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The Poetics of John Keats in "The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream"

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Amy A. Zenger for the Master of Arts in English presented May 9, 1997.

Title: The Poetics of John Keats in "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream."

The Hyperion poems are Keats's epics. Like Wordsworth in *The Excursion,* in these poems Keats attempts to write an epic of the unexplored regions of the human mind. Unlike Wordsworth, however, Keats uses the narrative vocabulary of Hellenic myth--a vocabulary already at hand--but alters it to suit his own purposes. As they are concerned with the mind, these poems deal with the same issues that characterize contemporary debates about the relation of mind to language, issues that illuminate what these poems are about as much as they illuminate Keats's own use of language and theory of poetry.

This essay reads "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream" in light of these contemporary ideas and in conjunction with Keats's poems and letters. The reading concludes that Keats saw poetic language--figurative, sonorous, sensual--as the most powerful means to speculation, which he claimed to be the end of poetry. For him, the end of poetry was not imitation, and the focus of poetic activity was not the construction of a product: the poem. Rather,

poetic activity was sensual and spiritual engagement with the world, and the residue of that engagement was the poetic text.

THE POETICS OF JOHN KEATS

IN "THE FALL OF HYPERION: A DREAM"

by

AMY A. ZENGER

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I appreciate all immensely.

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Chapter I. Keats's Hyperion Poems

Yes, I will be thy priest and build a fane
  In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
  Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind

John Keats. "Ode to Psyche" (50-54)

The Hyperion poems are Keats's epics. Like Wordsworth in *The Excursion*, in these poems Keats attempts to write an epic of the unexplored regions of the human mind. Unlike Wordsworth, however, Keats uses the narrative vocabulary of Hellenic myth--a vocabulary already at hand--but alters it to suit his own purposes. As they are concerned with the mind, these poems deal with the same issues that characterize contemporary debates about the relation of mind to language, issues that illuminate what these poems are about as much as they illuminate Keats's own use of language and theory of poetry.

Critics often consider Keats's two Hyperion poems--as he did himself--together as a single project. He began working on "Hyperion" late in 1818, but abandoned it in April of 1819 (Keats *Poems* 460). He began composing "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream," a radically revised version of "Hyperion," about three months later, but gave this version up as well in

September of 1919 (Keats *Poems* 477). Keats published the earlier work as "Hyperion: A Fragment" in *1820*, but decided not to publish "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream," and it remained unknown to the public until it appeared as "Another Version of Keats's "Hyperion" in the 1857 volume of the *Miscellanies of the Philobiblion Society*.

The writing of the two Hyperions bracketed an extremely productive period in Keats's life as a poet. In the interim between giving up "Hyperion" and beginning "The Fall of Hyperion" Keats composed the odes--"Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on Melancholy," "Ode on Indolence," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn,"-- and he also wrote "Lamia," "The Eve of St. Agnes," "Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil," and "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," as well as many other poems. He wrote "To Autumn" in September of 1819, at the time when he was giving up the Hyperion project altogether.

The Hyperion poems are dark--explorative, in Keats's own words, of "dark passages," passages of language and passages of consciousness. They were written at a dark time in his life: while he was working on "Hyperion," Keats was nursing his younger brother, Tom, through the final stages of consumption, the same illness that had claimed their mother when Keats was 14. When Tom died on December 1, 1818, Keats was already ill with the same disease. He himself lived two years longer, until February 23, 1821.

Keats chose the cosmic battle between the Titans and the Olympians as his subject, the battle in which the Olympian generation of gods, led by Zeus, rose up and overthrew their parent's generation to become the ruling deities. Original progeny of Ge, the mother earth, and Uranus, the father sky, the Titans were gigantic in size, and under Saturn they ruled the earth in a Golden Age. The Olympians, children of the Titans, fought them in an enormous earth-wide war that lasted ten years. After being defeated, the Titans were condemned to imprisonment in the gloomy caverns of Tartarus deep inside the earth.

Keats's treatment of the myth is curious: Rather than describing the conflict between the two generations of gods, or the triumph of Zeus, he chooses to narrate the aftermath of the war, when the Titans are coming to recognize their defeat but before the Olympians have not yet fully come into their power. In "Hyperion," Keats first approaches the telling of this material as a third person narrative. When the poem opens in Book I, Saturn, the unsceptered king of the fallen gods, lies senseless on the ground until Thea awakens him and leads him to the other already-imprisoned Titans. Hyperion, the last Titan to lose his power, is seen realizing his loss and plunging down out of the sky. In Book II, the Titans convene in Tartarus and discuss their fate. In Book III, after the poet for the first time invokes the muse, the scene shifts to Delos, home of Apollo,

the Olympian who is to take Hyperion's place as new god of the sun and of poetry. He is visited by Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory, and receives a vision from her that gives him the "knowledge enormous" to make him a god: "Creations, destroyings, all at once / Pour into the wide hollows of my brain / And deify me." The vision that initiates him into the pantheon is a vision of the inevitability of change.

The "Fall of Hyperion" radically revises the form of "Hyperion," by framing the scene of the fallen Titans as a vision that occurs in a dream, which in turn occurs within another dream, narrated in the first person. In Canto I (this poem is in cantos, rather than books), the narrator prefaces his account of the dream. Within the vision itself, he first finds himself in an Eden-like arbor where he comes across a wonderful feast, eats and drinks, and falls into a deep, deep sleep. When he "wakes up," (still within his dream) he is inside of a vast, somber temple, where he meets a priestess sacrificing at the altar, and is compelled to undergo two tests: First, he must mount the steps of her altar before an offering of sacrificial leaves is consumed by fire, or he will die. Second, after being mysteriously transported into the mind of the priestess, he must wait for a whole long month, watching Saturn, Thea, and Moneta, all of them still and unmoving as the dead, until Saturn finally stirs and speaks. In Canto II, at the "end" of this unfinished poem, the setting again shifts--to the inside of

the gleaming palace of Hyperion, where the dreamer sees the sun god as he "flares" past.

This treatment seems odd when considered simply as the retelling of the myth; it becomes understandable, however, when seen as using the myth to new ends, as a way to write about the mind, a project many critics have recognized Keats was undertaking in the Hyperion poems. Helen Vendler, for example, in *The Odes of John Keats* says:

> In *Hyperion*. . . and *The Fall of Hyperion* . . , Keats brings up for examination. . . the inner operations of the working brain. The wide hollows of Apollo's brain in *Hyperion* and the dark secret chambers of Moneta's skull in *The Fall* become urns of Knowledge and of art, art as yet. . . disembodied. (197)

In "Spectral Symbolism and the Authorial Self in Keats's 'Hyperions,'" Geoffrey Hartman considers the Hyperion poems together as a single project in which Keats writes his inner quest for authorial identity in grand, mythic proportions, and in "The Two *Hyperions*: Compositions and Decompositions," Balachandra Rajan calls the two, "doubly unfinished" *Hyperions* part of Keats's larger "*Bildungsroman* of consciousness."

First, in a one very literal sense, the poem dramatizes the processes of the working poet's mind, and depicts an image of "the working brain."

Donald Goellnicht and Hermione De Almeida, whose works look at Keats's poetry in relation to his training as a medical practitioner, assert that such a literal reading is not at all farfetched. Keats's knowledge of anatomy and physiology certainly enter into his imagery and vocabulary, as they do in many other places in his work. When the poem is viewed in this light, the two primary faculties of the mind--sensation and reflection--may each be seen to have its own province in the poem, and each of these provinces also has its characteristic form of language. The narrative connection between the two provinces is elucidated by the relations between the two mental faculties.

The sunny bower (I.19-60), is a world filled with sensation, where perceptions are even heightened by being linked together in a kind of material synesthesia: the scent of roses "touches" the dreamer; and the sounds of the fountain "showers" in his ears. The faculty of reflection, of thought and inner vision, has its place, on the other hand, in the cavernous sanctuary (I. 62-468). Moneta is the "Shade of Memory"--the mental activity which makes experience possible, since without it the mind would know nothing but an unending, undifferentiated sensation in an endless present moment. Hers is the realm not of the instant, but of duration in time. As such, this faculty is concerned with narrative.

Just as importantly, as epics concerned with the mind the poems also reflect many of the central issues in the philosophical debates about the relationship of language to consciousness that interested such thinkers as Condillac, Rousseau and Diderot in France; Herder in Germany; and Horne Tooke, Lord Monboddo, and Adam Smith in Britain--to mention only a few of the key thinkers.[1] Hans Aarsleff, the most widely-cited scholar in the field of eighteenth-century linguistic thought, has described how the study of language arose in connection with study of the human mind:

> During the years under consideration [1786-1860], language study--even when called philology--was not merely a matter of knowing the forms, syntax, phonology, historical relationships, and other aspects of particular languages. It involved questions of wider significance. What, for instance, was the origin of thought? Did the mind have a material basis? Did mankind have a single origin? Was the first language given by revelation, or had man invented it in the process of time? Could etymology be made instructive without lending support to skepticism? (*Study of Language* 4)

He asserts that the study of language and the origins of language inevitably arose from investigations into the nature of knowledge and the reliability of knowledge after John Locke, because language was recognized to be such

a crucial necessity for thinking and for the development of human institutions ("Tradition of Condillac" 163).

In his treatise exploring the foundations of human knowledge, the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke had stated that all of human knowledge rests entirely on ideas formed by two essential capacities possessed by every person: sensation and reflection. He saw language as a system of signs chosen arbitrarily to stand for the ideas in the mind, and to serve as means to communicate those ideas from one person to another--preferably as quickly as possible, to be consonant with the speed of thought. But he considered language to be an unreliable and even misleading tool for communicating ideas, since there is no way to ascertain if the idea a word represents is the same for all users of that word.

Although Locke had discussed language only as it was pertinent to his theory of knowledge, thinkers after him looked much more closely at language itself and its relation to thought, including theories about the genesis of language. They wondered whether thought preceded language, or language was first necessary for thought, or whether language preceded social organization, or was dependent on society for its beginning. Aarsleff stresses that the search for origins was not a historical search for factual information about early languages, but was of necessity purely hypothetical, and was a way to explain consciousness in the present:

> All participants in the [origins of language] debate accepted the principles expressed in Monboddo's two statements that "it appears, that, from the study of language, if it be properly conducted, the history of the human mind is best learned" and that he "couldn't give the philosophical account proposed, of the origin of language, without inquiring into the origin of ideas". ("Tradition of Condillac" 164)

Searching for origins was a primary feature of linguistic thought, and was an approach typical of the eighteenth century. Aarsleff explains that this was a way of discovering the most essential qualities of language, stripped of the accretions of later developments, and to determine the language most *natural* to man.

Condillac and Rousseau, for example, both considered gestures and "les cris naturels" to be the earliest and most immediate expression of the passions; more articulated systems of linguistic signs developed out of these original expressions as worked upon by natural reason. Both men also considered that original languages were figurative, and had few grammatical distinctions or restrictions. They thought that primitive languages had a much wider contrast of tones, and considered poetry to be closely related to these early languages, developing out of chanting. The

language of analytical thought only developed later, after poetry, and was, according to this argument, a diminished form of expression (Robins 166).

> Rousseau . . . rejoiced in the supposed vivacity and passion of the earlier stages of human language, when poetry had not been chilled into reasoning, and before writing, unable to symbolize the stress and pitch differences and the vocal inflexions of speech, had substituted "exactitude for expression" and enervated the liveliness of language itself: "All written languages have to change their character and lose vigour in gaining clarity." Rousseau, who could dream of the noble savage uncorrupted by property and civil government, could also write of "languages favorable to freedom; these are sonorous, prosodic, harmonious languages, which can be heard and understood from afar. Our languages are designed for the buzzing of the drawing room." (Robins 166-167)

Such ideas were never merely historical, but were ways of evaluating current practices.

Another important feature characterizing the late-eighteenth century discussions about language was the universal recognition of the linearity of speech. Thoughts were considered to be like pictures, instantaneously appearing whole in the mind, but expression was recognized to occur necessarily in a succession over time. To become

translated into language, thoughts need to be "decomposed" into the discrete, arbitrary signs of speech and writing. Aarsleff quotes Maupertuis on this subject: "The composition and decomposition of the signs of our perceptions and their relations to the perceptions themselves constitute nearly all our knowledge and make it function at their pleasure" ("Tradition of Condillac" 165). Similar ideas expressed in similar terms were common to many writers.

These ideas about the relation of figurative poetic language to analytic language, and the relation of feeling to thought, and of image to language, affected the way poets conceived of their work. Shelley, for example, is quite explicit in "A Defence of Poetry"; he appears to endorse the ideas of Condillac, Rousseau, and Monboddo, since he follows them in asserting the primacy of synthetic thinking and synthetic language over analytic language and thought (Peterfreund 384). Like Rousseau, Shelley celebrated the expressive strength of the sensual aspects of language--its actual sonority. For him, to engage in making poetry meant using language in a particular way: to use it figuratively; to heighten its sonority; to prefer synthetic rather than analytic word orders. Rather than rejecting the ambiguity and slipperiness of language, uses the associations words have to make serious puns, using the complex fields of meaning inherent in words as sources of thought.

If read in conjunction with the contemporary ideas about language, "The Fall of Hyperion," emerges as a poetical working out of Keats's theories of poetry. Though he appears to share Shelley's ideas about language, he is less explicit than Shelley or Wordsworth or Coleridge in expounding his theoretical positions: in general, these are to be gleaned from his prolific and articulate letters, and from the ideas in circulation among his friends, rather than from any formal critical writing.

"The Fall of Hyperion" strives to reconcile the linearity of speech with the instantaneous quality of the imagination or thought, reflecting an interest in the connection between mental pictures and charactered language so vital to philosophy of mind. The process of connecting thought to language determines both what "The Fall of Hyperion" is about as well as how Keats works with language. He was acquainted with the idea of the linearity of speech, as evidenced by his ideas and by the language he uses in a letter to a painter friend, Benjamin Robert Haydon, 8 April 1818:

> I have ever been too sensible of the labyrinthine path to eminence in Art (judging from Poetry) ever to think I understood the emphasis of Painting. The innumerable compositions and decompositions which take place between the intellect and its thousand materials

> before it arrives at that trembling snail-horn perception of Beauty. (*John Keats* 389).

In terms of the narrative, the tension between visual images and "charactered language" emerges in the strange test which the poet must go through, to wait with the image of the silent gods until they stir and begin speaking.

In terms of Keats's own process, the tension between language and image emerges in his desire to make the poem as much like an image as possible, and as readily perceived as a picture. By presenting the poem as a dream, he conflates the visual and the linguistic. "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream" is a poem that tells a dream, but the dream it tells is a vision of language: image and word cycle endlessly back and forth, neither one ever gaining precedence over the other. Like Freud, who was to theorize more than eighty years later that "A dream is a rebus"--is, in other words, a picture that encodes language--Keats tells a dream whose interpretation into words reveals the depths of human consciousness.

Chapter II. Telling Dreams

> A melodious passage in poetry is full of pleasures both sensual and spiritual. The spiritual is felt when the very letters and points of charactered language show like the hieroglyphics of beauty:--the mysterious signs of an immortal freemasonry! "A thing to dream of, not to tell!"
>
> John Keats. "Mr. Kean." (*John Keats* 346)

Within "The Fall of Hyperion" itself, commentary reflecting on the poem's own project gives credence to such critical assessments and suggests that it indeed participates in the philosophical investigations into the relation between consciousness and language so widely debated in the late eighteenth century. In Canto I, the first 18 lines are not part of the dream itself; they serve as a preface in which the narrator raises questions about the dream he is about to tell, and lay out a framework of concerns to be used to test the poem he is about to embark upon.

What are the concerns of the narrator about his project? At first, he would appear to be most concerned about the distinction between seeing and telling--or, more precisely, the distinction between seeing a vision and putting that vision into language. Although he says that every man

"whose soul is not a clod / Hath visions" (I.13-14), not all "tell" them: "fanatics" and "savages" have dreams, but they have not "Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf / The shadows of melodious utterance" (I.5-6). But, unlike them, Poets tell their dreams in poetry: "Poesy alone can tell her dreams, / With the fine spell of words alone can save / Imagination from the sable charm / And dumb enchantment" (I.8-11). The simple distinction between those who put dreams into language and those who do not becomes insufficient, however, when the final question at stake emerges as "Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse / Be poet's or Fanatic's" (I.16-17); if the narrative that ensues *might* be the dream of a fanatic, this would indicate that fanatics may also put their dreams into words.

The difference between poets and fanatics lies in the way they use words, not simply in whether or not they do use them; the test of whether this dream is that of a poet or a fanatic depends on whether its language fulfills the exactions of Poesy. Fanatics and savages "live, dream and die free of laurel"--that is, they never become followers of Apollo, god of poetry and music, whose initiates are crowned with a wreath of laurel; they may "trace" something on vellum or wild Indian leaf, but their tracings are not the "shadows of melodious utterance." The "alone" which qualifies both the "fine spell of words" and "Poesy" reinforces the perception that

what is at issue here is not simply language, but more specifically, the nature of poetic language, and the passage resonates with the power of words: "spell," "charm," "enchantment"--all are forms of language with magical potency in the world.

Further questions still remain concerning the narrator's preface to the dream. Why is it that he refers to poetry as "The shadows of melodious utterance"? Shadows are visible, and are cast by concrete objects, but utterances, being sounds (not concrete objects) seemingly would not *have* shadows. Even more mysterious is his final statement: "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" (I.16-18). By referring to his own hand as "this warm scribe," and indicating that it is writing down the dream, the narrator points again to the difference between dreaming and writing. But why is it that his death will occur before it is known "whether the dream. . . / Be poet's or Fanatic's"? If, in lines one to eleven, the narrator implies that the kind of person who is telling the dream determines what kind of language it is, here in lines 16-18 it appears that, on the contrary, it is the *writing* that determines what sort of person (poet, fanatic, or savage) the writer is--but only after his death.

The idea emerging--of the writer's death--casts his previous remarks in a different light. For example, in referring to the telling of the dream,

his choice of "rehearse" now leaps out, since the word contains "hearse" in it and brings its own associations with death. "To rehearse" used in the immediate sense it has here, meaning "to recount," or to tell over again, is somewhat archaic. "Rehearse" in the more current usage has an implicit sense of performance and repetition. As a verb, "hearse"--by itself--means to bury or to convey to the grave (OED 1). The word comes from the Latin *hirpex*, meaning harrow, and it may be the shape of the harrow--something like a large rake--which led to the use of hearse to name an elaborate framework erected over a coffin or tomb to which memorial verses or epitaphs are attached (OED 2.c.). It also names a triangular candelabrum for 15 candles used especially at Tenebrae, a church office commemorating the suffering and death of Christ with a progressive extinguishing of candles (OED 1.a.). The presence of death also suggests a reading of "the shadows of melodious utterance"; perhaps in this case the shadows are not literal, visible shadows, but the "ghosts" of utterance.

Thus, in the first 18 lines of "The Fall of Hyperion," Keats brings out the central issues that concern him as a poet, issues that not only determine how he will go about writing this poem, but also what the poem is about. This preface serves as a lens through which to read the dream narrative. The connection between vision and speech; the distinction between poetry and other uses of language; the relation of language to loss

(shadow of melodious utterance): all of these come into play in the language and action of "The Fall of Hyperion."

As mentioned in Chapter One, both "Hyperion" and "The Fall of Hyperion" are peculiar and unexpected as narratives. The subject matter of the Hyperion poems is the war between the two generations of gods, but they actually portray very little action. This is in contrast to Hesiod, for example, who in his account of this myth, goes, as a good storyteller, to the heart of the action, vividly describing the battle between the Olympians and their parent gods in such passages as this:

> Now Zeus no longer held in his strength,
> but here his heart filled
> deep with fury, and now he showed
> his violence entire
> and indiscriminately. Out of the sky
> and off Olympos
> he moved flashing his fires incessantly,
> and the thunderbolts,
> the crashing of them and the blaze
> together came flying, one after
> another from his ponderous hand,
> and spinning whirls of inhuman

flame, and with it the earth,

the giver of life, cried out

aloud as she burned, and the vast forests

in the fire screamed. (689-694)

"Hyperion," however, is notable for the "stationing" of its scenes; the characters appear in statue-like arrangements (Goslee). In "The Fall of Hyperion," the causal links and logical connections that we expect appear to be missing, and the action moves in abrupt shifts: a series of clearly-articulated topographies, each one of which is rather static and tableau-like and is juxtaposed to the others without apparent physical or logical connection.

When considered in terms of the theories of consciousness already discussed, however, "The Fall of Hyperion" may be re-envisioned as an allegorical retelling of the "compositions and decompositions" of the mind and its materials. Viewed in this light, and seen through the lens of the narrator's preface, the plot of "The Fall of Hyperion" may be summarized in simplest terms this way: The poet "saves" Moneta's imagination "from the sable charm and dumb enchantment" by means of Poesy.

The preface to the dream stresses the unique power of language to "tell dreams." In his review of Mr. Kean, Keats writes that poetry has a sensual aspect, and he considers the sensual to be the means by which the

spiritual meaning of poetry is conveyed, rather than by arbitrary signification of ideas. In poetry, he says, "charactered language" can function like the "hieroglyphics of beauty": being pictographs, hieroglyphics differ from charactered language in their ability to be apprehended all at once, rather than succesively, as charactered language must be. This quality of picture writing fascinated other Romantics, too, like Coleridge and DeQuincey. William Hazlitt, a friend of Keats, declared that "Shakespeare's language is hieroglyphical. It translates thoughts into visible images" (*John Keats* 614). As an originary language, poetry is as close as language can be to image, to instantaneous apprehension. Word and image draw together and sometimes blur: Keats calls this poem "A Dream," so that from the very outset the distinction between vision and the linguistic construct is confused.

"The Fall of Hyperion" is, in Eugenio Donato's words, Keats's "most systematic and ambitious attempt to provide a grounding for his poetical idiom" ("Writ" 972). Here Keats struggles to balance his own sensual experience with his intellectual knowledge, and to balance the felt present moment with the overwhelming weight of the past. The poem demands to be read simultaneously on all of these levels: at once a hieroglyphic and a narrative, an image of the mind (the parts of the poem relate to each

other as parts of the mind do) and a narrative of individual and of human consciousness.

Chapter III. Inspiration

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
    Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
    Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
    Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
        With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
            And purple-stained mouth;
    That I might drink and leave the world unseen. . .
                John Keats. "Ode to a Nightingale" (11-19)

The entry into the dream narrative at the beginning of line 19 is signaled by the word "methought." Eleanor Cook, who has written about this fascinating word as it is used by Milton, Keats, and other poets, notices that the verb actually has two chief functions: used in the present tense, "methinks" pertains to the waking judgment, but when used in the past tense, "methought" is strongly associated with seeming and with the visionary. Cook points out that in *Paradise Lost* Eve uses "methought" four times in recounting her dream about the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Cook's observations are especially pertinent to "The Fall of

Hyperion," because the sunny bower in which the dreamer first finds himself is a literary echo of the Miltonic Eden in *Paradise Lost*. Here, "methought" is the entry into a vision, and the dream the narrator is telling (like Eve's dream) also concerns the awakening of what Keats called "the thinking principle."

The Eden-like bower is a world of delightful sensation. It is filled with light, a place where all of the senses are charmed. The dreamer soon encounters a plentiful feast "which seem'd refuse of a meal / By Angel tasted, or our Mother Eve" (I.30-31). Feeling tremendous appetite, "more yearning than on earth," he says:

> I ate deliciously;
> And, after not long, thirsted, for thereby
> Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice,
> Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
> And, pledging all the Mortals of the World,
> And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
> Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme. (I.40-46)

In this passage, "That full draught is parent of my theme" (I.46), stands out particularly, not only because it is noticeably brief and direct in contrast to the more complex lines that follow and precede it, but also because the

unexpected appearance of the word "theme" in this context complicates the meaning of the line and flags a reference to the nature of poetry itself.

Bearing in mind the dichotomy between the instant of time and duration which is so pertinent in language theories, "This full draught is parent of my theme" may be simultaneously associated with experience of the moment and with the passage of time. Conceptually, the two senses of draught--the experiential and the historical--are unified by the idea of *inspiration* since, literally speaking, inspiration is a breathing in of breath, or spirit, but inspiration also *generates* poems.

"Draught" is connected to immediate sensation in several ways. In this passage, it may be taken most immediately to mean "the drawing of liquid into the mouth or down the throat; an act of drinking, a drink; the quantity of drink swallowed at one 'pull' " (OED V.14.a), since the dreamer thirsted, came upon the "cool vessel of transparent juice," and drank. A draught, however, may similarly be a current of air, or the amount of air that can be held by the lungs at one intake of breath--a second meaning which may be pertinent as well, since both senses of "draught"-- drink and intake of air--appear in another moment of transition elsewhere in Keats's writing.

In a letter which he wrote to J. H. Reynolds on 3 May, 1818, Keats's wrote: "Among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous

one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of men," a statement which almost directly parallels "This full draught is parent to my theme," in the first canto of "The Fall of Hyperion." In the letter, Keats's remark appears as he is discussing his estimation of Milton in relation to Wordsworth and also describing a "simile for human life" important enough to quote here at length:

> I compare human life to 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 the 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 the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man--of convincing one's nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heratbreak, Pain, Sickness and

> oppression--whereby This Chamber 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 balance of good and evil. We are in a Mist--We [that is, Keats and Reynolds] are now in that state--We feel the 'Burden of Mystery,' To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote "Tintern Abbey" 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. . . .Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton (*John Keats* 396-7)

Comparing the language in the letter and in the poem strengthens the perception that the two inform each other: the "breathing" of the intoxicating atmosphere--in the letter--is like the "full draught" of transparent liquid--in the poem; "father," in the letter is like the "parent" in the poem; and the "vision into the heart and nature of Man" in the letter is like "theme" in the poem.

To carry the comparison between the letter and the poem further, the chamber simile of Keats's letter also is mirrored in the structure of "The Fall of Hyperion": like a "Mansion of many Apartments," the poem contains discrete topographies within itself and the dreamer is impelled from one "chamber" into another in a journey that resembles Keats's

description of the journey of consciousness. For example, the Eden-like bower in which the dreamer in the poem first finds himself, lines 19-49 of the first canto, is very much like the second chamber of human life Keats describes in the letter--the "chamber of Maiden-Thought," a place of "light " and "pleasant wonders." Presumably, the first chamber, the one he calls the "infant or thoughtless Chamber," would be like Eden *before* the departure of Adam and Eve, before the tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and before the fall into language.

In Keats's letter, the sensuous and delightful atmosphere of the second chamber becomes intoxicating, then gives way to a dark, mysterious labyrinth; likewise, in the poem, the dreamer becomes intoxicated by the "domineering potion" after enjoying the sweetness of the sounds and scents and tastes of paradise, and this intoxication leads to his awakening inside of the somber monument. In terms of Keats's theory of the growth of human consciousness as he expresses it in the letter to Reynolds, "The Fall of Hyperion" may be read, then, as an exploration of the darkened second chamber of consciousness beyond which Keats says in his letter that he had not gone.

The same letter yields still further meanings of "draught," in light of Keats's evident concern with thinking and consciousness. In the plural,

"draughts" is a game played on a chessboard ("checkers" in the United States), a meaning that Keats also uses in the letter to Reynolds:

> If I scribble long letters I must play my vagaries....I must be free of tropes and figures--I must play my draughts as I please and for my advantage and your erudition, crown a white with a black, or a black with a white, ... this crossing a letter is not without its association--for chequer work leads us naturally to a Milkmaid, a Milkmaid to Hogarth Hogarth to Shakespear Shakespear to Hazlitt . . . . (*John Keats* 396-7)

Keats suggests here the way in which, rather than taking a simple linear path, he "leapfrogs" through the associations that words and images have for him, a chequering of associations that moves the way the mind moves when it is processing experience. The textual notes to this letter suggest that it may, in fact, have been literally composed in "chequer work," a practice in which the face of the page was covered twice: once by the lines of script being written horizontally, and a second time by lines written at right angles to these, producing a chequered effect. A text that "plays draughts" would reflect a subjective consciousness rather than an objective reality, and each moment in such a text would have, like a square in a checkerboard, any number of possible moves that might arise from it.

Draught is also a term Keats would have used in medicine to indicate a dose of medication. In "The Fall of Hyperion," the draught of inspiration is a "domineering potion" that acts like a poison and causes the dreamer to swoon as if being taken by death. As Hermione De Almeida points out, in this sense the draught is like one of the homeopathic remedies Keats would have been familiar with from his medical training, where he would have learned the medicinal properties of many substances--substances which, if taken in proper doses spur healing, but in the wrong amount can also act as deadly poisons (146-7). The laurel, symbolic plant of the devotees of Apollo, was such a medicinal plant, and Apollo was not only the god of poetry and of healing, but was capable of bringing on pestilence and "mists" as well. To induce an inspirational fervor, the Pythian priestesses who received the oracles of Apollo in his temple at Delphi chewed small amounts of laurel leaf, which produced feelings of breathlessness and trance. But extract of the same laurel, if taken in even a very small quantity, is fatal.

Keats's characterization of language as being "full of pleasures both sensual and spiritual" brings language into the realm of things that can be taken in on the sensual level--by eating drinking or breathing--as well as the intellectual. He often spoke of "dining on words," and in "Hyperion," when Apollo reads the face of Mnemosyne, knowledge "pours into the

hollows of his brain" like wine or an elixir. In "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again," a sonnet Keats inscribed in his copy of Shakespeare, the idea of reading as inspiration emerges:

> once again, the fierce dispute,
> Betwixt Damnation and impassion'd clay
> Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
> The bitter-sweet of this Shaksperean fruit.
> Chief Poet! and ye Clouds of Albion,
> Begetters of our deep eternal theme!
> When through the old oak forest I am gone.
> Let me not wander in a barren dream:
> But when I am consumed in the fire,
> Give me new Phoenix Wings to fly at my desire. (ll. 5-14)

Line ten in this sonnet--"Begetters of our deep eternal theme"--again recalls "This full draught was parent to my theme" in "The fall of Hyperion." The play itself is a 'fruit" to be tasted by the reader, and , like the transparent liquid in "The Fall of Hyperion," it so "bitter-sweet."

The idea of "dining on words" even affects how Keats reads his own work. In revising "Hyperion" to compose "The Fall of Hyperion," Keats did not merely put the story of the fall of the Titans *after* the story of Apollo; he put it *inside* of the story of Apollo by framing it inside of a

vision which is in turn inside of another vision: "The Fall of Hyperion" "swallows" the earlier "draught" of "Hyperion." Furthermore, by identifying the dreamer in "The Fall of Hyperion" with Apollo, the vision of the fall of the Titans becomes a vision within a vision within a poet's dream--that is, no longer an objective narrative, but encompassed entirely in the poet's mind.

Comparing the two versions of the epic, one striking difference is that while "Hyperion" is a linear, historical narrative, recounted in the third person, and the narrator, inspired by a muse, is not a participant in the story, "The Fall of Hyperion" is a retelling of a dream, the dreamer is a participant in the events he dreams about, and the account is in the first person. Another striking difference between the earlier and later versions of the poem is that the vision of the fallen Saturn, which begins "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale" in the opening lines of "Hyperion," does not show up in "The Fall of Hyperion" until line 294 of the first canto.

A careful reading of both poems, however, shows that the first 294 lines of "The Fall of Hyperion" are not entirely new prefatory material; they are a revision of Book III of "Hyperion," which has been moved from the end of the earlier poem and placed at the beginning of the later one. In Book III, the narrative shifts to Delos, to the story of the young Apollo, who is to be instated as the new sun god in place of the deposed Hyperion. The

island of Delos is described as a divine place, forested with "olives green/ And poplars, and lawn shading palms, and beech." Apollo is wandering there sadly when he is visited by a goddess--Mnemosyne. When she asks why he is sad, he doesn't know, but would like her to tell him why he feels "curs'd and thwarted." Mnemosyne remains mute in answer to his question, but Apollo reads a reply in her face:

> Mute thou remainest--Mute! yet I can read
> A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
> Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
> Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
> Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
> Creations and destroyings, all at once
> Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
> And deify me, as if some blithe wine
> Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
> And so become immortal. (III. 111-120)

This "reading lesson" induces a fit in Apollo, who shudders with "commotions," "most like the struggle at the gate of death;/ or liker still to one who should take leave/ of pale immortal death, and with a pang/ as hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse/ die into life" (III. 126-30).

Mnemosyne stands like one who is prophesying while Apollo shrieks--the poem breaks off at this point.

The dreamer's story in "The Fall of Hyperion" loosely parallels the story of Apollo's initiation in "Hyperion." The beautiful garden dreamed in lines 19-39 of the first canto in "The Fall of Hyperion" is very much like Delos in lines 14-28 of "Hyperion," and even though the dreamer gives no indication that he himself is Apollo, by identification with Apollo's story in "Hyperion" he may be read as an Apollo-like figure. Also, like Apollo, the dreamer in "The Fall of Hyperion" suffers a violent "dying into life" when he is approaching the altar in Saturn's temple. While Moneta stands as if prophesying, the dreamer feels a sudden numbness:

> Suddenly a palsied chill
> Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
> And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
> Upon those streams that pulse beside the throat;
> I shrieked; and the sharp anguish of my shriek
> Stung my own ears (I.121-7)

When the dreamer mounts the stairs to the altar, the life and warmth flow back into his body (I.133-4). The vision of the fallen Saturn that the dreamer receives from Moneta in "The Fall of Hyperion" is like the "reading lesson" Mnemosyne gives Apollo in "Hyperion."

As drink, as breath, and as game, "draught" is associated with immediate experience, because it indicates the taking in of sensations, and because it refers to the play of associations characteristic of immediate experience. But the close proximity of "draught" to "theme" in "This full draught is parent to my theme" also demands that "draught" be read in another sense as: "A preliminary 'sketch' or outline of a writing or document, from which the fair or finished copy is made" (OED X.32). This sense, by differentiating between earlier and later versions of a writing, implicates time and development in a way that the other meanings do not; semantically, then, "draught" is connected both to the sense of history (as preliminary sketch) and to the sense of immediate experience (as drink or inhalation of breath).

Like "draught," the word "parent" in "This full draught was parent to my theme" also implies the passage of time by assuming the presence of earlier and later generations. In "The Fall of Hyperion," "parent" appears, curiously, only four lines after the mention of the vessel of "transparent" liquid, in the Eden-like garden, in which, through the abandoned meal, Keats has just summoned up the image of the departed Adam and Eve--who are often called our "first parents." The *transparency* of the liquid could refer merely to its clarity, but may also be considered in terms of vision: this "trans-apparent" drink may have the effect of taking the

dreamer "beyond the appearances" of things, so that he will be able to "see into the heart and nature of Man," like the poet in Keats's letter to Reynolds. Then again, perhaps this is a "trance-parent" liquid that will induce in the dreamer the visionary trance in which he meets Moneta and becomes able to see into her mind. In relation to "parent," however, the "trans-parent" liquid could be seen as bringing about the drinker's "moving beyond the parent"--his birth. This birth, like Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden, is a birth into mortality, or a birth into life that will eventually lead to death.

Chapter IV. Speculation

> As to the poetical character itself . . . it is not itself--it has no self--It is everything 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 chameleon 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.
>
> John Keats. "Letter to Woodhouse." 27 October 1818

> One of the most mysterious of semi-speculations is, one would suppose, that of one Mind's imagining into another . . . . A Poet can seldom have justice done to his imagination--for men are as distinct in their conceptions of material shadowings as they are in matters of spiritual understanding.
>
> John Keats. Marginalia to *Paradise Lost*.

When the dreamer awakens inside of the ancient sanctuary, he has moved beyond the realm of the senses and outer vision and entered a

deeper area of consciousness--the world of reflection and spirituality, presided over by Moneta, the priestess of memory. Her name, Moneta, derives from the Latin *moneo* meaning "I warn," or "remind," or "admonish," and is said to have become an epithet of the Roman goddess Juno when a voice heard issuing from her temple during an earthquake informed the people of the necessary sacrifice to be made (Room 206). At Rome, the temple of Juno Moneta, built on the citadel of the city, became the site of the Roman mint, and because of this *moneta* also came to mean both the mint and the money that was coined in the temple; *moneta* is the source, by way of French, of the English word "money." Through the vagaries of translation from Greek into Latin, Juno Moneta also came to be identified with the Greek goddess whose name means memory: Mnemosyne, the mother of the nine muses.

As goddess of reflection, Moneta is moon-like, and is related to Hyperion in the same way that the moon is related to the sun: She is not the source of her own luminosity, but shines with reflected light. The light which she reflects is from a sun that has fallen. Like the feast that the dreamer finds in the sunny bower, Moneta, too, is a "remnant"--the last, the "pale omega" of the "withered race" of the Titans. She is associated with change and impermanence, as the moon traditionally has been. Her face is blanched to a terrible whiteness by a sickness that works a "constant

change" in her. This oxymoronic diagnosis suggests that in the goddess of memory, illness is caused by the knowledge that nothing ever is changeless, even the gods.

As a muse figure, Moneta brings a complex set of concerns to the poet in "The Fall of Hyperion" by these meanings with which she is associated. If the various aspects of the dreamer's experience in the sunny bower are unified by the idea of inspiration, here in Moneta's temple, the same kind of conceptual unity is provided by the meanings of speculation. The concept of speculation encompasses vision in the simple sense of "looking" as well as in the sense of "contemplation"; it also refers to reflective thinking--the "bending back" of thought--or to the bending back of light (cf. speculum--a mirror). Speculation is also a financial activity.

Though it does not appear as a word in this poem, Keats used "speculation" in other places in his work. In "Keats' Use of Speculation" John Middleton Murry considers how Keats uses the word very specifically in the vision sense--both as in simple "looking" and as in "contemplation"--but not in the more contemporary sense of "cogitation" (93). In this aspect, the underlying theme of speculation accounts for the fascination with inner and outer vision in this section of the poem. Moneta is possessed of divine insight, but she is blind to the outside world. The poet describes her eyes as luminous, but unable to see:

But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back, with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things--they saw me not,
But in blank splendor beam'd like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast. (I.264-71)

Moneta's blindness relates her to Poesy in stanza four of "Ode to a Nightingale," which begins: "Away! away! for I will follow thee / Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, / But on the viewless wings of Poesy" (I.31-33). She also recalls the figure of Melancholy in the "Ode on Melancholy" : If thy mistress some rich anger shows / Emprison her soft hand and let her rave / And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes" (I.18-20).

The transfer of Moneta's vision to the dreamer, furthermore, is a visual experience, not a linguistic one: not a gradual unfolding of words, but an immediate "speculation" into her imagination, which she calls "the scenes / Still swooning vivid through my globed brain" (I.244-5). As soon as the poet "conjures" Moneta to allow him to see into her memory, he is

suddenly transported into her inner world without the mediation of language:

> Whereon there grew
> A power within me of enormous ken,
> To see as a God sees, and take the depth
> Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
> Can size and shape pervade. (I.302-6)

It is only after he has entered into this scene and acquired her divine ability to "see as a God sees" that Moneta speaks some few words of explanation: the primary communication is through the transferred vision.

What the poet sees is a scene of "dumb enchantment"--a scene that is "dumb" both in being speechless and in being thoughtless. The shady vale is airless, and the stream running through it is "voiceless," where "the Naiad mid her reeds / Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips" (I.317-18). The fallen Saturn sleeps there as if dead: "It seemed no force could wake him from his place" (I.327). Only the goddess Thea speaks momentarily, as if to awaken Saturn, but then refrains, saying,"Me thoughtless, why should I/ Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?" (I.368-9).

Voice and movement--life--return through an act of looking: the poet revives the gods in a desperate test of speculation and of memory. He says: "I set myself/ Upon an Eagle's watch, that I might see,/ And seeing

ne'er forget " I.308-10). He is compelled to contemplate the silent, unmoving, unchanging scene for "a whole Moon."

> Without stay or prop
> But my own weak mortality, I bore
> The load of this eternal quietude,
> The unchanging gloom, and the three fixed shapes
> Ponderous upon my senses (I.388-92)

The poet suffers and waits "a long awful time," hoping that "Death would take [him] from the Vale/ And all its burthens" (I.397-98). These "burthens" recall the "burden of the mystery" Keats quotes in his letter to Reynolds about the chambers of consciousness. Here, the silence and the stillness weigh heavily on the watcher: they are "ponderous," a heavy "load."

Finally, Saturn, who had been "postured motionless, / Like sculpture builded up upon the grave," awakens and begins to speak:

> As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and leaves
> Fills forest dells with a pervading air
> Known to the woodland nostril, so the words
> Of Saturn fill'd the mossy glooms around,
> Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,
> and to the windings in the foxes' hole,

With sad low tones, while thus he spake, and sent

Strange musings to the solitary Pan. (I.404-411)

It is as if the poet's long, burdensome watch has transformed the frozen image into language, and the formerly silent, breathless, still Vale has become saturated with the god's voice.

In this passage, the vision is, in effect, a strange reconciliation of the tension between moment-to-moment experience and time past: The transference of memory from Moneta to the poet privileges the present without excluding the past since Moneta enables the dreamer to see the past as if he were experiencing it himself in all of its immediacy. In "Hyperion" a linear progression of past time culminates in a single moment--the deification of Apollo, but in "The Fall of Hyperion," a focal present moment--the transfer of vision from Moneta--encompasses the whole succession of past time, reversing the relationship of past and present, and turning the narrative inside out, so to speak. This move recalls Keats's comment of admiration about Mr. Kean: "There is an indescribable gusto in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past and the future, while speaking of the instant" (*John Keats* 346). In Moneta's sanctuary, time acquires duration: Moneta prophesies the future, and as Shade of Memory, she keeps the past alive, too, but duration is subordinated to the subjective moment.

Finally, speculation also suggests financial activity, and in this sense, too, is relevant in this context. Both as mother of the muses and as the goddess of the mint, Moneta is the "parent" of the poet's "coining." Keats, like Shakespeare, often referred to the productions of the poet's imagination as its coinage. Implicit in this conceit is the concern for truth and falsity: like real money, this coinage can be counterfeit. In *King Lear*, the mad king says, "No, they cannot touch me for coining, I am the King himself"--a play on the legitimacy of his mind's imaginings: As the King, his coinage is legitimate, but as a madman, his "coinage" is unsound, counterfeit (IV.vi.83-84).

In "The Fall of Hyperion," the poet describes his desire to know what Moneta knows as if he were speculating for gold:

> As I had found
> A grain of gold upon a mountain's side,
> And twing'd with avarice strain'd out my eyes
> To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,
> So at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
> I ached to see what things the hollow brain
> Behind enwombed: what high tragedy
> In the dark secret Chambers of her skull
> Was acting, that could give so dread a stress

To her cold lips, and fill with such a light

Her planetary eyes (I.271-281)

The poet is "mining" Moneta, Mother of the Muses, for his coinage.

For Keats, legitimate poetic imaginings arose from feeling; false coinage was the product of art. In a letter to J. H. Reynolds from 3 Feb 1818 he expresses his reservations about "Wordsworth & co." in terms of true and counterfeit coinage: "Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself " (Hoagwood 131). Keats worried whether his own work was genuine or counterfeit: In another letter to Reynolds, written 21 September 1819, he wrote that he was giving up the Hyperion project, because he could not tell what was the product of true feeling, and what was the product of art in his poem.

> I always somehow associate Chatterton with autumn. He is the purest writer in the English Language. He has no French idiom, or particles like Chaucer--'tis genuine English Idiom in English words. I have given up Hyperion--there are 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. English must be kept up. It may be interesting to you to pick out some lines from Hyperion and put a mark x to the false beauty

> proceeding from art, and one // to the true voice of feeling. Upon my soul 'twas imagination I cannot make the distinction--Every now & then is a Miltonic intonation--But I cannot make the division properly. . .(*John Keats* 493)

Keats calls the "beauty proceeding from art" false, and the beauty proceeding from the "true voice of feeling" genuine, but curiously he cannot distinguish between the two (curious, because as the writer, he would presumably know if what he wrote was composed with genuine feeling or with art). Instead, he assumes that Reynolds, his reader, is better able to tell the difference. In explaining why he has given up working on the Hyperion project, Keats writes that Miltonic verse can only be written artfully--that is, it seems to preclude the voice of true feeling. He also implies that verse written in the "artist's humour" is less genuinely English than verse that arises from feeling.

Keats also identifies the Muse with "our English"--the language itself--in "If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd," a sonnet written in the spring of 1819, in which he says the poet must be on guard against counterfeit language, be "jealous of dead leaves" :

> Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress
> Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
> By ear industrious, and attention meet;

Misers of sound and syllable, no less

Than Midas of his coinage, let us be

Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown (I.7-12)

The poet must be "miserly" of his coinage, watchful that it be authentic. Perhaps it is this sense of miserliness that moves the narrator of "The Fall of Hyperion" to speak of "telling" his dream--by the associations that word has with counting and money, he relates himself to the teller in a bank.

The implications of the financial imagery in Keats's work have been studied by Terence Alan Hoagwood, who looks at the financial climate in England at the time, and at the ways finance was portrayed in reviews and newspapers, some of which also published Keats's work. He concludes that for Keats, money is associated with the falsity of unscrupulous speculation, and represents the falseness of fictionality: the coin is a token for something which it purports to be equivalent to, but which does not really exist: "Keats's poem questions . . . the use of signifiers detached (like paper money) from abstract realities" (127). Hoagwood sees the poem as being "preoccuppied with the *action* of fabricating imagery and with paradigms of illusion" (136).

In a more mundane sense, Hoagwood also considers the poet's ascent of the steps to Moneta's shrine as an ironic worshipping at the "'horned shrine' of Money." In this respect, the poem is a reminder that

Keats was writing at a time historically when literature was becoming a professional occupation. No longer able to look to patronage for support, Keats, who had very little money of his own, needed to depend on his writing for his income. He had planned to set up an apothecary practice--a profession he was licensed in--if his poems did not soon bring him a livelihood.

Chapter V. The Shady Vale

> Perhaps you may ask, studious reader, what then was said, what was done. I would tell you, if it were lawful to speak; and you would know, if it were lawful to hear . . . . I approached the boundaries of death; I trod the entrance of Proserpina and, carried through all the elements, I returned. At midnight I saw the sun shine with a brilliant light, I came into the presence of the gods below and the gods above, and close by I worshipped them. Behold, I have told you that about which, although you have heard, you must remain ignorant.
>
> Apuleius. *The Golden Ass.*

In "The Fall of Hyperion," the poem's own nature as a sign is revealed through the various plays upon the word "vale," or "veil," a play that shows Keats at his most characteristic in his approach to language. The poem itself may be viewed as a series of puns on the first line of "Hyperion": "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale."

On one hand, Moneta's face appears to the poet "deep in the shady sadness of a veil." The dreamer refers to Moneta as a "veiled shadow"

(141), as a "Tall shade veil'd" (194), and "Shade of Memory." She is dressed in pale robes that hang down around her face:

> But yet I had a terror of her robes [the dreamer says]
> and chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
> Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries
> That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
> This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
> Parted the veils. (I.251-256)

He also knows that Moneta is sad, even before he sees her face: "By her voice I knew she shed / Long treasured tears" (I.220-221)--thus the "shady sadness" of her veil. On the other hand, the fallen Saturn first appears "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale" (I.294). The vale in which he lies, is, of course, dark--"shady"--and sad--because of the catastrophic occasion.

The poem itself is also a "veil," whose successive dreams open up, one by one, like veils parting, to reveal the to dreamer his own mortality. The veil of Moneta parts to reveal the vision of Saturn, and the vale of Saturn gives way to the innermost dream: the view of Hyperion "flaring" through his palace. Among the Titan gods, only he is still sovereign in the world, but he can already read the signs of his impending fall: "yet unsecure, / For as upon Earth dire prodigies / Fright and perplex, so also shudders he" (II.17-19). Inasmuch as the dreamer is identified with Apollo,

the Olympian who was to take Hyperion's place as god of the sun and god of poetry, this is a vision then of the fall of the poet's own precursor, and, given to him at the very moment of his own elevation, it becomes, in effect, a warning of his own eventual doom.

These plays on "vale" also recall the famous remarks Keats made in a letter addressed to George and Georgiana Keats, in which he calls the world a "vale of soul-making," and considers the agonies and sorrows of the world, especially knowledge of death, to be the means for the soul to acquire its own individual identity, apart from the eternal stuff of the intellect. He writes that the world acts upon the intellect and the passions to create a soul unlike any other; the sadness implicit in this great process is that this particular identity must inevitably die when the person dies. He contrasts his notion with the Christian view of the world as a "vale of tears" to be simply endured with hopes for a happier afterlife:

> 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! Call the world if you Please 'The vale of Soul-making' Then you will find out the use of the world. . . .'*Soul making*' Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence--there may be intelligences or sparks of divinity in millions--but they

> are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. . . . This is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years--these three materials are the *Intelligence*--the *human heart* (as distinguished from intelligence or Mind) and the *World* or *Elemental space* suited for the proper action of *Mind and Heart* on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul* or *Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity*. . . . (*John Keats* 472)

In the same letter, he explains that death is the unavoidable circumstance of life that works upon the heart and the intelligence to foster the individual sense of identity that is the soul.

> 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. (*John Keats* 472)

Eve left Paradise in tears; in "The Fall of Hyperion," however, the dreamer leaves the Eden-like bower in a swoon of inspiration.

The world that schools the heart and mind in soulmaking includes poetry, because of its supremely sensual aspect, which lets it participate in the *elemental space* which we experience with the senses. Poetry thus can serve the role Moneta takes in unveiling the "burden of the mystery" to the dreamer, and schooling the soul. The nature of language precludes a direct embodiment of that mystery, and the poem itself, as a hieroglyph, as a "veil," must be interpreted: With the progress of civilization, the time has long since passed when language had, like the language of the Titans, resonance and melody enough to be a perfect expression of the passions.

By contrast with modern speech, the speech of the Titans exemplifies the languages Rousseau had imagined existed in the origins of time: "sonorous, prosodic, harmonious languages, which can be heard and understood from afar." Saturn's speech pervades the vale, and appears to be understandable without the "decomposition" entailed by language as belated speakers know it. Thea's speech is like a gust of wind:

> As when, upon a tranced Summer Night,
> Forests branch-charmed by the earnest stars
> Dream, and so dream all night, without a noise;
> Save from one solitary gust,
> Swelling upon the silence; dying off
> As if the ebbing air had but one wave;

So came these words, and went. . (I.372-378)

The dreamer, a speaker of fallen language, is unable to understand the Titan's language. When Thea speaks, he apologizes for his translation into our language: "[her words] in our feeble tongue / Would come in this-like accenting; how frail / To that large utterance of the early Gods! (I.351-353). Moneta, understanding the feebleness of the dreamer's language, "humanizes" her speech or, as she says, "Thou might'st better listen to the wind, / Whose language is to thee a barren noise, / Though it blows legend-laden through the trees" (II.3-6).

As understood in the context of the intellectual questions being debated at the time this poem was written, Keats saw that among the modern uses of language, only poetry could approach the potency of those early tongues, and indicate proper subjects of contemplation--of the speculation which he claimed to be the end of poetry. For him, the end of poetry was not imitation, and the focus of poetic activity was not the construction of a product: the poem. Rather, poetic activity was a sensual and spiritual engagement with the world, and the residue of that engagement was the poetic text. Perhaps this is why Keats wrote so quickly and so spontaneously; as a major rewriting of an earlier poem, "The Fall of Hyperion" is unique in his work (Stillinger 309).

A "hieroglyphic of beauty," the poem is a sign, at once pointing to its source, but at the same time severed from it. This suggests that, for Keats, writing--draughting--was less a way of expressing his inner mind or capturing ideas in order to convey them out into the world, than it was another way of "drinking in " the world, of experiencing it and encompassing it by a chequer-work of associations within his consciousness. What we read in this poem is the "refuse of a meal," like the remains of the feast which the dreamer finds in the beginning of "The Fall of Hyperion," or the like the remainder/reminder of Moneta's moon-like face. The poetic text is an eloquent trace of an experience that cannot be recaptured, but which can still nurture those who come afterwards. Through poetic language, the dark vision of mortality can be transformed from sorrow into soul-making.

Notes

1. Aarsleff lists the most important British writings that participated in the debates about language:

> The first was Adam Smith's "Considerations concerning the first formation of Languages," first published in 1761. The second was the first volume of Lord Monboddo's brilliant Of the Origin and Progress of Language (1773). To these two a third, less substantial work may be added, Joseph Priestley's Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language, and the Universal Grammar (1762). But apart from the decisive roles of Locke and Warburton, other English writers also exercised a continuing . . . whether in the original or in French and German translations. A few names and titles will immediately call this strain to mind: Shaftesbury, Berkeley, Francis Hutcheson's Inquiry into our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (1725 and often reissued. French translation 1749, into German 1762), Thomas Blackwell's Inquiry into the life and Writings of Homer (1735) Robert Lowth's De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum Praelectiones academicae (1753, reissued in Germany with notes by J. D. Michaelis 1758-1761) and John Brown's Dissertation on the Rise, Union, and Power, the Progressions, Separations, of Poetry and Music (1763). ("Tradition of Condillac" 148)

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