[11] The imagination, then, establishes a fullness within itself in the face of the denuded and demythologized landscape of the modern world where the "forest boughs, / . . . the air, the water, and the fire" are no longer "haunted" or envisioned as "holy."

As the poem begins, the poet comes upon Cupid and Psyche "couched side by side" sheltered "beneath the whisp'ring roof / Of leaves and trembled blossoms." "Hush'd" and "calm" as they are, the lovers are reminiscent of Keats and his "nymph" in "Sleep and Poetry," who lie "like two gems upcurl'd / In the recesses of a pearly shell." In "Psyche," the god and goddess

> . . . lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
> Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
> Their lips touch'd not, but had not bid adieu,
> As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
> And ready still past kisses to outnumber
> At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love.
> (15-20)

Although, as critics have noted, Keats appears here to be returning to his earlier and narrower poetic world of the bower, we know that such a setting is one that seems to ready him for wider visions. And here, the vision that the poet confronts is that of a moment, more than a space--a moment so charged with potential-

ity that it holds within it, though seemingly inactive itself, all times past and future, all spaces real and imagined. The "tender eye-dawn of aurorean love," which has been viewed as one of several "lapses in diction" that mark the opening of the ode, a return "to the Huntian excesses of the early Keats,"[12] is actually an enormously suggestive phrase. As a description of the quality of Cupid and Psyche's emotion, it suggests that their love encompasses within each of its dawnings not just the illusion, but the reality of eternal newness, as if the two immortals, who do not grow "pale, as mortal lovers do," were living forever "in eternity's sunrise."

In addition, the poet's vision of time in "Psyche" is in part of that peculiar moment between--after, yet before--charged equally, as in "Ode to a Nightingale" and the two Hyperions, with what is past and to come. For the lovers, as for Keats, it is a definitive moment "removed from the action of time." It is, as Poulet remarks of Guerin's "virginal consciousness,"

> . . . a point between times, in which are reabsorbed and from which proceed all spaces, a point forever final and forever initial, a dead stop, but also a punctum saliens, since from this point life is perceived on both its slopes.[13]

While Keats is intent on sustaining this moment that has "surpris'd" him, he recognizes several kinds of

time in the poem: real time, "these days," which are "so far retir'd / From happy pieties"; Psyche's "historical" time, which already was "too late for antique vows," when the Olympian deities already had grown "faint"; time between moments of lovemaking, such as the moment at which the poet initially comes upon the lovers; and, most important artistically, the validating time which is also a space that the poet creates in his own mind by means of his own imagination, and which subsumes real time because it recognizes and simultaneously negates it.

Much of what Keats writes about in the second and third stanzas of the ode has to do with the way in which the passage of time has divested space of its rich suggestiveness and consequently stripped the imagination of its wealth of symbols and "happy pieties." Keats would restore that earlier time and keep alive this timeless moment by linking past and present imaginatively within the "untrodden" space of his own mind. In so doing, he "bodies forth" and validates what he had guessed in an earlier poem to be "all the secrets of some wond'rous thing / That breathes about us in the vacant air."[14] "By [his] own eyes inspired," the poet creates a mental space and a time that are as open as they are sheltered. It is the time in

which Cupid and Psyche exist at the outset of his poem that the poet is trying to preserve as he goes about the imaginative business of building the temple of Psyche "In some untrodden region of my mind." The questions that the poet asks at the end of "Ode to a Nightingale," and the ambiguity of the closing of "Ode on a Grecian Urn" have no place here: a positive inner space has been actuated by the potency of the poet's vision of a "between-whiles" acting upon his "working brain," and it is in this visionary moment between that the richness of the poet's images occurs. The act of creating Psyche's temple becomes an extraordinarily Blakean gesture:

> Then Eno a daughter of Beulah took a
> Moment of Time
> And drew it out to Seven thousand years
> with much care and affliction
> And many tears and in Every year made
> windows into Eden.
> She also took an atom of space and
> opened its centre
> Into Infinitude and ornamented it with
> wondrous art.[15]

If, as Stillinger suggests, "the odes as a group may be read as an investigation of the imagination's ability to cope with time and change,"[16] then in "Ode to Psyche," at least, Keats has made of coping an art. "Between the conception and creation of poetry," Mario L. D'Avanzo states, "the shadow of imperfection has not fallen on Keats. The ode records one of his

supremely confident moments as a poet."[17] Yet for Stillinger the conclusion of "Ode to Psyche" conveys "something less than a triumphant solving of the problem." Stillinger remarks:

> It may be that the hypothetic excursion to "some untrodden region of my mind" leaves the poet stranded, and at too great a distance from the forest . . . where he last saw the lovers; whatever the nature of the perception in the opening stanza . . . the "working brain" and "shadowy thought" of the final lines do not seem an entirely satisfactory compensation.[18]

But there is no such element--or "problem"--in the ode as having "last [seen] the lovers"; rather, Keats has immortalized and vastly broadened the landscape in which they may be at home. Because there is an "untrodden region" in Keats's mind, an area that time does not touch, in which "hethen"[19] verities persist, he never will have seen the "last" of Cupid and Psyche.

If we examine the mental landscape of the ode's last stanza, we recognize in it the kind of height that Edgar creates for Gloucester in King Lear (IV, vi, 11-24), but without the dramatic motives involved in the conjuring up of that landscape. As in Blake's Jerusalem (although parodically intended there), what is created is "wrought without delusion."[20] And, like "the brazen cars, / . . . the shadows of the woods, / . . . the white breast of the dim sea, / And

all dishevelled wandering stars" of Yeats's "Who Goes With Fergus?" the properties of Keats's imagined space seem to defy artistic control. Yet, because an antique outer world of "haunted forest boughs, / Holy . . . air, . . . water, and . . . fire" has become a consciously internalized landscape in the present, not control, but inexhaustible possibility is what is being sought and, in a sense, found in the final stanza.

As Psyche's priest, the poet will create a "wide quietness" within his own psyche in which will be housed the same "aurorean" newness that surprises him at the outset of the ode. The "rosy sanctuary," bringing with it connotations of Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn," connects the eternity of Cupid and Psyche's "aurorean love" with the poet's own imagination, existing out of time. It is like "that dome in air" that the inspired poet would construct at the end of "Kubla Khan," but without regard to any audience. No one else would "see it there."

In the "dark cluster'd trees," "the wild-ridged mountains," "stars without a name," "shadowy thought," we have the suggestion that, like the world of Yeats's "Fergus" poem, this is not a landscape on which control may be imposed. At the same time, it was through Psyche's attempt to control, her curiosity, her wish to

know too much, her lack--as Keats might have it--of "negative capability," that the goddess brought all her sufferings upon herself. So the poet provides her with a landscape in which not to know is richer, where everything, like her love, is new, where flowers never repeat themselves. At the same time, in his generosity, he provides the goddess with an open window that allows an inlet for love and a view of all the richness he has culled for her. But all comes from within. It is a total world--varied, complex, and beautiful--of which through her open window Psyche may have a view. And yet, when she looks out--such is the harmonizing character of the imagination in this poem--she is also looking in. Interior and exterior are at total peace with each other. The space that Keats creates in "Psyche" is a magnificent realm of both mystery and clarity, where there is no gap between dream and "awaken'd eyes." It is a realm through which one may wander "thoughtlessly," yet always garner a wealth of surprises.

III

In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats is responding to a very concrete, yet infinitely suggestive, physical space--an antique work of art. As the urn revolves before him, it awakens a vast store of images that arise both from its content and from what, as a finite physical object, it omits.

The poem begins, not in the moment between, as in "Ode to Psyche," or in the moment just after, as in "Ode to a Nightingale," but in a strange kind of present: one in which Keats's mind is cast back to a sylvan world--a world of "tale" and "legend"--that the urn captures "more sweetly" than language can, and in which his mind moves forward to future generations at the same time that it exists in a present that is aware of itself. As the poet's mind moves through time and through space, that space and that time become almost interstellar: both seem to comprehend distances between worlds--between the object of art *per se* and the consciousness of the perceiver of that object. At certain points this space diminishes--art and life seem to touch. But remoteness persists even in the closeness between the two and, in a strange way, prevails, although Keats does imagine that the same relative contact that he experiences will recur

"in midst of other woe / Than ours," as time moves away from him into the future, and the urn outlives the poet's own time. The mixture of images of the almost ineffable eternity of the urn, and of Keats's consciousness of the inexorable processes to which human life is subjected, results from the poet's stance with respect to what he observes. It suggests that no easy line may be drawn between the two--that a "real" visitor might happen on the imagined "emptied . . . town" and find no trace there of its now immortalized citizenry. In one sense, then, the folk have vanished; in another, they can never leave.

The urn captivates the receptive eye and mind of the observer with images of energy in stasis--an infinite present, arrested pursuit, eternal possibility, silent music--and something more. The urn is a composite of earlier human achievement, of all human perception subsequent to its creation, and of "slow time." Through successive generations, it carries its own time--or "eternity," or contemporaneity--with it; simultaneously it is suggestive of other times and other places that, to Keats's mind, lurk invisibly but inevitably outside its finite form. Thus, the poet's mind itself is arrested by its own interaction with what it observes: the possibilities inherent in the

urn's and the poet's own "present," as well as those possibilities that lie somewhere almost imperceptibly beyond the present. Although the urn embodies an eloquent silence audible only to the spirit, silence exists also at both "ends" of the urn--a profounder silence, one that seems to reside at a distance from what even the "ready" spirit can apprehend. That silence issues both from the "little town" from which the parade of "pious folk" has come, and from the "green altar" of their destination. The poet is able to humanize those silent, virtually nonexistent spaces into richly authentic locations. But in doing this, he is creating for himself a double awareness: he recognizes that there is implied in the work of art an enormous wealth of potentiality, and yet, at the same moment, that as a poet he is actually filling an empty space. In the mind of Keats the very emptiness of those places temporarily--in the moment that the poet contemplates them--becomes full, in the same way that silence can become music. And that is because the perceiving mind touches them.

As the poet's consciousness moves beyond the immediacy before him, Keats's own predispositions come to bear on the object. Consequently, the congratulatory tone of his address to the "bold lover," to the

"happy melodist," and to the "happy boughs"--all of which live in the noon of a perpetual spring day--fades, as he imagines what is concomitant with the art that they embellish: an eternal, inevitable movement --an infinitely slower movement than that to which real human nature is subjected--toward decay and death. Though the urn seems to conquer circumstance, it does not annihilate it. Finally, in due course of "slow time," this "foster child of . . . time" will be subject to the same laws of gradual decay that govern the shorter span of human life. When the poet speaks to the urn in the last stanza of the ode, he reforms the now faded congratulatory tone. His awareness of his own human fate alters the urn and becomes inherent in it, just as the urn itself has worked upon the consciousness of the percipient: what time does not accomplish quickly, human perception does. The alteration that Keats wreaks in the object--whether viewed as a slight change or a dramatic one--becomes a natural outgrowth of the way in which the mind of Keats operates.

The repetitions of "canst not," "never canst," and "cannot" imply, almost ironically, the limits of this world of eternal potentiality--nothing has the power to "leave," to "be bare," to "kiss," or to "fade."

The urn lacks the capability to imitate the human world, in which one has not the power not to do these things. What is unalterably "real" for the figures on the urn becomes merged, however, in the poet's mind with his own experience of inconstancy in the experiential world, and he consoles the bold, pursuing lover with what would most console him--that although the lover is constrained by the "natural law" of art, which is changelessness, that although, really, nothing is evermore about to be, the full moment of pursuit is enough. So the lover is beckoned forever forward with an eternal intensity that belies any possibility of disillusionment. There is at least a threefold consciousness in Keats's apprehensions of the urn figures: a more or less observing awareness that becomes a narrative, descriptive voice; an understanding that because of the fragile, yet unpassable, limits of art, the lover is doomed never to capture what he so ardently pursues; and an empathic response that allows Keats to feel the ecstasy of the bold lover's dream.

To the mind for which "At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth," and to which "Everything is spoilt by use," the reality of eternal pursuit with the hope--however illusory--of eternal fulfillment, is full beyond imagining. Commented on in the ode is not only the ear-

lier "Fancy," but Keats's sonnet, "To J[ames] R[ice]," where Keats images, with almost metaphysical conceit, the "slow time" that he subsequently attaches to the urn:

> O that a week could be an age, and we
> Felt parting and warm meeting every week;
> Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
> The flush of welcome ever on the cheek.
> So could we live long life in little space;
> So time itself would be annihilate;
> So a day's journey, in oblivious haze
> To serve our joys, would lengthen and dilate.
> O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind,
> To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant,
> In little time a host of joys to bind,
> And keep our souls in one eternal pant!
> This morn, my friend, and yester evening taught
> Me how to harbour such a happy thought.

The intensity of certain luxurious moments becomes dilated, as does the time through which one journeys to reach those moments. Anticipation becomes almost infinitely protracted, and nothing that follows is a disappointment. Free from swift time where things become "spoilt," the soul lives "in one eternal pant," because time can take away nothing more rich than what it gives. Yet Keats has a perspective on the two times--the slow one that he is creating and the rapidly moving one that he is annihilating. Carried into the new time would be the consciousness of the old--

the usual human time--and this contrast would serve to enrich even further, as it does in "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the slow hours of joy.

Such is the situation as the poet regards the frieze on the urn: it is by contrast with the ordinary human movement through time that the urn's time becomes so rich in joyous possibility. And it is really in the space of the contrast--in the points at which object and percipient seem to differ--that the silent urn has a statement to make as "a friend to man." There is no embellishment on the urn that is capable of change, because everything has been altered already by the human hand of its creator as he translated human enterprise into art, thereby precluding any further change. The urn stills a fleeing moment and presents it in its beauty to the observing eye. The work of art is true to that moment. The urn's lesson is that any significant human moment, perceived and isolated in its intensity, has the same beauty to show us, the same truth to tell. Hence, what is beautiful, as well as true, is not only the apprehended space between the constant, unravished urn and the fading, wasting generations of mankind, but the arrested moment--the reminder that, for each of us, there is a moment in the rose garden, a moment that

recurs in memory, as in art, undefiled by time. What the urn emobodies are

> Eternal moments, in that they repudiate and erase all others, in that they do not reintegrate common duration, but stay in isolation without being linked, before or behind, to other moments which their refulgence abolishes.[21]

And "the peculiarity of the eternal moment is to continue to be eternal, even when it has ceased to be a moment, ceased to be lived."[22] In this way, "Time is devoured by the moment."[23] Or, in T. S. Eliot's words, "Time the destroyer is time the preserver."[24]

This is certainly the major element in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." At both ends of the poem, as at both "ends" of the urn, are times that exist for the poet in a realm of pure imagination, which, almost by definition, releases them from time. The antiquity that precedes the poet's apprehension of the urn, but that is encompassed in it, is as curtained in myth and surmise as is the posterity that follows his apprehension. The only "unimagined" reality is the real coincidence of the urn and Keats's eye. Everything that follows from that moment is geared to creating timelessness.

Yet, paradoxically, while Keats sees the urn as "a friend to man," reminding him of the possibility of

timelessness in the midst of time, still, the space between the urn and the poet--because it is so enormous and ultimately unbridgeable and unfillable--serves to limit severely the poet's inner space. The result is his feeling of being "teased out of thought"--of being interiorly diminished by the intensity of his response to the vastness of the finite object's inner eternity. Thus, while the urn expands consciousness to embrace boundlessness, at the same time it virtually empties the mind. The image refers us back to the hymn to Pan in Endymion, where Pan is seen as

> . . . the unimaginable lodge
> For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
> Then leave the naked brain.
> (I, 293-296)

The feeling is akin to the human, rather familiar one of trying to glean from one's memory a lost dream. As a fragment of the dream rises in the mind, one attempts to grasp it and place it into a forgotten context. Then, at the very verge of remembrance, even the small image we had remembered eludes us.

The same intimation of inner diminution in the face of outer vastness marks Keats's thoughts about death in the sonnet, "When I have fears." There the poet records a very subjective impression of what death finally will mean--not simply an end to possibility, but an

absolute negation of all that preceded it. In the last lines of the sonnet, standing "On the shore of the wide world . . . alone," Keats presents an extraordinary spatial image of death as a vast, unknowable space, a blank from which nothing can be gleaned. Not like the "night's starr'd face" in which one may "read huge cloudy symbols," but an endless emptiness, devoid of meaning or possibility, that annihilates all the large longings that fill his life. The emptiness is one that cannot be enriched, despite all that it takes into itself.

With these thoughts of death, Keats images the world--human life itself--as a precarious, though apparently "wide," neck of land perpetually threatened with inundation, himself standing solitary on its shore. As with Paul Zweig's description of Melville's world of "continual movement" in Moby Dick, there are, in this sonnet, no "fixed shapes that inspire confidence and convince [Keats] that one moment will resemble another."[25] Rather, like Melville, Keats faces the "dangerous liquidity of . . . all . . . earthly experience. . . . With nothing firm to hold on to, . . . the very notion of a goal, of a finished achievement, becomes impossible."[26]

The urn and the "wide world" seem at first to be antithetical--the urn is a solid, bounded form that represents changelessness; the "wide world," a tentative shore that fronts on chaos and is marked by inconstancy. Yet in Keats's perceptions of them lie the same apprehensions. Despite the urn's "friendship" and death's "nothingness," finally, the way in which the poet perceives them, and carried to the limit to which the poet extrapolates them, both defy--perhaps even deny--human value.

Notes: Chapter 5

[1] Earl Wasserman, The Finer Tone (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 186.

[2] Wasserman, p. 184.

[3] Robert Browning, "Two in the Campagna," in Poems of Robert Browning, ed. Donald Smalley (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956), p. 253.

[4] Wasserman, p. 189.

[5] Jack Stillinger, "Imagination and Reality in the Odes," in The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 106.

[6] Wasserman, p. 199.

[7] Wasserman, p. 212.

[8] John Milton, Paradise Lost II, 150-151, in The Complete Poetry of John Milton, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1971), p. 275.

[9] Stillinger, p. 106.

[10] Morris Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry: A Study in Development (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 73.

[11] Harold Bloom, The Visionary Company (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), p. 423.

[12] Dickstein, p. 197.

[13] Georges Poulet, The Interior Distance, trans. Elliott Coleman (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 233.

[14] "Sleep and Poetry," 30-31.

[15] William Blake, "The Four Zoas: Night the First," in The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p. 300.

[16] Stillinger, p. 104.

[17] Mario L. D'Avanzo, Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1967), p. 214.

[18] Stillinger, p. 106.

[19] Keats writes to the George Keatses of his "Ode to Psyche":

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

[20] Blake, Jerusalem: Chapter 4, p. 237.

[21] Poulet, p. 186.

[22] Poulet, p. 188.

[23] Poulet, p. 107.

[24] T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," II, in The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), p. 133.

[25] Paul Zweig, The Heresy of Self-Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 205.

[26] Zweig, p. 207.

Chapter 6

The Hyperions

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern--
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

Robert Browning
"Two in the Campagna"

I

The consensus of writers on Hyperion is that "there is something lacking."[1]

Bernard Blackstone's feelings on this point run so high that he states, "Probably [Keats] should not have attempted the epic at all."[2] In the poem, he continues, we are "moving among impersonalities"[3]: Hyperion, according to Blackstone, "lacks vitality," being "essentially a constructed poem" into which "Keats was not able to put the whole of himself."[4]

M. R. Ridley feels that what the poem wants is "reality":

> The figures are described with a wealth of detail that ought to make them live before us; and yet for the most part they remain lay figures dressed in gorgeous robes; they are not fully 'felt'; they are verbally vivid, but not spiritually vivid.[5]

Jack Stillinger suggests that "the poetry of earth [is] missing,"[6] and that Hyperion suffers from a "lack of relatedness to the rest of Keats's writings, . . . almost as if it had been written by someone other than Keats."[7] Like other writers on Keats, Stillinger shapes a Procrustean bed for the poetry (i.e., "by 1819 [Keats] was firmly grounded in the realities of the actual world"[8]), and when a poem stubbornly refuses to lie down, he declares it un-

Keatsian. Other critics have done much the same thing in announcing that Hyperion "strikes as a whole an anomalous note in the symphony of Keats's verse."[9]

What we must bear in mind as we make judgments about Keats's progress and development is that he was himself "young writing at random--straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness--without knowing the bearing of any one assertion or opinion" (II:80). We must remember, too, how relative things appear to Keats's mind: he makes a statement and then asks, "Are these facts or prejudices?" (I:242) Throughout the letters appear references to Keats's awareness of the transience of many of his feelings and moods:

> If then [a poet] has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant [have] been cogitating the Characters of saturn and Ops? . . . no dependence is to be placed on what I said that day. (I:387)

> Believe in the first Letters I wrote you: I assure you I felt as I wrote--I could not write so now-- (II:140)

> . . . sometimes I feel not the influence of a Passion or Affection during a whole week--and so long this sometimes continues I begin to suspect myself and the genuineness of my feelings at other times. (I:186)

He is aware, too, as Stephen Daedalus is in Ulysses, that "Molecules all change. I am other I now."[10] Keats says:

> Our bodies every seven years are completely fresh-materiald--seven years ago it was not this hand that clench'd itself against [Thomas] Hammond--We are like the relict garments of a Saint: the same and not the same: for the careful Monks patch it and patch it: till there's not a thread of the original garment left, and still they show it for S^{t} Anthony's shirt. . . . 'Tis an uneasy thought that in seven years the same hands cannot greet each other again. (II:208-209)

The "uneasiness" of this thought is related to Keats's efforts at assuring himself of the reality of his own identity and that of others, of an ongoing resolution that assures some standard of stability and validity. But what Keats seems to experience instead is what Walter Pater describes in The Renaissance: "that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves."[11]

Patricia Ball, writing of Hyperion in The Central Self, feels that in the poem, "a dimension is missing": that of "the creator in relation to the created."[12] What Keats "needs" in his rendering of the Hyperion theme is "to behold his experiencing self in order to achieve the vital sense of emerging identity."[13] This seems an accurate and sensible summation of Keats's reasons for reestablishing a different narrative voice, and moving into The Fall of Hyperion. The Fall, then, becomes as much self-exploration as narrative. In fact, as we have the poem, in its frag-

mentary state, the emphasis is placed much more on the enlargement of the perceiving self than on the objects of perception. Indeed, those objects become correlatives for the poet's own confusion and disorientation: they embody his own frustration in establishing perspective and organizing experience into something coherent and cogent.

In turning aside from his first version of Hyperion, Keats made an important judgment about where that poem was leading him. He had said in a letter of January 1818 that there would be a "wide range" in the poem, "a march of passion and endeavour" that would be "undeviating" (I:207). But perhaps one of the most striking features of Hyperion is its narrowness. It begins

> Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
> Far sunken from the healthy breath of
> morn,
> Far from the fiery noon, . . .

where there is "no stir of air," where a stream goes by voicelessly, where even the Naiad "Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips," an emblem of absolute silence. The only apparent dimension is depth. The world is constricted into a closed, tunnel-like lair, bounded by silence, at the bottom of which sits Saturn, the fallen, sleeping god. Saturn is identified immediately and intimately with the world of

shadow and silence that centers on him: his presence intensifies the already overwhelming stillness. The "voiceless" stream is "still deadened more" by the "spreading . . . shade" of Saturn's fall from godhead (I, 11-13). This shadow resonates throughout the natural world, which in turn becomes an internalized landscape. Far from all light and air, the vale becomes intermingled with, and at times indistinguishable from, the figure at its core. Thus, the "forest on forest" that hangs above Saturn's head "Like cloud on cloud," may be a foreshortened, somewhat flattened perspective of the forest, may be cloud, may be Saturn's own "Druid locks" (I, 137). The entire visible world narrows and becomes enclosed in the sleeping figure of stonelike Saturn. Once Thea appears, she and Saturn are imaged as "postured motionless / Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern" (I, 85-86), confined, organic rocks that bear testimony to the ineluctability of time.

The strikingly negative simile of the first verse paragraph underscores the shrunken and moribund world that surrounds Saturn:

> No stir of air was there,
> Not so much life as on a summer's day
> Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
> But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
> (I, 7-10)

There is not even sufficient life not to stir a light seed resting in light grass. In the space of a few syllables, the image moves from "seed" to "dead leaf," from spring to autumn, making nothing of the fullness of either, like Keats's vision of youth in "Ode to a Nightingale," as a thing that "grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies," without seeming ever to have lived or realized any of its possibility. There is enormous tension in the blight--none of the ease of moving from natural stage to stage. Rather, possibility is there, and then possibility is gone, as if existence were being observed by one who can focus clearly, at the moment of his destruction, on his promising early beginnings, and cannot decipher where they all have gone. The "seed" to "dead leaf" simile anticipates the reactions of the Titans to their fall: there was possibility and now there is none.

Like the negatives in the simile, the accumulated negatives in the language Keats employs to describe Saturn become the notes in an anthem of deprivation:

> Upon the sodden ground
> His old right hand lay nerveless, list-
> less, dead,
> Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were
> closed.
> (I, 17-19)

In the midst of this deep autumnal universe, Saturn becomes, in Thomas Hardy's words, "the deadest thing /

Alive enough to have strength to die. . . ."[14] We learn that he is situated somewhere "Along the margin-sand," as if in a borderland at the very edge of things. When Saturn first awakens, it is to find all possibility gone. Conscious of being "smother'd up, / And buried," he is aware, as Thea is, of the all-encompassing reality of his plight--a reality so real and inescapable, yet so unimaginable, that in it "unbelief has not a space to breathe" (I, 67).

From the vale, the poem moves from space to hemmed-in space. Hyperion himself, in transition from godhead to fall from godhead, senses in the confines of his palace, portents of his own destruction. The wings of Zeus's messenger, the eagle, "Unseen before by Gods or wondering men, / Darken'd the place" (I, 183-184); Hyperion hears the neighing of Apollo's steeds, "not heard before by Gods or wondering men" (I, 185); the incense used in rites of worship to Hyperion is tinny in taste and smell. He is aware that time is bringing something alarming and new--something that hitherto was inconceivable--and that his time is drawing to an end, his space vanishing. With "stride colossal," he moves about his palace "from hall to hall," finding no rest, no place for himself, as if the palace had shrunk suddenly. In the

meantime, "far within each aisle and deep recess" of Hyperion's palace, "His winged minions in close clusters stood, / . . . like anxious men / Who on wide plains gather in panting troops" (I, 197-200) at a time of catastrophe. The juxtaposition of the claustrophobic depth of the aisles and recesses of the palace and the "wide plains" of the simile underscores Keats's perceptions of human space, where wideness can become as terrifying, threatening, and limiting as the hemmed-inness of deep aisles and recesses in a more confined and structured space. In either event, one's boundaries have been drawn in and one is at the edge of an abyss, unable to control or avoid what must be undergone. In addition, the architectural description of Hyperion's palace includes details that serve to make natural events (i.e., the colors of sunrise or sunset) inseparable from imminent cataclysm:

> . . . His palace bright . . .
> Glar'd a blood-red through all its
> thousand courts,
> Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
> And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
> Flush'd angerly. . . .
> (I, 176, 179-182)

As a result of Hyperion's own perceptions, even this formerly commodious space provides him no respite.

It is important to note that in his treatment of space here, as in his other poetry, Keats makes of

space not simply a metaphor for a particular frame of mind or a specific series of events. Rather, it serves as a reflection, a mirror image, an inseparable quality of a mode of consciousness or struggle toward consciousness. There are few spaces in Keats's poetry that "stand for" particular mental references. What happens instead is that exterior space and interior mind become mutually reflective. Undoubtedly, before he was threatened with loss of godhead, Hyperion looked upon his palace, with its dome, deep recesses, aisles, cloudy curtains, arches, and courts, as a capacious structure that provided space for rest and joy. Keats tells the reader as much when he notes that Hyperion now wanders aimlessly about his palace rather than resting, as he used to, "upon exalted couch / And slumber[ing] in the arms of melody" (I, 192-193). Now Hyperion's palace has become a large area that offers nothing but a series of claustrophobic rooms and passageways--a lidded, finite edifice that reflects and comments upon the god's imminent loss of liberty, power, and deity.

From the confinement of Hyperion's palace, Keats moves to Tartarus, a lightless "den" where sound is cut off by deafening "thunderous waterfalls." The rocks seems lifelike, just as the Titans immured in

the den have the appearance of rocks, so solidly pressed and petrified are they. The most bellicose of the Titans are even more deeply buried, "pent in regions of laborious breath, / Dungeon'd in opaque element" (II, 22-23) that keeps them motionless and tightly clenched.

Along with all of these confined spaces--the vale, the palace, and the den--are constant reminders of the huge stature of the Titans: their "large footmarks," "big tears," "big hearts," "giant nerve," "wide shoulders." We know from Hesiod's Theogony that as the Titans were "about to be born, Sky would not let them reach the light of day; instead he hid them all away in the bowels of Mother Earth."[15] Saturn, by castrating Sky as he was about to lie with Earth, freed himself and his brothers and sisters from the tyranny of their father. Along with the obvious psychosexual concomitants of this act is the further spatial concomitant: Sky "no longer approached Earth, but left room for the Titans between them."[16] The sense one has in Hyperion, however, is that Earth and Sky have moved together once again, and made of space an asphyxiating enemy. Further, time has turned on the Titans as well: they have come full circle, to be walled up once more in "Mother Earth."

The Saturn we see at the outset of Hyperion, and in The Fall of Hyperion, is a creature for whom literally nothing exists in the present. Poulet characterizes this state as he comments on the way in which Guerin sees:

> Between himself and the past . . . there is no continuity, nothing but a void, nothing but the painful consciousness of the "distance between places." . . . Far from supporting and nourishing the present, the past seems abruptly to have weaned it and dismissed it into existence. It is as if one were suddenly deprived of an essential wellspring, or as if time were no longer a horizontal progression, but a vertical falling through space in which one keeps one's eyes focused on a luminous center which withdraws in the distance. Each lived moment becomes that of a diminution of heat and light. . . .[17]

What distinguishes the present is its absolute absence of landmarks, its sudden appearance, as if from nowhere, its canceling out of a known and formerly commodious world:

> Thus the sense of the past and that of the present are set against one another, across the intervening distance, like two worlds, of which one is that in which man was capable of experiencing what he experienced, and the other a world in which he is no longer capable of experiencing anything but his own powerlessness.[18]

Consequently, the principal problem in Hyperion, one that is concomitant with the bereavement that the Titans face, is that of self-definition: of creating

a time and a space in which to exist. All the realms in which the Titans felt at home and through which they defined themselves have passed now into "unaccustomed hands." As in the more ordinary sphere of human experience, every loss incurs a reassessment--a questioning of how one may continue in view of that loss. If one is to continue, even if it be in a proportionately diminished state, some position with regard to the fact is required. Far from being "Blinded by his egoism," then, or lost in "his self-preoccupation,"[19] Saturn is without "ego," without "self." His self is engulfed in the time between past and present. His awakening is a grievous coming to awareness of what is gone--not only "A heaven he lost erewhile," but himself, since his self-definition arises from what he holds. Saturn dwells on what is lost to him:

> . . . all godlike exercise
> Of influence benign on planets pale,
> Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
> Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
> And all those acts which Deity supreme
> Doth ease its heart of love in.--
> (I, 106-112)

The sense Saturn has is not that these things are gone, but that he is "gone / Away from [his] own bosom," that he is himself "buried," having "left / [His] strong identity, [his] real self / Somewhere. . ." (I, 112-114).

In a kind of natural progression of grief, sorrow is superseded by rage, as Saturn begins to search for "another Chaos"(I, 145)--another opportunity to recreate the universe as it was--to fashion a time in which he may exist--and "To overbear and crumble this to nought" (I, 144). It is in Saturn's assertion here of the need for room in which to realize himself that Thea begins to feel "a sort of hope" (I, 148). But it is a hope that depends upon denying a reality that by now has become only cruel facts and substituting for it the dream of annihilating those facts and creating in their place a new "reality."

When Saturn faces the other Titans in Hyperion, and attempts to account to them for their terrible predicament, he cannot:

> "Not in my own sad breast . . .
> Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
> Not in the legends of the first of days,
> Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
> Which starry Uranus with finger bright
> Sav'd from the shores of darkness . . .
> And the which book ye know I ever kept
> For my firm-bas'd footstool: --Ah infirm!
> Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
> Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,--
> At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling . . .
> --not in that strife,
> Wherefrom I take strange lore and read it deep,
> Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
> No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
> And pore on Nature's universal scroll
> Even to swooning, why ye Divinities,
> The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,

> Should cower beneath what in comparison,
> Is untremendous might. . . ."
> (II, 129ff)

Thus, once shock, sorrow, and anger are put by, the human response to loss, a response that the gods share, is an endeavor to understand, however incompletely--to perceive purpose behind the seemingly fortuitous occurrence.

This section of Hyperion holds deep biographical interest. It is full of the human effort to understand "the nature of things"--the effort Keats must have made all his life, especially in view of the losses he suffered: both parents when he was a child, and, later, a younger brother. It is sadly premonitory of Keats's response to his own imminent death, as reported by Joseph Severn. In a letter to William Haslam, dated 15 January 1821, Severn, in Italy with the dying Keats, writes:

> . . . --but above all--this noble fellow lying on the bed--is dying in horror--no kind hope smoothing down his suffering--no philosophy--no religion to support him--yet with all the most knawing [sic] desire for it--yet without the possibility of receiving it.--It is not from any religious principles that I feel this--but from the individual sufferings of his mind in this point--I would not care from what source--so he could understand his misfortunes.[20]

Earlier, Severn had written to John Taylor:

> . . . this night [Keats] said to me "I think a malignant being must have power over us--over whom the Almighty has little or no influence--yet you know Severn I cannot believe in your book--the Bible --but I feel the horrible want of some faith--some hope--something to rest on now--their [sic] must be such a book.[21]

Thus, the intense search for understanding, for some sort of comprehensive--and consoling--world view that would take into account all "fallings from us," marks both the driven Saturn and the dying Keats. It is present as well in Apollo before he achieves godhead --indeed, it is finally his ability to comprehend that assures his apotheosis--and in the poet-dreamer of The Fall of Hyperion as he observes Saturn and Thea.

Obviously, the knowledge sought is not that of Apollonius in "Lamia," whose understanding is clear, but cold and withering because it lacks any emotional component. If one falls under its spell, Apollonius' kind of rational scrutiny, his road to truth, is destructive of all wonder and all beauty: it is an exclusive, not an all-encompassing, vision. It does not nimbly take the depth of things. Rather, his mode of seeing most closely resembles that of Coleridge's "loveless observer" who, "Seeing weakness on the surface of a Character . . . has made no allowance for Strength."[22]

II

Keats comments further in his letter of January 1818 about his ambitions for Hyperion. He states, "The nature of Hyperion will lead me to treat it in a more naked and grecian manner" than he had Endymion. He continues:

> . . . --and one great contrast between [Endymion and Hyperion] will be--that the Hero of the written tale being mortal is led on, like Buonoparte, by circumstance; whereas the Apollo in Hyperion being a fore-seeing God will shape his actions like one. (I:206)

However, Apollo does not appear until Book III of Hyperion--nearly 750 lines into the poem--and it is with Apollo's assumption of godhead, his deification through both memory and foreknowledge, that Keats abandons the poem in order to cast it into an altogether different framework. This abandoning of the earlier form of the poem has been read--and Keats's letters, of course, validate that reading--as a rejection of Milton as a poetic model. He writes to the George Keatses on 24 September 1819:

> The Paradise lost though so fine in itself is a corruption of our Language--it should be kept as it is unique--a curiosity, a beautiful and grand Curiosity. The most remarkable Production of the world--A northern dialect accommodating itself to greek and latin inversions and intonations. . . . Chatterton's language

> is entirely northern--I prefer the native music of it to Milton's cut by feet. (I:212)

And more important than rejecting Milton's language as a language viable for himself, Keats rejects altogether Milton's world view as embodied in his verse:

> I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me. Miltonic verse cannot be written but [in] the vein of art--I wish to devote myself to another sensation. (I:212)

Keats now feels ill at ease with the Miltonic cadences, inversions, metaphors that he had embraced earlier as being the proper mode of treating Hyperion in a "naked and grecian Manner." He abandons these conventions because they express not the pulse of the perceiving self, but "the vein of art." Keats's wish "to devote [himself] to another sensation" must involve him in a more natural, more profoundly personal approach to the subject at hand.

Thus, Keats bravely rejects the model of Milton once he begins to feel that it is robbing him of his own voice. But this is not the only reason for his abandoning of Hyperion. In Hyperion Keats appears to be reflecting upon a mode of vision that finally is alien to him. Although Robert Gittings sees Keats as "speaking through Oceanus," and "counsel[ing] acceptance of the inevitable and even joy in it, since it is

an essential part of nature,"[23] the philosophy expressed in Oceanus's speech seems an uncomfortable and untypical view for Keats. It is with Saturn's and Hyperion's struggles that he is most closely involved --Oceanus already has resolved his. His mind, like Apollo's in "God of the meridian," is able to encompass, along with the present and the past, a vision of the future. He feels competent to discern where things will lead, and he can accept the moment because he recognizes its source in the past; he sees time and his own life as a continuous, comprehensible flow. Oceanus's speech, with its acceptance of process and progress, with its melancholy willingness to let go of the past and still to attempt to cling to the vestiges of one's personality, is the answer to Keats's speculation in the sonnet written "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns"--

> For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise,
> The real of beauty, free from that dead
> hue
> Sickly imagination and sick pride
> Cast wan upon it!
> (9-12)

Oceanus is able "to bear all naked truths, / And to envisage circumstance, all calm" (II, 203-204). He derives "comfort" from the truth, or "the real of beauty," seeing that "Minos-wise" stance--as Keats himself sees it--as "the top of sovereignty" (II, 205).

Yet the ability of Oceanus to accept loss calmly, with equanimity and humility, though clearly the most logical (or, perhaps, the least neurotic) course to take--as opposed to shaking one's fist at a pitiless sky--is not the answer to everyone's quest. For Saturn, Hyperion, and Enceladus, the truth, as well as the key to personal identity, is lost in the irreparably departed past. It is in the past that the old gods define themselves, from the past that they are extirpated, and it is the past that they want back. With the extinction of the past comes their own extinction. It becomes clear, then, that their battle is a battle with time; their weapon is rage; their enemy is invulnerable. With this observation in mind, Oceanus's speech, heralded as "indicative of Keats's withdrawal toward objectivity in surveying the human condition,"[24] seems instead to be a rather cool statement about "a world that is ethically impeccable, but from which the self is excluded."[25]

It is most likely because of this that Keats, in The Fall of Hyperion, introduces the human element, which Blackstone sees as Keats "with all his weariness, weakness and confusion,"[26] but which seems more like humanity in its most perceptive, receptive, and wondering form--that of a dreamer who is also a poet. Keats

did not omit totally the Miltonic rhetorical elements of Hyperion in writing The Fall of Hyperion but, rather, incorporated some of them into The Fall and added still others. It is, therefore, more the Miltonic world view than Miltonic rhetoric that Keats rejects in abandoning Hyperion in its initial form. Oceanus's speech reflects a cosmic consciousness, an acceptance of "the sacrificial nature of all historical movement,"[27] that is foreign to Keats's native way of seeing, although it always holds enormous attraction for him. Thus,

> Far from reasserting the consoling law stated by Oceanus "That first in beauty should be first in might" [II, 229], the historical awareness in The Fall returns to the deeper theme of man's temporal contingency. The poet is the chosen witness of the damage caused by time.[28]

But Keats seems to have still another reason for leaving the first Hyperion behind: there is nowhere to go in the poem--it has, in itself, become a closed space; everything appears to be finished: Apollo is now a god who inevitably will succeed Hyperion; Saturn already has been deposed, as have Oceanus and the other Titans. For them, the future holds little more than a painful nostalgia for the past, just as for Apollo it seems to hold limitless promise and limitless self-realization.

Now the important element for Keats becomes a registering consciousness, a consciousness that mediates between reader and image. And this he embodies in the poet-dreamer. The poet-dreamer is as much Keats struggling with his subject as he is subject, and it is as much, if not more, the poet-dreamer's struggle with which we as readers become involved as it is that of the Titans. Grappling with space and time for the power rightly to convey his image, he becomes part of the whole tableau for us, inseparable from the Titans, contemporaneous with them. Equally significant, in the persona of the poet-dreamer, Keats incorporates both the "mortal" being "led on . . . by circumstance" and the "fore-seeing" aspect of a god. Thus, the equation that Keats has established in Hyperion between "Gods [and] wondering men" (I, 183, 185) is realized in the persona of the poet-dreamer.

The "fore-seeing" mortal is reminiscent of the poet who sonnetizes "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again." Keats's sense of fatality in that sonnet--

> . . . once again, the fierce dispute
> Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
> Must I burn through. . . .
> (5-7)

--involves what we may regard as his foreknowledge of what is to come; yet, because of his mortality--his

role as outsider and reader with respect to the play--he feels powerless before that knowledge. As in a letter to the George Keatses, his sense of himself is that of "being a Slave of what is to happen" (II:211). Face to face with Moneta, sole priestess of Saturn, sole prophetess of an age long gone, the poet-dreamer anachronistically calls on "Apollo! faded! O far flown Apollo!" The perspectives here are those of two creatures at opposite ends of time: Moneta dreaming backward in a sense to a Titanic age, as the poet-dreamer dreams in a time when even the Olympian gods have become extinct, except in the immortal works of the poets who chronicled their duration. For him, Apollo is "faded"; for Moneta and the Titans whom she shows to the poet-dreamer, the "calamity" of their fall, one that occurred eons before Apollo's, "had but begun" (I, 340).

Too, in the Lear sonnet is Keats's fear of what will become of him once he has again "burned through" the play:

> When through the old oak Forest I am gone,
> Let me not wander in a barren dream
> But, when I am consumed in the fire,
> Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.
> (11-14)

The great fear is that of wandering "in a barren dream" after having penetrated by painful labor and with great

emotion the richly dense Druidic oak forests of King Lear. Stillinger feels that in the Lear sonnet Keats "dismisses romance as a 'barren dream,'" that Keats has become aware of the tragedy of human existence, and that his own poetry seems not to answer to such considerations.[29] But the fear of "a barren dream" at the end of the sonnet seems to point to a more profound problem than choice of literary genre--a richer psychological dilemma than whether to abandon "romance" in favor of a form that will better reveal the new and painful truths about human life that Keats now has discovered. Keats's fear is not that dreams may be barren, but that in turning away from rereading Lear, he will be barren--that he will find no place at all to put what he has learned there, what he has felt: that he will find no language at all with which to express it. Keats opens The Fall of Hyperion with an emphasis on the importance of language as a means of validating and perpetuating dreams: without language, we are ephemeral fanatics, weaving for a few seconds "a paradise" for a few individuals. It is the fear of this rapid dissolution that makes Keats entertain the possibility that his dream will bring forth nothing--that nothing will save it, or its dreamer, from the void.

III

The induction to The Fall of Hyperion anticipates in some ways the categories of poet and dreamer that Moneta insists upon later in the poem. At the outset, Keats emphasizes the identity of poet and dreamer, with the single exception that the dreamer does not solidify his vision by casting it into the mold of language. It is poetry "alone," the "spell of words alone," that liberates the imagination from its own manacles. The imagination, then, instead of singing to itself its own songs and remaining mute so far as the world's ear is concerned, is freed by language from its own narrow and solipsistic enchantment. The imagination that feeds on itself ends up empty. But by sharing its repast with the world outside, and indeed, drawing much of its sustenance from that world, it fulfills more than itself. Thus, as we have seen in "Ode to Psyche," the imagination, however rich in its own constructions, always must leave the window open--not only "to let the warm Love in," but to allow for intercourse beyond its own created room. The discrete categories that do exist for Keats, then, are not those of poet and dreamer, but of fanatic and poet. The narrow nature of fanatics' dreams--"they weave / A paradise for a sect"--sets them below their

brother dreamers, the poets, whose visions encompass all sects and may comprehend a multiplicity of paradises. Like Keats, like the poet-dreamer, we are all "fanatics" and "savages," who carry within us our own visionary dreams of a world. Few of us, however, are "poets," in the sense of being able to recreate in language that personal, subjective world, making of it a universe in which others, too, may live.

As he ends the eighteen-line induction, Keats asserts that only with the passage of time can a judgment be made as to which of the categories--poet or fanatic--he may claim for his fraternity. Thus, for the poet, language and time (implying as it does perspective and comparison) become the two criteria by which his greatness may be measured.

With the conclusion of the induction, the dream begins. In the course of the dream Keats will cover great temporal, spatial, and psychological distances. In fact, the poet-dreamer's apprehensions of space will become one of the paramount issues of The Fall. The persona of the first eighteen lines of the poem is that of the poet introducing his dream. We descend into the dream with the persona of the now-dreaming poet who, in his dream, falls asleep and dreams himself farther back in time--from the dawning of Judeo-

Christian culture to that of Greek civilization. When he encounters Moneta, she increases the depth of the dream by allowing him to share in her vision, which takes both herself and the poet-dreamer back still farther in time and into a space far more limited than the Edenic garden he had entered at first. In a sense, what we as readers observe is a continual tightening of spatial and temporal boundaries. The dreamer moves almost relentlessly into more and more confined areas where, paradoxically, he expects his own vision to widen.

The garden in which the dreamer finds himself at the outset of his dream affords a preliminary view of the temple. Its transformation into the similarly, although more severely limited construction of the temple of Moneta allows us a glimpse of the manner in which the artist in his careful focus and selection of detail uses the elements of a seemingly natural world in order to delineate the apparently more sheltered realms of his own art. The "trees of every clime" which surround the poet-dreamer are chosen with care. All are sacred trees: the palm is the Hebrew tree of life; the myrtle is regarded as holy by the Jews, Egyptians, and Greeks; to the Druids, Celts, and Teutons, the oak is the tree of life, believed among

ancient tribes to be the first tree created, the tree from which the first man arose; the sycamore is the Egyptian tree of life; the beech is dedicated to Zeus[30]; and it is under the plantane that Eve first sees Adam in Paradise Lost. Thus, the poet-dreamer is surrounded by a known world--there is nothing "anti Grecian & anti Charlemagnish" about it. These trees, culturally familiar to him, form a screen which, while it limits the view he may have of what lies beyond the garden, at the same time allows for the workings of his other more primitive senses, which are abetted by his imagination. As Gaston Bachelard points out in a discussion of sensually experienced space:

> . . . sight curtails the drama it witnesses. But a whiff of perfume, or even the slightest odor can create an entire environment in the world of the imagination.[31]

When the poet-dreamer finally confronts the temple of Moneta, of which this garden is a miniature and highly suggestive precursor, sight is the only sense on which he relies. But now, in the garden, he hears the "soft showering" of a fountain, and knows, "from the touch of scent," that he is "not far from roses." His imagination is vitally at work, and consequently, although the dreamer appears to be inhabiting a limited area where vision is cut off, he can, like the poet of "I

stood tip-toe," concentrate his energies on "picturing out" the natural world and not as yet step beyond it. He is evidently content now with what this miniature world offers up to him. But already in the next few lines, the temple of Moneta is anticipated. The "arbour with [its] drooping roof," its "floral censers," its "wreathed doorway," serves to suggest a more man-made than natural structure.

There is sufficient nutriment in the garden--albeit the remnants of another's meal--to satisfy an "appetite / More yearning than on earth [he] ever felt." The "full draught" of "transparent juice" which the poet-dreamer drinks, after a generous toast to all the living and all the remembered dead, becomes "the parent of my theme" (I, 46). The question then arises: what is the theme? In the poet-dreamer's "hard" struggle to retain his consciousness and integrity in spite of the overwhelming dominance of what he, in his hunger and thirst for experience, voluntarily takes into himself, we have, at least in part, the "theme" of The Fall of Hyperion. That struggle against unconsciousness, against a loss of selfhood that is brought about by all those conditions and contingencies outside us that have their way with us, is the dominant consideration of the poem. It is repeated

later when the poet-dreamer struggles to gain the first step that will lead him to the height of Moneta's temple. In fact, it becomes one of many repetitions that occur in the course of The Fall of Hyperion: the induction and Moneta's categories; the "arbour" and the temple; the remnants of food in the garden and the religious artifacts in the neighborhood of the temple; and the sense we have as the poet-dreamer looks about him at the temple, at Moneta veiled and unveiled, at motionless Saturn, that he is always beginning again. As he goes forth "to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience," he is always still at the beginning. Along with the fact that each of the elements in the initial description of the garden is repeated and amplified in the deeper dream of Moneta's temple, there is an unabating sense that the poet-dreamer himself must go through certain repetitions of experience until he is capable of controlling what presses on him so from what seems to be the outside, but is quite purely, as in any dream, simply another manifestation of the self. Thus, "Keats continually subjects his narrator to the same experience until his imagination is large enough to handle it."[32] Similarly, the poem itself, as a reworking of the earlier Hyperion, is a repetition of experience for Keats.

Just as clearly, the poet-dreamer very nearly parallels the Apollo of Book III of Hyperion, and closely resembles the Saturn of both poems. Apollo's deification as he gazes into Mnemosyne's face is relived, on the human level, by the narrator of The Fall with Moneta as his mentor. The repetitions serve almost as a series of mirrors before which certain motifs are posed, to be reflected in a variety of ways and to create at each reflection a new mode of seeing. When the dreamer awakens from the effects of the "domineering potion," in place of the "fair trees," he sees the temple's "silent massy range of columns." "The mossy mound" is replaced by marble on which, instead of food, he sees,

> Store of strange vessels, and large draperies.
> . . . All in a mingled heap confus'd there lay
> Robes, golden tongs, censer, and chafing dish,
> Girdles, and chains, and holy jewelries. (I, 73ff)

And the "arbour" itself, as already noted, is transformed into the temple.

Thus, from a world that is at least familiar and comfortable, even if it carries with it the properties of a dream, the poet-dreamer enters one in which all is changed, all is old--nothing is recent, like the fresh meal left him by the departed angel or "mother Eve." As he regards the temple, he feels that there

is "no standard law of earth or heaven" to which he can refer--nothing on earth with which he can identify the size and antiquity of what is now before him:

> I look'd around upon the carved sides
> Of an old sanctuary with roof august,
> Builded so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
> Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of heaven;
> So old the place was, I remembered none
> The like upon the earth; what I had seen
> Of grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
> The superannuations of sunk realms,
> Or nature's rocks toil'd hard in waves and winds,
> Seem'd but the faulture of decrepit things
> To that eternal domed monument.
> (I, 61-71)

As Walter Jackson Bate points out, "The experience is that of a finite creature confronted with vastness."[33]

It is important to note that the poet-dreamer regards the temple "with awe," and, at this point, having only sight on which to depend--he was able to use his other senses in the garden--attempts "to fathom the space every way." But the space he fronts is unfathomable. If we examine the temple from a distance, as the poet-dreamer does, we are met with an enormous but strictly confined structure whose roof is lost in clouds (63), whose "silent massy range" of columns end "in mist / Of nothing" (84-85), whose eastern gates are "shut against the sunrise evermore" (86), and at

whose western boundary stands a statue so huge that it, too, is vague, like "a cloud" (88). Like a photographic blow-up in which all definition is sacrificed to size, the still undefined temple of Moneta looms before the poet-dreamer, an "eternal domed monument."

In his study of "Keats and Human Space," Arthur H. Bell makes the point that "In moods of frustration and disorientation, [Keats] often portrays himself as fronting an immense expanse with no perceptible bounds."[34] He goes on to say that with the appearance of Moneta's temple, Keats seems to be working "toward resolution and synthesis. For once," Bell remarks,

> . . . the enormity and vastness of the poet's vision is not marred by a concomitant sense of disorientation. Moneta's temple, that is, maintains its cosmic scope while still providing a structure of "within-ness" to direct the poet's course and define his goal.[35]

Bell's point is that the altar, by an elimination of all the other directions, is the only course available to the poet-dreamer. But this severe limiting of possibilities is hardly a motion toward "resolution and synthesis." Disorientation consistently marks the poet-dreamer's responses once he leaves the garden, and it is reflected in the questions he asks Moneta: "'What am I . . . ?'" "'. . . tell me where I am: / Whose altar this; for whom this incense curls: / What

image this whose face I cannot see, / . . . and who thou art.'"

While the temple is being described in The Fall of Hyperion--and one does have some vague sense that it must have limits--one is aware that its very vagueness precludes distinctions between inner and outer. The trees in the garden had formed a screen and the arbor a shelter from which it was possible to participate imaginatively in what lay beyond. The dreamer knew where he was, knew what was close by and what lay in the distance. The temple, however large, appears to be closed in all directions, by roof, by gate, by altar, but most of all by its cloudy size that thwarts vision and makes all boundaries nebulous. The impression is that the temple is all-encompassing, that nothing lies beyond it and that everything is contemporary with it. In that sense it is, as so many critics have suggested, the temple of art. But to say that is not to say everything. With its carefully selected trees, its almost easy access to the "outside" where roses and fountains lay, its bits of human nutriment, the garden is a world of art as well, but perhaps to Keats it is a world of art that is too easy of attainment, too intellectually and emotionally familiar, not "anti Grecian & anti Charlmagnish" in the

way the temple is. Keats uses the garden, however, in order to reform it into something thoroughly manmade, architectural, and, oddly, at the same time, far less manageable.

Although the poet-dreamer is regarding the temple --or at least the distant parts of it--from afar, there is no sense of its elements diminishing or receding with distance, no sense that the artist is assuming a useful posture that allows for perspective, or even that perspective is possible. Rather, everything appears to loom before him, no element assuming greater or lesser importance. The "clouds," the "mist," the "innumerable" steps leading to the altar combine to make of the temple a space that calls to the mind of the dreamer no images from a waking life. The continuity that is bred of familiarity is gone. One's former life, quite simply, is cut off. As a result, for the first thirty-five or so lines in which the temple is being described, there is an absence of simile--there is "none / The like upon the earth." It is only after the poet-dreamer observes "One minist'ring" (96) that the dreamer's own experience and imagination can come to his aid in allowing him some relationship to what he observes. Just as the maiden of "I stood tip-toe" serves to ready the poet for vision, to open

his eyes to possibilities that lie beyond observable nature, so the presence of Moneta (although the poet-dreamer does not have as yet any contact with her) allows him a place to touch down and allows the hugeness that surrounds him to begin to assume some measure of human dimension.

At the same time, the poet is aware that the temple embodies mysteries and an ancient continuity that he does not at present understand. Through Moneta's offices, he will be initiated into a past not his own, will respond to it with all the subjectivity of a sensitive nature and all the emotion of a wingless thing, and will call upon his own powers to objectify it and make it "real" for others to whom poet-dreamer and temple are both cut off by time.

IV

Although the dreamer shuns simile in his description of Moneta's temple, one need not look far in Keats's own experience for possible antecedents for it, and even for the ambience to which the poet-dreamer is so attuned. Keats writes of strikingly similar landscapes to his brother Tom on 26 July 1818, during his walking tour of Scotland, after visiting Iona and Staffa. On Iona he was impressed with the wealth of

"the most interesting Antiqu[i]ties." Never having "heard much about this Island . . . before [he] came nigh it," Keats is surprised to discover "the ruins of a fine Cathedral Church, of Cloisters," and other remnants of an ancient world "in so remote an island." He notes, too, that "the now treeless place was covered [in the sixth century] with magnificent Woods." Even the guide, an "old Schoolmaster" whom Keats calls "an ignorant little man," gives a sense of the poet-dreamer's awareness of his own state and size as he stands next to Moneta, "Like a stunt bramble by a solemn pine": the guide, Keats reports, is "as much above 4 foot as he is under 4 foot 3 inches" (I:347-348).

Coupled with the description of Iona is Keats's rendering of Staffa. "I am puzzled," he writes to Tom, "how to give you an idea of Staffa."

> The finest thing is Fingal's Cave--it is entirely a hollowing out of Basalt Pillars. Suppose now the Giants who rebelled against Jove had taken a whole Mass of black Columns and bound them together like bunches of matches--and then with immense Axes had made a cavern in the body of these columns--of course the roof and floor must be composed of the broken ends of the Columns--such is fingal's Cave except that the Sea has done the work of excavations and is continually dashing there--so that we walk along the sides of the cave on the pillars which are left as if for convenient Stairs--the

> roof is arched somewhat gothic wise. . . .
> --For solemnity and grandeur it far surpasses the finest Cathedrall. (I:348-349)

Bate remarks that "The memory of Fingal's Cave recurs a year later in the description of the vast sanctuary in The Fall of Hyperion.[36]

From his description of the cave, Keats passes into the poem, "Not Aladdin magian," for which he apologizes to Tom: "I am sorry I am so indolent as to write such stuff as this." In that poem, Keats expresses, rather lightly, the effect on him of Fingal's Cave:

> Not Aladdin magian
> Ever such a work began;
> Not the Wizard of the Dee
> Ever such a dream could see;
> Not St. John in Patmos' isle,
> In the passion of his toil, . . .
> Gazed at such a rugged wonder.

Keats, as he "stood its roofing under," sees "one sleeping there / On the marble cold and bare," "reminiscent of the icy marble pavement in The Fall of Hyperion."[37] With hindsight, one wonders if it is not himself in his dream that he sees, fresh from the garden. But no, it is Lycidas, "Fam'd in funeral minstrelsy." Lycidas, annoyed at the tourists who flock to Fingal's Cave, explains:

> "Many a mortal of these days
> Dares to pass our sacred ways,
> Dares to touch audaciously
> This cathedral of the sea."

He threatens to "'unweave / All the magic of the place,'" and leave it to "'the stupid eye of mortal,'" which cannot begin to comprehend its majesty. "'The great sea,'" he says, "'shall war it down.'" With this and a few words more, "He dived--." Keats did not finish the poem, but seems instead to have altered utterly the tone of it, somehow transformed the already transformed Lycidas into part Moneta, part poet-dreamer, and touched the entire scene, combining it with the impressive antiquity of Iona, into the world of dream and vision of The Fall of Hyperion. Even the audacity that Lycidas attributes to the fashionable tourists who disturb the timeless wonder of the cave, finds its way into Moneta's words to the poet-dreamer: "'Such things as thou art are . . . suffer'd in these temples'" (178ff). And, of course, Keats's obvious equation of the cave with a structure worthy of the efforts of "the Giants who rebelled against Jove" does not leave much doubt that Fingal's Cave plays its part in the magnificent construction of Moneta's temple. It is the cave in combination with the remoteness and antiquity of Iona that gives to the temple of Moneta both its giant size and its great age.

Relevant, too, is a later letter to Tom, dated 3 August, also from Scotland, in which Keats recounts

his climb up Ben Nevis--"it is almost like a fly crawling up a wainscoat--Imagine the task of mounting 10 Saint Pauls without the convenience of Staircases" (I:352). Keats relates to Tom the difficulties of the ascent and his expectation at every moment that at last he had reached the summit, only to be told by the guide that "this was not the top." Keats goes on to tell Tom that, at a point above the vegetation line, "there came on a Mist, so that from that part to the verry [sic] top we walked in a Mist." The chasms that Keats observes from Ben Nevis with "other huge crags arising round it give the appearance to Nevis of a shattered heart." When at last Keats reaches the summit of Ben Nevis, he records his observations for Tom:

> After a little time the Mist cleared away but still there were large Clouds about attracted by old Ben to a certain distance so as to form as it appeared large dome curtains which kept sailing about, opening and shutting at intervals here and there and everrywhere [sic]; so that although we did not see one vast wide extent of prospect all round we saw something perhaps finer--these cloud-veils opening with a dissolving motion and showing us the mountainous region beneath as through a loop hole--these Cloudy loop holes ever varrying [sic] and discovering fresh prospects east, west north and South. . . . The most new thing of all is the sudden leap of the eye from the extremity of what appears a plain [i.e., the mountain's summit] into so vast a distance. (I:353-354)

Keats incorporates many of the naturalistic details of his ascent of Ben Nevis into The Fall of Hyperion, along with the "most new" way of seeing that a mountaintop perspective affords. Keats's responses to what and how he sees and experiences are translated into the poet-dreamer's immediate apprehension of the temple--clouds, mists, and all. And the difficulty--and sometimes hopelessness--he actually experienced in scaling the mountain and reaching its summit--"I will never ascend another in this emnpire"--becomes mythologized in the poet-dreamer's desperate climbing of the stairs with their "innumerable degrees" that lead to Moneta's sanctum. Even upon arriving there, as in reaching the summit of Ben Nevis, he still must contend with further veils, films, and curtains.

V

The section that follows the poet-dreamer's first glimpse of Moneta contains within it much of the apparent illogic that one associates with dreams. The sight of "One minist'ring," combined with the dreamer's ability now to connect the "Maian incense" that "fills the air" with thoughts of his own connectedness to an earlier life--all the past has not been obliterated--makes some form of communication possible. He

moves slowly and soberly--"Repressing haste as too unholy"--toward the altar. Decidedly, he is not one with the "cravats" and "petticoats" of "Not Aladdin magian," who swarm audaciously over the world's wonders, perpetual, rude tourists. As he moves, he hears "Language pronounc'd." He has no sense as yet that the priestess has deigned to speak to him; rather, the disembodied language seems to emanate from the "curtains" of "soft smoke" that now obscure the shrine, as if the very vagueness of the place had found a voice and been jolted into life.

A challenge is hurled at the poet-dreamer: "'if thou canst not ascend / These steps, die on that marble where thou art'" (I, 107-108). The essence of the words spoken to the poet-dreamer is that if he cannot meet the challenge he will "parch for lack of nutriment," "wither," and "vanish" without a trace. As in the sonnet written at Burns's cottage, the narrator's own paltry mortality is placed against something eternal--in this case, the "immortal steps" that lead to the shrine. Among the givens of the poet-dreamer's former knowledge of temples was the precept that one approached their altars solemnly and without haste. But he is now confronted with a new rule: he must take the steps speedily, before the "gummed leaves be

burnt," or his moment will be gone. He hears "the hard task proposed," he looks at the "innumerable" stairs, and he is aware once again (as he was in lines 90-92) of the difficulty of mounting up. The altar is

> To be approached on either side by steps,
> And marble balustrade, and patient travail
> To count with toil the innumerable degrees.

The "patient travail" becomes itself a part of the temple in the eyes of the poet-dreamer. And now he is told that patience will not serve him: he must reach the height quickly.

What happens here to apprehensions of time? If we look back at the garden, we become aware that the pace there was leisurely--there was more than ample time to slake a "yearning" appetite. In remarking on the amount of time he has slept, the poet-dreamer cannot even "guess" how long he "slumber'd" after drinking the "domineering potion." He starts up from the sleep that took him from garden to temple "as if with wings." And now everything around him has speeded up. All that exists for him is a short duration and an apparently unvanquishable space. He sees himself, as he does in an earlier letter, as a "bare shouldered Creature" (I:277) struggling to fly. Mario L. D'Avanzo points out the relationship between this section of The Fall of Hyperion and Book III of Endymion, where Keats im-

ages those "few" anointed who occupy "throned seats unscalable / But by a patient wing" (23-24):

> Although winged flight serves as the basic recurrent metaphor for facile, almost involuntary poetic adventure, Keats occasionally regards the ascent to the throne of poetry as a struggle afoot and therefore much more difficult. In taking up Moneta's challenge . . . the poet, as he ascends on foot, puts on the knowledge of human sympathy and philosophy necessary for the most superior kind of poetry.[39]

Ascent, whether on wing or by foot, however, is accompanied by the same nagging ambivalence and fear. Either way, one anticipates at the end of any "uphill journeying" (I:139) a radically different perspective that shakes one's former suppositions and beliefs. In this life-and-death struggle, former knowledge cannot sustain him. Faced with the challenge, the poet-dreamer suffers a terrifying paralysis, and he knows that "no hand in the universe" can interpose to save him. He knows, as Moneta reminds him a little later (I, 143), that whatever power can rescue him resides only in himself.

A number of questions arise at this point in reading The Fall of Hyperion. First, why is such a challenge hurled at the poet-dreamer by what seems to be the spirit of the place? Then, why is his initial reaction one of numbness and paralysis? Third, why,

once overcoming the "lowest stair," is he able to mount up with such ease?

The answers to these questions seem to have strongly mythic overtones. At the same time, however, part of the answer lies in Keats's own very personal early poetry. The challenge, for example, seems to include Keats's own self-challenge, going back to "Sleep and Poetry," to "overwhelm myself in poesy; so I may do the deed / That my own soul has to itself decreed"; and, as a result, to draw near "the countries I see / In long perspective." The limited and weighty time that Moneta presses on the poet-dreamer takes us back, too, to "Sleep and Poetry," to Keats's sense there that art is long and life, short:

> An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle,
> Spreads awfully before me. How much toil!
> How many days! what desperate turmoil!
> Ere I can have explored its widenesses.
> Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees,
> I could unsay those--no, impossible!
> Impossible!
>
> (306-312)

This excerpt, from as early a poem as "Sleep and Poetry," seems to resonate throughout this section of The Fall of Hyperion. The dim and awe-inspiring vision of the isles in a dimly apprehended sea, the arduousness of attempting to explore the sea's vastness and translate it into poetry, the desperate ambivalence Keats experiences (as in the "Elgin Marbles" sonnet) in con-

templating the attempt, and finally his realization that, despite all difficulties, despite the widenesses and the dimness, he cannot abandon this self-imposed task--all these find their way into that challenge in The Fall of Hyperion, which at first seems impossible of meeting and then is partially met. The ambivalence, the "undescribable feud" of the sonnet "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," is also an issue that leads to the physical paralysis of the poet-dreamer as he approaches the first step to the altar. Once he has gained the height, however, all knowledge must begin again. The poet-dreamer is still in a foreign country whose dimensions and customs he cannot know, but which he is most eager to learn, and, typically, not as a tourist, but as an habitue.

In the dialogue that ensues between the poet-dreamer and Moneta, the dreamer, once again faced with an almost palpable lack of knowledge, asks Moneta to "'purge off / Benign . . . [his] mind's film'" (I, 145-146). What she shows him first is himself. And this is, of course, for any poet, a dazzling revelation. But for the poet-dreamer of The Fall, it is more than that. William C. Stephenson points out:

> Romantic narrative art generally has two stories to tell: the story itself and the author's relation to it. . . . Quite often the perspectives he imposes upon it are more important than the story.[39]

Since these perspectives arise from the consciousness of the narrator, in this case the poet-dreamer, he must from the first establish his own sensitivity to what he sees and is about to see, and, even given the dream context, his own "reliability," certainly his sympathetic stance toward what he observes, and finally his empathic participation in it. I do not believe, with Kenneth Muir, that Apollo's deification in the last book of Hyperion signals Keats's own "acceptance of human suffering." Or that "Keats, by accepting suffering had transcended [it]," and, as a result, "was able to face the 'eternal fierce destruction' from which he had recoiled in March 1818."[40] The poet-dreamer's very relation to what he observes--indeed, his frequent inability adequately to extricate himself from it--suggests that he still "venoms all his days": he has not come to easy terms with, or transcended the sorrow that he witnesses.

Moneta tells him that simply by virtue of having reached the present height he is one of "'those to whom the miseries of the world / Are misery, and will not let them rest.'" The others, those who are at home in the world, who are not restless seekers, have not the power within them--or even the will--to "'usurp this height.'" The poet-dreamer is "Encourag'd by the sooth

voice of the shade"--he knows the truth when he hears it--to ask why there are not more men in the temple, since there must be thousands

> "Who love their fellows even to the death;
> Who feel the giant agony of the world!
> And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
> Labour for mortal good."
>
> (I, 156-159)

Moneta's answer is that "'They are no dreamers weak.'" Rather, they are more practical, more ameliorative, in their approach to the world's agonies: they see unhappiness and try to do something immediately useful about it. The poet-dreamer, the shade says, is here because he is "'less than they.'" Compared to such philanthropists, he is "'a dreaming thing'" who "'venoms all his days, / Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.'"

Keats makes a similar judgment about himself in one of his letters from Scotland. In writing about the poverty he sees there, he says:

> What a tremendous difficulty is the improvement of the condition of such people --I cannot conceive how a mind 'with child' of Philanthropy could grasp at possibility--with me it is absolute despair. (I:321)

His empathic grasp of the world's "giant agony," as well as his own despair over it, makes him wonder how anyone, however generous, can imagine that things can be bettered: where would one begin? Is his inability to "grasp at possibility" a failure of his imagina-

tion? or is the philanthropists' conviction that things can be improved a failure of theirs?

Incapable, then, of earthly happiness, "such things" as the poet-dreamer are tolerated in the temple. But important here is the inference, both in what Moneta says and in Keats's own letter, that although as the world goes the poet-dreamer is "less," he is at the same time "more" because the capabilities of his imagination are different--perhaps even greater. And these capabilities allow for a wider--yet simultaneously and paradoxically, a narrower--apprehension of earthly life.

In the poet's own deeply personal experience of the world, he cannot distinguish joy from pain because he can cast himself forward into the future by means of his imagination, thus throwing a pall on the present moment; or he can participate in the past by means of memory, and feel the present pain of lost joy. In Endymion's account to Peona of his blissful dream of Cynthia appears an illustration of one way in which the dreamer "venoms all his days":

> "I was distracted; madly did I kiss
> The wooing arms which held me, and did
> give
> My eyes at once to death; but 'twas to
> live,
> To take in draughts of life from the gold
> fount

> Of kind and passionate looks; to count,
> and count
> The moments, by some greedy help that
> seem'd
> A second self, that each might be redeem'd
> And plundered of its load of blessedness."
> (I, 653-660)

Even as Endymion dreams, his "second self" is always aware that time is passing. That "second self" is the aspect of Endymion's own psyche that is not lost in the moment--that knows of evanescence--while his "madly" involved self is thoroughly enraptured by the moment. It is the "second self" that counts the passing moments and collects them, so that when they all are gone each may be "redeem'd and plunder'd." But the "greedy help" that this self provides--the memory it helps to construct--can serve only to make the present less bearable. Poulet speaks of this aspect of memory:

> The past is not blotted out . . . nor cured. Can one even say that it is past, since it continues to exist? It is there, present, though outside of the present, distant without being blurred by distance, ineffaceable memory which never ceases to attest, to aggravate by its negative splendor, the tragic deficiency of the moment which it is not. Such is the strange dividing into two of being and time. . . .the division of the present itself between a past always present to the mind but no longer lived, and a present which it is necessary to live but which is consumed and unbearable.[41]

It is this quality of Hyperion, Saturn, and Enceladus in Hyperion that distinguishes their responses to the

isolated moment in which they find themselves from those of Oceanus. All four of the Titans tamper with time, but Oceanus draws a different lesson from it.

Moneta continues to speak to the poet-dreamer of "what" he is: he is, as the descriptive compound denotes, part poet, part dreamer. Significantly, Moneta emphasizes that should those who are dreamers only, who "'thoughtless sleep away their days,'" come to the temple, they "'Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half'" (I, 150ff). The assumption, then, is that the "thoughtless" aspect of the poet-dreamer has been purged away, that indolence of which Keats continually accuses hmself in his letters and which so often leads him to write no verse at all or verse that appears afterwards, to himself at least, to have little value. What is left after this part of the poet-dreamer has been "rotted" away is the poet's earnest desire to take into himself all that he can of the world and then to give it back, transmuted alchemically by means of his own power to grasp experience and then liberate it through "the fine spell of words." As a poet, he would perceive, delineate, and offer up those things that he speaks of in "Sleep and Poetry"--not only "all that was permitted, / All that was for our human senses fitted" (79-80), "visions of all places" (63), but

also those unknown, unguessed-at elements that at first seem only vacancy.

Where the only distinction between poet and dreamer that Keats had allowed in the induction to The Fall of Hyperion was that the dreamer cannot "tell [his] dreams, / With the fine spell of words . . . ," Moneta's categories appear to be less broad. When the poet-dreamer suggests to Moneta--

> ". . . sure not all
> Those melodies sung into the world's ear
> Are useless: sure the poet is a sage;
> A humanist, physician to all men. . . ."
> (I, 187-190)

--with these words he is drawing on all his prior sense of what a poet is and does, while having the sense that he is "none," which Moneta roundly assures him is the case. He is, she tells him, a member of "'the dreamer tribe,'" one of those who vex the world, and not a poet who "'pours out a balm upon the world.'" Moneta is speaking here on behalf of all the old characteristics of poets that Keats had laid down in "Sleep and Poetry" three years earlier: "And they shall be accounted poet kings / Who simply tell the most heart-easing things" (267-268).

However, heart's ease, which the poet is able to create from the most bitter experience and of which Keats speaks in "Sleep and Poetry," is considerably

less a quality of things in themselves than of the poet's way of perceiving them--his ability to establish a useful distance from them--and of translating them into language. But Keats's frequent shifts toward despondence in "Sleep and Poetry" would seem to indicate that his stance in relation to the world, his lack of artistic distance from experience, his own profound involvement in the mystery, precludes his being able to "relish Minos-wise" those things that lie before him, "free from the dead hue / Sickly imagination and sick pride cast wan upon" them. Moneta is Keats confronting himself with his own inability to assume a poetically useful perspective with regard to experience--one that would liberate him from the manacles of his own "sick pride," the weight of his own ego, and allow him truly to become the chameleon poet, the invisible poet who is not subsumed by experience or by the personalities of others, but who can alter his coloring as he faces the world: by not bringing a preconceived pattern of response to it, he will be able to protect himself against it.

That the same goal of art as that expressed in "Sleep and Poetry" should appear again three years later in Moneta's admonitions to the poet-dreamer indicates that Keats never had abandoned the "balm" aspect

of poetry as a kind of ideal, despite his apparent conviction that he never had fulfilled it in his own work. Certainly Keats's response to "the scenes / Still swooning vivid through [her] globed brain / With an electral changing misery," which Moneta is about to reveal, presents a challenge to the poet's ability to distance himself sufficiently from those scenes to make "all disagreeables evaporate" (I:192), and to forge a poetry that will "sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man" (247). Moneta's categories and her own so evident sadness produce such confusion and disorientation that, after a short diatribe, the poet-dreamer ceases to pursue the subject--although it forms a living response throughout the remainder of the poem--and begins to concentrate on more apparently wieldy issues by asking about the temple and Moneta's place in it.

One essential detail of the dialogue between Moneta and the poet-dreamer seems to be that the dreamer, although unable to embrace the world as it is and incapable of changing it, suffers from a "sickness not ignoble": dreaming is not the worst activity one can engage in, although it does not necessarily bring with it artistic liberation. The dream, however, is necessary:

> [Moneta's] words are so compelling, and the poet-dreamer's need for her speech so genuine and moving, that we may forget the circumstances and the consequent irony. Indeed, he is a dreaming thing, and the poem itself, as its subtitle states, is a dream. She does not exist apart from that dream, which is not to say that she is merely a fiction so much as to say that she needs his power of dreaming to give definition to the high tragedy she represents.[42]

The poet-dreamer's "power of dreaming," however, is less a process of giving "definition" than of inwardly creating that which finally must be released from "shadowy thought" in the space between dreamer and dream, and subsequently be rebound in the spell of language. Without language, no definition is imparted, no experience is shared. It is the process involved in recreating the dream within the "spell of words" that provides definition while, at the same time, language serves to retain and objectify the spell-like quality of the dream itself.

The dream "now purposed to rehearse" has assumed the dimension of an almost dizzying depth. It is not only a double dream--that is in the sense that the dreamer dreams and then dreams that he dreams--but in that second dream occurs a third: the poet-dreamer's initiation into the world behind Moneta's veiled eyes to the point that he observes another sleeping figure --that of "motionless" Saturn. As the distance from

the dreaming self and from the waking world increases, possibilities for response grow fewer and fewer. At the same time, the poet-dreamer, in the relentlessly shrinking pattern of his dream, becomes more and more aware of his own scant size and knowledge in comparison to the surrounding hugeness.

The poet-dreamer's initial apprehensions of unmanageable space are not gone by once he ascends the temple's steps. Having succeeded in getting from Moneta some sense of who he is, in the context of his dream at least, he begins to look about him again and returns to the statue he had seen from the foot of the marble steps as "An image huge of feature as a cloud" (88). Now, as Moneta tells him (181), he stands "'safe beneath this statue's knees.'" But the "safety" of the poet-dreamer's position precludes his gaining knowledge of the seated image "'whose face I cannot see, / For the broad marble knees'" (213-214). His present point of perspective acts to limit his vision, and the poet-dreamer eschews safety because it is accompanied by a narrowing of experience. In answer to his questions, then, Moneta introduces him to his dream landscape:

> "This temple sad and lone
> Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
> Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
> Against rebellion: this old image here,

> Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
> Is Saturn's; I, Moneta, left supreme
> Sole priestess of his desolation."
> (221-227)

With this knowledge the dreamer can do nothing. Confronted with the enormity of Moneta's loneliness and suffering--she represents the last sorrowful remnant of a lost world--with her voice that indicates that "she shed / Long treasured tears," the poet-dreamer is overwhelmed, unable to translate the nobility of her suffering into something that can transcend not only her sorrow but his own empathic response to it. The poet-dreamer faces the same inability to use language effectively, or affectively, here as he does later when he witnesses the sleeping Saturn. His tongue is "useless" to find a "syllable of fit majesty." The "answer" or "rejoinder to Moneta's mourn" that the poet searches for is one that would ease her burden, and at the same time rescue the poet-dreamer, as pure empathic imagination, from "the sable charm / And dumb enchantment." The human mind, then, becomes, like Moneta's temple, an "eternal domed monument" within which are entrapped visions and impressions--an entire racial history. These can be grasped intuitively and emotionally, but they act as they did at Burns's cottage, as "a dead weight on the nimbleness of one's quill" (I:325), because they are so utterly internal-

ized as to encumber rather than enlighten. Words as a liberating medium, as "a fine spell [that] can save / Imagination" remain in their "roofed home" because the imagination itself has gone out on a quest in which, at present, language fails.

The result is "a silence" in which the poet-dreamer must resort, not to language, but to contemplation of action. As he looks back and forth from the heaps of "crisped spice-wood" to the dying flame on the sacrificial altar, Moneta reads his generous intention, responds to his gesture of good will, and offers to reward him with vision:

> "The sacrifice is done, but not the less
> Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.
> My power, which to me is still a curse,
> Shall be to thee a wonder: for the scenes
> Still swooning vivid through my globed brain
> With an electral changing misery
> Thou shalt with those dull mortal eyes behold,
> Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not."
> (I, 241-248)

The equations of "power-curse" and "power-pain-wonder" in Moneta's words to the poet-dreamer return us to Keats's ambivalent thoughts about poetic power in "Sleep and Poetry"--

> Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees,
> I could unsay those--no impossible!
> Impossible!
> (310-312)

--and in "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles":

> Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
> That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
> Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
> (6-8)

That power of seeing, which may bring "large limb'd visions," may bring also, as in the sonnet, "On Visiting the Tomb of Burns," a painful comprehension of self-limited response. Wonder does, indeed, become pain for the poet-dreamer, because in the vivid scenes that Moneta places before his "dull mortal eyes," there is nothing that stirs. At the same time, he is so stirred within that he cannot make his "eyes / And ears act with that pleasant unison of sense / Which marries sweet sound with the grace of form / And dolorous accents from a tragic harp / With large limb'd visions" (I, 441-445). This is the "barren dream" that Keats so feared as he sat down to read King Lear once again--the possibility that he would find no way to express the emotions the tragedy evoked, no way to formalize his responses and thereby make them bearable. That capacity to utilize pain creatively would open a way out of pain. But instead, the power to feel becomes a "curse." And the power of wonder, of which the poet-dreamer becomes aware in his "terror" of Moneta's robes, "and chiefly of the veils" that "curtain'd her in mysteries," and which serves to make his "heart too

small to hold its blood" (I, 251-254)--this power, so profoundly does the dreamer experience it, becomes creative of an almost infinite series of closed doors. Consequently, expansion of vision serves here to make the power of coherent response shrink proportionately. And yet the poet-dreamer cannot resist his desire to see more.

Just as the goddess had understood, without the aid of language, the poet-dreamer's gesture of "good will," so here she responds to his need to see, his fear of not seeing. As Moneta, "with sacred hand," parts her veils, the poet-dreamer sees:

> . . . a wan face,
> Not pin'd by human sorrows, but bright
> blanch'd
> By an immortal sickness which kills not;
> It works a constant change, which happy
> death
> Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
> To no death was that visage; it had pass'd
> The lily and the snow; and beyond these
> I must not think now, though I saw that
> face--
> (I, 256-263)

As with the poet-dreamer's first sight of the temple, there is nothing in his prior experience to which he can relate what he now sees. There he had mentioned that the place was "so old," he remembered "none / The like upon the earth"; that what he had seen of the antique world "Seem'd but the faulture of decrepit things / To that eternal domed monument." Now, look-

ing at Moneta's face, he is aware that she, too, surpasses anything previously known: her face transcends in whiteness "the lily and the snow," and the poet-dreamer fears any further motion that might take him farther away from his previously known world--"beyond" these emblems of paleness. He is totally isolated now --a visitor to a place he can compare to nothing known, confronted with a goddess whose face eradicates all his prior outer knowledge.

Moneta's veil had served to allow for some mediating distance between the poet-dreamer and his dream. Once it is stripped away, all protection is gone. The poet-dreamer's initial impulse is to flee--to remove himself from this new experience of which he fears he will be unable to empty himself because all metaphor fails. But his response to Moneta's "planetary" eyes holds him back; he reads both kindness and vision in them. In another context, Bachelard describes the kind of stimulus that Moneta exemplifies and the kind of response the poet-dreamer represents:

> One might . . . say that light emanating from a lone watcher, who is also a determined watcher, attains to the power of hypnosis. We are hypnotized by solitude. . . .[43]

Too, the poet-dreamer now feels he is ready for the next initiation. As in the garden, he cannot resist

his hunger--the possibility of seeing beyond his own "sickly imagination and sick pride"--of envisioning "What things [Moneta's] hollow brain / . . . enwombed," "what tragedy / In the dark secret chambers of her skull / Was acting." With the poet-dreamer's successive movements toward knowledge, veil upon veil must be lifted, and, as with ordinary experience, finally one may be forced to proceed to the next step without having assimilated fully the ones preceding.

As the poet-dreamer asks for vision, he finds himself where the first Hyperion began: "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale." Moneta has become a sort of superconsciousness of the poet-dreamer; she conducts him into a place that is both inside and outside himself, and into the past--really, into his and her own dreams of the past--into a kind of interior exteriority. Thus, she directs him toward a huge distance which ceases to be either temporal or exterior. The vision of Saturn to which Moneta introduces the poet-dreamer brings with it an expansion of perception:

> . . . there grew
> A power within me of enormous ken,
> To see as a God sees, and take the depth
> Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
> Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
> . . . hung vast before my mind,
> With half unravel'd web. I set myself
> Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
> And seeing ne'er forget.
> (I, 303-310)

The poet-dreamer's vision takes on a new dimension--his mind sees in a way that it has never seen before. At the same time, the "web" before his mind is "half unravel'd": vision has not done all the work. It remains for perspective and language to continue the labor, to externalize what is within the mind and to weave into an integrated and comprehensible whole those discrete threads of vision.

The sleeping Saturn is a giant, unmoving form that seems cramped into a space that is too small for it. The lines that follow the poet-dreamer's experience of expanded perception are very nearly those that open the first Hyperion in their insistence upon silence, deadness, unconsciousness, deprivation. Although the poet-dreamer says that he sees "as a God sees," he soon discovers that for him, as for Saturn and the other Titans, there is nothing to fill that enormous vision but the slow time it takes him to be able to establish a perspective relative to it--a perspective that would permit him to do something with that vision, rather than allowing it to become "a barren dream"--the dream of a "fanatic" or the guess of a "savage." Indeed, since he shares Moneta's perspective on the scene, he shares also her "power" of seeing, "'which to [her] is still a curse'" (I, 243).

She underestimates the depth and quickness of the poet-dreamer's empathy in assuming that what she experiences as a "curse" will be to him a "wonder." She ends, however, by qualifying the distinction she has established between "curse" and "wonder":

> ". . . the scenes
> Still swooning vivid through my globed
> brain . . .
> Thou shalt with those dull mortal eyes
> behold
> Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee
> not."
> (I, 244-248)

The qualification implicit in the last five words is Moneta's recognition that wonder without an exit becomes both pain and curse.

It still remains for the poet-dreamer to objectify and validate Moneta's--hence, his own--inner images, first by apprehending them, and then by moving them into the realm of language. Interestingly, Moneta does not use language to delineate or breathe life into "'the scenes / Still swooning vivid through [her] globed brain.'" She gives to the poet-dreamer the power to see what is there; she introduces the vision with a few scant words: "'So Saturn sat / When he had lost his realms'" (I, 301-302). Once the poet-dreamer has cast this scene into words for us, Moneta uses a few more words to introduce Thea. It remains for the poet-dreamer to continue the task of realizing the

scene for us. But, as the two dejected gods remain relentlessly unmoving, the poet-dreamer mercilessly challenges his claim to the name of poet. He can do nothing with them.

Thus, less than eighty lines after saying that he sees "as a God sees," the poet-dreamer becomes aware that neither in the vision of Saturn and Thea that is before him nor in himself is there anything to sustain him:

> Long, long, those two were postured
> motionless,
> Like sculpture builded up upon the grave
> Of their own power. A long awful time
> I look'd upon them: still they were the
> same;
> The frozen God still bending to the earth,
> And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet;
> Moneta silent. Without stay or prop
> But my own weak mortality, I bore
> The load of this eternal quietude,
> The unchanging gloom, and the three fixed
> shapes
> Ponderous upon my senses a whole moon.
> For by my burning brain I measured sure
> Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
> And every day by day methought I grew
> More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I
> pray'd
> Intense, that Death would take me from
> the vale
> And all its burthens. Gasping with
> despair
> Of change, hour after hour I curs'd
> myself.
> (I, 381-399)

True to Moneta's prophecy, the "power" to see does become an almost self-imposed "curse." In fact, certainly at this point--and despite his own divine en-

hancement of vision--there is little that is godlike in the poet-dreamer's relationship to what he observes: he is neither spectator, nor bemused observer, nor prime mover, nor "artist, like the God of creation, . . . invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."[44] He is as changeless and as empty of power as what he beholds. And if, for the poet-dreamer, Moneta adds herself to what is to be borne, then for the reader there is the additional burden of bearing the poet-dreamer.

In his struggle to grasp the inner meaning of Moneta's images, the poet-dreamer, always conscious of his stature--"Like a stunt bramble by a forest pine"--continues to dwindle away. As the "load" of the unchanging scene before him becomes more and more "Ponderous," he in turn grows "More gaunt and ghostly." The space between his godlike eye and the scene before him diminishes, and yet there is no sense of communion, only of a paralyzing empathy that acts, as Burns's "Misery" did, as "a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill." The moon, which for Endymion signalled a union between the real and imagined worlds, the worlds of matter and consciousness, here functions, as it does in "Ode to a Nightingale," almost as an emblem of the inability to connect. In "Ode on Indolence,"

Keats had apostrophized, "O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy, / That I may never know how change the moons. . ." (38-39). But here, in The Fall of Hyperion, the moon becomes a chronometer of failure as the poet-dreamer uses it to measure the depth and extent of his own impotence. He is presented with a picture that appears huge because it has become interior and because the poet-dreamer is no longer an external spectator. He has become part of what he sees--not only to readers of The Fall of Hyperion, but to himself. He is participating in a universe that Poulet describes, in another context, as one in which,

> . . . space and time are no more than a conglomeration of points and moments whose very bulk weighs down the mind. . . . There is neither happiness nor perfection in a plenum made up of feelings. One is engulfed in it. One perishes in it for lack of air and space.[45]

It is a feeling, as in the Lear sonnet, of "being a slave of what is to happen" (II:211). The feeling, far from being one of perspective, is that of being invaded and vanquished by the very manner in which one perceives--of having all boundaries confounded. It is a closeness in which there is no room for intimacy.

As he discusses the poetry of Victor Hugo, Georges Poulet might as easily be describing the sensations that accompany the poet-dreamer's state at this point in The Fall:

> How can one describe this situation in which a human being appears all at once to himself, not in the sanctuary of his own consciousness, not in a solitary thought which assures him of his sole existence, but in so total an envelopement and penetration by things that he cannot detach himself from them, cannot distinguish himself from them, cannot abstract himself from them.[46]

While the poet-dreamer sets himself "Upon an eagle's watch, that [he] might see, / And seeing ne'er forget," he soon ceases to be a spectator aware of the importance of both vision and memory, and becomes instead, again, in Poulet's words,

> . . . like a wrestler so tightly entwined with his adversary that the same heat and the same lock seem to animate both of them. There is nothing so different from the state of the spectator one was just beforehand.[47]

The poet-dreamer experiences precisely the emotions that those around him experience. As Moneta identifies Saturn and Thea for the poet-dreamer, he reports: "Then came the griev'd voice of Mnemosyne [i.e., Moneta], / And griev'd I hearken'd" (I, 331-332). His instantaneous empathy--his ability to "take the depth / Of things as nimbly as the outward eye / Can size and shape pervade"--is a power (presumably both wonder and curse) that Keats always has had. But the result for the poet-dreamer is the experience of an absolute inertness. As he faces the dreadful tableau that is

Moneta's memory, he sees not only a lost place but a lost time--

> . . . if one can call time the permanence of inertia. It is a time that does not even flow, and which, like the "stagnant water," will continue not to flow, unless, only unless, something makes it move! A single chance stroke, an intervention from outside, can rouse this nothing, can fill this void.[48]

Once Saturn raises "his faded eyes," the poet-dreamer's feeling of "dumb enchantment" begins to break. He begins to be able to move outside of his own responses and to register and record some sense of Saturn as "the other." The poet-dreamer's "despair of change" becomes patently ironic as Saturn, in despair because of change, "look'd around, and saw his kingdom gone" (I, 401). And yet it is not the world that is altered:

> ". . . the stars their antient courses keep,
> Clouds still with shadowy moisture haunt the earth,
> Still suck their fill of light from sun and moon,
> Still buds the tree, and still the sea-shores murmur."
> (I, 419-422)

What has changed is Saturn:

> "Moan, Cybele, moan, for thy pernicious babes
> Have chang'd a God into a shaky palsy.
> . . . I have no strength left. . . ."
> (I, 425-427)

Like the poet-dreamer, Saturn experiences the pain of impotence: he is "swallow'd up / And buried from all godlike exercise" (I, 412-413). When the poet-dreamer attempts to exercise his own godlike power as poet, he is unable to separate himself sufficiently from what he sees and hears to make it bearable.

In speaking to "the frozen god" in the preceding lines, Thea has emphasized that "all the air / Is emptied of [his] hoary majesty" (I, 360-361), and yet, despite the emptiness, there is no room for anything--not even dreams. The world has become a place of harsh truths in which "unbelief has not a space to breathe" (I, 367). When Saturn begins to speak (at line 412), the poet-dreamer's experience of Saturn's words is that the god's feelings of sorrow and loss fill all space:

> As the moist scent of flowers, and grass,
> and leaves
> Fills forest dells with a pervading air
> Known to the woodland nostril, so the
> words
> Of Saturn fill'd the mossy gloom around,
> Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,
> And to the windings in the foxes' hole,
> With sad low tones, . . . and sent
> Strange musings to the solitary Pan.
> (I, 404-411)

The same sadness fills "the hollow brain" of Moneta, and the "nimble" mind of the poet-dreamer. He had grasped its depth before a word was spoken.

But once Saturn's speech stops and stillness and silence once again assume their sway, the poet-dreamer questions whether he has heard anything at all:

> Still fix'd he sat beneath the sable trees,
> . . . his awful presence there
> (Now all was silent) gave a deadly lie
> To what I erewhile heard. . . .
> (I, 446ff)

The situation resembles that of the last lines of "Ode to a Nightingale": the artist is unable to trust his own former perceptions--there still is no "stay or prop" to provide support or validation. As if to emphasize the psychological void in which all this occurs, the poet-dreamer sees Thea stretch "her white arm" to direct Saturn's eyes "through the hollow dark" (I, 455). The sounds of Saturn's lament have left no vestige, although they formerly filled all visible and invisible space. The darkness is now an emptiness, "a barren dream," that can be neither filled nor ignored.

As Thea and Saturn leave to join "'the families of grief'"--their brother and sister Titans who are "'roof'd in by black rocks'" and who "'waste in pain / And darkness for no hope'"--the poet-dreamer stands before the "open doors" (I, 466), reluctant to pass the portal. Beyond the "antichamber" may be an even more limited area with an even more restricted pattern of response.

What the poet-dreamer--and Keats, too--looks forward to attaining is the godlike condition that Apollo assumes at the conclusion of the first Hyperion fragment: to go beyond "dark, / And painful vile oblivion" (III, 86-87)--beyond "aching ignorance" (III, 107) --to a truly godlike state of "Knowledge enormous" (III, 113). Like the poet-dreamer, Apollo already has guessed that there is something more in the universe than "'the green turf [that is] hateful to [his] feet'" (III, 94). He asks Mnemosyne to "'point forth some unknown thing: / Are there not other regions than this isle? What are the stars?'" (III, 95-97) Once knowledge comes, it is imaged in spatial terms: it comes as an "enormous" thing of size and heft that fills the "aching" void of Apollo's "ignorance":

> "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. . . ."
> (III, 114-118)

Apollo's assumption of godhead, then, becomes a laying-in, rather than a putting-on, of knowledge. He sees "all at once": his vision is without time--everything is "now" and everything is eternal.

On the other hand, the "power . . . of enormous ken" that the poet-dreamer of The Fall of Hyperion

feels growing "within" (I, 303), while certainly an experience of expanded perception, is also, in a sense, an illusion, like the dreams of "fanatics" and the "guesses" of the savage. Paul de Man remarks on the role of the poet in The Fall:

> The poet is the chosen witness of the damage caused by time; [unlike Apollo] by growing in consciousness he gains no new attributes of beauty or might, merely the negative privilege of witnessing the death of those who surpassed him in greatness. . . . The dynamic thrust of history itself is frozen into immobility by the deadly power of time and the poet now has to expand his capacity for sympathy until it encompasses the full range of this tragedy. . . .[49]

But what the poet-dreamer sees is "Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe" (II, 9) precisely because it is perceived from a distance and an angle which serve to displace the experiential world--to obliterate everything that was formerly part of one's knowledge. In a physical, as well as perceptual frame, this vantage is like that of Leopold Bloom in the "Circe" episode of Ulysses, when he "eclipses the sun by extending his little finger."[50] This kind of parallax extends itself indefinitely as the poet-dreamer views "what things the hollow brain [of Moneta] / Behind enwombed" (I, 276-277). The huge tapestry--the "knowledge enormous"--that he then faces blocks out all else and becomes an overwhelming and, at first,

undecipherable mystery--an exclusionary, not an all-encompassing vision. Once again Poulet explains, in another context, the response of the poet-dreamer--and, later, of the Titans--to seeing "as a God sees":

> I know nothing about the event which has happened except that it has happened, that I cannot distinguish it from myself, and that it now forms a part of my very existence. . . . I am that which is happening, although I am also the one to whom it is happening. . . . What I know is that I am. What I do not know is what I am. . . . This astonishment is like a pause of the reflective activity, a momentary disappearance of the intelligible universe in which one situated his own being. One no longer knows where one is, one is lost, one no longer comprehends, one is at his wit's end, one knows not what to decide and feels as if he were struck stupid. This is an astonishment which allows us no margin for reflection. . . . My thought is nothing but bewilderment. . . . The bewilderment of being what happens to me.[51]

The "bewilderment" is a result of empathy, of an intense identification of the self and what lies beyond the self. The nightmare and the pain begin and end with the poet-dreamer's inability to assume any other stance in relation to the world than the one that he does assume. The simple, honest, "complaining" voice of Clymene in Hyperion expresses this inability to alter one's deep, habitual modes of seeing. Clymene says in Canto II, ". . . all my knowledge is that joy is gone, / And this thing woe crept in among our

hearts, / There to remain forever. . . " (253-255). Her "baby words" (314) incense the already wrathful Enceladus, who has been expected to tolerate the views of both the "over-wise" Oceanus and the "over-foolish" Clymene. Yet each of the Titans embodies a different way of responding to experience and, regardless of the angle of vision, each is trapped in his own perspective. Each has established, by virtue of his personality, his own singular way of seeing--his own inconstant "interior distance."

It is not simply fortuitous, then, that Keats begins and ends his poetic career with long poems in which he seeks to expand the boundaries of his own perception. He senses that on both sides of the observing, participating eye are barely discernible and unexplored worlds whose interplay can serve as apt subject matter for poetry.

When, in the early morning, Keats scales a little hill and attempts to open his perspective by standing on tip-toe, his quest is not unlike that of the poet who stands, small and insignificant, beside a giant goddess of a lost world and concentrates his deepest energies toward unpuzzling the enigmas she reveals to him. But while his scrutiny of nature in the earlier poem leads him back in time to mythic worlds that,

even within the confines of a "forlorn flower," have ample room to grow, the "larger" world of The Fall of Hyperion finds him where "I stood tip-toe" lost him--in a realm of myth, whose drama he contemplates and tries to comprehend in the very human terms of the earliest mythic poets. With its great depths of sorrow and its focus on loss, the old Titanic universe becomes for the later Keats a far more challenging and compelling realm for exploration. "Rightly understood," it can convey consoling truths not only about general human history, but about the history of every suffering individual. The problem that Keats must deal with, however, in The Fall of Hyperion is that of establishing his own unequivocal identity, of inwardly situating himself so that his consciousness, while brilliantly capable of registering and recording events, can also exist as an integrated, well-defended, and unassailable entity in an insecure world.

Interestingly, The Fall of Hyperion becomes, in large part, an almost self-indicting chronicle of Keats's inability to achieve his goal. Thus, what Keats writes about in The Fall centers on the psychological reality of entrapment--the feeling of being forced to exist in and make not only sense, but poetry, of a space and a time one seems not to have cre-

ated. This is vivified in a variety of ways and through a variety of personae: it is explored in detail in Hyperion; it is prefigured in the induction to The Fall of Hyperion; and it is realized in the poet-dreamer's initial--and in most ways, abiding--inability to respond constructively to what Moneta sets before him. Like the Titans of Hyperion, the poet-dreamer is virtually caged in his own imagination, feeling "As feels a dreamer what doth most create / His own particular fright."[52]

The vision Keats longs for in Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion is the kind of spiritual "disinterestedness" that he admires and praises in his sister-in-law and in Benjamin Bailey--a lack of "narvus" involvement, a "Minos-wise" relishing of "the real of beauty," not an entrapment in it. Keats's search throughout his poetry has been a quest for "something real in the World" and, concomitant with that "something real," an inner realm from which this "reality" may be observed and understood without diminution of self, without "the suffocation of accidents": a freedom from the "Moods of one's mind," an unknotting of the "tangled wonder" of his habitual way of seeing.

Notes: Chapter 6

[1] M. R. Ridley, Keats' Craftsmanship (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 83.

[2] Bernard Blackstone, The Consecrated Urn (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1959), p. 262.

[3] Blackstone, p. 257.

[4] Blackstone, p. 228.

[5] Ridley, p. 83.

[6] Jack Stillinger, "The Heart and Nature of Man," in The Hoodwinking of Madeline (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 63.

[7] Stillinger, p. 48.

[8] "Imagination and Reality in the Odes," in Stillinger, p. 116.

[9] Blackstone, p. 227.

[10] James Joyce, Ulysses (New York: The Modern Library, 1961), p. 189.

[11] Walter Pater, The Renaissance (New York: The Modern Library, undated), p. 196.

[12] Patricia Ball, The Central Self (London: Athlone Press, 1968), p. 143.

[13] Ball, p. 142.

[14] Thomas Hardy, "Neutral Tones," in Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy, ed, John Crowe Ransom (New York: Collier Books, 1970), p. 2.

[15] Hesiod, Theogony, trans. Norman O. Brown (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1953), p. 57.

[16] "Kronos," in The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd ed., eds. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 573.

[17] Georges Poulet, The Interior Distance, trans. Elliott Coleman (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 200.

18 Poulet, pp. 200-201.

19 Stuart M. Sperry, Keats the Poet (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 180-181.

20 The Keats Circle, 2nd ed., ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), I:196-197.

21 Keats Circle, I:181.

22 The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 2 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957 and 1961), I, entry 624.

23 Robert Gittings, John Keats (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), p. 255.

24 Walter Evert, Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), p. 231.

25 Paul de Man, Introd., The Selected Poetry of Keats (New York: New American Library, 1966), p. xxiv.

26 Blackstone, p. 229.

27 de Man, p. xxi.

28 de Man, p. xxi.

29 Stillinger, p. 113.

30 Ernst and Johanna Lehner, Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 16, 17 et passim.

31 Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 174.

32 William C. Stephenson, "The Performing Narrator in Keats's Poetry," KSJ, XXVI (1977), 70.

33 Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 591.

34 Arthur H. Bell, "'The Depth of Things': Keats and Human Space," KSJ, XXIII (1974), 78.

35 Bell, p. 93.

[36] Bate, p. 359.

[37] Bate, p. 360.

[38] Mario L. D'Avanzo, Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1967), p. 72.

[39] Stephenson, p. 51.

[40] Kenneth Muir, John Keats: A Reassessment (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1958), p. 110.

[41] Poulet, p. 188.

[42] Stuart A. Ende, Keats and the Sublime (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), p. 151.

[43] Bachelard, p. 36.

[44] James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), p. 215.

[45] Poulet, pp. 70-71.

[46] Poulet, p. 163.

[47] Poulet, p. 163.

[48] Poulet, p. 5.

[49] de Man, p. xxi.

[50] Ulysses, p. 495.

[51] Poulet, p. 6.

[52] Endymion IV, 889-890.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

. . . language bears within itself the dialectic of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up.

Gaston Bachelard
The Poetics of Space

With his brother George in America and Keats himself at Wentworth Place, the poet's mind at times gives way to a feeling of overwhelming separation, which can sometimes be countered by a sense of nearness:

> . . . --sometimes I fancy an immense separation, and sometimes, as at present, a direct communication of spirit with you. That will be one of the grandeurs of immortality--there will be no space. . . . (II:5)

Out of the kind of separation that Keats speaks of here grows an ability--and a need--to place events and individuals, most importantly himself, within a universe that affirms temporal and spatial realities. This becomes the benchmark of much of Keats's poetry, and is present to a very great degree in many of his letters as well. One means of eradicating the "immense separation" is a commonality of pursuit within time. Thus, he tells George and Georgiana Keats,

> . . . I shall read a passage of Shakespeare every Sunday at ten o Clock--you read one at the same time and we shall be as near each other as blind bodies can be in the same room-- (II:5)

As he writes to his brother and sister-in-law later in 1819, Keats is pleased to present vivid images of his own concreteness in relation to the solidity of the space he fills, and the integrity of the very material objects that surround him:

> . . . --the fire is at its last click--I am sitting with my back to it with one foot rather askew upon the rug and the other with the heel a little elevated from the carpet--I am writing this on the Maid's tragedy which I have read since tea with Great pleasure-- . . . . I require nothing so much of yourselves, however it may be when you are writing to me--Could I see the same thing done of any great Man long since dead it would be a great delight: as to know in what position Shakespeare sat when he began 'To be or not to be"--such thing[s] become interesting from distance of time or place. (II:73)

From certain circumscribed spaces, then, emanate intimacy and definition, because, bounded though they may be, these spaces serve to obliterate other kinds of boundaries. As Bachelard remarks:

> For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more important than determination of dates.[1]

Thus, regardless of its spatial or temporal remoteness, the space an individual occupies at any given time helps to characterize and humanize him.

But much depends upon the inner motion toward a connectedness with that space. As we have seen, the poet can connect with nothing in the small space of Burns's cottage: he observes the objects and recognizes their significance, but his own momentary lack of relatedness leaves them in their ordinary, unanimated state--mere commonplace things without personality. The closeness that Keats feels toward Burns is a

closeness that "presses upon" him and that consequently thwarts his ability to assume an encompassing, comprehensive stance. This situation is different in kind but not in quality from his feeling of removal in the Highlands poem, where the outer world is at such a distance that one loses not only that world, but all that is within one's self. Consequently, much depends on how space is experienced by the perceiving mind, which itself determines how "open" or "closed" a space is. Since so much hinges on Keats's own receptiveness or lack of receptiveness, the dialectic of "open" and "closed" is an extraordinarily interesting and often complex aspect of his poetry.

As Canto I of The Fall of Hyperion ends, for example, the poet-dreamer is faced with "open doors." The very idea of them is alarming, because, rather than providing a way out, they beckon the poet-dreamer more deeply in. Aware that he is as yet in "the Antichamber of this dream," the poet-dreamer "must delay," inviting any reader "who can unwearied pass / Onward," to do so. For his part, he may "perhaps no further dare." (A nice conundrum: what will the reader read if the poet-dreamer does not pass through?) While he "glean[s] [his] memory" of what is yet to be, the doors stand open, and, like the numerous doors in

Keats's "large Mansion of Many Apartments," they are "dark-- . . . leading to dark passages" (I:280).

We know of the importance to Keats of openness: in "Ode to Psyche," for example, the open window is essential to the character of the created environment. As it opens out, it simultaneously opens in, providing a profound and reciprocal enrichment. The "magic casements" of "Ode to a Nightingale," on the other hand, are harbingers of absolute solitude, almost as if, like the doors in The Fall of Hyperion, they opened more deeply into the "perilous seas" of the poet's own soul.[2]

The motif arises again in the "Sonnet to Sleep." There, the images all center on closedness, and yet the ultimate effect is one of opening:

> O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
> Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
> Our gloom-pleased eyes, embowered from the light,
> Enshaded in forgetfulness divine;
> O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
> In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
> Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
> Around my bed its lulling charities;
> Then save me, or the passing day will shine
> Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;
> Save me from curious conscience that still lords
> Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
> Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
> And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

As Keats asks Sleep to "Turn the key deftly . . . , / And seal the hushed casket of my soul," one has an almost Blakean vision, not of "the Limit of Opacity," or of "the Limit of Contraction,"[3] but of "the diamond which tho cloth'd / In rugged covering in the mine, is open all within."[4] In fact, as Bachelard says of quite another poem,

> . . . the poet has given concrete form to a very general psychological theme, namely that there will always be more things in a closed than in an open box.[5]

Thus, the very interiority of the casket in the "Sonnet to Sleep" underscores "the infinite quality of the intimate dimension"[6] the moment it is closed. At that point, "Limitless night ceases to be empty space."[7] Rather, the poet can find within himself a fruitful place to hide, a place that, paradoxically, is open. The sealed casket serves to create a clear demarcation between his own and some other world, an ongoing and ineffaceable differentiation between inner and outer realities. The one is no longer limited or colored by the other. The "material sublime," which Keats had wished to inform both his sleeping and waking dreams in his verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds, would then be not a "shadow of our own soul's daytime in the dark void of night," but would rather reflect the unjostled,

unworldly, thoroughly interior intimacy of the soul, in its integrity, apart from the world.

The same may be said of Keats's identification with a billiard ball or of his ability to "take part in [the] existence [of a sparrow] and pick about the Gravel" (I:186). Richard Woodhouse reports of Keats:

> He has affirmed that he can conceive of a billiard Ball that it may have a sense of delight from its own roundness, smoothness, volubility & the rapidity of its motion.--[8]

This is mentioned in the course of Woodhouse's analysis of Keats's remarks on "the poetical Character,"

> (. . . that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself--it has no self--it is every thing and nothing--it has no character. (I:386-387)

The billiard ball is a startling image, especially in acting as an example of a thing into which the essentially "characterless" poet can dream himself. Roundness, as Bachelard remarks, "gather[s] being together in its center":

> . . . images of <u>full roundness</u> help us to collect ourselves, permit us to confer an initial constitution on ourselves, and to confirm our being intimately, inside. For when it is experienced from the inside, devoid of all exterior features, being cannot be otherwise than round.[9]

At the same time, "a poet . . . knows that when a thing becomes isolated, it becomes round, assumes a figure of

being that is concentrated upon itself."[10] The image of the billiard ball, then, becomes one that is fraught with paradoxes. On the one hand, it implies a unity of being that cannot be dispersed; it implies an integrity that is almost synonymous with isolation; yet its "volubility" allows it to glide easily from place to place, to turn quickly from object to object. Thus, while it is chosen by Keats as an illustration of his own chameleonlike changeableness, the ball is itself almost emblematic of self-containment and isolation. It becomes, then, an utterly metaphysical image of Keats's desire for separation, his wish, mentioned consistently in his letters of late 1818, to "abstract" himself. Simultaneously, it becomes an image of his "mobility," to borrow Byron's term, which moves him about restlessly and with great facility, and allows him to invest himself momentarily in other people or things, but which permits him to settle nowhere for very long.

The same observations are true for the sparrow which "pick[s] about the Gravel" and with which Keats identifies himself in a letter to Benjamin Bailey. To enter into that small living creature is to recreate the world, to experience human isolation on a more compressed, yet more objective scale. Discussing "the bird" in a phenomenological context, Bachelard comments:

> . . . the bird's being in its cosmic situation [is] a centralization of life guarded on every side, enclosed in a live ball, and consequently, at the maximum of its unity. All other images, whether of form, color or movement, are stricken with relativism in the face of what we shall have to call the absolute bird, the being of round life.[11]

Thus, Keats's very facility in "filling some other Body" (I:387), in these cases at least, guarantees him an inner cohesiveness, and simultaneously serves to underscore his own "sublime Solitude" (I:403).

The closed-in feelings of Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion are very different from the secret intimacy of the closed casket, or from Keats's identification with bird or billiard ball. In both Hyperions, the narrowing is so claustrophobic that it allows room for nothing--neither expression, nor rebellion, nor hope. There are no possibilities that one can examine, no avenues of escape, no perspective that permits Keats to do other than "wander in a barren dream." The poet-dreamer knows, as Keats knew when he sat down to read King Lear once again, how the tragedy ends, and because it can go nowhere but where it goes, the poet, as the expressive, active part of the poet-dreamer, feels as entrapped as do the characters his dream creates. On the other hand, the shrinking implied in partaking of the life of a bird or the actions of a

ball is an enclosing that is protective, that allows for a nearly perfect concentricity in which the self, as an actively perceiving consciousness, can continue unfettered and undisturbed.

The human ability to visit space with such disparate apprehensions of its properties, as if space were itself a bellows we could expand or contract by means of mood or will, is part of an introspective and virtually automatic gesture that Keats brings to his poetry and examines, describes, and images there. From his earliest--almost schoolboy--efforts in verse, through the Burns poems, the great odes, and the two Hyperions, Keats treats exterior and interior space as twin mirrors that may reflect or shape or distort each other. The real and imagined worlds of "I stood tiptoe," for example, are indistinguishable in their detail: the only delination between the two occurs in the midst of Keats's description of his imagined space when his clarifying voice remarks, "Were I in such a place. . . ." These inner and outer worlds become less and less distinguishable from one another, however, as the poet progresses in his art. The positive force of this lack of boundaries achieves its finest expression in the last stanza of "Ode to Psyche" where the two worlds, barely separated by an open window,

merge within the validating intellect of the adoring poet. A very different kind of merging occurs in The Fall of Hyperion with the creation of an incommodious landscape--one that the mind dreams, but that the mind cannot control.

Thus, the dimension of space, which closes and opens; which receives its definition from the perceiver and which, in turn, acts to define; which coalesces and diperses; which changes its properties commensurate with the chameleonlike variety of the perceiving mind; which at times ceases to have depth and texture, taking on the attributes of a flat pasteboard, and which a moment later assumes such wayward, unmanageable configurations that treasures become lost in it: apprehensions of space become analogy, metaphor, the very form and fabric of vision--not only in Keats's poetry, but in nearly all his apprehensions of inner mood and outer reality as expressed in his letters as well.

Notes: Chapter 7

[1] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Becon Press, 1965), p.

[2] In his letters, Keats sometimes writes of the wonder of windows. In a delightful letter to his sister, he tells of "a partiality for a handsome Globe of goldfish." His imagination centers first on all the preparations he would make for the comfort of the fish, and then broadens outward:

> --Then I would put [the bowl] before a handsome painted window and shade it all around with myrtles and Japonicas. I should like the window to open onto the Lake of Geneva--and there I'd sit and read all day like the picture of somebody reading-- (II:47)

Almost always playful in his letters to Fanny, Keats very nearly exceeds himself in this one. And he does here what he frequently does--he shifts from looking out to looking in: that is, he ends up being on both sides of the window at once.

[3] William Blake, "The Four Zoas: Night the Fourth," in The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p. 331.

[4] "Milton: Book the First," in Blake, p. 125.

[5] Bachelard, p. 88.

[6] Bachelard, p. 86.

[7] Bachelard, p. 230.

[8] The Keats Circle, 2nd ed., ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), I, 59.

[9] Bachelard, p. 234.

[10] Bachelard, p. 239.

[11] Bachelard, p. 238.

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