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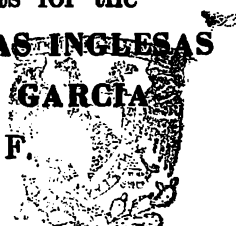
KEATS'S ATTITUDES TO LIFE AND POETRY
IN
"Sleep and Poetry", "Endymion", "Hyperion"
and the
"Fall of Hyperion"

T E S I S

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of the requirements for the
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TO MY PARENTS

With love and gratitude

M. 233601

TO MY TEACHER

Dra. Enriqueta González Padilla.

TO MY FRIEND

Olga Flores

O U T L I N E .

I.- THE ROMANTIC PERIOD- - - - -	Page 1
II.- " <u>SLEEP AND POETRY</u> "- - - - -	Page 6
III.- " <u>ENDYMION</u> "- - - - -	Page 12
IV.- " <u>HYPERION</u> "- - - - -	Page 30
V.- " <u>THE FALL OF HYPERION</u> "- - -	Page 41
VI.- CONCLUSION.- - - - -	Page 53

It is legitimate to date the beginning of the Romantic Period in England from the publication of the Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. There were two generations of poets in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. The first one (1798-1815) was formed by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, who belonged to the Lake School; the second group was integrated by Byron, Shelley and Keats, who did not belong to any particular school but whose revolt of passion against reason was a common tendency.

Keats's development as a creative artist who tirelessly struggled throughout his short career to break away from "the didacticism, the sentimentality of Moore, the patriotic flutings of Campbell, the elegant inanities of Rogers, the chivalry of Scott, and the melancholy posturings of young Byron",⁽¹⁾ as variously listed by Aileen Ward in the second chapter of her book on Keats, is a source of interest to any student of English Letters. Although Keats fell under the influence of Leigh Hunt, a polifacetic

1) Aileen Ward, John Keats, "The Making of a Poet", Secker & Ward, London, 1963, p. 44.

writer of his time, whose theories about poetry were rather superficial —poetry should be regarded merely as an indulgence in the pleasure of the senses— he soon managed to break away from him. Keats had a "genuine adhesion to the notion of priesthood in literature" (1), and by the time of his death he had already achieved maturity as a poet and as a human being. Furthermore, he had been able to reach perfect balance within his art, but as we are dealing with a Romantic poet, it is important to notice some of the principal aspects of neo-classicism in order to understand Keats's intellectual stand-point in contrast to that of his predecessors.

During the Augustan Age the writers endeavoured to imitate the works of Virgil, Horace, Cicero and Lucretius, who in their day had sought to emulate the methods of the Classical Greek writers. For almost a century, reason and the critical habit continued to prevail over emotions and the creative spirit. Naturalism and formalism were supreme in this age of prose and reason, which set up

1) Legouis and Cazamian's, History of English Literature, Aldine Press, 1971, p. 1061.

rules of writing and principles of good form. During the Romantic Period, however, many poets began to revolt against the formal rules of the classical tradition. They turned to nature and simple life (a movement encouraged by the doctrines of J. J. Rousseau), and to the past, particularly medieval tales and ballads. Their subject-matter became the remote and unfamiliar, or the out-of-door aspects of the world, or human nature in terms of the brotherhood of man. They renewed the sensuous elements of love and adventure characteristic of the old romances which were stories written in verse or in prose during the Middle Ages. "The essential ideas were a belief in the intuitive powers of the imagination, in the value of the individual as opposed to group conformity and external authority, in the exaltation of rural life, of content over form, of the subjective over the objective, of the emotion and imagination over the intellect and judgement". (1) At the beginning of his career Keats's overwealthy imagination distorts his vision. In some of his poems as in Sleep and Poetry and Endymion, the

1) Morris H. Needleman, Williams Bradley Otis, An Outline History of English Literature, Volume II: Since Milton, Barnes & Noble Books, U.S.A., 1961, p. 409.

language is artificial, loaded, exaggerated. The poems are flawed by a remoteness, a rambling of episodes, a disproportion of structure, and, especially, a flaccid sensuousness and lush sentimentality. But in spite of these shortcomings, his talent is foreshadowed. It is in some of his masterpieces, like Hyperion, that he could at last achieve the fusion of form and content, reason and feeling, sensation and intellect; in other words, the order and harmony which must prevail in a real work of art.

The split between the heart and the intellect; this deep-rooted duality, is typical of Romanticism. Keat's soul division between dream and reality, between the world of sensations and the world of the mind, between poetic truth—beauty regarded as truth from the poet's imaginative powers and philosophic truth—cold facts, rationalism—created a tense inward struggle which reflects itself in his work, giving it great dramatic intensity. For Keats the world of beauty, grasped, perceived or created by the imagination, clashed with the tragic world of reality, but he found it impossible to ignore or

turn away from the actual world. Keats would not have been able to fulfill his ambition to become a great poet if he had not struggled between his tendency to regard poetry as an indulgence in the pleasure of the senses and a deeper ambition: his desire to identify himself with human suffering. As a poet, not only as a dreamer, Keats knew he could not escape from reality. His attitude to life and poetry experienced a great change in a short span of time. It is the purpose of this essay to study these changes in four poems: Sleep and Poetry, Endymion, Hyperion, and The Fall of Hyperion.

It was in Hampstead, a pleasant country village, in which Hunt held a kind of literary court, where he was visited by Byron, Shelley, Moore, Lamb and many other famous men, that Keats was finally introduced to him by his tutor Cowden Clarke. Hunt, a liberal in politics and a romantic in literary training, a poet, essayist, editor, and dramatist, burst out in admiration after reading Keats's poems written in praise of Clarke and himself. Keats felt great admiration and respect for Hunt's theories about poetry. He attributed to him the notion that

poetry should be a kind of transcendental experience leading into a supernatural realm. Later on, however, he discovered that Hunt's poetical notions were absolutely banal.

One night in Hampstead the conversation ran on so late that Hunt offered to put him overnight in his study. Keats was too excited to sleep and as he lay there with his eyes open, he had a sort of revelation of his own destiny. He was able to see with the eyes of the imagination Bousin's Empire of Flora, a painting which he and Hunt might have studied that afternoon, and draw a comparison between it and his literary career. He realized that the poetry he had been writing until then had not dealt with human sorrow, only with the pleasant aspect of life. Keats became conscious at that moment, that in order to be able to fulfill his mission as a poet, he had to wrest beauty from the suffering of mankind. He could not yet envisage this new kind of poetry clearly, but he knew he could write it. His overexcited imagination took hold of him and he began to express his thoughts in Sleep and Poetry, which epitomizes his poetical beliefs at the time, and dimly foreshadows

his development. It is a long, rambling and ecstatic poem, which can be considered as the key to Keat's early conflict between dream and reality. It expresses Keats's romantic concept of poetry. Nature is the eternal source of delight; poetry is the soul's reaction to the beauty which he finds in it. There is a relation, however, between sleep—the unconscious world— and inspiration. During sleep the poet has visions which are "awful, sweet and holy". The goal he struggles to reach is fame, which is attained through poetry.

"No one who once the glorious sun has seen,
And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
For his great Maker's presence, but must know
What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow:" (1)

Consequently, the first invocation of the poem is dedicated to sleep, nature and fame; the second to poetry, which is a sort of substitute for religion, understood in terms of paganism: the love of beauty and art. Poetry is considered as a goddess and the poet would like to become a priest, a "denizen", of religion. Not only that, but he would also like to die "a death of luxury". (According to Hunt's concepts,

1) Keats, Poetical Works, Oxford University Press, London, 1970, p. 43, line 41.

that poetry should be ornamental, a poet was one who indulged in luxury).

The influence of neo-classicism on Keats is present in the reference to Greek legends and myths such as Apollo, Flora and Pan, which the poem contains. The poet's enthusiasm grows as he becomes aware of the immense force of poetry. He is able to visualize his brilliant future within literature.

"Then the events of this wide world I'd seize
Like a strong giant, and my spirit tease
Till at its shoulders it should proudly see
Wings to find out an immortality". (1)

But life is ephemeral and the poet has strange forebodings that he may not fulfill his vocation as a poet. It is as if he were begging the pagan gods to allow him to fulfill it. The tone of his voice is pathetic:

"O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed". (2)

Yet, he conceives these years as a series of joys. He wants to pass through the realm of Flora and old Pan; to enjoy the satisfaction of all the senses. But these youthful pleasures, this frivolous manner of looking at life does not satisfy him entirely.

1) Ibid., p. 44, line 82.

2) Ibid., p. 44, line 96.

"And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts". (1)

He wants to establish a sympathy with human sorrow, but he is still too young; too immature to be able to understand what suffering really means. He is carried away by his imagination and he has the vision of a splendid charioteer before whom "shapes of delight" emerge. The charioteer bends forward, listens and writes down what these mysterious creatures seem to tell him. It is evident that Keats's prophetic vision of himself is portrayed through the charioteer (the poet), and that through this vision he is implying that a certain kind of knowledge is achieved through poetry. But his imagination fails him again, as it is wont to do many a time, and this magnificent vision fades. Keats is left alone to face the crude facts of life, but he shows that he is not consistent with his former attitude. He rejects reality immediately:

"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". (2)

1) Ibid., p. 45, line 122.

2) Ibid., p.46, line 155. (underlinings mine)

Keats's idealistic position is reflected in these lines: it is evident that he lacks experience. Reality upsets him. The prosaic, sordid side of life provokes in him a moral divorce. His tendency towards escapism is manifested. He cannot accept the present state of things in the poetic realm:

"Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood, that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old?"(1)

There is a nostalgic feeling for the past; for a Golden Age which will never come back. Neo-classicism is attacked. With its excessive preoccupation with the form, its rules and laws, poetry has almost been suffocated, but Keats prophesies a new era will begin for poetry. This new era is Romanticism in which nature becomes the source of inspiration. Hunt's notions of poetry, however—that it should be regarded as a palliative only—are present throughout the poem. Hence, the aim of poetry becomes vague:

"forgetting the great and
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man."(2)

1) Ibid., p. 46, line 163.

2) Ibid., p. 48, line 245.

In keeping with this effeminate point of view,
Keats gives his definition of a good poet:

"And they shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things".(1)

Keats's poetic creed, though still immature,
is absolutely sincere. Furthermore, in the incredible
short span of four years he managed to achieve all
his dreams about immortality and fame. It is not
bold then to say that his faith in his own prophetic
vision was infallible. Though at this time the natural
habitation of his mind was the pure romantic kingdom
of beauty, Keats already had more than a premonition
of what lay behind. He still had to cross through the
realms of Flora and Pan, which he later did in
Endymion, but his ideas of the end and aim of poetry
were already hinted at. The lines in which he refers
to the mortal struggle he is about to begin bear
witness to it, though they may seem melodramatic:

"yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me, and I glean
Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen
The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear
As anything most true; as that the year
Is made of the four season—manifest
As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,
Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I
Be but the essence of deformity,
A coward, did my very eye-lids wink

1) Ibid., p. 48, line 245.

At speaking out what I have dared to think.
Ah! rather let me like a madman run
Over some precipice; let the hot sun
Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down
Convuls'd and headlong! an inward frown
Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
An ocean dim, sprinkled with many a 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!". (1)

Keats's two antagonistic attitudes: the desire to escape from reality, and at the same time to assume the suffering of mankind, are at the roots of his inner conflict. A conflict which forced him to write great poetry. He would not have been able to achieve this, if he had remained among "O'erwhelming sweets", Floras and Pans forever.

"Sleep and Poetry" was published in March 1817; in April, Keats began Endymion. It is the story of a man who fell in love with a beautiful but unattainable ideal; an ideal which can only be achieved through erotic love. Erotic sensibility is a characteristic which is common to the Romantic writers; the theme of the "femme fatale" or "fatal woman" is usual among them. Keats is no exception

1) Ibid., p. 49, line 290.

to the rule. Probably, he took elements from this theme and developed them in Endymion in his own way. In the Romantic Agony, Mario Praz says:

"The ancient myths, such as that of the Sphinx, of Venus and Adonis, of Diana and Endymion, were called to illustrate this type of relationship which was to be so insistently repeated in the second half of the century". (1) The fatal woman's relationship with her lovers was that of superiority. The lover was usually a youth who maintained a passive attitude. He was obscure or inferior either in condition or in physical exuberance. The fatal woman ended by devouring him. Although this is not Endymion's case, the truth is that each time that the shepherd-prince meets the goddess, he falls into a deep depression after having contemplated his love. The clash with reality is too strong for him, and leaves him with an acute feeling of loneliness and frustration. This was the case with most of the Romantic writers. They tried to escape from reality, through their ideals: love of nature,

1) Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, Oxford University Press, London, 1970, p. 215.

art, freedom, humanity. Many times, however, their inability to face life as it is, made them search for destructive means of evasion.

Keats told his sister the story of Endymion in the letter he wrote to her on September 10, 1817.

"Many years ago there was a young handsome Shepherd who fed his flocks on a Mountain's Side called Latmus—he was a very contemplative sort of Person and lived solitarily among the trees and Plains little thinking—that such a beautiful Creature as the Moon was growing mad in Love with him—However so it was; and when he was asleep on the Grass, she used to come down from heaven and admire him excessively for a long time; and at last could not refrain from carrying him away in her arms to the top of that high Mountain Latmus while he was a dreaming— but I dare say you have read this and all the other beautiful Tales which have come down from the ancient times of that beautiful Greece". (1)

The poem consists of four thousand lines and

1) Maurice Buxton Forman, ed., The Letters of John Keats, letter No. 19, Sept. 19, 1817, Oxford University Press, London, 1935, p. 38.

is divided into four parts. (It is written in heroic couplets, in iambic pentameter). The myth provides the background for the first book. The romance of Endymion and Rhoebe happens in a sort of mythical Golden Age when man had not yet lost contact with nature. Keats's poetic thought is expressed in the first opening lines. He explains the manner in which the soul instinctively perceives beauty. It is this beauty perceived by man which binds his soul to the earth. It is a means of enduring his mortal fate.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth". (1)

Instances of beauty are the sun, the moon, old trees, clear rills and many other things we have imagined or have heard or read about. These things of beauty are not perceived for a short moment; the soul identifies with them and transforms them into poetry. Beauty is identified with truth which is immortal and must remain with man forever, else he dies.

1) Keats, Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 55, line 1.

"Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'er-cast,
They always must be with us, or we die." (1)

There is a festival in honour of Pan and Endymion's sister, Peona, becomes aware of her brother's sufferings. She persuades him to trust her with his secret. Endymion tells her about his three encounters with Phoebe, the moon. The first one took place in the forest, the second one in a well; the third in a cave. In each one of these encounters with the moon-goddess there was an exaltation of the senses, but when the bliss of love disappeared, there remained nothing but emptiness. As we have already said, this attitude was typical of the Romantic writers. The clash with reality became too painful for them, and as in the case of Endymion, left them with a bitter sense of frustration.

Keats's personal philosophy about happiness is given in the famous passage where he defends his love against Peona's criticism:

"Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space". (2)

1) Ibid., p. 55, line 25.

2) Ibid., p. 74, line 777.

"Fellowship with essence" means "an emphatic fusion with particular things of beauty". (1) For Keats there exist different levels of happiness. The simplest one consists in the response of our senses, when we feel the contact of a rose-leaf in our skin. Through this primary union with nature, our senses are awakened, and we listen to old songs which were sung in a past golden age. If this miracle takes place, it means that we have already achieved communion with the divine world of nature and art. Only through the annihilation of the personality is man able to achieve this fusion with the spirit of essential beauty. There is a resurrection of things through the "kiss of music", the wind, old songs, ditties, prophecies and so on; but there are other bonds which are more "self-destroying", because in them the surrender of the self is more complete and permanent; and these are "love and friendship". The crown of values is love, which in Keats's opinion is the worthiest goal of all our striving:

1) Kenneth Muir, ed., John Keats, A Reassessment, Clarice Godfrey, "Endymion", Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1969, p. 27.

"But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.
All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
There hangs by unseen film, and orb'd drop
Of light, and that is love". (1)

Sexual love is an "unsating food"; it is like
being in paradise. The most ambitious men have
sacrificed all their dreams of greatness to achieve
love's "endless bliss".

"Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,
That men, who might have tower'd in the van
Of all the congregated world, to fan
And winnow from the coming step of time
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
Left by men- slugs and human serpentry,
Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium". (2)

The flowers bloom, the fish have mail, the
earth rivers, woods and vales, the meadows runnels,
because the souls kiss and greet. Consequently,
according to Keats, human love, precisely in this
form of fellowship with essence, is a principle of
beauty in nature and in the universe.

Keats explains his theories about "fellowship
with essence" or negative capability, in his letter

1) Keats, Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 74, line 797.

2) Ibid., p. 75, line 816.

to Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818.

"As to the Poetical Character itself (I mean that sort of which, If I am a thing, I am a member; that sort distinguished from 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- it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto- be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has so much delight in conceiving a Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things anymore than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in for -and filling some other Body- The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute- the poet has none; no identity- he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures". (1)

1) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 93, 27 Oct. 1818, p. 227.

In the II Book, Endymion decides to search for Phoebe in the depth of the earth. He visits the Bower of Adonis; there he learns about Venus and Adonis's tragic love-story. The sea-born goddess fell in love with Adonis but her love was not reciprocated; Adonis contented himself with being loved. Later on, when Adonis was killed by a boar, Venus became almost mad with pain. Jove moved by her sorrow, decreed that Adonis should be rear'd back to life each summer. Endymion's love sickness increases as he watches the lover's happiness, but Venus, being an immortal goddess, is able to see into his future. She prophesies he will find happiness one day. After he visits the Bower of Adonis, Endymion flies away upon the wings of a large eagle, which takes him to a jasmine bower where he is allowed to see Phoebe once again. But she is an elusive presence, who hints at her reasons for concealment. If Jove and Minerva discover that she is in love, she will lose her realm:

"Horror rushes
To palpable before me—the sad look
Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion

In reverence veiled—my crystalline dominion
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!" (1)

Endymion's loneliness becomes unbearable when she departs again. He strays until he finds a grotto where he takes refuge against a storm. There he ponders on all his life. He remembers the festival in honour of Pan, his sister's sorrow and his own wandering until he met Phoebe, and he says:

"How long must I remain in jeopardy
Of blank amazements that amaze no more?
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
All other depths are shallow: essences,
Once spiritual, are like muddy less," (2)

Nothing more can satisfy him after he has tasted her love. Phoebe's brilliant presence has darkened everything which once seemed beautiful to him. While he is reflecting on all these things, he begins to hear strange noises. Suddenly a river springs before his eyes, and he listens to Alpheus's pathetic love-story. He fell in love with Arethusa, a peerless nymph who could not requite his love because of her vows to Diana. There is a touch of irony in Arethusa's lamentation. She wishes that the goddess herself had fallen in love so that she

1) Keats, *Poetical Works*, *op. cit.*, p. 99, line 789.

2) *Ibid.*, p. 102, line 901.

didn't feel so guilty. Alpheus tries to console her by telling her that Diana must feel the same pains occasionally.

"Those fitful sighs
'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
A Dewy balm upon them!—fear no more,
Sweet Arethusa! Diana's self must feel
Sometime these very pangs". (1)

Endymion's sympathy for the thwarted lovers is expressed in his prayer to the one-goddess before he reaches the sea in the last part of the second book:

"I urge
Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;
And make them happy in some happy plains". (2)

The poem's main theme—the "immortality of passion"—is stressed through Endymion's encounters with all these famous lovers.

In the III Book Phoebe disappears into the background and there remains only a thin thread with the poem's main theme, through Glaucus's story. Endymion makes his way across the bottom of the sea where the sight of the skeletons of men, beasts, elephants and nameless monsters frightens

1) Ibid., p. 102, line 901.

2) Ibid., p. 105, line 1012.

him. He meets Glaucus, a wretched old man, who fell in love with Scylla, the nymph, when he was young, but as he was refused by her, he found relief in Circe, the demon-goddess. When Glaucus discovered her true personality, Circe took revenge by condemning him to a thousand years of old age. She also punished innocent Scylla by taking her life from her. The shepherd-prince does not only rescue him, but he also restores to life his beloved Scylla and all lovers drowned in the sea. Endymion emerges from this adventure tested in courage and humanity and ready to continue his journey through the air.

It is through the stories of all these lovers: Venus and Adonis, Alpheus and Arethusa, Glaucus and Scylla, that the power and importance of erotic love is stressed throughout the poem. After Endymion has restored Glaucus's youth and brought back to life all the other lovers who were lying at the bottom of the sea, they all go to pay homage to Neptune. There Endymion receives his recompense. He listens to a voice that tells him he will be crowned with love and glory.

"Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done—
Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won,
Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!" (1)

But before this happens, he has to go through his last trial. He has travelled to the depth of the earth, and to the bottom of the sea, now he will have to go through the air. This means that before he is fit for heaven, he has to be spiritualized through suffering.

In Book IV Endymion is preparing himself for the journey to heaven's dome by offering vows in the middle of the forest, when he hears the voice of an Indian Maid who seems to be in the same painful plight that he is: sad, lost and lonely. The Indian Maid being young and beautiful: furthermore, sharing Endymion's attitude to love, is too great a temptation for him to resist. He falls in love with her in spite of his love for Phoebe. It is here that his painful soul-division starts, because he cannot understand how he can love another person besides Phoebe. Mercury appears before him and the Indian Maid; he offers

1) Ibid., p. 131, line 1022.

them two winged steeds and they start their journey to heaven mounted upon them. Endymion falls into a sort of reverie and he sees Diana in front of him but he cannot resist the temptation to kiss the sleeping Maid who is riding next to him, and as he does this, Phoebe disappears. Endymion is torn between the thought of his treachery to the moon-goddess and his love for the Indian Maid. When they both disappear, he becomes much discouraged and he wanders until he discovers "The Cave of Quietude". In this place he recovers his health again. He remains there until grief and woe are replaced by self-contentment. When he comes back from the Cave he asks the Indian Maid to share his simple life of human pleasures with him, but for some unknown reason, she refuses to swear vows to him. Endymion is seized once more with despondency, he decides to become a hermit; his sister Peona will take care of the Indian Maid. It is not until this moment of self-denial, when he decides to devote his life to the welfare of the shepherds, that the miraculous transformation of the dark-tressed girl into the moon-goddes takes

place.

Many allegorical interpretations have been given to the poem. They all link Endymion with the poet. His adventures are considered a symbol for the poet's quest in search of a poetic ideal. Some critics believe Phoebe stands as an image of "essential beauty", while others think that the Indian Maid represents sensual passion. Keats himself stated his purpose in writing Endymion in a letter he wrote to Bailey, a friend of his who was studying theology at Oxford, and who introduced him to philosophy.

"(Endymion) will be a test, a trial to my Powers of Imagination and chiefly of my invention which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4,000 lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry; and when I consider that this is a great task, and that when done it will make me say —God forbid that I should be without such a task! I have heard Hunt say and may be asked —Do not the lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are

forgotten and found new in a second Reading: which may be food for a Week's stroll in Summer?... Besides a long poem is a test of Invention which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry, as Fancy is the Sails, and Imagination the Rudder." (1)

It is evident that Keats did not intend to write an allegory. As he himself declared, he only wanted to test his powers of imagination and invention. Clarice Godfrey in his essay on Endymion points out that all allegorical interpretations have their basis on the passage where the shepherd defends his love against his sister's criticism.

"It is only on the assumption that the words "a fellowship with essence", mean "union with some kind of transcendent reality" that Endymion's love for Phoebe can be said, with any confidence to symbolize the pursuit of an ideal." (2)

However, the fact that Keats uses the word "essences" in other parts of the poem, suggests that he uses the term to describe his particular

1) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 25, 8 Oct. 1817, p. 52.

2) Kenneth Muir, ed., op. cit., p. 27.

response to other forms of beauty.

In my opinion, Keats was not trying to work out an allegory, but it is logical that his inner self-division should project itself upon his work. In Sleep and Poetry he was anxious to establish contact with human sorrow, but he was still too young, too immature to be able to tear himself away from the pleasures that life offered him. Besides, he could not face reality as it was. In Endymion, however, he had to deal with all sorts of problems. He had to win his independence from Leigh Hunt. He was worried about Tom Keats's illness (he didn't know whether or not it was consumption); he himself had to struggle against a venereal disease and was running short of funds most of the time. All these experiences must have helped him to mature. The change of tone in Book IV reflects the change in Keats's own life. The shepherd-prince suffers so much that he has to search for refuge in "The Cave of Quietude". In this strange place, he can at last regain peace. He arrives almost to a state of absolute indifference. He is no longer in "the realm of Flora and Pan", but

in a sort of "dark paradise" where "new-born woes" pierce him continually. He falls into a dreamless sleep and awakens with his strength renewed. He achieves a kind of spiritual freedom which he had never felt before. If the "message" of the poem is, as Godfrey says, "that man is purified by suffering",⁽¹⁾ then it is possible to deduce that Keats had indeed made great progress from his former banal attitude towards life and poetry to this last conclusion at which he arrived after a long spiritual struggle. I believe that in Endymion Keats attempted to find a solution to his inner conflict between dream and reality. He tried to integrate these two opposite worlds. In spite of the many attacks that the poem has received, it is still worth while reading and studying. Its imagery is beautiful, the heroic couplets are smooth and the description of the settings luxurious. Keats's richness of imagination is present throughout the poem.

Endymion was finished in December 1817. On January 23rd., 1818, Keats wrote to his friend Haydon, the famous classical painter, whom he had
1) Ibid., p. 36.



met at Hampstead three years before, the following lines:

—"in Endymion I think you may have many bits of the deep and sentimental cast— the nature of Hyperion will lead me to treat it in a more naked and Grecian manner". (1)

This change was significant, because it meant that Keats was psychologically prepared to give up the "mawkish" tone, the excess of sentimentality that characterized his former poetry, for another style. One in which his new attitude to life could be reflected and that allowed him to express his ideas with more depth. In other words, he had finally won independence from Hunt's influence. In Hyperion, the effeminacy and intensity which impairs many passages of Sleep and Poetry and Endymion, has disappeared completely. It has been substituted by Keats' s best qualities which are his manliness, courage and determination.

Keats had decided to write Endymion, as a test of his ability and as a trial for his imaginative

1) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 38, 23 Jan. 1818, p. 82.

powers. He wanted to learn the difficulties of writing a long narrative poem through practice, not only through theory. Endymion's failure taught Keats a hard lesson, but it was a fruitful experience to him. He had to accept sorrow as part of everyday experience. Bailey's conception of poetry, that it should not consist of mere luxuriant description or exquisite sentiment, but of moral and philosophic truth, had a great influence upon him. He began to study philosophy: Socrates and Plato. He read Milton's Paradise Lost and Cary's translation of Dante. He became interested in religion; the figure of Jesus attracted him. The unfavourable criticism that Endymion received, and his brother Tom's painful agony, changed his superficial ideas about life and literature in a radical way.

Both poems Endymion and Hyperion deal with feeling, but the difference between them is that in Endymion happiness is identified with love, beauty and truth, whereas in Hyperion, sorrow has become more beautiful than beauty itself. In the letter to Bailey, written on November 22nd., 1817, Keats says: "O for a Life of Sensations

rather than of thoughts", (1) but Hyperion is a philosophic poem which deals with human sorrow as the source of all wisdom, whereas in Endymion the pleasure of the senses is exalted. Keats's change of attitude from one poem to another is evident: Endymion and Hyperion do not seem to have been written by the same man. Keats makes a comparison in his letter to Bailey between two kinds of persons: "In passing however I must say of one thing that has pressed upon me lately and increased my Humility and capability of submission and that is this truth —Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect— by (for but) they have not any individuality, and determined Character— I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self Men of Power..." (2) He identifies Men of Achievement with Men of Genius. The quality inherent to this kind of men is "negative capability", which implies a state of passive sensitiveness and

1) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 32, 22 Nov., 1817, p. 68.

2) Ibid., p. 67.

extreme receptivity. It is a condition which is essential to poetic nature; the way to self-achievement is through self-annihilation. The poet is the only man capable of reaching beyond himself, to apprehend eternal truths of existence and transmit them directly to humanity.

I believe that the character of Hyperion is a symbol for the men of Power, whereas Apollo, the god of poetry, is a man of Genius. Hyperion has an identity; Apollo has none.

"I am gone
Away from my own bosom: I have left
My strong identity, my real self". (1)

In this same letter Keats expresses his regret for not having a philosophic mind:

"I am continually running away from the subject—sure this cannot be exactly the case with a complex Mind— one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits—who would exist partly on thought—to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind..."(2)

In Hyperion though, Keats had already achieved

1) Keats, op. cit., p. 223, line 112.

2) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 32, 22 Nov., 1817, p. 68.

a philosophy of life. He had come to the full realization that wisdom is the crown of all values and that it cannot be obtained without sacrifice. Tom's illness, his premonitions about his own early death, his desire to do humanity some good, the sense of failure provoked by the savage criticism that Endymion received, made him search refuge in the abstract world of beauty which Hyperion represents.

The poem develops in two levels; it is a political poem in the sense that it represents the inevitable march of Progress and History and it is a philosophic poem about sorrow, wisdom and beauty, which Keats accepted as correlatives. Keats, like most of the Romantic writers, was in favour of a more democratic system of government. He hated tyranny and despotism. He desired for England a better way of living, one in which Justice existed for everybody, not only for the privileged few. The poem as a whole expresses his belief in human progress, but actual self experience had taught him that spiritual growth cannot be achieved without suffering. The old system embodied by the Olympians must be overthrown by a new generation of gods, who are better than them in all

aspects, more beautiful and wiser. Apollo represents Keats's ideals. He has achieved immortality by taking upon himself the sorrows of mankind.

Keats expresses his belief in Progress through his presentation of the old gods who have been defeated by the new. The tension of the poem undergoes a "crescendo" from beginning to end. Saturn is not seen any more as an almighty god but as a gray-haired realmless man who is a pathetic figure altogether. He is not surrounded by life but by death:

"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,
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips". (1)

Saturn cannot believe he has lost his power. His kingdom represented the fruit of the struggle between Chaos and Creation; out of it grew the Earth. He belongs to the race of the Titans—the old gods who reigned before the days of Zeus—and who have been displaced by the Olympians. Hyperion, held in respect as the spirit of the Sun, is the sole survivor among this desolation, but he does not feel safe either; he is afraid he will share the fate of

1) Keats, Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 220, line 7.

the Titans. He believes he will soon fall: he knows
it is inevitable

"Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
Of all my lucent empire? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry,
I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness." (1)

The main difference between Hyperion and
Apollo his successor, is that the former is not
as aware of human sorrow as Apollo will be. He
has power but he does not have negative capability.
Coelus, his mother, speaks about the generational
gap, which is the reason of the feud among the gods.

"There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods". (2)

In Hyperion, Book II, Keats's theory about
Progress is expressed through Oceanus's speech.

"We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-univers;
But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,

1) Ibid., p. 226, line 234.

2) Ibid., p. 229, line 321.

One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
Thou art not the beginning nor the end." (1)

Progress means a development towards greater perfection in beauty; it is a natural law in accordance with the eternal law of change. As light is the first fruit, born of the struggle between chaos and darkness, life is the result of the victory of light upon them. As Heaven and Earth are fairer than Chaos and Darkness, so have the old generation of gods been surpassed by a power stronger in beauty. Keats's former idea about progress is given in a single phrase:

" 'tis the eternal law

That first in beauty should be first in might:" (2)

The theme of the poem is expressed through the description of Thea's face, the goddess of the earth, at the beginning of Book I. It is the key to understand Keats's theories about the relation between beauty and spiritual growth. It shows the manner in which his ideas of progress developed during the composition of the poem. He had intended

1) Ibid., p. 234, line 181. (underlinings mine)

2) Ibid., p. 235, line 228.

to make Apollo more beautiful than Saturn and Hyperion, but while he was writing the first and second books, he was witnessing Tom's lingering towards death. He could not believe in a mere physical beauty which must disappear with the passing of time. His set of values had to change by force. All the time he was groping towards a new conception of beauty. In Thea's face Keats finds:

"Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self". (1)

Clymene's confession in Book II, is a declaration of Keats's new beliefs: grief and joy are the two faces of the same coin. To accept life is to accept darkness as well as light: sorrow as well as pleasure.

"A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string:
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once." (2)

In the III Book of Hyperion there is a complete break with Keats's former view of life. Apollo,

1) Ibid., p. 222, line 36.

2) Ibid., p. 236, line 281. (underlinings mine)

the new god, becomes immortal through suffering. Hyperion's philosophical and political implications are that historical change cannot be achieved without sorrow. Human progress must be based upon spiritual progress, and this cannot be achieved without man developing a capacity to die and being reborn into a new spiritual life. Apollo's immortality is not based mostly upon power, but upon his infinite understanding of human woe. This makes him more beautiful than his predecessors.

In Hyperion Keats has already gone through the experience of suffering; he cannot accept his old vision of life. He has realized he cannot use poetry as an escape from reality. He has accepted sorrow as an inevitable part of the human condition. The recurrent images of pain are like the musical theme of the poem. The old gods: Saturn, Thea, Cybele, the Titans, Typhon, Dolor, Prophyron, and others, have been displaced by the new gods, not only more beautiful and clever, but more sensitive to the wounds of mankind. In Endymion, beauty was for the most part the beauty of convention, whereas in Hyperion Keats has matured. He

understands that moral beauty cannot be achieved without man's capacity to understand human misery. Apollo is the God of suffering—he is deified through pain—as the god of beauty and poetry; he is not an elusive presence, like the goddess in Endymion, who leads man to conflict and despair.

In Hyperion there is a conflict between the old and the new generation, but there is no inner conflict in Keats. He is convinced of the benefit of sorrow upon man's soul.

The poem culminates with the Ode to Apollo, who learns the lesson of human agony in Mnemosyne's silent face. She is the goddess of memory. She belongs both to the old order and to the new. She has forsaken the old gods to guard his new-born loveliness. Apollo has the power to perceive through intuition all the events that have happened in the history of mankind. It is a sort of revelation; a mystical experience, through which he reaches ecstasy. By describing Apollo's "death into life", Keats reasserts his theories concerning knowledge; that it arrives through woe, not through happiness. Apollo reads in Mnemosyne's face all the successive "creations

and destroyings" inherent to historical change.

"Mute thou remainest—mute! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And defy me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal". (1)

He becomes immortal by self-annihilation;
he is a Christian as well as a pagan god. With
Apollo, Keats succeeded in creating a very powerful
symbol: one that combines both the ethical and
the aesthetical ideal. He knew by now that the
way to merge beauty and truth was through the
acceptance of reality as it is.

Hyperion was finished by the end of April
1819. Three months later, in the month of July,
Keats began to rewrite it. This short period of
time is nothing in the life of a normal person,
but in the life of a genius, it means a total
revolution. In The Fall of Hyperion Keats recasts
Apollo's encounter with Mnemosyne in the form
of a vision or a dream, but this time Apollo is
himself. The Greek Mnemosyne becomes the Latin
1) Ibid., p. 242, line 111.

Moneta, because Keats probably "desired a sterner name for a sterner knowledge" (1)

Keats plays a double role within the poem, that of the poet (or dreamer) and of his own jury. He has decided not to make any concessions to himself. He wants to know from an objective viewpoint whether he has done humanity some good or not.

In Hyperion Keats was to reveal the secret of poetic nature; he was to narrate his own birth as a poet. In the second version the question is what good poetry is and the differences between a poet and a dreamer. The reward for Apollo's experience in Hyperion –his "death into life"– was an insight into human suffering. This means that Keats had finally accepted that the world is full of misery. The Fall of Hyperion reflects Keats's search for an identity. He tries to discover the truth about himself. Whether he has been an escapist or a man that redeems humanity through his art.

1) J. M. Murry, Keats and Shakespeare, Oxford University Press, London, 1935, p. 170.

He begins by defending his right to narrate his dreams; he lays emphasis on the difference that exists between fanaticism (superstition) and real poetry (the soul's medicine). The dreams of the fanatics, offer a paradise only to a sect, whereas the doors of poetry are opened to all humanity. All men have poetic dreams but only the poet is capable of uttering his. Whether his dream has been that of a poet or a fanatic will be known after his death.

"Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven; pity these have not
Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance.
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable charm
And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
"Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?"
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purpos'd to rehearse
Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave." (1)

After this brief "induction" Keats begins to describe his dream. He dreams he is in an earthly

1) Keats, Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 403, line 1.

Eden eating the remnants of an eternal banquet. He drinks a delicious liquor, a "nectar" and falls into a swoon. When he comes to his senses he has a vision which is awe-inspiring rather than delightful: he looks around and discovers he is in an old sanctuary (Saturn's temple), where things are incorruptible. I agree with Aileen Ward's opinion that "the dreamer's progress from the garden into the temple corresponds to the poet's growth from unreflective delight in all the beauty of the world to his first awareness of the misery which life holds for the sentient man. The development which Keats previsioned in Sleep and Poetry and Endymion and underwent in reality with Tom's last illness". (1)

The poet's journey through this place, which has been interpreted by Murry as "the temple of life become conscious of itself in man" (2) is symbolic. The poet must strive for knowledge along the road, he hears a voice which summons him to ascend the steps of this strange temple; its tone

1) Ward, op. cit., p. 326.

2) Murry, op. cit., p. 174.

is prophetic. The man who dares dream and does not fulfill his dreams rots in life. The allegorical meaning is clear: the poet must have the talent to persevere and attain his goals, else he will never reach immortality. He makes a strenuous effort to ascend the steps and is saved on the very brink of death by a sort of miracle. When he asks the goddess the reason for saving him, she answers that he has been rescued, because, like Apollo, he has felt what it is to die and live again before his fatal hour. In other words, what Keats is really trying to say is that spiritual birth is essential for the poet's development, but that this cannot be achieved without sacrifice. Keats knows what it is to die in life, because of his supreme creative effort to accomplish mastery within his art; also because he has been the silent spectator of his brother's incurable sickness. He has acquired "knowledge enormous" through enormous pain. Moneta, the Roman goddess of admonition tells him:

"None can usurp this height, return'd that shade,
But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest." (1)

1) Keats, Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 406, line 147.

The entrance to this temple is open only to the men who are conscious of the pain of the world. The poet answers her that there are men who feel this giant agony and work for the welfare of humanity. Moneta then reminds him that they are no visionaries. He has arrived there because he is less than they; he is not an active imaginative man:

"What benefit canst thou, 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? every creature hath its home;
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
Whether his labours be sublime or low—
The pain alone; the joy alone; distinct:
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
Such things as thou art are admitted oft
Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
And suffer'd in these temples: for that cause
Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees." (1)

Yet, he is a man who suffers from a creative disease; he is a "fever of himself". The dreamer alone "venoms" all his days. The rest of humanity is no dreamer. The dreamer in this sense is one who comes into the full awareness of life. But for those who dare cross the threshold of human consciousness there is a reward. They will finally reach a height which is reserved for them alone. Keats, however,

1) Ibid., p. 407, line 167.

feels he has done nothing for humanity. He believes he is less than the ordinary man, more talented than him but less useful. He is just a dreamer; a man who rejoices in his own woes. He defends real poets, though. He thinks they are humanists who carry within themselves the cure for their own illness. His suffering increases because he does not even know to which tribe he belongs. Moneta shows him the difference:

"The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the World,
The other vexes it." (1)

Keats then states that he prefers to die, rather than belong to the tribe of the false poets. Those who have done nothing for humanity:

"Then shouted I
Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen,
Apollo! faded! O far flown Apollo!
Where is thy misty pestilence to creep
Into the dwellings, through the door crannies
Of all mock lyrists, large self worshippers
An careless Hectorers in proud bad verse.
Though I breathe death with them it will be life
To see them sprawl before me into graves." (2)

But he is still searching for enlightenment and he asks the goddess who she is, whose this temple

1) Ibid., p. 408, line 199.

2) Ibid., p. 408, line 202.

and whose the image lying in front of him. She tells him that in this place the Titans fought long ago against rebellion. She decides to reveal to him the secret of her power. The reward for his courage will be to behold free from pain all the scenes of human progress through her "globed brain". The final revelation comes when Moneta parts her veils and the poet contemplates her face. He sees in it all the successive "creations and destroyings" of the universe from the beginning of the history of mankind. There is a combination of elements which only human experience can reflect. There is pain, change, death, terror, and above all, there is benignity towards him. There is a love which is eternal and impersonal. This is the poet's vision of the reality of the world. Keats is face to face with his notion of truth, at last. But he is not yet completely satisfied. He wants to know the "high tragedy" acting in the chambers of Moneta's skull. He wants to arrive at the ultimate consequences of an abiding knowledge. It is the tragedy of life which is embodied in her. The fallen image of Saturn, with Thea weeping at his feet,

represents the "giant agony of the world" which he himself had to bear and which by then, he knew only too well. Though Moneta had promised him he would be free from pain on contemplating the tragedy of human destinies, Keats had to confess himself incapable of escaping from the painful impact that full consciousness has upon each individual. No one who has developed the power to see as gods can only see, is able to forget what he has absorbed afterwards:

"whereon 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
At those few words 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." (1)

The most beautiful description of the whole poem is the passage where Keats immortalizes Moneta's face. In order to be able to write this passage Keats had to experience suffering to its highest degrees. He had to travel through "the valley of soul making" which is the "school of Intelligence" and the "crucible of the Soul". (2)

1) Ibid., p. 410, line 302.

2) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 123, 14 Feb., 3 May, 1819, p. 296.

His vision had finally been sharpened into the heart and nature of man.

"Then saw I 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 past
The lilly and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face—
But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back, with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things,—they saw me not,
But in blank splendor, beam'd like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast." (1)

According to Murry's theories, "Keats abandoned the revised Hyperion because he was committing the sin of uttering soul-knowledge through an effort of mind-knowledge." (2)

Keats believed that truth could not be achieved through the rational faculty; it could only be known by an intuitive apprehension of reality. All that he had learnt, he had assimilated through actual self-experience. I have already mentioned that while he was writing the first two books of Hyperion he was distressed by the thought of his brother's

1) Keats, Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 409, line 256.

2) Murry, op. cit., p. 169.

imminent death. He refused to accept disease was part of human experience. At the bottom of his heart, though, he knew he had to admit this fact. The conflict is solved in Book III. Apollo, the god of poetry, transcends reality by accepting suffering. At the moment Keats was writing The Fall of Hyperion, he was trying to express his full acceptance of the beauty that exists in all things. This implied an absolute submission of his conscious self to the mystery of human suffering. The new poem is his confiteor; the summary of his painful experience to understand this enigma. He transforms a classical legend into an agonized vision of the nature of the universe and the eternal harmony that exists within it. Yet, the tone of the poem is pessimistic. We have to understand Keats's ambivalent attitude concerning human destinies. The key to this comprehension lies in the part where he describes his share in the "giant agony of the world",

"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;
Until old Saturn rais'd his faded eyes,
And look'd around and saw his kingdom gone,

And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess at his feet." (1)

It comes to the surface that while Keats was finishing the poem his cup of sorrow had been filled to the brim. He could not go on writing while his feelings were being purged. It is impossible to profit by a moral catharsis when our emotions are involved in it. In his next poem, however, Keats was able to integrate at last theory and practice. In the Ode to Autumn which was written in September 19th, 1819, after he had made up his mind to abandon The Fall of Hyperion, he describes his contact with reality from an objective viewpoint. In Gitting's opinion, this is "the most serene poem in the English language". (2) This means that Keats's conflict had disappeared. He had reached a degree of maturity in his art, that allowed him to express his own inner experience through a new kind of poetry where dream and reality were finally reconciled. As Murry says, Keats had faced his crisis alone and emerged out of it "a calm, confident

1) Keats, Poetical Works, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

2) Robert Gittings, John Keats: The Living Year, William Heinemann, Ltd., London, 1954, p. 186.

and happy man, secure of his purpose and of himself."(1)
It is evident that his prolonged struggle against
despair had been crowned by victory.

I believe Keats was both a dreamer and a poet,
but he was also a philosopher. Philosophy understood
in the sense of comprehension of the mystery of
human life, not in its technical sense, because it
is obvious that what Keats needed was a basis of
philosophical theory. The knowledge that Keats
pursued was not of an intellectual sort; it could
not be based upon abstractions but upon his broodings
over real life. It did not mean erudition or learning;
it was an instinctive faculty of the undivided man.
A quality which is essentially self-engendered by
contact with true reality. Keats knew this kind of
knowledge could not be transmitted directly but
through the language of metaphor and parable which
emanates from the soul and is the spontaneous
utterance of the complete being. If he had not
sought truth, his poetry would have remained at a
superficial level: the kind of poetry to which he
referred in Sleep and Poetry: a sort of palliative

1) Murry, op. cit., p. 190.

for man's sufferings; a drug; an escape from reality. He would have been remembered only as the "bard of sensuous poesies of delight", not as an "intensely serious, mature poet", (1) the goal towards which he always strove.

Keats fought to attain completeness as a human person, until at last, he was able to express his belief that "truth is beauty" and "beauty is truth", with full poetic power. For him ethics and aesthetics were part of an undivided whole that could never be separated. He once said of England's greatest poet: "Shakespeare led a life of allegory; his works are the comments on it". (2)

I think that Keats's early death —his own "dying into life"—is a perfect illustration of his actual self-experience. He knew it was the only way to be among the English poets after his death.

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- 1) Leon Gottfried, Mathew Arnold and the Romantics, Routledge & Kegan, London, 1963, p. 129.
 - 2) The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., letter No. 123, "To George and Georgine Keats", 14 Feb. to 3 May, 1819, p. 305.

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FE DE ERRATAS

Dice.....	No. de Pag....	Debe decir
Rousseau	3	Rousseau
Keat's	4	Keats's
Keat's	7	Keats's
Claucus's	23	Claucus's