The Conflict Between the Apollonian and Faustian Ideals of Poetry in Keats

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Fitzgerald Flournoy

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I

Those who have at least a working knowledge of the life and accomplishment of Keats will always think of him essentially, if not exclusively, as a poet of acute sensibilities and endowments, an extraordinary imagination, and, chiefly, a particular obsession with the idea and physical manifestation of beauty. Perhaps more than any other poet the life and work of Keats exemplified those qualities which found prominence in the nineteenth century and which we have labelled as "romantic." Those who know something of his brief life, doomed as it was to the omnipotent domination of a tubercle bacillus, will regard it as almost a stereotype of those gifted, vivid, and intriguing personalities who delighted and disturbed, pacified and provoked the bourgeoisie of Europe. For all practical purposes these quite superficial impressions are fairly justified and permissible.

But for the more discerning and curious minds such generalized thinking will prove inadequate and dissatisfying. It is certainly hoped that this will be the case. For them Keats and the other dashing romantics, pursuing beauty, relying on sensation and intuition, will not be classified as _enfants terribles_ or negligent and irresponsible escapists. Other observers will see the romantic period as a natural and desirable successor to the eighteenth century, however excellent and indispensable it may have been. Everything that was, no longer was considered necessarily right. Heeding Pope's exhortation, men became intensely interested in themselves; truly, for them the proper study of mankind _was_ man ---all of man, including the darker and deeper labyrinths of the human psyche. Whereas the inverted romanticism of the eighteenth century had deliberately, if also valiantly,

compressed the multiplicities of human nature into the neatest and most convenient compartments (to the extent that Dryden was to inform us "The things we must believe are few and plain"), irresponsibly ignoring some perhaps distracting and disturbing facets of men, the romantics of the nineteenth century were to return again to grander thoughts of greater men---to ponder with Shakespeare this

> piece of work <which> is a man! how noble
> in reason! how infinite in faculty! in
> form and moving how express and admirable!
> in action how like an angel! in apprehension
> how like a god!

The shackles and limitations of theory and <u>raison</u> which had found such ready expression in devices like the heroic couplet simply would not suffice and certainly would be tolerated no longer. The best-laid schemes of mice, men, and philosophers were going awry. Men were ready to admit and rejoice in the fact that intuition and sensation often struck straight to the heart of the matter and problem, whereas the more laborious syllogisms and epigrams of eighteenth century thinking were proving embarrassingly inadequate, unsatisfying, and intolerably boring. Not merely the political revolutions of 1848 were inevitable; conjoint with these insurrections were the perhaps even more significant developments in the poetry of a Keats or Shelley, the music of a Beethoven, Brahms, or Wagner. The stars and Ideas above were beckoning with an inexorable force, and the most highly wrought vehicles of reason were proving inadequate to reach those things which transcend human logic, the epigram, heroic couplet, or philosophical syllogism.

But constant with the desire of the moth, with the return to nature, the melancholy, medieval revival, sentimentalism, primitivism, exoticism, and individualism was a natural humanitarianism. Poets and thinkers were both forced and willing to occupy a position which is termed

in the present century as engagé; there was no escaping the miseries, repressions, and fetters of one's self or his fellows. The squalor of the home and factory, the tyranny of monarchs, the lack of employment, the enclosures, poverty, and disease could leave only the most insensate and callous minds at rest; in proportion to one's sensitivity arose increasing concern, which culminated in various reform movements and legislation. In conjunction with this the retreat to the pastoral landscape was more a necessity for sustained and objective thinking than an opportunity for the celebration of pantheistic rites, such as is commonly assumed. The easy resignation and detachment which found expression in "Whatever is, is right," as welcomed by the noblesse, were not merely outmoded but also a ridiculous rejection of the inherent dignity, worth, and potentiality of the human organism to help himself and to improve his environment. The beauty of streben, the individual or organized endeavor, was supreme. Along with T. S. Eliot of our own period the many Goethes and Fausts of the nineteenth century were to realize conclusively that "For us, there is only the trying ....Who are undefeated Because we have gone on trying." Though Protestant theology taught that men are saved by faith alone, men vented their impulse to charity, inherent long before the advent of any Christian ethic, in kind thoughts and philanthropic works.

Keats was such a man. The ardency, comprehensiveness, and constancy of his endeavor were a tribute to the potential of humanity itself. From early manhood through the last rending labors with tuberculosis Keats strove and fought---for a set of resolutions and convictions which would express conclusively the meaning and destiny of life and poetry; his sense of mission and dedication as a man and an artist were in themselves comparable only to that of Christ Himself. In a tribute which she wrote in the March 21, 1954,

edition of the Chicago Tribune some time after the death of the brilliant young American pianist William Kapell, Claudia Cassidy said:

> No, it is not a gay life, this world of the supreme artist who is of necessity unique. It is lonely and perilous, exposed in a way the man in the mob can never comprehend. Every such artist must at times wonder if he knows he has no choice. I doubt if he would change if he could, once he glimpses his mountain top through the mists of that struggle, and knows what it holds in air and view.

No one knew better than Keats this exposed and lonely world, -- but no one had a better vision with which to perceive through the mists of the struggle, or a finer faculty with which to describe what he saw. Professor Douglas Bush of Harvard has written:

> As he said himself, the genius of poetry must work out its own salvation in a man, and we cannot guess, if he had had health and some measure of contentment, what would have been his ultimate solution and achievement. His house was, most of the time, divided against itself, but his consciousness of the fissure, his unceasing endeavor to solve the problem of sense and knowledge, art and humanity, are in themselves an index of his stature. No other English poet of the century had his poetic endowment, and no other strove so intensely to harmonize what may, without undue stretching of the terms, be called the Apollonian and the Faustian ideals of poetry. However high one's estimate of what he wrote, one may really think---to use an often meaningless cliché---that Keats was greater than his poems. 1

Using Dr. Bush's statement as a thesis, this paper will survey the life and work of Keats as an Apollonian and Faustian man. The problem of definition and semantics is a constant one, and has certainly proved itself to be a source of chaotic confusion and misunderstanding. I shall first define the terms "Apollonian" and "Faustian," using as my sources Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy, a lecture by A. C. Bradley entitled "Poetry for Poetry's

Sake," and Oswald Spengler's Decline of the West.

II

Nietzsche described the separate art worlds of dreamland and drunkenness as Apollonian and Dionysian. He credited the artist with the ability to perceive a variety of visions and figures in his dreams:

> The beauteous appearance of the dream-world, in the production of which every man is a perfect artist, is the presupposition of all plastic art, and in fact, as we shall see, of an important half of poetry also. We take delight in the immediate apprehension of form; all forms speak to us; there is nothing indifferent, nothing superfluous. But, together with the highest life of this dream - reality, we also have, glimmering through it, the sensation of its appearance: .... Indeed, the man of philosophic turn has a foreboding that underneath this reality in which we live and have our being, another and altogether different reality lies concealed, and that therefore it is also an appearance .... Accordingly, the man susceptible to art stands in the same relation to the reality of dreams as the philosopher to the reality of existence; he is a close and willing observer, for from these pictures he reads the meaning of life, and by these processes he trains himself for life. And it is perhaps not only the agreeable and friendly pictures that he realises in himself with such perfect understanding: the earnest, the troubled, the dreary, the gloomy, the sudden checks, the tricks of fortune, the uneasy presentiments, in short, the whole "Divine Comedy" of life, and the Inferno, also pass before him, not merely like pictures on the wall --- for he too lives and suffers in these scenes, --- and yet not without that fleeting sensation of appearance. 2
>
> This cheerful acquiescence in the dream-experience has likewise been embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo; for Apollo, as the god of all shaping energies, is also the soothsaying god. He ... is the "shining one," the deity of light, also rules over the fair appearance of the inner world of fantasies. The higher truth, the perfection

> of these states in contrast to the only partially intelligible everyday world, ay, the deep consciousness of nature, healing and helping, in sleep and dream, is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the faculty of soothsaying and, in general, of the arts, through which life is made possible and worth living. ... And so we might apply to Apollo, in an eccentric sense, what Schopenhauer says of the man wrapt in the veil of Maya: Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, (I, p. 416):
>
> 'Just as in a stormy sea, unbounded in every direction, rising and falling with howling mountainous waves, a sailor sits in a boat and trusts in his frail barque: so in the midst of a world of sorrows the individual sits quietly supported by and trusting in his principium individuationis. Indeed we might say of Apollo, that in him the unshaken faith in this principium and the quiet sitting of the man wrapt therein have received their sublimest expression; and we might even designate Apollo as the glorious divine image of the principium individuationis, from out of the gestures and looks of which all the joys and wisdom of "appearance," together with its beauty, speak to us. 3

Nietzsche proceeded to explore the structure of Apollonian culture, in which Apollo stands among the Olympian figures as an individual deity. The impulse embodied in Apollo gave birth to the entire Olympian world. At this point Nietzsche inserted what would appear to be a crucial ancient story of Midas's hunt for Silenus, who told him:

> Oh, wretched race of a day, children of chance and misery, why do ye compel me to say to you what it were most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is for ever beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. The second best for you, however, is soon to die. 4

The sensitive and contemplative Greeks were painfully aware of the tragedy of existence. It was only through the medium of artistic expression that they felt they could in some way surmount the dark veil of

Moira. From the original thearchy of Titan terror evolved an Olympian thearchy of joie de vivre---through the Apollonian impulse to beauty which complemented the bare means of existence.

> But how seldom is the naive --- that complete absorption is the beauty of appearance --- attained! And hence how inexpressibly sublime is Homer, who, as unit being, bears the same relation to this Apollonian folk-culture as the unit dream artist does to the dream-faculty of the people and of Nature in general. The Homeric "naiveté" can be comprehended only as the complete triumph of the Apollonian illusion: it is the same kind of illusion as Nature so frequently employs to compass her ends. The true goal is veiled by a phantasm: we stretch out our hands for the latter, while Nature attains the former through our illusion. In the Greeks the "will" desired to contemplate itself in the transfiguration of the genius and the world of art; in order to glorify themselves, its creatures had to feel themselves worthy of glory; they had to behold themselves again in a higher sphere, with ut this consummate world of contemplation acting as an imperative or reproach. Such is the sphere of beauty, in which, as in a mirror, they saw their images, the Olympians. With this mirroring of beauty the Hellenic will combated its talent--- correlative to the artistic --- for suffering and for the wisdom of suffering: and, as a monument of its victory, Homer, the naive artist, stands before us. 5

Subordinate to the Apollonian world of beauty was the terrible wisdom of Silenus; the two were mutually dependent. Apollo appeared as

> the apotheosis of the principium individuationis, in which alone the perpetually attained end of the Primordial Unity, its redemption through appearance, is consummated: he shows us with sublime attitudes, how the entire world of torment is necessary, that thereby the individual way may be impelled to realize the redeeming vision, and then, sunk in contemplation thereof, quietly sit in his fluctuating barque in the midst of the sea.

This apotheosis of individuation, if it be at all conceived as imperative and laying down precepts, knows but one law --- the individual, i.e., the observance of the boundaries of the individual, measure in the Hellenic sense. Apollo, as ethical deity, demands due proportion of his disciples, and that this may be observed, he demands self-knowledge. And thus, parallel to the aesthetic necessity for beauty, there run the demands "Know thyself" and "not too much," while presumption and undueness are regarded as the truly hostile demons of the non-Apollonian sphere, hence as characteristics of the pre-Apollonian age, that of the Titans, and of the extra-Apollonian world, that of the barbarians 6

We maintain rather, that ... the antithesis between the subjective and the objective is quite out of place in aesthetics, inasmuch as the subject, i.e., the desiring individual who furthers his own egoistic ends, can be conceived only as the adversary, not as the origin of art. In so far as the subject is the artist, however, he has already been released from his individual will, and has become as it were the medium, through which the one verily existed Subject celebrates his redemption in appearance. For this one thing must above all be clear to us, to our humiliation and exaltation, that the entire comedy of art is not at all performed, say, for our betterment and culture, and that we are just as little the true authors of this art-world: rather we may assume with regard to ourselves, that its true author uses us as pictures and artistic projections, and that we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art --- for only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified: .... Hence all our knowledge of art is at bottom quite illusory, because, as knowing persons we are not one and identical with the Being who, as the sole author and spectator of this comedy of art, prepares a perpetual entertainment for himself. Only in so far as the genius in the act of artistic production coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he get a glimpse of the eternal essence of art, for in this state he is, in a marvellous manner, like the weird picture of the fairy-tale which

> can at will turn its eyes and behold itself;
> he is now at once subject and object, at
> once poet, actor, and spectator. 7

Nietzsche proceeded to emphasize limits, self-knowledge, and proportion as absolute necessities for the Apollonian way of life. In order to insure a moderate existence in all facets, however, Nietzsche saw the importance of the Dionysian strain in Greek civilization which restrained the one-sided Apollonian "will" from confining the Hellenic world. Nietzsche continued:

> With the immense potency of the image, the concept, the ethical teaching and the sympathetic emotion---the Apollonian influence uplifts man from his orgiastic self-annihilation....8

Speaking specifically of the effect of a tragedy on the spectator, Nietzsche perceived that

> While he <the spectator> thus becomes conscious of the highest exaltation of his instincts for conspicuousness and transfiguration, he nevertheless feels with equal definitiveness that this long series of Apollonian artistic effects still does not generate the blissful continuance in will-less contemplation which the plasticist and the epic poet, that is to say, the strictly Apollonian artists, produce in him by their artistic production: to wit, the justification of the world of the individuatio attained in this contemplation---which is the object and essence of Apollonian art. He beholds the transfigured world of the stage and nevertheless denies it. He sees before him the tragic hero in epic clearness and beauty, and nevertheless delights in his annihilation. He comprehends the incidents of the scene in all their details, and yet loves to flee into the incomprehensible. He feels the actions of the hero to be justified, and is nevertheless still more elated when these actions annihilate their originator. He shudders at the sufferings which will befall the hero, and yet anticipates therein a higher and much more overpowering joy. He sees more extensively and profoundly than ever, and yet wishes to be blind. 9

> If we could conceive an incarnation of dissonance---and what is man but that?--- then, to be able to live this dissonance would require a glorious illusion that would spread a veil of beauty over its peculiar nature. This is the true function of Apollo as deity of art: in whose name we comprise all the countless manifestations of the fair realm of illusion, which each moment render life in general worth living and make one impatient for the experience of the next moment. 10

It is perhaps amusing to note, in the light of the large volume which Nietzsche wrote on tragedy, of which so much is devoted to a discussion of his term "Apollonian," that his sister, in the Biographical Introduction to the book, felt an obligation to explain _briefly_ herself what her brother meant by his use of the term:

> ...the word 'Apollonian' stands for that state of rapt repose in the presence of a visionary world, in the presence of the world of _beautiful_ _appearance_ designed as a deliverance from _becoming_.... 11

Spengler told us that whereas the classical world chose the Apollonian ideal with its emphasis on the present and the sensuously real, the modern world has selected a Faustian _Weltanschauung_, which he symbolizes as pure and limitless space.

> The Apollinian (sic) existence is that of the Greek who describes his ego as _soma_ and who lacks all idea of an inner development and therefore all real history, inward and outward; the Faustian is an existence which _is_ _led_ with a deep consciousness and introspection of the ego, and a resolutely personal culture evidenced in memoirs, reflections, retrospects and prospects and conscience. 12

Actually, Spengler had selected many aspects and creations of Western civilization as typically Faustian; these include, especially, the window, the violin, chamber music, Galileian dynamics, Catholic and Protestant dogmatics,

Lear's destiny, and the modern drama, among many others, which are unnecessary for our consideration here. But, perhaps of greatest import, Spengler saw our dynamic syntax, the first person idiom, our ego habeo factum as perhaps most characteristic of the Will-Culture of Faustian culture.

> We, as Faustian natures, are accustomed to take note of the individual according to his effective and not according to his plastic-static appearance in the field of our life-experience. We measure what a man is by his activity, which may be directed inwardly or outwardly, and we judge all intentions, reasons, powers, convictions and habits entirely by this directedness. The word with which we sum up this aspect is character. And the deep relation between this word "character" and the word "will" is unmistakable; what will is in the soul image, character is in the picture of life as we see it, the Western life that is self-evident to western men. It is the fundamental postulate of all our ethical systems, differs otherwise as they may in their metaphysical or practical precepts, that man has character. Character, which forms itself in the stream of the world -- the personality, the relation of living to doing -- is a Faustian impression of the man made by the man; ...... it is impossible to draw a strict distinction between will and soul, character and life.
>
> The overcoming of resistances may far more justly be called the typical impulse of the Western soul. Activity, determination, self-control, are postulates. To battle against the comfortable foregrounds of life, against the impressions of the moment, against what is near, tangible and easy, and win through to that which has generality and duration and links past and future --- these are the sum of all Faustian imperatives from earliest Gothic to Kant and Fichte, and far beyond them again to the Ethos of immense power and will exhibited in our States, our economic systems and our technics. The carpe diem, the saturated being, of the classical standpoint is the most direct contrary of that which is felt by Goethe and Kant and Pascal, by church and Freethinker, as alone possessing value --- active, fighting and victorious being. 13

> Strength and distinctness of this consciousness are the marks of higher Faustian man, but it is not wholly absent in the most insignificant of the breed, and it distinguishes his smallest acts from those of any and every classical man. It is the distinction between character and attitude, between conscious becoming and simple accepted statuesque becomeness, between will and suffering in tragedy.
>
> In the world as seen by the Faustian's eyes, everything is motion with an aim. He himself _lives_ only under that condition, for to him life means struggling, overcoming, winning through. 14

Spengler continued:

> It is not attitude and mien, but activity that is to be given form. As in China and in Egypt, life only counts in so far as it is deed. And it is the mechanicalizing of the organic concept of Deed that leads to the concept of work as commonly understood, _the civilized form of Faustian effecting_. This morale, the insistent tendency to give to Life the most active forms imaginable, is stronger than reason, whose moral programs--be they never so reverenced, inwardly believed or ardently championed---are only _effective_ in so far as they either lie, or are mistakenly supposed to lie, in the direction of this force. Otherwise they remain mere words....The Socialist---the dying Faust of Part II -- is the man of historical care, who feels the future as his task and aim, and accounts the happiness of the moment as worthless in comparison. The classical spirit with its oracles and its omens, wants only to _know_ the future, but the Westerner would _shape_ it. 15

Though Spengler had in his _Decline of the West_ popularized and defined the term "Faustian" so conclusively, to the extent that it has become a term of common parlance, I think that an even more explicit comprehension of the term can best be realized in a thorough reading of Goethe's _Faust_ itself.

Here, rich in hope and firm in faith,
With tears, wrung hands and sighs, I've striven,
The end of that far-spreading death
Entreating from the Lord of Heaven!
Now like contempt the crowd's applauses seem:
Couldst thou but read, within mine inmost spirit,
How little now I deem
That sire or son such praises merit! 16

What thinker or "striver" has not pondered this thought, painfully cognizant that the <u>deed</u>, the <u>action</u>, is its own reward and justification, and that there is nothing else? And, a little later, in this second scene of Book I Faust bewails:

O happy he, who still renews
The hope, from Error's deeps to rise forever!
That which one does not know, one needs to use;
And what one knows, one uses never.
But let us not, by such despondence, so
The fortune of this hour embitter!
Mark how, beneath the evening sunlight's glow,
The green-embosomed houses glitter!
The glow retreats, done is the day of toil,
It yonder hastes, new fields of life exploring;
Ah, that no wing can lift me from the soil,
Upon its track to follow, follow soaring!
Then would I see eternal Evening gild
The silent world beneath me glowing,
On fire each mountain-peak, with peace each valley filled,
The silver brook to golden rivers flowing.
The mountain-chain, with all its gorges deep,
Would then no more impede my godlike motion;
And now before mine eyes expands the ocean
With all its bays, in shining sleep!
Yet, finally, the weary god is sinking;
The new-born impulse fires my mind, ---
I hasten on, hi- beams eternal drinking,
The Day before me and the Night behind,
Above me heaven unfurled, the floor of waves beneath me,---
A glorious dream! though now the glories fade.
Alas! the wings that lift the mind no aid
Of wings to lift the body can bequeath me.
Yet in each soul is born the pleasure
Of yearning onward, upward and away,
When o'er our heads, lost in the vaulted azure,
The lark sends down his flickering lay, ---
When over crags and piny highlands
The poising eagle slowly soars,
And over plains and lakes and islands
The crane sails by to other shores. 17

But it is the aged Faust, the Faust who is saved in spite of his

gross hubris because he has gone on striving, because eventually, at least, he recognizes his obligation as a human being and then attains the highest social responsibility, who especially interests us:

> I only through the world have flown:
> Each appetite I seized as by the hair;
> What not sufficed me, forth I let it fare,
> And what escaped me, I let it go.
> I've only craved, accomplished my delight,
> Then wished a second time, and thus with might
> Stormed through my life: at first it was grand,
> completely,
> But now it moves most wisely and discreetly.
> The sphere of Earth is known enough to me;
> The view beyond is barred immutably:
> A fool, who there his blinking eyes directeth,
> And o'er his clouds of peers a place expecteth!
> Firm let him stand, and look around him well!
> This World means something to the Capable,
> Why needs he through Eternity to wend?
> He here acquires what he can apprehend.
> Thus let him wander down his earthly day;
> When spirits haunt, go quietly his way;
> In marching onwards, bliss and torment find,
> Though, every moment, with unsated mind! 18

I think the ultimate paradox of any endeavor to distinguish between the terms "Faustian" and "Apollonian" is readily apparent. Even in his old age, in the midst of all his philanthropic activity, Faust remains, as it were, Apollonian; he is never satisfied; his capacity for visionary imaginings is inexhaustible; and we can rightly suspect that to the very end his innermost soul forever longs to transcend its boundaries of human flesh and reason. But, in the finest classical tradition, Faust remains sensitive to the tangibly sensuous appearance of all material things; his sensitivity as an aesthete serves as his constant source of the highest joy --- but it also culminates in the tragic association with Margaret. The Apollonian and Faustian dichotomy in his character results in his misery and decline but also his redemption. Victor Lange, Professor of German at Princeton, has written in his introduction to the Modern Library edition of Faust:

> It is not until his end that he <Faust> succeeds in freeing himself of the deceptive magic which tends to obscure the infinite magnitude of man's task to maintain himself between cosmos and chaos. His titanic wavering between superhuman longing and radical self-debasement, between his will to transcend and his suicidal paralysis, between his curse of all faith, hope, love and patience at one time and his ecstatic praise of a pantheistic Godhead at another ---these are the extremes of experience between which Faust must go his way.
>
> To his very end Faust is not a "good man." What Goethe has represented in the person of Faust and in the poem as a whole is not, after all, a model either of excellence or of depravity. It is rather an account, rendered with compassion as well as critical intelligence, of modern man, Faust's "two souls," his extremes of effusion and action, are the source of his highest as well as his lowest aspirations. But between ultimate knowledge of good and evil and unexceptionable, virtuous deeds, there lies, for Faust, a gulf which is, in the pursuit of our earthly life, unbridgeable. His last speeches acknowledge the tragic, the ultimately ambiguous nature of all human effort....Faust's quest on earth is given its true meaning only within the frame of "divine reconciliation": the forgiveness that is commensurate with his striving must come from above; it can be shown only poetically in symbols of extremely rarefied spirituality.[19]

On the other hand, we have seen, or, we shall agree for the purposes of this paper, that the Apollonian Weltanschauung implies a state of visionary repose---a view and insight which transcend mortal and finite existence and yet are grounded in its material and sensuous objects. The Apollonian, in the finest Faustian tradition, "longs" and "strives" for something above and beyond.

Keats, Mr. Bush has told us, attempted to harmonize the Apollonian and Faustian ideals of poetry. He came to realize that no matter how alluring might be the Apollonian world of the fancy and imagination, which was his

birthright, poetry and life must also be grounded in the realm of the tangible real. As we shall see, there was no alternative or choice to be made. He wanted and knew that he must, in respect to his status as a human being and member of society, whose privileges he enjoyed, concern himself with the workaday and eventful world which pressed on all sides around him; yet, for the purpose of his own sanity and in order to write the sublimest and purest poetry, Keats took resort to the land of the Lotus-eaters, where he found the necessary leisure for philosophic contemplation and imaginative indolence.

> To yield to Life: this was, for Keats, the secret of poetry and of human living. To receive, to lie open, to grow; yet also to strive, to seek, to endure: to strive to the uttermost, and when the organism can no more, to sink back through numbness, and pain, and despair, into the warm darkness of Nature's womb, thence to emerge re-born. 20

The "pure" poetry which resulted from Keats's excursions into Lotus-land is to be found in such peices as La Belle Dame Sans Merci or The Eve of St. Agnes. But we must not use the term "pure poetry" too loosely, as many critics have warned. Mr. A. C. Bradley in one of his Oxford Lectures On Poetry outlined three characteristics of "pure" poetry: first, that the experience of poetry is an end in itself; second, that the poem's poetic value is this intrinsic worth alone; and, third, that the consideration of any "ulterior" ends tends to lower the worth and excellence of the poetry, because it removes the poem from its own atmosphere, which is a totally independent world.

> The formula only tells us that we must not place in antithesis poetry and human good, for poetry is one kind of human good; and that we must not determine the intrinsic value of this kind of good by direct reference to another. If we do, we shall find ourselves maintaining what we did not expect 21

> When poetry answers to its idea and is purely or almost purely poetic, we find the identity of form and content; and the degree of purity attained may be tested by the degree in which we feel it hopeless to convey the effect of a poem or passage in any form but its own. Where the notion of doing so is simply ludicrous, you have quintessential poetry.
>
> Pure poetry is not the decoration of a preconceived and clearly defined matter: it springs from the creative impulse of a vague imaginative mass pressing for development and definition. 22

I certainly should take issue with Mr. Bradley's third characteristic of pure poetry; in the case of Keats, I see it as an evidence of his genius that he was able to incorporate in the most adroit manner many "ulterior" considerations and ends. It was John Middleton Murry's

> ...conviction that pure poetry is not irrelevant to life, but on the contrary more exactly relevant to it than any other creation of the human spirit. I believe, for I have found it so by experience, that pure poetry contains a revelation, and I would far rather stand with the ancients in their belief that the poet is a lusus naturae and poetry an amusing accident. What the ancients said---though I might not care, or dare, to use their language---corresponds with my experience; their explanation is at least adequate to the revelation which pure poetry brings: what the moderns say is almost an insult to my knowledge. 23

III

From the testimony and memoirs of his many friends, Keats had a seemingly innate hatred of rank and degree, which often vented itself in a supercilious disdain for others. Benjamin Bailey, perhaps his dearest intimate, reported that all discussions of oppression, falsehood, fraud, and general wrongdoing would excite Keats to the point of fierce indignation. All of this was especially remarkable in light of the fact that his normal countenance and bearing radiated sweetness and light. An early acquaintance with the somewhat radical journal, the *Examiner*, to which the father of his friend Charles Cowden Clarke subscribed, helped confirm at an early age any tendencies towards liberal and free political thinking, and religious liberty. In his *Recollections of Writers* Clarke mentioned Keats's avid interest during his last eighteen months at the Enfield school in Burnett's *History of Our Own Times*, Mavor's *Universal History*, and the histories of Scotland, America, and Charles V by Robertson, which were popular at that time. Readings in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and special attention to Achilles' battle scenes in Homer helped develop a healthy identification with masculine, heroic actions; Keats's imaginative capacities and a vicarious spirt of exploration are early apparent in the *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*. All of this points to an early boyish interest, romanticized as it was, in the typical *Heldenleben*, which later assumed the natural proportions of adult citizenship and responsibility.

Though most critics see in *Sleep and Poetry*, composed in November and December of 1816, the first evidences of the major conflict in Keats's mind as to his destined function and that of his medium, poetry, it seems readily apparent that there are many tangible evidences before this.

In the finest nationalistic sense, Keats was proud of being a

Briton. The 1814 Peace of Paris found Keats, along with most of Europe, breathing a united sigh of relief at the removal of the Napoleonic menace. Composing a sonnet On Peace in April, 1814, Keats's pacifist sympathies were balanced by an expression of his republican and British sentiments:

> With England's happiness proclaim Europa's Liberty.
> O Europe! let not sceptred tyrants see
> That thou must shelter in thy former state;
> Keep thy chains burst, and boldly say thou art free;
> Give thy kings law---leave not uncurbed the great;
> So with the horrors past thou'lt win thy happier fate!

Keats enjoyed several friendships with various types of people, many of whom were crucial factors in molding his personality, attitudes, and thought-patterns. These included Leigh Hunt, a minor poet of the period, whose importance for us lies in the fact that he marshalled the group of liberals demanding reform in spite of the conservative reaction which ensued in England resultant to the disastrous and retroactive events across the Channel. As editor of The Examiner, avidly read by Keats, Hunt blatantly declared his preference, if the choice had to be made, for the tyranny of Bonaparte over that of the Bourbons. Though, in his autobiography, he stated his main objective of producing reform in Parliament and inculcating liberal, objective opinions, he did not restrict his comments to events on the home front; nothing was exempt from his acrid tongue or pen. But he went too far; his ebullience in the cause of reform was surpassed only by a curious lack of discretion and careful restraint. George, the Prince of Wales, had along with the Whigs supported numerous liberal demands, including emancipation for the Catholics; after being appointed Regent, George became increasingly deceitful and retained both the Tory ministry and all the policies of their party. The March 22, 1812, Examiner retaliated with scathing attacks on the Regent. A conviction for libel and a two-year imprisonment ensued. Hunt's release on February 3, 1815, inspired Keats's sonnet Written On the Day

That Mr. Leigh Hunt Left Prison, in which Keats, as well as saluting the unconquerable sovereignty of the human spirit, also suggested a course of action which Keats himself was often later to follow---the retreat to Parnassus:

> What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,
> Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
> In his immortal spirit, been as free
> As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
> Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
> Think you he naught but prison walls did see,
> Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
> In Spenser's halls he stray'd, and bowers fair,
> Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
> With daring Milton through the fields of air:
> To regions of his own his genius true
> Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
> When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew? 24

An apostrophe, To Hope, composed this same month, again showed Keats's concern for the continuing welfare of his country and the cause of freedom; in the sixth and seventh stanzas we read:

> In the long vista of the years to roll,
> Let me not see our country's honour fade:
> O let me see our land retain her soul,
> Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade.
> From they bright eyes unusual brightness shed---
> Beneath thy pinions canopy my head!
>
> Let me not see the patriot's high bequest,
> Great liberty! how great in plain attire!
> With the base purple of a court oppress'd,
> Bowing her head, and ready to expire:
> But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings
> That fill the skies with silver glitterings! 26

Three months later, on May 29, Keats paid tribute to some English patriots of whom he had read in Bishop Burnet's History of My Own Time during his stay at the Clarke School. These included Algernon Sydney, Lord William Russell, and Sir Henry Vane, all of whom were executed during the reign of Charles II, whose restoration he observed on the May 29 anniversary:

> Infatuate Britons, will you still proclaim
> His memory, your direst, foulest shame?
> Nor patriots revere?

Ah, while I hear each traitorous lying bell,
'Tis gallant Sydney's, Russel's, Vane's sad Knell,
That pains my wounded ear. 27

It would certainly be wrong to think of Keats as any sort of propagandist or rabble rouser; he was too intelligent and dedicated a poet and enjoyed too great a sense of perspective to descend to any such activity. But, he did realize that, as a respected poet, whose star was definitely in the ascendant, his powers upon his fellows were limitless; at this early period in his life he was not certain precisely how to employ those powers; certainly, with such dear friends as Leigh Hunt falling victim to tyranny round about, Keats could hardly remain aloof from contemporary events.

November, 1815, marked the composition of the Epistle to George Felton Mathew, a young sentimental poet with whom Keats had enjoyed a brief friendship. Here, for the first time, was explicitly revealed the dichotomy in Keats's mind between Apollonian versifying and Faustian action:

Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong,
And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song;
Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view
A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd,
Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd
To raise a trophy to the drama's muses.
The thought of this great partnership diffuses
Over the genius-loving heart, a feeling
Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

Too partial friend! fain would I follow thee
Past each horizon of fine poesy;
Fain would I echo back each pleasant note
As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float
'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted,
Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted:
But 'tis impossible; far different cares
Beckon me sternly from soft 'Lydian airs,'
And hold my faculties so long in thrall,
That I am oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phoebus in the morning:

. . . . . .

But might I now each passing moment give
To the coy muse, with me she would not live
In this dark city, nor would condenscend
'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.

. . . . . .

There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy,
To say 'joy not too much in all that's bloomy.'
Yet this is vain --- O Mathew lend thy aid
To find a place where I may greet the maid ---
Where we may soft humanity put on,
And sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton;
And that warm-hearted Shakespeare sent to meet him
Four laurell'd spirits, heaven-ward to intreat him.
With reverence would we speak of all the ages:
And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness,
And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness
To those who strove with the bright golden wing
Of genius, to flap away each sting
Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell
Of those who in the cause of freedom fell;
Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell;
Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace,
High-minded and unbending William Wallace.
While to the rugged north our musing turns
We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns. 28

Claude Lee Finney saw the conflict here between versifying and, specifically, a career in medicine. Though it is true that at the time he was studying and working as a dresser to a surgeon in a London hospital, I see no reason for restricting the "far different cares" to medicine. At any rate, the Keats of twenty years of age felt he was being sternly beckoned from "soft 'Lydian airs'" to the extent that he feared he would lose his powers of communication with the Muses. Apparently, as much as he sensed an impulse to humanitarian activity, he also felt a compulsive allegiance to the Muses of Parnassus. The tone of this poem is tenderly pensive and nostalgic; but there is especially something more than a soupçon of regret for "the fearful dearth of human kindness" and the ill treatment towards the greatest spirits, both literary and otherwise, in English history. This realization plagued Keats all of his life and was, I feel, a positive factor in his occasional, if vehement, rejection of the pupulace. On his trip to Scotland a year later he especially bewailed the condition of Burns's existence as he saw it, and again pondered the treatment by the English people of their poets. But note again the freedom-fighters whom he saluted:

King Alfred, William Wallace, and William Tell!

The Epistle to My Brother George, composed in August of the following year, marked Keats's first serious consideration of poetry as a profession for his future. The rigorous training in surgery which he had undergone was now past; with it had fled all the fever and fret, especially the fear that he had alienated his Muse and that poetic inspiration was now a thing of the past. Apparently, Keats was painfully conscious of the prerequisite need for a proper climate and environment for creative activity. His residence was now in Margate, his habitat was nature herself, and Apollo was near:

> But there are times, when those that love the bay,
> Fly from all sorrowing far, far away;
> A sudden glow comes on them, naught they see
> In water, earth, or air, but poesy. 29

Keats continued with an abundant description of all the knights in armor, steeds, ladies, fairies, and bowers, which he was able to see in this Apollonian state of "visionary repose," as Nietzsche's sister described it. But Keats did not dwell in this dream; the tension in the poem is paramount, and he juxtaposed a long description with thoughts on the more serious work of the poet:

> These are the living pleasures of the bard:
> But richer far posterity's award.
> What does he murmur with his latest breath,
> While his proud eye looks through the film of death?
> 'What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould,
> Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
> With after times.---The patriot shall feel
> My stern alarum, and unsheath his steel;
> Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers
> To startle princes from their easy slumbers.
> The sage will mingle with each moral theme
> My happy thoughts sententious; he will teem
> With lofty periods when my verses fire him,
> And then I'll stoop from heaven to inspire him. 30

The pull towards opposing poles and counterpoint in thought continues as the Apollonian man soars upward:

Fair world, adieu!
Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view:
Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions.

But Keats never could soar from the earth very long without being soon drawn back to it. The very fact that he drew so much ecstasy from the sensuous and material aspects of earthly things constrained him from overstepping his bounds. Unlike Icarus in this respect, and, especially different from Faust, Keats never would have sold his soul for supernatural powers. The beauties of the earth ravished his sensibilities so completely that it was a great enough challenge in the twenty-five years preceding his premature death to enjoy them alone and to pay a humble tribute of appreciation in his poetry, which would immortalize those beauties long after they had passed from the earth. Curiously, the most seemingly irrelevant things which his vision caught often would channel his mind into thoughts of other problems, such as in this same poem, in which the red poppies brought reflections on the British redcoats whom he hated:

On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;
So pert and useless, that they bring to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human-kind. 31

The influence of the friends and associates on an individual can never be underestimated. Throughout the course of history the fruits of friendship have been both good and ill, depending, of course, on the situations and persons involved. For some one of so gregarious and impressionable a nature as Keats, it was inevitable that he should remain sensitive to the thoughts and actions of others. The debt which Keats felt he owed one early friend was paid in his <u>Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke</u>, the son of the Schoolmaster of the Clarke School which Keats had attended. In the poem

which traced his poetic evolution culminating in the decision to devote his life to poetry, Keats credited the younger Clarke with introducing him to the medium, teaching him the art of poetry itself, and awakening a long dormant love for poetry. Various allusions to particulars in Spenser and Milton and the composers Mozart and Handel suggest the types of poetry and music which they enjoyed together. But, as Finney wrote, it was Clarke who helped influence Keats's awareness of contemporary religious, political, poetic, and social forces, which, in turn, shaped the content and composition of Keats's large group of juvenile poems:

> Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly
> Up to its climax and then dying proudly?
> Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,
> Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load?
> Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,
> The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram?
> Show'd me that epic was of all the king,
> Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring?
> You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty,
> And pointed out the patriot's stern duty;
> The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell;
> The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell
> Upon a tyrant's head. 32

The extraordinary sense of mission and dedication which all creators in the arts have shared is now a known commonplace. As Miss Cassidy wrote, in the excerpt which I quoted earlier, though the artist may in the throes of his struggle question the worth of his endeavor, he knows he has never been given a choice. Certainly, it would hardly seem likely that he would ever turn back, once he has been granted the vision. At this point, with his total being he makes a consummate affirmation of "Yes"; the point of no return has been reached.

Keats's guardian Richard Abbey had opposed his poetic endeavors from the beginning. The result of some fiery interviews with Abbey was the sonnet _To a young Lady who sent me a laurel crown_, Miss Georgiana Augusta

Wylie, whom his brother George was later to marry. The call from Parnassus had made Keats almost belligerently unrelenting in his desire to be a poet:

> Lo! who dares say, 'Do this'? Who dares call down
> My will from its high purpose? Who say, 'Stand,'
> Or 'Go'? This mighty moment I would frown
> On abject Caesars---not the stoutest band
> Of mailed heroes should tear off my crown: 33

The February 16, 1817, edition of The Examiner published a new sonnet, written in December, 1816, To Kosciusko, in the memory of the valiant Pole who had dedicated his life to the cause of liberty---another in the long line of favorite heroes for Keats. A bust of the Polish hero is described in the fragment of Sleep and Poetry devoted to a description of Hunt's study. Keats included Kosciusko in that special group of courageous favorites---among them, Alfred, William Wallace, and William Tell:

> Good Kosciusko, thy great name alone
> Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling;
> It comes upon us like the glorious pealing
> Of the wide spheres---an everlasting tone.
> And now it tells me, that in worlds unknown,
> The names of heroes, burst from clouds concealing,
> And change to harmonies, for ever stealing
> Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne.
> It tells me too, that on a happy day,
> When some good spirit walks upon the earth,
> Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore
> Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth
> To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away
> To where the great God lives for evermore. 34

Before we pass from this early group of juvenile poems, all of which were written before Keats was twenty-two years of age, I would emphasize that Keats had not in his early manhood been devoting himself exclusively to topics of political and social importance; for each one of the poems from which I have quoted above, there were many more little pieces, some of which were conscious imitations of Spenser and the large group of minor eighteenth century poets. Keats was at this point in what might be called the gestation period of poetic development; uncertainty, doubt, fear, naiveté---elements such as these are readily apparent in all

his early poems. He was groping his way awkwardly and ingenuously; new thoughts, books, and persons were finding an unusually fallow mind on which to impress themselves; this may be seen in the titles of some of the poems themselves:

'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill', On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies, Imitation of Spenser, 'How many bards gild the lapses of time.'' 'O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell', and On first looking into Chapman's Homer. The point I wish to make is that, contrary to the notions of so many people who see Keats and, indeed, so many of the Romantic poets as escapists only, this young man was keenly aware of current events and concerned to the extent that he wrote about them.

But it is time to turn to the first poem of major importance, Sleep and Poetry, composed during November and December of 1816. Keats's mind had been maturing rapidly. His knowledge from both experience and reading; the influence of the poetic principles of Hunt; the stages of natural education outlined by Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey; the figure of the charioteer taken from Plato through Shelley; a thorough knowledge of the various schools of English poetry, which he critically surveys---all show a pronounced development and a more acute cognizance of external issues.

The first section of the poem describes, exactly as Nietzsche and his sister wrote, the state of visionary repose which the typical Apollonian man and poet can enjoy; in the case of Keats, the visions appeared during sleep; with Coleridge, for example, the use of narcotics brought about such trances. Under such a condition Keats was quite ready to throw over everything in surrender to his Muse:

> O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen
> That am not yet a glorious denizen
> Of they wide heaven---Should I rather kneel
> Upon some mountain-top until I feel
> A glowing splendour round about me hung,

And echo back the voice of thine own tongue?
O Poesy! for thee I grasp my pen
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven; yet, to my ardent prayer,
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
Like a fresh sacrifice; or, if I can bear
The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair
Visions of all places: a bowery nook
Will be elysium--- 35

It was this consummate surrender to his Muse, this total commitment, the desire to be absorbed and consumed by beauty and poetry, which I consider or define as the Apollonian Keats. Intimations of the problem which was to vex him for the rest of his life, and which turned him towards the Apollonian life in art---the mutability of life and the permanence of Art---follows:

Stop and consider! life is but a day;
A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit;
. . . . . .
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale; 36

What follows is another affirmation of his dedication to poesy, and an ardently poignant (in light of the few years remaining) one:

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.
Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan: 37

Keats thought that ten years would be adequate to develop his poetic powers to the level necessary to "do the deed" which his soul had "to itself decreed." The reader now finds a passage charged with typical Keatsian imagery, an imagery which generally represents all five of the human senses. Corresponding to the second and third stages in a man's natural education as outlined by Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey Keats now turned his attention to the

second realm of poetry, which is concerned with the human heart.

> 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. 38

Keats now incorporated the figure of the charioteer, taken from Plato's *Phaedrus*, to symbolize the poet's imagination:

> The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
> To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
> Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
> Passing along before a dusky space
> Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase
> Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep
> Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep:
> Some with upholden hand and mouth severe;
> Some with their faces muffled to the ear
> Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom,
> Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom;
> Some looking back, and some with upward gaze;
> Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
> Flit onward--- 39

But painfully conscious of the letdown feeling, of the gravitational pull which prevented any such disastrous fate as Icarus suffered, Keats described the dénouement following the flight of his fancy:

> 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. 40

The rending realization of the limits of mortality was only too clear, as it would be for the rest of his life; it plagued his Apollonian soul but also nurtured the Faustian man:

> 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? prepare her steeds,
> Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
> Upon the clouds? Has she not shown us all?

From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning
Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows? 41

A second division, critically surveying the divers schools of English poetry, especially attacking Pope and his followers and Wordsworthian naturalism, contains Keats's famous definition and statement of the purpose of poetry:

A drainless shower
Of light is poesy; 'Tis the supreme of power;
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.
The very archings of her eye-lids charm
A thousand willing agents to obey,
And still she governs with the mildest sway:
But strength alone though of the Muses born
Is like a fallen angel: trees uptorn,
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres
Delight it; for it feeds upon the burrs,
And thorns of life; forgetting the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man. 42

Of this passage John Middleton Murry wrote a rather facile, if not altogether convincing, explanation, which I quote:

> This intuition of the nature of poetry is very difficult to apprehend or to express, because it is the most essential. Poetry is a thing-in-itself, unique, and the more truly it is poetry the less possible it is to assimilate the elements which compose it to the things which ordinarily bear the names of those elements. We speak, for instance, of thought in poetry; but if the poetry is pure and uncontaminated, the thought it contains is of a different kind from what is ordinarily called thought: it is a perception, not a cogitation, and in the finest kind of poetry it is a perception of the general in the particular. But there again, and quite inevitably, by dragging in these words 'general' and 'particular,' as we are forced to do, we are doing violence to the unique thing. We are, in spite of ourselves, assimilating poetic thought to ordinary thought. We cannot do otherwise: exposition in such a case is necessarily transposition, from one order of reality into another. 43

This explanation, cogent as it may seem, is unsatisfying to me

and almost beside the point, as far as the passage cited from Keats is concerned. There does not seem to me to be any consistent decision reached as to the aim of poetry. From the consensus of the critics, we may assume that in this particular fragment Keats was attacking Byron and, especially, Wordsworth's naturalism, for feeding on and employing the "burrs, and thorns of life," losing sight of the ultimate purpose of poetry---to tranquillize the cares and lift the thoughts of man. A little later we are told:

> And they shall be accounted poet kings
> Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.
> O may these joys be ripe before I die. 44

Taken at face value all of this seems a total contradiction of passing these joys for a nobler life,

> Where I may find the agonies, the strife
> Of human hearts:

Keats continued quite buoyantly in this vein, quite forgetting those agonies and strifes:

> But off Despondence! miserable bane!
> They should not know thee, who athirst to gain
> A noble end, are thirsty every hour.
> What though I am not wealthy in the dower
> Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know
> The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
> Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
> Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts
> Out the dark mysteries of human souls
> To clear conceiving: 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_. 45

But Keats did not continue long in such totally detached Apollonian reverie and vision; the make-up of his own psyche did not permit him; if he had been able, we can perhaps imagine that he would have been superficially

a happier man. But, his Faustian humanitarian concerns made him both a better and greater man, if not necessarily a greater poet. At this tender age of twenty-one, he knew the long, arduous process which he would have to undergo; any attempted deviation could only result in an ersatz kind of poet and poetry, which would be anathema to such an honest and dedicated person as Keats. However strongly the Apollonian vision had and would repeatedly draw him, the thought of excellence and perfection had no slight attraction; accepting the circumstances in the most intelligent philosophic manner, he wished to descend to the hardest, most fruitful path, to feel the necessary agony and suffering of himself, but also of others:

> 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! Stay! an inward frown
> Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
> 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!
>   For sweet relief I'll dwell
> On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay
> Begun in gentleness die so away.
> E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades:
> I turn full hearted to the friendly aids
> That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood,
> And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.
> The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
> Into the brain ere one can think upon it; 46

It seems to me that the very words and images which Keats used in this passage are indicative of a most warmly humane person---e.g., "humbler," "gentleness," "full hearted," "friendly aids," "brotherhood," "friendliness," "mutual good," and, especially, "The hearty grasp." Again, in this poem, Keats paid another tribute to his old and favorite men of Faustian action: Alfred and Kosciusko, in describing busts of them

in Hunt's home:

> Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,
> As if he always listened to the sighs
> Of the goaded world; and Kosciusko's worn
> By horrid suffrance---mightily forlorn. 47

The coming of _Endymion_ was foreshadowed by the minor sonnet _On receiving a laurel crown from Leigh Hunt_; its significance for us lies in its tone of exuberant imaginings of new revolutions and liberties which would be acquired, though Keats never knew it, in the revolutions of 1848:

> Still time is fleeting, and no dream arises
> Gorgeous as I would have it---only I see
> A Trampling down of what the world most prizes,
> Turbans and Crowns, and blank regality;
> And then I run into most wild surmises
> Of all the many glories that may be. 48

"Turbans," "Crowns," and "regality" were to be used again in the opening of Book III of _Endymion_.

IV

Right from the beginning of the year 1817 there was apparent an increasing introspection, development, and maturity in Keats. The conflict between Apollonian repose and Faustian effort was becoming an ever-widening breach in his soul. As he worked with growing intensity on his poetics and his profession in general, and as he met more and more people, some of whom loved him while others rejected him, his greatest challenge came from one indulgent and forgiving part of his heart, which begged him not to become embittered, while his intellect and sensibilities said they could no longer withstand intolerance, depravity, wickedness, gossip, stupidity, and malice---all of which he saw with greater clarity among an increasing number of people. He was never sure that he had chosen the right path; inevitably he became certain that he had taken the wrong one. The result, for us, is a rather confused and totally contradictory set of statements, one as strong as the others. For a man of so delicate a nature, equally susceptible to the little acts of kindness, celebrated by Wordsworth, as well as the darker, more invidious labyrinths of human nature, it was quite impossible for him to reach any final conclusions. As is so often the case, pride saved him. Even after the mortal blow following the publication of Endymion was dealt him by the critics, Keats remained confident in his own endowments; he was himself keenly aware at all times of both the defects and virtues of his work, and that was, essentially, all that mattered to him. When his spirits were right down to ebb tide, his pride prevented his showing any outward signs of defeat or melancholy, though I think he must have suffered much more than many critics seem willing to believe.

Though he often became disgruntled with people, Keats never forsook his Muse; indeed his entire life is the history of an ever-increasing love of poetry. To John Hamilton Reynolds he wrote on April 17-18, 1817:

> I find that I cannot exist without poetry---without eternal poetry---half the day will not do---the whole of it---I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan. [49]

In the throes of composing Endymion he wrote to Leigh Hunt on May 10, 1817:

> These last two days however I have felt more confident---I have asked myself so often why I should be a Poet more than other Men---seeing how great a thing it is,---how great things are to be gained by it---what a thing to be in the Mouth of Fame---that at last 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, and at this moment I drive the thought from me...

The same day he wrote Benjamin Robert Haydon:

> ...I hope for the support of a High Power while I clime this little eminence and especially in my Years of more momentous Labor. I remember your saying that you had notions of a good Genius presiding over you. I have of late had the same thought---for things which ⟨I⟩ do half at Random are afterwards confirmed by my judgment in a dozen features of Propriety...I am glad you say every Man of great Views is at times tormented as I am... [51]
>
> You tell me never to despair---I wish it was as easy for me to observe the saying---truth is I have a horrid Morbidity of Temperament which has shown itself at intervals---it is I have no doubt the greatest Enemy and stumbling block I have to fear---There is no greater Sin after the seven deadly sins than to flatter oneself into an idea of being a great Poet. [52]

In this letter was expressed Keats's theory that the poet's function is to express ethereal matters, a theory which formed the basis of the allegory of Book II of Endymion:

> I know no one but you who can be fully sensible of the turmoil and anxiety, the sacrifice of all what 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---that is to say ethereal things---but here I am talking like a Madman greater things that our Creator himself made!! [53]

But Keats never soared in the realm of the ethereal for very long; I do not think that he ever really wanted to. Certainly, the highly charged political and social scene around him did not permit his Faustian manhood any extended imaginative flights. About the time that he was beginning work on Endymion two important cases involving freedom of the press were causing much concern in the British nation. One involved Jonathan Wooler, publisher of an obscure journal, The Black Dwarf, which had attacked the ministry, accusing it of designs to conquer all of England. The second case, considerably later, involved a publisher by the name of Hone, who had cleverly parodied various practices in the Church, and who was eventually acquitted. On December 21, 1817, rejoicing that subscriptions were being raised for the publisher, Keats wrote to his brothers George and Thomas, expressing grave concern:

> Hone, the publisher's trial, you must find very amusing; and, as Englishmen, very encouraging---his Not Guilty is a thing, which not to have been, would have dulled still more Liberty's Emblazoning---Lord Ellenborough has been paid in his own coin---Wooler and Hone have done us an essential service---. 54

The backgrounds of Endymion are rather involved and long. But some knowledge of what was going on in Keats's mind, especially as revealed in his letters, is necessary for a proper appreciation. Keats divided Shakespeare's poetry into three categories: the poetry of historical fact, the poetry of human emotions, and the poetry of romance, the last being that which he preferred. Prior to setting his pen to Endymion, he had been reading some essays by Hazlitt, whose thought he found very harmonious to his own. Hazlitt's On Poetical Versatility, in The Round Table, spoke of the natural sphere of poetry as that which traversed the empyrean and looked down on the humble earth. But Keats had also been much impressed with the work of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, whose dramatic art and naturalism,

respectively, he had been studying in Hazlitt's essays. An inevitable personal affection developed especially for Shakespeare (the two poets have often been classed together to the extent that John Middleton Murry wrote a volume entitled Keats and Shakespeare), who inspired Keats's philosophy of Negative Capability, discussed in a letter to his brothers George and Thomas on December 21, 1817:

> ...and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously---I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason---Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration. 55

The critics tell us that Keats had formulated Negative Capability as early as November, 1817, at which time the distinction was drawn between dominant men of power with individualized intellects subject to their strong and practical wills, and those men of genius who were, relatively, without identity, but whose free intellects reflected their environment as in a mirror. In the letter cited above, Keats had specifically used Coleridge and Shakespeare as examples---the former poet remaining unsatisfied with half-knowledge, and the latter concerned only, or primarily, with the phenomenon of beauty, to the extent that everything else was of secondary import. From now on, the Apollonian-Faustian dichotomy in Keats involved the conflict between (1) pure sensation and imagination, and (2) philosophy, logic, and truth. The Apollonian man was more than content with the beauty which he found and the truth which it contained, but the Faustian philosopher demanded form, consistency, and philosophy.

The fall of 1817 had seen the completion of Book IV of Endymion.

The empirical humanism which Keats had developed from Shakespeare's plays, with Hazlitt's help, turned him from his earlier preference for the poetry of romance to the poetry of human emotions. Wordsworth's naturalism was interpreted by Keats with a clear understanding of the empirical philosophy of David Hartley, Hobbes, Hume, and Locke. Keats took up Wordsworth's special variety of empiricism, which not only stressed sensations but also said that one's sensations determined the quality of his thought and ideas. It was Wordsworth's conviction that through sensations and their associations a mystical insight, neo-Platonic in origin, could be achieved. It was this fusion of neo-Platonism, derived from Spenser, with a naturalism based on sensations, which Keats incorporated in Endymion. From the fall of 1817, Keats was to stress an unqualified, typically Apollonian emphasis on sensations---often, but not always, to the exclusion of all thought, all philosophy, all Faustian humanitarianism and social responsibility. There are several important letters which were written during this period which show Keats's sudden rejection of humanity at large; he had been looking more and more at his own heart and finding some rather disturbing truths, such as he discussed in this letter written in October, 1817, to Benjamin Bailey, his great humanitarian friend and benefactor:

> ...I wish I had a heart always open to such sensations--- but there is no altering a Man's nature and mine must be radically wrong for it will lie dormant a whole Month. This leads me to suppose that there are no Men thouroughly wicked---so as never to be self spiritualized into a kind of sublime Misery---but alas! 'tis but for an Hour---he is the only Man "who has kept watch on Man's Mortality" who has philantrophy enough to overcome the disposition <to> an indolent enjoyment of intellect---who is brave enough to volunteer for uncomfortable hours...Health and Spirits can only belong unalloyed to the selfish Man---the Man who thinks much of his fellows can never be in Spirits--- when I am no suffering for vicious beastliness I am the greater part of the week in spirits. 56

A typical incident which would cause Keats limitless ire involved

the abuse of the Bishop of Lincoln; apparently Bailey's ordination was involved; when Keats heard of the news, he replied to Bailey on November 3, 1817:

> ...It must be shocking to find in a sacred Profession such barefaced oppression and impertinence---The Stations and Grandeurs of the World have taken it into their heads that they cannot commit themselves towards and inferior in rank---but is not the impertinence from one above to one below more wretchedly mean than from the low to the high? There is something so nauseous in self-willed yawning impudence in the shape of conscience----it sinks the Bishop of Lincoln into a smashed frog putrifying: that a rebel against common decency should escape the Pillory! That a mitre should cover a Man guilty of the most coxcombical, tyrannical and indolent impertinence! I repeat this word for the offence appears to me most especially impertinent---and a very serious return would be the Rod---Yet doth he sit in his Palace. Such is this World---and we live---you have surely in a continual struggle against the suffocation of accidents---we must bear (and my Spleen is mad at the thought thereof) the Proud Mans Contumely. O for a recourse somewhat human independant of the great Consolations of Religion and undepraved Sensations----of the Beautiful---the poetical in all things---O for a Remedy against such wrongs within the pale of the World! Should not those things be pure enjoyment should they stand the chance of being contaminated by being called in as antagonists to Bishops? Would not earthly thing do? By Heavens my dear Bailey I know you have a spice of what I mean---you can set me and have set it in all the rubs that may befal me. You have I know a sort of Pride which would kick the Devil on the Jaw Bone and make him drunk with the kick---There is nothing so balmy to a Soul imbittered as yours must be, as Pride---When we look at the Heavens we cannot be proud---but shall stocks and stones be impertinent and say it does not become us to kick them? At this Moment I take your hand---let us walk up yon Mountain of common sense now if our Pride be vainglorious such a support would fail---yet you feel firm footing---now look beneath at that parcel of knaves and fools. Many a Mitre is moving among them. I cannot express how I despise the Man who would wrong or be impertinent to you---The thought that we are mortal makes us groan---
>
> ...I hope you will recieve an answer from Haydon soon---if not, Pride! Pride! Pride! 57

Another letter to Bailey, on November 22, 1817, contained Keats's famous statement of the "holiness of the Heart's affections," as well as a

general rejection of all reason as a means of knowing truth. The letter was one of poignant disillusionment, with a total absence of hope for any worldly happiness:

> In passing however I must say of one thing that has pressed upon me lately and encreased 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---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...I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination---What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth---whether it existed before or not---for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty...The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream---he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning---and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections. However it may be, O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts! It is "a Vision in the form of Youth" a Shadow of reality to come---and this consideration has further convinced me for it has come as auxiliary to another favorite speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated. And yet such a state can only befall those who delight in Sensation rather than hunger as you do after Truth. Adam's dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human Life and its spiritual repetition. But as I was saying---the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness---to compare great things with small---have you never by being Surprised with an old Melody---in a delicious place---by a delicious voice, felt over again your very Speculations and Surmises at the time it first operated on your Soul---do you not remember forming to yourself the singer's face more beautiful than it was possible and yet with the elevation of the Moment you did not think so---even then you were mounted on the Wings of Imagination so high---that the Prototype must be here after---that delicious face you will see. What a time! 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 Sensations partly on thought---to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind---such an one I consider your's and therefore it is necessary to your eternal Happiness that you not only drink this old Wine of Heaven which I shall call the redigestion of our most ethereal Musings on Earth; but also increase in knowledge and know all things....but the world is full of troubles and I have not much reason to think myself pesterd with many---...You perhaps perhaps at one time thought there was such a thing as Worldly Happiness to be arrived at, at certain periods of time marked out---you have of necessity from your disposition been thus led away---I scarcely remember counting upon any Happiness---I look not for it if it be not in the present hour---nothing startles me beyond the Moment. The setting Sun will always set me to rights---or if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existince and pick about the Gravel. The first thing that strikes me on hearing a Misfortune having befalled another is this. 'Well it cannot be helped---he will have the pleasure of trying the resources of his spirit'---and I beg now my dear Bailey that hereafter should you observe any thing cold in me not to but <for put> it to the account of heartlessness but abstraction---for I assure you I sometimes 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 genui<ne>ness of my feelings at other times---thinking them a few barren Tragedy-tears---... 58

Much of Keats's thought was occasioned by his relationship with his humanitarian friend Bailey, whom Keats regarded as a sufficiently imaginative person and friend, but one who needed some knowledge in order to become a totally integrated person and artist. Keats saw Bailey's whole humanitarian system as one constructed on foundations of reason, a system which assumed that through reason and education human nature could eventually be perfected and all society improved; all of this was curiously discarded by Keats, who at this point decided that happiness could be achieved only in momentary intuitions of beauty.

However much Keats may have rejected humanitarianism in the fall of 1817, during the months of April through November he had been thoroughly influenced by Wordsworth's achievements, especially, The Excursion, in his

composition of Endymion. Even after Keats had lost much of his earlier respect for Wordsworth, he still praised this poem in particular as one of the three things in the age most worthy of exultation. Keats was particularly impressed with the characters of the solitary Sceptic, the Poet, the Parson, and the Wanderer. In Part V of the poem all the "basic" philosophical questions are posed, from which the Wanderer, Wordsworth's hero, makes his conclusions----that the principle of love, whose noblest residence is the human soul, pervades the universe. By contemplating and communicating with forms of nature, men may become wise and compassionate.

It seems to me especially unfortunate that Keats soon became so soured on any humanitarianism, for in Endymion he seemed to have achieved a beautiful and mutually compatible harmony between the Apollonian and Faustian tensions in his own soul.

The opening of the poem is the contemplation of beauty by an Apollonian who derives comfort in beauty. Though the comfort derived is irrelevant in the development of neo-Platonism, it was integral to Wordsworth's philosophy of nature:

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
> Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
> A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
> Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
> Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
> Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
> Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
> Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
> from our dark spirits. 59

Briefly, the theme of the poem is the neo-Platonic quest for immortality. Endymion must go through four stages in order to win his "fellowship with essence"---which comprises an appreciation of the beauty of nature, of art, friendship, and love:

Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven! Fold
A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips: hist, when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Aeolian magic from their lucid wombs:
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 have we stept
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthralments 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, an orbed drop
Of light, and that is love:... 60

However Apollonian Keats may have been in his seeming other-worldliness, he did accept the empirical principle, in contrast to Shelley, for example, that there are no innate ideas or supernatural illuminations; rather, sensations form the sole basis for mental experience. Gefühl ist alles, as Goethe would have said. Sensations from natural objects induce an ecstatic state in which the imagination intuits truth through beauty. "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth." The imagination seizing truth in beauty has found an attribute of God. Claude Finney said, in his monumental The Evolution of Keats's Poetry, that in this mental process as outlined by Keats the poet fused the epistemology of empiricism and

the ontology of neo-Platonism. Quoting again from Keats's letter to Benjamin Bailey on November 22, 1817:

> The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream---he awoke and found it truth....Adam's dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human Life and its Spiritual repetition. 61

Thus, the material world may have been an imperfect reproduction of the ideal world for Keats, but still it was of primary import.

Book I of Endymion narrates the episode of the moon-goddess descending to earth to Endymion, who is lifted up to fly with her through the air; this may be taken to represent a union of the soul with the spirit of essential Beauty. The tragedy, or the inevitable outcome of such an event, is that once having perceived transcendental Beauty the mortal spirit of man must ever remain dissatisfied with mankind and nature and surrender his life to the search for this Beauty. Peona, representative of fellow human support, can be of no avail.

Book II has an important passage of typical Apollonian detachment in which all is surrendered for the sovereignty and power of love; everything else is of relatively secondary importance:

> But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly
> About the great Athenian admiral's mast?
> What care, though striding Alexander past
> The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
> Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers
> The glutted Cyclops, what care?---Juliet leaning
> Amid her window-flowers,---sighing,---weaning
> Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
> Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
> of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
> Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
> Are things to brood on with more ardency
> Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully
> Must such conviction come upon his head,
> Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
> Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
> The path of love and poesy. 62

In the best, or worst, Apollonian tradition, Keats has implied that love, above all acts of heroism, all central world issues, will always be the fittest subject for poetry and the most valuable concern in the heart of the poet.

Professor John Hawley Roberts of Williams College, in an article entitled "Poetry of Sensation or of Thought," had an original interpretation of the visionary meeting between Endymion and Cynthia in this book. He said that the achievement of the ideal in the dream was expressed in terms of the actual physical sensation and possession. Does this suggest that in sensations Keats had found a way to reach the ideal? he asked. Also, Roberts said that Cynthia's admission of cowardice and her request that their love be kept secret may be interpreted as the ideal of poetry afraid to admit that these are materials for the noblest kind of verse. 63

A poignant expression of Keats's disgust with life was given by the poet to Endymion, who, in the throes of despair following repeated disillusionment and failure, longs for his moon-goddess:

> But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
> The disappointment, the anxiety,
> Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
> All human; bearing in themselves this good,
> That they are still the air, the subtle food,
> To make us feel existence, and to show
> How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,
> Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
> There is no depth to strike in: I can see
> Naught earthly worth my compassing; 64

I do not think this is to be interpreted in light of the typical death-wish common in so much of twentieth-century literature; it is rather an understated wish to be consumed in beauty, in somethingtranscending the mortal and the finite, which were no longer worth Keats's compassing.

But no sooner has the soul of the Apollonian Keats-Endymion soared than the conscience of the Faustian man beckons again with solemn command:

Thus swell'd it forth: 'Descend,
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world!
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd
As from thy threshold; day by day hast been
A little lower than the chilly sheen
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms
Into the deadening ether that still charms
Their marble being: now, as deep profound
As those are high, descend! He ne'er is crown'd
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend! 65

Descend to the silent mysteries of earth, the voice has commanded, to know the agonies and strifes of human hearts. Man must know and submit to his limits, but I also think that Keats strove all his life to be happy within those limits, to derive the solace which can only come with definite circumscriptions. Whether he ever did achieve any sort of peace of mind within those twenty-five years is a question which will never be settled; certainly the problem plagued him with increasing intensity to the very end.

A consummation of love between the poetic soul of Endymion and Cynthia in disguise, representing sensuous beauty, results in new vision, power, and insight, but especially, a new sympathy for human beings. Meeting the despairing Arethusa and Alpheus, Endymion cannot understand their misery, but he does feel compassion, and prays to the goddess of his pilgrimage to make them happy.

Book III opens with an acrid polemic against all tyranny, especially that of the Holy Alliance; the Apollonian poet has returned to political and social problems, as every Faustian man should:

There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
Their baaing vanities, to browse away
The comfortable green and juicy hay
From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge
of sanctuary splendour, not a sight

Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,
Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones---
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,
And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone---
Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.---
Are then regalities all gilded masks? 66

Following this passage with a discourse on the greater royal realms which are above and which transcend human imagination, Keats showed in this particular juxtaposition his unusual ability to write in the most caustic and pungent style about matters which disgusted him, as well as in his more common sensuous vein on subjects which were sacred and tender to him.

But Book III is primarily significant for us in its narrative of a great philanthropic deed and adventure in human empathy and action. Endymion meets Glaucus, a miserable wretch and nature-lover, who is suffering a relationship of unrequited love with Scylla. Blindly seeking aid from Circe, Glaucus has been seduced and made a vassal, as well as a victim of senile feebleness. Feeling an impulse to aid some shipwrecked people, he would explore the innermost meaning of all things and preserve the bodies of the dead lovers on the floor of the sea; he has been told that a young man will arrive to aid him in his task. Glaucus is overjoyed to meet the long-awaited Endymion and relates the long history of his plight; he is a humane man and is torn between his consuming passion for Scylla and thoughts of others:

For I would watch all night to see unfold
Heaven's gates, and AEthon snort his morning gold
Wide o'er the swelling streams: and constantly
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest
With daily boon of fish most delicate:
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate

Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach. 67

. . . . . .

Woe, alas!
That love should be my bane! Ah, Scylla fair!
Why did poor Glaucus ever---ever dare
To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger-youth!
I lov'd her to the very white of truth,
And she would not conceive it. Timid thing! 68

The two men set out to perform the appointed task and revive all the dead lovers; in so doing they burst the bud of genuine happiness, which could be offered to them only after typical Faustian action comparable to that found in Book II of Goethe's Faust. Glaucus acts as guide for Endymion:

'Youth! now strew
These minced leaves on me, and passing through
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,
And thou wilt see the issue.'---'Mid the sound
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.
How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force
Press'd its cold hand, and wept,---and Scylla sigh'd!
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied---
The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head,
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much:
Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latmian persever'd along, and thus
All were re-animated. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes
Of gladness in the air---while many, who
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest.
They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full showers
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,
Distracted with the richest overflow
Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven. 69

I think that for sheer tenderness, delicacy, and beauty, this passage can be surpassed in its intensity only by certain passages in the New Testament, where one may read of the miracles of Christ and of His effect on others. Certainly, the acts of Endymion and Glaucus, the spirit in which they perform these acts, and their effects on others are quite Christlike, and could have been written only by a poet who, at least once, had felt keenly the passion to give of himself to his fellows, to satisfy the need of the ego to feel needed and purposeful. The narrative in this book continues to be intensely moving and is, I think, as perfect and inspired a piece of poetry as ever resulted from any Apollonian vision:

> ---'Away!'
> Shouted the new born god; 'Follow, and pay
> Our piety to Neptunus supreme!'---
> Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,
> They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,
> Through portal columns of a giant size,
> Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.
> Joyous all follow'd as the leader call'd,
> Down marble steps; pouring as easily
> As hour-glass sand,---and fast, as you might see
> Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
> Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.
>
> Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,
> Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
> Just within ken, they saw descending thick
> Another multitude. Whereat more quick
> Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,
> And of those numbers every eye was wet;
> For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,
> Like what was never heard in all the throes
> Of wind and waters: 'tis past human wit
> To tell; 'tis dizziness to think of it. 70

Endymion is again encouraged by Venus to try to regain his love; swooning with passion for his goddess, Endymion soars too high in his passion, and the Faustian half of his character calls him back:

> The Palace whirls
> Around giddy Endymion; seeing he
> Was there far strayed from mortality.
> He could not bear it---shut his eyes in vain;
> Imagination gave a dizzier pain. 71

Hearing a voice which assures him that he has attained immortal bliss for both his goddess and himself, Endymion arises from his repose, and Book III comes to a close. Endymion's act of human love and sympathy has prepared his spirit for the next higher experience, which will be the complete union of his soul with the heart of humanity, the final key to the "Penetralium of Mystery," as well as the last step leading to the altar of highest poetic insight.

In Book IV Endymion has come to the conclusion that of all things in the world which are to be cherished, sorrow is first. Meeting a lovely Indian maid, he is not only weak against the charm of her beauty; the compassion in his soul reaches out to her in her misery. He is seriously distracted from his love for his goddess, whom in a dream he has learned is Diana. It is inevitable that he should be so drawn to the Indian maid, for he has suffered mercilessly in his loneliness; his spirit, forsaken and friendless on earth, has soared in typical Apollonian yearning for union with the Muse itself:

> Great Muse, thou know'st what prison,
> Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets
> Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
> Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn
> Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
> Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
> Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
> To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
> And could not pray:---nor could I now---so on
> I move to the end in lowliness of heart.---
> . . . . . .
> To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
> A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour:
> Yet would I have, great gods! but one short hour
> Of native air---let me but die at home.' 72

His humanitarian impulse now in full force, Endymion can not resist the Indian maid; he sees Sorrow, to whom he addresses a long apostrophe, as the interlocutor between them:

> 'Come then, Sorrow.'
> Sweetest Sorrow!
> Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
> I thought to leave thee
> And deceive thee,
> But now of all the world I love thee best.
>
> 'There is not one,
> No, no, not one
> But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
> Thou art her mother,
> And her brother,
> Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.' 73

But the conflict between earth and air, the mortal and the immortal, the tangible and the ethereal, the Faustian and the Apollonian---this conflict never was settled in Keats's mind, nor in Endymion's. In a dream, Endymion perceives his vision, the Mystery, to whom he springs:

> He looks, 'tis she,
> His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
> And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
> Bood-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring
> Towards her, and awakes---. 74

Like Milton's Adam, and, indeed, like all aesthetes of the highest order, Endymion is "weake Against the charm of Beauties powerful glance." Now, typical Keatsian vacillation sets in; at first, Keats clings to the Indian maid, who later fades from his grasp when the moon shines again. Finally resorting to the Cave of Quietude, Endymion enjoys total apathy there. But he soon feels recriminations and pangs of conscience for having loved only a dream and rejoins the Indian maid:

> By thee will I sit
> For ever: let our fate stop here---a kid
> I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
> Us live in peace, in love and peace among
> His forest wildernesses. I have clung
> To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
> Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
> Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
> Against all elements, against the tie
> Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
> Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
> Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
> Has my own soul conspired: so my story
> Will I to children utter, and repent.

> *There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent*
> *His appetite beyond his natural sphere,*
> *But starv'd and died.* My sweetest Indian, here,
> Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
> My life from too thin breathing: gone and past
> Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!
> And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
> Of visionary seas! No, never more
> Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
> Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
> Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast
> My love is still for thee. *The hour may come*
> *When we shall meet in pure elysium.*
> *On earth I may not love thee*; and therefore
> Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
> All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine
> On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
> And bless our silver lives. 75

But Keats was never satisfied, never certain, and neither is Endymion. He makes a host of passionate promises to the maid, but concludes with rending uncertainty and dissatisfaction:

> And that affectionate light, those diamond things,
> Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,
> Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
> Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure?
> *O that I could not doubt!*' 76

In spite of all, *Endymion* is a happy poem, and all ends on a positive note. For various reasons, the Indian maiden has concealed her identity; she and Cynthia are one and the same, as are Endymion's earthly passion, with its roots in human pity and desire, and his heavenly passion, stemming from his poetic aspiration and the thirst of his soul for Beauty. Lover and poet are the same.

Various critics have written some interesting commentaries on *Endymion*. Sidney Colvin, in his monumental *Life of John Keats*, wrote:

> Let it be borne in mind, then, that besides the fundamental idea of treating the passion of Endymion for Cynthia as a type of the passion of the poetic soul for essential Beauty, Keats wrote under the influence of two secondary moral ideas or convictions, inchoate probably in his mind when he began but gaining definiteness as he went on. One was that

> the soul enamoured of and pursuing Beauty cannot achieve its quest in selfishness and isolation, but to succeed must first be taken out of itself and purified by active sympathy with the lives and sufferings of others: the other, that a passion for the manifold separate and dividual beauties of things and beings upon earth is in its nature identical with the passion for that transcendental and essential Beauty: hence the various human love-adventures which befall the hero in dreams or in reality, and seem to distract him from his divine quest, are shown in the end to be in truth no infidelities but only attractions exercised by his celestial mistress in disguise. 77

Douglas Bush commented:

> It is a fundamental source of Keats's strength, and of his hold upon us, that he, despite his love of poetic luxuries and devotion to art, shared and understood the common experience of mankind as Shelley, with all his humanitarian zeal, never did. Although, then, Endymion does not learn his lesson until the very end, his whole previous pilgrimage has been leading him away from purely visionary idealism to the knowledge that the actual world of human life must be accepted, not denied, and that only through participation in that life can the ideal be realized. 78

Of Endymion Keats himself wrote:

> It is as good as I had power to make it---by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece, & with that view asked advice, & trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble---I will write independantly.--- I have written independently without Judgment.--- I may write independently, & with Judgment hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation & watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself---In Endymion, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice.--- I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest. 79

V

As we take up Keats's life again, we find him with his dear brother Tom, whom he was faithfully nursing, and who was dying a slow death. The seemingly cogent philosophy of Negative Capability which Keats had systematized for himself was hardly proving satisfactory. Wordsworth's humanitarianism and naturalism had already been discarded; he longed for the warmth of Christianity but refused to accept it at this point. Even his fecund imagination, in all events his final recourse, if necessary, was no solace; Keats was feeling the sting of the outer world too keenly to be able to afford his imagination, which had left him only more painfully cognizant of reality and the workaday world:

> 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'd day-time
> In the dark void of night. For in the world
> We jostle,---but my flag is not unfurl'd
> On the Admiral-staff,---and so philosophize
> I dare not yet! Oh, never will the prize
> High reason, and the love 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 imagination brought
> Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
> Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
> Cannot refer to any standard law
> Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
> In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,---
> It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
> It soils the singing of the Nightingale. 80

There is no pathetic fallacy in this poem; nature is harsh, cruel, and ruthless---" most fierce destruction," as Keats put it.

The year 1818 was a great year of letter-writing for Keats, and many of these letters are among the most thoughtful and beautiful in the English language. Keats, as always, was devoting much time to contemplation. Art was again assuming an increasingly important position in his life, often

to the exclusion of everything else. To George and Thomas Keats he wrote on January 13, 1818:

> So I do believe---not thus speaking with any poor vanity---that works of genius are the first things in this world. 81

Ten days later saw the composition of an important letter to his friend Bailey, in which he expressed his concern over disease and relationships between human beings. Keats had learned never to expect too much from his friends, and he urged Bailey to adopt a similar policy:

> How has that unfortunate family lived through the twelve? One saying of your's I shall never forget---you may not recollect it---it being perhaps said when you were looking on the surface and seeming of Humanity alone, without a thought of the past or the future---or the deeps of good and evil---you were at the moment estranged from speculation and I think you have arguments ready for the Man who would utter it to you---this is a formidable preface for a simple thing---merely you said; "Why should Woman suffer?" Aye. Why should she? 'By heavens I'd coin my very Soul and drop my Blood for Drachmas"! These things are, and he who feels how incompetent the most skyey Knight errantry its <for is> to heal this bruised fairness is like a sensitive leaf on the hot hand of thought. Your tearing, my dear friend, a spiritless and gloomy Letter up ~~and~~ to rewrite to me is what I shall never forget---it was to me a real thing. Things have happen'd lately of great Perplexity. You must have heard of them. Reynolds and Haydon retorting and recrimminating---and parting for ever---the same thing has happened between Haydon and Hunt---It is unfortunate ---Men should bear with each other---there lives not the Man who may not be cut up, aye hashed to pieces on his weakest side. The best of Men have but a portion of good in them---a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames which creates the ferment of existence---by which a Man is propell'd to act and strive and buffet with Circumstance. The sure way Bailey, is first to know a Man's faults, and then be passive---if after that he insensibly draws you towards him then you have no Power to break the link. Before I felt interested in either Reynolds or Haydon---I was well read in their faults yet knowing them I have been cementing gradually with both. I have an affection for them both for reasons almost opposite---and to both must I of necessity cling---supported always by the hope that when a little time---a few years shall have tried me more fully in their esteem

> I may be able to bring them together---the time must come because they have both hearts---and they will recollect the best parts of each other when this gust is overblown. I had a Message from you through a Letter to Jane I think about Cripps---there can be no idea of binding till a sufficient sum is sure for him---and even then the thing should be maturely consider'd by all his helpers. I shall try my luck upon as many fatpurses as I can meet with. Cripps is improving very fast. I have the greater hopes of him because he is so slow in devellopment---a Man of great executing Powers at 20---with a look and a speech almost stupid is sure to do something. 82

As Keats's interest in other people began to diminish more and more during this year, he was able to concentrate his energies and thought on his art, in which he never lost faith, and which remained the sole stabilizer for him in a world of constant flux, despair, anxiety, and disappointment; to John Taylor on February 27, 1818 he wrote:

> In Poetry I have a few Axioms, and you will see how far I am from their Centre. 1st. I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity---it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance---2nd. Its touches of Beauty should never be half way ther<e> by making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural to him---shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight--- 83

It was in February of this year that Keats began work on his Isabella, a poem which inspired some interesting, if farfetched, comments by George Bernard Shaw, among other critics. Garrod wrote in his little volume, Keats, that the poem represented a relapse into sense and luxury, the relapse of an aspiring temperament. The reader feels the sense of an escape from reality, yet is cognizant of the outer world. Garrod said that this tension in the poem is probably the main factor for its success. 84

Shaw, on the other hand, saw a Bolshevik strain in Isabella:

> ...Keats achieved the very curious feat of writing one poem of which it may be said that if Karl Marx can be imagined as writing a poem instead of a treatise on Capital, he would have written Isabella. The immense

indictment of the profiteers and exploiters with which Marx has shaken Capitalistic civilization to its foundations, even to its overthrow in Russia, is epitomized in:

XIV

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

XV

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
    And went all naked to the hungry shark;
For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death
    The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
    A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts
    Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?---
Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts
    Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?---
Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd accounts
    Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?---
Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

Everything that the Bolshevik means and feels when he uses the fatal epithet "bourgeois" is expressed forcibly, completely, and beautifully in those three verses, written half a century before the huge tide of middle-class commerical optimism and complacency began to ebb in the wake of the planet Marx. Nothing could well be more literary than the wording: it is positively euphuistic. But it contains all the Factory Commission Reports that Marx read, and that Keats did not read because they were not yet written in his time. And so Keats is among the prophets with Shelley, and, had he lived, would no doubt have come down from _Hyperions_ and _Endymions_ to tin tacks as a very fullblooded modern revolutionist. Karl Marx is more euphuistic in calling the profiteers _bourgeoisie_ than Keats with his "these same ledger-men." Ledger-man is at least better English

> than bourgeois: there would be some hope for it yet if it had not been supplanted by profiteer....
>
> On the whole, in spite of the two idle epics, voluptuously literary, and the holiday globe-trotting "From Silken Samarcand to Cedar'd Lebanon," Keats manages to affirm himself as a man as well as a poet, and to win a place among the great poets in virtue of a future he never lived to see, and of poems he never lived to write. And he contributes a needed element to that august Communion of Saints: the element of geniality, rarely associated with lyrical genius of the first order. 85

This is a curious critique, however unquestionably strained it is. Certainly, Keats was quite caustic in his attack on the factory owners and their maltreatment of factory workers. But I can hardly imagine his having become a Bolshevik or revolutionary. However much he hated tyranny and oppression, he also cringed before ignorance and insensitivity; though he found the former in the upper economic bracket, he was painfully disturbed by the latter among the populace. Of course, the poem is a sterling example of Keats's Faustian cognizance of the most pernicious effects of the Industrial Revolution. But, the poem represents an unexplainable reversion to sentimentality as well as a growth in Keats's imaginative and poetic talents. The description of Isabella's vision of the ghost of Lorenzo, the simple diction, moving sentiments, and luscious, elegant style---all show the serious endeavor of a poet who was striving to perfect his powers as an Apollonian creator in the arts.

In March and April of 1818 Keats was tending more and more to doubt the efficacy and worth of poetry and to adopt Wordsworth's principles of reason and knowledge as checks. He was, in the best Faustian tradition, placing greater emphasis on the motive in action than on the action itself. From one letter to another his opinions on his fellow mortals would change radically. In a letter to Bailey, dated March 13, 1818, we read:

> I like I love England. I like its strong Men. Give me a long brown plain for my Morning so I may meet with some of Edmond Ironside's des <c> endants. Give me a barren mould so I may meet with some Shadowing of Alfred in the

> Shape of a Gipsey, a Huntsman or a Shepherd. Scenery is fine---but human nature is finer. The Sward is richer for the tread of a real, nervous, english foot---the eagles nest is finer for the Mountaineer has look'd into it--- Are these facts or prejudices?....I do not think myself more in the right than other people, and that nothing in this world is proveable....I am sometimes so very sceptical as to think Poetry itself a mere Jack a lanthen to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brillance. As Tradesmen say every thing is worth what it will fetch, so probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer--- being in itself a nothing--- Ethereal thing<s>may at least be thus real, divided under three heads---Things real---things semireal---and no things. Things real---such as existences of Sun Moon & Stars and passages of Shakspeare. Things semireal such as Love, the Clouds &c which require a greeting of the Spirit to make them wholly exist---and Nothings which are made Great and dignified by an ardent pursuit---which by the by stamps the burgundy mark on the bottles of our Minds, insomuch as they are able to "consec<r>ate whate'er they look upon".... every point of thought is the centre of an intellectual world---the two uppermost thoughts in a Man's mind are the two poles of his World he revolves on them and every thing is southward or northward to him through their means. We take but three steps from feathers to iron. Now my dear fellow I must once for all tell you I have not one Idea of the truth of any of my speculations---I shall never be a Reasoner because I care not to be in the right, when retired from bickering and in a proper philosophical temper. 86

Two outstanding examples of Keats's vacillation follow. In the first letter, written to John Hamilton Reynolds on April 9, 1818, Keats expressed an attitude of sheer contempt for the public, which, he said, remained totally outside his sphere of thought and endeavor. In a letter written fifteen days later to John Taylor, he expressed a spirit of humanitarianism comparable only to that which might be found in the heart of a Christian saint; it can be argued, in considering the following two specimens, that Keats rejected the public only from the realm of his art, that he really was concerned about them and only barred any entrance to his world of art because of their boorishness and lack of understanding and sensitivity. This is a point to bear in mind, but surveying Keats's thought and life as a whole, I have found a total lack of consistency in his statements on the

populace. But let us look at the letters themselves. First is the one written on April 9:

> ...I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the Public---or to anything in existence,---but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men---When I am writing for myself for the mere sake of the Moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me---but a Preface is written to the Public; a thing I cannot help looking upon as an Enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of Hostility---If I write a Preface in a supple or subdued style, it will not be in character with me as a public speaker---I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me---but among Multitudes of Men---I have no feel of stooping, I hate the idea of humility to them---I never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought.
> ....I could not live without the love of my friends---I would jump down AEtna for any great Public Good---but I hate a Mawkish Popularity.---I cannot be subdued before them---. 87

Next is that written on April 24:

> I find that I can have no enjoyment in the World but continual drinking of Knowledge---I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world---some do it with their society---some with their wit---some with their benevolence---some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good humour on all they meet and in a thousand ways all equally dutiful to the command of Great Nature---there is but one way for me---the road lies through application study and thought. I will pursue it and to that end purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy---were I calculated for the former I should be glad---but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter. 88

Many critics find in the latter letter a new turning point in Keats's thought, a new period of genuine Faustian humanitarianism. Certainly, as was almost inevitable for someone of Keats's intelligence, the Faustian man was coming to realize that an Apollonian life of sensations was not going to suffice over a long period of time. Study, serious philosophic contemplation, and action were at a premium value now in his mind's estimate. In a letter to Reynolds on April 27, 1818, we read:

> I have written to George for some Books---shall learn Greek, and very likely Italian----and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a years time the best metaphysical road I can take. For although I take Poetry to be Chief, <yet> there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among Books and thoughts on Books---- I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare, and as I have lately upon Milton. If you understood Greek, and would read me passages, now and then, explaining their meaning, 'twould be, from its mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing one's self.---I shall be happy when I can do the same for you.---I have written for my folio Shakespeare, in which there is the first few stanzas of my "Pot of Basil":.... 89

We are now approaching that period of his life when Keats was achieving some of his most profound conclusions and writing some of his most inspired poetry. The problem of sensations versus knowledge was a pressing one. Having studied and read more English and Classical writers, as well as some philosophy, Keats was inevitably affected by some of these studies in particular. Not exactly desirous of a model, Keats, extremely impressionable as he was, knew that he must discard some predecessors and adopt others as models of excellence.

The May 3, 1818, letter to John Hamilton Reynolds is a paragon of profundity and hard, solid thought. Knowledge by now had definitely achieved its place of proper respect and reverence in Keats's mind, and what he wrote at this time seemed to indicate that he was never to question the consolations, if nothing else, which are akin to knowledge; the Apollonian youth had matured into the Faustian man, a man who wanted to know everything:

> Were I to study physic or rather Medicine again, I feel it would not make the least difference in my Poetry; when the Mind is in its infancy a Bias is in reality a Bias, but when we have acquired more strength, a Bias becomes no Bias. Every department of Knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole. I am so convinced of this, that I am glad at not having given away my medical Books, which I shall again look over to keep alive the little I know thitherwards;....An extensive

> knowledge is needful to thinking people---it takes away the heat and fever; and helps by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery; a thing I begin to understand a little, and which weighed upon you in the most gloomy and true sentence in your Letter. The difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge appears to me this---in the latter case we are falling continually ten thousand fathoms deep and being blown up again without wings and with all the horror of a bare shoulderd creature ---in the former case, our shoulders are fledge, and we go thro' the same air and space without fear. This is runing one's rigs on the score of abstracted benefit---when we come to human Life and the affections it is impossible to know how a parallel of breast and head can be drawn---... ---It is impossible to know how far Knowledge will console us for the death of a friend and the ill "that flesh is heir to"---With respect to the affections and Poetry you must know by a sympathy my thoughts that way;... 90

The Ode to Maia was contained in this letter and was inspired by Keats's passion for knowledge. The Ode represents Keats's endeavor, a first one, to write in the style of Greek poetry.

Continuing in this letter, Keats showed his considerable thought on the relative merits of Milton and Wordsworth; the former poet Keats saw as less concerned about humanity. But however much Keats enjoyed a new faith and appreciation of knowledge and the relative certainty which it brings, and which he needed so desperately, he still was reluctant to make knowledge an end in itself; rather, he demanded that philosophical principles prove themselves---in short, he remained an empiricist:

> You may be anxious to know for fact to what sentence in your letter I allude. You say "I fear there is little chance of any thing else in this life." you seem by that to have been going through with a more painful and acute zest the same labyrinth that I have---I have come to the same conclusion thus far. My Branchings out therefrom have been numerous: one of them is the consideration of Wordsworth's genius and as a help, in the manner of gold being the meridian Line of wordly wealth,---how he differs from Milton.---And here I have nothing but surmises, from an uncertainty whether Miltons apparently less anxiety for Humanity proceeds from his seeing further or no than Wordsworth: And whether Wordsworth has in truth epic passion, and martyrs himself to the human heart, the main region of his song---In regard to his

> genius alone---we find what he says true as far as we have experienced and we can judge no further but by larger experience---for axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses: We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the Author.---I know this is not plain; you will know exactly my meaning when I say, that now I shall relish Hamlet more than I ever have done--- Or, better---You are sensible no Man can set down Venery as a bestial or joyless thing until he is sick of it and therefore all philosophizing on it would be mere wording. Until we are sick, we understand not;---in fine, as Byron says, "Knowledge is Sorrow"; and I go on to say that "Sorrow is Wisdom"---and further for aught we can know for certainty "Wisdom is folly"!---. 91

For Keats philosophy was purely intuitive, whereas knowledge was something organic and living. In a sense, he was totally right in making this distinction; for him, as for most of us, those things which he had learned from breathing reality were the more significant molders in his brief life. Poetry Keats knew was the only vehicle which could express those amorphous and scattered intuitions which emanated from his highly imaginative mind.

But the May 3, 1818, letter to Reynolds has been called the "Mansion of Life" letter, which, the critics have said, most concisely expressed Keats's ideas on the evolution of a poet's powers. The letter shows a new respect for Wordsworth and a new sensitivity to the "world...full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression":

> Life is a large Mansion of Many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think---We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of this thinking principle within us---we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However <u>among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's</u>

> <u>vision into the heart and nature of Man---of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression</u>---
> whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open---but all dark---all leading to dark passages---We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist. <u>We</u> are now in that state---We feel the "burden of the Mystery", To this Point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote '<u>Tintern Abbey</u>', and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. He is a genius and superior to us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries and shed a light in them. Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect than individual greatness of Mind. From the Paradise Lost, and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves, to say that his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years. In his time, Englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition, and Men had got hold of certain points and resting places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much opposed by the Mass of Europe not to be thought etherial and authentically divine---who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in Comus, just at the time of the dismissal of Cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces? who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost, when just free from the inquisition and burning in Smithfield? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining Dogmas and superstitions, then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning---from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings---He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done---Yet Milton as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth---What is then to be inferr'd? O many things---It proves there is really a grand march of intellect---, It proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion---.... 92

Here we see an ebullient faith in the progress and perfectibility of mankind, rather optimistic for Keats, I should say. Though Keats saw himself and all poets as prophets of a higher order of life, he regarded the

poet as an interpreter of the highest life and thought of his day, bound to the needs of the contemporary scene. The greatest poet still, however, is able to penetrate to the very core of reality and to express what he has seen. An interest in humanity and the ability to martyr one's self and to think into the human heart constitute the median of poetic excellence. To perceive the "burden of the Mystery", one must himself be empathically aware of the miseries of men. The path leads from the intellect to a broader wisdom and even deeper insight. All of this is wholly comparable to the thought of Wordsworth and the stages which he outlined in *Tintern Abbey*, however much Keats may have earlier rejected Wordsworth.

Keats had become more painfully aware of the illnesses of his brother and himself and rejoiced again in the thought of quiet death. Vexed by such realizations as the fact that women suffer with cancer, Keats stoically anticipated death---but not before having done the world some tangible good, if only having written some good poetry; His Faustian conscience demanded achievement and philanthropic charity:

> Yes on my Soul my dear Bailey you are too simple for the World---and that Idea makes me sick of it---How is it that by extreme opposites we have as it were got discon<ten>ted nerves---you have all your Life (I think so) believed every Body---I have suspected every Body---and although you have been so deceived you make a simple appeal---the world has something else to do, and I am glad of it---were it in my choice I would reject a petrarchal coronation---on accou<n>t of my dying day, and because women have Cancers. I should not by rights speak in this tone to you--- for it is an incendiary spirit that would do so. Yet I am not old enough or magnanimous enough to an<n>ihilate self---and it would perhaps be paying you an ill compliment. I was in hopes some little time back to be able to releive your dullness by my spirits---to point out things in the world worth your enjoyment---*and now I am never alone without rejoicing that there is such a thing as death---without placing my ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose*. Perhaps if my affairs were in a different state I should not have written the above---you shall judge---I have two Brothers

> one is driven by the 'burden of Society' to America the other, with an exquisite love of Life, is in a lingering State. My Love for my Brothers from the early loss of our parents and even for earlier Misfortunes has grown into an affection 'passing the Love of Women'---I have been ill temper'd with them, I have vex'd them---but the thought of them has always stifled the impression that any woman might otherwise have made upon me. I have a Sister too and may not follow them, either to America or the the Grave---Life must be undergone, and I certainly derive a consolation from the thought of writing one or two more Poems before it ceases. 93

A summer walking tour of Scotland was important for two reasons: it broadened Keats's outlook and perspective---but also hastened the advent of his death. In typical Wordsworthian fashion, he was much affected by the beauty of the mountains and lakes. In a letter to his brother Thomas on June 25-27, he seemed to suggest that he was writing for a larger group than any small coteries of intellectuals or aesthetes:

> I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavor of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into etherial existence for the relish of one's fellows. I cannot think with Hazlitt that these scenes make man appear little. I never forgot my stature so completely---I live in the eye; and my imaginatiòn, surpassed, is at rest.... 94

A letter written two days later to Thomas shows a surge of typical British nationalism and fraternity:

> I hope I shall not return without having got the Highland fling, There was as fine a row of boys and girls as you ever saw; some beautiful faces, and one exquisite mouth. I never felt so near the glory of Patriotisem, the glory of making by any means a country happier. This is what I like better than scenery. 95

A visit to Robert Burns's cottage occasioned some remarks on the plight of such a "southern" disposition living in "northern" Scotland, as well as some more reflections on economic inequality; curiously, this letter to Keats's brother Thomas on July 3-9 did not inspire any more comment from

Shaw as to Keats's Bolshevik leanings:

> Poor unfortunate fellow---his disposition was Southern---how sad it is when a luxurious imagination is obliged in self defence to deaden its delicacy in vulgarity, and not in things attainable that it may not have leisure to go mad after things which are not. No Man in such matters will be content with the experience of others---<u>It is true that out of suffrance there is no greatness, no dignity; that in the most abstracted Pleasure there is no lasting happiness</u>; yet who would not like to discover over again that Cleopatra was a Gipsey, Helen a Rogue and Ruth a deep one? I have not sufficient reasoning faculty to settle the doctrine of thrift---as it is consistent with the dignity of human Society---with the happiness of Cottagers---All I can do is by plump contrasts---were the fingers made to squeeze a guinea or a white hand?---Were the lips made to hold a pen or a kiss? And yet in Cities Man is shut out from his fellows if he is poor, the Cottager must be dirty and very wretched if she be not thrifty---The present state of society demands this and this convinces me that the world is very young and in a very ignorant state---We live in a barbarous age---I would sooner be a wild deer, than a girl under the dominion of the Kirk; and would sooner be a wild hog, than be the occasion of a poor creature's penance before those execrable elders. 96

At this point, the somewhat immature Keats had not learned to suffer, nor had he perceived the beauty, "greatness" and "dignity" <u>in</u> suffering. It is quite amazing to notice just how much he could include in one letter; here he had discussed Burns the man, the transiency of all pleasure and happiness, the economic situation, the purpose and goal of men.

But two weeks later Keats was back in his rather anti-humanitarian mood, with a positive conviction that he inevitably dampened any social gathering. What especially plagued him at this point was a growing realization of his alienation from the female of the species, as he admitted in this letter to Bailey on July 18-22:

> Yet further I will confess to you that I cannot enjoy Society small or numerous. I am certain that our fair friends are glad I should come for the mere sake of my coming; but I am certain I bring with me a Vexation they are better without--If I can possibly

> at any time feel my temper coming upon me I refrain even from a promised visit. I am certain I have not a right feeling towards Women---at this moment I am striving to be just to them but I cannot---Is it because they fall so far beneath my Boyish imagination? When I was a Schoolboy I though <t> a fair Woman a pure Goddess, my mind was a soft nest in which some one of them slept, though she knew it not---I have no right to expect more than their reality. I thought them etherial above Men---I find them perhaps equal---great by comparison is very small. Insult may be inflicted in more ways than by Word or action---one who is tender of being insulted does not like to think an insult against another---I do not like to think insults in a Lady's Company---I commit a Crime with her which absence would have not known. Is it not extraordinary? When among Men I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen---I feel free to speak or to be silent---I can listen and from every one I can learn---my hands are in my pockets I am free from all suspicion and comfortable. When I am among Women I have evil thoughts, malic spleen---I cannot speak or be silent---I am full of Suspicions and therefore listen to nothing---I am in a hurry to be gone---You must be charitable and put all this perversity to my being disappointed since Boyhood. Yet with such feelings I am happier alone among Crowds of men, by myself or with a friend or two---With all this trust me Bailey I have not the least idea that Men of different feelings and inclinations are more short-sighted than myself---I never rejoiced more than at my Brother's Marriage and shall do so at that of any of my friends---. I must absolutely get over this---but how? The only way is to find the root of evil, and so cure it "with backward mutters of dissevering Power"---that is a difficult thing; for an obstinate Prejudice can seldom be produced but from a gordian complication of feelings, which must take time to unravell and care to keep unravelled. I could say a good deal about this but I will leave it in hopes of better and more worthy dispositions---and also content that I am wronging no one, for after all I do think better of Womankind than to suppose they care whether Mister John Keats five feet high likes them or not. You appear to wish to avoid any words on this subject---don't think it a bore my dear fellow---it shall be my Amen---I should not have consented to myself these four Months tramping in the highlands but that I thought it would give me more experience, rub off more Prejudice, use me to more hardship, identify finer scenes load me with grander Mountains, and strengthen more my reach in Poetry, than would stopping at home among Books even though I should reach Homer. [97]

In this letter we may spot a primary reason for Keats's descent from the ideal to the real agonies and strifes of human hearts. In typical

Apollonian and adolescent fashion, he tended to idealize such things as women to such an extent that he quickly and easily became painfully disillusioned. After repeated experiences of this kind, he knew that, for his own health and well-being, he must assign the ideal to its proper place and devote a proportionate amount of time and care to the everyday matters around him.

In October, 1818, Keats had formally resumed his earlier philosophy of Negative Capability, but with two important changes: he now felt that he would still have to make at least occasional escapes to the ideal world of poetry from the world of harsh facts; also, knowledge, he felt, could be a sure aid to the imagination in the creation of his ideal world.

From April 24, 1818, when Negative Capability had been discarded temporarily, until the end of October of this year Keats, according to a general agreement among most critics, had been going through a period of general humanitarian charity. I myself am not so sure that several references of good will constitute an entire period or change in attitude. Finney believed, quite cogently, I feel, that the extremely humanitarian introduction to the _Fall of Hyperion_ must have been written in this period. It explores what might be called the third chamber of human life, in which one feels sympathy with all human misery, and anticipates the fourth and final stage, in which one renders his support to alleviate the human tragedy. I shall discuss the revised _Hyperion_ as a whole later.

In any event, the October resumption of Negative Capability and Miltonic humanism was not slightly the result of the scurrilous reviews of _Endymion_ which the critics had given Keats. His brother George had departed with his new wife for the United States, and his other favorite brother, Thomas, was dying from consumption, as was Keats himself, though

he did not know it. Negative Capability, the imagination, the Apollonian pursuit of beauty---these alone could sustain him during this crisis, in which bare survival and the preservation of one's sanity were things for which to be greatful. The beautiful development of the Faustian man and the Faustian sense of social responsibility and participation had all been cast overboard. As Finney wrote:

> Keats rejected humanitarianism because it did not solve the painful problems of this experience. A universal love of humanity did not comfort him for the absence of his brother George in the backwoods of America and the approaching death of his brother Tom. His love of humanity and his passion to do the world some good were diminished by the malignancy of the reviewers and the indifference of the public to Endymion. The evil which he saw in men and the tyranny which he observed in governments shattered his faith in the perfectibility of human nature and in the progress of society.
> Keats resumed, in this crisis, the humanistic philosophy of Negative Capability which he had developed in December 1817 out of the poetry of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. The imagination, the principle of negative capability, gave him a relief from unhappiness which reason, the principle of humanitarianism, could not give him. 98

The character and tone of his letters showed a new cautious bitterness, as evidenced in this one to his sister Fanny on October 26:

> ...But you know with what People we are obliged in the course of Childhood to associate; whose conduct forces us into duplicity and falsehood to them. To the worst of People we should be openhearted: but it is as well as things are to be prudent in making any communication to any one, that may throw an impediment in the way of any of the little pleasures you may have. I do not recommend duplicity but prudence with such people. 99

And, especially, this letter to Richard Woodhouse on October 27, which restated Negative Capability and implied a distinction between egotistic poets, such as the humanitarian Wordsworth, and negatively capable artists, e.g., Shakespeare. There is an inherent fear in this letter that Keats had lost all faith in humanity and the ideal:

> As to the poetical Character itself...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 as much delight in conceiving an 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 any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity---he is continually in for---and following 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. If then he has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would write no more?...It is a wretched thing to confess; but is a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature---how can it, when I have no nature? 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 every one in the room begins to press upon 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 am ambitious of doing the world some good: if I should be spared that may be the work of maturer years---in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in Poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of Poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs---that the solitary indifference I feel for applause even from the finest Spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will---I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the Beautiful even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself: but from some character in whose soul I now live. 100

Poetry and the poet had become ends in themselves again. But, once having felt such a beautiful Faustian love for his fellows, I do not think that Keats or anyone else could have been quite so ardent or successful again in any purely Apollonian quest for beauty. He had seen Burns's cottage and realized how that poet had suffered as a result of restrictions of the Kirk

there. He had come to know poverty and disease, even in his own brother and family. The elements of the exterior world had pelted his little palace of art in spite of everything; as a result of this Keats could never have been quite the same again. He himself seemed to think he could, and he wrote very passionately of his convictions in his solitude and of his estrangement from everyone, an alienation which Keats was finally realizing had always existed:

> Notwithstand<ing>your happiness and your recommendation I hope I shall never marry. Though the most beautiful Creature were waiting for me at the end of a Journey or a Walk; though the carpet were of Silk, the Curtains of the morning Clouds; the chairs and Sofa stuffed with Cygnet's down; the food Manna, the Wine beyond Claret, the Window opening on Winander mere, I should not feel--- or rather my Happiness would not be so fine, ~~ands~~ my Solitude is sublime. Then instead of what I have described, there is a Sublimity to welcome me home. The roaring of the wind is my wife and the Stars through the window pane are my Children. The mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness---an amiable wife and sweet Children I contemplate as a part of that Beauty---but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my hear. I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my Spirit the office ~~of~~ which is equivalent to a King's body guard---then "tragedy with scepter'd pall, comes sweeping by." According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches, or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily. Or I thro~~ugh~~w my whole being into Triolus, 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 have written this that you might see I have my share of the highest pleasures and that though I may choose to pass my days alone I shall be no Solitary....The only thing that can ever effect me personally for more than one short passing day, is any doubt about my powers for poetry---I seldom have any, and I look with hope to the nighing time when I shall have none. I am as happy as a Man can be---... ---with the yearning Passion I have for the beautiful, connected and made one with the ambition of my intellect. Th<i>nk of my Pleasure in Solitude, in comparison of my commerce with the world---there I am a child---there they do not know me, not even my most intimate acquaintance

---I give into their feelings as though I were refraining from irritating a little child---Some think me middling, others silly, others foolish---every one thinks he sees my weak side against my will, when in truth it is with my will---I am content to be thought all this because I have in my own breast so great a resource. This is one great reason why they like me so; because they can all show to advantage in a room, and eclipese from a certain tact one who is reckoned to be a good Poet---I hope I am not here playing tricks 'to make the angels weep': I think not: for I have not the least contempt for my species; and though it may sound paradoxical: my greatest elevations of Soul leave me every time more humbled---... 101

But Keats was always full of paradoxes and contradictions---one often juxtaposed against the other. However much in this letter he had surrendered himself exclusively to his Muse again, earlier in the same letter he had shown a consuming interest in the international scene, criticizing English liberals, and drawing a distinction between such worldly and theatrical figures as Byron or Napoleon and the spiritual, ethereal variety---e.g., Bishop Hooker and John Howard:

...I have no town talk for you, as I have not been much among people---as for Politics they are in my opinion only sleepy because they will soon be too wide awake---Perhaps not---for the long and continued Peace of England itself has given us notions of personal safety which are likely to prevent the re-establishment of our national Honesty---There is of a truth nothing manly or sterling in any part of the Government. There are many Madmen In the Country, I have no doubt, who would like to be beheaded on tower Hill merely for the sake of eclat, there are many Men like Hunt who from a principle of taste would like to see things go on better, there are many like Sir F. Burdett who like to sit at the head of political dinners---but there are none prepared to suffer in obscurity for their Country---the motives of our wo <r>st Men are interest and of our best Vanity---We have no Milton, no Algernon Sidney---Governers in these days loose the title of Man in exchange for that of Diplomat and Minister We breathe in a sort of Officinal Atmosphere---All the departments of Government have strayed far from Spimpicity which is the greatest of Strength---there is as much difference in this respect between the present Government and oliver Cromwell's, as there is between the 12 Tables of Rome and the volumes of Civil Law which were digested by Justinian. A Man now entitlerd Chancellor has the same honour paid to him whether he be a Hog or a Lord Bacon. No sensation is created by Great-

> ness but by the number of orders a Man has at his Button holes Notwithstand <ing> the part which the Liberals take in the Cause of Napoleon I cannot but think he has done more harm to the life of Liberty than any one else could have done: not that the divine right Gentlemen have done or intend to do any good---no they have taken a Lesson of him, and will do all the further harm he would have done without any of the good---The worst thing he has done is, that he has taught them how to organize their monstrous armies---The Emperor Alexander it is said intends to divide his Empire as did Diocletian---creating two Czars besides himself, and continuing the supreme Monarch of the whole---Should he do this and they for a series of Years keep peacable among themselves Russia may spread her conquest even to China---I think <it> a very likely thing that China itself may fall Turkey certainly will. Meanwhile european north Russia will hold its horns against the rest of Europe, intrieguing constantly with France. Dilke, whom you know to be a Godwin perfectibil <it> y Man, pleases himself with the idea that America will be the country to take up the human intellect where england leaves off---I differ there with him greatly---A country like the united states whose greatest Men are Franklins and Washingtons will never do that---They are great Men doubtless but how are they to be compared to those our countreymen Milton and the two Sidneys---The one is a philosophical Quaker full of mean and thrifty maxims the other sold the very Charger who had taken him through all his Battles. Those Americans are great but they are not sublime Man---the humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime. 102

By the end of this year Keats was to make a distinction in his thought which was just the opposite of Swift's. Whereas the latter hated _man_ but liked individuals, Keats, in his letter to Benjamin Robert Haydon on December 22, wrote:

> I never expect to get anything by my Books: and moreover I wish to avoid publishing---I admire Human Nature but I do not like _Men_---I should like to compose things honourable to Man---but not fingerable over by _Men_. So I am anxious to exist without troubling the printer's devil or drawing upon Men's and Women's admiration---in which great solitude I hope God will give me strength to rejoice. 103

But it is time to turn to Keats's epic _Hyperion_. Garrod, in his _Keats_, saw this poem as an epic of the Revolutionary Idea. He emphasized that, under the influence of Huntian or Wordsworthian politics, Keats's

revolutionary sympathies went deeper and lasted longer than is usually thought. Hyperion is the last of the Titans to fall before the new order. The institutions of political life, as Keats saw them, were of worth only in so far as they were workable. The last of the old order to leave is its poetry; though tradition, habit, and material institutions may fall, some ghost of beauty and poetry still lingers, the 'still undisgraced radiance' of Hyperion. 104

Apollo, of course, is the new power of beauty and poetry; Hyperion and his order have outlived themselves. A primary reason for the fall has been the mutual breach of sympathy and lack of faith in Hyperion.

It is Saturn who was given by Keats lines which his Faustian manhood must have certainly pondered and whose truth he must have felt so intensely:

> 'Now comes the pain of truth, to whom'tis pain;
> 'O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
> 'And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
> 'That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
> 'As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
> 'Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
> 'And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
> 'In form and shape compact and beautiful,
> 'In will, in action free, companionship,
> 'And thousand other signs of purer life;
> 'So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
> 'A poer more strong in beauty, born of us
> 'And fated to excel us, as we pass
> 'In glory that old Darkness:
>
> . . . .
>
> 'We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
> 'Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
> 'But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
> 'Above us in their beauty, and must reign
> 'In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
> 'That first in beauty should be first in might:
> 'Yea, by that law, another race may drive
> 'Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
>
> . . . .
>
> 'Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.' 105

Garrod interpreted Apollo's "dying into life" by saying that alike

of the god of poetry and of the poet on earth, their living must be by dying. Whereas the revised Hyperion emphasizes the poet's necessity of seeing the beauty of the world through its sorrows and human suffering, Garrod saw the revolutionary Apollo to contrast, in Keats's imagination, with the god whom he has dispossessed, as humanitarian with visionary:

> I should prefer to conceive that Keats, pursuing his epic of the Revolutionary Idea, trailing, as he went, clouds of indeterminate allegory, was held by that death-shriek, or birth-shriek, of his own Apollo; that he was startled into misgiving; that some disquiet of the creating imagination assailed him; that he felt himself brought up sharply against the need of defining, the need of clarifying his own conception. What truly was this god, who thus dies into life? and into what order of life does this dying in fact conduct him? 106

Though the emphasis on the poet's knowing the agonies and strifes of human hearts was to receive its consummate expression in the revised Hyperion, Apollo in Book III of this original Hyperion announces his source of power to Mnemosyne, prophetic of greater powers and insights which Keats was later to enjoy:

> Where is power?
> 'Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
> 'Makes this alarum in the elements,
> 'While I here idle listen on the shores
> 'In fearless yet in aching ignorance?
> 'O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
> 'That waileth every morn and eventide,
> 'Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
> '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 deify me, as if some blithe wine
> 'Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
> 'And so become immortal.' 107

Bearing in mind Apollo's affirmation here that poetry of philosophical humanitarianism is superior to that of pure sensation, we may

conjecture, if we are going to treat Hyperion with attention to the symbolism which it deserves, that Apollo's "wild commotions" and death struggle are to suggest the pains and difficulties encountered in the endeavor to write a new type of poetry. As for the abrupt ending of the poem, some critics have expressed their belief that Keats did not earnestly believe what he was saying here and that he broke the poem suddenly in a fit of disgust. The only evidence which one might submit is that Keats was working on La Belle Dame Sans Merci, the Ode to Psyche, and the Eve of St. Agnes at this time---three of his most sensuous, romantically lyrical, and purely aesthetic achievements.

Whatever may have been Keats's feelings or ideas recollected in tranquillity, Hyperion represents an impassioned belief in the progress and perfectibility of humanity and a happy anticipation of the old order changing and yielding place to new. As Clarence Thorpe wrote:

> Hyperion, which is an imaginative conception of the miseries of the human heart, shows his drift towards the poem of "character and sentiment." Whatever else he may have set out to do, the thing he here supremely achieved is an unforgettable portrayal of the fears of threatened sovereignty and the despair of fallen greatness. Much earlier, Keats had written zestful prophecy of the trampling down of
>
> Turbans and crowns and blank regality.
>
> Without shifting ground on central principles, the poet has in a remarkable sense thrown the shield to the reverse and revealed a spectacle of the passion of "blank" regality overthrown. There is no evidence that Hyperion was written with definite reference to immediate political conditions. It becomes all the more significant, therefore, as an indication of the direction which Keats's maturing poetic genius could have taken. He was turning his powers towards the imaginative recreation of the most intense human experiences, conceived wholly apart from partisan dissensions or political creeds. 108
>
> This instinctive insistence on beginning with and building on the actual possible saved Keats from wandering afield into an abstract mysticism or into a philosophic haze of exaggerated ideality, with "no

> earthly depth to root in." It was leading him to a poetry whose central theme would be humanity, with a warp and woof of the character, sentiment, and passions of mankind, yet with the divine touch of eternal truth upon it, within it the breath and spirit of the infinite. 109

But what seems to me to be particularly significant in Hyperion, aside from all the social consciousness and humanitarianism, is the reflection of Keats's own increasing maturity in his acceptance of suffering. Such lines as:

> But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
> How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
> Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self. 110

and Coelus's words to his dismayed son:

> This is the grief, O Son!
> 'Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!
> 'Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,
> 'As thou canst move about, an evident God;
> 'And canst oppose to each malignant hour
> 'Ethereal presence:---I am but a voice;
> 'My life is but the life of winds and tides,
> 'No more than winds and tides can I avail:---
> 'But thou canst.---Be thou therefore in the van
> 'Of circumstance; yes, seize the arrow's barb
> 'Before the tense string murmur.---To the earth!
> 'For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
> 'Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
> 'And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.'--- 111

are what I would call in the grand tradition of Faustian thought and endeavor with their emphasis on striving according to one's capacities. "Be thou therefore in the van of circumstance" is the command. "To the earth"--- Keats was telling himself. No more Apollonian detachment and soaring. It is on earth that the woes of men will be found. Apollo's moment of deification through intuitive knowledge is the moment when Beauty is born in his soul. Oceanus, one of the deposed Titans, alone has "wandered to eternal truth," and can now accept all the new circumstances with wisdom, as compared to Clymene, whose approach to truth is purely a sensuous and emotional one.

VI

From the end of the year 1818 to the close of his life, Keats, conscious of his impending death, felt with increasing intensity that poetry was all that mattered now. He was beginning to look more and more on society as a slave would to a lord; the restraints of the ways of the world had always irritated and been foreign to him, but he was now devoid of any patience or understanding of what the exterior world had to offer or of what he himself owed to that world. The Apollonian man had made a complete arc, and had now returned to an almost juvenile world of fancy and imagination. He now hoped that any future world would include a system by which everyone grew to know each other by their intelligences alone. I think without question, judging almost exclusively by Keats's own words in his letters, that the effects of the critical reviews of _Endymion_ on his entire outlook can never be underestimated. As much as he hated those reviewers themselves, he also hated and especially despaired over the way the public was gauging their tastes according to the reviews---thus eliminating Keats. Their weakness and reluctance to think for themselves both baffled and embittered him---but more than this, I think Keats suffered that chilling sense of isolation which all artists and geniuses feel when they realize that so many of the populace not only fail to understand and appreciate---they also refuse to accept and believe the prophet who descends with his tablets and gifts from the mountain. Another shock was to learn that Bailey, his dear friend who had endeavored so long to inculcate in him a Wordsworthian type of humanitarianism, had become an egotistical fool. Perhaps the most pitiful characteristic of the dying Keats was a general lack of enthusiasm and conviction for those things which he had held dearest in his heart and mind. He even selected Shakespeare instead of himself as the most perfect example of a negatively capable poet,

who he now decided must be able to minister to his own impulses but also to freely intuit the outer world. The latter prerequisite Keats could not fulfill, for he no longer understood---assuming he ever did---that world which, in true Faustian fashion, he had wanted to help in every possible way. In a letter to his brother George on February 19 he said that each man's life was a continual allegory, of which the Mystery could be seen by only a marginal few.

Another letter, to Benjamin Haydon on March 8, offers some of his typical sentiments:

> What a set of little people we live amongst! I went the other day into an ironmonger's shop---without any change in my sensations---men and tin kettles are much the same in these days---they do not study like children at five and thirty---but they talk like men of twenty. Conversation is not a search after knowledge, but an endeavour at effect. 112

Eventually, even the Apollonian Keats was becoming embittered. The wish to be dissolved in beauty, sensation, and intuition was now changed into a longing to escape the fevers of the imagination. He yearned for a calm mind, all passions spent, such as that expressed in Hyperion: "To bear all naked truths, And to envisage circumstance, all calm, That is the top of sovereignty." In another letter to Haydon in January, 1819, he wrote:

> I see by little and little more of what is to be done, and how it is to be done, should I ever be able to do it---On my Soul there should be some reward for that continual 'agonie ennuiyeuse.' 113

But a tragic vision and acceptance were on the way, though unsupplemented by any Christian faith. A new idea of "diligent indolence" was soon adopted by Keats. This was essentially synonymous with Wordsworth's "wise passiveness"; Keats explained his term to his brother George and his wife Georgiana, in one of his longest and most important letters, dated March 19:

> This morning I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless: I long after a stanza or two of Thompson's Caste of indolence. My Passions are all asleep from my having slumbered till nearly eleven and weakened the animal fibre all over me to a delightful sensation about three degrees on this side of faintness---if I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lillies I should call it langour---but as I am I must call it Laziness. In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable frown. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me: they seem rather like three figures on a greek vase---a Man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. This is the only happiness; and is a rare instance of advantage in the body overpowering the Mind.... 114

But especially important for us and for Keats's peace of mind was his growing ability during this last year of his life to see those phenomena in the world, which make it a fit place in which to develop one's soul---the necessity for a direct, instinctive, and earthy pursuit of objects, the necessity of struggle and opposition for a proper maturation of the individual being. However much Keats still could enjoy his Apollonian state of repose, his awareness as a Faustian philosopher served him in good stead, to the extent that he often expected the worst, even when not prepared for it. In the same letter as that quoted earlier we read:

> This is the World---thus we cannot expect to give way many hours to pleasure---Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting---While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events---while we are laughing it sprouts it grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck---Even so we have leisure to reason on the misfortunes of our friends; our own touch us too nearly for words. <u>Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind</u>: very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others---in the greater part of the Benefactors to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness---some melodramatic scenery has fascinated them...Yet this feeling ought to be carried to its highest pitch as there is no fear of its ever injuring

> Society---which it would do I fear pushed to an extremity---For in wild nature the Hawk would loose his Breakfast of Robins and the Robin his of Worms---the Lion must starve as well as the swallow. The greater part of Men make their way with the same instinctiveness, the same unwandering eye from their purposes, the same animal eagerness as the Hawk. The Hawk wants a Mate, so does the Man---look at them both they set about it and procure one in the same manner. They want both a nest and they both set about one in the same manner---they get their food in the same manner---The noble animal Man for his amusement smokes his pipe---the Hawk balances about the Clouds---that is the only difference of their leisures. This it is that makes the Amusement of Life---to a speculative Mind. 115

Later in this letter we read:

> ...for any thing tho' it be unpleasant, that calls to mind those we still love, has a compensation in itself for the pain it occasions. 116

Also,

> The whole appears to resolve into this---that Man is originally 'a poor forked creature' subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest, destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind or other. If he improves by degrees his bodily accomodations and comforts---at each stage, at each ascent there are waiting for him a fresh set of annoyances---<u>he is mortal and there is still a heaven with its Stars above his head</u>. The most interesting question that can come before us is, How far by the persevering endeavours of a seldom appearing Socrates Mankind may be made happy---I can imagine such happiness carried to an extreme---but what must it end in?---Death---and who could in such a case bear with death---the whole troubles of life which are now frittered away in a series of years, would then be accumulated for the last days of a being who instead of hailing its approach, would leave this world as Eve left Paradise---But <u>in truth I do not at all believe in this sort of perfectibility---the nature of the world will not admit of it---the inhabitants of the world will correspond to itself.</u>...The point at which Man may arrive is as far as the parallel state in inanimate nature and no further...no more can man be happy in spite, the worldly elements will prey upon his nature---The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven---What a little circumscribed straightened notion! <u>Call the world if you Please "The vale of Soul-making"</u>. Then you will find out the use of

the world (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it) I say '<u>Soul making</u>'---Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence--- There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions---but they are not Soul till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. Intelligences are atoms of perceptions---they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God---How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them---so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this? The point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander system of salvation than the chrystiain religion---or rather it is a system of Spirit-creation---This is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years. These three Materials are the <u>Intelligence</u>---the <u>human heart</u> (as distinguished from intelligence of Mind) and the <u>World</u> or <u>Elemental space</u> suited for the proper action of <u>Mind</u> and <u>Heart</u> on each other for the purpose of forming the <u>Soul</u> or <u>Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity</u>. I can scarcely express what I but dimly perceive---and yet I think I perceive it---that you may judge the more clearly I will put it in the most homely form possible--- I will call the <u>world</u> a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read---I will call the <u>human heart</u> the <u>horn Book</u> used in that School---and I will call the <u>Child able to read, the Soul</u> made from that <u>School</u> and its <u>hornbook</u>. <u>Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways</u>! Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, It is the Minds Bible, it is the Minds experience, it is the teat from which the Mind of intelligence sucks its identity. As various as the Lives of Men are--- so various become their Souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the Sparks of his own essence---This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity---I am convinced that many difficulties which christians labour under would vanish before it---there is one which even now Strikes me---the Salvation of Children---In them the Spark or intelligence returns to God without any identity---it having had no time to learn of and be altered by the heart---or seat of the human Passions---It is pretty generally suspected that the christian scheme has been coppied from the ancient persian and greek Philosophers. Why may they not have made this simple thing even more simple for common apprehension by introducing Mediators and Personages in the same manner as in the heathen mythology

> abstractions are personified---Seriously I think it probable that this System of Soul-making---may have been the Parent of all the more palpable and personal Schemes of Redemption, among the Zoroastrians the Christians and the Hindoos. For as one part of the human species must have their carved Jupiter; so another part must have the palpable and named Mediator and Saviour, their Christ their Oromanes and their Vishnu...I began by seeing how man was formed by circumstances---and what are circumstances?---but touchstones of his heart---? and what are proovings of his heart but fortifiers or alterers of his nature? and what is his altered nature but his Soul? And what was his Soul before it came into the world and had these provings and alterations and perfectionings? ---An intelligence---without Identity---and how is this Identity to be made? Through the medium of the Heart? And how is the heart to become this Medium but in a world of Circumstances? 117

All the ideals, pursuits, disillusions, and frustrations had in Keats's mind come to be seen as part of the organic beauty of existence. It would almost seem that Keats had had a mystic vision in which he had seen all elements of life forming---without a soupcon of doubt in his mind---a perfect and harmonious organic unity. Goethe's Man muss End sagen must have summarized his thoughts at this point. Man must accept limits graciously, seek the pattern, and attune himself to the harmony of the world which he inhabits. Man is not perfectible, he was not destined to be perfected on this earth. But this does not rule out the streben, the endeavor. Indeed, man may be distinguished from the lower forms only by virtue of the fact that he strives, that he ever reaches towards that "heaven with its Stars above his head." If life must be justified or proved worthwhile, a proper estimate may be computed perhaps exclusively by a fitting attention to the energy, purpose, and motive involved.

All of this I regard as perhaps a supreme comment on the man who has taken up a Faustian existence, who is only saved because he has gone on trying, to paraphrase Eliot's words in the Four Quartets. Continuing in this letter we read:

> I go among the Fields and catch a glimpse of a Stoat or a fieldmouse peeping out of the withered grass--- the creature hath a purpose and its eyes are bright with it. I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a Man hurrying along---to what? the Creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. But then, as Wordsworth says, "we have all one human heart"--- there is an ellectric fire in human nature tending to purify---so that among these human creatures there is continually some birth of new heroism. The pity is that we must wonder at it: as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish. I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two---Socrates and Jesus---their Histories evince it. What I heard a little time ago, Taylor observe with respect to Socrates may be said of Jesus---That he was so great a man that though he transmitted no writings of his own to posterity, we have his Mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour. Even here though I myself am pursueing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal you can think of---I am however young writing at random---straining at particles of light in the midst of great deakness---without knowing the bearing of any one assertion of any one opinion. Yet may I not in this be free from sin? May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful, though instinctive attitude my mind may fall into, as I am entertained with the alertness of a Stoat or the anxiety of a Deer? 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 reasonings may take the same tone---though erroneous they may be fine---This is the very thing in which consists poetry; and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy---For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth---Give me this credit--- Do you not think I strive---to know myself? 118

Even the energies displayed in a quarrel in the streets have their own beauty and grace---"This is the very thing in which consists poetry!"

The month of May, 1819, saw the composition of the five great Odes: Nightingale, Melancholy, Grecian Urn, Indolence, and Psyche. One can, of course, hardly think of Keats without almost identifying him with the first three. So much has been written about all of the odes that it seems quite futile to add anything more. But, they still remain Keats's

consummate and final thoughts on the problems of art versus life, and for this reason they are important in this paper.

The Ode on A Grecian Urn states that truth is the practical scientific world and Beauty that ideal changeless realm. Kenneth Burke observed that:

> This transcendent scene is the level at which the earthly laws of contradiction no longer prevail. 119

The many and the one, the eternal and transitory are all synthesized into a high truth. Allen Tate emphasized in his On the Limits of Poetry that behind this world of eternal youth remains another world from which it came and which is now emptied and dead. In this light the youth on the urn is perpetually anti-youth, anti-life, dead, and can never return. The intensest life here is achieved only in death. Tate pointed out that, bearing in mind the "dead" mountain citadel, one may easily believe that truth is not beauty, since even art itself cannot do more with death than preserve it; on the other hand, the beauty which has been frozen on the urn is also dead, inasmuch as it cannot move. This pessimism, said Tate, can be found in the poem as well as Keats's comforting paradox in the final two lines.

I also find, without an undue stretching of a point, a certain sense of social consciousness and guilt in the fourth stanza of the poem:

> What little town by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
> And, little town, thy streets for evermore
> Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
> Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. 120

There is for me a warm feeling of humanity in these lines---a sense of camaraderie and fraternal "Togetherness" of the best sort. After expressing an extended discourse on the superiorities of art, Keats seemed to suffer

remorse at having shirked his responsibilities as a member of society and, especially, a citizen of a small town of which he was probably a necessary citizen. This is only a soupcon, I admit, but I definitely think it is here and typical of the Faustian conscience of Keats ever present even in a moment of the most intense Apollonian repose when

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; 121

The *Ode On Melancholy* presents what must have been one of the most rending final realizations which Keats ever suffered---however latent it must have always been in his mind.

> She dwells with Beauty---Beauty that must die;
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
> Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
> Ay, in the very temple of delight
> Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
> Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
> Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
> His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
> And be among her cloudy trophies hung. 122

With all his knowledge of the mutability and transiency of life, Keats, in his most intoxicated Apollonian reverie, suffered---or enjoyed---his realization that mutability and sorrow are inextricably bound to the beautiful. Without stretching this point into the area of the Freudian masochistic, I think that Keats and most aesthetes have enjoyed this realization----indeed, I think consciousness of the fact is almost a necessary constituent for a mental balance in the extreme fervor of the experience of Beauty or Joy. Garrod also pointed out that melancholy is, indeed, in the nature of Joy and Beauty:

> ...whatever is beautiful in the world is 'spoilt' by something in the nature of our apprehension of it---...by something which is, indeed, in the nature of beauty, of which the true apprehension is anguish. 123

As Cleanth Brooks remarked in his Modern Poetry and the Tradition, the paradox of the Ode To A Nightingale is that though the world of the imagination offers a release from the painful world of actuality, at the same time it renders the world of actuality all the more painful by contrast. 124 Certainly, the poem expresses perhaps the supreme desire of the Apollonian poet to be consumed and lifted into something which transcends the mortal and the finite.

> That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
> And with thee fade away into the forest dim. 125

All the imagery and tone of the entire poem are suffused with that Sehnsucht which the nineteenth-century German romantics made famous, or notorious, depending on one's taste. "The weariness, the fever, and the fret" best epitomize the workaday world of common reality, and are especially effective in their juxtaposition to the following stanza, in which, in typical Apollonian fashion, Keats described the sensation of his flight on the wings of poetry:

> Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
> Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
> But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
> Though the dull brain perplexes and retards: 126

Keats here would seem to have rejected all knowledge and intellectual pursuit; all is sensation and intuition, rather than thoughts.

> Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
> I have been half in love with easeful Death,
> Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
> To take into the air my quiet breath;
> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy!
> Still wouldst thou saing, and I have ears in vain---
> To thy high requiem become a sod. 127

But other critics have seen in this poem a real paradox, which is worthy of consideration; Frajam Taylor, for example, wrote:

> His love for the earth is so strong that when, in the following stanza, he says how easy it would be to die while the nightingale is singing, one feels that he is not escaping from a hell so much as dreaming of a heaven, and that his heaven is close at hand, and bears a very strong resemblance to the earth he said he wanted to fly from. Indeed, the very birdsong which transported him from the earth is the medium which recalls him to it, for as he reflects that if he were dead he could not hear the nightingale any longer, to its "high requiem become a sod," he intimates that he'd rather live in sorrow and still enjoy the sights and sounds of the world, than die and become immune to them. The song of the nightingale conspires with the perfume of the flowers to beguile him back to life and so he cries "Thou wast not born for death, Immortal bird" and resumes his own identity. 128

It is not with agony, but a sad and gentle irony that the poet bids farewell to his illusion of freedom. Taylor commented that, however romantic this poem may be, Keats achieved a classical serenity of vision which recalled Goethe and suggested that he might assume the Olympian dignity of the great German.

> But what is more germane to this discussion of the "Ode to a Nightingale" is the fact that it is a superb example of the Apollonian mode of absolution which Nietzsche, with an eye on Schiller's definition of the naive art impulse, described as delighting in the beauty of appearance, and of finding its highest realization in the realm of dreams wherein the world of appearance is enhanced and rendered more acceptable. And an Apollonian artist is one who, like Keats, finds relief from the burden of suffering in contemplation of the world of dreams. But, as Nietzsche is careful to point out, lest the dreamer be misled into mistaking the realm of dreams for the world of reality, and so of passing beyond the limits of sanity, Nature has endowed him with a strong sense of his own identity which interposes itself between the dreamer and his dreams and serves to remind him of the barriers which separate the world of fantasy from the world of fact. This natural barrier...besides enabling him to pass with impunity from the world of reality to the world of dreams and back again,...also protects him, by setting limits to the scope of his existence, from a great deal of the universal suffering which the Apollonian knows is at the core of life, lurking even under those appearances of beauty which so delight him. 129

The month before in his sonnet _To Sleep_ we see foreshadowing evidences of those conflicting Apollonian and Faustian impulses---the desire to escape reality juxtaposed in his mind with a remorseful conscience and sense of social responsibility:

> O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
>   Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
> Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd 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 passed 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. 130

From July 12 until September 5, 1819, Keats was working assiduously on _Lamia_, a poem which raises the question again of the relationship between the purely sensuous and the philosophical in poetry. Various critics have seen in this poem, along with the _Odes_, _Endymion_, and _Hyperion_, a repudiation of philosophical and humanitarian poetry as set forth in _Sleep and Poetry_.

Assuming, as most critics have done, that _Lamia_ is a poem whose characters are symbolic or representative of other things, we may assign to Apollonius the part of philosophy, knowledge, _rationale_. Lycius would, in turn, be Everyman, and Lamia represents sensuous enjoyment. The desertion of the world of mankind for his own personal benefit is the sin from which Apollonius tries to free Lycius. But, in his endeavor he inadvertently also destroys his pupil. Keats apparently had thought of Apollonius as symbolic of that variety of humanitarianism which, in _Sleep and Poetry_, had been argued essential to one's richest poetic fulfillment. Only Apollonius is

cognizant of the venom of the snake-like Lamia, that embodiment of feeling and sensuousness opposed to knowledge and thought.

I think that such lines as these in Part II of the poem:

> and she began to moan and sigh
> Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
> That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
> 'Why do you sigh, fair creature?' whisper'd he:
> 'Why do you think?' return'd she tenderly: 131

and:

> What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
> What for the sage, old Apollonius?
> Upon her aching forehead be there hung
> The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;
> And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
> The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
> Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
> Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
> War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given
> In the dull catalogue of common things.
> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine---
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
> The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade. 132

could have been written only by a Keats who had again become skeptical of knowledge and certainly reluctant to embrace it or to "conquer all mysteries by rule and line." This is what I call the typical Apollonian yearning for the strange and the far, the deliberate shirking of the "rule and line" of logic or systematic thinking. The tragic and obvious irony of the ensuing circumstances is that purposefulness destroys the only thing which makes life worth-while for Lycius, and thus destroys him, too. The beautiful rainbow is gone forever. About this time Keats himself had written:

> I have given up Hyperion---there were too many Miltonic inversions in it---Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. _I wish to give myself up to other sensations_. 133

Following _Hyperion_, the odes were written, along with _Lamia_.

Of these lines in _Lamia_:

> Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
> of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
> There is not such a treat among them all,
> Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
> As a real woman, lineal indeed
> From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed. 134

H. W. Garrod wrote:

> That the same man could write that, and elsewhere write poetry, we can only believe by finding it to be so. But the fact is that nowhere in Keats are we safe from these relapses upon the real. No sooner has he, in the world of pure imaginative forms, achieved some characteristic perfection, than the old hunger and thirst for 'reality' assails him. Philosophy, politics, action, character---all these are for ever calling him from his proper effectiveness to regions of enterprise where he can be only inefficient and unhappy. 135

Though during these latter days Keats was becoming more and more embittered in his attitude toward life and other people, he was continuing to see in vivid clarity and outline the place and role of suffering in life. However much he was again veering towards a life of sensations and artistic detachment from society, Keats had grown immeasurably through suffering. Though at the time of his visit to Scotland he had bewailed the treatment by the Kirk of Burns, he was even coming to see, foreshadowing Edmund Wilson's theory as discussed in _The Wound and the Bow_, that suffering is a necessary constituent in the development of the artist; in a letter to a Miss Jeffrey on June 19, 1819, he wrote:

> To be thrown among people who care not for you, with whom you have no sympathies, forces the Mind upon its own resources, and leaves it free to make its speculations of the differences of human character and to class them with the calmness of a Botanist....One of the great reasons that the English have produced the finest writers in the world is, that the English world has ill-treated them during their lives and foster'd

> them after their deaths. They have in general been trampled aside into the bye paths of life and seen the festerings of Society. They have not been treated like the Raphaels of Italy.... Shakespeare was all clouded over; his days were not more happy than Hamlet's who is perhaps more like Shakespeare himself in his common every day Life than any other of his Characters---Ben Johnson was a common Soldier and in the Low countries, in the face of two armies, fought a single combat with a french Trooper and slew him....I dare say my discipline is to come, and plenty of it too. I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing; both from the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying Pet-lamb. 136

Perhaps we may make an important distinction at this point. Though philosophical pursuits and the humanitarian impulse were in general, and rightly, linked together in the evolution of Keats's thought and development, towards the end he made, I believe, an important distinction between the two. In spite of the ideas expressed in Lamia, Keats, insofar as we may judge from his letters, continued to feel the need for philosophical discipline and organization. Shortly before completing Lamia he had written Benjamin Bailey on August 14, 1819:

> I am convinced more and more every day that (excepting the human friend Philosopher) a fine writer is the most genuine Being in the World. Shakespeare and the paradise Lost every day become greater wonders to me. I look upon fine Phrases like a Lover. 137

This shows a definite hierarchy in Keats's mind, I think, with the philosopher right alongside the poet. He knew that he needed discipline for his romantic temperament; his pride demanded that he assume all of his own responsibilities, however willing his grand host of friends were to aid him; this he admitted in a letter to John Taylor on August 23:

> Being thus far connected, Brown proposed to me, to stand with me responsible for any money you may advance to me to drive through the Summer---I must observe again that it is not from want of reliance on you<r> readiness to assist me that I offer a ~~Bond~~ill; but as a relief to myself from a too lax sensation of Life---which ought to be responsible which requires chains for its own sake---duties to fulfill with the more earnestness the less strictly they are imposed Were I completely without hope---it might be different---but am I not right to rejoice in the idea of not being Burthensome to my friends? I feel every confidence that if I choose I may be a popular writer; that I will never be; but for all that I will get a livelihood---I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman---they are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence. I shall ever consider them (People) as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration---which I can do without. I have of late been indulging my spleen by composing a preface <u>at</u> them: after all resolving never to write a preface at all. 'There are so many verses,' would I have said to them, 'give me so much means to buy pleasure with as a relief to my hours of labour---You will observe at the end of this if you put down the Letter 'How a solitary life engenders pride and egotism!' True: I know it does---but this Pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than any thing else could---so I will indulge it. Just so much as I am hu<m>bled by the genius above my grasp, am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world--A drummer boy who holds out his hand familiarly to a field marshall---that Drummer boy with me is the good word and favour of the public. Who would wish to be among the commonplace crowd of the little-famous---who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves? is this worth louting or playing the hypocrite for? To beg suffrages for a seat on the benches of a myriad-aristocracy in Letters? This is not wise---I am not a wise man--Tis Pride. I will give you a definition of a proud Man---He is a Man who has neither vanity nor wisdom---one fill'd with hatreds cannot be vain---neither can he be wise. 138

The next day a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds was to produce Keats's final and consummate statement of what was nearest and dearest to his heart:

> ...home speculations every day continue to make me more Iron. I am convinced more and more day by day that fine writing is next to fine doing, the top thing in the world, the Paradise Lost becomes a greater wonder. The more I know what my diligence may in time probably effect; the more does my heart distend with Pride and Obstinacy---I feel it in my power to become a popular Writer---I feel it in my strength to refuse the poisonous suffrage of a public. My own being which I know to be becomes of more consequence to me than the crowds of Shadows in the shape of men and women that inhabit a Kingdom. The soul is a world of itself, and has enough to do in its own home. Those whom I know already, and who have grown as it were a part of myself, I could not do without: but for the rest of mankind, they are as much a dream to me as Milton's Hierarchies. I think if I had a free and healthy and lasting organization of heart, and lungs as strong as an ox's so as to be able <to bear> unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness, I could pass my life very nearly alone though it should last eighty years. But I feel my body too weak to support me to the height, I am obliged continually to check myself and <strive to> be nothing. It would be vain for me to endeavour after a more reasonable manner of writing to you. I have nothing to speak of but myself---and what can I say but what I feel? If you should have any reason to regret this state of excitement in me, I will turn the tide of your feelings in the right Channel, by mentioning that *it is the only state for the best sort of Poetry---that is all I care for, all I live for*. [139]

But though Keats was inclined to make strongly positive and final statements on various subjects, it is difficult for us to reach any similarly positive or final conclusions on the man himself. Though ultimately he may have found the populace totally repugnant, which I do not think he did, he took an active interest in the political scene around him. In the middle of September, in a letter to his brother George, he expressed his concern over a publisher named Carlisle, who was printing the works of Tom Paine and a weekly paper called "The Deist"; as a result, the man was issued several indictments but had many friends put up all the necessary bail for him. In this same letter he referred to the grand reception given in the streets of London at the triumphal entry of Manchester and Hunt; this was on the occasion of the rather pivotal Peterloo Massacre, in which Orator

Hunt was arrested.

Though Keats was no political theorist, he enjoyed that innate sense of the traditional liberties of Englishmen which would tolerate no interference. Though increasing threats to the cause of liberty inspired people like Shelley to become involved in reform and propaganda activity, it reduced Keats to despair and resulted in the loss of any belief in the perfectibility of men.

In the aforementioned letter to George Keats, the poet attempted a brief analysis of the English liberal movement, an analysis which showed a thorough knowledge of historical fact and a sympathetic understanding of contemporary events. The first period which Keats outlined in his survey of the growth of liberalism constituted the coalition of kings and common people against the tyranny of nobles. Secondly came the alliance of the kings and nobility against the commoners and the attempt to destroy popular privileges. Thirdly would be the activities of the French and English writers culminating especially in the French Revolution, which Keats considered a decided setback to the cause of freedom. As for his contemporary scene, Keats saw the lack of Whig or Tory spirit, as well as entirely individualized moralities and political spirit. This letter, dated September 17-27, 1819, was considered by Clarence Thorpe a particularly fine example of excellent criticism of current politics in the Romantic period. The tone of wisdom, said Thorpe, especially distinguishes it from the more hysterical propaganda common to the period. 140

Claude Finney in his definitive work on Keats, The Evolution of Keats's Poetry, logically showed that the first draft of the introduction to The Fall of Hyperion - A Dream must have been composed during September and October of 1818 when Keats actually professed a philosophy and conscious

attitude of humanitarianism. There had been two earlier versions of Hyperion which Keats was to combine into a third version, the Fall of Hyperion. He used a fragment of the humanitarian version as the introduction and the incomplete humanistic epic as the body of the third version. The humanitarian theme was retained in the introduction, for he could not remove it without recomposing the entire introduction; it beings with reflections on those dreams by which poets have interpreted the problems of human existence, and was most likely suggested by various passages in Wordsworth's Excursion:

> 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
> Traced 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 chain
> And dumb enchantment. Who alone can say,
> 'Thou art no Poet---may'st not tell they dreams'?
> Since every man whose soul is not a clod
> Hath visions and would speak, if he had lov'd,
> And been well nurtured in his mother's tongue.
> Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
> Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
> When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave. 141

According to Finney, Keats later inserted into the introduction a passage of twenty-four verses, lines 187-210, in which Keats is speaking again as a negatively capable humanist and is denying the humanitarian theme of the introduction. Omitted from the first edition of the Fall published in 1856, this passage was unknown until the discovery of the transcript in 1904.

In the first canto we see the poet in that thoughtless stage which Wordsworth described in Tintern Abbey: childhood, the age of sensation; later sections of the poem treat the youthful stage of feeling and the mature age of thought, also outlined by Wordsworth. The poet meets Moneta, the

goddess of memory, at the altar of humanitarianism. Steps leading to the altar are of knowledge, by means of which humanitarian reformers can expel everything negative, such as poverty, evil, and injustice, from the world. These same principles of the perfectibility of human nature and of social progress through education were the most prominent principles lifted by Keats from the Excursion. Moneta informs the poet of those conditions necessary for the poet to enter the temple of Saturn, after he has asked why he has been saved from death:

'Thou hast felt
'What tis to die and live again before
'Thy fated hour, that thou hadst power to do so
'Is thy own safety; thou hast dated on
Thy doom.'---'High Prophetess,' said I, 'purge off,
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film.'---
'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.
'All else who find a haven in the world,
'Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
'If by a chance into this fane they come,
'Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half.'---
'Are there not thousands in the world,' said I,
Encourag'd by the sooth voice of the shade,
'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 sure should see
'Other men here; but I am here alone.'
'Those whom thou spak'st of are no vision'ries,'
Rejoin'd that voice---'They are no dreamers weak,
'They seek no wonder but the human face;
'No music but a happy-noted voice---
'They come not here, they have no thought to come---
'And thou art here, for thou art less than they---
'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.'
'That I am favour'd for unworthiness,
'By such propitious parley medicin'd
'In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
'Age, and could weep for love of such award.' 142

A little later, in the humanistic insert, Keats gave Moneta these lines:

'Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
'The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
'Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
'The one pours out a balm upon the World,
'The other vexes it.' 143

to which the poet replies:

'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 worshipers
'And careless Hectorers in proud bad verse.
'Though I breathe death with them it will be life
'To see them sprawl before me into graves. 144

In these passages the original problem and conflict as outlined in Sleep and Poetry is stated again. The first cited passage had, of course, been written in the heat of Keats's humanitarian period. Only those poets who have not only felt the agony and strife of the human heart but also dedicated their lives to abolish such misery can enter the innermost chamber of Saturn's temple.

From the humanistic viewpoint, the poet is to be a sage, humanist, and healer to humanity, one who pours balm on the world. Like Oceanus in Hyperion, he acts as a shepherd to his people, for whom he interprets the woes of existence and, in general, acts as mentor. In the second half of the passage, the dreamer, who vexes the world, was censured by Keats, whose earlier interpretation of "dreamer"---one who sees the agonies of the world but is too weak or lethargic to do anything about them---had changed to an attitude which saw the dreamer as a mock lyrist and egotist; undoubtedly

Keats had in mind Byron, whom he had always hated as the epitome of egotism. This distinction would appear to be the only logical one, though the passage and entire poem have long been a subject of considerable debate among many critics. For example, John Middleton Murry, in his 1955 edition of Keats, wrote:

> The beauty in truth, the truth in beauty of that, is the proof that Keats was right in rejecting the suggestion of his doubtful mind that the Poet and the Dreamer are distinct: 'the one pours out a balm upon the world, the other vexes it.' The great poet vexes the world, and himself; but in the selfless quality of his vexation is the balm. 145

Certainly, the entire poem constituted a final and valiant effort in Keats's mind to deal with the problems of the artist and his role. But, as I have either stated or implied many times throughout this paper, Keats was never able to reach any genuine conclusion or ultimate decision, However earnestly his mind and conscience endeavored to deal with so many problems, we might say that his thoughts and conclusions, the products of his mind, were of the nature of the sensations which breathed joy into his brief life---intense but fleeting. The last letter of import which I should like to quote here was written to Georgiana Augusta Keats from January 13 through 28, 1820:

> Upon the whole I dislike Mankind: Whatever people on the other side of the question may advance they cannot deny that they are always surprised at hearing of a good action and never of a bad one...'Tis best to remain aloof from people and like their good parts without being eternally troubled with the dull processes of their everyday Lives. When once a person has smok'd the vapidness of the routine of society he must have either self interest or the love of some sort of distinction to keep him in good humour with it. 146

These are rather bitter and cynical words. But, really, what other reaction could have befallen this man who one year later lost his battle with the tubercle bacillus, which had also claimed his brother's life? I have not even mentioned his relationship to Fanny Brawne---a

relationship which not only inspired his most exuberant moments but also accounted inestimably for much of his suffering.

VII

It is almost impossible for us to reach any conclusions concerning the Apollonian-Faustian dichotomy in his soul. I do think his was an Apollonian mind and sensibility <u>of the moment</u>. I am sure he forgot few of those things which affected him so deeply; but, nevertheless, he was unable to screen anything from his sight; indeed, in a sense, his delicate sensibilities were constantly barraged by literally everything with which they came into contact. Grecian urns, Elgin marbles, and poverty-stricken hovels in Scotland affected equally, I believe, in their widely varying ways, the Apollonian aesthete and Faustian Britisher and member of society.

Those whom the gods love die young, and the shears of the Fates were ready and waiting that sad day, February 23, 1821, when Keats died in the arms of his faithful Severn. As for what might have been written following Keats's twenty-sixth year, so much speculation has been expressed that it seems futile to make any more comment.

As for what Keats <u>did</u> write and think, I think we must remember that, perhaps more than for Beauty, Keats wrote with a keen eye for the entire truth and wholeness of life. Life had not, it may be argued, been good to him. In a sense the beauty which his eye caught and the form which his own powers made possible were all that he had, everything in which he could have consummate faith. Even his friends and their motives he eventually saw as almost purely egotistical. But Beauty was very tangibly real for Keats, and he was always conscious of its mutability and mystery. In one of the most beautiful tributes and perceptive essays, Emilio Gecchi wrote, translated by Robert H. H. Cust:

> In order, therefore, to find in Keats a complete and wholly human inspiration it is needful that beauty in its very exaltation should doubt itself, lest in the end it should be unable to put forward

> some absolute sense of reality. It is needful that the fervour of the poet should be broken up by a despondency against which aesthetic charm can be of no avail. It is necessary that the "green nest" should be pierced by the chill wind of Death; blind forces should make their attack upon it. Beauty must suffer condemnation; must become "the beauty that is to die"; and joy "the joy that carries its hand to its lips in token of farewell." All realism must culminate upon the border of approaching night; as the aspect of all things merges at sunset with a still and supreme sublimity. Beauty truly survives, but we do not feel it in its entirety, because of our grief for something which plucks at it. Beauty does indeed exist; but it never reveals itself so beautiful as when we are being drawn along inexorably to our unknown fate. In beauty all things live, but like the figures on a "Grecian Urn," they are shrouded in a mystery which no human soul can ever explain. 147

When he was prostrate in awe and, like Milton's Adam, "weake against the charm of Beauties powerful glance," I think Keats relapsed into that Apollonian state of reverie which Nietzsche described so beautifully. But, when nights of intoxication were over; when the sun shone again, illuminating the wretched, the horrible, the squalid; when he himself felt anew the pain of his disease and saw the agonies and strifes of human hearts---then, I think, the Faustian man resumed his course of work with a proper attention to all that constitutes suffering in life---for which Beauty is perhaps a sole compensation and consolation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Douglas Bush, "Keats," *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*, New York: Pageant Book Company, 1957, pp. 127-128.

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6. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

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10. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. xxv.-xxvi.

12. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, I, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1950, p. 183.

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

23. John Middleton Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, London: Oxford University Press, 1925, p. 146.

24. John Keats, *Poetical Works*, Edited by H. W. Garrod, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 419. (Hereafter this volume will be referred to as *Poems*.)

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26. *Poems*, *To Hope*, p. 20

27. *Poems*, *Written On 29 May*, p. 427.

28. *Poems*, *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*, pp. 23-24.

29. *Poems*, *To My Brother George*, p. 26.

30. *Poems*, *To My Brother George*, p. 27.

31. *Poems*, *To My Brother George*, p. 28.

32. *Poems*, *To Charles Cowden Clarke*, pp. 30-31.

33. *Poems*, *To A Young Lady Who Sent Me A Laurel Crown*, p. 363.

34. *Poems*, *To Kosciusko*, p. 40.

35. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 47-56, p. 43.

36. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 85-87; 90-91, p. 44.

37. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 96-102, p. 44.

38. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 122-125, p. 45.

39. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 136-149, p. 45.

40. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 155-162, p. 46.

41. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 162-171, p. 46.

42. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 235-247, p. 48.

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44. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 267-269, p. 48.

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46. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 301-320, pp. 49-50

47. *Poems*, *Sleep and Poetry*, ll. 385-388, p. 51.

48. *Poems*, *On Receiving A Laurel Crown From Leigh Hunt*, p. 420.

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66. *Poems*, *Endymion*, Book III, ll. 1-22, p. 105.

67. *Poems*, *Endymion*, Book III, ll. 363-371, p. 114.

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70. *Poems*, *Endymion*, Book III, ll. 807-827, pp. 125-126.

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72. *Poems*, *Endymion*, Book IV, ll. 20-29; 34-37, p. 132.

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91. Letters, pp. 141-142.

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