The question which I suspect to underlie most of the objections to *Hyperion* is this: can a sophisticated reader care about Apollo and Hyperion? I believe much of Keats’s art is directed to making a virtue out of this apparent difficulty. Because we do not care about Apollo and Hyperion *per se*, we are free to respond to their situation with an appropriate ambivalence. This freedom is not available, for example, to readers of *Paradise Lost*. The meaning of the conflict between the Olympians and the Titans must be dramatically created by the poet, who cannot rely on his readers’ allegiance to traditional attitudes toward the antagonists. The significance of his poem must evolve dynamically. Yet he is protected against mere idiosyncrasy by the fact that his subject-matter derives from our oldest and most viable literary tradition.

Whether or not *Hyperion* is to be called an epic, its particular characteristics may be defined by contrast with our epic tradition, which began, it seems safe to say, in the humanising of what had been narratives about divinities, myths. Much of the power in epics such as *Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad* derives from the way in which their human protagonists emerge, under our eyes so to speak, from purely magical and religious contexts, in which gods, not men, dominate all activity. Achilles’ manhood is impressive because he stands so close to the gods. In *Hyperion* man reassumes divine proportions; epic re-approaches myth. The Titans and the Gods are, if the word may be divested of pejorative associations, super-men. Keats’s monumental figures, so enormously sensual, express spiritual actions and attitudes. So their strength is curiously similar to that of Achilles or Gilgamesh. Though complex, self-conscious and aesthetic as their “primitive” forebears were not, Keats’

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protagonists, like the earlier heroes, have their being in a realm
that is not earth, not heaven, but inseparable from both.

*Hyperion* narrates the birth of a new kind of divinity. Keats is
not literarily archaistic; he does not ask us to admire the ancient
Greek god Apollo; he asks us to see Apollo as a manifestation of
the evolutionary principle which gives dynamic order and meaning
to the universe. Thus the "remoteness" of the Titanomachia also
serves Keats's central purpose.

For this reason the mythic, rather than symbolic, nature of the
*persona* of *Hyperion* is appropriate. Apollo does not "stand for"
something other than himself, yet he is not merely the old Apollo.
He is not a literary reconstruction of a dead mythological figure,
yet he is not fully separable from the ancient mythological figure.
Keats's Apollo manifests a beauty that surpasses his individuality.
He is a god. He is not a symbol of unchanging divinity nor is he a
timeless object of adoration. Apollo must be one of many gods, not
merely because there are other Olympians, but because there have
been and will be other kinds of gods, other dazzling manifestations
of developing beauty.

To Keats beauty is harmony, and there can be progress from
simple to complex harmony. Such progress is dramatized by *Hyperion*,
which moves from the description of Saturn, wherein sen-
sory particularities are subdued to the harmony of a single mood
of tranced sadness, to the narrative of Apollo's dying into godhead,
which unifies in vital concord contrasting sensations, feelings, and
thoughts. The Olympians, as Oceanus' says, surpass the Titans in
"might" because the Olympians are "first in beauty." Titanic
beauty is little more than mechanical unity; Olympian beauty is an
organic unity which reconciles contrary and diversities.

But *Hyperion* is more than story, it is history—the early history
of the universe. The progress from Titanic to Olympian beauty re-
veals our cosmos to be a developing historical entity, as subject to
(and a theater for) evolutionary processes. Keatsian evolution,
however, differs from Darwinian. Keats thinks in purely aesthetic
terms; he does not anticipate the later scientific concept. Darwin
applies the theory of evolution horizontally, to one level of being
at a time. Keats concentrates upon the "thresholds" of being. The
scientific evolutionist seeks to connect man with the animals and
the physical world, but Keats seeks to connect man with the gods
and a supranatural world.

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"Hyperion is to be a cosmogonic epic. It will 'unfold through images the theory of the
world.'" Blackstone's emphasis is upon the relevance of Plato's *Timaeus*.**
Nevertheless, the “system” of Hyperion is evolutionary; in this respect Keats labors in direct opposition to Milton, and, indeed, to the entire classical-Renaissance literary tradition upon which so much of Hyperion depends. What principally characterizes Keats’s poem, in fact, is the intensity with which a commemorative, traditionalistic impulse interacts with a prophetic, progressive impulse. Keats fabricates a new “personal” mythology out of old religion and traditional literature.

Hyperion progresses from simple harmony to complex. The marvelous opening lines portray a scene in which all the details are of a piece, each contributing to a mood of sad silence appropriate to Saturn’s fallen divinity.

*Deep in the shady sadness of a vale*  
*Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,*  
*Far from the fiery noon, and eve’s one star,*  
*Sat gray-hair’d Saturn, quiet as a stone,*  
*Still as the silence round about his lair;*  
*Forest on forest hung about his head*  
*Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,*  
*Not so much life as on a summer’s day*  
*Robs not one light seed from the feather’d grass,*  
*But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.*  
*A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more*  
*By reason of his fallen divinity*  
*Spreading a shade: the Naiad ’mid her reeds*  
*Press’d her cold finger closer to her lips.*

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,  
*No further than to where his feet had stray’d,*  
*And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground*  
*His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,*  
*Unspected; and his realmless eyes were closed;*  
*While his bow’d head seem’d list’ning to the Earth,*  
*His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.*

Saturn listens to the Earth for comfort. To Hyperion words of comfort are spoken by Coelus, who is “but a voice,” whose “life is but the life of winds and tides,” yet who speaks “from the universal space.” Coelus is more “heavenly” than Earth, and Hyperion’s superiority to his fellow Titans derives from his association with the sky. He is “earth born/ And sky engendered.” One must admire

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5 See, of course, Bush, 115–123; also Ernest De Selincourt’s edition of *The Poems of John Keats* (New York, 1931, 4th ed.), p. xlv: “... a story of the ancient world had to assume Elizabethan dress before it could kindle his imagination.” Also, pp. xlvii–xlviii: “... The poems of Greek inspiration exhibit no trace of influence of classical literature, but are determined in each case by the influence of different models of English poetry.” This last probably overstates an excellent point.
Keats’s narrative strategy: Apollo and Hyperion are more equally matched than any other pair of God-Titan opponents and their clash ought to be the climax of an evolutionary movement in which "supranatural" gods are born out of the agony of "natural" deities. Apollo, though "Celestial," is not detached from the earth. Not only is he born on Delos but his assumption of divinity occurs under the aegis of Mnemosyne,

an ancient Power
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
Of loveliness new born.

The new celestial must encompass within his progressive divinity the memory of earthly powers. The old is not to be obliterated but absorbed into a more complicated and comprehensive unity, just as Hyperion is meant to absorb previous literary traditions into a new unity.

To understand Apollo’s dying into life, therefore, we must understand Hyperion’s living into death, which is the climactic representation of all the Titans’ tragedy. Unlike Saturn, who is old and gray and surrounded by silence and inertness, Hyperion “flares” along, “full of wrath,” in a blaze of crystalline and golden opulence to the sound of “slow-breathed melodies” from “solemn tubes.” The entrance to his palace, unlike the tranced woods in which Saturn sleeps, is described with the dynamic richness of full Keatsian synaesthesia.⁴

And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

Yet one notices that “this haven” of Hyperion’s “rest” and “this cradle” of his “glory,” a structure of pure light, seems now strangely alien from the earth.⁵ The beauties of the earthly world appear in reference to Hyperion’s palace only in metaphors and similes. The palace, full of “the blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry” of artifice, suffers “death and darkness” when elements of the natural world intrude. The Titans have fallen. Natural phenomena appear to Hyperion as “effigies of pain,” as “spectres,” and as “phantoms.” This is the effect of the Olympian triumph. Hyperion is a Titan, an earth-god. and he swears “by Tellus and her briny robes!”⁶ Yet earthly nature enters his “lucent empire” as a

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⁴I use the word synaesthesia in its more general sense. R. H. Fogle, The Imagery of Keats and Shelley (Chapel Hill, 1949), drawing on C. D. Thorpe’s work, analyses with more intensity and profundity the significance of synaesthesia in Keats’s art; see esp. p. 157.


⁶A good discussion of the Titans’ “earthliness” is to be found in Lucien Wolff, John Keats, sa vie et son œuvre (Paris, 1910), p. 628. Though old, Wolff’s book is still valuable.
threat, in its least attractive guise, as something sinister and suggestive of death: the “cold, cold gloom” of “black-weeded pools” and the “mist” of a “scummy marsh.” Hyperion’s impotence, when he finds himself unable to utter his “heavier threat” is imaged by a serpentine power usurping his supra-mundane godhead.

... through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls’d
From over-streained might.

Hyperion, “releas’d,” in desperation attempts to disrupt the order of nature; he bids “the day begin... six dewy hours,/ Before the dawn in season due should blush.” Hyperion is “a Primeval God,” but “the sacred seasons might not be disturbed.” The Titans, more primitive divinities than the Olympians, are identified with purely natural processes; Hyperion’s actions reveal how shaken is his divinity. The Olympians are not to be identified, however, with the anti-natural. Rather they represent nature advanced to a new level. Hence the conflict of the poem is not between good and evil but between one kind of truth and beauty and a superior kind of truth and beauty. The inert lifelessness of the opening scene where all the animation of the natural surroundings is deadened by Saturn’s presence symbolizes the limitation of the primeval gods: they do not represent the progress and fulfillment of natural life. Their successors will be more “godlike” because they will carry forward and more nearly fulfill the developing natural processes of earthly life. Implicit here is the idea that increased consciousness fulfills, does not thwart, “nature”; man’s supranatural life is the proper evolutionary successor to unreflective biological existence.

Hyperion, “by hard compulsion bent,” no longer strides and stamps and flares.

And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch’d himself in grief and radiance faint.

He is approaching the gray passivity of Saturn; he has reached the boundaries of day and night moving toward darkness. Apollo at the same moment, as we learn in Book III, has also reached “the boundaries of day and night,” but the Olympian is moving toward light. He appears in a dim, quiet solitude analogous to that of Saturn, “I have sat alone/ In cool mid-forest,” that is as much a psychological condition as a physical situation:

For me, dark, dark,
And painful vile painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs.
But, contrary to Hyperion, Apollo begs that Mnemosyne may “point forth some unknown thing.” The new and unknown attracts and draws forth his godhead instead of strangling it. He does not stretch himself in grief and radiance faint but aspires toward the natural lights of the heavens, the inanimate “brilliance” and “splendour” of which he desires to fill with the passion of life.

There is the sun, the sun!  
And the most patient brilliance of the moon!  
And stars by the thousands! Point me out the way  
To any one particular beauteous star  
And I will fit into it with my lyre,  
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.

We travel from Hyperion to Apollo by way of the council of the Titans, which is held in a cavern far from the life and light of surface earth. The most important speech in this deliberation is that of Oceanus, who advises acceptance of the truth that the Titans have been overpowered by a “fresh perfection” and “a power more strong in beauty.” Although Oceanus speaks the truth, the “comfort” and “consolation” he offers is bleak. “Receive the truth, and let it be your balm,” he says, asserting that

... to bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,  
That is the top of sovereignty.

This stoicism is the “top of sovereignty” for the Titans. It is not the top of sovereignty for Apollo. Every Titan who speaks regrets that he, and his world, is no longer “all calm.” The passivity of Saturn in defeat, ironically, reveals the limits of the life he ordered in triumph. Oceanus preaches stoicism because the characteristic quality of Titanic rule was placidity. Even fiery Enceladus urges renewed war to regain “the days of peace and slumberous calm.”

Apollo, representative of the Olympians, does not seek “days of peace and slumberous calm.” He hates his idleness, he wishes to make the stars “pant with bliss,” he is exhilarated to godhead by the knowledge of “dire events, rebellions... Creations and destroyings.” The life over which Apollo will preside is to be active, violent, aspiring.

9 Leone Vivante, *English Poetry* (London, 1950) provides a valuable definition of Keats’s love for the new and unknown: “Keats describes... the moment of novelty as outstandingly representative of life and life’s value...” (p. 182) “Novelty” must be understood as laying stress on an intimate value of non-predeterminedness and potency, rather than on change.” (p. 183).

10 “The assembled Titans themselves approximate to the chaos surrounding them: ... Plainly Hyperion... is a macrocosmic model of the psyche in ignorance and enlightenment.” Blackstone, p. 238.

Evolution, as described by Oceanus, is a process of rising and lifting, a process of increasing movement and activity, a process by which more and more vitality emerges and gives meaning to inert, disorganized matter. “From Chaos and parental Darkness came/Light,” he says. The “sullen ferment” of chaotic darkness “for wondrous ends/Was ripening in itself,” and when “the ripe hour came” light was born.

First chaos, then light, an ordering of inanimate matter, finally life, a further ordering of light. The Titans came into being with the appearance of life. They are now to be superseded, not because life is to vanish, but because a more intense kind of life is being born out of the old life, just as the old life (a more intense kind of “light”) was born out of the older light, which, in turn, had emerged from darkness.

The new life that is being born, the life of which the Olympians are the highest representatives, is a life of increased intelligence, and, since the universe now includes life, increased consciousness of life, increased consciousness of self. “Knowledge enormous makes a God of me,” cries Apollo. He is aware of becoming a god, his godhead is in large measure his self-awareness.

The intensity of Apollo’s self-awareness is impossible for Oceanus. He is aware of the god who replaces him and he knows the new god is somehow superior to him, but in what this superiority consists he does not know. Were he capable of the “knowledge enormous” which fills Apollo’s mind Oceanus would be an Olympian. He is not capable of that knowledge, and, because he is the wisest of his kind, he does not try for it. He retires stoically.

Clymene, not so wise, experiences the anguish of not being able to comprehend. She suffers what Oceanus would have suffered had he not possessed the wisdom to recognize his limits. In so suffering, however, Clymene prepares the reader for Apollo’s apotheosis. Hyperion opens with a scene of complete deadness and silence, one without consciousness, for Saturn sleeps and his divine sleep trances his surroundings. When Hyperion himself appears we have action, but arrested action, awareness (Hyperion recognizes the stifling of his divinity), but arrested awareness. In the cavern we have more activity, the arrival of Saturn, the debate, and finally the appearance of Hyperion. But this activity is cramped, self-lacerating, inconclusive, and the same adjectives might be applied to the awareness developed by the arguments. Oceanus’ opening
plea for storical endurance is finally answered by Enceladus’ hopeless fulminations. But the Titans’ struggle into self-defeat is the matrix of agony out of which the Olympians are born, and in the unfinished third book we move upward and outward from the cavern to reach, finally, the ecstatic sufferings of Apollo dying into a more intense and harmonious life, a life fully conscious of its own power and capable, therefore, of reconciling the potent diversities of a wonderful and ever developing cosmos. Apollo’s ecstasy and its significance is adumbrated by Clymene, whose plaintive speech links Oceanus’ stoicism to Enceladus’ rage.

Clymene dramatizes the truth of what Oceanus has said (while emphasizing the painfulness of his truth). Her story reveals how unfit are the Titans to control the new life that pervades the universe.

I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief;
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
So that I felt a movement in my heart
To chide, and to reproach that solitude
With songs of misery, music of our woes.

Clymene could only reproach the joy and warmth of nature with “songs of misery.” It is not in the Titans’ power to reconcile contraries, as it is in the Olympians’ power, as is shown by the music which destroys Clymene’s sad melody murmured into “a mouthed shell.” “That new blissful golden melody” was, for Clymene, “a living death” which, she relates, made her “sick/ Of joy and grief at once.” What sickens her and is for her “a living death” is the new harmony which enables Apollo “with fierce convulse” to “die into life.”

The apotheosis of Apollo which concludes the fragmentary third book is, as one might guess from Clymene’s story, the exact opposite of Saturn’s trance at the opening of the poem. Saturn sleeps in silence, dimness, and inerntness.\textsuperscript{14} The apotheosis of Apollo is a

\textsuperscript{12} A. E. Powell (Mrs. E. R. Dodds), The Romantic Theory of Poetry (London, 1926), p. 229: “In their [the Titans’] very passion there is no conflict, no struggle to recreate their being out of tragedy. The “vale of Soul-making” is not for these. They are like great natural forces, which governed by an overmastering law fulfill easily and unconsciously that for which they are formed. It is not theirs to win knowledge and by art to make, with all the agony and effort of creation. The new gods seem smaller, but more vivid . . . they are convulsed in making . . . . Art and knowledge have entered into their singing, so that it is able to express their complex life, with its active, conscious effort to shape things to its intent.”

\textsuperscript{13} Bush, 124: “The Titans, however benign and beneficent, had in a crisis behaved not like deities but like frail mortals; they had lost, and deserved to lose, the sovereignty of the world because they had lost the sovereignty over themselves.” Note that Keats stresses Saturn’s loss of “identity,” see I, 11, 112–116.

\textsuperscript{14} “All is negative here. The divisions of the day are, as it were, obliterated: the four elements are presented in terms of silence and inaction. There is no air. The rhythms of the verse gyrate sluggishly . . . .” Blackstone, The Consacrated Urn, p. 234.
birth full of sound, movement, and the radiant anguish of emerging consciousness. The contrast between the two passages is best told in the concluding images. Saturn, like a sculptured figure, is long bowed to the earth for comfort, whereas from Apollo's "limbs Celestial" some yet undefined power is forever about to emanate. But the contrast is not merely that Saturn retreats toward familiar consolation and Apollo yearns toward new and painful wonder. The difference between the two divinities lies in the different harmonies which unify the contrasting passages. The description of Saturn is harmonious in that nothing contrary to the mood of tranced stillness intrudes. The narrative of Apollo's apotheosis reconciles contraries. For instance, Apollo's ecstatic words contrast to Mnemosyne's "silent face," as the "wild commotions ... of his limbs" contrast to her rigid pose, "upheld/Her arms as one who prophesied."15 Likewise "dire events ... pour" into his brain like "some blithe wine"; his "level glance ... steadfast kept/Trembling with light." Virtually every word in this narrative of "Creations and destroyings" is matched by a contrary, so that the Dionysiac fury of the event is controlled by an Apollonian symmetry of form.

The harmony of the Saturn passage is substantive, that of the Apollo passage compositional, a total order imposed upon diverse sensations, feelings, and ideas. The beauty born with Apollo is the beauty of complex design. The particularities retain their integrity: pain remains pain, it does not become pleasure; death and life remain distinct conditions; creations and destroyings remain opposed processes. But pain and pleasure, life and death, creations and destroyings interlock in a design that reconciles them.16 Apollo's birth is meant to transform the value, the meaning, of each of these particular elements, because the god's birth is the birth of understanding of the place of each particularity and its opposite within the scheme of cosmological history.

The comprehension of this scheme, the dying out of incomplete life into total life, should not merely change the value of the parts but should also increase it, because the formal symmetry of the whole event will reflect back upon each particle more energy than it alone can generate. Once the encompassing design is conceived, each element within it will be seen to contribute not alone to its own existence but to the ordering, the significance, of all existences

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16 James, p. 128: "The beauty of the new Gods is a more difficult and terrible beauty than that of the old; yet it is none the less greater. The Godhead of Hyperion is that which acknowledges for its own the world in which Lear suffered and Cordelia was hanged, and is yet no less a principle of Beauty and Order; ..." I think this is the point toward which Dorothy Van Ghent moves in "Keats's Myth of the Hero," Keats-Shelley Journal, III (1954), 7-25 (pp. 10-16 on Hyperion), but I confess I do not fully follow her argument. See also R. D. Havens, "Of Beauty and Reality in Keats," ELH, XVII (1950), 206-13, for a discussion of how the connotations of "beauty" change in Keats's later poetry.
together. The final contrast between Apollo and Hyprion is probably that life become conscious of its system of vitality is more intense and precious and enduring, more fully supranatural, self-transcending, divine, than unreflective life, life unaware of its own potency.\textsuperscript{17}

One must speak tentatively because Keats did not finish \textit{Hyperion}. We can only speculate as to why he was dissatisfied with it, but his own “explanations” suggest that he was more troubled by stylistic problems than by his subject-matter. Perhaps he did not control the style necessary to represent the Olympian life, a style which ought to transcend that of the first books. The logical culmination of the Keatsian Titanomachia ought to be the triumph of Apollo over Hyperion. Oceanus’ stoical retirement before Neptune is not a reconciliation of contraries, not an absorption of an old, incomplete beauty into a new, more complete beauty. This reconciliation and absorption are necessary to authenticate Olympian divinity, and they should be fashioned in a manner suggested by but not fully realized in the narrative of Apollo’s apotheosis.

At least partial realization of this new manner is found, perhaps, in the early portion of \textit{The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream}, Keats’s re-casting of the original poem.\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Fall} is certainly a more personal poem than \textit{Hyperion}, and it might be argued that it is also more literary,\textsuperscript{19} that it includes a wider range of literary references and incorporates a more intense appreciation of its mythological and poetic sources.\textsuperscript{20} The key to this double development seems to me to lie in Keat’s recognition that the life of full consciousness, including of course consciousness of self, must be deeply involved with visions or dreams.

Consciousness, after all, is more than mere perception. A mind fully aware is not satisfied by appearances, it strives to comprehend more than meets the eye. Consciousness is also something more than commonsense. A mind fully aware is sensitive to causes and motives which lie beyond the reach of workaday rationalism. No one could deny that scientific activity of the past one hundred and fifty years has advanced man’s awareness of the workings of his universe and of his own being. And the modern understanding of the

\textsuperscript{17} Caldwell, 1998.

\textsuperscript{18} Sperry, 80: “The life-and-death struggle with which the first \textit{Hyperion} ends is carried over and expanded in the second. But its context is changed in such a way as to lead one more and more to consider Keats’s allegory within a framework of sin and redemption.” My only disagreement with Mr. Sperry’s excellent point is that he seems to make it exclusive: without denying the relevance of “sin and redemption” to \textit{The Fall of Hyperion}, I should say that some less orthodoxy religious conceptions are as important.

\textsuperscript{19} John D. Rosenberg, “Keats and Milton: The Paradox of Rejection,” \textit{Keats-Shelley Journal}, VI (1957), 87–95. Rosenberg argues that the principal change between the two \textit{Hyperions} is to be traced to Keats’s effort “to humanize the poem” (p. 91).
natural universe is founded, as A. N. Whitehead pointed out, upon a willingness to accept as truth explanations that seem to controvert "commonsense." Most important work in the physical sciences today concerns phenomena which simply cannot be observed by "the naked eye." Psychoanalysis of course, is founded upon the study of what appears to be irrational, particularly upon the study of the "truth" of dreams.

Keats was neither a proto-Freud nor a proto-Einstein. He knew little about science and contributed nothing directly to its development. In some respects he looked backward, toward Socrates, who "examined" life with the most intense rationality, who constantly sought self-awareness, and whose climactic utterances passed beyond dialectic into stories of visions. But Keats also looked forward. In The Fall of Hyperion he suggests a conception of poetic truth as "visionary" truth which foreshadows our contemporary interest in extra-ordinary mental conditions and in new systems of logical enquiry and organization. This is perhaps why The Fall of Hyperion is so complex, and why, specifically, even more than the earlier version it speaks in two voices, one commemorative, one prophetic.

The Fall of Hyperion is above all else what Keats himself called it: a dream. In the first eighteen lines of the fragment the word "dream" appears five times.

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
Trace'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance.
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,—
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable charm
And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
"Thou art no Poet—mayst not tell thy 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 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.

The distinction drawn here appears to be intended as the foundation for everything else in The Fall. 2

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2 Bloom, p. 412: "Keats implies that the fanatic and the savage are imperfect poets, with a further suggestion that religious speculation and mythology are poetry not fully written." p. 413: "Moneta... is a priestess of intense consciousness doing homage to the dead faiths which have become merely materials for poetry."
between the poet on the one hand and, on the other, the fanatic, the savage, and the “man whose soul is not a clod: but who has not “been well nurtured in his mother tongue.” These latter differ from the poet only in that they do not or cannot effectively tell their dreams, so their dreams die with them. The poet is like them in that he, too, dreams. But his melodious utterance lives on after his death. “Every man,” Keats says, “hath visions and would speak”—if he could. The fanatic differs from “every man” and the savage in that he does speak. The fanatic can “weave/ A paradise for a sect.” The poet, then, differs from the savage and “every man” in that he does speak, with his “fine spell of words” he escapes the “sable charm,” achieves something more than “a paradise for a sect,” achieves something precious for all men.²²

All men, including poets, are dreamers. The poet alone can effectively tell his dreams. Hence the poet can be certainly recognized only after his death. If what he has told results only in “a paradise for a sect” he is to be identified as a fanatic. If his melodious utterance does more than delude a few, does more than create a fantasy world of escape, and bodies forth, instead, heretofore unrecognized truth, he is to be identified as a poet.

This differentiation is not possible until the Apollo of Hyperion has died into life. Until life has evolved to the point where it not only exists but is conscious of its existence, the problem of “dreaming” cannot arise. As long as we are unconscious of ourselves we cannot be mistaken about ourselves. But as soon as we attain self-consciousness we are open to self-misunderstanding and self-delusion.

That Keats was interested in this problem is implied, I believe, in his dramatic strategy of presenting his story as a vision within a vision within a dream. His first words after the introduction are: “Methought I stood where trees of every clime.” He is “purposed to rehearse” a dream, and the supra-reality of that dream is accentuated by its setting, an idyllic garden where, contrary to nature’s practice, every species of tree flourishes. In this paradisical setting Keats drinks a “transparent juice” which he describes as “parent of my theme,” because it induces a “swoon” from which he wakes, not in the garden, but in “an old sanctuary,” an “eternal domed monument.” There he encounters Moneta, who transports him,

²²Sperry, p. 78: “... the true poet, as the closing lines of the paragraph make clear, is the very opposite of the fanatic who speaks merely to a “sect.” True poetry implies not only imaginative activity but the perception of value and meaning relevant to all mankind. “In dreams,” Keats seems to say with Yeats, “begins responsibility,” and the special obligation of the poet to society is destined to become, particularly through Moneta’s urging, the major concern of Keats’s dreamer.”
first, to “the shady sadness of a vale” where he can observe Saturn and Thea, because

... 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,

and later to Hyperion’s palace where he observes in the same godlike fashion.

By presenting inspired perceptions with a vision of which he dreamed Keats makes his form functional, that is, representative of the nature and worth of that awareness which transcends ordinary observation and ordinary reason. The truth he seeks to establish, after all, is extraordinary. Ultimately it is the manner of the dream’s presentation that must convince us of its substantive value. Keats seems to want his literary dream, in one way at least, to be like an actual dream, in which style is literally substance. Dreams differ from waking thoughts in that form or manner of apparition is decisive in dreams. One can rephrase an argument but not a dream. A dream can recur only by repeating its form.

Keats also discusses dreamers with Moneta, and about that discussion have gathered most of the critical controversies concerning The Fall of Hyperion.23 There is too little evidence for anyone to explain with assurance Keats’s meaning and intentions, but I should like to suggest some ways in which my understanding of the direction of his thinking relates to the major problems of the poem. If we accept The Fall in the most nearly finished form Keats achieved, that is, with the twenty-three lines beginning “Majestic shadow, tell me” (the cancelled passage comprising lines 187–210 of Book I) exised, Keats’s argument is not inherently difficult, for it does not become fully engaged with the dreamer-poet distinction.24 Keats asks by what right he has been allowed to attain the altar, and is told:

... Thou hast felt
What 'tis to die and live again before
Thy fated hour;...
None can usurp this height...
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...
Rot on the pavement where thou rotted'st half.”

Keats then asks why he is alone, since

"Are there not thousands in the world . . .
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?"

These humanitarians are like Keats in that the miseries of the world will not let them rest. They are, however, more than he:

... "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."

We may overestimate Keats’s praise of busy go-gooders. He certainly credits them with virtue, but perhaps he subtly implies their limitations, too, by having Moneta—one must remember that her wisdom is not complete, for she is not a true Olympian but “the pale Omega of a wither’d race”—praise the humanitarians in terms which recall those “who find a haven in the world.” The humanitarians find their satisfaction and fulfillment, their “haven,” in the world. True, they “feel the giant agony” of the world, but in a fashion that might be meant to recall the giant agony of the Titans, who were unable in Hyperion to sustain the feeling, as Apollo could, of pain and joy together. If so, from one point of view Keats is indeed “less” than the humanitarians, as the Olympians give the impression of being physically less than the Titans in Hyperion, but from another point of view he is more: he can bear “more woe than all his sins deserve,” and can be “admitted oft” to paradise-like gardens.

Then in a passage which Keats (according to his good friend and careful scribe Woodhouse) meant to strike from The Fall, the discussion is carried from the poet-humanitarian contrast to the poet-dreamer contrast. Keats proposes that poets are not “useless,” that their “melodies” do good, though he does not yet claim himself to be such a poet, a “physician to all men.” Moneta replies with the query: “Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?” And she asserts:

The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world,
The other vexes it.

In the introductory lines Keats states plainly that the poet is a dreamer. The difference between poet and fanatic lies in the effectiveness of their expressions, but both tell their dreams. Possibly Moneta’s distinction is meant to assist in refining the earlier definition. According to her the poet-dreamer pours out a balm upon the
world while the fanatic-dreamer vexes it. Both, as it were, offer potions: that of the poet-dreamer heals, that of the fanatic-dreamer poisons.

At any rate, Moneta’s words bring forth an angry exclamation from Keats, his first violent outburst:

Apollo! faded! O farflown Apollo!
Where is thy misty pestilence to creep
Into the dwellings, through the door crannies
Of all mock lyrists, large self-worshippers,
And careless Hectorers in proud bad verse.

This is the first mention of Apollo in The Fall, and, in keeping with the pattern of imagery introduced by the word “physician” at the opening of the cancelled passage, he is invoked, not as the god of poetry, but as the god of pestilence. But Keats skillfully links the god’s two functions: Apollo is called upon to destroy not dreamers but bad poets, “mock lyrists,” and “careless Hectorers in proud bad verse.” This returns us to the problem of Moneta’s words. In the introduction Keats defines the fanatic as less than the poet but not as evil. Now he condemns those who tell their dreams without genuine poetic gifts as vexatious poisoners of the world. He who weaves “a paradise for a sect” is now identified as a “self-worshipper”—not a worshipper of Apollo’s supra-personal truth—who ought to be destroyed.

Tho’ I breathe death with them it will be life
To see them sprawl before me into graves.

It may be that the harmless fanatic is now seen to be the poisonous dreamer because Keats has reached the point where he is able to invoke Apollo, that is, he has passed the first tests of his initiation into genuine poethood. It is certain that this Apollo is not the new-born god of Hyperion. He is “faded” and “farflown.” It appears to be the bad poets, the fanatic dreamers, who have exiled him. As remarked above, the effectiveness of a dream depends entirely upon its style. A badly told dream is a falsification, a distortion of the dream’s truth. The “large self-worshippers” destroy the truth of Apollo, not because they dream, but because they recount their dreams badly. The poet recounts his dreams well and thus makes manifest the truth of his vision; by his art he invokes Apollo the healer who “pours out a balm upon the world.” Keats, not claiming to be a poet yet, is nonetheless dedicated to the “objective” truth of vision. Thus it will be “life” to him, even though

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Footnote: This imagery fits in with the pattern of sickness-medicine imagery, so far as I know unnoticed by the critics, which runs throughout the second version of Hyperion. For example, by Moneta’s “propitious parley” the poet is “medicin’d/In sickness not ignoble,” and later the face of the goddess is described as “bright blanch’d/By an immortal sickness which kills not;... deathwards progressing/To no death...”
he must personally suffer extinction in the process, to see the proud falsifiers of vision destroyed.

I do not wish to insist dogmatically on the correctness of this reading, and I propose it principally because it suggests that at the end of his career Keats may be reaffirming his faith in the truth expressed by Apollo's apotheosis in Hyperion. But if so Keats does not merely repeat his earlier celebration of evolutionary consciousness. He recognizes that increased consciousness leads inevitably beyond ordinary rationality to the exploration of the truth of dreams and visions. And he recognizes that the best authentication of such visionary consciousness lies in the manner of its expression. The moral, then, would be that in the modern world the evil man is he who falsifies his dream or vision by telling it badly. This is no minor, aesthetic sin. It is blasphemy, the distortion of the highest truth. The genuine poet must be a good and useful man—"a sage, a humanist, a physician to all men"—for his well-told dream will embody the truth that surpasses the limited truth of sensory observation and rational discourse. The dedicated poet expresses the one truth fully appropriate to modern man's capacity for conscious life.

Whatever the problems and uncertainties of The Fall of Hyperion may be, this faith is his art, this confidence in the worth of his poetry as something more than ornamental and entertaining, sustains all Keats's finest work. In this belief, moreover, Keats is typical of his era, not unique. His contemporaries share his passionate conviction that in uttering beautifully their private visions they contribute to a better, a more fully human life for all men—that they in fact help to bring to birth the new life falsely promised by political revolutionists and social reformers, fanatic-dreamers who are not poets.

26 Rosenberg, 93: "He [Keats] reveals an instinctive historical sense and faith in the collective development of mind."
27 Albert Gérard, "Coloridge, Keats and the Modern Mind," Essays in Criticism, I (1951), 249-61, emphasizes the general significance of this point. For example: "The Romantics . . . firmly believed that within mankind there is room for a faculty that goes beyond reason. This is the basic assumption of romanticism." (p. 253).
28 "The Fall of Hyperion must be regarded as one of the major attempts within European romanticism to reconcile the imagination with a realistic and human awareness of the suffering of mankind." (Sperry, p. 83). Mr. Sperry's insistence on the poem's adherence to the orthodox pattern of sin and redemption leads him to stress the dark side of The Fall—he speaks of Keats's final attitude as "closer to resignation than to hope—perhaps even despair." I wish to emphasize the element of reaffirmation within Keats's admittedly ever more tragic view of life.