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GOING WONDER-WAYS:
SACRALITY AND SKEPTICISM
IN BRITISH ROMANTIC POETRY

by

SUSAN CAROL O'HARe

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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Chapter 1

TOWARD ROMANTICISM: WONDER AND THE SACRED

In our journey up to the Grande Chartreuse, I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation, that there was no restraining. Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other arguments.

—Thomas Gray, November 16, 1739

"Post-Christian" is one of the epithets most commonly applied to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Few people would challenge its applicability, and this recognition became the cornerstone of Hoxie Fairchild's study of the major British Romantic poets' religious sentiments. Few critics, he points out, have discussed Romantic poetry without devoting partial attention to its manifestations of unorthodox views, whether overt condemnation of the Judaico-Christian tradition or demonstrated belief in pantheism, mysticism, and very non-Pauline sensuality, especially eroticism. Blake's nose-picking, farting Nobodaddy cannot be overlooked. As sky-god, he has withdrawn from man's generative world, becoming an extreme example of the remote and inactive God (deus otiosus). Wordsworth's early conviction that there are spirits in the woods and genii in the springs, many of Shelley's letters and essays, including his undergraduate pamphlet "The Necessity of Atheism," Keats's youthful sonnet "Written in Disgust of Vulgar
Superstition," and Blake's, Shelley's and Keats's recurrent emphasis on the sacredness of human sexuality are similarly of interest to the traditionalist.

That Christianity has frequently been considered ultimate truth rather than as one of man's many sacred beliefs is clearly apparent to those of us looking back upon Fairchild's undertaking from our vantage point in the mid-1970's. Undertaking this study, I follow many recent scholars, both literary and non-literary, in my desire to differentiate orthodox Judaeo-Christianity (what earlier Western scholars have almost unanimously meant by "religion") and a less reductive anthropological sense of the sacred. At the point of making this distinction, however, it is equally necessary to recognize that the actual sacred experiences of orthodox and non-orthodox persons need not be generically different, if personal and intense. In Ecstasy: A Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences, Marghanita Laski points out that, in either case, the experiences are unexpected, rare—"different from those we could expect in the normal course of events." Furthermore, they are frequently followed by what she calls "ecstatic after-glow"—a period during which the experience is "appreciated and interpreted." As a result, the experience is valued, not so much for itself, as for the manner in which it culminates in "improved mental organization, whether this takes the form of replacing uneasiness and dissatisfaction with ease and satisfaction, or of appearing to confirm a sought belief, or
of inspiring to moral action or of enabling the expression of a new mental creation."

Given this basic similarity, the dichotomy between religious and secular experiences is most apparent when the historic period concerned is one in which orthodox belief becomes ossified, during which it is bequeathed from generation to generation as dogma, rather than experienced by individuals as revelation. Such was assuredly the situation combatted by eighteenth and early nineteenth century philosophers and artists as they increasingly opened their eyes and minds to new possibilities rather than resting content in their heritage of a world based, first, on ignorance and, subsequently, on natural law. Nothing was closed to investigation and contemplation, and the result was a rapid unfolding of new theories of the nature of religion, of the cosmos, of the earth, and of man.

During the seventeenth century and early decades of the eighteenth, a cultural revolution occurred in the form of a casting out of superstition and a glorification of reason and observation. The dominant figures were, of course, the philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and the scientist Sir Isaac Newton. While Locke has a positive effect on some of the poetry of major Romantics which must be discussed later, Hobbes, for present purposes, is primarily important as a figure against whom these poets often unanimously rebelled. In *Leviathan*, he argues
that imagination rightly belongs to the infancy of personal and cultural growth, not to the adult nor to modern civilization. The irrational faculty is equated with the superstition he feels society has only begun to outgrow. Rejecting the recent past in which people commonly believed in witchcraft and possession by spirits, often explaining physical phenomena as the works of malevolent ghosts and demons or of benevolent genii and nymphs, Hobbes provides the elite of his age with a new sense of their intellectual potential and their physical power. As a result, the Duke of Buckinghamshire, John Sheffield, pays a characteristic tribute when he writes:

While in dark ignorance we lay, afraid
Of fancies, ghosts, and every empty shade;
Great Hobbes appear'd, and by plain Reason's light
Put such fantastic forms to shameful flight. 4

This idea of the Light of Reason became a typical metaphor, even an obsession, of the age, and, as such, it was also repeatedly linked to Newtonian science. 5 Richard Glover, for example, writes:

... from the darksome main
Earth raises smiling, as new-born, her head,
And with fresh charms her lovely face arrays.
So his extensive thought accomplish'd first
The mighty task to drive the obstructing mists
Of Ignorance away, beneath whose gloom
Th' unshrouded majesty of Nature lay. 6

Pope's concise epitaph proposed for the scientist, now locus classicus of the age, again merits repetition:

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, "Let Newton be!" and all was light.

In an age rising out of chaos, Newton's Principia sets
forth theories of cosmic proportion, limitation, and order, rendering its author a symbol of new hope. As a result, rationalistic Deism develops, arguing God's existence as a prerequisite to the existence of such a highly-wrought universe, and, thus, serving as a bulwark to hold back the chaotic seventeenth-century flood of religious enthusiasts from Lodowicke Muggleton and James Nager who claimed personal illumination and were pilloried, branded, or imprisoned for their claims to the even more radical French Prophets who preached an impending conflagration centered on London which was to culminate in the violent death of the Lord Chief Justice who had imprisoned members of their sect.

However, because of the development of natural religion, the deistic followers of Newton were, in turn, condemned for elevating nature above God. Their task was to discover natural law, and as moralists began to feel, they often neglected what were viewed as higher spiritual truths. As he served as spokesman in praise of Newton, Pope also serves as spokesman against Newton's disciples who carried their mentor's theories to an extreme. "Go, wondrous creature," he advises these extremists,

Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to Rule—
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool.
(An Essay on Man, II, 19, 29-30.)

And, similarly, in The Dunciad, he proclaims that mankind's most important concern should be ethics and not reason. As
a result of man's misplaced emphasis, "Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,/And unaware Morality expires" (IV, 649-650).

A parallel view of law and the occasional admission of necessary exceptions to these laws carries over from those seeking order and clarity in the physical realm to those seeking them in the artistic realm. Imlac’s advice that "the business of a poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances," not to "number the streaks of the tulip, or to describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest" (Rasselas, X) is almost too well-known to be mentioned. Nevertheless, Dr. Johnson’s theory is pertinent for the role it plays in Blake’s revolutionary thought. In the same vein, a less famous passage in Reynolds’s Discourses both explains the neo-Classical preference for generality as a means of avoiding a feared chaos of solipsism and also serves as a target for Blake’s vehement attacks. "We may suppose a uniformity," Reynolds proposes,

and conclude that the same effect will be produced by the same cause in the minds of others. . . . We can never be sure that our own sensations are true and right, till they are confirmed by more extensive observation. One man opposing another determines nothing; but a general union of minds, like a general combination of the forces of all mankind, makes a strength that is irresistible. . . . A man who thinks he is guarding himself against prejudices by resisting the authority of others, leaves open every avenue to singularity, vanity, self-conceit, obstinancy, and natural operation of his faculties. This submission to others is a deference which we owe, and indeed are forced involuntarily to pay. In fact, we are never
satisfied with our opinions, whatever we may pretend, till they are ratified and confirmed by the suffrages of the rest of mankind. 7

Fine writing, as Hobbes notes in Leviathan and as more liberal Addison points out when paraphrasing neo-Classical Boileau, "doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable turn" (Spectator, No. 253). Or, as Pope, says, great art is "what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (Essay on Criticism, II, 97). Yet, even here, some divergence must be allowed. In a country whose favorite literary sons are Shakespeare and Milton, eventually a voice such as Pope's must ring out, proclaiming that

Some beauties yet no precepts can declare
For there's a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles poetry, in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
And which a master hand alone can reach.
If, where the rules not far enough extend,
(Since rules were made but to promote their end)
Some lucky licence answer to the full
The intent proposed, that license is a rule.
Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its end at once attains.

(Essay on Criticism, I, 141-155)

Again, as in his attitude toward the excesses of post-Newtonian scientists, Pope's concern is chiefly moral, now more human than divine. What is most important, he recognizes, is not the perfection of the work itself when measured against Classical standards, but instead the effect that the work has upon the reader.
Shifting interest from the Newtonian cosmos to the geocosm—a shift recently described as central to the era—one finds a similar situation dramatized by the debates of scientists, physico-theologians, and philosophers about the nature of the earth in all its various formations. Again, orthodox beliefs clash with newer beliefs destined to provide a less tragic and chaotic explanation for the shape of the earth and, therefore, destined to supply man with increased self-esteem and hope. Characteristic of the seventeenth-century belief that the earth's rough topography was not original with the Creation are Donne's "An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary" (1611) and Henry Vaughan's "Corruption" (1650). "But keepes the earth her round proportion still?", Donne asks,

Doth not a Tenarif, or higher Hill
Rise so high like a Rocke, that one might thinke
The floating Moone would shipwracke there and sink? . . .
Are these but warts, and pock-holes in the face
Of th'earth? Think so; but yet confesse, in this
The worlds proportion disfigured is.

(285-288, 300-302)

Also writing before the development of New Science that was soon to make such a view untenable, Vaughan adds a specific theological interpretation:

Sure it was so. Man in those early days
Was not all stone and earth;
He shined a little, and by those weak rays
Had some glimpse of his birth.
He saw Heaven o'er his head, and knew from whence
He came, condemned hither;
And, as first love draws strongest, so from hence
His mind sure progressed thither.
Things here were strange unto him; sweat and till
All was thorn or weed.
Nor did those last, but, like himself died still
    As soon as they did seed.
They seemed to quarrel with him, for that act
    That felled him foiled them all:
He drew the curse upon the world, and cracked
    The whole frame with his fall.

(1-16)

Having caused the fall of the earth by his own sin, man is fated to an inharmonious life in which he can only long for Eden, sighing "Ah! what bright days were those!" (20). No trust is placed in future reform.

Following the Goodman-Hakewell debate in which the former's The Fall of Man (1616) argued essentially the same thesis as Vaughan and the latter's An Apologie or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World (1635) argued that omnipotent God would never create a corruptible universe and that topographical variety was in itself good, Thomas Burnet composed his even more important physico-theological Telluris Theoria Sacra (1681). The central goal of the treatise was a reconciliation of orthodox teachings of the Fall with seemingly contradictory scientific explanations of the manner in which natural forces may have transformed the earth's once smooth surface. Because an omnipotent God would never have created an inharmonious topography, present conditions must be punishment for Original Sin. Yet, with the rise of New Science, supernatural explanations alone are insufficient, and Burnet proceeds to explain that the original Mundane Egg had a liquid center which spilled forth as Deluge when the earth's surface cracked, thus overrunning the surface and creating
irregularity by the natural impact of its erosive powers. Characteristic of the century as they were, his middle-of-the-road theories were fated to come under attack by both clergymen convinced of his unorthodoxy and by scientists dissatisfied with his poetic, supernatural elements. Although Burnet's reputation was not that for which he may have hoped, he nevertheless certainly remains significant as one of the first thinkers arousing a new geological interest which was to become increasingly important to theological, scientific, and aesthetic speculation of subsequent decades.

In the same year that Burnet publishes *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, Charles Cotton's long poem *The Wonders of the Peak*, written about Derbyshire's Peak District, sheds an interesting light on the relationship between contemporary views of nature and art. While he shares belief in the topographical fall that we have so far seen to be a commonplace of the period, he also suggests that human artistry can enhance, almost overcome, natural deformities. Although the "Hillocks, Mole-Hills, Warts, and Pipples" of the earth appear like the place "where sinful Sodom and Gomorrah stood," the splendid Chatsworth mansion appears to be a new paradise, even a parallel of God's creation:

Environ'd round with Nature's Shames and Ills,
Black Heaths, wild Rocks, black Craggs, and naked Hills,
And the whole prospect so inform and rude,
Who is it but must presently conclude?
That this is Paradise, which seated stands
In midst of Desarts and of Barren Sands?
So bright a Diamond would look if set
In a vile socket of ignoble Jet,
And such a face the new-born Nature took
When out of Chaos by the Fiat strook.\textsuperscript{10}

In spite of his agreement with traditional attitudes toward
the landscape, Cotton's belief in man's creative capacity
stands in definite contrast to Vaughan's belief that man
must remain evermore discontent as a fallen denizen of a
fallen world. Although the age is not yet convinced of the
sacrality of its natural world, at least some glimmers of
optimism arise.

Even before Cotton's lengthy poem, however, a move-
ment toward glorification of the earth had begun which was
destined, if very gradually, to alter the world-view. As
the scientific revolution advances, supernatural explana-
tions are deemed increasingly insufficient; and, as they are
discarded, so too, are many people's traditional notions of
the evil character of both man and earth. The tragic con-
ception of life is at least partially replaced by a more optim-
istic one, and, little by little, as Basil Willey succinctly
states the case, "nature was rescued from Satan and restored
to God."\textsuperscript{11}

Several important names are in the front rank of
this transition, including the empiricist John Locke, the
physicist Sir Isaac Newton, major and minor Cambridge Pla-
tonists from Henry More to the third Earl of Shaftesbury,
and physico-theologians John Ray and William Derham. In
his significant study, The Imagination as a Means of Grace,
Ernest Tuveson concentrates on the manner in which Lockian
epistemology leads to a revolution in art, more specifically to the highly visual poetry of excursion poets such as Mallet, Savage, and Thomson. Central to Locke's thought is a rejection of preconceived notions. Man is born neither a good man nor a bad man, but as a passive Tabula Rasa upon which "simple ideas" necessarily impress themselves. "These simple ideas," Locke writes,

when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out, and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas which the object it do therein produce. As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the mind is forced to receive the impressions, and cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them.

(Essay on Human Understanding, II, 1, 25)

Receiving "simple ideas," the mind is then free to contemplate them. From this perspective, Locke goes on to note that man's perceptions are limited by his humanness. He can only know what Locke speaks of as "Natural Revelation, whereby the Father of Light, and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of natural faculties" (IV, 19, 4). The effect of this assertion upon the major Romantic poets will be brought up occasionally within my individual discussions.

For Locke and Newton, as well as the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, vastness of space results in man's greatest ideas and is, therefore, granted a noble station heretofore inconceivable. The cosmos, as Tuveson points
out, becomes a meeting place of the natural and the divine, a "physical-spiritual datum of experience."\textsuperscript{12} Confronted with the problem of explaining the mind's concept of God if no concepts are held to be innate but are instead derived from limited sensations, the religious philosopher explains that notions of God result from recognition of infinite space.

In his \textit{Essay on Human Understanding}, he writes:

I would fain meet with any thinking man that can in his own thoughts set any bounds to space, more than he can to duration, or by thinking hope to arrive at the end of either; and therefore, if his idea of eternity be infinite, so is his idea of immensity; they are both finite or infinite alike.

(II, 13, 21)

"God," he continues, "fills eternity; and it is hard to find a reason why any one should doubt that he likewise fills immensity" (II, 15, 3).

When, in \textit{Opticks}, Newton proposes that God may be to the universe as the soul is to the body, his view becomes the culmination of mechanists' attempts to reconcile religion and New Science. Speaking of ordinary perception, he asks,

Is not the Sensory of Animals that place to which the sensitive Substance is present, and into which the sensible Species of things are carried through the Nerves and Brain, that they may be perceived by their immediate presence to that Substance.

(III, 1, 28)

Contrasting the manner in which only God can know the essences of things, unperceivable by man limited to acquaintance with their external appearances, he presents his famous idea of the divine sensorium:
Does it not appear from Phaenomena that there is a Being incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent, who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, sees the things themselves intimately, and thoroughly perceives them, and comprehends them wholly by their immediate presence to himself, of which things the Images only carried through the Organs of Sense into our little Sensoriums, are there seen and beheld by that which in us perceives and thinks.

(III, 1, 28)

Although the physicist never conceived of himself as a metaphysician, his impact on metaphysics was profound. Addison's adoption and popularization of the concept of the sensorium of God is exemplary. In an essay on the "Omniscience and Omnipresence of God," Spectator No. 565 comments:

the noblest and most exalted way of considering this infinite space, is that of Sir Isaac Newton, who calls it the sensorium of the Godhead. Brutes and men have their sensoriola, or little sensoriums, by which they apprehend the presence, and perceive the actions of a few objects that lie contiguous to them.

As a result of this notion shared by Locke, Newton, Addison and others, man's perceptual powers were increasingly viewed as extremely limited. As Tuveson notes, the basic belief of these men was that space is "not merely the beginning of the idea of God . . . but the very fullness of that idea itself so far as we may have it." And it is this idea of the limitations of human faculties against which such poets as Young and Blake were to rebel violently.

Although sharing the basic belief that immensity of space promotes man's ideas of God, Henry More nevertheless possesses a stronger faith in man's ability to attain full knowledge. More turns upward, rather than outward, and, as
Tuveson so accurately differentiates him from Locke, he "thinks of the impression of immensity as a first rung on a ladder, a 'rude and obscure Notion' from which we may ascend to a fuller and more spiritual idea of God."\textsuperscript{14} Hence, More reveals himself to be a follower of one of the neo-Platonists' favorites—the fifteenth century Nicolaus of Cusa, who regarded the earth, even if imperfect, as a shadow of the Divine. Expressing this idea, Nicholas comments: "So infinite truth is the precision of finite truth; and absolutely infinite, the precision, measure, truth, and perfection of everything finite."\textsuperscript{15} While the basic goal of man remains upward toward complete understanding of Godhead, such a notion of earthly shadows at least partially results in this-worldly thinking which becomes increasingly a mark of the coming age. Although only a shadow of God, the cosmos nevertheless is viewed as an image of Him, therefore, partly partaking of His divinity.\textsuperscript{16}

In such a poem as \textit{Democritus Platonissans; or, An Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds out of Platonick Principles} (1646), More attains prominence as first English poet to proclaim the theory of both an infinite spatial and temporal realm. From the seventeenth-century minor poet, Thomas Traherne, on through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the influence of More is momentous. Expressing a desire for the infinite, Traherne's "Insatiableness" makes a very extreme anti-Classical declaration:
'Tis mean Ambition to define
   A single World.
   To many I aspire,
   Tho one upon another hurl'd;
Nor will they all, if they be all confin'd
   Delight my Mind.

This busy, vast, enquiring Soul
   Brooks no Controul;
   'Tis very curious too;
Each one of all those Worlds must be
   Enrict with infinite Variety
   And Worth; or 'twill not do.

'Tis nor Delight nor perfect Pleasure
   To have a Purse
   That hath a Bottom in its Treasure,
Since there's a God (for els there's no Delight)
   One Infinit.

(II, 7-24)

Saying this, Traherne expresses an idea increasingly characteristic of post-Burnet physico-theologians such as John Ray and William Derham. Both Ray's *Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691) and Derham's *Physico-Theology; or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God from his Works of Creation* (1713) in their very titles declare a belief that God is manifested in his works. The changed outlook since Burnet expressed his theory of the earth's fall is profound. Ray praises all natural variety as the result of divine wisdom and plenitude, now preferring modern civilization to pre-lapsarian Eden. Similarly, Derham argues that, even if fallen, earth's rougher parts as well as its smoother ones, are worthy of praise as examples of God's work. The very fact that a world exists at all is viewed as a cause of wonder. Furthermore, he adds, this ruggedness and irregularity is useful; mountains and seas contribute
to travel and provide resources which enrich man culturally and materially; even volcanoes function as outlets for subterranean energies which, repressed, could break open the earth’s crust and bring destruction.

With eighteenth-century man’s increasing receptivity toward natural variety—toward the great as well as the small, the high as well as the lowly—comes the gradual development of aesthetic dualism. The Beautiful is distinguished from what comes to be known as the Sublime. A distinction is made fairly early by Addison in his "Pleasures of the Imagination" essays in The Spectator and by his follower, Mark Akenside, in his poem by the same title. But their aesthetic is initially tripartite rather than bipartite. What Addison calls the "great, uncommon, or beautiful" (Spectator, No. 412), Akenside calls "the sublime,/ The wonderful, the fair" (I, 145-146). The Beautiful, nearly everyone of the age would agree, characterized the smoother, more delicate objects, generally also the small rather than the grand. Order and limitation are again the key. Although not using quite the same vocabulary, Abraham Cowley’s essay “Of Greatness well expresses what is initially the Augustan preference:

I love littleness almost in all things. A little convenient Estate, a little Cheerful House, a little Company, and a very little Feast. If I were ever to fall in love again (which is a great Passion, and therefore I hope, I have done with it) it would be, I think, with Prettiness rather than Majestic Beauty. 17

He speaks of what Akenside refers to as "harmonious wonder" (Pleasures, I, 279).
The quality that Akenside initially differentiates from both the Beautiful and the Sublime, calling instead the "wonderful," is clearly the same as Addison's "uncommon." Describing the effect of his wonder-events and the common desire for such experiences, the poet writes:

Witness the sprightly joy when aught unknown
Strikes the quick sense, and wakes each active power
To brisker measures: witness the neglect
Of all familiar prospects, though beheld
With transport once; the sober zeal
Of age, commenting on prodigious things.
For such bounteous providence of Heaven,
In every breast implanting this desire
Of objects new and strange, to urge us on
With unremitting labour to pursue
These sacred stores that wait the ripening soul
In Truth's exhaustless bosom.

(Pleasures, I, 232-244)

The experience of the novel, rather than of the general, comes to be equated with Truth and Divinity. A change to come in the next years is for man to realize that both the Beautiful and the Sublime can be the Wonderful— that the latter is not an exclusive category. The greatest change to come, however, is the recognition that the wonderful need not necessarily be the unusual. As Sam Keen discusses it in his phenomenological study, Apology for Wonder, the mature sense of wonder "is most often called forth by a confrontation with the depth of meaning at the heart of the familiar and the quotidian."18 But we must wait for the flies and thistles of Blake and the daffodils and cuckoos of Wordsworth to see this. In the meantime, Akenside himself appears somewhat to recognize a less radical sort of inclusiveness when
his original version of The Pleasures alludes to the Beautiful as "harmonious wonder"; and certainly he recognizes it when, in the revised version, he omits the "wonderful" altogether as a separately discussed species of aesthetic experience, thus bringing his poem into harmony with Burke's intervening and famous Enquiry.

When applied to nature rather than to grand rhetoric and its effects upon the mind as discussed in Longinus' Peri Hupsous, the Sublime was often associated with vastness, especially with mountain heights and ocean expanses. Burke emphasizes the idea that the natural Sublime need not necessarily be the immense so long as it is powerful, but the idea of immensity recurs over and over in writing of the age. With this basic and early definition in mind, we must look back momentarily at Burnet who, despite his theoretical description of mountains as signs of corruption, actually experienced an ambivalent emotional response when confronted by the Alps. Educated in Yorkshire schools, he was not unfamiliar with small mountains, and his emotional response is not the extreme one Burke later speaks of when he writes:

The passion caused by the great and the sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings and hurries
us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect.

(Enquiry, II, 1)

Explaining why Burnet's partial familiarity with mountains causes him to encounter the Alps without astonishment and fear, but why his previous acquaintance only with less lofty peaks not approaching the magnitude of the Alps nevertheless enables him to experience milder admiration, reverence, and respect, Burke continues:

It is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration and chiefly excites our passions. Knowledge and acquaintance make the most striking causes affect but little.

(Enquiry, II, 4)

Like Akenside, Burke points to the wonderful quality of novelty which leads Burnet to describe his feelings:

There is something august and stately in the Air of these things, that inspires the Mind with great Thoughts and Passions; we do naturally, upon occasions, think of God and his Greatness; And whatsoever hath but the Shadow and Appearance of INFINITE, as all things have that are too big for our Comprehension, they fill and overbear the Mind with their Excess, and cast it into a pleasing kind of Stupor and Admiration.

(Sacred Theory, II, 188-189)

Speaking of the manner in which the Sublime is experienced as both tremendum and fascinans, as both frightening and attractive, awesome and pleasant, Thomson speaks of "sacred terror, a severe delight" (Summer," 541), Addison of "pleasing astonishment" and "agreeable horror" (Spectator, No. 489), John Dennis of "those things wonderful, which we admire with fear." 21 The emotional responses of Wordsworth,
Shelley, and Keats will be discussed in relation to this idea of ambivalence as I examine their poetry in detail.

To show just how far mountain attitudes of some people had altered since the days when they shocked travellers unacquainted with them and unprepared by predecessors in the field of aesthetics, Thomson declares that he experienced charm rather than horror when first visiting the Alps:

their shaggy mountains charm
More than or Gallic or Italian plains;
And sickening fancy oft, when absent long,
Pines to behold their Alpine views again.

(Liberty, IV, 344-347)

Once warts on the earth, mountains are now seen as contributing to the health of the imagination. As Marjorie Nicolson so well and so repeatedly expresses it, the dynamics of taste could scarcely be more apparent than in this change from mountain gloom to mountain glory.

With Addison, another important duality comes to the foreground of aesthetic speculation. The Spectator Numbers 411-421 deal primarily with a dissociation of sensibility—of Imagination and Reason. Although echoes of the neo-Classical idea that "imagination in the great poets is subordinate to reason and judgment" occur as late as Jeffrey's infamous reviews of Wordsworth and Keats, Addison gives no indication that this is the proper case. As the student of Locke and the New Scientists that he is, he describes imagination as grounded in sight. "We cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy that did not make its first entrance through the sight," he asserts (Spectator,
411). But finally, he notes, man is also capable of conceiving of more than even the most acute sight can perceive, though conception must be based on prior perception. "There are none," he writes

who more gratify and enlarge the imagination, than the authors of the new philosophy, whether we consider their theories of the earth or heavens, the discoveries they have made by glasses, or any other of their contemplations on nature. We are not a little pleased to find every green leaf swarm with millions of animals, that at their largest growth are not visible to the naked eye. There is something very engaging to the fancy, as well as to our reason, in the treatises of metals, minerals, plants, and meteors. But when we survey the whole earth at once, and the several planets that lie within its neighborhood, we are filled with a pleasing astonishment, to see so many worlds hanging one above another, and sliding round their axles in such an amazing pomp and solemnity. If after this, we contemplate those wide fields of aether, that reach in height almost to an infinitude, our imagination finds its capacity filled with so immense a prospect, as puts it upon the stretch to comprehend it. But if we rise yet higher, and consider the fixed stars so many vast oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets, and still discover new firmaments and new lights, that are sunk farther in those unfathomable depths of aether, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our telescope, we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the immensity and magnificence of nature.

(Spectator, No. 420)

Believing this, Addison notes that

A poet should take as much pains in forming his imagination, as a philosopher in cultivating his understanding. He must gain a due relish of the works of nature, and be thoroughly conversant in the various scenery of country life.

(Spectator, No. 417)

Elizabeth Carter, paradoxically declared by Dr. Johnson to be the best Classical scholar of the day, goes far in reversing neo-Classical valuation of the faculties. The
imagination, not reason, she declares, "indisputably distinguishes the human race from other animals."\textsuperscript{23}

Hand in hand with this reversal is the frequent substitution of obscurity for clarity, mystery for reason or scientifically demonstrated fact—a substitution already touched upon by Burke's typical assertion that "it is our ignorance that causes all our admiration." While Deism had no tolerance for the unexplained and little belief in sacred otherness, the cultural climate gradually accepts uncertainties as pregnant with meaning, dark places as places of revelation. In 1757, Burke states that "it is one thing to make an image clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination" and that

\begin{quote}
hardly anything can strike the mind with its greatness which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity, which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds; but to see an object distinctly and to perceive its bounds is one and the same thing. A clear idea is another name for a little idea.
\end{quote}

\textit{(Enquiry, II, 4)}

Two years later, in \textit{Conjectures on Original Composition}, Edward Young agrees with this idea, writing that one should seek "Mysteries . . . not to be explained, but admired."\textsuperscript{24} Wonder, in such cases, is again ontological—wonder at the fact of being itself, rather than at revealed meaning.

Although agreeing that all things need not have scientific explanations—in fact, that scientific explanations are delusive substitution of natural causes for spiritual causes—at least one important writer voiced
violent objection to this idea that the unfamiliar and obscure are sublime or evocative of sublime states of mind analogous to that state evoked by contemplation of God. Ignorance of things, Blake feels, is not a cause of sublimity but a characteristic of empirical, non-visionary mentality. "Obscurity is Neither the Source of the Sublime nor of any Thing Else," his annotations to Reynolds' Discourses declare. Further explaining this view, he adds:

Burke's Treatise on the Sublime & Beautiful is founded on the Opinions of Newton & Locke on this Treatise Reynolds has grounded many of his assertions. In all his Discourses I read Burkes Treatise when very Young at the same time I read Locke on Human Understanding & Bacon's Advancement of Learning on Every one of these Books I wrote my Opinions & on looking them over find that my notes on Reynolds in this Book are exactly Similar. I felt the same contempt & Abhorrence then; that I do now. They mock Inspiration & Vision Inspiration & Vision was then & now is & I hope will always Remain my Element my Eternal Dwelling place.

As Blake thinks, it is not external nature that is both tremendum and fascinans but, instead, man's mind itself. "I rejoice & I tremble: 'I am fearfully & wonderfully made.'" he writes, paraphrasing Psalm 139.

Yet, in an age generally still under the influence of Locke and Burke, thus regarding the obscure as a manifestation of meaning partially incomprehensible by man's limited senses and therefore all the more divine, poets frequently substitute shadows and darkness for the light of all-comprehending reason. Or, when light imagery does become central to a poem as it admittedly does in works not only by Blake but also in scattered poems by each of the poets
to be discussed, it is generally more closely related to the poetic light of Apollo than to that which Pope attributes to Newton. In The Seasons, Thomson specifically rejects harsh meridian light, the favorite of the majority of neo-Classicists:

"Tis raging noon; and vertical, the sun
Darts on the head direct his forceful rays.
O'er heaven and earth, far as the ranging eye
Can sweep, a dazzling deluge reigns; and all
From pole to pole is undistinguishable blaze.
In vain the sight dejected to the ground
Stoops for relief; thence hot ascending steams
And keen reflection pain. Deep to the root
Of vegetation parched, the cleaving fields
And slippery lawn an arid hue disclose
Blast fancy's blooms and wither even the soul.
("Summer," 432-442)

Outside the shady bower, Thomson adds, all the world remains "unsatisfied and sick" and all "tosses in noon" ("Summer," 464). On the other hand, he expresses his idea of the obscure place most conducive to poetic revelation:

Still let me pierce into the midnight depth
Of yonder grove, of wildest largest growth,
That foaming high in air a woodland quire,
Nods o'er the mountain beneath. At every step,
Solemn and slow the shadows blacker fall,
And all is awful listening gloom around.

These are the haunts of meditation, these
The scenes where ancient bards the inspiring breath
Ecstatic felt, and from this world retired,
Conversed with angels and immortal forms,
On gracious errands bent--to save the fall
Of virtue struggling on the brink of vice.
("Summer," 516-527)

Shifting emphasis from reason to feeling, the early Romantics can again admit the supernatural previously rejected by neo-Classical writers as a sign of primitive man's ignorance and as far too likely to result in chaos rather than order. William Collins' "Ode on the Popular Super-
stitutions of the Highlands of Scotland, Considered as the Subject of Poetry" is an excellent example. Writing to Scottish clergyman Douglas Home, who had previously returned from London. Collins both describes various spirits of the place and advises his friend:

Such airy beings awe the untutored swain,
Nor thou, though learned, his homelier thoughts neglect;
Let thy sweet Muse the rural faith sustain
These are the themes of simple, sure effect,
That add new conquests to her boundless reign,
And fill with double force, her heart commanding strain.

(30-35)

Even if not empirically true, "scenes like these, which daring to depart/From sober truth, are still to Nature true" (188-189). Nature is now the nature of the imagination and of the heart.

As Thomson's midnight bower passage indicates, it is noteworthy that, for the eighteenth-century man communicating with a divine spirit in nature, the identity of that spirit is usually an angel or God. Nature itself is only infrequently viewed as superior to orthodox deity. The First Cause conceived of by natural philosophers remains essentially the Power of the age. In Spectator, No. 393, for example, Addison refers to brooks, birds, groves, and fields that "raise such a rational admiration in the Soul as is little inferior to Devotion," while a few years later Thomson addresses his God:

Hail! Source of Being! Universal Soul
Of Heaven and Earth! Essential Presence, hail!
To thee I bend the knee; to thee my thoughts
Continual climb; who, with a master hand,
Hast the great whole into perfection touch’d.
("Spring," 556-560)

Although the earth now partakes of Divine Being, having
been divorced from earlier notions of tragedy and longing,
it is not pantheistic, not independently divine, but in-
stead a manifestation of the transcendent.

Looking back at Thomson’s midnight bower passage
once again, we see that, not only is his supernatural inspira-
tion apparently a traditional angel, but also the experience
in nature is connected with a growth in morality. The
alleged result is “to save the fall/Of virtue struggling on
the brink of vice.” This general notion recurs throughout
the period in regard to the effect of both the Beautiful
and the Sublime upon the imagination. In The Minstrel,
for instance, James Beattie speaks of natural harmony,
announcing:

These charms shall work thy soul’s eternal health,
And love, and gentleness, and joy impart.

(I, 82-83)

Elizabeth Carter theorizes that “exercise of the aesthetic
imagination might strengthen the moral one.”28 We are
reminded of Shelley’s famous assertion in “A Defence of
Poetry” that

poets, or those who imagine and express this indestruct-
able order, are not only the authors of language and
of music, of the dance and architecture, and statuary,
and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the
founders of civil society, and the inventors of the
arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain
propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion.

Describing the effects of recognition of the Beautiful and the Sublime upon mankind's behavior, Elizabeth Carter argues that the latter is the more inclined to mold man into a moral being:

Amidst the gay and smiling scenes of nature our minds are engaged in an attention to our own enjoyments; amidst the unrelenting storm and desolating torrents, our hearts are awed and softened to a tender sensibility of the wants and distresses of others.29

In general, Beauty is often associated with happiness and gentleness. In "Tintern Abbey," for example, Wordsworth views recollection of "beauteous forms" as having

no slight or trivial influence
on that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love.

(32-35)

On the other hand, as Carter notes, the Romantic age most frequently associates the Sublime with self-annihilation and recognition of humanity's suffering. Here, Wordsworth occasionally differs. The same rural beauty that leads to gentleness, he explains, also leads to his being "laid to sleep in body" and to his becoming a visionary "living soul" (45, 46). Having outgrown his boyhood preference for the sublimity of sounding cataracts, mountains, and gloomy woods, it is in the quieter, less rugged places such as south Wales that he is led from love of nature to love of man, finally coming to recognize the "still, sad music of
humanity" (91). The contrast between Carter on one hand and Wordsworth on the other may well be an indication that, although the early Romantics' sensibility to nature remained partially undeveloped and, therefore, responsive primarily to the Sublime which they associated with the infinite, the more refined sensibilities of the major Romantics could sometimes be affected equally by the Beautiful. We seem to find a parallel to the idea mentioned previously that, for some poets possessing a mature sense of wonder, the object conceived of as wonderful need not be an unusual one.

Associated with this general idea of the moral effects of the Beautiful and the Sublime is the growing belief that imaginative openness is potentially destructive to both political and religious tyranny. Gray's *The Bard* (1757), illustrated by Blake and clearly an influence on Blake's own poetry, treats the former type of oppression and describes the prophetic bards' impending victory over Edward I, British conqueror of Wales. With a superhuman voice, the Bard tells of the immortal natures of those other bards recently executed by the king's soldiers:

No more I weep. They do not sleep.  
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,  
I see them sit; they linger yet,  
Avengers of their native land. (43-46)

Poetry will survive and liberty be restored, he predicts to Edward:

with joy I see  
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine Despair, and sceptered Care;  
To triumph, and to die, is mine.  
(139-142)

This association of poetic powers with freedom recurs again and again as we turn from the realm of totalitarian politics to the realm in which the concept of the Great Chain of Being dictates an ontological hierarchy and the realm in which organized religion dictates that man must humble himself in order to be exalted. Although early Romantics rarely question the existence of transcendent God, they nonetheless increasingly lend His better attributes to man. One cannot help recalling Pope's more conservative view of man's state of being:

Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,  
A being darkly wise, and rudely great;  
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,  
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,  
He hangs between, in doubt to act, or rest,  
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;  
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;  
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;  
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
Whether he thinks too little, or too much;  
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;  
Still by himself abused, or disabused;  
Created half to rise, and half to fall;  
Great end of all things, yet prey to all;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!  
(Essay on Man, II, 3-18)

Occasionally questioning this ontological status quo, the more radical of the pre-Romantics pose a view more optimistic than Pope's. Even though he does not reject the notion of the Great Chain, Edward Young gives somewhat greater weight to man's godly side. Man, he writes, is
Midway from nothing to the deity!
A beam ethereal, sullied, and absorpt!
Though sullied and dishonoured, still divine!
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!
A worm! A god!

(Night Thoughts, I, 74-80)

"Our senses," he later adds, "as our reason, are divine"
(VI, 428). What Collins declares in "Ode on the Poetical Character," Young also declares in Conjectures on Original Composition:

Learning we thank, Genius we revere; that gives us pleasure; This gives us rapture; that informs; This inspires; and is itself inspired; for Genius is from Heaven; Learning from Man.30

It is partly because organized religion is later regarded as oppressive--because it is believed to exalt only the lowly--that Shelley and Keats reject it. As Shelley writes to Godwin:

The first doubts which arose in my boyish mind concerning the genuineness of the Christian religion as a revelation from the divinity were excited by a contemplation of the virtues and genius of Greece and Rome. Shall Socrates and Cicero perish whilst the meanest kind of modern England inherits eternal life?31

Similarly, the youthful Keats writes his sonnet "In Disgust of Vulgar Superstition":

The church bells tell a melancholy round,
Calling the people to some other prayers,
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
Surely the mind of man is closely bound
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
And converse high of those with glory crown'd.
Still, still they tell, and I should feel a damp,--
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;
That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
Into oblivion;--that fresh flowers will grow,
And many glories of immortal stamp.

Although Shelley's and Keats' rejection of organized Christianity, because of its failure to provide a place for the noble ancients, is more extreme than that of most of their predecessors and contemporaries, this basic rejection of melancholy and lowliness leads some of the earliest Romantics to turn from the typical earthly excursion poems of the period to cosmic voyages more appropriate to the conception of creative, godly man. Interest is not merely in the expanded earth, but also in the expanded powers of man and in his desire to partake of the infinite. Akenside clearly demonstrates this when he explains:

the high-born soul
Disdains to rest her heav'n-aspiring wing
Beneath its native quarry. Tir'd of earth
And this diurnal scene, she springs aloft
Thro' fields of air; pursues the flying storm;
Rides on the volley'd lightning thro' the heav'n's,
Or yok'd with whirlwinds, and the northern blast
Sweeps the long tract of day. Then high she soars
The blue profound.

*(Pleasures, I, 183-191)*

In his *Night Thoughts*, Young specifically rejects both finite time and space, again proving himself to be a true predecessor of Blake. Speaking of the imaginative soul's ability to encompass all space and all time, from Creation to Last Judgment, he declares:

What wealth in souls that soar, dive, range around
Disdaining limit, or from place or time;
And hear at once, in thought extensive, hear
The mighty fiat and the trumpet's sound!
Bold, on creation's outside walk, and view
What was, and is, and more than e'er shall be;
Commanding with omnipotence of thought,
Creations new in fancy's field to rise!
Souls, that can grasp what e'er the Almighty made,
And wander wild through things impossible!
What wealth in faculties of endless growth,
In quenchless passions violent to crave,
For liberty to choose, in power to reach,
And in duration (how thy riches rise!)
Duration to perpetuate—boundless bliss!

(VI, 462-476)

Such is the desired life of many imaginative poets. But, although Young here radiates a confidence that Blake will echo, the later Romantics become more and more skeptical of their abilities to achieve such transcendence, recognizing that they are also men who must live in the world.

Before we can turn to specific analysis of Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, however, several more general points must be noted about their characters and works and about my approach to those works. First of all, I must note that, if man's traditional historical religion was waning, newer and in many ways more heartfelt religions were coming into being. These were closely aligned with, although not totally identified with, the cosmic religions of archaic man. Living in a cosmos believe to be the abandoned creation of a deus otiosus, man characteristically finds necessary the discovery of more concrete reli—

failing to find it, the loss of his sense of oneness with the world. Anthropologist Mircea Eliade has observed that when archaic man found himself in this predicament, he turned to nearer gods—

...
goddesses, and to immanent spirits of sundry varieties. 32

Though these are myths, and therefore man-made, they are nonetheless myths that become beliefs, stories that provide hope and evolve into faiths, thereby transcending their origins in man's imagination. Sparked by something in the external world as myths generally are, they are usually conceived of as "given," rather than as "created." Exactly this sense of revelation is considered by Helen Gardner as the central element in a definition of religious or sacred poetry. "To define religious poetry as poetry that treats of revelation and of man's response to revelation," she writes,

\[\text{does not equate religious poetry with Christian poetry; but the great majority of English religious poems on this definition will be found to be Christian in some sense. . . . There are also a good many poems mainly written in the later centuries, which are clearly religious in this sense but are not Christian, such as Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." . . . It expresses with burning faith the religious sense of the absolute demands of revelation upon the soul and conscience. And, equally, we should include many passages from The Prelude in which Wordsworth gives sublime expression to his sense of revelation and of dedication.}^{33}\]

A slightly different definition of sacred poetry, and one often in accord with the sometimes tortured religious gropings of the major Romantic poets whom I intend to discuss, is that offered by Vincent Buckley: "The religious man is one who grasps his life within a larger historical and cosmic setting. He sees himself as part of a greater whole." 34 Arguing in favor of applying Eliade's canon as a key to unlock the religious psyches of poets, Buckley adds
that the traditional religious literary genres (psalms and hymns) are definitely not the most interesting and that "therefore throughout English poetry we are faced with the task of locating religious imaginative life in poetic forms which themselves exhibit, in Eliade's terms, sacred and profane co-existing in such a way as to break through accepted categories."\textsuperscript{35} "If the result does not accord with our images of God," he stresses, "it may be that our images of God have been got too easily."\textsuperscript{36} Finally, I think it safe to say that the truest religious poetry is not a mere reminder of the "known" or the "orthodox," but a means of bodying forth a personal intuition of sacrality. The difference is largely that between dogmatic and personal faiths, a difference expressed by Browning's Fra Lippo Lippi as he responds to the accusation that he is not a religious artist because he fails to remind his observers of matins:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
why for this
\end{center}
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
\textsuperscript{319-322}
\end{quote}

What is far more significant is the personal expression of faith and the quest for a knowledge that transcends the self. Again, Fra Lippo Lippi's words are appropriate:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
This world's no blot for us
Nor blank; it means intensely, and it means good;
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
\textsuperscript{313-315}
\end{center}
\end{quote}

Writing this, Browning voices perhaps the greatest religious
hope of the major Romantics—the hope that they are not only a part of a larger historical and cosmic setting, but that the setting "means good." In a world in which man experiences an ontological crisis—in which current thought distances him from his traditional God and, hence, from a comforting sense of belonging to a world in which cosmos dominates over chaos—the poet seeking assurance turns to the nearer earth and to the task "of Spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, customs had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops."37 The novelty of wonder spoken of by Addison, Akenside, and Burke again becomes a central necessity, but now the objects themselves need not necessarily be new. Instead, they must be seen with renovated eyes.

Having already come this far, next some attention must be given to Eliade's concept of "hierophany"—the means of revelation, the discovery of new value in some trigger-object. Unwilling to accept passively a mechanistic, pre-ordained law, the Romantics instead seek renewed human freedom through recognition of renewed ontological possibilities. For them, nature becomes an entirely different sort of supernatural. They refuse to reason, with the Deists, that a distant God exists because the world exists, but often intuit sacrality immanent in natural objects or in
various human potentialities ranging from sexuality to the imagination. Illuminating the processes of the Romantic mind, Eliade writes:

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly other than the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred, we have proposed the term hierophany. 38

A hierophany is "anything that manifests the sacred"; and so we must get used to the idea of recognizing hierophanies absolutely everywhere, in every area of psychological, economic, spiritual and social life. Indeed, we cannot be sure that there is anything--object, movement, psychological function, being or even game--that has not at some time in human history been somewhere transformed into a hierophany. 39

Thus, in Romantic poetry, hierophany commonly replaces theophany.

 Granted the idea that the sacred manifests itself in time and space but that it is nevertheless "non-historical" and a break in the homogeneity of the historical present, 40 immediate attention is due to the psychological make-up of the person who experiences a hierophany--in our case, the Romantic poet--and to the manner in which he conceives of the object, event, etc. According to Gabriel Marcel, the central characteristic is a very Lockian passivity which he instead refers to as the character's "availability"--his readiness for a "call" or "vocation." "The being who is ready for anything," Marcel writes, is the opposite of him who is occupied or cluttered up with himself. He reaches out, on the contrary, beyond his narrow self, prepared to consecrate his being to a cause which is greater than he is, but which at the same time he makes his own." 41 Drawing
upon a number of philosophic sources, including Marcel,
Keen also stresses this idea:

Every wonder event involves a cognitive crucifixion; it disrupts the system of meaning that secures the identity of the ego. To wonder is to die to the self, to cease imposing categories, and to surrender the self to the object. Such a risk is taken only because there is the promise of a resurrection of meaning.\textsuperscript{42}

Although he who closes his eyes and mind to the sacred or wonderful avoids the distressing confusion that recognition of the unusual may cause, only the person open to novelty has within his reach the infinite—at least the infinite in the sense of "possibility."

Not only the Romantic mentality but also the Romantic arts more nearly approach the sacred. In his impressive study of the arts as they have been related to the sacred throughout history, Gerardus van der Leeuw repeatedly asserts that the more mimetic the art form, the more holy "otherness" is diminished.\textsuperscript{43} Thus, although much Romantic poetry is highly pictorial, as poetry can hardly help being to some extent, it is certainly not purely imitative poetry. There is generally the feeling that meaning lies beneath the surface—that the images are not mere replicas but are instead re-presentations. As Earl Wasserman argues in both The Subtler Language and his essay "Nature Moralized: The Divine Analogy in the Eighteenth Century,"\textsuperscript{44} as a result of the breakdown of previously existing patterns of correspondence, mimetic art is no longer feasible. With the loss of belief in the Divine Analogy, no merely descriptive poem
has meaning. Therefore, as Wasserman so well explains, "by the end of the eighteenth century—and ever since—the poet has been compelled to conceive his own structure of order, his own more-than-linguistic syntax, and so to engage that structure that the poetic act is creative both of a cosmic system and of the poem made possible by that system."\textsuperscript{45} In this perception, Wasserman actually parallels Archibald Alison's \textit{Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste} (1790) in which Alison recognized that the new poets' symbolism possessed no pre-ordained meaning, but that it arose from the imagination and spoke to the imagination. Yet Alison, like Wasserman, argues that the result is not solipsism; for, as he believed, and as such people as Jung and Eliade have since believed, many images function as cultural archetypes, thus bearing clear emotive meaning.

To be sure, such is also the nature of a hierophany or wonder-event. Rather than remaining a simple existential fact, the immediate encounter is wrought, through an act of symbolic transformation, into an experience endowed with transcendent significance. Such a transformation results in what van der Leeuw refers to as the "two-fold experience of form." \textit{"We experience things twice,"} he asserts, \textit{"first directly in actu, the second time as an image, as a form; the first time as uninterpreted life, the second time as transformed life. Only what stands before our eyes as image, as form, as figure, has meaning for us, only that confronts us as power."}\textsuperscript{46}
The process through which this transformation is accomplished is contemplation—the act that Ernst Cassirer has labelled "aesthetic experience." Describing this act, Cassirer relates it to the increase of ontological possibility we find characteristic of wonder:

... the artist does not portray or copy a certain empirical object—a landscape with its hills and mountains, its brooks and rivers. What he gives us is the individual and momentary physiognomy of the landscape. ... Our aesthetic perception exhibits a much greater variety and belongs to a much more complex order than our ordinary sense of perception. In sense perception we are content with apprehending the common and constant features of the object or our surroundings. Aesthetic experience is incomparably richer. It is pregnant with infinite possibilities which remain unrealized in ordinary sense experience. In the work of the artist these possibilities become actualities; they are brought into the open and take on a definite shape. The revelation of this inexhaustibility of the aspects of things is one of the greatest privileges and one of the deepest charms of art.

It is also important to recognize that contemplation of a wonder-event is not restricted solely to the immediate aftermath—the ecstatic afterglow or the melancholy withdrawal period of the encounter, but that it can be extended over a lifetime. In this manner, the careers of the poets I will examine can all be seen to evolve. Not only are they characterized by the epistemological humility that allows objects or events to help create the categories by which they will be understood, these poets remain open to new ideas—new possibilities—that prevent the initial interpretation from stagnating, from becoming dogma. As Verhoeven defines it, philosophical contemplation evoked by
wonder-events is essentially non-teleological: "it is not founded on knowledge nor has it knowledge as its goal. Rather it is obstinate ignorance." It is, above all, "an attitude adopted toward the infinite." Through its inclusiveness and its intensity, Romanticism hopes to overcome the finite.

At this point some of my ideas most clearly break from M. H. Abrams interesting Natural Supernaturalism, throughout which he argues that Romantic poets were content with the earthly. Citing marriage as the metaphor of the age, exemplified by Wordsworth's declaration in the Prospectus to The Excursion that nature is fitted to the mind and the mind to nature, he argues that the sacred completely becomes the natural—that it is finally in this world that "we find our happiness, or not at all" (Prelude, 1805, X, 728). Although this theory is generally true of the poems on which Abrams concentrates—the poems in which the poet's imagination experiences nature as hierophany and is satisfied with his experience—it seems not to be true of Romantic poetry as a whole. The poets' skepticism and changing attitudes should not be overlooked. Tuveson speaks to this point in his discussion of Hutcheson's Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (1726). Hutcheson, he comments, possessed an unorthodox belief in worldly beatitude—a trust that man lived harmoniously in a harmonious natural world. Although certainly a part of the Romantic sensibility, Tuveson notes that this is the "'naive' aesthetics of
Romanticism." It is a failure to share the Romantic Agony. Certainly such poems as Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" and "To a Skylark" ("Ethereal Minstrel"), or Shelley's "Sensitive Plant," Epipsychidion, and Witch of Atlas, to name just a few, are not poems in which the poet is content with the earthly. Even Keats's Fall of Hyperion which Abrams views as a felix culpa destined to initiate the poet into humane awareness of tragedy and to convert him into "a sage; A humanist, Physician to all men" (I, 189-190), I believe is finally a profoundly paradoxical poem in which the poet is not content with what he has envisioned. But all this is to get ahead of myself. This difference between my emphasis and Abrams' must be discussed at more length as I discuss the individual poets.

Striving to assimilate hierophanies into their larger experiences, the poets under study reveal a dialectic between pure wonder (the raw, uncontemplated experience) and systematization. From within this dialectic arises the art that separates them from the quotidian, constructing a new metaphoric world of its own. Because such art springs from life's depths and because the artist is a creator, it resembles religion, while he resembles God. But a critical distinction generally remains. As van der Leeuw observes, art is only "other" whereas religion is "wholly other." And the artist is only a partner of God. Although he creates, he does not do so ex nihilo. Even Blake feels that each
Poetic Genius is but a sort of reincarnation of his arche-
typal Genius, Christ.

These concepts and the ways in which they relate to
the polar opposites of despair and hope, doubt and faith,
tyranny and freedom, hatred and love, will serve as the
basis of my subsequent chapters on Blake, Wordsworth,
Shelley, and Keats. Coleridge's exclusion is due to his
avowedly more traditional Christian concerns and to the
limited number of his excellent relevant poems, "The Eolian
Harp," "This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison," "Frost at Mid-
night," "Dejection: An Ode," and "Rime of the Ancient
Mariner" foremost. Byron is excluded for what I think will
be an obvious reason. His greatest works are, without
question, his later satires. The precise manner in which
these ideas apply to each of the individual poets and the
degree to which they apply will, I trust, become clear as
I concentrate, not on their biographies nor on their histor-
ical contexts, but instead on the structures of their wonder-
experiences and the manner in which they formulate and ver-
balize their thoughts.

Biographical details and historical contexts, of
course, cannot justly be excluded entirely. Therefore,
they will occasionally creep in when they elucidate the
sacred experiences or cognitive and artistic processes.
Although dwelling amidst "conditions/that seem unpropitious"—perhaps because dwelling amidst these conditions—the Romanti-
tics seek a new freedom, one that, if it does not come easily,
is therefore all the more precious if it does come. "The great poets are always primitives. They return to the primeval force of life and language," van der Leeuw proclaims. True as it is, this is not the total picture. Although returning to many beliefs subscribed to in cosmic religions rather than passively accepting the heritage of historical Christianity, each of these poets, for at least a portion of his career, exhibits an acute consciousness of his own historical being. Such a consciousness was not part of archaic man's existence. Instead, he sought to harmonize his life with the rhythm of cosmic cycles; and, as Harvard theologian Harvey Cox has pointed out, these religions "help man situate himself in the larger cosmic setting of which he is undeniably a part. But they do not encourage him to be a history-maker."

This desire to be a history-maker of a rather passive variety is precisely what characterizes all of these poets during certain phases of their careers, if not during the entirety of those careers. Unlike the neo-Classicists, the Romantics do not easily accept the status quo. Their desire for change is inherent in the very act of writing, an act that is carried on between contemplation (the result of wonder) and direct action. Significantly, heightened states of consciousness have long been associated with healing powers. Shamans frequently sought (and seek) such states in order to enable themselves to diagnose patients'
ailments and also frequently worked to produce such states in their patients as a prerequisite to healing. One of the major goals of Romantic poetry, therefore, is to make readers think differently than they do—to open their minds to the manifold possibilities recognized by each poet. Because he links hope to this experience of communion, Marcel writes that "this means that in the first place hope is only possible on the level of the _us_, or we might say the _agape_, and that it does not exist on the level of the solitary _ego_, self-hypnotized and concentrating exclusively on individual aims."56 Marcel's words here are reminiscent of Coleridge's own after his intuition of the "one Life": "Methinks, it should have been impossible/Not to love all things in a world so fill'd" ("Eolian Harp," 27, 30-31). One shared central concern of these poets is, therefore, a profoundly moral one. Yet they are frequently skeptical of their artistic abilities to communicate personal intuitions to the degree that their poems will successfully inaugurate reform. Although changing greatly during their individual careers, each desperately tries to cling to a faith, whether a faith in this life or in an afterlife, but occasionally even this effort proves futile. In these faiths, when they are achieved and maintained, lie the poet's most joyful victories and from these spring personal hopes and a hope for mankind. As Professor Wasserman reminds us, "the minds of men are bound together in meaningful unity not by the cosmic patterns that
we can accept with easy passivity, but by those that must rest on a sorely tried faith, those that are outside language and usually contrary to it⁵⁷--those faiths for which many of the best poems serve as metaphors.
Chapter 1: Notes


5. For an excellent discussion of Newtonian science as a motivating principle behind the poetry of such pre-Romantics as Savage, Mallet, Thomson, and Akenside, and for a good, although brief, discussion of Newton's eventual damnation by Blake, see Marjorie H. Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse* (Princeton, 1946).


9. Translated as *The Sacred Theory of the Earth: Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth and of all the General Changes which It Hath Already Undergone or is to Undergo, till the Consummation of All Things* (London, 1684). Quotations will be from this edition.

11 Willey, p. 4.
12 Tuveson, pp. 65-66.
13 Tuveson, p. 65.
14 Tuveson, p. 66.


22 Francis Jeffrey, Review of Keats's poetry (August, 1820), Edinburgh Review, No. 67, art. 10.


24 Edward Young, Conjectures on Original Composition (Leeds, Eng., 1966), p. 28.


26 Ibid., p. 650.

28 Carter, Letters, III, p. 120.
30 Young, Conjectures, p. 36.
35 Buckley, p. 22.
36 Buckley, p. 44.
38 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 11.
40 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 72.
42 Keen, pp. 30-31.
44 ELH (March, 1953), 39-76.
46 van der Leeuw, p. 306.

48 Cassirer, p. 160.


50 Verhoeven, p. 30.


54 van der Leeuw, p. 122.


56 Marcel, p. 10.

Chapter 2

WILLIAM BLAKE'S INTELLECTUAL WAR

And Man walks forth from midst of fires the evil
is all consumd
His eyes behold the Angelic spheres, arising night
& day,
The stars consumd like a lamp blown out & in their
stead behold
The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of
wondrous worlds.

Although writing cosmological prophetic books at
the time when Wordsworth and Coleridge are producing many
of their most typical and greatest lyrics, Blake does not
quite belong to the greater Romantic tradition. Spurning
the delusive goddess Nature—a goddess worshipped by early
Wordsworth and Coleridge—Blake's poetry is more closely
allied with Collins' "Ode on the Poetical Character," and
especially with Young's and Blair's apocalyptic Night
Thoughts and The Grave and with Smart's visionary Jubilate
Agno. His primary interest is certainly not this-worldly.
Instead, a self-declared visionary and mythmaker in what he
conceived of as a fallen world of the blind and the uncrea-
tive, Blake attributes perhaps the central statement of his
canon to one of his mythical creations, Los: "I must Create
a System or be enslaved by another Man's/I will not Reason
& Compare; my business is to Create" (Jerusalem, 10:20-21),
this imaginative hero of the later prophesies announces.
Obviously repudiating the circumscribed nature of existing
systems, especially the empirical "Philosophy of the Five
Senses" ("Africa," Song of Lot, 16) and deistic Natural Religion of his time, Blake believed in the necessity of an ontological revolution. Man must not remain an entity divorced from an objective world, but must instead recognize that subject and object, seer and seen, are one in Eternity—that man's ontological state both determines and is determined by what he beholds. In order to express a world view and in order to combat the chaos he saw fostered by contemporary attitudes, he creates an anthropogeny intended to serve a redemptive function. As Mircea Eliade tells us, "Indeed, it must not be imagined that cosmogonic or anthropogenic myths are narrated only to answer such questions as 'who are we?' and 'whence do we come?' Such myths also constitute examples to be followed whenever it is a case of creating something, or of restoring or regenerating a human being."2

In this light, both John Beer's and Northrop Frye's explanations of Blake's preference for the epic genre are of interest. The structure, Beer argues, primarily serves a personal psychological function. It is the poet's attempt to substitute security for personal fears. "The common poetic dream of producing an epic," he writes, "often takes this form with the romantic writer. The solidity of the epic structure and the epistemological security of a comprehensive mythology are both needed to back the remainder of the achievement."3 Fighting against opposition from the
outside world, Blake perhaps also fights against himself. More than most of his poems, his letters occasionally body forth a personal fear. "I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse," he writes,

to tell you what Ought to be Told: That I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily & Nightly; but the nature of such things is not, as some suppose without trouble or care. Temptations are on the right hand & left; behind, the sea of time and space roars & follows swiftly; he who keeps not right onward is lost, & if our footsteps slide in clay, how can we do otherwise than fear & tremble?

The highly-developed cosmological prophesies become the poet's effort to shore up personal existence in Eternity against the antagonistic flood of ordinary time and space. It is Blake's recognition that conflicting forces exist within all men and a manifestation of his individual desire to transcend the materialistic concerns of the natural world and to espouse the spiritual concerns of his visionary world.

More interested in the universal than in the personal implications of Blake's adoption of the epic, Frye explains that "the primary function of the epic is to teach the 'nation' its own traditions, and in Blakean terms this means recreating dead facts into living truths, the vanished spectres of tradition into the imagination's eternal and infinite present." Whatever the cause, if both are, in fact, not equally causes for Blake's choice of genre, several facts become increasingly clear as we carefully examine his canon. Borrowing traditional mythical and typological symbols, Blake depicts the disintegration and reintegration of
Albion, his *homo maximus*, and the intervening fallen state of Generative man. Gradually developing his own system, Blake strives to undermine existing dogma and to recreate a world in which the novelty of wonder allows him to replace fate, finitude, and duty with freedom, infinitude, and responsibility, despair and doubt with hope and faith.

Although my primary interest is in Blake's visionary prophesies, a few points should be mentioned, by way of introduction, in relation to his early call for sexual and political revolution. Energy, as Morton Paley demonstrates, is a key term to understanding Blake. It is ultimately the source of all valuable physical and spiritual experiences. Dismissing the notion of a body/soul dichotomy, Blake argues:

1. Man has no body distinct from his Soul for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this Age.
2. Energy is the only Life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound and outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

*(Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 4)*

The theological, political, and philosophical climate of the age, in Blake's view, all legislate against this desirable working out of one's divine energies. As a result, man's options are to become less than fully human or to rebel against conventional mores.

In the poet's mind, the church's teachings of Pauline asceticism eventually necessitate clandestine heterosexual fulfillment of instincts or else lead to repression which
results in autoeroticism. Either the individual comes to believe that "stolen joys are sweet & bread eaten in secret pleasant" (Europe, III, 6) or acts in the manner that causes Blake to write:

The moment of desire! The moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for man shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
In the secret shadows of her chamber; the youth shut up from
The lustful joy shall soon forget to generate & create an amorous image
In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.
(Vision of the Daughters of Albion, 7:3-7)

The result is masturbation or sexual fantasy, both of which Blake regards as a deviation from Eternal existence. "He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 7), he writes, summarizing this idea. Because directly contrary to man's inner needs and to the wondrous recognition that one can be what Freud termed "polymorphously perverse," this false holiness leads Blake to advocate a return to total delight:

For the Sanctuary of Eden is in the Camp, in the Outline, In the Circumference; & every Minute Particular is Holy, Embraces are Comminglings from Head even to Feet, And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place. (Jerusalem, 69:40-41)

As Keen notes, "ask any unsophisticated religious group to free-associate from the word sin: the immediate response will always be 'sex,'" causing these groups to either condemn sensual wonder as immoral or to recognize it as "merely an aesthetic attitude" belonging properly to the arts. To Blake, however, such wonder is clearly a part of the Edenic world,
a world to which the "pompous High Priest" does not belong. Those modern men who equate sex with sin forget that sex was once considered sacred. Only to modern man, Eliade explains, is sexuality entirely physiological. For the primitive man it was a communication with "the force [energy] which stood for life itself"—a force that was ultimate reality.  

Energy, as Paley describes it, is "erotic in origin . . . and revolutionary in expression." This would seem to explain Blake's linking of sexual and revolutionary energies in such characters as Orc and Fuzon. Fighting against tyrannic oppression, the libidinal Orc is described as "Intense! naked! a Human fire fierce glowing" (*America*, 4:8) and is viewed by Albion's Angel (George II, preserver of the status quo) as "Blasphemous demon, Antichrist, hater of dignities, / Lover of wild rebellion and transgressor of God's law" (*America*, 7:5-6). Such energy proves contagious, inspiring the colonists to act. Without this step, Blake writes,

> Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite. (*America*, 14:17-18).

Without energy, the result would have been chaos rather than cosmos. Although Orc similarly arises to lead the revolution in France, his energy becomes increasingly ambiguous as the Reign of Terror results. Blake is forced to begin developing a substitute mythology in the Lambeth books. By the time of *The Four Zoas*, the disintegration of Albion is attributed not only to the Eternal's fall from vision but also to
resultant passionate jealousy leading to the split of Tharmas and his Emanation, Enion. Orc, admittedly, still contrasts himself with the passive Urizen, saying,

I rage in the deep for Lo my feet & hands are naild to the burning rock
Yet my fierce fires are better than thy snows Shuddering thou sittest
Thou art not chain'd Why shouldst thou sit cold grovelling demon of woe
In tortures of dire coldness

(Four Zoas, 79:1-4)

Yet, although active, Orc is now reminiscent of the libidinal Fuzon whose phallic "hungry beam" (Book of Ahania, 2:19) divides Urizen's cold loins but who, in turn, becomes Urizenic, declaring himself "God . . . eldest of all things" (Ahania, 3:38). Chained by his jealous father Los, Orc of The Four Zoas cannot now be unchained. Even though Los recognizes his error in chaining such energy, he recognizes it too late for remedy. The Chain of Jealousy "had taken root" (62:32). The Urizenic Orc had become internally bound to the vegetable world. Energy had failed.

No longer believing in the efficacy of energy divorced from reason, Blake is forced to reconsider the fallen world and to create a revised mythology capable of lending order to the apparent chaos and of explaining how the pre-lapsarian state of the Eternals could be recreated. In a speech similar to Vaughan's poem "Corruption," Urizen laments his separation from Eternity and demonstrates that the changes in subjective and objective worlds are directly proportional:

O, Thou ruined world!
Thou horrible ruin! Once, like me, thou wast all
glorious
And now, like me, partaking desolate thy master's
lot,
Art thou, O ruin, the once glorious heaven? Are
these thy rocks
Where joy sang in the trees, & pleasure sported on
the rivers,
And laughter sat beneath the Oaks, & innocence
sported round
Upon the green plains.

(Four Zoas, 72:35-39,
73:1-2)

In contrast to Vaughan, however, Blake's world is not tragic.
His fallen man is not fated to evermore lament, "Ah, what
bright days were those!" Instead, the later poet believes
that, through a freeing of the Imagination which leads to
Vision, man can not only regain the lost innocence of Beulah
for which Urizen laments but can even regain the Eternal
Paradise of organized innocence that forever exists and is
forever open to the Poetic Genius.

Rather than remaining predominantly interested in
the reptilization of man as a result of his fallen state,
Blake's more mature prophesies stress the existence of
mercy and forgiveness which open the world more and more
to wonder and, therefore, to hope. Only the oppressors who
impose their own perceptual categories and moral laws on
others are to be punished at the moment of the Last Judg-
ment. In response to the earthly Judge's query, "What have
I done?", the Prisoner depicted in the apocalyptic Ninth
Night of The Four Zoas demonstrates a Blakean reversal of
roles and fates:

... you scourged my father to death before my face
While I stood bound with cords & heavy chains. your
hipocrisy
Shall now avail you nought. So speaking he dashd him with his foot
(Four Zoas, 123:30-32)

Although oppressors are to be punished for attempting to circumscribe the existences of others, fallen man in general is to be pardoned. Travelling through Albion's bosom, Los, for example, expresses this notion:

If I should dare to lay my finger on a grain of sand
In way of vengeance, I punish the already punished.
O whom
Should I pity if not the sinner who is gone astray.
(Jerusalem, 45:33-35)

Torn asunder by the self-assertive Zoas, Albion experiences the mercy described in "To Tirzah" as having "changed Death into Sleep." As he dreams in the passive state of Beulah, removed from the active intellectual life of Paradise, indications are that, like the legendary Arthur, he will one day awaken.

Contemporaneous with the fall is the creation of the Generative world. "Time is the Mercy of Eternity," Blake announces in Milton (24:72), and "whatever is visible to the Generated Man/Is a Creation of mercy & love from the Satanic Void," he adds in Jerusalem (13:44-45). Here, a central problem arises. To the legalistic mind, any gift imposes an obligation on the recipient. In the profane realm, Urizen speaks of acts of "charity" employed in order to obtain subservience of the poor:

... If you would make the poor live with temper
With pomp give every crust of bread you give with gracious cunning
Magnify small gifts reduce the man to want a gift & then give with pomp
Say he smiles if you hear him sigh If pale say he is ruddy
Preach temperance say he is overgorgd & drowns his wit
In strong drink tho you know that bread & water are all
He can afford Flatter his wife pity his children till we can
Reduce all to our will as spaniels are taught with art

(Four Zoas, 80:14-21)

In the cosmogonic realm, God's gift of life is regarded as imposing religious obligations. Much as the temporarily disillusioned Wordsworth turns from his naturally fostered "little, nameless, unremembered, acts/Of kindness and of love" in "Tintern Abbey" to his desire to become the "Bondsman" of Duty in "Ode to Duty," Blake's innocent Chimney Sweep believes that adherence to divinely imposed duty will save him from exposure and suffocation. Visited by an Angel in a dream, the Sweep's young friend, Tom Dacre, is told: "If he'd be a good boy,/He's have God for his father & never want joy" (20). Concluding that "if all do their duty, they need never fear harm" (24), the Sweep becomes one of the most pathetic believers in duty in all literature.

In contrast to this legalistic view, Keen comments, "If the doctrine of creation signifies that life is to be perceived as a gift, the appropriate response to this perception will be thankfulness and celebration. Life is to be lived under the sign of gratitude and not obligation; it
is not a debt to be repaid but a gift to be enjoyed."\(^{10}\)

While experience teaches that the vegetable world itself
is not a gift beneficial to mankind, man is nevertheless
left with the individual ability to recreate Eternity. As
early as *Europe*, Blake tells us that all was overwhelmed
"except this finite wall of flesh" (10:20), and, further
developing his anthropogeny, he later defines Adam as the
"limit of Contraction" (*Jerusalem*, 42:31)—that point beyond
which man cannot fall. Even Albion's Spectre, Satan, is
viewed as retaining possibility. Having "withered up" and
having become "a Mortal Worm," he remains "translucent all
within" (*Jerusalem*, 27:53, 55, 56). The wonder that is man
cannot be completely lost. Given the gift of Being, creative
man can alter his state by achieving the fourfold vision of
Eternity rather than remaining limited to the twofold (subject/object) sight of Generation. As Blake writes in a
November 22, 1802, letter to Thomas Butts:

Now I a fourfold vision see,
And fourfold vision is given to me;
'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
And threefold in soft Beulah's night
And twofold always. May God us keep
From Single vision & Newton's sleep

(*Letters*, 79)

Just how man is to regain this wondrous vision can
be best understood by examining the nature of freedom in
Blake's mythology and the manner in which he contrasts this
freedom with the rationalistic proclivities of his time. In
an earlier letter to Butts (October 2, 1800), Blake describes
one of his particular visions:
The jewels of light
Distinct shone & clear.
Amazed and in fear
I each particle gazed
Astonished, Amazed;
For each was a Man
Human-formed.

(Letters, 57)

While such visions lead Blake, as an individual, to a perception of "One Man," presumably Albion, his use of the word fear introduces an element important to any discussion of wonder. Both attracted and frightened by his vision of the microcosmic dewdrops, Blake exemplifies the ambivalence of response associated with both wonder and the holy. In his now classic study, Rudolf Otto speaks of "the holy" as awful, overpowering, and mysterious, but as a force that is also, paradoxically, attractive.\textsuperscript{11} Wonder partakes of this same ambiguity (\textit{tremendum} and fascinans), Keen notes: "In so far as it disrupts our proven way of coping with the world, it is menacing; in so far as it offers the promise of renewing novelty, it is desirable and fascinating."\textsuperscript{12}

Plunged into contingency by wonder-experiences, the rationalists of Blake's day are obviously more concerned with the former threat than with the latter promise. As Erich Fromm points out, such men "want to control life because they are afraid of its uncontrollable spontaneity."\textsuperscript{13} and as Dutch philosopher Cornelis Verhoeven similarly notes, "it is clear that man, collectively, cannot live in wonder and cannot bear the tension imposed by what is 'different.'" He wants to equalize arbitrarily and integrate
or remove the 'other.' This is the tyranny of the mediocre." 14 An obvious exemplar of this tyranny, Blake's mathematician, Obtuse Angle, declares: "In the first place, it is no use for a man to make Queries, but to solve them, for a man may be a fool and make Queries, but a man must have good sense to solve them" (An Island in the Moon, Chap. 1). Turning to scientific investigation, these rationalists lose the immediacy central to a wonder-event, no longer viewing the object as a potent Presence but as an alien object from which elements must be abstracted if one is to realize a solution. "Bacon's philosophy has ruined England," Blake proclaims. Natural Law, he repeatedly argues, is not truth but only that portion of truth that Vala, the deceptive goddess of Nature, reveals to the five senses.

Abstracting and generalizing from what the senses perceive, many of Blake's contemporaries are viewed as "winking and blinking/Like Dr. Johnson" (Island in the Moon, Chap. 9) -- as becoming incapable of seeing anything but segments of a total reality. As Johnson's spokesman, Imlac, tells us in Rasselas, "the business of a poet is to examine not the individual but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks on the tulip, or describe the different shades of verdure of the forest" (X). In Blake's mind, such a theory reveals an atrophy of wonder. His muse-like, prophetic
Fairy in the introductory lines of Europe quite pointedly
sits on a "streak'd tulip." Blake writes:

Five windows light the cavern'd Man; thro' one
he breathes the air;
Thro' one, hears music of the spheres; thro' one,
the eternal vine
Flourishes, that he may receive the grapes; thro' one
can look
And see small portions of the eternal world that ever groweth;
Thro' one himself pass out what time he please,
but he will not;
For stolen joys are sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant.

So sang a Fairy mocking as he sat on a streak'd Tulip,
Thinking none saw him: when he ceas'd I started from
the trees!

(Europe, 3:1-8)

Again, Blake gives us the idea that man's senses are limited
and that the sense of touch (or sexuality) is the most likely to result in momentary Vision if man were only to act freely. Yet, the point he stresses is that only the rare man is a visionary--only he who perceives through, rather than with, the senses. Expecting not to be seen, the Fairy is seen only by the true poet. Further relating sensuality and Vision, the Fairy then addresses Blake:

I will write a book on leaves of flowers,
If you will feed me on love-thoughts, & give me
now and then
A cup of sparkling poetic fancies; so when I am
tipsie,
I'll sing to you to this soft lute; and shew you
all alive
The world, when every particle of dust breathes
forth its joy

(Europe, 3:14-18)

The Fairy's fluid fancies are a direct contrast to non-visionary Urizen's rock which "himsel/From redounding
fancies had petrified" (Book of Ahania, 3:57-58). "Every Man has Eyes, Nose & Mouth; this Every Idiot knows," Blake writes, "but he who enters into & discriminates most minutely the Manners & Intentions, the Characters in all their branches, is the alone Wise or Sensible Man" (A Vision of the Last Judgment).

Speaking to this point, Fromm comments that "logical thought is not rational if it is merely logical and not guided by the concern for life, and by the inquiry into the total process of living in all its concreteness and with all its contradictions." Precisely this low tolerance for contradiction characterizes the law-seeking Augustans whom Blake rejects. Man who adheres to "mere logic" becomes a victim of what Keen terms an "ideopathology"—an unbalanced philosophy, in this case denying human freedom by positing a "vision of necessity" which destroys the "vision of the possible." The result, Keen notes, is a "shriveling of life, which is accompanied by a distortion of the capacity to wonder." Blake's repeated imagery of the shriveling of the senses and of the reptilization of Urizenic man is almost too apparent to be mentioned. To cite just one example of many, the poet writes:

... when the five senses whelm'd
In deluge o'er the earth-born man; then turn'd the fluxile eyes
Into two stationary orbs, concentrating all things.
The ever-varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens
Were bended downward; and the nostrils golden gates shut
Turn'd outward, barr'd and petrify'd against the infinite.

(Europe, 10:10-15)

In his essay "The Keys to the Gates," Frye discusses Urizen as a reality principle demonstrating the Deistic idea that reality is "out there"--that man is condemned, in Marxist terminology, "to study the world and never change it."^18

As described in A Descriptive Catalogue, the upward-striving dolmen stones of the Druidic (for Blake, Deistic) temples of Natural Religion are limited by the horizontal stones of Urizenic reason, just as the serpentine lay-out of the temples themselves are an "image of infinite/Shut up in finite revolutions" (Europe, 10:21-22). Such is the closing illustration of Jerusalem: A picture of visionary Los with a background depiction of the serpent temple of the visionless eighteenth century.

Arguing in favor of Imaginative Vision without which man can never hope to perceive the Eternal, Blake primarily objects to the perceptual passivity described by Locke and Locke's disciples. The mind is not a passive Tabula Rasa on which "simple ideas" impress themselves as an object impresses itself on a mirror. Not the external object, but the mind, the poet insists, plays the all-important role. Furthermore, rejecting the notion of Tabula Rasa, Blake's annotations to Reynolds' Discourses assert: "Man is born like a Garden ready Planted & Sown. This World is too poor to produce one seed," and, "innate ideas are in Every Man,
Born with him; they are truly Himself." "There is No Natural Religion" stresses the effect of a dearth of Imagination: "If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic Character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round again." The "ratio" signifies empirical perception based finally on memory of the object which has impressed itself on the passive senses rather than on direct and active perception of the immediate object itself. Thus, the empiricists' conclusions are invalidated as Blake writes:

And every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause,
and not
A Natural: for a Natural Cause only seems, it is
a Delusion
Of Ulro: & a ratio of the perishing Vegetable
Memory.

(Milton, 26:44-46)

Even the minuter or vaster worlds perceptible through lenses of scientific instruments do little to improve this situation. And here Blake again differs from such men as Newton and Addison. As he argues, neither the microscope nor the telescope can perceive all space as visionary. They, instead, only "alter/The ratio of the Spectators Organs but leave the Objects untouched" (Milton, 29:17-18). The Eternal realm perceptible only to the Poetic Genius lies beyond the confines of the vegetable world--either at its very heart or beyond its constrictive outer bounds: "The Vegetable Universe," Blake explains,

opens like a flower from the Earths center:
In which is Eternity. It expands in Stars to the Mundane Shell
And there it meets Eternity again, both within and without,
And the Satanic Voids between the Stars are the Satanic Wheels.

(Jerusalem, 13:34-37)

Condemning this visionless conception of only natural causes, as exemplified by the mechanical motions of the stars amidst the Satanic Wheels, Blake argues that the Spiritual Cause, God, "is not a Mathematical Diagram" (annotations to Berkeley's Siris).

Unlike the fallen vegetable existence, the Eternals are presented as vibrant and various. While the non-visionary infant of "The Mental Traveller" is fated to remain in his Orc cycle, changing only from the joyous to the "wayward" and "frowning" Babe, the Eternal Mental Traveller himself is an outsider who "heard & saw such dreadful things/As cold earth wanderers never knew" (3-4). He is a "visionary who succeeds in maintaining his visionary power in the face of the cyclical delusion which the poem describes."19 Able to envision what those on earth are incapable of seeing as a result of their closed senses, the Traveller's life is not claustrophobic. "Wonder and a closed mind," Verhoeven writes, "are mutually exclusive since wonder prevents the development of a closed circle, a system."20 Unable to passively succumb to external strictures such as the chains which bind the Orcan Babe or the materialistic possessions which the Babe-turned-Adult substitutes for sensual or sexual gratification, wondering man continues to rule his
life only by possibility.

In contrast to Albion's fall which Frye views as the "form of passive wonder or awe at the world he has created"—a separate world of the Female Will or of a Mother Nature totally external to Albion himself—and in contrast to Milton's self-assertive Spectre which makes the Urizenic declaration that "I alone am God" (Milton, 38:56), the fully Human being must die to the circumscribed self and live according to his infinite and eternal Genius. "Selfhood," Blake says, belongs to the realm of "the Not Human" (Milton, 41:1) and results in the type creature portrayed in the early "Mad Song." Afraid to view the wondrous varieties existent in the world of those who dwell in light, the self-enclosed madman runs a perpetual race ahead of the sun in order to remain in non-contingent darkness. The unnaturalness of his internal state is reflected by the maddened and stormy external world through which he runs.22 Only when man is capable of casting off error as Milton does, putting off "in self-annihilation all that is not of God alone" (Milton, 38:48), does he open the vegetable world to the possibility of apocalypse and resurrection. As Blake asserts in A Vision of the Last Judgment, "whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth, a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual." And as Keen points out, imagery of apocalypse and resurrection is "integral to the experience of wonder." "Every wonder-event," he continues, "involves a cognitive crucifixion... To wonder is to die to the self,
to cease imposing categories. . . . Such a risk is taken only because there is a promise of a resurrection of meaning. 23

To the man who imposes categories based on what his senses can perceive, each object is merely what it appears to be. The cat Jefffrey is a whiskered feline pet, not the electrical fire envisioned by Christopher Smart in Jubilate Agno. Each bird is a feathered and winged biped or, at most, just another sparrow or robin. To the Poetic Genius, however, each is seen as a particular and pregnant wonder.

"How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way/Is an immense world of delight closed by your senses five?" (Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 6), Blake inquires. The object is no longer what it ordinarily appears to be. It has become something completely other. A thistle is perceived as a humanized "Old Man Grey" and the sun as "Los in his Might" (Letters, 77, 78); grains of sand and wild flowers, in "Auguries of Innocence," are perceived as worlds and heavens. Even the commonplace, pesky housefly is a marvelous phenomenon. "Seest thou the little winged fly," Blake writes,

smaller than a grain of sand?
It has a heart like thee, a brain open to heaven & hell
Withinside wondrous & expansive; its gates are not closed
I hope thine are not.

(Milton, 20:27-30)

Generalizing about this belief, Blake explains that "we see
only as it were the hem of the garments/When with our vegetable eyes we view these wond'rous visions" (Milton, 26:11-12). Anticipating the empiricists' condemnation as a fantasy-ridden madman, he further stresses the ontological reality of the spiritual:

A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see does not imagine at all.

(Descriptive Catalogue)

Without such Vision, man is once again back to the empiricists' ratio of all things which the "Proverbs of Hell" contrast with perception of the Eternal. "Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth," Blake comments, adding that "the cistern contains. The fountain overflows" (Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 8). The open, wondering approach to life continually lends new meaning to objects, whereas the delimiting viewpoint brings forth final answers that stagnate.

To the wondering man, therefore, the process of seeking knowledge is paramount, not the absolute end-product revered by those whom Blake regards as the tyrannic majority. Wonder, as Verhoeven says, is more a "disposition" than an "attitude"—an "experience of self on the way to and groping for an attitude or a concentration from which an attitude or a feeling may possibly develop." As a result, wonder is characterized by true interest, a word that both Verhoeven and Fromm take pains to define as
derived from the Latin *Interesse*, "to be in the middle."
In wonder experiences, man finds himself amidst multiplicity: identity has exploded, turning the one into the many.
Because man is humanly involved in creating the identity of the object, Keen notes that the "distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity." 25 Distance vanishes:

What is Above is Within, for everything in Eternity is translucent;
The Circumference is within; Without is formed the Selfish Center,
And the Circumference still expands, going forward to Eternity.

(*Jerusalem*, 71:6-8)

This is precisely where Los's reasoning Spectre has failed; for as Los tells him:

... never! never! shalt thou be Organized
But as a distorted & reversed Reflection in the Darkness
And in the Non Entity; nor shall that which is above
Ever descend into thee, but thou shalt be a Non Entity for ever.

(*Jerusalem*, 17:41-44)

The external can never be internalized and fully comprehended by the unimaginative Spectre. Instead, like Locke and Newton, it is condemned to believe that all externals, including God, are ultimately mysterious—that we can only know what the five constricted senses perceive.

Expressing the belief that "Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably" or that "In Eternity, one thing never Changes into another Thing" (*Vision of the Last Judgment*), Blake is
not contradicting his predominant wondering stance as he may first appear to be. We must recall the nature of the Eternals, who, themselves, are perfect examples of multeity in unity—androgy nous beings characterized by the fourfold faculties of the Zoas and by the dynamics implied by such fourfold balance. Vision is the man’s capacity to perceive this Eternal state—his capacity to perceive "wonders Divine/Of the Human Imagination" (Jerusalem, 98:31-32). In addition to this, the nature of the Imagination, he says, is not a mere aesthetic attitude less real and less permanent than the vegetable world. Just as the oak and the lettuce die individually but are perpetuated as a species through the growth of their seeds, "so the Imagination returns by the seed of contemplative thought" (Vision of the Last Judgment). This contemplative thought, Blake adds, again in A Vision, has for its subject "Redemption or Judgment." In this subject matter, Blake's imaginative man differs from the Lockian empiricist believed to contemplate "simple ideas" impressed upon the mind by external objects. Blake contemplates the spiritual realm envisioned through the Imagination, not the material realm of which man only has memories. Referring to the images of three aged men discussed as representatives of Divine Providence, Blake further develops the relationship between thought and redemption in yet another passage of A Vision:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination, approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought, if he would Enter into
Noah's Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder, which always entreats him to leave mortal things, as he must know, then he would arise from his grave, then would he meet the Lord in the Air, & he would be happy.

Contemplation of Heaven, Judgment, and Redemption leads Blake to contemplation of the reunified Albion who, when awake, both recognizes and is Eternal Truth. In contrast to the absolute reality, or Urgrund, of tantric yoga in which all contraries coexist in perfect stillness, Albion's unity consists of the active "wars of life and wounds of love/With intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought" (Jerusalem, 34:14-15).

Exactly this thought, seen as an outgrowth of Vision, enables men avoiding the Apollonian ideopathology to avoid its opposite, the Dionysian ideopathology. Hoping to experience a resurrection of meaning by experiencing the wonder of diversity rather than denying ontological freedom by categorizing and abstracting, man can again go too far. "The power of the dance is a dangerous power," Greek scholar E. R. Dodds warns, "Like other forms of self-surrender, it is easier to begin than to stop."\textsuperscript{26} The archetypal nightmare of Dionysian terror, Keen mentions, is that of coming apart at the center.\textsuperscript{27} We need only look to Yeats's poem "The Second Coming." Such an archetype lies behind Blake's dramatization of the disintegration of Albion as a result of loss of the equipoise of Zoas. Arguing against Norman O. Brown's desire to abolish all boundaries, Keen describes
his so-called "timely man" or "man for all seasons,"
asserting that "madness must be in conversation with san-
ity, the id with the ego, or the result will be a frenzy of
destruction rather than an ecstasy of self-transcendence." 28
Again, we see why Blake abandoned his early interest in
revolutionary and sexual energies in favor of a balance of
intellectual energies. While Urizen originally attempts to
deny the existence of all contraries, later realizing his
error and saying, "I have sought for a joy without pain,/ For a solid without fluctuation" (Book of Urizen, 4:10-11),
Orc, who represents energy without reason, is equally in
error. As a result, he becomes equally tyrannic. In the
paradisal visionary state, Blake believes, "Contraries
mutually Exist" (Jerusalem, 17:33). "Without Contraries is
no progression," he explains, "Attraction and Repulsion,
Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Human
existence" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 3). The on-going
strife between oppression and revolution is the source of
all growth of the Imagination. Both the god-like energy of
the Prolific and the circumscribing reason of the Devourer
are necessary. "These two classes of men are always upon
earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile
them seeks to destroy existence" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell,
16). Reason's efforts to circumscribe energy are what
stimulates it to greatest achievement. Finally, then,
neither reason nor energy is condemned in itself, but
instead the unbalanced manner in which either can be employed.

Looking more closely at Blake's specific imagery, we find a fairly commonplace relationship between waking and this sense of wonder, sleep and the atrophy of wonder. Sleep, Verhoeven reports, is a retreat in the face of recognition and is characteristic of those who flourish in twilight. "We flee from anything that we cannot integrate into our lives," he adds. 29 Again man strives to overcome contingency, this time not by explaining it away but by trying to ignore it. While Albion's sleep is simply a passive state granted him until the Zoas recognize their error and reunite, his sleep indicates that the original disturbance in heaven is now viewed by Blake as a fall from vision, not as the traditional assertion of blasphemous pride. Urizen himself enters a state similar to sleep: "A roof, vast, petrific around,/On all sides He framed, like a womb" (Book of Urizen, 5:28-29), Blake writes. Separated from the world of the Eternals, Urizen returns to the Earth Mother. But like the sleeping state, his is one that implies the possibility of later waking life. Believing that the best that can be said about empiricists such as Locke is that they had fallen asleep in Eternity. Blake writes a few relevant lines in "Auguries of Innocence":

We are led to Believe a Lie
When we see not Through the Eye
Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night
When the Soul slept in Beams of Light.  (125-128)
The senses are related to sleep, the soul to waking Vision. Similarly, this time condemning Deism, he reiterates this basic contrast between the cloudy, night-time nature of the closed senses and the light, day-time nature of the open and wondering mind: "Religious dreams and holy vespers light thy smoky fires," he tells us, adding, "Once were thy smoky fires lighted by the eyes of honest morn" (Vision of the Daughters of Albion, 6:14-15).

Fallen into this sleep and into the dogmatic and restrictive "Holy love . . . which separated the stars from the mountains, the mountains from Man/And left Man a little grovelling root outside of Himself" (Jerusalem, 17:30-32), man has fallen into the "caverns on earth" (Milton, 17:25). Though mountains are viewed by Blake as partaking of the Eternal, caverns are not yet for him symbols of man's imaginative powers as they will be for the major Romantics.

"Great things are done when Men & Mountains meet" in the Eternal state, Blake announces in the Rosetti MS, but "this is not done by Jostling in the Street." Only by transcending what appears to be, does man fulfill himself. Such transcendence in inherent in the visionary moment, the most valuable gift given to fallen man. These visionary moments of wonder are "hierophanies," the term Eliade employs to designate a manifestation of the sacred. "Reason, or the ratio of all we have already known," Blake writes, "is not the same that it shall be when we know more" ("There is No Natural
Religion," II). This increased knowledge, achieved by man's willingness to acknowledge tension within the object, leads to the hierophany or to man's "resurrection." Resurrection, so conceived, says Fromm, is "not the creation of another reality after the reality of this life, but the transformation of this reality in the direction of greater aliveness. Man and society are resurrected every moment in the act of hope and faith in the here and now."30 This is apparently what "Auguries of Innocence" means when it speaks of visionary man's ability to "hold Infinity in the palm of your hand/And Eternity in an hour" (3-4). Similarly, Urizen alludes to this idea when, weeping in the darkness, he describes his past error as "Thro Chaos seeking for delight & in spaces remote/Seeling the Eternal which is always present to the wise" (Four Zoas, 121:9-10).

Once again, it is this central idea that Paley develops when he refers to Joseph Frank's seminal essay on "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (Sawanee Review, 1945) and suggests that the complexity of Milton is actually a vision occurring in a single moment.31 Comprehensible only when we recognize that the events of the prophesy are synchronic instead of diachronic and when we also recognize the manner in which Blake uses symbolic figures representative of various perceptual possibilities inherent in all individuals, Blake tells us:

Thus Milton stood, forming bright Urizen, while his Mortal part
Sat frozen in the rock of Horeb, and his Redeemed portion
Thus formed the Clay of Urizen; but within that portion
His real Human walked above in power and majesty,
Though darkened; and the Seven Angels of the Presence attended him.

(Milton, 20:10-14)

Thus, in Blake's vision in the garden at Felpham, the great poet can simultaneously be seen as possessing an Eternal ontological possibility while undergoing the necessity of casting off his Selfhood and of defeating Urizen. We are reminded of Blake's letter speaking of his being under the direction of Messengers from Heaven but simultaneously being forced to confront and overcome temptations on the right hand and the left.

It is finally in the "Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery" (Milton, 29:3) that the redemptive vision, itself, occurs: "There is a Moment in each day," Blake writes,

that Satan cannot find,
Nor can his Watch-Fiends find it, but the Industrious find
This Moment & it multiply, & when it once is found
It renovates every Moment of the Day, if rightly placed.

(Milton, 35:42-45)

Characteristic of wonder-experiences, as we have already seen them, this moment "tis translucent & has many Angles" (Jerusalem, 37:15). Thus, it is this ability to recognize transluence that gives importance to the moment; for, as Blake states in "All Religions are One," "the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences." The Human perceptual act itself—the ability to see more than the reasoning Satanic Selfhood can see—appears more impor-
tant than the specific perception. "The moment is the point of time that serves as a point of departure, impetus, to an action or experience, a transition," Verhoeven remarks; "time is not homogenous; there are points of time of greater or lesser importance, or perhaps time is usually not there at all."32 It is what Eliade refers to as "sacred time"—those moments in which time is reversible, in which primordial mythical time is made present.33 They are those moments in which the mythical ancestor, Albion, can be reintegrated.

Carried a step farther, this notion of apocalyptic moments differentiates Blake from one of his most noteworthy predecessors, Edward Young, and from the most typical poems of the major Romantics. While Young's poetry is apocalyptic, he retains belief in the traditional future apocalypse which will be an end to all time, not the apocalypse in the present moment that vertically intersects the horizontal historical continuum. On the other hand, while Wordsworth's "spots of time" and Shelley's and Keats's own sacred moments are renovative and often regarded as conducive to future reform, they are not in themselves apocalyptic. But more of this later.

Emphasizing the role of art as related to visionary moments and to Eternity which encompasses all contraries or possibilities, Blake describes Los's Halls in Golgonooza, the City of Art:

All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
Los's Halls, & every Age renews its powers from these works . . .
In all their various combinations, wrought with wondrous art.  
(Jerusalem, 16:61-62, 66)

The early libidinal Orc can be equated with "Becoming" and the subsequent imaginativaive hero, Los, with "Being" Frye notes, adding that "Being" is a work of art and exists in that unity of time and space which is infinite or eternal. 34 "Maximum openness" to tension within the object, Verhoeven adds to Frye's idea, "gives maximum self-experience." It involves one "to the very verge of one's identity." 35

Christ, Blake's archetypal example of Genius, is probably involved to the verge of his identity even more than the other personages of the poet's canon. Writing from the rationalistic or Deistic viewpoint, Blake presents the argument from Design:

Poor Spiritual Knowledge is not worth a button
For thus the Gospel Sir Isaac confutes:
God can only be known by his attributes,
And as for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost
Or of Christ and his Father--it's all a boast,
And pride and vanity of the imagination
That disdains to follow this Worlds Fashion.

(Everlasting Gospel)

This argument, however, clearly fails to satisfy Blake whose Christ stresses: "I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend/Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me" (Jerusalem, 4:18-19). "When God becomes segregated from the times, spaces, and activities in which the majority of life is lived," writes Keen, "when a wedge is driven between the holy and the quotidiant--the concept of God becomes either
insignificant or positively repressive and must be rejected if the integrity of human life is to be retained. Deistic God (Nobodaddy), who dwells in the interstellar voids, is rejected. For example, "To Nobodaddy" inquires:

Why art thou silent & invisible
Father of Jealousy
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching Eye.

(1-4)

Revealing himself to be what Harvey Cox, in his book The Feast of Fools, repeatedly refers to as "Christ the Harlequin," Blake's Christ embraces the quotidian, becoming a celebrant of life. He is the nearer God that Eliade describes as sought when man finds himself a resident of a cosmos abandoned by its creator. Natural Religion, Blake argues, is the "Preacher of Death/Of Sin, of Sorrow,& of Punishment," while Christ, on the other hand, is "the Bright Preacher of Life" (Jerusalem, 77:18-19, 21). Similarly, addressing orthodox man, the poet asserts that "the vision of Christ that thou dost see/Is my visions greatest Enemy" (Everlasting Gospel). As early as The Songs of Experience, Blake's Little Vagabond speaks against a restrictive God and in favor of a fuller life:

Dear Mother, dear Mother, the Church is cold,
But the Alehouse is healthy & pleasant & warm;
Besides, I can tell where I am used well;
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.
Attacking the Greek concept of Fate and also attacking the
Hebraic Decalogue, Christianity entered the world as a
rebellious force, only later stagnating into what Blake views
as its own legalism. The poet’s laudable Devil acts as spokes-
man for the former point as he contends with a self-righteous
Angel:

If Jesus is the greatest man, you ought to love
him in the greatest degree; now hear how he has given
his sanction to the law of the ten commandments: did
he not mock at the sabbath and so mock the sabbath’s
God? Murder those who were murdered because of him?
Turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery?
Steal the labour of others to support him? Bear false
witness when he omitted making a defense before Pilate?
Covet when he prayed for his disciples and when he
bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such
as refused to lodge them? I tell you, no virtue can
exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus
was all virtue and acted from impulse, not from rules.
(Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 24)

"First God Almighty comes with a Thump on the Head,
Then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it" (Vision of
the Last Judgment), Blake announces. Thus, he concentrates
his attention on Christ the Redeemer. The "Holy" is actually
even labelled "Antichrist," as, for example, in an early
version of The Everlasting Gospel:

    For what is Antichrist but those
    Who against sinners Heaven close
    With bars in virtuous state,
    And Rhadamant us at the gate?

Alluding to the judicial son of Zeus and Europa, Blake pre-
sents a direct contrast to his Jesus. Christ "comes to
Deliver Man the Accused & not Satan the Accuser," he writes,
"We do not find anywhere that Satan is Accused of Sin: he
is only accused of Unbelief & thereby of drawing Man into Sin
that he may accuse him" (*Vision of the Last Judgment*).

Again the lover of religious Mystery is contrasted with
Christ as the "holy"-minded, shadowy Man of *The Everlasting
Gospel* speaks:

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Crucify this cause of distress
Who don't keep the secrets of Holiness
All Mental Powers by Disease we bind,
But he heals the Deaf & the Dumb & the Blind.
Whom God has afflicted for Secret Ends,
He comforts & Heals & calls them Friends.
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Healing man's senses which, in the above passage, are con-
ceived of as limited by a purely self-interested God rather
than by an Eternal's error, Christ's entry into history rein-
forces the possibility of wonder. Man can be saved from the
subject/object perceptual dichotomy of the Generative world,
Blake writes:

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What seems to Be Is To those to whom
It seems to Be, & is productive of the most dreadful
Consequences to those to whom it seems to Be, even of
Torments, Despair, Eternal Death, but the Divine Mercy
Steps beyond and Redeems Man in the Body of Jesus, Amen.
And Length, Breadth, Height again Obey the Divine
Vision. Hallelujah.
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*(Jerusalem*, 32:49-55)

Speaking of the difficulty of verbally describing
sacred wonder-events and, therefore, shedding light on much
of Blake's own practice, Keen declares: "The Plethora of
titles given to Jesus (Lord, Messiah, Son of David, Priest
of the Order of Melchizadek, New Adam, Lamb of God, Suffer-
ing Servant, and so on) is evidence of the playful and poetic
extremes to which language had to be stretched to express
the happening. . . . Novelty had entered history."37 In
this, Keen once again echoes Rudolf Otto who earlier comments on the metaphorical nature of most attempts to verbalize sacred experiences. We cannot tell another person precisely what we have experienced, Otto argues, but we can aid in his process of understanding "by bringing before his notice all that can be found in other regions of the mind, already known and familiar." In Blake's canon, this concept becomes a complex one. Although the poet views the wondrous Christ as more Dionysian than Apollonian, he nevertheless also views Christ's teachings as solidifying into ritual. A dualism once again arises between the sacred and the profane worlds, much as it did as a result of the Decalogue's disregard for the beneficial aspects of human energy and impulse. Since the God of New Science was increasingly distanced from the earth, no longer in-dwelling and only conceived as a result of the Deistic argument from Design, an interpretation of Christ's appearance as "theophany" became less and less appropriate. An impersonal God would not be likely to send a personal Saviour. It becomes increasingly difficult to accept Christ's appearance as purely historical wonder, necessarily self-limited by the simple fact that the Divine had chosen human form existing in space and time. Blake repeatedly rejects the notion that anything sacred is totally limited to earthly existence.

As a result, Blake is forced to go even beyond the complex plethora of titles discussed by Keen. Further compli-
cating his mythology, in such works as Milton, he creates a Los-Christ-Milton-Blake unity, each incarnation of which is viewed as hierophany. Envisioning Milton's entrance into his own left foot and becoming "One Man" with the Christ-like Los (Milton, 21 & 22), Blake arises with new strength. Capable of transcending time, as previously discussed, he insists once again on his belief in the recurrence of "types." As Isaiah asserts, his own motive for going naked and barefoot is "the same that made our friend Diogenes the Grecian" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 13)—that is, to raise the perception of others. No longer merely an historical wonder, because no longer limited to an unrepeatable event, this symbolic unity of prophetic Genius reveals the centrality of ontological wonder to Blake's canon. "The Imagination is not a State: it is Human Existence itself" (Milton, 32:32), the poet proclaims, revealing the manner in which Genius might be labelled "ontophany"—a showing forth of Being itself, a revelation of total Humanity. "Where man is not nature is barren" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 10), he tells us, emphasizing the idea that, unlike early Wordsworth, he wonders at man's visionary faculty and not at natural objects perceived as external to man.

Because he wonders at this visionary capacity, Blake ultimately deifies man. In traditional Christian imagery, the imaginative of fourfold man becomes Christ-like, "Eyed as the Peacock" (Jerusalem, 98:14). Natural sight, Blake says in his annotations to Wordsworth, is not Divine and is,
therefore, not wonder-ful. Instead, imagination is "the Divine Vision, not of the world, nor of Man, nor from Man as he is a Natural Man, but only as he is a Spiritual Man."
The difference between these two outlooks is perhaps most lucidly bodied forth in "Auguries of Innocence":

    God Appears & God is Light
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night,
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of day.

    (129-132)

God is not the withdrawn, alien, and unknowable Nobodaddy of rationalists who believe in the limited nature of man’s understanding, but a truly humanized God who merits recognition only when He is conceived of as inherent in man’s experience of wonder. As God tells Christ in The Everlasting Gospel:

    If thou humblest thyself thou humblest me;
Thou also dwell’st in Eternity.
Thou art a man: God is no more;
Thy own humanity learn to adore,
For that is my spirit of life.

In a letter to his friend Thomas Butts (October 2, 1800), Blake notes that this Imaginative Vision consists of seeing "each particle" as "a Man/Human-formed" (Letters, 57); for only such Vision grants sacred existence to objects by abolishing the perceptual dichotomy and, thereby, rendering the objects as wonder-ful as the perceiver himself. "Think of a white cloud as being holy, you cannot love it," Blake declares in his annotations to Swedenborg, "but think of a holy man within the cloud, love springs up in your thoughts, for to think of holiness distinct from man is impossible to the
affections." Once again Blake is separated from Wordsworth, not conceiving of Nature as transforming man through its Ministry but, very differently, conceiving of Man as transforming nature through existence as a Visionary Being.

Capable of this divine perception, man becomes capable of transcending his vegetable existence. Portraying the innocent infant cherub as mutilated by Urizenic "Aged Ignorance" who says, "Holy & cold, I clipped the wings/Of all sublunary things" (The Gates of Paradise), Blake repeatedly makes use of archetypal birds of knowledge apparently derived from early reading of Swedenborg. According to Eliade, such birds are primarily associated with man's desire for the freedom so central to Blake's wonder. While words for "transcendence" and "freedom" did not exist in archaic languages, the concept of Magical Flight did, proving that "the roots of freedom are to be sought in the depths of the psyche, and not in conditions brought about by certain historical moments; in other words, the desire for absolute freedom ranks among the essential longings of man, irrespective of the stage his culture has reached and of its forms of social organization."39

We need only look to Blake's Sunflower in Songs of Experience to find an example of weariness of imprisoning earthly time and of the desire to escape to a freer world. But returning to the concept of Magical Flight itself, it is important to note that the ascensional experience gradually becomes more and more associated with contemplation rather than with
bodily movement and, thus, results in "a sort of spatial simultaneity granted to one by the intelligence." This explanation, coupled with Blake's own pervasive use of birds and flight as representative of thought, helps explain much of his own synchronic and psychological poetic architecture. For example, in contrast to Theotormon who cannot forgive Oothoon for her loss of virginity and who thus proves to be a "holy" man incapable of visionary freedom that leads to forgiveness, the freedom-seeking Oothoon daily wails: "Arise, you little glancing wings, and sing your infant joy! Arise and drink you bliss, for everything that lives is holy" (Vision of the Daughters of Albion, 8:9-10). Only the imaginative are able to long for flight, for only they recognize it as an ontological possibility.

A more successful, purely visionary example appears in Milton as Blake contrasts the Mundane Shell of fallen perception or atrophied sense of wonder with this desirable freedom:

It is a cavernous Earth
Of labyrinthine intricacy, twenty-seven folds of opaqueness,
And finishes where the lark mounts.

(Milton, 17:25-27)

Using the number twenty-seven as a symbol for the fallen world (the contrictive Mundane Shell), Blake signals the Imaginative apocalypse by the rising of the lark, which he later notes is "a mighty Angel" (Milton, 36:12) when seen by the transformative Vision of the imaginative eyes. The moment
of flight is appropriately the moment of Milton's reunification with Ololon, his Emanation, and thus a reattainment of perfect coexistence within an androgynous whole. "Immediately the lark mounted," Blake writes,

with a loud trill from Felphams Vale
And the wild Thyme from Wimbletons green & impurpled Hills
And Los & Enitharmon rose over the Hills of Surrey. (Milton, 42:29-31)

In Milton's casting off of error and reunification with Ololon, the symbols of his expansion in moments of sublimity (symbolized by the upward-soaring lark) and of his contraction in moments of pathos (symbolized by the wild thyme) are united. As John Beer asserts:

The thyme concentrates human vision towards the minute particularity of its beauty; simultaneously, its scent contracts the physical senses into a total unanalysable response. The knowledge that the flower is no static object, that it contains seed within seed for ever, increases one's sense of infinity.

Similarly with the lark. The straining of the eye to follow it into the heavens is matched by an unorganized expansion of the physical senses produced by its song. This again is no quantitative response; to measure the distance of the bird's flight would be absurd. The 'infinite' dimension here is measured by the impulse in the bird, not by the capability of ascending to this or that particular height in the sky. Thus, natural symbols that for Blake possess Eternal value unite, just as Los and Enitharmon, the creative Genius and the object-world, also unite in flight. The earthly act has cosmic parallels. Reiterating the perceptual dichotomy of Generation as contrasted with the unified Vision of Eternity, Blake describes the point attained by those possessing each of these outlooks. As he explains, "travellers from Eternity
pass outward to Satan's seat, / But travellers to Eternity
pass inward to Golgonooza" (Milton, 17:29-30). Once reach-
ong Golgonooza, Los's City of Art where all possibilities
co-exist, the traveller is given the opportunity of actively
rebuilding Jerusalem.

Closely related to these concepts of wonder and free-
dom, lost wonder and increased restriction, therefore, are
the concepts of hope and despair. Believing in a God who
"is not a Being of Pity & Compassion" but who, quite the
contrary, "feeds on Sacrifice & Offering" (Jerusalem, 10:47,
48), Los's Spectre laments his condition. "O that I could
cease to be! Despair! I am Despair," he moans (Jerusalem,
10:51). Similarly, he later adds, "Hope is banished from
me" (Jerusalem, 47:16). "The bounded is loathed by the
possessor," Blake tells us, noting that, as a result of these
bounds, "the same dull round even of a universe would soon
become a mill with complicated wheels" ("There is No Natural
Religion"). In this early version of mill imagery, recurring
in subsequent works, Blake already begins to associate the
tyannical wheels with the Selfhood incapable of perceiving
otherness. "The many become the same as the few when possessed," and, consequently, man cannot achieve the infinity that he
desires. Restricted to what he can see with his eyes, man's
perceptual possibilities (and thus his ontological possibili-
ties) are closed. "If any could desire what he is incapable
of possessing," Blake explains, "despair must be his eternal
lot." Hope, a polar opposite, Keen says, is "The conviction that the future, no less than the present, is open to radical novelty." Here, Los becomes Blake's exemplary figure. Capable of ontological wonder, he comments: "Still I labour in hope... That Enthusiasm and Life may not cease" (Jerusalem, 9:28, 31). Life characterized by freedom remains open to possibility, thereby enabling Los to remain hopeful.

As Fromm notes, this hope is related to another element of life's structure: faith. "Faith," as he defines it, "is not a weak form of belief or knowledge; it is not faith in this or that... It is certainty about the reality of the possibility." "Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth," the "Proverbs of Hell" announce. A brief satiric verse provides Blake's special definition of "reason" and directly contrasts the New Scientist with the Visionary: "Reason and Newton they are quite two things," he writes;

For so the Swallow & the Sparrow sings
Reason says Miracle. Newton says Doubt
Aye thats the way to make all Nature out
Doubt Doubt & dont believe without experiment
That is the very thing that Jesus meant
When he said Only believe Believe & try
Try Try & never mind the Reason why.

Clearly, this is the reason conversant with imagination--reason as a component of the fourfold Albion. Essentially Blake argues that man should be content with what Keen calls ontological wonder--wonder at the fact of existence itself. In contrast to the doubters who live by demonstration alone, and not by faith, Visionaries obtain truth and achieve organ-
ized innocence through their mental battle of contraries.

Contending with his Spectre, Los explains:

Negations are not Contraries; Contraries mutually exist,
But Negations Exist Not; Exceptions & Objections & Unbeliefs
Exist not; nor shall they ever be Organized forever & ever.
If thou separate from me, thou are a Negation, a mere Reasoning & Derogation from me, an Objecting & cruel Spite
And Malice & Envy. (Jerusalem, 17:33-36)

Experiencing ontological wonder, as expressed by Los's description of himself as a "Living Man" (Jerusalem, 17:16) in contrast to those who inhabit the Generative world of Eternal Death, both Los and Milton exhibit the inner activeness prerequisite to a faith based on "certainty about the reality of the possibility." Each has faith that he can subdue his Spectre or Selfhood, thereby ending Negation and ultimately reuniting with his Emanation or Contrary. Combating his own Puritanical Selfhood, Milton declares this faith: "Satan! my Spectre! I know my power thee to annihilate" (Milton, 38:29), he proclaims. In a passage which follows, likely the greatest passage of the poem, Milton addresses his Emanation, Ololon, differentiating between Negation and Contrary as Los does and also describing the means by which the Selfhood must be subdued. The necessary acts, he says, are:

To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the Not Human . . .
To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the
Saviour
To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration,
To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albion's covering,
To take off his filthy garments & clothe him with Imagination . . .
To cast off the idiot Questioner who is always questioning
But never capable of answering, who sits with a sly grin
Silent plotting when to question, like a thief in a cave,
Who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge, whose Science is Despair.

(Milton, 41:1, 3-6, 12-15)

Blake's concern with Negations and Contraries reveals his concern with ethics. But, making this claim, one must be careful to distinguish ethics as traditionally conceived by dogmatic "holy" men whom Blake despised and as conceived by wondering men in whose group Blake numbered himself. Finally, Blake believe that the concern should be not "whether a man is Good or Evil," but "whether he is a Wise Man of a Fool" (Jerusalem, 91:54-55). The Wise Man's goal is to denounce rigid systems and to emphasize the necessity of deferment--of continual recognition of tension within the object. Blakean ethics becomes a patient openness to possibility instead of becoming an authoritarian imposition of duty. It should not be based on a balance of terror, but on freedom. "Freedom," Fromm argues,

is the quality of being fully humane. In as much as we transcend the realm of physical survival and in as much as we are not driven by fear, impotence, narcissism, dependency, etc., we transcend compulsion. Love, tenderness, reason, interest, integrity, and identity--they are all the children of freedom. 45

Describing the manner in which man acts with benevolence and virtue instead of merely giving them lip-service, Los con-
demns standard morality and praises the divinity of Vision of the wonder-ful. He advises the Spectre with whom he contends:

   Go to These Fiends of Righteousness,
   Tell them to obey their Humanities & not pretend Holiness
   When they are murderers; as far as my Hammer & Anvil permit,
   Go, tell them that the Worship of God is honouring his gifts
   In other men & loving the greatest men best, each according
   To his Genius, which is the Holy Ghost in Man; there is no other
   God, than that God who is the intellectual fountain of Humanity;
   He who envies or calumniates; which is murder & cruelty,
   Murders the Holy-one.

   (Jerusalem, 91:5-12)

Blake believes that man must pass from the world of totalitarianism or duty to the realm of freedom or responsibility. As Fromm argues, in a statement that could as easily have come from Blake's own pen, the "humanistic conscience" is the willingness to be independent of external commands and, instead, to "listen to the voice of one's own humanity." When man believes that he must actively discover meaning for himself, he reveals faith in his ability to transcend vegetable existence and finally reveals his faith in his ability to become a creator god.

As homo faber, man's ultimate task is to create himself, Keen notes. In harmony with this, Eliade repeatedly tells us that archaic man established his identity around places in which hierophanies had occurred. The place became
a sort of *axis mundi*, and every building a new cosmogony. Such acts are necessarily based on faith in both the present and the future and seem to be the basis of Blake's own desire to build Jerusalem. In his Preface to *Milton*, Blake declares this task:

> Bring me my bow of burning gold;  
> Bring me my Arrows of desire;  
> Bring me my Spear:  O clouds unfold!  
> Bring me my Chariot of fire!

> I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
> Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:  
> Till we have built Jerusalem,  
> In England's green & pleasant Land.  

(*Milton*, 1:9-16)

Having experienced wonder which arises and is nourished only in an environment which does not preclude possibility, Blake strives to build a permanent city in which such freedom or co-existence of Contraries is ever-present and ever-experienced. He perceives a difference between what he knows possible and what he conceives of as the increasingly stifling nature of his era, and he quite naturally turns to a psycho-socio dynamics intended to bring the world into harmony with desire. We must stress, however, that Blake conceives of his eschatological city as a more psychic than temporal state. Frye very aptly remarks: "In Blake, we recover our original state, not by returning to it, but by recreating it. The act of creation, in its turn, is not producing something out of nothing, but the act of setting free what we already possess."\(^48\) What man possesses on the individual level is his freedom to
wonder—to perceive continual hierophany. With faith in
his own recognized ability, he learns to have faith in the
constructive and transcendent abilities of others. As
Blake so reassuringly tells us, although Adam is the Limit
of Contraction,

   . . . there is no Limit of Expansion; there is no
   Limit of Translucence
   In the bosom of Man forever from eternity to eternity.
   (Jerusalem, 42:35-36)

Complete knowledge, therefore, appears unattainable, but
that, in itself, is the important fact. Because he lacks
complete knowledge, man can continue to experience wonder
and to contemplate those sacred experiences.

Continuing to do so, Blake nevertheless appears to
believe that he has attained at least one ultimate truth
which he must impart to mankind. This is the pre-eminence
of the wondering disposition itself. Conceiving of himself
as an initiate—indeed, as a sort of shaman—he feels that
he has received the "Call." "But Milton entering my Foot,"
Blake writes,

   I saw in the nether
   Regions of the Imagination; also all men on Earth
   And all in Heaven, saw in the nether regions of the
   Imagination.
   (Milton, 21:4-6)

Presumably Blake means to say that, having achieved this
Vision and having become a sort of shaman, he has obtained
the power of awakening others to that Vision. The poet
feels that one must obey his "call" no matter what the
repercussions. On January 10, 1802, he writes to Thomas
Butts:

If you, who are organized by Divine Providence for Spiritual communion, Refuse, & bury your Talent in the Earth, even tho' you should want Natural Bread, Sorrow & Desperation pursues you thro' life, & after death shame and confusion of face to eternity. Every one in Eternity will leave you, aghast at the Man who was crown'd with glory & honour by his brethern, & betray'd their cause to their enemies. You will be call'd the base Judas who betray'd his Friend!

(Letters, 71)

Similarly, July 6, 1803, he again speaks of poetry:

If all the world should set their faces against This, I have Orders to set my face like a flint (Ezekiel iii10, 9v) against their faces, & my forehead against their foreheads.  

(Letters, 89)

Through the poet, the Eternal enters time.

In contrast to Wordsworth, one of the "elect" purposefully shaped by Nature's Ministry, Blake believes he is shaped by his own innate Genius or true Humanity--that which is Christ-like in him. Symbolically portraying his election by Milton's entrance into his left foot and occasionally asserting that various poems were dictated to him, he makes careful note of his belief that the proper muses are the Daughters of Inspirarion, not the Daughters of Memory whom he associates with the Lockian notion of passive reception of "simple ideas" and of subsequent memory of those limited impressions. As Frye points out, the poet's use of the terms angel and spirit, when not used sarcastically, generally refer to "imagination functioning as inspiration, and the fact that inspiration often takes on a purpose of its own
which appears independent of the will.⁴⁹ Unlike Wordsworth whose early empirical orientation led him to conceive of himself as "A youthful Druid taught in shady groves/Primeval mysteries, a Bard elect,"⁵⁰ Blake is above all a believer in the idea that his election has a non-empirical basis.

"Wonder may well be to philosophy what inspiration is to poetry,"⁵¹ Verhoeven suggests in a pregnant remark seeming to explain why much inspired poetry is essentially philosophical or contemplative in execution if not in origin. Enabling Blake to be at least roughly classified, Eliade notes that the shaman is also "not solely an ecstatic but also a contemplative, a thinker."⁵² With the goal of displaying "Nature's cruel holiness, the deceits of Natural Religion" (Milton, 36:25), Blake remains open to miracles rather than comes to reduce everything to laws. Freedom, instead of dogma and force, are again the key to his efforts. Should his own views petrify, he would not be helping man to break out of the Orc cycle. He would become an ineffectual revolutionary replacing one set of stale lies with another and attempting to enforce them with his power. In contrast to such ineffectual revolutionaries, the later Blake, who wrote prophesies in which Los becomes Imaginative hero, clearly rejects the use of force. He sees it as a grasping at single identity rather than as a willingness to admit otherness. "A Prophet is a Seer not an Arbitrary Dictator," he writes in an annotation to Watson. Inspiration is a positive power,
while one-sided obsession is only Force, a negative power.
Or, in Blake's own words as expressed in "Auguries of Innocence," "To be in a passion you Good may do, /But no Good if a Passion is in you" (111-112).

Related to this election and to this desire to reveal the possibility of wonder to others is the manner in which Blake conceives of the function of art. Heidegger, as Verhoeven reminds us, "speaks of being as giving and thought as thanking." Since contemplative thought is clearly the basis of Blake's canon, because the outgrowth of wonder, his art becomes his thanksgiving. The poet, himself, repeatedly and variously expresses this idea. "Praise is the Practice of Art," he announces in The Laocoon, explaining why wondrous Golgonooza and Eternity are described as they are. While the former City of Art is constructed of ceilings of "devotion" and hearths of "thanksgiving" (Jerusalem, 12:37), the latter is characterized in Jerusalem's lament as also a place of the arts:

Turkey & Grecia saw my instruments of music; they arose;
They seized the harp, the flute, the mellow horn of Jerusalem's joy.
They sounded thanksgiving in my courts.

(Jerusalem, 79:48-50)

Similarly, Blake himself seems to express his thanks as he accepts the wondrous gift of Vision:

And all the Vegetable world appeared on my left Foot
As a bright sandal formed immortal of precious stones & gold;
I stooped & bound it on to walk forward through Eternity.

(Milton, 21:12-14)
Blake is granted the gift of wonder, and he accepts his responsibility to walk freely into Eternity, transforming the vegetable world through his Vision and celebrating that Vision through his art.

Inherent in his act of celebration of the possibility of fullness of Being is the fact that, so far, this remains a possibility realized only by the few. Having abandoned his early declarations of the necessity of revolutions based on political and sexual energies, Blake turns to the Imagination, viewing it as a power capable of transforming the "Eternal Death" of Generation into the Life of Eternity. Because he experiences wonder, he recognizes that ontological freedom is characteristic of totally Human Being. Man is a creator of the experience, for only his open mind and contemplative faculty can determine whether or not this wonder is realized. Man, who possesses an innate desire for freedom and transcendence, is motivated by his desire to satisfy these needs. So motivated, Blake undertakes the task of repudiating both Deism and reason not in converse with imagination. He wants to create rather than to reason and compare, and, therefore, he conceives of and gradually revises an anthropogeny capable of lending hope to a despairing world.

As Verhoeven remarks, "to speak or write from the standpoint of wonder already implies the pretension to change the world even where no force is preached,"\(^5\) and in this sense only can Blake accurately be termed a reformer. The wondering man, the Dutch philosopher adds, "will tend to
think rather toward a 'completely other' than toward a clearly 'thus.' 55 In Blake's words, "Improvement makes straight roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement are the roads of Genius" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 10). The Contraries must forever be allowed to exist mutually. As a result of his desire to avoid all dogma, Blake creates a mythology within which man is characterized by infinite possibility of expansion and not by a particular and rigid identity. Envisioning an Imaginative faculty that he called "Being" itself and which was certainly not identical with his society's pervasive attitude toward human nature, Blake was condemned as a madman. As Cox stresses repeatedly in The Feast of Fools, however, such individual fantasy leads to aggregate social transformation and ultimately to the establishment of what earlier could only be labelled fantastic utopia. As Blake tells us, "What is now proved was once only imagined" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 8). With the ability to wonder and the faith that this ability can become universal, Blake sets out to prove, through his art, the possibility of building a New Jerusalem. Until then, he says, man must not cease to fight the intellectual war inherent in his act of writing.
Chapter 2: Notes


10. Keen, p. 86.


12. Keen, p. 29.


15. Fromm, p. 42.


18 Northrop Frye, "The Keys to the Gates," Romanti-
cism and Consciousness, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, 1970),
p. 239.
19 Hazard Adams, William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter
Poems (Seattle, 1963), p. 81.
20 Verhoeven, p. 18.
21 Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 126.
22 Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 179.
23 Keen, p. 31.
25 Keen, pp. 24-25.
26 E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley,
27 Keen, p. 177.
28 Keen, p. 184.
29 Verhoeven, p. 50.
30 Fromm, p. 17.
31 Paley, p. 238.
32 Verhoeven, p. 54.
33 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1959),
p. 68.
34 Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 248.
35 Verhoeven, pp. 37, 126.
36 Keen, p. 90.
37 Keen, pp. 38-39.
38 Otto, p. 7.
39 Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, p. 106.
41 Beer, p. 7.
42 Keen, p. 174.
43 Fromm, pp. 13-14.
44 Keen, p. 22.
45 Fromm, p. 91.
46 Fromm, p. 86.
47 Keen, Chap. V.
51 Verhoeven, p. 39.
53 Verhoeven, p. 166.
54 Verhoeven, p. 196.
55 Verhoeven, p. 197.
Chapter 3

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S SEARCH FOR SECURITY

Mr. Wordsworth . . . was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears yet hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

--Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, XIV

As viewed in this passage from *Biographia Literaria*, Wordsworth is the perfect example of a man capable of recognizing and relishing natural wonders--a man for whom custom has not "bedimmed all the lustre and dried up the sparkle and the dew drops." He is a man, unlike Blake, who perceives the sacrality of an external, physical world, and who, unlike many of the pre-Romantics, does not demand the "sensational" (the natural sublime) or the otherwise "unusual" as a means of awakening him to recognition of novelty. The calmly beautiful, the simple, and the quotidian are all equally capable of showing forth their own type of novelty, of revealing that they are "other" than what they appear to be to the common man. In many ways, this view is true. Certainly, like archaic man, the young poet frequently experiences hierophanies in nature, enabling him to conceive of an order and purposiveness indicative that cosmos is dominant over chaos, and that man, because granted the ability to realize this,
is an inherent part of a great whole—that he is at one with a beneficent power greater than the finite self and greater than the immediate society. The natural world is viewed, not only as a place in which man lives, but also as a "presence" with which man lives in harmonious interchange. Yet, in many ways this view is not altogether accurate; at least, it is insufficient. Coleridge, himself, notes that this was Wordsworth's purpose in writing his contributions to Lyric Ballads, and he makes no claim that it is an accurate description of either the younger boy or the older poet. Although interpreting objects and events as assurances of cosmic order and perhaps even of human immortality, Wordsworth recurrently recognizes that these seeming assurances are more products of the mind—end-products of contemplation—than aspects of reality. Throughout his life, the great poet is a searcher for security, testing one optimistic philosophy against the facticity of his world only to feel his belief falter and to be forced to replace it with a new belief. Nevertheless, led to philosophy by an inherent sense of wonder, he retains that sense through both joy and disillusionment. The specific object evoking wonder may change radically, but one fact remains stable. Wordsworth repeatedly demonstrates in his life, and asserts in his poetry, that by being a wondering man he can be a religious and a hopeful man.

To Wordsworth, the child's initial perception of
unity and resultant sense of security derive, not from nature, but from the mother/child relationship. This relationship, thus, becomes a paradigmatic experience. The Infant Babe passage of The Prelude bodies forth this belief. In harmony with the poet's basic philosophic transition from his early belief in the developmental process by which the child's "glad animal movements" are replaced by man's "holier love" (as so well expressed in "Tintern Abbey") to his later belief in the child as a reflection of a perfect state of pre-existence or as "thou best Philosopher" in the "Immortality Ode," the differences between Wordsworth's view of the Babe in the 1805 and 1850 versions are noteworthy. Both versions speak of unity as perceived by the Babe, but differ in their presentations of the Babe's degree of awareness. In each, Wordsworth tells us that the Infant obtains feelings or passions from perception of his "Mother's eye," but the 1805 version includes a description of Lockian passivity that is later deleted. Speaking of a "torpid life" (1805, II, 244), Wordsworth notes that the Babe is receptive to change, but also emphasizes that only the mother's feelings, passing into the tabula rasa of a child like an "awakening breeze" (245), are able to rouse it from this initial state:

    ... and hence his mind
    Even [in the first trial of its powers]
    Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
    In one appearance, all the elements
    And parts of the same object, else detach'd
    And loath to coalesce. Thus day by day,
Subjected to this discipline of love,
His organs and recipient faculties
Are quicken'd.

(II, 245-253)

In contrast, now omitting this passage and picking up again at line 258 of the 1805 version, the 1850 version describes the Babe

who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
For him in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connects him with the world.

(II, 236-244)

Capable of emotion if not of reason, the Infant is already capable of sensing oneness with the world—at least with the world as he experiences it, granted a very limited world in breadth if not in depth. As a result of his nurturing, the child becomes predisposed to perceive unity and to sense security as his rational faculties increase and begin to obtain something near the status of his emotions. The child who perceives this unity also begins to create it, "working but in alliance with the works/Which it beholds" (259-260). Wordsworth describes this intuitive comprehension of the mother's unity leading to the world's unity as "the first/Poetic spirit of our human life" (260-261). This spirit, he says, is lost by most people as they mature and encounter the broader but shallower adult world of fragmentation and pain, but it is, however, "preeminent till death" (265) among the fortunate few. The means of maintaining this sense of
universal harmony seems to be the ability to encounter repeated experiences which reinforce one's trust in his existence and environment. As the child views the mother as a comforting source greater than himself, Erik Erikson has pointed out that such basic trust is a necessary element of a healthy personality—"that 'this paradigm experience of the infant with the mother must be recapitulated at a higher level at every stage of the life cycle.'"\(^2\) It is this sense of trust that Wordsworth tries to maintain throughout his life, and it is certainly this striving for security that is central to much of his poetry. He, himself, tells us:

> I have endeavoured to display the means Whereby this infant sensibility, Great birthright of our being, was in me Augmented and sustained. (II, 269-272)

Wordsworth notes that wonder, leading to perception of unity and hence to a sense of security, is natural to children, but too frequently stifled by the adult world. To the modern mind focusing on facticity, the world is desacralized. It is explicable by experimentation and discovery of fixed laws, no longer possessing mystery of Being and therefore destroying the human capacity for ontological wonder so central to the Romantic sensibility.

Writing the satiric passage on the child Prodigy, in the 1850 version Wordsworth is not actually satirizing this "model of a child" (V, 299) and "miracle of scientific
lore" (315) himself, as much as he is satirizing the "modern system" (295) confining the child to the precincts of factual knowledge and essentially to the "barren leaves" described in "The Tables Turned." The fault, Wordsworth believes, is largely the teacher's. "For this unnatural growth the trainer blame/Pity the tree" (328-329), he advises the reader. Even when the child occasionally reaches out beyond the circumscribed grounds, he is foiled in his attempts:

Some intermeddler still is on the watch
To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray,
Within the pinfold of his own conceit.

(334-336)

These teachers believe that they possess ultimate knowledge or at least that one can obtain it only through scientific investigation and drudging pedantry, and they therefore overlook the superior and benevolent purposefulness of Nature as conceived by the poet. Planning everything, educators become

the keepers of our time
The guides and wardens of our faculties,
Sages who in their prescience would control
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
Like engines.

(352-358)

Because he views Nature as a living presence, Wordsworth rejects the average man's view of it as generally inanimate and totally external. As Nathan Scott, Jr. comments in The Wild Prayer of Longing, the literal scientific mind presupposes that

man faces a self-enclosed and unresponsive world which is not itself a 'glass of vision'; it seems to be
without what Hopkins called 'inscape,' which is to say that our encounter with it is not felt to be an affair of seeing-into anything... It seems not to be ignited by any capacity for exchange or reciproc-ity. And being without any numinous thresholds, it is beheld as something essentially dead.}

Instead of viewing the cosmos as dead and, as a result, acting out of self-interest, Wordsworth asserts that he personally shrank from

the tendency, too potent in itself,
To use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death
For that which moves with light and life informed,
Actual, divine, and true.

(XIV, 157-162)

Again, he proves capable of perceiving the sparkle and the dew drops. Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" supplies a useful gloss here. Saying that people sense life in themselves by first experiencing it in nature, he writes:

Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud--
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud--
We in ourselves rejoice!

(67-72)

Here we are reminded of Coleridge's philosophy of the Primary Imagination, probably derived from Schelling's well-known distinction between naturalis naturans and natura naturata.

"The primary IMAGINATION," Coleridge writes, "I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (Biographia Literaria, XIII). The mind open to the world is a potent power, just
as is the world to such a mind. It is only to the scientific and abstractly philosophical mind, self-distanced from the impulses of Nature, that Wordsworth and Coleridge see the world as appearing anything but alive and joyous.

In the 1806 poem "Star-Gazers," for example, Wordsworth speaks of the characteristic modern eclipse of wonder experienced by citizens anticipating a majestic and awe-inspiring vision of the heavens, only to be dissatisfied by observation through a telescope:

Whatever be the cause, 'tis sure that they who pry and pour
Seem to meet with little gain, seem less happy than before;
One after One they take their turn, nor have I one espied
That does not slackly go away, as if dissatisfied.  

(29-32)

This is indeed a far cry from Addison's earlier argument that microscopes and telescopes gratify and enlarge the imagination (Spectator, No. 420). Once again, the idea comes up that, although these instruments alter the ratio of man's perceptions, they do not render the objects visionary. Even if larger, the stars remain only stars, lacking in any moral significance. The difference remains quantitative rather than qualitative. Even when scientific questions are answerable in principle, they may lead to dissatisfaction and to stifling of the sense of universal harmony and sacrality. Wordsworth believes conceivable through intuition and contemplation. As Dutch philosopher Cornelis Verhoeven suggests,
We might try to argue that the positive appreciation of wonder by Plato and Aristotle is linked with their more contemplative concept of philosophy, while Democritus and the Stoics try to master it because they are more scientific oriented, but this would be hard to prove. 4

Hard to prove or not, Wordsworth at least would appear to agree, implying that wonder could be retained if man were content with what the naked eye can see and what the mind can think. Suggesting that perhaps "Conceit rapacious is and strong" (17), Wordsworth seems to condemn those who, like the Prodigy’s "wardens," are not content with the recognition that the heavens are naturally "blue and fair" (6). Instead, he advocates ontological wonder--reverence for the fact of Being itself, with no demand for an explanation of why such skies exist.

By juxtaposition with the Prodigy, the Boy of Winander reveals a Wordsworthian ontological hierarchy. He is nurtured by a beneficent Nature rather than crippled by restrictive education. In contrast to the Prodigy and his teachers, this Boy is a natural being who "Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls/That they might answer him" (V, 373-374). Because he has escaped the strictures of intermeddlers who would control all accidents, the Boy experiences joie de vivre and is unconsciously influenced, certainly not living "knowing that he grows wiser every day" (324) as does the Prodigy. Describing this ideal rural Boy, Wordsworth writes:

Then sometimes in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into the mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

(381-388)

The child is not yet fully conscious of Nature's intentions as Wordsworth conceives of them, but he nevertheless is sometimes aware of a mild shock—of the fact that Nature is a living presence capable of a reciprocal relationship with man. It is only later that full understanding of the Ministry of Nature can be achieved. For the child, this remains "nourishment that came unsought" (II, 7). Similarly, it should remain nourishment that comes untaught, education that must come naturally and that cannot be inculcated by man. Education remains, for the early Wordsworth as for Hartley, primarily a developmental process resulting from immersion in the right environment. As Havens notes, "education, as Wordsworth conceived it, is a way of life." Setting forth this belief, the poet wrote an 1806 letter to a friend, advising him about the education of his daughter and saying that a child's defects should be corrected, not by preaching to her . . . nor by overrunning her infancy with books about good boys and girls, and bad boys and girls, and all that trumpery; but . . . by putting her in the way of acquiring without measure or limit such knowledge as will lead her out of herself, such knowledge as is interesting for its own sake; . . . in a word, by leaving her to luxuriate in such feelings and images as will feed her mind in silent pleasure.6

Rousseau-istic freedom is deemed necessary in order that the
child be left open to various beneficial influences, the results and implications of which are manifold. Most basically, the result will be "A Race of real children, not too wise,/Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,/And banded up and down by love and hate" (V, 411-413). These are the type children who experience "new pleasure like a bee among the flowers" (I, 580).

The child allowed to luxuriate in images that will feed the mind eventually learns to relish an environmental otherness, and thus obtains a sort of knowledge not purported to be ultimate, but a sort that is "interesting for its own sake." As Verhoeven and Fromm both note, and as previously mentioned in regard to Blake, interest is derived from the Latin Inter-esse—"to be in between," a position presupposing multiplicity within the world or the individual object and also leading to an active or reciprocal subject/object relationship. Rejecting modern education as not based on real interest but as, instead, based on a quasi-interest concerned with the social or financial advantages to be obtained from alleged "ultimate knowledge," Verhoeven makes a point pertinent to an understanding of Wordsworth's own conception of wonder's role in the attainment of true wisdom. "General education wants to know immediately, no matter how," Verhoeven comments, "and all it wants is to know, to get results. It is not interested in the way these results are achieved. It presupposes the absence of any form of wonder or even of curi-
osity. Its motives lie outside things and outside the sub-
ject. "7 In this materialism lies a major difference between
Blake and Wordsworth. While the former wonders only at man's
Genius capable of perceiving spiritual qualities that are,
alone, truth, Wordsworth believes in the material existence
of objects. Precisely this subject and object become important
in their immediate interrelationship and, eventually, in the
subject's subsequent cognitive processes.

One obvious way to nurture the child without inter-
meddling is to provide what Wordsworth considers the proper
physical environment. Given a place in Nature, the child in
general, like the Boy of Wimander, is in unconscious harmony
with a sacred world. In the 1802 sonnet "It is a Beauteous
Evening, Calm and Free," for example, Wordsworth addresses
Caroline, his French daughter, as she walks by his side along
the beach:

Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not. (9-14)

While the child is unconsciously part of the divinity con-
ceivable by the adult only through "solemn thought," the
post-"Tintern Abbey" poet frequently laments the adult's loss
of this unconscious unity. In the "Immortality Ode," for
instance, he writes:

--But there's a Tree, of many, one
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?  

(51-57)

To David Ferry, this passage represents the child's mystical orientation as contrasted with the adult's limitation to sacrality. Aware of mortality, the adult, in Ferry's opinion, can no longer realize perfect unity with Nature. Having lost this capacity for complete unity, Wordsworth can never again be fully content. Although the early Wordsworth is generally content with what the earth has to offer, he now realizes that its glories are less permanent than those of a supernatural realm remembered only vaguely by the child, forgotten by the young adult, only gradually (although Ferry would not really admit it) recognized again by the philosophic mind. While Nature can be "all in all" for the youth at Tintern Abbey and while the poet can perceive intimations of immortality in the child's life, it is noteworthy that these views are transient. Speaking of the immediacy of experience important to the child who enjoys rather than contemplates, Keen comments:

The child accepts what is given at the moment with little concern for what it implies. . . . For the adult the awareness of the passing of time casts a veil of reluctance, of hesitation, over the experience of immediate enjoyment. . . . Immediate enjoyment, delight in the presence of ______, is but another way of describing the experience of wonder in one of its aspects.  

Admittedly, while Wordsworth in 1802-1804 believed that the
child could intuit assurance (perhaps religious glory) by perceiving all trees or pansies as one, and while he also believed that the adult could only rely on memory of childhood as an indication that a religious, if not a natural harmony exists, we must remember that this is a somewhat late and disillusioned Wordsworth, having seen his early belief falter and not quite yet having developed a substitute belief based on man's inherent but transcendent power of Imagination. Having perceived Nature's transience, Wordsworth decides that the loss of wonder is not only the result of man's efforts to control it (as in "Star-Gazers"), but that it is also inherent in the aging of man. What is relevant to our immediate purposes, however, is not so much his 1802-1804 belief, but instead the "visionary gleam" he attributes to the young child and which contributes to the child's sense of unity and belonging inaugurated by the mother/child relationship.

Hand in hand with this love and unity experienced or recalled by the infant and child is a sense of sublime fear evoked by Nature's Ministry and described in the early development-oriented poems. Like the pre-Romantic poets, like Burke, Otto, Keen, and Verhoeven, Wordsworth writes of the mingling of fear and fascination in many of his wonder-experiences. In the Stolen Boat episode, for example, Wordsworth reveals this coincidentia oppositorum--this conflicting existence of the "sublime or fair" (Prelude, I, 546). Here, Wordsworth begins by describing the evening calm and, only
then, goes on to present the mountain-moving. Speaking of "small circles glittering idly in the moon,/Until they melted all into one track/Of sparkling light" and saying that "above/Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky" (I, 365-367, 371-372), Wordsworth suddenly introduces "a huge peak, black and huge" that "with a purpose of its own/And measured motion like a living thing,/Strode after me" (378, 383-385). Unlike the Prodigy who is so "fenc'd round, nay arm'd, for aught we know/In panoply complete" that "natural or supernatural fear,/Unless it leap upon him in a dream,/Touches him not" (1805, V, 314-315; 1850, V, 307-309), Wordsworth cannot avoid the effect of the Natural Sublime.

The immediate result of the evoked fear, however, is only confusion leading to contemplation:

\[
\text{for many days, my brain} \\
\text{Worked with a dim and undetermined sense} \\
\text{Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts} \\
\text{There hung a darkness, call it solitude} \\
\text{Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes} \\
\text{Remained, no pleasant images of trees,} \\
\text{Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;} \\
\text{But huge and mighty forms, that do not live} \\
\text{Like living men, moved slowly through my mind} \\
\text{By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.}
\]

(391-400)

We are reminded of Burke's assertion that the mind encountering the Natural Sublime "is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (Enquiry, II, 1). Yet, the Sublime, as generally conceived by the major Romantic poets, is not entirely natural. As a result of Wordsworth's encounter with the mountain, the Sublime is internalized,
becoming a psychological experience even more than a natural phenomenon. Feeling guilty, as well as confused, he expects punishment, and he, therefore,conceives of the power inherent in the mountain as well as eventually conceiving of the power inherent in a man capable of intuiting such an idea. To begin with, though, the young boy confronted by the moving mountain experiences an ontological crisis as he undergoes the type of wonder-experience that Marcel describes as becoming a "centre which imposes upon me a regrouping of myself." Only later, distanced from the immediate threat, does Wordsworth achieve this regrouping, conceiving of Nature's purposeful guidance of him to the mooring place in order to be able to teach him the moral lesson. With the explanation, the wonder that was originally viewed as "inflicted" is now viewed as "granted." The essential paradigmatic experience is heightened, not diminished. As Keen writes,

For the child, the growing ability to reason is correlated with a growing sense of wonder about the world that reason enables him to discover. Wonder is no more dissolved by reason than freedom by law or enjoyment by discipline. We must look for the causes underlying the sense of wonder and delight, not in the activity of reasoning, but rather in the attitude in which the activity is carried out. Although involving a self-centered adult rather than the "glad animal movements" of a child, "Peter Bell" (1798) presents an early parallel example of Nature's sublime Ministry of Fear. Much like an unconscious child, Peter travels from Cornwall to Caernarvon to Carlyle, from Ayr to Aberdeen,
without recognizing the power of Nature:

As well might Peter, in the Fleet,
Have been fast bound, a begging debtor;--
He travelled here, he travelled there;--
But not the value of a hair
Was heart or head the better.

(236-240)

At the beginning of the poem, Peter is clearly suffering from spiritual myopia. He fails to achieve the apocalyptic vision of Blake that transforms a thistle into a man, a sun into a host of angels. He even fails to achieve recognition of the mundane wonder that beautiful earthly objects evoke in the young poet, Wordsworth. "A primrose by a river's brim," the poet writes, "A yellow primrose was to him,/And it was nothing more" (248-250). An immoral man with a "dozen wedded wives," Peter is concerned only with "thinking of his whens and hows" and is recognizable by the continued "knitting of his brows" (313, 314). He clearly lacks what Verhoeven and Fromm speak of as "interest." But like the pre-Romantics and like the child in the early poems, the adult Peter finally proves amenable to sublime Nature's teachings. Although the beauty of primroses and of "the soft blue sky" (263) lacks power to arouse his underdeveloped sensibility, the more powerful terror related to the Sublime can do so. When chased by the rustling leaf, he quickly supplies an interpretation:

When Peter spied the moving thing,
It only doubled his distress;
"Where there is not a bush or tree,
The very leaves they follow me--
So huge hath been my wickedness!"

(706-710)
Once he interprets the movement of the leaf as nature's reprimand for beating the dead man's faithful ass as he tried to steal it, his compassion for the animal is born, and Nature can rest from her Ministry, allowing "the Spirits of the Mind" (783) to complete Peter's humanization. As Peter tells the widow about the faithful ass's refusal to leave its dead master's side, the adult Wordsworthian penitent is assimilated into the human community much as the young Wordsworth in the Stolen Boat episode is assimilated into the natural community.

In both her beautiful and her sublime aspects, Wordsworthian Nature eventually becomes influential, leading the poet to remark:

Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents
(Like those ill-sorté unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturest seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.

(Prelude, I, 587-596)

Unable to recognize the import of an initial wonder-event, but nevertheless feeling "a shadowy exaltation," Wordsworth speaks of the mind's gradual development and resultant understanding:

... the soul
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire.

(Prelude, II, 315-319)

In order to mitigate the initial fear evoked by the mountain's
apparent movement, the poet transforms the event into one of comforting wonder. He is, therefore, able to recognize personal growth—to sense "the vacancy between me and those days" and to view himself as "Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself/And of some other Being" (II, 29, 32-33).

Believing in the necessity of intervening thought processes, Wordsworth exemplifies Verhoeven's idea about wonder as a "disposition" or an experience of Self in the process of groping for an attitude toward the reality with which one is confronted. For the poet, this disposition leads to a newly recognized ontological possibility, to the recognition of new promise that will enrich his life. By overcoming the initial contingency of the experience, the explanation of events as indicative of the Ministry of Nature again renders the poet secure. As he says, such a ministry is only termed evil by "men/Who know not what they speak" (XIV, 116-117).

In a desacralized world relying on scientific explanations, such a view would be uncharacteristic of the average adult, for as Keen explains:

While modern scientific man is aware of the intricate order of the subatomic world and the astronomical worlds, he finds no moral significance in it. Order is merely a fact; it is not evidence of a moral intention resident within things. The physical world of modern science is orderly but not teleological; it is law-abiding, but no sphere of revelation. Thus, the divinity of the cosmos is no longer. 13

Of course, Wordsworth's society was not as scientifically advanced as that Keen depicts, but the point is clearly
applicable. We need only look back to Pope's own previous recognition of this loss as he condemns the Natural Law-seeking disciples of Newton, commenting that "Religion blush- ing veils her sacred fires, /And unawares Morality expires" (Dunciad, IV, 649-650).

Even in a desacralized world, however, the experience in its basic sense would remain available to an individual, and especially to the child. Referring to such experiences as Peter Bell's association of the leaf with his own sins against nature and humanity and to Wordsworth's association of the moving mountain with the boat-stealing, Jung defines one of the three categories of "synchronicity" as the coincidence of a psychic state in the observer with a simultaneous, objective, external event that corresponds to the psychic state or content where there is no evidence of a causal connection between the psychic state and the external event. 14 While this explains the young Wordsworth's immediate psychic perception that could be more rationally explained as the result of changing perspective, a sense of sacrality remains central to the older Wordsworth's explanation, making out of the event still another reason that man can feel himself an integral part of a well-ordered cosmos. As he writes part of his Essay Supplementary to the Preface (1815), Wordsworth himself speaks to this point and explains his illogical insistence on synchronicity:

The appropriate business of poetry, (which, nevertheless, if genuine, is as permanent as pure science,) her appro-
priate employment, her privilege and her duty, is to treat of things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist to the senses, and to the passions. 15

Man's role, as he reacts to Nature, is all-important.

In addition to the Ministry of Fear so far discussed, Wordsworth feels that fantasy is a necessary element for the shaping of the ideal child. Believing that his society represses the natural propensity for fantasy, Wordsworth appears to agree with modern educators who argue that facticity is only one segment of reality, while subjective fantasies (whether daydreams, nightdreams, or even literature) are actually another segment contributing to total human development. As theologian Harvey Cox asserts: "Science is not designated to demonstrate what is real, but to investigate that portion of reality for which its methods are appropriate." 16 In contrast to science, fantasy allows man to experience wonder and sublimity by enabling him to transcend the empirical world. This idea will become increasingly important to Keats.

In "To H. C.," for example, Wordsworth addresses young Hartley Coleridge as one of those capable of living in a world of novelty rather than of rigid law:

Thou faery voyager! that dost float
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery.

(5-10)

Referring here to the unity of heaven and earth revealed to
Wordsworth in 1802-1803 as inherent in the child's way of life, the poet actually gives his most telling presentation of the need for fantasy as he concludes the Prodigy passage of *The Prelude*:

Oh! give us once again the wishing cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible cap
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.  

(5, 341-346)

This other-consciousness contrasts sharply with the vanity of the intermeddlers circumscribing the Prodigy's existence, and even more sharply with the Prodigy's own vanity as it is described in the 1805 *Prelude*. In this earlier version, the child is viewed as "the monster birth" and "a Child, no Child,/But a Dwarf Man" (1805, V, 293, 295-296). His very soul is vanity:

Vanity
That is his soul, there lives he, and there moves;
It is the soul of everything he seeks;
That gone, nothing is left which he can love.

(1805, V, 354-357)

Teachers are amazed at his rapid progress, but "the Country People pray for God's good grace,/And tremble at his deep experiments," for "All things are put to question" (1805, V, 339-341). To the reader, the fact that the country people's view is generally believed by Wordsworth to be the correct view hardly needs to be mentioned. Wordsworth advocates that man should trust his intuitions:

... Suffice it here
To hint that danger cannot but attend
Upon a function rather proud to be
The enemy of falsehood, than the friend
Of truth, to sit in judgment than to feel.  

(XII, 133-137)

Wordsworth is telling us again that it is not the effort to find explanations for our wonder that diminishes our delight, but that it is instead the vain assumption that we have become masters of our environment. While the former approach is positive, the latter is negative—interested solely in questioning and disproving rather than in believing and enjoying. Instead of measuring out his life in coffee spoons like the intermeddlars and the Prodigy, the unselfish or other-conscious child nourished by fantasy becomes another example of the ideal child who looks beyond himself and who is "like a Being made/
Of many Beings" (II, 430-431).

The results of this ability to look beyond the self are far-reaching, and, consequently, Wordsworth believes that the initial inclination toward fantasy should be fostered rather than curbed. A sense of pleasure derived from repetition of childhood verse, rather than being the emotional result of a "vulgar power" (V, 571), is regarded as an embryonic form of man's greatest desire—his striving after attainment of something superior to himself and the everyday world in which he lives. In fact, Wordsworth says that joy in fantasy is

--nothing less, in truth
Than that most noble attribute of man
Though yet untutored and inordinate,
That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
Of human life.  

(V, 572-577)
The child capable of dreaming, of forging daring tales, is viewed as in league with a great power and, hence, as capable of making "our wish our power, our thought a deed,/An empire a possession" (V, 528-529).

As mentioned in relation to Blake, throughout The Feast of Fools, Cox asserts that it is this ability to dream on the individual level—or to conceive of utopias on the aggregate level—that enables man to improve his world. Writing of his interest in the ideal goals of the French Revolution, Wordsworth speaks of man's dream of liberty and attempt to realize that dream:

The gift which God has placed within his power,  
His blind desires and steady faculties  
Capable of clear truth, the one to break  
Bondage, the other to build liberty  
On firm foundations, making social life,  
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,  
As just in regulation, and as pure  
As individual in the wise and good.  

(IX, 356-363)

Although, by Book XI, Wordsworth becomes disillusioned with a revolution stooping to the cutthroat level of the Reign of Terror, it is clear that at the time of composition of the above passage he views the freedom of unselfish fantasy (utopia) as opening doors to innovation closed to the unimaginative person.

In his 1801 sonnet on Napoleon Bonaparte, Wordsworth summarizes this view of the proper way to educate a child in order to develop, rather than stifle, his capabilities:

Wisdom doth live with children round her knees  
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: These are the degrees
By which true sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

(9-14)

II

Leaving behind his childhood love of fantasy and his
"glad animal movements" and "extrinsic passion," the youth
or young man experiences a changing relationship with Nature,
leading eventually to a new type of security rooted in the
natural world, not in the maternal world, the fantasy world,
or a world of pure activity. Wordsworth describes this change:

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervene till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake.

(II, 198-203)

Gradually coming to contemplate rather than to enjoy "for her
own sake," the poet eventually perceives his world's sacrality,
or what Abrams, borrowing the term from Carlyle's Sartor
Resartus, discusses as "natural supernaturalism." Like the
speaker of the Prologue to "Peter Bell" who abandons his
fantastic little flying boat in favor of "the common growth
of mother-earth" (133), Wordsworth is struck by Nature's
harmonious beauty, experiencing what he describes in "Tintern
Abbay" as "holier love." "I too exclusively esteemed that
love,/And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings/Hath
terror in it" (XIV, 244-246), Wordsworth writes while renounc-
ing preference for the Natural Sublime which had characterized his earlier life and the lives of the pre-Romantics. Thus, he turns toward the Beautiful, toward what he defines as "these gifts/of more refined humanity" (XIV, 263-264), and towards a new conception of the sacred.

A belief that the environment is a living Presence capable of a reciprocal relationship with man repeatedly reveals itself to be at the center of this sense of sacrality. Although already touched on briefly in reference to the Prodigy and the Boy of Winander, this idea merits closer attention. In Keen's study of wonder, this sense of Presence is given a very important position. "When Buber speaks of an I-Thou encounter with a tree," Keen writes, "or Marcel speaks of discovering a presence in a flower, each is indicating a level of experience at which what we normally call an object ceases to be inert and passive."17 In contrast to Blake's view that the mind (Imagination) is solely responsible for wonder, the young Wordsworth generally seems to believe that the object takes the initiative, while the mind and emotions react. In "Tintern Abbey," for example, he writes: "And I have felt/A presence that disturbs me with the joy/Of elevated thoughts" (93-95), and he refers to Nature as

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

(109-110)

Similarly, denying the efficacy of abstract philosophy in "The Tables Turned," the poet urges: "Come forth into the
light of things/Let Nature be your Teacher" (15-16). Nature, here, is seen as an active entity, and as hierophany, for

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

(17-20)

The wonder of the poem is inherent in the poet’s recognition that Nature bestows her wealth and wisdom on man.

It is through this ontological gift that Wordsworth is able to feel assurance, to perceive that man is not an isolated object, but instead a part of the whole that is capable of communion with that whole. To the unmeditative child, this gift is incomprehensible. In the Mount Snowdon episode of The Prelude, for example, Wordsworth characterizes his boyhood as "careless then/Of what was given me" (XIV, 141-142). Viewing knowledge as a developmental process, he conceives of youth as conscious of this gift, but, as yet, conscious in a relatively intuitive sense only. In the Sentiment of Being passage, for instance, the poet speaks of his seventeenth year:

I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart.

(II, 399-405)

At this point, the youth intuits sacrality, but makes no attempts to explain it rationally, to contemplate in order to understand more completely.
The more mature Wordsworth, by contrast, becomes increasingly contemplative, less satisfied with the experience per se and more concerned with deriving meaning from it. But before man can actively contemplate, he must first experience the sense of wonder that induces contemplation in the adult. Keen notes that receptive passivity is generally essential. "Disciplined silence," he says, "is essential to contemplation to allow the object to speak." Only when we approach the world in a spirit of abandonment and acquiescence (what Heidegger calls Gelassenheit), Scott asserts, is it that the voice of Being begins to be heard. Throughout his poems, Wordsworth stresses the role of this passivity. In "Tintern Abbey," for example, he writes of

that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

(41-49)

Only after such an observation can Wordsworth recognize this new gift, referring to his lost and passionate youth and saying "other gifts/Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,/Abundant recompense" (86-88). Similarly, in "Expostulation and Reply," he argues, with Locke, that our senses work independent of our will, that even in apparent idleness we are capable of achieving our greatest knowledge:

The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

(17-24)

As Locke argues, we are like mirrors that cannot help reflecting external objects.

In relation to this passiveness, it is noteworthy that so many of Wordsworth's poems involve the "wanderers of the earth" (XIII, 155). He presents us with such characters as a vagrant soldier, a leech gatherer, a beggar, a potter, a pedlar, and a poet. Furthermore, we cannot avoid recognizing that each of these wanderers learns from his wanderings, transmits his wisdom to those he encounters on the road or in the fields or woods, or does both of these. Solitary, or in Wordsworth's case, occasionally with a small group of sensitive friends, these wanderers realize the possibilities available. In "A Narrow Girdle of Rough Stones," for instance, Wordsworth speaks of the necessity of slowness—of open-eyed rambling rather than a fast pace directed toward a set goal:

Ill suits the road with one in haste; but we  
Played with our time, and as we strolled along,  
It was our occupation to observe  
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore . . .  
. . . And in our vacant mood,  
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft  
Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,  
That skimmed the surface of the dead calm lake,  
And started off again with freak as sudden . . .  
--And often, trifling with a privilege
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,
And now the other, to point out, perchance
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair
Either to be divided from the place
On which it grew, or to be left alone
To its own beauty.  

(10-13, 16-20, 26-32)

Pausing to wonder at these commonplace beauties given to their sight by wave or wind, Wordsworth and his two companions (Dorothy and Coleridge) experience absolute existence related to both sea and land. Through time—through their sauntering—they are able to witness the multiplicity inherent in Nature and gradually to see the laborers' productive harvest and to learn a moral lesson in human perserverance from the lone and sickly fisherman, who, like the Leech Gatherer in "Resolution and Independence," uses "his best skill to gain/
A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake" (64-65). While Nature may not of her own accord purposefully supply the fisherman's needs, it nevertheless can be made to meet those needs. From the interaction of this natural beauty and this human industry rises the wonder. In contrast to the early Peter Bell, in whose breast "these silent raptures found no place" (272), these itinerants acquire all that is around them. Speaking of what he calls the "sacral ritardando," Verhoeven notes that the wondering man perceives more than a direct path along which he travels. The line is transformed into a space; the whole comes alive and is perceived as both unified and sanctified.20 As we shall see, this idea will be important to certain phases of both Shelley's and
Keats's careers, to their desire if not to their actual attainment.

What is prerequisite to this recognition of Nature's sacrality is an epistemological humility, a willingness to admit that mankind is not scientifically capable of fully understanding and controlling the world. As Wordsworth portrays him, man must willingly consider himself a part of that cosmos, a brother rather than a lord. Firedrake, the hero-narrator of Hazard Adams' delightful romantic fable, The Truth About Dragons, tells us, "We do not own Earth, each of us merely expresses constantly some different aspect of this fundamental unity." 21 Denying the supremacy of modern education totally derived from history, science, and abstract philosophy books, Wordsworth insists upon the supremacy of education derived from Nature. As he declares in "The Tables Turned":

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

We are again reminded of Keen's observation that every wonder-event involves a cognitive crucifixion; it disrupts the system of meanings that secures the identity of the ego. To wonder is to die to the self, to cease imposing categories, and to surrender the self to the object. Such a risk is taken only because there is a promise of resurrection of meaning. 22

Unlike the intermeddlers attempting to shape the Prodigy and like the advice about training a young girl by seeing that she is led outside herself, Wordsworth continually reasserts
this need for epistemological humility. Just as the pride of the hunter in "Hart-Leap Well" is proved vain when his pleasure dome decays and Nature mourns in cosmic sympathy for the slain hart, modern man determined to retain pride in his alleged knowledge will lose the possibility of achieving the harmonious attitude of Wordsworth, Heidegger's desirable attitude of "letting Be."

Wordsworth, however, is not content to remain completely passive. The mind must frequently be active, not imposing categories on what it sees, but instead deriving moral significance from those objects and events. As he says in The Prelude, man must maintain

A balance, and ennobling interchange
Of action from without and from within;
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees. (XIII, 375-378)

The primary reason for this belief in the necessity of contemplation is the fact that, in wonder-experiences, contingency is at first operative. While the Being of an object rises to consciousness, the observer is not initially able to explain why the object exists or what it signifies.23 We recall, for example, Wordsworth's "To the Cuckoo" in which the poet has difficulty describing precisely what the bird is. It is "no bird," he says, "but an invisible thing." The use of negatives is typical of attempts to describe the numinous. It is difficult for the observer to say exactly what his experience is.24 Therefore, in the poem the sacred
experience is related largely in terms of music, one of
the least tangible forms of expression, as the bird evokes
the feeling of something "wholly other." In contrast to
the cuckoo which, in itself, apparently remains unchanged
by the passing time between the poet's boyhood and manhood,
the adult poet is described as at least partially fallen
from his previous state. The adult Wordsworth attempts to
reason about the bird as would a scientist, perceiving it
as an ordinary, natural creature. It is "babbling only to
the Vale,/Of sunshine and of flowers" (9-10), he remarks,
noting the bird's allegiance with the earth. Yet, the cuckoo
becomes a motivational force in the poet's life. Its "myst-
tery" leads him to seek it "through the woods and on the
green" because it remains "still a hope, a love;/Still
longed for, never seen" (22, 23-24). Because the experience
becomes a mystery encompassing the observer and because his
reactions to it are, therefore, subjectively contemplated,
he does not long remain limited to empirical sight. Momentar-
ily regaining his boyhood "vision," he re-enters a sort of
sacred time, making the earth actually appear to grow young
again. "And I can listen to thee yet," he writes,

Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

(25-32)
The world appears to have returned to sacred or mythical time. But even the word appears, itself, is an indication that the bird only momentarily revives that mythical realm of boyhood and supernatural wonder. Memory of the past seems to play a large part.

For Wordsworth, many of the wonder-events, especially those involving initial contingency, can be characterized as "spots of time"—those experiences that give

Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will.

(XII, 220-223)

We have already seen how the "moving" mountain frightened the young boy incapable of explaining the phenomenon, but how it later comforted the older Wordsworth who viewed it as the Ministry of Fear. A similar example of such an experience in The Prelude is Wordsworth's encounter with the Discharged Soldier who at first evokes fear, causing the youth to retreat into the shadows, but who, throughout the manuscript history, is given closer attention and is rendered an increasingly potent and laudable figure. Close critical attention to this radical transformation sheds much light on the manner in which Wordsworth's contemplative faculties interpret various wonder-events.

Much as Wordsworth recognizes his own tendency to describe the "original" disposition in accordance with his later feelings and attitudes, introducing the "intruding sky" of "Nutting" with the words "unless I now/Confound my
present feelings with the past" (48-49), his manuscript changes in the Discharged Soldier episode clearly reflect his changing Weltanschauung. The 1805 version commences with a marked emphasis on Nature as a semi-mystical force motivating the poet to become the Soldier's teacher, yet Wordsworth gradually transforms it into an episode in which the Soldier becomes the more influential teacher. The scene, itself, opens with an empty landscape which Lindenberger suggests is a characteristic transition in The Prelude. 26 Apparently wandering aimlessly, as "a favorite pleasure" (1805, IV, 363), the youthful Wordsworth is characteristically nourished by Nature, "drinking in/A restoration like the calm of sleep,/But sweeter far" (1805, IV, 386-388) and sensing a "harmonious imagery" that "rose/As from some distant region of my soul/And came along like dreams" (1805, IV, 393-395).

In contrast to this beneficent and placid Nature, somewhat as the peak in the Stolen Boat episode arises, the Soldier appears unexpectedly as the poet rounds a bend. It is significant that his initial appearance arises naturally from the external world rather than from the internal visionary world of the poet that we have previously entered. As Onorato tells us, "this is because Wordsworth intends to make a different point, that at such moments one's greatest sensitivity shows and self-possession yields to natural concern with the needs of others." 27 As Wordsworth himself
comments, the Soldier evoked "a mingled sense/Of fear and sorrow" which, in the 1805 version, eventually leads him to guide the Soldier to a cottager's door in order that he receive aid. This is a point greatly de-emphasized in 1850, however, when Wordsworth deletes nearly all details of his assistance. But in 1805, instructed in the unity of Nature, he acts primarily in such a way that he recreates this unity through his humanitarian act.

The closing scene is most crucial in revealing the early version's almost total concern with helping one's fellow man. Having admonished the Discharged Soldier, the poet evokes the reply: "my trust is in the God of Heaven/And in the eye of him that passes me" (1805, IV, 494-495). Although in "Resolution and Independence" it is the poet who receives "apt admonishment" (112) from another "man from some far region sent" (111), there is an important difference between that episode and the one described in The Prelude. Instead of learning from the Soldier, the youthful Wordsworth in the 1805 Prelude is conceived of as the teacher, for, so far, we are shown a stable rather than a transient world. The youth sees no reason to doubt his own powers of understanding as he later does in "Resolution and Independence" when, realizing the ephemeral nature of the world around him, he suddenly recognizes that he has wrongly been living "as if life's business were a summer mood" (37). Unlike the later poet encountering the Leech Gatherer, the youth of the 1805 Prelude still believes that one can trust in Nature's permanence, as
well as knows that his youthful self has been taught a love
and trust of mankind. He, therefore, possesses an active
desire to help which he regards as superior to the Soldier's
passive wait for charity. At the end of the 1805 version,
Wordsworth returns the blessing of the "poor, unhappy man"
(IV, 501). The Soldier is not ennobled, except to the degree
that his "reviving interest" (IV, 499) implies that he has
successfully learned a lesson about human kindness from the
youth. In the future, he must seek help.

In the 1850 version, Wordsworth gives what seems to
me an ennobling portrait of the Soldier and a more self-
effaced portrait of himself. Omitting the lengthy passage
describing dream-like interaction with Nature which served
as a restatement of the youth's relationship with Nature in
the earlier version and also as a context within which to
consider the encounter, he now substitutes an extremely
different context:

When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
How gracious, how benign is Solitude;
How potent a mere image of her sway;
Most potent when impressed upon the mind
With an appropriate human center—hermit,
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
Is treading, where no other face is seen)
Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;
Or as the soul of that great Power is met
Sometimes embodied on a public road,
When, for the night deserted, it assumes
A character of quiet more profound
Than pathless wastes.

(1850, IV, 354-370)
Described by de Selincourt as unnecessary and as an awkward stylistic contrast to the simple style of the following narrative and by Havens as one of Wordsworth's best pieces of later verse, the passage significantly alters the context from pleasure brought on by Nature to a more sombre allegory of Solitude. Simultaneously, the passage significantly foreshadows the specific encounter—that with the "potent" figure on the deserted public road.

In sharp contrast with the vague dramatic situation in which we find the youth of 1805 and an uncharacteristic change for the older Wordsworth, in the 1850 Prelude we find him in a very specific situation. Leaving a sailing regatta where he has passed a day described by the paradox "strenuous idleness" (IV, 378), he is, instead, travelling homeward, "making the night do penance" (IV, 377) for the day. Here, as in the introductory reference to the praying votary, we are given religious references non-existent in the 1805 version. What little of Nature we see in this later version has been stripped of its semi-hallucinatory quality. The watery road which in 1805 "seem'd before my eyes another stream" (1805, IV, 373) now merely bears "the semblance of another stream" (IV, 382). No visions are "heard and felt," and instead,

No living thing appeared in earth or air
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,
Sound there was none.

(IV, 385-387)

The Discharged Soldier himself now occupies a more
central position, as the youth is increasingly self-effaced. Having lost his earlier possible association with death—his "murmuring voice of dead complaint, Groans scarcely audible" (1805, IV, 431-432)—he is described with a new twist. "Yet still his form/Kept the same awful steadiness," Wordsworth tells us (IV, 406-407). A slight sense of fear remains in the awed response, but even that is tempered by the positive value of steadiness—by the youth's attraction toward endurance (quite the contrary of death). Paralleling the Soldier's transformation, the poet is now more introspective than purely active, perceiving that his insistence on hearing of the Soldier's past hardships would have been "better spared" (IV, 408). Offering the same reproof to the Soldier that is offered in the 1805 version and receiving the same reply, the 1850 youth nevertheless exhibits a changed attitude toward the befriended Solitary. Like its predecessor in nearly every detail, the final scene is greatly altered by a small but significant change: the poet no longer returns the blessing of a "poor, unhappy man" but, instead, the blessing of the "patient man" (1850, IV, 466). While in the early version the poet could seek "With quiet heart [his] distant home" (1805, IV, 504) because he had helped a helpless man, the poet can now do the same, not only because he has helped, but also because he has been ennobled by contact with the Discharged Soldier's Christian stoicism.

In short, the difference between the 1805 and the
1850 versions parallels the difference between being made a better person by virtue obtained from helping the Old Cumberland Beggar and being made a better person by receiving "apt admonishment" from the Leech Gatherer. Poet and Soldier have been altered inversely: the former, once self-assured, has become self-effaced; the latter, once pitiful, has become venerable. The education has become reciprocal rather than remaining one-sided. Viewed from the perspective of these changes, it becomes obvious that the poet’s trek is not merely homeward, but also a journey through the changing paths of a wondering and contemplative mind.

Speaking of this wonder as it leads to contemplation and finally to a special sort of non-absolute knowledge characterized by epistemological humility, Verhoeven remarks:

The basic principle of all knowledge is that the thing known is not simply the known thing, that things are not what they are and originally seem to be, not even what they shall appear to be. The being of things is inexhaustible. . . . Being is the infinitely deferred end-term of knowledge and knowledge can therefore approach being only provisionally and without pretensions.31

Such an observation seems to be Wordsworth's own discovery as he repeatedly revises his poems on the basis of subsequent life-experience and contemplation. As he tells us in "Simon Lee":

O Reader! had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
O gentle Reader! You would find
A tale in everything. (65-68)

In addition to the beneficial effects of the moral
Ministry of Nature already discussed, the mature Wordsworth also believes that man can possess hope as a result of this ability to recall, recreate, and reinterpret wonder-events of the past. In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1850), Wordsworth maintains that his ability is characteristic of poets, thus differentiating his notion of contemplation based on memory from Blake's notion of contemplation of ressurrection and redemption inherent in the visionary moment itself. Having spoken of the poet's sensitivity to present objects, he continues:

> To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves.  

(*Prose*, I, 138)

Manifesting this ability to recall in his frequent poetic revisions, Wordsworth also recurrently expresses the comforting quality of this recall even more overtly. He emphasizes that quotidian objects and experiences can be wonder-ful, and he writes in the poem "The Little Unpretend-ing Rill" that "yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought/Oftener than Ganges or the Nile; a thought/Of private recollec-tion sweet and still" (6-7). To this he adds that "the immortal Spirit of one happy day/Lingers beside that Rill, in vision clear" (13-14). Approaching a similar mundane experience from a slightly different angle, this time emphaz-
ing the fact that the impact of the event was not fully understood at the moment of the experience, the poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" recalls the field of daffodils:

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay,
In such jocund company;
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought;
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon the inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(13-24)

Initially content to wonder at the sheer beauty—the absolute Being—of the blossoms, the poet can only later contemplate this experience, again developing a general attitude. Finally in "Tintern Abbey," this idea is extended a step farther, saying not only that recall has given a sense of joy in the past, but also that it may continue to do so in the future: "with pleasing thoughts/That in this moment there is life and food/For future years. And so I dare to hope" (63-65). By extension, other people can experience similar wonder and, therefore, possess similar hope. Dorothy is described as being what the poet once was, and she, therefore, "reenacts the course of the poet's own development with such exactness that she supplies living confirmation of the deterministic axiom that similarity of circumstance produces similarity of character, 'that if one be happy, all must.'" 32

These experiences, centered on natural places, seem exemplary of what Eliade speaks of as archaic man's tendency
"to set himself in opposition, by every means in his power, to history, regardless of a succession of events that are irreversible, unforeseeable, possessed of autonomous value." 33 By reliving past experiences believed sacred, Wordsworth, like archaic man, is able to transcend profane time and enter into sacred time. Through festivity—in Wordsworth's case through mental recall—sacred time is recoverable, thus making a sort of immortality available to man otherwise confined to historical existence.

In conjunction with this idea, Eliade also notes archaic man's propensity toward gestures of consecration, particularly of tracts of land. This appears to be Wordsworth's intention in his "Poems on the Naming of Places," as he describes that intention in an advertisement prefixed to the series:

By persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents must have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents, and renew the gratification of such feelings, Names have been given to Places by the author and some of his Friends, and the following Poems written in consequence. 34

Interestingly, inherent in this process of naming and sanctifying is a repeated process of humanizing, for each place is named either for a specific person or a specific human encounter. The view of Nature is largely "anthropocentric." 35 "To M. H.," for example, refers to a walk with Mary Hutchinson to an uninhabited spot "made for Nature herself" (15).
Not content to name the place for some geographical feature, however, Wordsworth humanizes it by naming it for "sweet Mary" (73) and by imagining a future inhabitant who "would so love it, that in his death-hour/Its image would survive among his thoughts" (21-22). In one of the most powerful of these poems, "When, To the Attractions of the Busy World," the poet actually becomes closer to another person as a result of the naming. Having abandoned the beloved growth because of its dense overgrowth, he returns to it after his sea-faring brother John has paid a visit to the area. Now discovering a path worn among the trees, Wordsworth recognizes an affinity with the brother whom he had previously regarded as a stranger with whom he had "little other bond/Than common feelings of fraternal love" (74-75). He now views John as "A silent Poet" (80), and names the place for him, at last learning to love the once abandoned fir grove "with a perfect love" (87). With the mutual love of place in mind, he imagines "undistinguishable sympathies" (107) as he walks the inland grove. Perhaps John is "pacing thoughtfully the vessel's deck" (101), sharing thoughts of when they "shall meet/A second time, in Grasmere's happy Vale" (109-110).

With a thirst for Being, man enacts these rituals of taking possession in order to insure the reality of place and, therefore, its participation in the immortal cosmos. In "A Narrow Girdle of Rough Stones," Wordsworth reveals an
urge to immortalize a personal moral lesson by giving the 
name "Point Rash-Judgment." In "It Was an April Morning," 
on the other hand, he hopes to give Emma (presumably Dorothy) 
objective immortality by associating her name with a place. 

Wordsworth writes:

I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said, 
"Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook, 
My Emma, I will dedicate to thee."
--Soon did the spot become my other home, 
My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode. 
And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there, 
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk 
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps, 
Years after we are gone and in our graves, 
When they have cause to speak of this wild place, 
May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL. 
(37-47)

By making this place his "other home" and "out-of-
doors abode" and, similarly, by returning to live at Grasmere 
and by celebrating that return in "Home at Grasmere," Words-
worth's actions prove a modern manifestation of archaic 
man's tendency to live in the vicinity of the sacred place 
because the place is considered equivalent to Power and 
therefore permeated by Being.36 Even as a boy first seeing 
Grasmere, Wordsworth says,

What a happy fortune were it here to live! 
And, if a thought of dying, if a thought 
Of mortal separation, could intrude, 
What a paradise before him, here to die. 
(11-14)

Finally carrying out this boyhood decision that "here/Must 
be his Home, this Valley be his World" (44-45), the poet 
again associates a place name with its human elements, say-
ing:
Beloved Grasmere (let the Wandering Streams
Take up, the cloud-capped hills repeat, the Name,
One of thy lovely Dwellings is my Home.
(57-59)

Grasmere is viewed as an axis mundi or focal point around
which he will establish his personal identity, and Wordsworth, therefore, speaks of a wonder-ful sense of sacred
unity:

'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual Spot,
This small Abidding-place of many Men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A Centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
A Whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself, and happy in itself,
Perfect Contentment, Unity entire.
(142-151)

The French Revolution now failed, Wordsworth perceives his
utopia here and now. There is no longer a need for "golden
fancies of a golden Age" (626), but, in their place, the
poet decides:

--Take we at once this one sufficient hope,
What need of more? that we shall neither droop,
Nor pine for want of pleasure in the life
Scattered about us, not through dearth of aught
That keeps in health the insatiable mind.
(633-637)

Speaking of this "dialectic between inside and outside" which
leads to the establishment of identity, Verhoeven makes an
appropriate point, noting that identity's establishment
"cannot be transferred to a mythical past nor be expected of
some technical perfection in the future." 37

Generally optimistic about Nature's benevolence dur-
ing this period of his life, Wordsworth writes one of his most positive passages in *The Prelude*. In reference to the failed Revolution and to a redemptive power, he tells us:

if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life; the gift is yours,
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never failing principle of joy
And purest passion.

(II, 440-450)

Wordsworth speaks primarily of Nature's power, of the sort of nurturing that in "Tintern Abbey" allowed the poet to view Nature as a comforting surrogate mother—nurse, guide, and guardian. Turning from this expression of optimistic stoicism in *The Prelude* and speaking again of perception of a Presence, "a vital pulse," Wordsworth speaks of the end-product of his contemplation. He now emphasizes man's powers which enable him to recognize cosmic harmony.

In the midst stood Man,
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
As, of all visible Natures, crown, though born
Both in perception and discernment, first
In every capability of rapture,
Through the divine effect of power and love;
As, more than anything we know, instinct
With Godhead, and, by reason and by will,
Acknowledging dependency sublime.

(VIII, 485-494)

So writing, Wordsworth again reveals his affinity with Dorothy about whose sense of wonder he writes: "God delights/In such a being; for her common thoughts/Are piety, her life is grati-
tude" (XII, 171-173). Once aware of the ontology of an object or event, man contemplates it, thereby eventually achieving an understanding of the central ontological harmony and unity that caused the initially contingent wonder-experience.

Summarizing the essential character of wonder and its end-product of celebration and thanksgiving, Josef Pieper writes:

To wonder is to be on the way in, in via, it certainly means to be struck dumb, momentarily but equally it means that one is searching for truth. In Summa Theologica wonder is defined as the desiderium sciendi, the longing for knowledge. . . . Out of wonder, says Aristotle, comes joy. 38

As the infant finds assurance in his mother and the child in activity and fantasy, the young but maturing Wordsworth finds it in the Nature that gradually leads him to mankind. As he tells us in "Home at Grasmere":

This day is a thanksgiving, 'tis a day
Of glad emotion and deep quietness.  

(230-231)

This is basically Abrams' argument in Natural Supernaturalism, yet, Wordsworth's career is not at its end.

III

While the young Wordsworth viewed Nature as succoring and nourishing—ultimately as permanent and assuring—the older Wordsworth increasingly comes to perceive its transience, thus feeling the necessity to seek security in the Presence of God. Having first passed from his boyhood emotive
response to Nature to his later emotive and contemplative response, the older Wordsworth becomes more and more contemplative, less and less of a Rousseau-istic emotivist. The child of "Tintern Abbey" is able to feel his life "in every limb" and to develop into an adult sensing a "holier love" and possessing "hope for future years," whereas Hartley Coleridge, in the slightly later "To H. C.," must somehow remain a child or "be trailed upon the soiling earth." The child of the "Immortality Ode" may retain remnants of the "visionary gleam," but "Shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing Boy," forcing the adult who hopes for solace to turn increasingly from Nature and toward a more religiously oriented conception of afterlife--toward

the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death
In years that bring the philosophic mind.
(183-186)

But even these examples deal primarily with the basic philosophic shift itself, not with the changed view of Nature in particular. Dealing more specifically with Nature's transience, in "Resolution and Independence," for example, Wordsworth recognizes that he has been living falsely "as if life's business were a summer mood" (37). It is in the even later poem, "Elegiac Stanzas," however, that the poet presents perhaps his most disturbed portrait of a natural scene. Prior to his brother John's shipwreck and drowning in 1805, Wordsworth had viewed the sea near Peele Castle as calm and
unchanging:

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings;
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

(9-12)

Recalling his original selective sense of calm and permanence as he later regards a landscape painting of Peele Castle and a surrounding storm at sea, Wordsworth admits that he would once have painted the sea differently than Beaumont has done, portraying its "sky of bliss" (20) and "Elysian quiet" (26) and using his creative sensibility to add a sacred light: "The light that never was, on sea or land,/The consecration, and the Poet's dream" (15-16). The words "that never was" reveal the new attitude that Nature can no longer be conceived of as sacred, that the sea can never be truly consecrated outside the poet's own fantastic dreams of harmony and immortality. Reality, instead, consists of a "rueful sky" (48) and a "deadly swell" (47). The original belief that once provided security now becomes merely "the fond illusion of my heart" (29), causing Wordsworth to bid farewell to his past conception:

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

(53-56)

Suddenly, the purely happy, natural man is no longer to be revered.

With the cosmic view of archaic man no longer sufficing, chaos threatens to dominate, causing the poet to identify
with the painting before him. Speaking of dream and disillusionment, he writes:

So once it would have been, --'tis so no more
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.

(33-36)

The powerful Ministry of Fear becomes "pagaentry of fear" (48). A "deep distress" or human passion has become the formative power, and the "new control" and humanized conception of life already become a comforting substitute for Nature's sublime ministry. Weathering storms, Peele Castle itself becomes the potent Presence and a symbol of stoic fortitude. Rather than being natural and somewhat frightening, the "sublime" is now the man-made symbol. Although not specifically the Leech Gatherer's or Discharged Soldier's Christian stoicism that previously reprimanded the young poet, this stoicism reflects Christianity's essentially hopeful orientation. Accepting events, Wordsworth counters despondency:

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here,--
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

(57-60)

Although, as already stated, "Elegiac Stanzas" is not yet explicitly Christian, one is tempted to read into it introductory lines from a contemporaneous and obviously related manuscript version of the "Elegiac Verses, In Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth." Describing an approach to John's
grave, Wordsworth writes:

I only look'd for pain and grief
And trembled as I drew more near,
But God's unbounded love is here
And I have found relief.\textsuperscript{39}

Having resembled archaic man during his earlier reliance on the consoling ability to recall and recreate wonder-events, Wordsworth can now no longer rely on a natural religion abolishing history through immersion in the transcendent cosmos. Instead, he finds that he must turn to the Christian tradition which, although rooted in history, can provide comfort after the desacralization of Nature. The transformation is not surprising, for archaic man's religion is generally regarded as leading to historical religions. Speaking on this point, Malinowski comments: "We can see in it (archaic religion or basic wonder) the germs of what in higher types of religion will develop into the feeling of dependence upon Providence, of gratitude, and of confidence it it."\textsuperscript{40} It is these beliefs and characteristics that Wordsworth develops by turning to Christianity.

In the slightly earlier "Ode to Duty," this essentially hopeful orientation becomes explicitly religious as the poet increasingly anticipates post apocalyptic paradise very different from his previous earthly paradise at Grasmere. Once loving the pleasurable freedom of "glad animal movements" or the more contemplative walking tours through the continent and British Isles, but now having perceived transience and therefore the failure of many earlier hopes, Wordsworth re-
jects his past. Addressing Duty, the "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God" (1), he writes:

I supplicate for thy control;
But in the quietness of thought;
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance-desires;
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.  

(35-40)

By making this declaration and later asserting "and in the light of truth thy Bondsman let me live!" (56), Wordsworth seems to have reached a low-water mark. His life appears nearly to have lost its generally prevalent sense of wonder. Feeling he has been made "lowly wise" (53)—that, following Adam's advice to Michael in Paradise Lost, he has learned to content himself with the things of the earth—he seems only to possess knowledge about a basically desacralized Nature and Mankind. As he tells Duty,

Too blindly have I reposed my trust;
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray.  

(28-31)

The Ministry of Nature no longer leads to the "little, nameless, unremembered, acts/Of kindness and of love," as described in "Tintern Abbey." While those who act according to the "genial sense of youth" (11) may live in "love and truth" (10), doing Duty's work but not realizing it, they also may often stray from that duty. As a result of misplaced confidence similar to his own, they must be guided, no longer by Nature, but by this wearer of "the Godhead's
most benignant grace" (42). If guided by her love and reprimanded by her rod, much as Nature reprimanded Peter Bell and the young Wordsworth, man can achieve a good existence—if not on earth, at least in the post-apocalyptic eternity where Nature is also ever-present and ever-renewed, where the flowers laugh and "the most ancient heavens ... are fresh and strong" (48).

Speaking of the difference between this concept of Duty and Wordsworth's earlier "little, nameless, unremembered, acts," Erich Fromm argues that "the difference between duty and responsibility corresponds to the difference between authoritarianism and humanistic concerns."41 While Blake would seem to agree with Fromm, dramatizing all repression as characteristic of the reptilized fallen state, Wordsworth seems to say that it is through surrender of freedom that one can hope for apocalyptic release from earthly pains—for the time when

Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security.  

(17-20)

In such a state, it is believed, all men will act out of love and joy. Interestingly, having denied his past states of Being, Wordsworth's two major goals are the same two attitudes that ontological wonder once evoked, first by the mother's presence before the Infant Babe, then by Nature's presence before the youth and adult. Erik Erikson's state-
ment that "this paradigm experience of the infant with the mother must be recapitulated at a higher level at every stage of the life cycle" is being made, by Wordsworth, to come true.

The primary difference between archaic man's religion and Judaeo-Christian man's has already been touched upon. The former relies on ontological wonder in the presence of Being, whereas the latter results from historical wonder (faith) before such events as the Exodus and the Incarnation. Hierophanies are no longer viewed as inherent in such objects as vales and daffodils, but as Eliade notes, history becomes hierophany, or better yet, theophany. For the first time, historical events begin to have significance in themselves rather than being something to be evaded. Unrepeateable events replace the orderly cosmic cycle in importance, for these events are manifestations of God's existence, therefore of a new type of enduring and comforting world beyond the self. While faith renders life tolerable, for Wordsworth the concern nevertheless appears to be not so much with a series of historical events as with that one ultimate theophany bringing immortality and release from pain.

It is here that Wordsworth eventually manages to transcend the "Bondsman" state declared necessary in "Ode to Duty," now becoming interested in the imagination's attainment of immortality. In this context, Wordsworth's 1825 poem "To a Skylark" is significant. With an "instinct more
divine" (10), the "Ethereal minstrel" and "pilgrim of the sky" (1) proves to be an example of contemplative magical flight capable of transcending earthly cares for a "privacy of glorious light" (8). A sense of "harmony" (10) is achieved as a result of attainment of the heavens, and the bird pours forth its song upon the earth, returning to earth when it chooses, but significantly never confined to that earth—or to the specific "shady wood" (7) of the melancholy nightingale. The natural world is no longer the place where happiness can be found. In this, the bird resembles the imaginative poet capable of both transcendence in his experiences and of verbalizing those experiences for the people of the earth.

Such a spiritual conception of the imagination is at the heart of The Prelude's 1850 version of Wordsworth's ascent of Mount Snowdon, and once again the manner in which this conception evolved is revealing. Wordsworth first climbed Snowdon in 1791 and described the ascent in Descriptive Sketches, presumably in a portion written in 1792. In this purely physical account, no mention is made of the imagination. By 1805 and 1850, however, that faculty gains increasing importance, finally becoming a divine gift. Speaking of the "moment of sudden illumination" in the "Dry Salvages" segment of Four Quartets, Eliot provides a useful gloss:

We had the experience but missed the meaning,
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form... I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations... 

Revising the episode for *The Prelude* in an effort to alleviate contingency, Wordsworth attempts to render it increasingly universal, presenting the archetypal transcendent ascent and inspirational moon and regarding imagination as essentially the ability to be wonder-struck and to come to terms with that experience.

As the hikers break through the mist, seeing it lying at their feet like ocean waves, the famous "vision" occurs. In the earlier version, Wordsworth writes:

> At a distance not a third part of a mile
> Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
> A deep and gloomy breathing place through which
> Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
> Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
> The universal spectacle throughout
> Was shaped for admiration and delight,
> Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg'd
> The Soul, the Imagination of the whole.

*(1805, XIII, 55-56)*

By contrast, in the 1850 version visual imagery is pared and "Nature" omitted in order to emphasize the auditory (therefore intuitive) and spiritual effects of the experience:

> All meek and silent, save that through the rift---
> A fixed, abysmal, gloomy breathing-place---
> Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
> Innumerable, roaring with one voice!
> Heard over the earth and sea, and in that hour
> For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

*(1850, XIV, 56-61)*
As Jonathan Wordsworth states, the 1805 version is probably the closer to what the poet actually saw, if we are to accept as accurate his previous account in Descriptive Sketches. But as the critic also notes, the Wordsworth of 1792 had not yet conceived of "The Soul, the Imagination of the whole" as resident in the chasm.\textsuperscript{43} Interestingly, by 1850, imagination has been dislodged from both the chasm and this section of the episode, not to reappear until line 189. In its place is an emphasis on unity: the voice "heard over earth and sea, and in that hour,/For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens." Wordsworth saves an explanation until later, but even here, by omitting "Nature" and adding "the starry heavens," he hints at what is to be the increasingly religious orientation of the revisions and of the imagination itself.

So far having essentially provided the physical details of the vision, Wordsworth now opens his interpretation with the words: "A meditation in me rose that night"--a highly suspect claim if we consider the evidence of the purely landscape poem in Descriptive Sketches and the scribbled attempts to define the higher mind which de Selincourt says were written during the composition of MS W (early 1804).\textsuperscript{44} In MS W, Wordsworth indicates that an extensive thought process, not intuition, was involved, and that it is this process that he intends to present in The Prelude. Addressing Coleridge, he writes:
Even yet thou wilt vouchsafe an ear my Friend
As to this prelude thou I know hast done ...
While with a winding but no devious song
Through processes I make my way
By links of tender thought. My present aim
Is to contemplate for a needful while
(Passage which will conduct in season due
Back to the tale which we have left behind).  

Most importantly, however, we must recognize that Wordsworth probably altered the poem as he did in order to create a sense of immediacy and, thereby, heighten the dramatic impact of the concrete vision.

Lines 63-78 of the 1850 version are basically transitional. We learn that the poet conceives of the vision as "given to spirits of the night/And three chance human wanderers" (XIV, 64-65). Again, we have the concept of wonder as "gift," but more significant is the element of chance in this later version. First of all, it does not appear in the earlier version, and quite appropriately so. Especially when *The Prelude* was intended to be complete in five books, chance could not have been the interpretation. We must recall such early episodes as the boyhood bird-snaring, nesting and boat-stealing, the interpretation of which is consistently that Nature purposefully reprimanded him for moral misconduct and in the latter case even "led" him to the boat in order that he be taught a lesson. This sense of purposefulness has been lost along with the younger Wordsworth's belief in Nature's permanence. Man is now acting without her express control, but is still receptive to her appearances.
As the transitional passage continues, we anticipate learning how the intellect, now associated with the landscape but not a result of it, "Feeds upon infinity" (71), how it speaks "in one continuous stream" (74), how it has "transcendent power" (75) and a "soul of more than mortal privilege" (77). Once more, we are given a sense of religious, more orthodox, meaning which in 1805 was perhaps religious, perhaps something more nebulous. In the earlier version, this mind is instead

... exalted by an under-presence,
The sense of God, or whatsoever is dim
Or vast in its own being. (1805, XIII, 71-73)

With line 78, Wordsworth becomes more explicit about the similarities between the natural scene on Snowdon and the mind, and emphasis is transferred from the physical surroundings to an analysis of that mind itself. Rather than portraying Nature as superior to man. Wordsworth now portrays both as possessing parallel powers. Nature puts forth "mutual domination" (81) which reveals unity in natural surroundings—the "interchangeable supremacy" which even "men, least sensitive" (85) are able to perceive. But its natural power does not now foster intellectual power. It merely is seen as the "express/Resemblance" (1850, XIV, 88-89) of that synthetic power with which the mind approaches "the whole compass of the universe" (XIV, 92).

Both the 1805 and the 1850 descriptions of this power are interesting for their thematic implications. Most
significant is the 1850 version in which Wordsworth says these minds

from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and, when'er it dawns
Created by them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.

(XIV, 93-99)

Important here is not only the ability to reconcile contradictions, but also the fact that this creation is believed possibly to have a power beyond that of the human creator, the possibility that the perception might possess the "inevitable mastery." The simile is especially appropriate to this interpretation, for the angels are stopped (caught) by perception of a similar harmony. As can be expected, in the earlier version the religious element is absent: men "for themselves create/A like existence, and, when'er it is/
Created for them, catch it by instinct" (XII, 94-96).

At approximately this point, Wordsworth originally intended to include further examples of this wonderful unity, examples based on both personal experience and on second-hand knowledge, but all unrelated to Snowdon. In MS W, he writes:

To these experiences which Nature thrusts
Upon our notice, her own naked work
Self-wrought, unaided by the human mind,
And others more imperious; those I mean
Which on our sight she forces.46

Nature is obviously dominant in this passage, thrusting and forcing these examples on man. Clearly, this is an inter-
pretation appropriate to the early manuscript and, therefore, later omitted both as a result of thematic changes and the desire to create a sense of dramatic immediacy.

As Wordsworth continues his delineation of the higher mind, he speaks of "its acts and its possessions . . . what in itself it is, and would become." Speaking of the necessity of both passivity and activity already discussed, he emphasizes that an object of wonder can be mundane, that such minds "need not extraordinary calls/To rouse them" (XIV, 104-105). As a result of not being made captive by purely physical sensations, the mind is capable of conversing with the spiritual world--the greater unity. This imagination plays a crucial role in the individual's attainment of immortality, Wordsworth tells us:

By their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.

(XIV, 107-111)

Possessing this faith or historical wonder, the poet relies completely on Grace and Providence, rather than on nature and contemplation. It is through Grace, rather than Nature's Ministry, that the later Wordsworth finally sees man as made an ideal moral being. In the Mount Snowdon episode again, imaginative minds are described as "truly from the Deity,/For they are Powers" (XIV, 112-113). As a result of this divinely given power, these minds are capable of the higher love that ultimately achieves communion with God,
thereby learning the morality that Nature's powers were earlier believed to teach via exemplary "spots of time."
Expressing this final attainment of moral being, Wordsworth writes:

--if here the words of Holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied--that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain,
(XIV, 125-129)

Both the natural wonder of "The Tables Turned" and the historical wonder of the Snowdon episode are clearly related to the idea of morality. As Keen notes, such wonder is a prerequisite: "It is important to insist on the priority of wonder," he says, "because otherwise we lose the basis of ethics. If there is nothing wonder-ful, nothing that is inviolable and sacred (in principle), then ethics can be based only upon a balance of terror." To Through wonder, this terror can be avoided. Contemplation and faith can both serve to alleviate the discomfort of contingency by conceiving of unity and by providing sufficient reason for life.

Abolishing this initial terror evoked by the natural Sublime, man is left with only the other possible reaction to a wonder-event: admiration and delight. With only this response finally available, increasingly religious love becomes characteristic of man as the later Wordsworth conveys of him. Speaking of the ewe's love for her lamb and man's love for woman, he relates these to the "still higher love" (XIV, 81) which is the result of imaginative man's
onto-theological wonder:

Love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.
(XIV, 182-187)

The "love more intellectual" (1805, XII, 166) has become
"this Spiritual love" that "acts not nor can exist/Without
Imagination" (1850, XIV, 188-189).

In contrast to Wordsworth when he wrote "Ode to
Duty," the Wordsworth who completed the 1850 version of
The Prelude is again a free and wondering man. Imagination
has become "freedom in himself" and "genuine liberty" (XIV,
131, 132) that results in "Faith in life endless, the sus-
taining thought/Of human Being, Eternity, and God" (XIV, 204-
205). Inherent in "the recesses of man's nature" (XIV,
216), this faculty becomes a sort of Divine Grace upon which
the poet believes man can build the "foundation of his future
years" (XIV, 220)—years to be increasingly characterized by
"humblest cares and delicate desires, Mild interests and
gentlest sympathies" (XIV, 230-231). At this point, one
can't ignore the implicit Christian beliefs.

In addition to this predominant belief in Divine
Grace, the later Wordsworth also occasionally expresses a
belief in Providence. The world becomes an ordered place
in which each person is assigned a position by God. In "If
Thou Indeed Derive Thy Light from Heaven," for example, he
asserts a comforting belief in this plan:
All are the undying offspring of one Sire
Then, to the measure of the light vouchsafed,
Shine, Poet! in thy place, and be content.  
(12-14)

Believing that positions are assigned and that no position is therefore superior or inferior to another, Wordsworth can indeed feel content with his lot, for he can see that he is fulfilling his role as one part of a larger whole.

Once we understand wonder as an experience leading to perception of sacrality and possibly to acceptance of orthodox theology, we see its centrality to man's contentment and happiness. Unlike modern man's adherence to scientific knowledge which presupposes that the world lacks Presence and unlike idolatry of material possessions which presupposes that value is not inherent elsewhere, Wordsworth believes that his perception perfectly unites the wonderful, the valuable, and the holy. They exist in harmony, not in separation. His is not the view of the average modern man as expressed in "Written in London, September, 1802":

The wealthiest man among us is the best;
No grandeur now in Nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore.
Plain living and high thinking are no more.  
(7-10)

Instead, even though his specific attitudes change greatly, his essential wonder-ful and hopeful disposition remains as it was expressed in 1791. Sending advice to a friend in the city, he comments:
You know there are certain little courts in different parts of London which are called bags. If you stumble into one of them, there is no advancing, if you wish to proceed on your walk, you must return the way you went in. These bags of life are what every man of spirit dreads, and ought to dread. Be industrious, and you never need get your head into them, let hope be your walking staff, and your fortune is made.

Expressing his preference for the unity of the wonder-ful, the valuable, and the holy, and re-emphasizing the basic characteristics and results of wonder, Wordsworth speaks of himself:

Worshipping then among the depths of things
As piety ordained, could I submit
To measured admiration, or to ought
That should preclude humility and love?
I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied.

(XII, 184-190)

By virtue of this hope, the philosophizing and wondering man is viewed as superior to the despairing man.

Like Blake, Wordsworth believes in the pre-eminence of the wondering disposition, also conceiving of himself as an initiate or a sort of shaman. At each level of his development, Wordsworth believes that he has received the "call," that he has become one of the "elect" of some teleological mind, whether the early "Genii of the Springs" (MS V) or the slightly later "Presences of Nature" (I, 464) or of God Himself. Everything after his election comes as a foregone conclusion. Above all, he becomes a prophet of his own life, of his personal conception of unity and belonging. In an image of transcendence reminiscent of the lark
in "To a Skylark," he writes his paean:

Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
Vast prospect of the world which I had been
And was; and hence this Song, which like a lark
I have protracted, in the unwearyed heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
To earth attempered and her deep drawn sighs,
Yet centering all in love, and in the end
All gratulant if rightly understood. (XIV, 379-387)

Because he thinks of himself as an initiate and,
therefore, conceives of the possible perfectability of man-
kind, Wordsworth, like Blake, sets out to initiate others.
"Why is this glorious creature to be found/One only in ten
thousand?", he asks. "What one is,/Why may not millions be?"
(XII, 87-89). Addressing Coleridge, to whom the entire
Prelude has been directed, Wordsworth re-emphasizes his
1815 Preface claim that the poet must possess "that dominion
over the spirits of Readers by which they are to be humbled
and humanized, in order that they be purified and exalted":

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By Reason, blast by faith; what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth'
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine. (XIV, 444-454)

"Poetry," Wordsworth asserts in the essay supplementary to
the 1815 Preface, "Is most just to its own divine origin
when it administers to the comforts and breathes the spirit
of religion."

Turning from security derived from a mother's presence to pleasure derived from physical activity and fantasy, Wordsworth comes to rely on Nature much as did archaic man. Perceived as Mother Nature—nurse, guide, and guardian—it provides the desired sense of cosmos, of an immortal Power transcending selfhood and attainable by man able to intuit its harmony, consecrate wonder-ful objects and places, and annihilate history through recollection, recreation, and reinterpretation of wonder-experiences. Later perceiving Nature's transience and, thereby, forced to abandon archaic religion in favor of historical religion, Wordsworth enters the Christian tradition. Theophanies replace hier-ophanies. Grace and faith replace reason. God the father replaces the surrogate Mother Nature. Citing Fichte, Pieper notes that man's personal philosophy is an outgrowth of his total personality, that it is not merely the result of hard-thinking. Craving security, Wordsworth seeks it through his experiences. In order to alleviate temporary despair, his conversion is almost inevitable, and, through it, he is able to remain both a wondering and a hopeful man. Out of wonder and hope grow joy and thanksgiving. Out of joy and thanksgiving grows much of Wordsworth's poetry.
Chapter 3: Notes

1 Contrary to recent preference, except where otherwise indicated, I will use the later (1850) version of The Prelude. Since the history of the poem suggests that it should be considered as "process," I adopt the later text as most relevant to my approach, since representative of the end-product of Wordsworth's thought about the growth of his mind.


7 Verhoeven, p. 15.


9 Keen, p. 51.


12 Keen, p. 57.

13 Keen, pp. 107-108.


18. Keen, p. 34.


20. Verhoeven, p. 192.


29. de Selincourt, The Prelude, p. 536.


31. Verhoeven, p. 23.

32. Grob, p. 32.


35. The descriptive term is Grob's.


37. Verhoeven, p. 140.


43. This idea is central to Jonathan Wordsworth's "The Climbing of Snowdon," *Bicentenary Wordsworth Studies*, Ithaca, 1970.

44. de Selincourt, *The Prelude*, 619.


47. Keen, p. 30.


49. Pieper, p. 139.
Chapter 4

SHELLEY'S MEDITATIONS ON NATURAL SCENES, 1816-1820

But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. Ans whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true word of Tasso: Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta.

—A Defense of Poetry

Proving a contrast to the blindly speeding Charioteer of Life portrayed in "The Triumph of Life," Shelley's self-conception in his Preface to The Revolt of Islam is that of the open-eyed, slow-paced wanderer. "I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea and the solitude of forests. . . . I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. . . . I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change" (Prose, 317), he tells us. Shelley essentially becomes what Wordsworth would call one of the "wanderers of the earth" (Prelude, XII, 155)—an itinerant who gains much through his seemingly unproductive passivity. Taking the time to see, the wandering and wondering poet imaginatively conceives of much more than can
be perceived by the metaphorically blind man travelling non-stop between starting point and single destination (birth and death). As his character Rousseau points out, the ordinary man sees only "the action and the shape without the grace/of Life" ("The Triumph of Life," 522-523). And it is precisely this grace—this holiness which cannot be ascertained empirically but which must, instead, be intuited—that Shelley discovers within many of the natural scenes that he contemplates. Finally, it is this grace that, through its presence, leads him to hope for an improved historical existence, or that, as a result of its transience or absence, forces him eventually to seek perfection in the atemporal realm of death.

Within this context, "Mont Blanc" is one of the earliest exemplars of this grace, and, I believe, one of Shelley's greatest poetic achievements. The poem opens with an assertion of his belief that all objects—both matter and mind—comingle to form the One Mind, just as narrow streams converge to form a mighty natural river. Therefore, he quickly introduces the idea of the individual mind into his poem; and, as the poem progresses, he will reveal its increasingly important role in the world. "The everlasting universe of things," he believes, is of a mixed nature: "Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—/Now lending splendour" (3-4). The individual mind (or human thought) which is among its components flows from "secret springs" (4) into the One Mind. While a spring, itself, is known to
originate underground, Shelley makes the point even more clearly in the Bodleian MS. (1816) which speaks of "secret caves" as the source. A commonly recognized symbol of man's mind and, more specifically, of his imaginative or intuitive faculty, such caves represent a dramatic change in man's conception of nature. Marjorie Nicolson, in her interesting study *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory*, notes that "the caves that were Ruins in Nature to the eighteenth-century poets have been touched by Neo-Platonic mysticism to become symbols of secret places in the soul of man,"² and, similarly, Northrop Frye, in his important "Drunken Boat" essay, delineates the revolutionary and inverted Romantic topocosm in which "good" no longer comes from without and on high but, instead, from within and below.³

These streams originating in the individual mind flow forth, both acting upon and being acted upon by the other components of the "everlasting universe of things." As Shelley conceives of it, a stream "speaks with a voice but half its own" (6), while waterfalls, woods, and the vast river all contribute subsidiary sounds. Consequently, mind and matter become one, various components of an absolute sound. But the one distinction made by Shelley seems highly significant. The great metaphorical river sometimes passively reflects gloom, sometimes more actively lends splendour. A clue to his meaning here lies in the second stanza, where Shelley refers to the descending rivulet as "Bursting thro' these dark mountains like the flame/Of
lightning thro' the tempest" (18-19). The natural parallel of the individual human mind is portrayed as the source of occasional glitter and splendor surrounded by darkness. Thus, the ravine, or the One Mind which it represents for Shelley, is the bearer not only of darkness, but also of glimmers of light deriving from the secret springs of cavern or cranium. The darkness of most of the physical elements of the "everlasting universe" is brightened, or beneficially transformed, by the mind as it blends (interacts) with matter.

Again relating an individual mind (this time his own) to this natural stream, Shelley adds:

    and when I gaze on thee
    I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
    To muse on my own separate phantasy,
    My own, my human mind, which passively
    Now renders and receives fast influencings,
    Holding an unremitting interchange
    With the clear universe around;
    One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
    Now float above thy darkness, and now rest,
    Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
    In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
    Seeking among the shadows that pass by--
    Ghosts of all things that are--some shade of thee,
    Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
    From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

(34-48)

As Spenser Hall points out in his recent article on the poem, Shelley appears to be discussing more than one mode of consciousness in an effort to dissociate himself from a destructive external force. These modes he distinguishes as the empirical and the poetic or imaginative. The mind sometimes stands in a reciprocal relationship with the ravine, receiving the larger portion of its knowledge from empirical
data. It sometimes goes into contemplative flights, com-
ing to realize that both thought and object, "that and thou,"
meet in hieratic communion and momentarily attain the in-
spired cavern realm of the Witch Poesy. 5 Until the moment
of communion passes, the mind transcends limitations of the
empirical world. Harold Bloom's interpretation in Shelley's
Mythmaking cannot be overlooked at this point. Although
Bloom's application of Buber's I-Thou concept is very useful
in describing the reciprocal relationship between poet and
mountain, it is grounded in the theological belief that the
greater power is the "Thou" external to man and inherent in
nature, whereas as I believe, and as Hall believes, the
greater power seems to be the mind of man itself.

In the third section, turning from the momentary
attainment of the inspired poetic state, Shelley ponders
the idea held by "some" (49) that "gleams of a remoter
world/Visit the soul in sleep" (49-50), again expressing
the idea that light related to knowledge is only occasional
rather than continual. Perhaps only in the sleep of death,
he muses, can permanent shapes be perceived. Earthly shapes
are clearly viewed as mere insubstantial shadows of these.
Yet, with such ideas in mind, Shelley raises his eyes from
the familiar Arve, thereby encountering the mysterious Mont
Blanc and receiving the stimulus for his subsequent descrip-
tion of wonder-ful or numinous Presence.

Contingency is at first operative. As in all wonder-
events, the poet conscious of the encounter has difficulty understanding why the Presence exists and what it signifies. Much like Keats in his magnificent "Ode to a Nightingale," Shelley questions whether this is a vision or a dream:

Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!

(53-59)

The July 22, 1816, letter to Peacock serves as a useful gloss on this experience. "Mont Blanc was before us," Shelley writes,

but was covered with cloud, & its base furrowed with dreadful gaps was seen alone. Pinnacles of snow, intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc shone thro the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of extatic wonder, not unallied to madness--And remember this was all one scene. It all pressed home to our regard & to our imagination--Though it embraced a great number of miles the snowy pyramids which shot into the bright blue sky seemed to overhang our path--the ravine, clothed with gigantic pines and black with its depth below.--so deep that the very roaring of the untameable Arve which rolled through it could not be heard above--was close to our very footsteps. All was as much our own as if we had been the creators of such impressions in the minds of others, as now occupied our own. Nature was the poet, whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest.6

We are again reminded of Keen's comment that wonder-events involve a cognitive crucifixion--a surrender of the self to the object in order to achieve new understanding, in order to revivify the world. With the recognition that no imagination could previously conceive of such wonder-ful
objects, Shelley recognizes that once the mountain has been seen the poet attains insight. Through interaction with the object, he becomes a type of creator-god.

Shelley's response is generally characteristic of the Romantic period and of his personal, contemplative orientation. "This poem," he writes of "Mont Blanc,"

was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe, and, as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untamable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from whence these feelings sprang. 7

Asserting this, Shelley's preface to A History of a Six Weeks' Tour is indicative of an historical change in the attitude toward mountains which parallels the changed attitude toward caves already discussed in Chapter One. Once viewed purely as the "ruins" of a fallen world, with interest in an expanded cosmos and geocosm newly aroused by science, mountains came to be viewed not only as objects of terror and melancholy but also as objects possessing a degree of fascination. These natural objects commanded additional attention as scientists explored the causes of their existence and as the mind of inquiring man became almost obsessed with the deep mystery which they were believed to body forth.

When Shelley encounters Mont Blanc, he is initially overwhelmed by its rugged and transcendent quality. It strikes him as possessing what Rudolf Otto calls an "overflow plus of meaning," 8 a significance which man cannot rationally
explain, but which must finally be intuited. The mountain
is conceived as a potent sign of power:

Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky
Mont Blanc appears—still, snowy, and serene—
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps. (60-66)

Already both the mountain and the surrounding territory
appear supramundane as a result of the poet’s acute faculty
of divination. Because he must divine the significance of
the mountain—because he must personally interpret this
manifestation of seemingly unapproachable power which shows
itself forth but without offering explanation of its meaning—
the role of Shelley’s individual mind and finally of the
mind of man becomes increasingly central to the poem.

"Power," he tells us, "dwells apart in its tran-
quility,/Remote, serene, and inaccessible" (96-97), but
through its physical manifestations such as the mountain, it
is capable of teaching the "adverting mind" (100) attracted
to it and constantly active. Past and present geological
theories are clearly of interest to Shelley’s active mind
as he asks,

--Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did the sea
Of fire envelop once this secret snow? (71-74)

What, exactly, caused this desolation, Shelley wonders.
Although of early interest, such inquiries ultimately are
discarded as insignificant. Instead, the feeling-response called forth by the encounter is that the mountain "seems eternal now" (75) and that it is therefore much more closely related to man's faith than to strictly scientific understanding. "The wilderness has a mysterious tongue," the poet writes,

Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for his faith, with nature reconciled.

(76-79)

As a natural and descriptive power, the glaciers teach rejection of Nature. One cannot easily love a force purely antagonistic to one's own well-being. Yet, if we can justly accept the Boscombe MS variant ("in such a faith") as a clearer expression of Shelley's meaning, we can see that man's intuitions of sacrality are capable of overcoming a strictly empirical perception of destructiveness. Directly addressing the mountain as a Presence, Shelley continues:

Thou hast a voice, great mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

(80-83)

Specifically what this ameliorative voice is, Shelley does not say here. Apparently he senses it before he can define or rationally explain it. We must wait until later in the poem--until he further develops his thoughts--for a more precise explanation.

In order to come completely to terms with the mountain and to experience it as renovative rather than
totally destructive, Shelley must first overcome the fear which is an integral part of his initial response. Such fear is very readily explained in terms of the phenomenology of wonder. Although Shelley has opened the poem with an exposition of the pre-established conception of the One Mind—a system in which mind and matter are neatly assimilated into an ordered cosmos, he does not rest entirely content with this notion. With the appearance of the mountain, his cosmic scheme is challenged and very nearly destroyed. Certainty is denied him by the partially distressing recognition that Mont Blanc cannot easily be pigeonholed as part of the One Mind. Instead, it appears to be a mysterious force, an "unknown omnipotence" (53), its darkness directly contrary to the bright and familiar Arve. Now momentarily considered to be a power greater than the mind, it poses a definite threat to mankind, and Shelley is temporarily aligned with those seventeenth and eighteenth century men who typically regarded mountains as warts on what would otherwise be a beautiful earthly visage. Commenting on this, he writes:

---how hideously

Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare and high
Ghastly, scared, and riven.

(69-71)

One is reminded of Donne's "warts, and pock-holes in the face/Of th' earth" ("An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary") and of Cotton's "Hillocks, Mole-Hills, Warts
and Pibbles" (The Wonders of the Peak). Feeling this way, Shelley might even conceivably react as his 1814 tour-group's French voiturier reacted when confronted by his first mountain. Described in the August 17th entry of the tour History, the driver, who had previously spent his entire life on the plains of Troyes, became "so utterly scared ... that he had in some degree lost his reason." As a result, he fled from the mountain and from his job, crying "Je ne puis pas."

Shelley, on the other hand, avoids such an extreme reaction because he moves beyond the initial contingency and terror of the immediate encounter toward a deeper understanding which dispels the disconcerting unfamiliarity. Of course, he has a simple and obvious advantage over the voiturier. While the latter had never before seen a mountain and was probably a man of too low a social class to have been influenced by the numerous diaries of recent travellers or the theories of recent aestheticians of the Natural Sublime, Shelley admits that he had been reared among mountains, even though less lofty ones than Mount Blanc. Like Burnet's, his experience of threat is lessened by at least partial familiarity. Given this, an even more significant explanation plays a role in the poem. Unlike the voiturier who reacts so violently that his cognitive processes are dormant, Shelley demonstrates that his mind rather than his feet are active. While the voiturier's terrified response serves as a reminder of Burke's statement that, in astonishment, "the
mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (Enquiry, II, 1), Shelley himself is reminiscent of the man more familiar with the Natural Sublime who consequently experiences more contemplative "admiration, reverence, and respect" (Enquiry, II, 1). As Burke continues:

It is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration and chiefly excites our passions. Knowledge and acquaintance make the most striking causes affect but little.

(Enquiry, II, 4)

Complete novelty results in the voiturier's mental paralysis, while partial novelty results in Shelley's admiration. Characteristically, Keen notes, man asks what has happened and why, and attempts to discover his personal relationship to this new knowledge. Like Keats, Shelley questions whether this encounter is a vision or a dream, but instead of concluding with this open-ended question, Shelley seeks an answer by looking more closely at Mont Blanc which, unlike the nightingale vanishing to a deeper valley-glade, remains steadfastly before him.

In order to alleviate his initial distress, the poet increasingly divides the mountain into malevolent and benevolent segments, thus demonstrating the mind's supremacy over simple matter. "The glaciers," he writes,

creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
Frost and the sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled; dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand.

(100-101)

As Bloom so aptly points out, Shelley's view of the Chamouni glaciers is contrary to Coleridge's Christian conception of the sublime glaciers as an objective manifestation of an omnipotent but nonetheless praiseworthy God. In his "Hymn Before Sun-rise in the Vale of Chamouni," Coleridge poses a rhetorical question, rather than a question requiring serious inquiry:

Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?—
GOD! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, GOD!

(54-59)

Even recognizing the terror of glacial avalanches, Coleridge is able to declare comfortingly that "Earth, with her thousand voices, praises GOD" (85). On the other hand, to Shelley's mind, these same glaciers are a cold, indifferent and perpetual force destructive to both nature and man, and certainly undeserving of praise. They are painstakingly portrayed as both non-human and non-civilized. Like "snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,/Slow rolling on" (101-102), they partly appear to be evil serpents who would calculatingly destroy an eden, bringing chaos to cosmos.
"Not a city, but a flood of ruin" (107), they also partly appear an already desecrated eden, serving as a direct contrast to what Shelley believes a city can potentially become if man remains free.

Generally mentioned by most critics, but so far given too cursory a treatment, the July 24, 1816, letter to Peacock makes an invaluable addition to an understanding of Shelley's personal view of glaciers:

Saussure the naturalist says that they have their periods of increase & decay--the people of the country hold an opinion entirely different, but, as I judge, more probable. It is agreed by all that the snows on the summit of Mt. Blanc & the neighboring mountains perpetually augment, & that ice in the form of glacier subsists without melting in the valley of Chamounix during its transient & variable summer. If the snow which produces the glaciers must augment & the heat of the valley is no obstacle to the perpetual subsistence of such masses of ice as have already descended into it, the consequence is obvious.

--The glaciers must augment, & will subsist at least until they have overflowed the vale. --I will not pursue Buffon's sublime but gloomy theory, that this earth which we inhabit will at some future period be changed into a mass of frost. Do you who assert the supremacy of Ahriman imagine him throned among these desolating snows, among these palaces of death & frost, sculptured in this their terrible magnificence by the unsparing hand of necessity, & that he casts around him as the first essays of his final usurpation avalanches, torrents, rocks, & thunders--and above all, these deadly glaciers at once the proofs & the symbols of his reign.

(Letters, I, 499; italics mine)

Now, unless Shelley could radically alter his theory of glaciers between the July 23rd draft of the poem and the letter dated the succeeding day or unless he could write a poem directly contradicting what he so explicitly declares that he finds probable, such critics as Wasserman
and Hall seem to have made an erroneous assumption based on the fact that we now hold Saussure's theory true. Wasserman's argument that "the inaccessible Power descends as glaciers, which melt into streams that become the river Arve in the ravine"¹¹ and Hall's derivative belief that Shelley views the mountain as both destroying and creating with equal insensibility¹² cannot easily stand unexamined. Although Shelley has been declared "the Newton among the poets,"¹³ in "Mont Blanc" we have already seen him reject geogenic theories of the mountain's origin in favor of intuition that it is "eternal."

Thus, glacier and stream must ultimately be viewed as totally at odds with one another, not as various phases of any cyclical process operative in the natural world. While the glacier may represent Necessity which perpetually augments and which manifests itself according to invariable natural law, the stream, whose source is a "secret throne" is merely girded by, and not comprised of, the "ice gulphs." Setting up a contrast between the fatalistic and sterile lives of the French Mountain people and the presumably more productive and fertile lives of people in the vale, Shelley's July 24th letter continues:

Add to this the degradation of the human species, who in these regions are half deformed or idiotic & most of whom are deprived of anything that can excite interest & admiration. This is a part of the subject more mournful & less sublime;—but such as neither the poet nor the philosopher should disdain.

(Letters, I, 499)
The implied contrast between mountain-dwellers and plains-dwellers is crucial. We must remember that Shelley's Golden City of The Revolt of Islam is, itself, situated on a plain. And even the voiturier from the plains of Troyes, though he has not yet learned the powers of contemplation, is certainly capable of awed response. On the other hand, living in accordance with the law of Necessity represented by the glacier's never-ending onslaught, Shelley's mountain people have been "deprived of anything that can excite interest & admiration." And these are, indeed, two central responses to any wonder-event. Shelley's essay "On Love" speaks to this point, describing both the perfect life of wondering man and the living death of these mountain people:

Hence in solitude, or in that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings, and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, and the waters, and the sky. In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondance with our heart. There is an eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture. . . . So soon as this want of power is dead, man becomes the living sepulchre of himself, and what yet survives is the mere husk of what once he was. (Prose, 170-171)

Deprived of this emotional sense of wonder, the mountain people's lives are totally ruled by a negative power, not open to possibility. The tyrannical glaciers threaten destruction, while the springs promise enrichment. From the former, "the race/Of man flees far in dread" (117-118);
to the latter, Shelley hopes we will become more closely tied.

In this context, Shelley's use of the imagery of the pines becomes clearer and extremely important. "Children of elder time" (21), they are remnants of Giant Forms. Their sacrality is emphasized by the eternal devotion of the "chainless winds" (22) which, in contrast to the mountain people, are not bound by Necessity. Rather than being resigned to living in the proximity of the glacial and desecrated world, every year moving slightly in advance of the onslaught, the winds thus far have been free to return to this sacred bower in order to "drink the odours" and hear the mighty and harmonious swinging of the pines. The pines, themselves, actively cling to the banks of the glimmering stream, and appear to brood over their loss of an era when wonder was still pervasive. Like the mountain-dwellers who become deformed and idiotic as a result of their atrophied sense of wonder and also like the Sensitive Plant (to be discussed later) that becomes a "leafless wreck" after the loss of the one who loved it and whom it could love in return, these pines are depicted as an endangered species. Many of them are mere shadows of their former selves. Their trunks succumb to the merciless glaciers and are ravaged by ice, or their roots are torn from the nourishing banks of the creative stream. They stand "branchless and shattered" (110), or they fall and decay upon the now "mangled soil" (110). Natural Law proves
destructive to both "life and joy" (117). Even the once carefully wrought cities of men are transient as smoke, vanishing before this force. Here, I think, lies the central difficulty of the poem. Despite the fact that the glaciers are described as "streams" and that such critics as Wasserman and Hall regard this "flood of ruin" (107) as the river which becomes the "breath and blood of distant lands" (124), these ice flows certainly are not causally identified with the beneficent waters that make fruitful the civilization on the plains. The one is a product of Necessity, the other of the caverns of imagination.

Only the imaginative poet can look beyond the deathly surface appearance of natural forces. Because he conceives of human life as graced by powerful mental capacities rather than as fated to domination by Natural Law, Shelley manages, although only gradually and with difficulty, to view that life in terms of promise. He is still open to novelty and, therefore, he retains the ability to conceive of an extra-sensory realm unavailable to the unfeeling mountain-dwellers or the unthinking voiturier. The fault lies not in man's stars but in his inability to recognize a creative potential which is his supreme gift of freedom.

Agreeing with Keats's assertion that "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/Are sweeter" (Ode on a Grecian Urn, 11-12), Shelley insists that man must intuitively
comprehend the massage inherent in the great mountain's solitude. Mont Blanc remains steadfast even after Shelley's contemplative wandering. "The power is there," he declares, "the still and solemn power of many sights,/And many sounds, and much of life and death" (127-129). The mountain finally encompasses not one, but two, "transcendent" realms: the one symbolic and internal to man, but through its capacity to allow for wonder, ultimately in touch with the sacred; the other external to man and ruled by Natural Law. Shelley experiences basically what Wordsworth calls "spots of time"—those moments that give

Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will.

(Prelude, XII, 220-223)

In "Mont Blanc," he conceives of the imagination as capable of discovering ontological plenitude in what initially appears to be a void. The mountain's mystery is a phenomenon which encompasses man; only he can potentially solve it. In his apostrophe to the mountain, Shelley concludes:

the secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

(139-144)

As Hall also notes, were the mind incapable of intuiting more than a void, neither the mountain, the earth, the heavens, nor the sea could be viewed as sacred. All men
would be irredeemably fated to share the myopic, non-
creative sight of the half-deformed and idiotic mountain-
dwellers.

As Rudolf Otto explains, and as Shelley obviously
intuits, a void such as silence or absence of color (in
this case, the snow-capped mountain) is a "negation that
does away with every 'this' and 'here' in order that the
'wholly other' may become actual." The silence and soli-
tude of Mont Blanc are finally not a vacancy, for from
within the mountain arise the more eloquent springs. Shelley
has found the desirable "secret correspondence" with his
heart that awakens man to wonder and, therefore, prevents
him from becoming a living sepulchre incapable of admiration
and delight. In contrast to the frozen floods of the dehuman-
ized glaciers, the free-flowing "majestic River" (123)
becomes the humanized "breath and blood of distant lands."
The air no longer merely gives destructive glaciers to the
earth, but the earth's vital center (and man's) now also
supplements "the ocean waves" and "the circling air" (125,
126). The human sense of wonder associated with the Arve
nourishes mankind, and, in this, it proves to be a fore-
runner of the Witch of Atlas who four years later pursues
her analogous journey

adown old Nilus, where he treads
Egypt and Aethopia, from the steep
Of utmost Axume, until he spreads
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain.

(497-452)
Remembering that Axume was one of the proposed sites of the location of Eden, just as Mont Blanc becomes the axis mundi, we can see Shelley's hope that chaos will once again be reclaimed by cosmos. In "Mont Blanc," Shelley celebrates an originally intuited, and eventually reasoned, potential. Therefore, he offers an alternative to the fatalistic view of the mountain-dwellers and to the unthinking terror of the voiturier. He does not write "The Hymn Before Sun-rise" of which Bloom states that Coleridge's central advice is "Submit!" Instead, Shelley comes much closer to Coleridge's recognition in "Dejection: An Ode," as the older poet states:

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

(45-46)

Mont Blanc's internal power proves ontologically more fundamental than its external power. The latter, natural power is merely "law" to earth, the former to the "infinite dome/of heaven" (140-141). The mountain which initially appears silent, upon a closer examination, is seen as permeated by "A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame" (31). Mind has interacted with matter, gradually becoming the greatest power conceivable. As Shelley states in "A Defense of Poetry": "Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta."

Having passed through this period of contemplation, Shelley no longer questions whether the mountain is a vision or a dream. Because it "yet gleams on high" (127), it is
viewed as ontologically real. It appears to be divine light, rather than a dead world. "Large codes of fraud and woe," Shelley believes, can now perhaps be repealed by the imaginative powers which it represents. "A world or a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion," he writes,

will touch the enchanted chord and reanimate in those who have ever experienced these emotions the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and beautiful in the world. ... Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of divinity in man.

(Prose, 294-295)

As Verhoeven explains it, "to speak or to write from the standpoint of wonder already implies the pretension to change the world even where no force is preached." A firm conviction is that man will not violate that which he truly holds sacred, and for the wondering man this necessarily includes human freedom and joy. There is hope if man takes the time necessary to experience Being in its fullness and if he accepts his social responsibility and follows the philosopher Rousseau's advice, modelling society after his own creative capabilities--after his own intuition of sacrality. In "Mont Blanc," Shelley therefore views ontological wonder as potentially culminating in ontological security. If man is careful, he need never again fear becoming deformed and idiotic like the mountain-dwellers. Even if man can perhaps never be wise enough to interpret the mystery entirely, the great poet intu...
its sacrality can at least make the grace of life felt; the good man begin to deeply feel.

While "Mont Blanc" is only secondarily political, such subsequent works as The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, and "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills," are more overtly political and, thus, further emphasize the need for reform and the hope that this need can finally be met. Again, it is noteworthy that each of these poems appears to be the outgrowth of Shelley's experience of wonder in some physical setting and of his meditation about that experience. According to Newman Ivey White, the French Revolution was first chosen as a topic for a major poem (Leon and Cythna which was to be revised and retitled The Revolt of Islam) when Shelley visited the palace of Versailles; while, on the other hand, Mary Shelley's note on the poem comments that it was written while Shelley was moored in his boat during wanderings through the countryside populated by poverty-stricken peasants. In his own preface to the later play, Shelley himself comments:

This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

(Prose, 327)

The element of wonder is obvious. While these sources must
be conveyed to us in notes, the source of "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" is adequately explained within the poem itself, just as is that of "Mont Blanc."

As Donald Reiman notes in his introduction to what was to become the first full-length explication of "Lines," it is a poem generally overlooked because it "has never been controversial" and because "its tetrameter couplets appear 'uncharacteristic' of Shelley under the generalizations which govern most discussions of his poetry, thus making the poem 'peripheral' to both attackers and defenders of Shelley's poetic achievement."19 Speaking of the poem, Harold Bloom calls it one of "two longish poems which I admire" (the other being the "Letter to Maria Gisborne") but which he excludes from his book because, like "Julian and Maddalo," The Cenci, and Hellas, "they have no bearing on my subject or my subject on them."20 Such a comment comes as no slight surprise when made by a critic expressly interested in relationship between mind and vibrant Presence.

Much like the "passive youth" who was "musing deeply on the lot/off life" when he experienced the momentary light of Intellectual Beauty ("Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," 79, 55-56), Shelley again experiences momentary light during his day's wanderings in the Euganean Hills overlooking Venice and Padua. And, as a result, he interprets the event in his poem written at Byron's villa at Esta (1818). In his prefatory remarks to the Rosalind and Helen volume (1819),
he provides the basic data of the poem's source:

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If anyone is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful mountains, I can only offer the excuse that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend / Mary Shelley/.  

(Prose, 320)

As Keen points out and as Shelley's "Hymn" and above commentary illustrate, one cannot purposefully set out for a day of wondering. The event must arise as a surprise. 21 "The numen on its side has intercourse with man, possessing him, breathing upon him, filling and permeating him," Otto tells us, adding that "the Divine, experienced as 'light,' 'fire' . . . is a permeating glow and illumination, fulfillment, transfiguration--most of all where it is experienced as 'Life,' or (what is but the intensification of this) as very 'Being.'" 22 Such seems to be Shelley's experience as he delineates the progress of a wonder-event momentarily dispelling the ordinary, phenomenal, "dead" world:

Mid the mountains Euganean,  
I stood listening to the paean  
With which the legioned rooks did hail  
The sun's uprise majestical;  
Gathering round with wings all hoar,  
Through the dewy mist they soar  
Like grey shadows, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow down the dark steep streaming
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

(70-89)

Looking at the poet's essay "On Love" previously cited and also at the preface to Prometheus Unbound, we find comments pertinent to Shelley's use of imagery in this and other poems. While the essay comments that we find "a secret correspondence with our heart" in the objects of nature, the preface asserts that "the imagery I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed" (Prose, 327).

As Wasserman well explains, the use of Apollonian light parallels Shelley's use of light imagery in his "Hymn," and it also parallels the dawn of wonder in the poet's mind. "Lo, the sun floats up the sky/Like thought-winged Liberty" (206-207), Shelley tells us, relating both sun and mind to the flight of the now glistening rooks and to the poem's central concept of liberty. Here, Reiman's interpretation seems exactly right and worth quoting at length:

At the literal surface a flock of rooks sing a paean to the rising sun even as they take flight and disappear, following the sun-dispersed morning mist into the distance where their cawing is inaudible. The symbolic
significance of the birds themselves is clear from Shelley's only other poetic use of the word "rooks":
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun
Night's dreams and terrors, every one,
Fled from the brains which are their prey
From the lamp's death to the morning ray.
("The Boat on the Serchio," ll. 26-29)
Thus on this morning the sun, symbol of divine energy on the cosmic level and the imagination on the human level, disperses both the light-distorting mists that darken men's minds and the "dreams and terrors" that affect men during their separation from divine illumination; yet these very birds of ill-omen hail the rising of the divinity that is their ultimate source. Aloft with their black wings appearing "all hoar" in the mist (black seems white in the distorted realm of merely human knowledge), they fly "like gray shades" until the sun bursts over the eastern horizon. Then, as evening clouds borrow colors ("fire and azure") from the sun's last rays, the purple plumage of the birds gleams "with drops of golden rain" as they pass out of hearing, till "all is bright, and clear, and still/Round the solitary hill" (ll. 88-89). The poet, released in part from the meaningless clamor and false colors of his own limited and divided mind, is ready to experience, in the silence and clarity of a moment of imaginative insight, a universe in which his private and social moral endeavors find their unified significance. 25

The rooks here appear to be conceived of archetypally, and according to Eliade would primarily be associated with man's desire for freedom. As also noted in my Blake chapter, while words for "transcendence" and "freedom" did not exist in archaic languages, the concept of Magical Flight did, supporting the idea that "the roots of freedom are to be sought in the depths of the psyche, and not in conditions brought about by certain historical moments; in other words the desire for absolute freedom ranks among the essential longings of man, irrespective of the stage his culture has reached and of its forms of social organization." 26 Gradually associated with contemplation rather
than with bodily movement, this Magical Flight is easily
transformed into Shelley's image of the rooks carolling
a hymn of thanksgiving.

Shelley, himself, is finally left standing atop
the highest of the hills, islanded in a sea of mist. A
hierophany has occurred, and his island becomes a sort of
axis mundi from which he can contemplate the decay and
rejuvenation of the earth. Having entered a cloudless
sacred time (of which dawn is a favorite), he gazes down
upon the shifting mists surrounding the profane realms of
Venice and Padua. Shelley has experienced the wonder-
event, the holy moment; and as Verhoeven describes it,
"the moment is a point of time that serves as a point of
departure, impetus, to an action." 27

But before Shelley can describe the most interest-
ing thoughts evoked by this event, he must first contrast
the gleaming and wonder-ful appearance of the cities with
their gloomy reality. Venice's spires may resemble
"flames of sacrifice/From the marble shrines" that rose
"to pierce the dome of gold/Where Apollo spoke of old"
(111-112, 113-114); but, in truth, the mythical age has
not been recaptured. Instead, it has only been conjured
up by the interaction of sunlight and the mind of a latter-
day Apollo or poet. Even when the sun reaches its zenith,
seeming to "level plain and height" (209) with its direct
"universal light" (208) and, as Reiman remarks, serving as
Shelleyan "symbol of the nearest conjunction between the
divine and the mortal, the eternal and the temporal," it
only "seems" to create equality, rather than actually
doing so. Even though at this most wonder-ful moment
Shelley temporarily views the world as if all objects and
living things were "interpenetrated" (313) with his own
spirit, he is not sure that Intellectual Beauty ("love,
light, harmony, Odor, or the soul of all, Which from heaven
like dew doth fall") is the cause, and even suspects that
all might be the product of his own mind "which feeds this
verse Peopling the lone universe" (315-317; 318-319).

The glory and seemingly equalizing quality of noon's
direct rays are not sufficient to prevent his thoughts from
becoming alloyed with doubt. Wonder can lead to personal
conception of the ideal, but the world lying below him is
ultimately real. Only if his personal conception can some-
how be made universal might there be hope. Like man in
The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, the citizens
of Venice are ruled tyrannically. Describing the basically
passive peasants, Shelley draws his imagery from Joel 3:
10-20 and Galations 6:7. The sickle, he tells us, has not
yet been changed to the sword, and, although tyranny is
wholesale, the peasants continue to relinquish their har-
vests to the tyrant (222-235). It appears that Shelley
attributes part of the fault to the peasants. Revolution
could remedy the situation, but the particular type of
revolution he advocates is not yet specified.

Similar to the Mont Blanc-dwellers who have allegedly become deformed and idiotic as a direct result of their inability to experience wonder, Shelley's tyrannized majority has also become weakened. The "human forms, / Like pollution-nourished worms" (146-147) also parallel Shelley's portrait of France in *The Revolt of Islam*. His hero, Laon, similarly remarks that

    The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
    Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side.
    (II, 694-695)

He subsequently adds that

    This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
    Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind;
    All that despair from murdered hope inherits
    They sought, and in their helpless misery blind,
    A deeper prison and heavier chains did find.
    (II, 712-716)

Oppressed by political and priestly forces similar to Jupiter's "thought-executing ministers" in *Prometheus Unbound* (I, i, 387) the masses appear doomed. Yet, Shelley's belief is that they are not. Like Homer's, Shakespeare's and Petrarch's souls, the cities' souls are also "mighty spirit[½—]/(204); the core is still wondrous, the soul still "sunlike" (193). As Blake says in *Milton*, there is a "Limit of Contraction," and, as a result, man retains his internal "translucence." Primarily, what the people lack is hope based on their ability to sense the sort of wondrous interpenetration that Shelley senses.
As in "Mont Blanc," Shelley speaks of the mind's transformative powers—an idea reiterated in his preface to *Prometheus Unbound*. "A poet," he explains, "is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers" (*Prose*, 328). However, even more important than whether the poet's attitude is based on perception, conception, or both, is the fact that he is privy to special knowledge and deems it worth sharing. "I vowed to dedicate my powers/To thee and thine" (61-62), Shelley announces in his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," referring to this Beauty and to those whom its light inconstantly visits. Desiring to "drive his dead thoughts / past feelings of wonder / over the universe/Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth" (Ode to the West Wind," 63-64), he bespeaks hope for his Italic brothers. His goal as a poet, he comments in the preface to *The Revolt of Islam*, is to write

in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor mis-representation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

(*Prose*, 315)

Much as the Hermit employs verbal eloquence to secure the captive Laon's release from the tyrants and as Cythna employs it to secure that of the slaves aboard ship (*Revolt of Islam*, III, 1506-09; VIII, 3388-96), Shelley hopes to use his own
in order to give hope to mankind, thus securing their release.

Having already indicated that "Men must reap the things they sow/Force from force must ever flow" (231-232), Shelley speaks of the extinguished "sacred flame" of Padua's "lamp of learning" (262, 256) and offers the subsequent parable of the Norway woodman. Like the tyrants extinguishing Padua's lamp, the woodman tramples out a light-giving fire and, thereby, initiates dramatic repercussions: "The spark beneath his feet is dead," Shelley writes,

He starts to see the flame it fed
Howling through the darkened sky
With myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear.

(275-279)

Perhaps referring to the manner in which "Repentence or, at least, guilt follows Crime" (254) as well as the way in which "Force from force must ever flow," Shelley next relates this parable to the natural wonder-event experienced in the Euganean Hills. "So thou,/O tyranny," he continues,

beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest;
Grovel on the earth: aye, hide
In the dust thy purple pride!

(280-284)

Paralleling the flaming sunrise, the event is not only related to the possibility of impending militant revolution but also to a reanimation of man's ability to wonder—to recognize a manifestation of Being. Such fires, accord-
ing to Eliade, are archetypally cleansing and renovative, and, as such, are related to the renovative volcanic imagery of both The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound. While G. M. Matthews has expertly interpreted the symbolic volcanic erruptions of the later drama as representative of earthly rebirth, one of several examples from The Revolt of Islam seems at least worthy of mention. As if expressing Shelley's own hopeful orientation, Laon asserts:

I will arise and waken
The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
The swoons of ages, it shall burst and fill
The world with cleansing fire; it must, it will--
It may not be restrained!

(II, 786-791)

The wonder symbolized by Shelley's rising suns and erupting volcanos, therefore, proves at odds with tyranny; its hope antithetic to servitude's despair. Both Laon and Prometheus embody this idea. Seeking to free the world, thus reopening it to possibility, the captured Laon remarks, "To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair/And die, I question not" (III, 1279-80). Similarly, Prometheus revokes his curse, thus expelling hatred and "Draining the poison of despair" (III, iii, 94). Two examples of man's ability to create his personal life in accordance with the freedom associated with wonder, these characters serve as prototypes. "Why is this glorious creature to be found/One only in ten thousand?", Wordsworth asks in The Prelude, "What one is/Why may not millions be?" (XII, 87-89). Such
seems to be Shelley's question. Others who could behold
the gleaming spires of Venice as he does, he argues,
"would imagine not they were/Sepulchres" (145-146).

But this specific wonder-event in itself cannot
change the world. Similar to the manner in which he speaks
of the inconstancy with which Intellectual Beauty manifests
itself in earthly objects, Shelley also describes what Buber
and Bloom refer to as a fall from relationship. Light fades
when evening comes, and the day’s wonder-event is at an end.
Some hope, however, is inherent in the fact that, as night
falls over the Euganean Hills, the sun rises elsewhere.
"And the soft dreams of the morn," Shelley declares,

(Which like winged birds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being),
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing... (327-332)

What Blake would call the "vehicular form" has played its
part in a momentary experience and promises to play a part
in experiences of others.

Even more importantly, however, Shelley indicates
that, because man has one such experience, he can posit
similar ones in the future. Presumably,

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of life and agony;
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf; even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove
Where for me and those I love,
May a windless bower be built
Far from passion, pain, and guilt.

(335-345)
Gazing down from his isle atop the highest peak in the Euganean Hills, Shelley shifts his glance from isle to isle, from once-great Venice, to once-great Padua. As Earl Wasserman has remarked, "in the successive splendor and darkening of Venice and then Padua, Shelley is tracing those scattered historical eras of mankind's cultural illumination, analogous to the successive 'islands' in each man's dark ocean and like the inconstant visitations of the Shadow of Intellectual Beauty." 31

Ultimately, however, Shelley's goal is to escape from this cyclical process of creation decay new creation. His creation is to suffer no decay, but to be forever renewed by man's ability to wonder. Feeling that all men possess this ability and need only learn to make it foremost, Shelley has faith in man's subsequent ability to help remake the world. In reference to wonder-ful hieratic experiences, Fromm notes that the resultant renewal is "not the creation of another reality after the reality of this life, but the transformation of this reality in the direction of greater aliveness." 32 This is Shelley's main point in *Prometheus Unbound*, which concludes by revealing that the story of Prometheus and Asia is essentially the mythical counterpart of an earthly transformation. Although Prometheus and Asia have attained "this far goal of time" and have, thus, become immortal, Shelley's main concern is with those on earth who look "in wonder up to heaven," "put their evil nature's off," and depose their kings (III, iv, 60, 77). Earth has been
made to be "like heaven" (III, iv, 160), and Demogorgon warns man that he must take care lest the serpent of evil should again uncoil at some time in the future.

Possessing affinities with both The Revolt of Islam which reveals that the spirits of a revolution of love survive even if the militant revolution has failed and also with Prometheus Unbound which depicts a successful revolution, "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" finally seems most hopeful. Its change is admittedly only imagined while that in Prometheus is presented as already occurring (in the dramatic if not in the real world). More significantly, its change is viewed as the more permanent. Freedom, Shelley says, might awake "In her omnipotence, and shake/From the Celtic Anarch's hold/All the keys of dungeons cold" (150-153). Writing a poem illustrative of what Eliade calls the "symbolism of the center," Shelley argues that, like the sacred mountain, the "island" (noticeably a mountain top) can become a sort of axis mundi exempt from the deluge and serving as a center from which humanity can be reformed. Initially, the polluting multitude would be drawn to the island paradise. Eventually the entire earth could be renewed:

They, not it would change: and soon  
Every sprite beneath the moon  
Would repent its envy vain,  
And the earth grow young again.  

(370-373)

"Mild brotherhood" (369), repentance of envy, and the ability to fill the wondrous and mysterious whisperings with the
"deep melodies" (365) of the "inspired soul" (364) are the end-products of Shelley's longed-for society.

As Demogorgon states in the conclusion to *Prometheus Unbound*, man must "hope till Hope creates/From its own wreck the thing it contemplates" (IV, i, 575-576), and through his poetry Shelley tries to awaken this hope. "My purpose," he declares in his preface to *Prometheus*,

has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealism of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness.

(Prose, 328)

In a sense, the new creation—the harvest of man's happiness—in "Euganean Hills" is a repetition of celestial archetypes, and especially of the era during which flames still burned on altars for Apollo. In another sense, however, and in the sense that I believe is most important, Shelley's thinking has been influenced by Rousseau. The life he desires is not merely an earth grown young again by returning to a past glory, but a world based partly on the past, partly on man's ability to conceive of an even better world. It is to entwine "memories of old time/With new virtues more sublime" (158-159). As Northrop Frye reminds us, Shelley's age had come to agree with Rousseau that "civilization is now the creative power of man; its model is the human vision revealed in the arts." With this idea, we are back
once again to Abram's notion in *Natural Supernaturalism* that Romantic poetry is characterized by a circuitous return (such as Wordsworth's return to Grasmere), but essentially by a return that is also upward, spiraling toward a way of life even better than that led by pre-lapsarian man.

II

But just as Wordsworth's career did not stop when he expressed his joyous return to Grasmere, Shelley's does not stop when he contemplates the Euganean Hills. By 1820, two years after Shelley had completed "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" and after he had begun work on *Prometheus Unbound*, he had come increasingly to question mortal man's ability to intuit the sacred or, having momentarily achieved that state of imagination which enabled him to intuit it, to perfect his life and society in accordance with that intuition. The meditative lyric, "To a Skylark," is exemplary of this gradually increasing skepticism about man's ability to find his happiness in this natural world. Once again, the poem is allegedly the product of a personal experience. In her note on the poem, Mary Shelley explains that the Skylark in question was heard near Maria Gisborne's house at Leghorn: "It was on a beautiful summer evening," she writes,

while wandering among the lanes whose myrtle hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies, that we heard the carolling of the skylark which inspired one of the most
beautiful of his poems.  

The poem becomes especially important for the manner in which it differentiates Shelley's mind during this period of his career from Wordsworth's mind when he composed "To the Cuckoo" (written 1802, published 1807)—a poem almost identical in subject matter, if not in subjective response. As noted in the last chapter, Wordsworth begins his poem with what Otto recognizes as a typical use of negatives to attempt explanation of a numinous object. The Cuckoo is "No bird, but an invisible thing" (15), Wordsworth declares; and the second generation Romantic, Shelley, similarly remarks,

    Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
    Bird thou never wert,
    That from Heaven, or near it,
    Pourest thy full heart
    In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.  
(1-5)

The sacred experiences are related largely in terms of music, each thus evoking a sense of something completely "other." While Wordsworth's Cuckoo is "a voice, a mystery" magnetically attracting both the small boy and the grown man, Shelley's Skylark is even more explicitly contrasted from the outset with the ordinary phenomenal world:

    All the earth and air
    With thy voice is loud,
    As when Night is bare
    From one lonely cloud
    The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven
    is overflowed.

    What thou art we know not;
    What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

(26-35)

As Shelley so well phrases it in *Adonais*, the refracted light which creates color, here exemplified by the rainbow, "stains the white radiance of Eternity" (stanza 52). The untainted Skylark, on the other hand, is associated with the pure art form of music. And, even here, Shelley is not content to equate the bird's song with any earthly song. "Chorus Hymeneal," he writes,

or triumphal chant
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

(66-70)

Neither the happiest moments of the earth on a personal or a national level are comparable to the bird's unearthly happiness.

Having already established the mysterious quality of the two birds, both poets also make use of positive analogies as a means of approaching definitions of the wonder-ful objects. Although alluded to in relation to the Cuckoo poem, a passage from Otto is so nearly like Shelley's practice in "To a Skylark" that it is worth quoting again at greater length:

There is only one way to help another to an understand-ing of it [hierophany]. He must be guided and led on by consideration and discussion of the matter through the ways of his own mind until he reach the point at which 'the numinous' in him per-force begins to stir, to start into life and into
consciousness. We can co-operate in this process by bringing before his notice all that can be found in other regions of the mind, already known and familiar, to resemble, or again to afford some special contrast to, the particular experience we wish to elucidate. Then we must add: "This X of ours is not precisely this experience, but akin to this one and the opposite of that other. Cannot you now realize for yourself what it is?" In other words our X cannot, strictly speaking, be taught, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind, as everything that comes "of the spirit" must be awakened. 

While Wordsworth is content to label his Cuckoo a "Wandering voice," Shelley employs what Woodring's discussion of "Ode to the West Wind" calls "haste of metaphor." "What thou art we know not;/What is most like thee?", Shelley asks, striving to find an appropriate explanation so that he can enable his readers to feel as he feels at this sacred moment. Soaring so high that it has become invisible, the Skylark is compared to various hidden people and objects, all characterized by love, light, or beauty:

Like a Poet hidden
   In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden
   Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not;

Like a high-born maiden
   In a palace tower
Soothing her love-laden
   Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love,—which overflows her bower;

Like a glowworm golden
   In a dell of dew,
Scattering unobhelden
   Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:
Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy
wing'd thieves.

(36-55)

Most noteworthy is the specific comparison with a contemplative poet. Shelley seems to express his own desire for identification with the bird whose divinity he has intuited. The ideal role of the poet as healer and as "unacknowledged legislator of the world" (Prose, 297) is obvious.

Concomitant with their music and this idea of contemplative thought is the birds' flight: "Higher still and higher," Shelley comments,

From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest.
And singing dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

(6-10)

A being of light, the bird passes from earth into the heavens. Like the rocks transformed by dawning light while soaring and singing above the Euganean Hills, this "unbodied joy" (15) is clearly associated with the soul engaged in shamanic flight.

In great contrast to the Cuckoo and Skylark who seem rightly to belong to a transcendent realm, man is viewed by both poets as at least partially fallen from a desirable visionary state. The adult Wordsworth attempts to reason about the bird, telling himself that it is a creature of the earth and, thus, losing the feeling of wonder experienced by
the child. Yet, he soon recalls past feelings, using this memory as a basis upon which to recreate feelings of sacrality. Shelley, on the other hand, is finally skeptical even of man's momentary ability to pass from profane to sacred time. Although still seeing and hearing the bird, and therefore experiencing wonder, he can no longer be as certain of understanding his experience or of being able to help others to experience it vicariously as he was four years before when he wrote "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills." The bird's transcendence of man's temporal realm is well represented as Shelley comments:

   In the golden lightning
       Of the sunken Sun,
   O'er which clouds are brightening,
       Thou dost float and run;
   Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

(11-15)

While the earth which man is fated to remain upon is growing dim and as Shelley's own contemplative wandering is nearly at an end, the Skylark is just entering a lightening world. Unlike the light that passes away from the poet's natural environment in "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills," however, this light is not described as passing on to another longitude, as "to other sufferers fleeing." Instead, it seems entirely to fade away, with only the bird apparently capable of escaping that relentlessness of historical existence.

As a result, the poet repeatedly senses what Otto calls "creature-consciousness" or "creature-feeling"--"the
emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures." Unable to soar, man is separated from knowledge of the "things more deep and true" that the happy bird is believed to know, and is instead fated to remain in time and, therefore, to fear mortality. As Shelley writes:

We look before and after
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

(86-90)

Only the bird seems to have attained the realm of "slow time" depicted on Keats's Grecian Urn. Only it can, therefore, never know "Love's sad satiety" (80).

"A poet is a nightingale," writes Shelley in "A Defense of Poetry," "who sits in the darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feels that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why" (Prose, 282). Although generally optimistic about art's redemptive function, Shelley's view in this particular poem is alloyed with doubt. In an obvious attack on waning neo-Classical belief that craftsmanship and imitation determine artistic perfection, he asserts that the Skylark's inspired ability to soar and sing is the true determinant. Not yet possessing the bird's knowledge, he can only imagine future success contingent upon his receipt of a gift of
that selfsame knowledge. If the bird should teach him its secrets, he could make others listen as he listens, feel as he feels. But the important fact about "To a Skylark" remains this: the bird does not teach these secrets. Shelley can wonder at its intuited divinity, but he cannot partake of that divinity.

Because allegedly derived from personal wonder-experiences as were "Mont Blanc," The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills," and "To a Skylark," both The Witch of Atlas and "The Sensitive Plant" demand attention, eventually revealing themselves to be clear manifestations of Shelley's increasing dissatisfaction with the earthly and of his increasing and compensatory other-worldliness. The sources are typical and, in themselves, convey none of Shelley's increasing skepticism. In her note on The Witch, Mary Shelley remarks:

We spent the summer of 1920 at the Baths of San Giuliano, four miles from Pisa. . . . The country around is fertile, and diversified and rendered picturesque by ranges of near hills and more distant mountains. . . . During some of the hottest days of August, Shelley made a solitary journey on foot to the summit of Monte San Pellegrino—a mountain of some height, on the top of which there is a chapel, the object, during certain days in the year, of many pilgrimages. The excursion delighted him while it lasted. . . . During the expedition he conceived the idea, and wrote in the three days immediately succeeding his return, The Witch of Atlas. 38

Similarly, in his note to the Rhinehart edition, Kenneth Neill Cameron suggests that Shelley may have modelled his garden after an Oxford garden, or may, as his cousin Medwin
proposes, have thought of the Pisan garden of his friend, Mrs. Mason. Although still stirred by natural scenes, Shelley is decreasingly interested in sacrality's manifestation in the natural world, and as a result his poetry becomes increasingly visionary. He presents the idea that only in an atemporal realm of death can man experience permanent ontological plentitude. Speaking of the Romantic trend toward this belief—a trend that directly counteracts the other (and generally earlier) Romantic belief that man can find his happiness here and now, Frye remarks: "It is suggested that the final identification of and with reality must be or at least include death." 

Herself a "wonder new" (88) and a "wondrous Lady" (119), the Witch is declared to have lived during the earth's "prime" (52), just as the early earthly Eden of "The Sensitive Plant," during its own "perfect prime" (I, 40), was characterized by the ontological purity attributed by the mind to "the rare blossoms from every clime" (I, 39). Reminiscent of Keats's diversified gardens in which all beauties of all seasons exist "all together" ("Fancy," 31), contributing to a moment of intensity, both Shelley's wondrous garden and Witch's cave are places of visionary potential. In the cave, he tells us, "lay visions swift, and sweet, and quaint, / Each in its thin sheath, like a chrysalis" (161-162). The visionary Witch not only carefully stores these potentially sacred objects, waiting for
the appropriate moments to send them fleetingly out into the world beyond the cave, she is also directly contrasted with that world. Unlike transient nature, the wondrous power represented by the Witch escapes decay. Depicted as transcendent rather than immanent, she is a rank above the Ocean-Nymphs, Hamadryads, Oreads, and Naiads who volunteer to do her bidding so that "they might live forever in the light/Of her sweet presence--each a satellite" (223-224). As a result of their mortality, the Witch responds with a blanket refusal of their offers:

XXIII
"This may not be," the wizard Maid replied;
"The Fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountain wide;
The boundless ocean, like a drop of dew,
Will be consumed--the stubborn centre must,
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust.

XXIV
"And ye with them will perish, one by one;--
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay--oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must--over me
Your leaves shall glance--the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so,--farewell!"

Shelley seems to be saying that his conception of poetic inspiration is superseding an older mythical conception of nature—that mental powers are replacing traditional earthly and spiritual ones.

In conjunction with this idea, Shelley presents the Witch as capable of leaving her symbolic cave and as willfully engaging in Magical Flight. Describing the manner in
which her perfectly balanced artistic creation, Hermaphroditus, plays an active role in this visionary ascension, Shelley writes:

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or, in the noon of interlunar night,
The lady-witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
Its storm-outspreading wings, the Hermaphrodite. (417-422)

Rising above the stars, she attains "a windless haven," like "a gem to copy Heaven engraven" (429, 448). The turn from the dawn and noontime of natural wonder in such poems as "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" is readily apparent and becomes increasingly characteristic of Shelley's subsequent works such as "To Night" (1821):

II

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out;
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
   Come, long-sought!

III

When I arose and saw the dawn,
   I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary day turned to his rest,
Lingered like an unloved guest,
   I sighed for thee.

It is in these "hours of sleep" (497) that the Witch pursues "Her choicest sport" (497) "adown old Nilus" and across the plains, as mentioned in relation to "Mont Blanc"—
the streams movement down that mountain. Shelley speaks of the possibility of wondrous poetry nourishing the earth.

Although the Witch has the ability to see into the life of things, as Shelley himself does in such earlier poems as "Mont Blanc" and "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills," the ordinary mortals of the world are viewed as incapable of wonder and as living in a starless realm lacking direction. The Witch is able to look upon sleeping human bodies and conceive of them as "living spirits" (570) in possession of "an inner form most bright and fair" (573) and is able to take the rudder of her boat, thus steering her own course. On the other hand, average men, viewed as "weak mariners," follow a course unpiloted "O'er its wide surface to an unknown goal" (540). They are unable either to descend into the Witch's cave of inspiration or to engage in ascendent Magical Flight, thus communing with the heavens. Increasingly typical of Shelley's later perspective, this view of disoriented humanity is echoed distinctly in "The Triumph of Life":

Though I sate beside a public way
Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,
Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear.
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;
And others as with steps toward the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within that gloom
Of their own shadow walked and called it death.

(43-59)

Again, there is continuity between these people and the
mountain-dwellers of "Mont Blanc," all of whom live an
existence ruled by fear of approaching death rather than
an active existence promising novelty and beneficial
change. As in The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound,
man's situation primarily results from an atrophy of love.
The scrolls in the Witch's cave are said to teach "inmost
lore of Love" (199) which has become cryptic, like hiero-
glyphics to modern man. "Let the profane/Tremble to ask
what secrets they contain" (199-200), Shelley asserts,
differentiating between those uninitiated into the sacred
realm and those initiates such as the Witch. Much like the
"companionless Sensitive Plant" (I, 12) attempting to
thrive, but unsuccessfully, amidst an alien nature where
it is not in possession of "the Beautiful" (I, 77), man,
in The Witch of Atlas, is obviously incapable of the sense
of wonder. The Witch has folded away the winds of inspira-
tion, Shelley explains:

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasure--
sounds of air
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die—yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.
(153-160)

Contentment with the earthly gradually passes as wonder-
events are perceived to be transient and as the imagina-
tion, relying only on memory, becomes obsessed solely
with loss rather than attaining at least some solace from
the fact of the initial intuition of sacrality, as Words-
worth is still able to do in his "Immortality Ode." For
Shelleyan mankind, the dominant response is mourning such
as that depicted in "The Sensitive Plant" when the Lady
dies. Described as "a Power in this place; An Eve in this
Eden; a ruling grace" (II, 1-2) and as "the wonder of her
kind" (II, 5), the Lady is needed as a caretaker of the
place if the garden is to remain wonder-ful, if weeds are
to be prevented from conquering the earth. As Wasserman
has commented, the Lady's death seems to be the death of
vision itself; the plants no longer viewed by her as
wondrous are fated to die, and even they seem to recognize
the fact that their own deaths are inextricably linked to
hers. In a description of the scene following her death,
Shelley writes:

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiae, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners, deep and low;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin-plank;

The dark green grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

(III, 1-16)

As a result of wonder's death among men, man, like the Sensitive Plant itself, becomes metaphorically a "leafless wreck" (III, 115), shrivelling and decaying much like Blake's Urizen. In Shelley's mind, the one-time ontological purity of the blossoms is blighted:

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew,
Were changed to a blight of frozen dew.

(III, 82-89)

Even the streams so important to both "Mont Blanc" and The Witch of Atlas and the flight so important to "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills," "To a Skylark," and The Witch are both affected by the wondering Lady's death:

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And its outlet, flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

(III, 70-73)

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want;
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

(III, 102-105)

Only in a poem such as "The Zucca" (1822), in which a sense of wonder is not lost in spite of the recognition of nature as a cosmic force antagonistic to both its individual components and to man, can life prosper and be characterized by joy. Summer gone, the poet/narrator weeps "the instability of all but weeping" ("The Zucca," II, 2), soon encountering the dying plant which "the Heavens had wept upon," but which "the Earth/had crushed ... on her unmaternal breast" (VI, 9, 10). We have come a long way since Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," conceived of Nature as "the nurse,/The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul,/Of all my moral being" (109-111). In a reverse of "The Sensitive Plant," Shelley describes taking the plant indoors, fostering it amidst the warmth of an interior human society, and watching it thrive while outdoors the savage December storm causes the once-singing birds to shiver in leafless bowerns and the fish to become frozen in their pools. Though the natural cycle is indifferent to wondrous life, Shelley seems to say, individual man can still experience such wonder in relation to highly particularized objects. Yet, the poem remains a fragment, even its limited optimism thus coming into question.

One thing certain, however, is that Shelley decreasingly associates wonder with political and social reform, coming to see the former as belonging to an atemporal mode
of existence. Although the Witch admittedly causes misers
to dream of relinquishing their hoards to beggars and
soldiers to dream of beating their swords into ploughshares,
her effect remains only in dreams, as yet unrealized in the
waking world and indicative of the fact that the poem does
not center on earthly reform. Instead, the late poems (with
the exception of the pessimistic "Triumph of Life" fragment)
present another sort of hope for the sensitive men, either
fulfillment in a mysterious transcendent realm or in what
Shelley comes to conceive of as the ordinary afterlife.
Those whom the Witch considers most worthy—primarily the
lovers—are initially seen as becoming initiates:

LXIX
To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl;
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforth as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them.

Yet it is after death, in a bower-world beyond the real
earthly world, that they achieve their only possible per-
manence. As Shelley continues:

        and the grave
        Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and over-arching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

LXX
For on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers' ruining and shook
The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathly nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.
LXXI
And there the body lay, age after age,
   Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
   With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
   Of death or life, while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new the rapid, blind,
   And fleeting generations of mankind.

This conviction that lovers or imaginative men
must finally die in order to fulfill their Being and attain
happiness is repeated in, and even more central to, Epipsychid-
ion. In that later poem, the narrator speaks of Magical
Flight to "a far Eden of the purple East" (417), where he
could be with his female complement or epipsyche, Emily
(Emilia Viviani). Such a place would be reminiscent of
the Golden Age, but, much like Shelley's proposed historical
paradise in "Euganean Hills," would also be characterized
by a higher degree of culture than ever existed in the
past. "I have sent books and music there," the narrator
remarks,

   and all
Those instruments with which high spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave.

   (519-522)

We have here the basic idea that Abrams refers to as the
Romantic spiral, but the better world attained is certainly
not a purely earthly one. Even this new civilization fin-
ally proves unsatisfactory. Man, the narrator recognizes,
would still remain mortal. His beau idéal cannot be in-
carnated successfully in a real person for the very funda-
mental reason that the person will eventually die. Such a love on earth cannot last, for consummation ends in annihilation. Shelley's ultimate ideal therefore again resides beyond the grave where he can himself unite with his epipsyche, where Keats of Adonais can attain his deserved immortality, where the Sensitive Plant can be Beautiful. As Shelley tells us, referring to three abstractions recurrently associated with wonder:

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change; their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

("Sensitive Plant," III, 138-141)

"New nations" no longer spring "with more kindly blossoming," as Shelley hopefully proposed that they could when he wrote "Euganean Hills" (165-166). But, to Shelley, there is still a form of hope. Although he concludes The Witch of Atlas with the thought that "We/Scarcely believe much more than we can see" (671-672), he implies that he might someday be able to continue his "visionary Rhyme" (8), declaring how the Witch was capable of compelling even the gods to do her will.

Although changing his specific outlook several times as each of the major Romantic poets does, Shelley remains steadfastly concerned with one question. Whether he believes that man can be fulfilled upon earth or not, the dominating element of his canon consists of four words and an interrogation: "Then, what is life?" (The Triumph of
Life," 544). It cannot consist wholly of that which we perceive, for there are elements that come from within, possessing little or no external cause, even little or no apparent internal cause. "Thoughts and feelings,"

Shelley writes in his essay "On Life,"

arise with or without our will, and we employ words to express them. We are born, and our birth is unremembered, and our infancy remembered but in fragments; we live on, and in living we lose the apprehension of Life. How vain it is to think that words can penetrate the mystery of our being! Rightly used they make evident our ignorance to ourselves, and this is much. (Prose, 172)

Saying this, Shelley expresses several important concerns. Most simply, like Blake and Wordsworth before him, he views the quest for knowledge as more significant than an end-product. Answers cannot be absolute, and anyone convinced of the contrary must become "a marble form,/ A rite, a law, a custom: not a man" (The Cenci, V, ix, 4-5). Believing that man can never thoroughly understand, Shelley finally reveals himself as more concerned with ontological, rather than mundane, wonder. The thing wondered at is not ultimately a single, inexplicable event or object, but the very fact of Being itself. Mountains, sunrises, skylarks, and such, are primarily significant for the mysterious plenitude that they manifest and for the mental processes which they actuate. Because analogous profane events or objects are not the original hieratic event itself, Shelley asserts that words are insufficient tools with which to penetrate the mystery. Yet words are what
the poet possesses and what must therefore be made to suffice. Poetry is much like wonder, he argues—a thing that cannot be achieved solely by the will but which must be inspired, a power that, if it could be written at the height of inspiration potentially could lead to amelioration of social ills:

What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship; what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious of poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet.

("A Defense of Poetry," Prose, 293-294)

Nevertheless, if words cannot penetrate the mystery, Shelley believes that they can at least begin to probe it. Emphasizing "how full of passion and reflection were his solitary hours," Mary Shelley, in her note on the poems of 1817, comments that Shelley "never wandered without a book, and without implements of writing." Celebrating his feelings by approximating them verbally, Shelley also accepts the
responsibility of trying to transform the world, attempting to open minds to the manifold possibilities inherent in wonder and, thus, teaching others to believe much more than they can see.
Chapter 4: Notes


4 Spenser Hall, "Shelley's 'Mont Blanc,'" *Studies in Philology* (1973), 199-221.

5 Hall is careful to note Wasserman's interpretation of the cave as representative of the ordinary, empirical world—as a place not "above" the darkness but in the dark experiential world. See *The Subtler Language* (Baltimore, 1968), p. 220. In my interpretation, I agree with Hall, regarding the Witch Poesy as similar to the later Witch of Atlas who is frequently identified with poetry and with the imagination.


12 Hall, 218.


14 Otto, p. 70.
15 Bloom, 17.


19 Donald H. Reiman, "Structure, Symbol, and Theme in 'Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills,'" PMLA (1962), 404-413.

20 Bloom, p. 9.

21 Keen, p. 28.


23 Wasserman, Shelley, p. 198ff.

24 Reiman notes a parallel to Shelley's "Proposed Letter to the Editor of the Literary Miscellany" written as a response to Thomas Love Peacock's "The four Ages of Poetry" (March, 1821): "He would extinguish Imagination which is the Sun of life, and grope his way by the cold and uncertain and borrowed light of the moon which he calls Reason, stumbling over the interlunar chasm of time where she deserts us, and an owl, rather than an eagle, stare with dazzled eyes on the watery orb which is the Queen of his pale Heaven" (Julian Edition, X, p. 246).


27 Verhoeven, p. 54.

28 Reiman, p. 411.


30 For an illuminating study of Shelley's use of contemporary geogonic theories and the manner in which they are related to revolutionary activity, see G. M. Matthews, "A Volcano's Voice in Shelley," ELH (1957), 191-228.
31 Wasserman, Shelley, p. 199.


34 Mary Shelley, pp. 706-707.

35 Otto, p. 7.


37 Otto, p. 10.

38 Mary Shelley, pp. 428-429.


41 Wasserman, Shelley, p. 154ff.

42 Mary Shelley, p. 605.
Chapter 5

JOHN KEATS'S DESIRE AND DENIAL

Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst Men and Women. —November 17, 1819

As Keats's comment indicates, his relation to the subject of wonder is in some ways much simpler and in some ways much more complex than Blake's, Wordsworth's, or Shelley's. His very early poems depict almost idyllic scenes in which both human relationships and nature are renewing forces evoking man's adoration and motivating him to write verse celebrating his feelings. Yet, compared to the others, Keats is even more a poet of process and a poet lacking deep-rooted faith—a poet never capable of fully committing himself to a well-developed, consistent philosophy. Repeatedly, he argues that the true poet "has no identity," that "he is continually in for—and filling some other Body" (Letters, I, 386). The poet, he declares, should cast aside a priori ideas in order to observe the world anew, to perceive the sparkle and the dewdrops, permitting each object to create the categories by which it will be understood, if understood at all. "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts" (Letters, I, 185), he writes to Benjamin Bailey, describing his desire for existence in this state of wonder or deferred identity.
Priority is clearly to be given to the experience of the moment, the direct encounter. However much Keats declares this to be a poetic ideal, it proves to be an ideal with which he is finally not entirely satisfied; for it proves incompatible with the sole self that he can never quite repress. While the creative mind can endure "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" (Letters, I, 193), the ordinary human mind yearns for answers, for some type of hope and faith. Keats the wondering poet is not always identical with "Mr. John Keats five feet high" (Letters, I, 342). The former advocates loss of the self in the object, but the latter frequently feels incapable of achieving self-annihilation and occasionally even fears that such self-loss could irretrievably alienate him from the personal existence he finds so necessary to his sense of security as a being who must live in the world.

Consequently, extreme tension characterizes Keats's writing. As he expresses it, "My head is sometimes in such a whirl in considering the million likings and antipathies of our Moments--that I can get into no settled strain in my letters" (Letters, I, 324). This idea carries over into his total canon, causing it to appear as a series of groping meditations with no completely clear-cut pattern. Both character and canon are repeatedly comprised of astonishing incongruities. Admittedly, we can point to a number of general trends. For example, we can point to the notion of "the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth
of the imagination" (Letters, I, 184) gradually giving way to a conception of life as "the vale of Soul-making" (Letters, II, 102), of progression through the "large Mansion of Many Apartments," from the "infant or thoughtless Chamber" to the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" and perhaps into the "dark Passages" of human Mystery (Letters, I, 280, 281), or even of a shift from simple surprised and joyous wonder in such poems as "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" to profounder and painful contemplation that follows the wonder-events of "Ode to a Nightingale" or "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Nevertheless, Keats's career is not, and cannot be expected to be, fully developmental. Apparent changes are often more the result of shifting priorities and ephemeral moods of the mind than they are of radical departures. Concern for humanity and recognition of transience appear very early; delight in natural and artistic beauties recurs until death. There is frequently almost an equipoise of despair and doubt, hope and faith. Whether Keats's career would have been fully developmental, had he lived longer, is open to speculation but must remain problematic. What is more important is that, while he lives, he is characterized by a compulsion to explore manifold possibilities even though he sometimes discovers the impossibility of completing poems thus begun. As Wallace Stevens would say, Keats is forever finding still another way of looking at a black-
bird or at a sea surface full of clouds. He is forever questing after knowledge, yet never resting content in the belief that he has attained it. For Keats, this contemplative orientation is not only the cause of his frequently condemned pagan sensuality, but, paradoxically, also the result of his urgent need for relationship with human beings and with sacred Being—relationship that he, much more rarely than the other poets, feels confident of experiencing.

Early in his career, Keats most notably reveals this tension in his poetry. The very label "nature poetry" must finally be further qualified because Keats's is an extremely humanized brand of nature poetry. His prevailing early belief is not the Blakean belief that man transforms nature (the fallen world) through apocalyptic vision, nor the early Wordsworthian one that nature transforms man through her Ministry, nor the early Shelleyan one that imaginative man's recognition of the wonders of nature can possibly result in his ability to make others feel as he feels and, thereby, in his ability to remake earthly society. Instead, Keats believes that the sanctity of nature increases proportionately with, indeed is almost entirely dependent upon, the intensity of human relationships. Rarely does a natural object itself evoke feelings of bewildered surprise, thus stimulating his cognitive processes. In this sense, several of his poems most nearly resemble those on the "Naming of Places" in which Wordsworth simul-
taneously humanizes and sanctifies a place by naming it for one of its human associations. The typical Wordsworthian
taste for solitude is repeatedly rejected by Keats, and
he seeks nature's companionship only as a secondary choice,
man's being primary. The November, 1816, sonnet "On Leav-
ing Some Friends at an Early Hour" makes this point as
Keats concludes:

Let me write down a line of glorious tone,
And full of many wonders of the spheres:
For what a height my spirit is contending!
'Tis not content so soon to be alone.
(11-14)

Because alone and discontent, he turns to nature and to
an attempt to write verse, asking that he be allowed to
"lean/On heap'd flowers in regions clear, and far" (2) --
a place blessed with the vegetation also seen by Wordsworth
and Shelley as a manifestation of ontological plenitude
and a place potentially conducive to insight into "many
wonders of the spheres" that will compensate for the absence
of those friends he leaves behind. He becomes a purposeful
seeker after compensatory experience of wonder, rather than
directly encountering wonder-ful objects by surprise as do
both early Wordsworth and Shelley. His willful approach is
goal-oriented and, consequently, unsuccessful. As Keen
remarks:

Wonder begins with the element of surprise. The now
almost obsolete word "wonderstruck" suggests that
wonder breaks into consciousness with a dramatic
suddenness that produces amazement or astonishment.
We can no more create a state of wonderment than we
can plan a surprise for ourselves. Consider, for
example, how strange it would be to say, "I'm going
out for a walk and wonder at the dogwoods in bloom." It may, indeed, happen that the dogwoods will evoke wonder, but we cannot be assured of it prior to the experience.

Not actually experiencing wonder, Keats only imagines what such a hieratic experience might be like. He imagines a "pearly car," "pink robes," "wavy hair," and "half discovered wings" (6-8). Only half discovered, the vision is not to be transcendent. He does not expect to see beyond heaven's bourne, but does hope that his resultant poetry will be of "glorious tone"—that it will approach the sacred.

A favorite topos becomes the setting for his attempt to create art imitative of divine art.

That this is a typical Keatsian experience is supported by a parallel passage in the May 19, 1817, letter to Leigh Hunt:

I went to the Isle of Wight—thought so much about Poetry so long together that I could not get to sleep at night—and, moreover, I know not how it was, I could not get wholesome food—By this means in a week or so I became not over capable in my upper Stories, and set off pell mell for Margate, at least 150 Miles—because forsooth I fancied I should like my old Lodgings here, and could contrive to do without trees. Another thing I was too much in Solitude, and consequently was obliged to be in continual burning of thought as an only resource. However Tom is with me at present and we are very comfortable. We intend though to get among some trees.

(Letters, I, 138-139)

Most immediately striking is the quite unusual reference to trees which, like Keats's more transient flowers, also function as symbols of life and ontological fullness and that become a central feature of the bowers so frequently serving as sacred centers in the world of his poems.
Again, he is a purposeful seeker, not writing about a spontaneous encounter. More important for present purposes, however, is the idea that places with human associations, and that human companions themselves, are primary prerequisites to happiness, nature secondary. As Keats gradually suffers the loss of all those dearest to him, he finds himself more and more frequently victimized by "burning of thought" that he must combat in order to escape despair.

Even when youthful Keats occasionally says that he directly experiences wonder in the presence of natural objects and scenes, he often simultaneously expresses a desire for human relationships as a means of enhancing that wonder or views those relationships as the source of his personal contentment, without which he could not have the experience. For example, in 1816, he writes to his brother George from Margate:

Many the wonders I this day have seen:
The sun, when first he kist away the tears
That fill'd the eyes of morn;--the laurell'd peers
Who from the feathery gold of evening lean;--
The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,--
Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears
Must think on what will be, and what has been.
E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write,
Cynthia is from her silken curtain peeping
So scantily, that it seems her bridal night,
And she her half-discover'd revels keeping.
But what, without the social thought of thee,
Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

Speaking of typical sacred moments, Keats also ranges over
an assortment of typical sacred places. While his morning sun brings renewal, his evening moon symbolizes love and fertility, as well as the half-discovered mysteries of night so prominent in Endymion.5 This same otherness is also inherent in the sea's "vastness" and "voice mysterious," allegedly urging man on from simple observation to contemplation of all time. For the most part, however, the sonnet reflects Keats's contentment with the earth because of his contentment with brotherly love. The description seems more characteristic of mimetic poetry than of Romantic expressive poetry. There is no sense of dramatic immediacy such as characterizes Wordsworth's Stolen Boat, Discharged Soldier, or Mount Snowdon episodes, Shelley's encounters with the timelessness of Mont Blanc and the Euganean Hills. There is no sense of surprise, of deep-felt confusion, of great knowledge gained through contemplation. In short, though Keats declares he has seen many natural wonders on this day, he seems not really to have encountered the numinous.

The June, 1816, sonnet "To a Friend who Sent Me Some Roses" provides an interesting variation on the theme. During an evening ramble, the poet sees the "sweetest flower that wild nature yields, /A fresh blown musk-rose" (5-6) just entered into ripeness and serving as a harbinger of summer's ripeness to follow. Initially, the musk-rose is considered superior to any garden rose. Indeed, it seems
the magical produce of the fairy queen, Titania. On the arrival of those garden roses sent by Charles Wells as an effort to end a recent quarrel, however, the experience is far more intense than it was with the natural musk-rose. Suddenly Keats's "sense with their deliciousness was spell'd" (12). Their voices "of peace, and truth, and friendliness unquell'd (14) speak not only of the human nurture that brought them to ripeness but of the wonder that Keats conceives human love to be. This is certainly not natural supernaturalism—not a seeing into nature in order to perceive its sacrality—but merely a pleasant love of nature as a result of its association with man.

In this context, Keats's early romance fragment "Calidore" is one of the most interesting poems and one that merits closer attention than that accorded any single poem thus far. By its very genre, "Calidore" gives us a good idea of what to expect. Commencing as pastoral, it shifts emphasis to courtly love and valiant deeds, proving to be a world in which Keats, as Calidore, can fulfill his most heartfelt wishes. In contrast to the youthful poet of "To Solitude" who seeks nature as an escape from the city's murky buildings, youthful and healthy Calidore encounters a "happy world" (4) wherever he goes. The time is Keats's favorite "silent eve" (3), the place also one of his favorites: a lake, blue sky, green slopes, shade trees, a goodly population of both flowers and birds. Baring his forehead to the sky, Calidore strives to live in
openness, clearly revealing a desire for expansion, a desire to partake of the sanctity of that extra-terrestrial realm. At this point, however, a recurrent Keatsian conflict is introduced. Desiring expansion, Calidore also fears a sublimity akin to madness—a fear that becomes increasingly apparent in later poems but that, for now, is nearly lost amidst the happy images of the stanza. Gradually overwhelmed by the "far clearness" of the sky, the youth's "heart is well nigh over wound" (8). He teeters on the brink of self-annihilation, rejects it, and seeks renewed calm by turning from sublimity to beauty, from infinite celestial depths to the "pleasant green of easy slopes" (7-10). The sensational is rejected in favor of the more familiar. The "clear and nimble eye-sight" (13) of the moderately wondering Calidore is barely able to follow the swallow darting about the sky. He does not share in its Magical Flight. Nevertheless, he continues to enjoy the presence of both bird and landscape, especially delighting in the bird's dips into the refreshing water. Calidore's experience is one of earthly renewal, not one of transcendence. The swallow does not symbolize a personal act of mind to the extent that the carolling and soaring rooks do in Shelley's "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills."

Pursuing his course across the lake, Calidore approaches the omphalic center of his environment. Blossoms that were originally randomly scattered about the
hillsides are now replaced by water lilies that surround him. Parallel to Calidore's earlier action, the pure "white canopies" (22) of these flowers now turn upward "to catch the heaven's dew" (23). Not only do man and nature perform basically similar acts in this world, Keats also stresses that their relationship is one of reciprocity. Both participate in bringing about the youth's experience of admiration. Although the objects "look'd out so invitingly/On either side" (31-32), the implication is that only the person with "warm heart, and eye prepared to scan/ Nature's clear beauty" (28-29) could greet them, or, in other words, experience relationship. Man with the "Stupid eye" ("Staffa," 45) would prove to be a Urizen, an unreformed Peter Bell, or a half deformed and idiotic mountain-dweller.

Like Wordsworth's and Shelley's, the center of Keats's world is an archetypal one: a mountain on a little island, a place somewhat set apart from the rest of the world. Atop the peak stands a mysterious "lonely turret, shatter'd and outworn" (38), the remnant of some "long lost grandeur" (40). Precisely what its function was Keats does not specify. One thing certain though, it radiates an over-plus of meaning, perhaps one finally unknowable by man but clearly related to its construction at the center of this environment. Everywhere, nature and edifice are in harmony. Surrounded by Keats's beloved trees, the tower is recipient of the fruits nature drops at its base. Even the white dove on the church window functions as a reminder of
the earlier black-winged swallow. Like the swallow, it flies among purple evening clouds, but, because of its position at the center, it is more symbolic, and more obviously sacred. Black has been replaced by pure white. It is no longer a natural bird at all.

Wonderful as this place is, Calidore is not content to remain. "A trumpet's silver voice" penetrates the great calm, calling him, not to the eventual loss of wonder as it calls Lycius in "Lamia," but to still more intense experience of a typical Keatsian variety. Having just consecrated nature, Calidore now turns his back on it in quest of "Friends very dear" (58). He

pushes off his boat most eagerly,  
And soon upon the lake he skims along,  
Deaf to the nightingale's first under-song:  
Nor minds he the white swans that dream so sweetly:  
His spirit flees before him so completely.  
(59-63)

Grown oblivious to evening's simple wonders, he enters into a more significant relationship:

Delicious sounds! Those little bright-eyed things  
That float about the air on azure wings,  
Had been less heartfelt by him than the clang  
Of clattering hoofs.  
(73-76)

Cacophony of domesticated creatures becomes pleasing to a degree that even the harmony of wild creatures is not. We are reminded that even the harmony of wild creatures is inferior to the garden roses sent to Keats by Charles Wells.

Penetration into the symbolic center--the human version of it--now begins. First entering the courtyard
wherein Calidore meets a group of fair ladies, he bestows a kiss upon each, delaying the contact of their feet with the common earth. Previously having avoided the trance nearly brought on by his contemplation of "far clearness," he now experiences no fear as he lapses into "how sweet a trance" (83). The familiar human world is not frighteningly self-destroying. Like flower petals, the maidens' tresses are pearled with evening dew" (89). A hand "fair as some wonder out of fairy land" appears as if "fresh from summer showers" (94-95). Once again, metaphor is the only means of approximating the emotional experience.

Although Calidore momentarily believes "for joy he would no further seek" (98), he soon discovers that there is increased joy in store. From the ladies' beauties, he is called to the world of gallant men and chivalric deeds. Eventually he turns from the "good Sir Clerimond," who first introduced him to "deeds of Glory" (108), to the younger and more dashing Sir Godibert, appropriately situated "Amid the pages, and the torches glare" (109). He, too, serves as a center. Like the ladies, he is also described in natural and even mythological terms as an effort to establish his wonder-ful presence:

... he was withal
A man of elegance, and stature tall;
So that the waving of his plumes would be
High as the berries of a wild ash tree,
Or as the winged cap of Mercury.
His armour was so dexterously wrought
In shape that sure no living man had thought
It hard, and heavy steel; but that indeed
It was some glorious form, some splendid weed,
In which a spirit new come from the skies
Might live, and show itself to human eyes.

(111-121)

Gondibert appears as a gift to man, a gift that can only result in Calidore's "large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat" (127). Even the castle lamps now seem transformed into "transcendent" stars (133), proving to be more sacred than the natural landscape Calidore has abandoned.

The penetration toward the center is finally complete: "Soon in pleasant chamber they are seated" (134). The ladies have greeted:

All the green leaves that round the window clamber,
To show their purple stars, and bells of amber.

(135-137)

The purple and gold of the natural landscape enter the human realm. Like the "pastoral farms,/Green to the very door" in the opening stanza of "Tintern Abbey," nature's fullness exists in harmony with man's, desiring to give its Being for his enjoyment. Yet Keats's nature is certainly not the moral force ("the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/Of all my moral being") that Wordsworth's is, but merely an enhancement of immediate human society. While Calidore longs to hear Gondibert recount valorous exploits, all nature conspires to make this a significant moment:

Softly the breezes from the forest came,
Softly they blew aside the taper's flame;
Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower;
Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower;
Mysterious, wild, the far heard trumpet's tone;
Lovely the moon in ether, all alone:
Sweet too the converse of these happy mortals,  
As that of busy spirits when the portals  
Are closing in the west; or that soft humming  
We hear around when Hesperus is coming.  
Sweet be their sleep.  

(152-162)

Allegedly a fragment, "Calidore" nonetheless is self-sufficient. Youthful Keats creates, in this romance, a harmonious and unified picture of his ideal world\(^8\)--one in which human love and glory are at the center, with all the best of nature focusing in upon it. It is a world in which people can pass a happy day in solitude and in society, later retiring to a night of sweet dreams and renewing slumber. "Calidore" is almost without a doubt Keats's happiest poem. Why he did not write more is hard to say. Perhaps he sensed its completion; perhaps he too quickly realized that such a world could never really exist, that palpable reality was greater than such fancy.

Related to Keats's early views of nature and humanity are his views of art and the artist--whether the "true Poet" or the apprentice John Keats. Although he generally likes nature, he often prefers it humanized, as long as humanized by kindred spirits. Although he generally likes life, he occasionally shifts his concern from love of its simple pleasures to preference for the great artist's more imaginative, or wonder-ful, conception. Not all poets, however, are what he considers immortal "Bards of Passion and of Mirth," and, from the outset, Keats distinguishes those he finds so from those he does not find so. For example, in an 1816 sonnet addressed to Hayden, he places
Wordsworth and Hunt in the forefront of those "great spirits" (1) who cause man to "Listen awhile . . . and be dumb" (14) -- as we have seen, a basic early response to a wonder-event. Experiencing wonder which motivates them to write, Wordsworth and Hunt are viewed as an invigorating and novel power entering the world and destined to replace the "dismal soul'd" and neo-Classical "thousand handicraftsmen" condemned in "Sleep and Poetry" (187, 200) as infants reining in a rocking horse and thinking it a free-flying Pegasus.

The Poet, Keats now argues, is he who sees into or beyond ordinary objects. His sonnet "The Poet" is a lucid portrait of both a living divinity and his hieratic encounter:

At Morn, at Noon, at Eve, and Middle Night,
He passes forth into the charmed air,
With talisman to call up spirits rare
From plant, cave, rock, and fountain.--To his sight
The hush of natural objects opens quite
To the core; and every secret essence there
Reveals the elements of good and fair;
Making Him see, where Learning hath no light.
Sometimes, above the gross and palpable things
Of this diurnal ball, his spirit flies
On awful wing; and with its destin'd skies
Holds premature and mystic communings;
Till such unearthly intercourses shed
A visible halo round his mortal head.

Just as Keats, in the "Epistle to George Felton Matthew," believed the Muse graced Matthew's "every dwelling" (74), he now implies that all hours can be sacred for the true Poet capable of perceiving "secret essence" or what Hopkins calls "incape."9 The Poet's progression in the sonnet is from knowledge to union. At first, there is no apparent loss of either subject or object, but instead a
depth of conception far surpassing that of man who limits himself to "consequitive reasoning" (Letters, I, 185) or man who reads only the philosophical and scientific treatises condemned by Wordsworth in "The Tables Turned." There is, however, a definite distinction evident between early Wordsworth and Keats. The author of "Expostulation and Reply" believes that, in nature, "There are Powers/Which of themselves our minds impress" (21-22). Less Lockian and therefore more like the later Wordsworth who fully recognizes man's imaginative faculty, Keats asserts that the Poet possesses a "talisman to call up spirits rare." Like Blake's, Shelley's, and the later Wordsworth's, Keats's Poet is not a tabula rasa.

In addition to the Poet's increased knowledge as a result of seeing into the object, his spirit "sometimes" flies "above the gross and palpable things/Of this diurnal ball." Engaging in Magical Flight, he communes with a reality beyond the "essence of physical objects. The word mystic implies self-annihilation. The occasional experience becomes one of the deepest possible wonder—a moment of complete empathy during which distinction between subject and object no longer exists. Receiving "a visible halo round his mortal head," the Poet becomes an example of ecstatic or "holy" living. May 11, 1817, Keats writes to Haydon of "looking upon the Sun the Moon the Stars the Earth and its contents as materials to form greater things—that is to say ethereal things." Realizing the radical
character of this thought, Keats quickly tries to temper it, adding: "but here I am talking like a Madman greater things that [for than] our Creator himself made" (Letters, I, 143). Once written, the thought cannot so easily be erased. Keats frequently registers belief in the principle of the imago dei--of Poet in the image of God. We are reminded of Shelley's "Non merita nome di creatore se non Iddio ed il Poeta" ("Defense of Poetry").

The fact that he believes this divine nature to be a gift bestowed by a greater power is also recurrently suggested. As early as "Ode to Apollo," he asserts that artistic genius comes from the god of Poetry. "The dying tones that fill the air/And charm the ear of evening fair," he says, "From thee, great God of Bards receive their heavenly birth" (45-47). The diverse ways in which this gift may manifest itself are reminiscent of The Prelude's distinction between nature's "fearless visitings" and her "severer interventions, ministry more palpable" (I, 352, 355). In "Sleep and Poetry," speaking of Apollo's gift, Keats writes:

The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy
Chasing away all worldliness and folly;
Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,
Or the low rumblings earth's regions under;
And sometimes like a gentle whispering
Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing
That breathes about us in the vacant air;
So that we look around with prying stare,
Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limning,
And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning;
To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended,
That is to crown our name when life is ended.
Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice,
And from the heart up-springs, rejoice! rejoice!
Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things
And die away in ardent mutterings.

(25-40)

Although the passage describes a knowledge ecstasy rather
than the union ecstasy with which "The Poet" ends, the
sense of wonder is intense. Keats clearly recognizes
the chance or surprise element in all true wonder events
even if he, himself, rarely experiences that surprise.
Apollo's gift of poetic inspiration, he says, is "holy,"
and therefore characteristically both frightening ("awful")
and attractive ("sweet"). Like most visionaries, Keats
views the Poet's experience as one of enlightenment granted
by the heavens or by "earth's regions under" which Frye
has often shown to be paradoxically the "highest" state of
the inverted Romantic topocosm. The appropriate response
for both Wordsworth and Keats, as for others, is celebration
and thanksgiving--praise, thanks, rejoicing, and the "ardent
mutterings" of poetry.

"I Stood Tip-Toe" presents an extreme example. Un-
like the Endymion of Greek myth, Keats's Endymion is not
in a state of eternal sleep. Traditional myth is altered
so that the union of Cynthia and Endymion (heaven and earth)
can be consummated rather than Cynthia's desire frustrated.
Presented as a cosmogonic marriage (hierogamy), this union
results in Keats's version of cosmic creation or regenera-
tion:

The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half-closed lattices to cure
The languid sick; it cool'd their fevered sleep
And soothed them into slumbers full and deep.
Soon they awoke clear eyed; nor burnt with thirsting,
Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting;
And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight;
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,
And on their placid foreheads part the hair.
Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd
To see the brightness in each other's eyes;
And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise,
Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy.
Therefore no lover did of anguish die;
But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses:
Was there a poet born?

(221-241)

The world is a better place as a result of the mythological event. One of the earth's beings has been cosmocized, and Keats conceives of the Poet as progeny of this wedding night. The Poet's creations, thereby, become repetitions of this cosmic creation.

More often, however, the Romantics (Keats included) portray the Poet as the one personally experiencing the hierophany, not as a product of others' experiences. As has been seen, the nature of the experience can vary from lesser recognition of novelty, unaccompanied by self-loss, to the greater union with some transcendent principle. Paradoxically, by leaving the world, each poet, in his own way, believes he can help humanity, whether by becoming Blakean or Wordsworthian poet-priest, Shelleyan legislator of mankind, or Keatsian physician. Believing that the poet is created in the image of God, each believes that the poet is capable of creating a new society. Natural Law need
not rule the world; instead, man's freedom enables him to
intervene even in the ontological constitution of the
universe." 11 The early Keats expresses this idea repeatedly.
For example, he writes:

Next thy Tasso’s ardent numbers
Float along the pleased air,  
Calling youth from idle slumbers,  
Rousing them from Pleasure’s lair:—
Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,  
And melt the soul to pity and to love.  
("Ode to Apollo," 36-41)

and:

I have an idea that a Man might pass a very
pleasant life in this manner—let him on any certain
day read a certain page of full Poesy or distilled Prose
and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and re-
fect from it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon
it, and dream upon it—untill it becomes stale—but when
will it do so? Never—when Man has arrived at a cer-
tain ripeness in intellect any one grand and spiritual
passage serves him as a starting post towards all "the
two-and-thirty Pallaces." How happy is such a "voyage
of conception," what delicious diligent Indolence... .
Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like
the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy
Citadel—the points of leaves and twigs on which the
Spider begins her work are few and she fills the Air
with a beautiful circuiting; man should be content
with as few points to tip with the fine Webb of his
Soul and weave a Tapestry empyrean—full of symbols
for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual
touch, of space for his wanderings of distinctness for
his Luxury... . Minds would leave each other in con-
trary directions, traverse each other in Numberless
points, and all / for at / last greet each other at
the Journeys end... . Man should not dispute or
assert but whisper results to his neighbor, and thus
by every germ of Spirit sucking the Sap from mould
ethereal every human might become great, and Humanity
instead of being a wide heath of Purse and Briars with
here and there a remote Oak or Pine, would become a
grand democracy of Forest Trees.  
(Letters, I, 231-232)

For sure, one of Keats's major early concerns is the heal-
ing of his society. From their desolate state, people are to be rejuvenated by the acting of literature upon their minds and of their minds upon literature. This should all occur in a state of wise passiveness. "We should rather be the flower than the bee," Keats continues,

... The flower I doubt not receives a fair guerdon from the Bee--its leaves blush deeper in the next spring--and who shall say between Man and Woman which is the most delighted? Now it is more noble to sit like Jove that for than to fly like Mercury--let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey-bee like, buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at; but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive--budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favors us with a visit--sap will be given us for Meat and dew for drink.

(Letters, I, 232)

At this point, Keats includes his hopeful sonnet "What the Thrush Said" in which the bird advises the would-be Poet:

O fret not after knowledge--I have none,
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.

(9-10)

After the darkness that is a purposeful deferment of identity, true enlightenment shall come. The spring will be a "triple morn" (8). Such healing knowledge, Keats says, can come only in time.

Still, while Keats aims this advice at the true Poet, he frequently finds his own actions disobedient to it. In the verse epistle "To My Brother George," he juxtaposes this poetic ideal and Keatsian reality. "There are times," he writes,

when those who love the bay
Fly from all sorrow far, far away;
A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see
In water, earth or air, but poesy, . . .
And what we ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,
Is the swift opening of their wide portal,
When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,
Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear.

(19-22, 29-32)

Coming unexpectedly, this hierophany is again characterized
as knowledge available only to those who remain content
to let it come on them. Keats recognizes that, unlike the
ideal Poet, he personally fails to achieve such knowledge
precisely because he actively seeks it. He lives in anxiety,
while the true wondering Poet lives in hope and faith.

Describing his situation, he comments:

Full many a dreary hour I have past
My brain bewildered, and my mind o'ercast
With heaviness; in seasons when I've thought
No sphyry strains by me could e'er be caught
From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze
On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays;
Or, on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely
Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely;
That I should never hear Apollo's song,
Though feathery clouds were floating all along
The purple west, and, two bright streaks between,
The golden lyre itself were dimly seen;
That the still murmur of the bee
Would never teach a rural song to me.

(1-14)

Keats's sense of heaviness and of overcast is a direct con-
trast to the Magical Flight and light associated with won-
der that culminates in knowledge or union. Capable of
empirical sight, Keats feels he lacks Vision. He recog-
nizes that, though dimly seen, Apollo's lyre and the bee
are inaudible. No mutual relationship is established. The
object refuses to give of itself when he pries into it.12
Although he is painfully conscious of his lack of enlightenment, Keats acknowledges that there are infrequent passive moments when he feels a certain, more limited, sense of wonder:

At times; tis true, I've felt relief from pain
When some bright thought has darted through my brain:
Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure
Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure.
(113-116)

Not characterized by self-loss, such an experience gives no feeling of transcendence but does provide a renewing novelty. The world and the self are not lost, but altered. It is also noteworthy that even these are passive moments--moments when he is not "prying" and when the thought, almost as a free spirit, seems to "dart through" his brain.

For Keats, sacred moments of varying intensity are often associated, not only with nature, but also with his observation of an art object or his reading of great literature. As Bate so accurately states, much of Keats's is "a poetry about trying to write poetry." Consequently, it is also a poetry about the innateness of a longing for relationship. Mortal man's dissatisfaction with mere earthly renewal and his craving for contact with a transcendent realm are often at the center. The early "Elgin Marbles" sonnets are a direct expression of this need and of a disheartening sense of failure. "Forgive me, that I have not eagle's wings,/That what I want I know not where to seek"
(3-4), he writes to Haydon in the second of these sonnets. Again, Keats strives to think divinely. The more famous
sonnet seems to me extremely complex and finally not
totally comprehensible, but several points should be made.
Most striking is the "sick eagle" (5) image—the failure
of Magical Flight in a situation of intense longing. Like
the eagle, Keats is forced to recognize his own weakness—
his mortality which "weighs heavily" on him like "unwill-
ing sleep" (2). Although a forerunner of the non-visionary
sleep described in the later sonnet "To Sleep," there is
one important difference. At the time of writing "Elgin
Marbles," Keats desires Vision. At the time of writing the
later sonnet, he hopes for rescue from the "curious conscience,
that still hoards/Its strength for darkness, burrowing like
a mole" (11-12), or in more common terms from the memory
that "shadow[s] our own soul's day-time/In the dark void
of night" ("Epistle to Reynolds," 70-71). "Unwilling sleep"
is not that of "Sleep and Poetry" characterized as second
only to the imagination in visionary potential. Clearly,
it is more like the initial "drowsy numbness" of "Ode to
a Nightingale" which must be overcome if one is to attain
Vision. Because of his intuitive conception of pinnacles
and steeps of "godlike hardship" (4) and his inescapable
recognition of human mortality, "such dim-conceived glories
of the brain/Bring round the heart an indescribable feud"
(9-10)—a tension akin to "a most dizzy pain" evoked by
the wonder he considers the marbles to be; for the marbles
similarly lead to both his imaginative conception of their
"Grecian grandeur" (12) and his realistic perception that they have barely escaped destruction by the "rude/Wasting of old Time" (13). They are capable of partaking of an atemporal realm while simultaneously manifesting sacrality in the temporal realm. Keats must learn to content himself with his intuition of an unattainable realm, of one graced with perpetual renewal rather than blighted by "rude wasting." But contentment without the satisfaction of complete knowledge and the ability to verbalize that knowledge does not come easily.

Repeatedly finding such mere intimations unsatisfactory, the youthful Keats is never quite content. As a result, his immersion in literature seems to be an attempt on the part of a mortal to achieve renewal. "Sleep and Poetry," for instance, describes a night spent surrounded by great literature and portraits of great men:

The very sense of where I was might well
Keep Sleep aloof; but more than that there came
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame
Within my breast; so that the morning light
Surprised me even from a sleepless night;
And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,
Resolving to begin that very day
These lines.

(396-403)

As in "Epistle to My Brother George," Keats again experiences adamic renewal, now specifically as a result of art and of the great human types who create it. Not insignificantly, Petrarch's immortalized love for Laura immediately precedes these lines. Once more, we are reminded of the necessity
of human relationships—of the "love and friendship" that, in *Endymion*, sit "high/Upon the forehead of humanity" and result in "the chief intensity" of man's life (I, 801, 801-802, 800). Such a love relationship is perfect:

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its influence,
Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
At which we start and fret; till in the end,
Melting into its radiance, we blend,
Mingle and so become a part of it,—
Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
So wingedly; when we combine therewith,
Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.
(I, 807-815)
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Possessing both sexual and eucharistic overtones, such a metaphor portrays the total annihilation of subject/object differentiation.

As Bate has recognized, Keats's discovery of literature was "the vital discovery (though there might be a few years before he realized it) that we are not completely the creatures of the environment in which we are placed—that we need not be imprisoned by the room where we are, by the stock responses that we pick up from those around us."15 As Eliade notes, reading has a mythological function:

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Through reading, the modern man succeeds in obtaining an "escape from time" comparable to the "emergence from time" effected by the myths. Whether modern man "kills" time with a detective story or enters such a foreign temporal universe as is presented in any novel, reading projects him out of his personal duration and incorporates him into other rhythms, makes him live in another "history."16
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Such is basically *The Prelude*'s meaning when, recommending the reading of fairy tales, Wordsworth says: "The child,
whose love is here, at least doth reap/one precious gain, that he forgets himself" (V, 345-346). Such is also basically Keats's meaning in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer":

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold;  
Then felt I as some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He start'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Just as the initially non-bookish Keats experienced his introduction to literature as a revelation, his introduction to Chapman's translation of Homer is described in the language of wonder. The air is divine—"pure serene." The poet, though using his eyes, is passive, and the object now "speaks" as it fails to do in the less inspired "Epistle to My Brother George." Keats's initial response is awed silence and "wild surmise." In Keen's words,

because of the suddenness with which it appears, wonder reduces us momentarily to silence. We associate gaping, breathlessness, bewilderment, and even stupor with wonder, because it jolts us out of the world of common sense in which our language is at home. The language and categories we customarily use to deal with experience are inadequate to the encounter, and hence we are initially immobilized and dumbfounded. We are silent before some new dimension of meaning which is being revealed.

As a result, Keats is forced to use a series of metaphors in an attempt to describe inexplicable feelings, much as
wondering Shelley is led to do in a poem like "To a Skylark." Keats's experience of self-loss here is less pronounced than is the fairy-tale reading of Wordsworthian child's, but his experience is nonetheless one of entrance into a new realm, of release and novelty.

Even so, Keats's first love for kindred spirits is never abandoned. Engaging in occasional temporal and spatial escapism in order to recreate mythical time, he returns again and again to this world. "I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds," he writes to the George Keatses,

--No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me and serve my Spirit the office of which is equivalent to a king's body guard. . . . According to my state of mind I am with Achilles in the Trenches or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily. Or I throw my whole being into Troilus and repeating those lines, "I wander, like a lost soul upon the stygian Banks staying for waftage," I melt into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone--These things combined with the opinion I have of the generality of women--who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a Sugar Plum than my time, form a barrier against Matrimony which I rejoice in. I have written this that you might see I have my share of the highest pleasures and that though I may choose to pass my days alone I shall be no Solitary. . . . I am happy as a Man can be--that is in myself I should be happy if Tom was well, and I knew you were passing pleasant days.

(Letters, I, 403-404)

A longing for relationship with loved ones now dying or having emigrated remains foremost. Like nature, wonderful art appears a secondary choice--a means of avoiding despair. One cannot help recalling Keats's earlier comment
to Haydon: "I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare" (Letters, I, 142).

Within this context, several elements of Endymion become clearer. Like the earlier "Calidore," this second romance is a literary return to an age Keats found attractive—in a sense, an escape into mythical environment anterior to, and preferable to, Keats's mortal existence. As has been pointed out by nearly all critics, however, Keats gradually changes his ideas about the right-mindedness of both his artistic goal (to write 4000 lines on one subject before winter) and his hero's quest for union with the transcendent moon-goddess, Cynthia.

The Hymn to Pan and the context within which it exists have frequently been declared a poetic highpoint, but, I think, too infrequently a thematic one. Reminiscent of "Calidore," all again moves toward a sacred center, now the altar of the immanent god, Pan. "Full in the middle of this pleasantness," Keats writes,

There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
And so the dawning light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun;
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old. (I, 89-106)
By now, the images of the "center"--of the sun's renewal, the flowers' ontological fullness, the birds' Magical Flight, the winds' and streams' imaginative power--hardly demand comment. All elements coexist in harmony, the cold springs even turning to the natural growth of earth in order to warm themselves. Men are again a central element, for they have consecrated the place by constructing an altar. They now come in ritual procession to pay tribute to their god. Noticeably, they also demonstrate their sense of belonging to the natural realm by coming "to pay their vows/With leaves about their brows" (I, 291-292).

Like the lost sheep believed to converge upon Pan's sacred and hidden bower, the people of Latmos converge upon the altar, arranging themselves in a cosmic circle. Having reached and looked upon the sacred altar, their responses are the appropriate ones for any deeply felt wonder-event:

    each look was chang'd
    To sudden veneration; women meek
    Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek
    Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.  
    (I, 185-188)

Both the characteristic fear and fascination of the coincidentia oppositorum are evident. "In the midst of all" (I, 193)--at the absolute center believed to be the place nearest the gods--stands the priest, asking his microcosmic cross-section of Latmians to listen, "for in good truth/Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan" (I, 212-213). April had come, and as Eliade explains,
it is not the natural phenomenon of spring, the actual occurrence itself which inspires the ritual of springtime, but it is, on the contrary, the ritual which confers its significance upon the coming of spring; it is the symbolism and the ceremonial which show the full meaning of the renewal of nature and the start of a "new life," in other words, the periodic recurrence of a new creation.¹⁹

Making use of parallel structure and of refrain characteristic of ancient invocations, the chorus delineates Pan's major accomplishments as immanent god, including his role as "dread opener of the mysterious doors/Leading to universal knowledge" (I, 288-289). They entreat him to

"Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thoughts: such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal--a new birth;
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between
An unknown--but no more. . . ."
(I, 293-302)

As creature-conscious humans, they are content with earthly intimations of the eternal. Even though those intimations of sacrality can achieve no final identity, they demonstrate the existence of novelty in the world--the reality of the "possibility." Mystery, for these people, remains a positive trait. Serving as a contrast to Calidore and Endymion, they continue, saying: "We humbly screen/With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending" (I, 302-303). They are content with their lives, not desirous of the purely transcendent. Furthermore, they accept their cosmic responsibilities by dedicating their existence to continual re-creation.²⁰
The pageant is carefully described as a "burden" (I, 307). Unlike entirely social modern dance, even the dancing that succeeds the hymn is presented as in tune with mythical time. "Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly/To tunes forgotten--out of memory" (I, 315-316), Keats writes. Speaking of this idea in his book Sacred and Profane Beauty, Cornelis van der Leeuw stresses that "every movement of the world is rhythmically ordered; the same principle reigns in the dance as in the cosmos. Every movement can be derived from a primal movement." Thus characterized, dance is closely related to the earlier procession toward the altar. "When a whole village is set in motion," van der Leeuw adds, "life is still lived in unity." This "very pretty piece of Paganism" magnetically attracts Keats.

Given a society believing that man's major responsibility is to secure the order of the cosmos, one would expect its leaders to be most responsible. Keats's allegiance, however, is at first split between attraction to the Pan-worshippers who are content with immanent sacrality and their young prince, the hero who is spiritually alienated from the ritual being enacted. The shepherds appear to belong to an "Arcadian" (I, 140) realm, while the less worldly Endymion

\[
\text{seem'd}
\]

To common lookers on, like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian.

(I, 175-177)
He carries the bugle and spear of action, is described as second only to Pan in influence, is advised by his sister Peona to accept his earthly role, yet he seeks transcendence through union with the figure of his visions. Seeking realization of "A hope beyond the shadow of a dream" (I, 857), he seeks an unchanging, rather than a fading, woman. He yearns for immediate attainment of the "finer tone"—of everlasting truth, beauty, and pleasure. He cannot rest content, like the Pan-worshippers, with positive mystery. His desire, however, is far from attainment. As Endymion withdraws from the world into a hypnogogic (pre-sleep) state and then lapses into sleep itself, his visions are characterized by typical transformation of reality. They are illusions that must eventually vanish as he surfaces to waking consciousness. Like all wonder-events, his dreams must pass.

Of course, the description of his important vision is carefully executed by Keats, the images selected with utmost care. Endymion describes a wooded area accented by magically strewn blossoms, a typical bower and a place of transcendence where the river sees the "naked sky" (I, 540). Appropriately, the river is moon-like, both progressing "silverly" (I, 541) and appearing from a distance "like a crescent moon" (I, 544). Gazing upon these natural wonders, Endymion feels his soul soothed by a "soft Lulling" breeze (I, 567), and its kinship with the imagination is emphasized as it begins
shaping visions all about his sight
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim;
And then he fell asleep.

(I, 568-572)

The silver color and liquidity of the river are replaced by objects of equal lightness and freedom of movement. Reality is gradually transformed into vision, and as Endymion lapses into deeper sleep, beginning to dream, his vision undergoes more and more radical transformation. First it appears as "The loveliest moon, that ever silver's o'er/A shell for Neptune's goblet" (I, 592-593), next as "a bright something" (I, 602), finally as a golden-haired "completed form of all completeness" (I, 606). Approaching self-annihilation, Endymion is reborn to a world of novelty, and to express Endymion's sense of ontological ripeness, Keats employs typical imagery:

I e'en dar'd to press
Her very cheek against my crowned lip,
And, at that moment, felt my body dip
Into a warmer air: a moment more,
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was a store
Of newest joys upon that alp.

(I, 661-666)

Having envisioned the moon-goddess, Endymion is fated to lose his momentarily achieved relationship. In the moon's very act of fading, he is forced to recognize not only the instability of intense moments, but also the inescapable fact of mortality itself. "It might be said that the moon shows man his true human condition," Eliade writes, that in a sense man looks at himself, and finds himself anew in the life of the moon. That is why the symbolism
and mythology of the moon have an element of pathos
and at the same time of consolation, for the moon
governs both death and fertility, both drama and
initiation.24

Once Endymion awakens, he is forced to confront reality,
although his view of reality, shaped by his own subjectivism,
is far different from that of the wondering Pan-worshippers.
Unlike their natural world in which the god's spirit is in-
dwelling, his natural world is one of death and terror. He
describes it to Peona:

Ah! my sighs, my tears,
My clenched hands;--for lo! the poppies hung
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,
With leaden looks; the solitary breeze
Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did teaze
With wayward melancholy; and I thought,
Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought
Faint fair-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieu!--
Away I wander'd--all the pleasant hues
Of heaven and earth had faded; deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
Seem'd sooty, and o'er spread with up-turned gills
Of dying fishes; the vermeil rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird
Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd
In little journeys, I beheld in it
A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit
My soul with under darkness; to entice
My stumbling down some monstrous precipice;
Therefore I eager follow'd, and did curse
The disappointment.

(I, 681-705)

Flowers, songs, breezes, bowery shades, fish, birds in
flight—all of Keats's favorite images—recur in this
passage; but, due to the lost visionary gleam, their values
are reversed. The garden greatly resembles that of Shelley's
Sensitive Plant after the death of the Lady who wondered at
its beauty and nourished it with her love. In spite of loss, Endymion manages to retain a hope that "what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth--whether it existed before or not" (I, 184), and, herein, he differs from Shelley's view. While Endymion continues to hope that what the imagination conceives of will attain ontological reality on earth as did Adam's dream of Eve, "The Sensitive Plant" (relatively late Shelley) declares earthly existence to be "error, ignorance, and strife, Where nothing is, but all things seem" (III, 123-124).

But coming this far, we must also note that Keats's view is finally not Endymion's. Unless we are originally to accept Peona as spokeswoman for what Keats conceives of as truth when he begins the poem, and I do not believe we are, we must recognize, as most critics have, that Keats changes his mind in midstream about the efficacy of his hero's quest. Endymion comes to be viewed less as a hero and more as an innocent who must gain experience. The Hymn to Pan and its context take on increasing significance as we turn to the poem's resolution. What is natural and immanent is ultimately that which is most real. Endymion recognizes this as he speaks to the Indian Maid:

Now I see
The grass, and I feel the solid ground--Ah, me!
It is thy voice--divinest! Where!--Who? Who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew?
Behold upon this happy earth we are;
Let us aye love each other . . . .
                By thee I will sit
For ever: let our fate stop here--a kid
I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wilderness. I have clung
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone!

(IV, 621-626, 632-643)

Much like the narrator of the prologue to Wordsworth's "Peter Bell" who abandons his fantastic, little flying boat in favor of "the common growth of mother earth" (133), Endymion must learn to abandon his quest for the transcendent in favor of what exists everywhere around him—natural beauty, human glory, and, above all, human love. Having roamed over the earth, through underground caverns, beneath the seas, and across the skies, he significantly concludes his quest—and Keats significantly concludes his poem—near the Temple of Diana (Cynthia), the goddess of love. The poem both begins and ends in a sacred spot upon the earth and at a sacred time (first dawn, then dusk) in which the Latmians engage in rituals intended to ensure the stability of the cosmos. One is essentially a vegetation cult ritual, one a love cult ritual, both fertility rituals. Endymion realizes his love for the Indian Maid and discovers her to be an earthly manifestation of Cynthia. Perhaps, as Bate argues, "the ideal has been discovered through acceptance of the real." Even more accurately, as Reiman argues, the divine is altered—"brought into conformity with earthly limitations and sympathies." Endymion recognizes, as does
Keats, that active striving after the wonder-ful is fruit-
less. The great failure of the poem is Keats's effort to
write 4000 lines in a set period of time regardless of the
dearth of inspiration. Its greatest success is the recog-
nition that neither hero nor poet can be successful unless
he changes.

II

Although Keats now realizes the futility of trying
to write: without inspiration--without wonder--he does not
abandon his own active quest after subjects. At the same
time he is advocating wise passiveness in "What the Thrush
Said," he adds that he is "sensible all this is a mere
sophistication, however it may neighbor to any truths, to
excuse my own indolence" (Letters, I, 233). April 8, 1818,
he writes to Haydon:

I propose within a Month to put my knapsack at my back
and make a pedestrian tour through the North of England,
and part of Scotland--to make a sort of Prologue to
the Life I intend to pursue--that is, to write, to
study and to see all Europe at the lowest expense. I
will clamber through the Clouds and exist.

Letters, I, 264

The following day he writes to Reynolds:

I hope soon to be writing to you about the things
of the north, proposing to wayfare all over those
parts. I have settled my accoutrements in my own mind,
and will go to gorge wonders... . . .

I have many reasons for going wonder-ways: to make
my winter chair free from spleen--to enlarge my vision--
to escape disquisitions on Poetry and Kingston Criticism,
--to promote digestion and economise shoe leather--I'll
have leather buttons and belt; and if Brown holds his
mind, over the hills we go.--If my Books will help me
to it,--thus will I take all Europe in turn, and see the
Kingdoms of the Earth and the glory of them.

Letters, I, 268
Going north in search of the Natural Sublime, Keats expects to experience wonders that are as powerful as any earth has to offer. As usual, he continues to regard such experiences as healing and as resulting in his own ontological development. His goal is to emulate Wordsworth, but, believing in intensity of personal experience, Keats does not fully accept Wordsworth's opinions without first proving them upon his own pulses (Letters, I, 279).

Keats's effort to write a masterful long poem had recently failed; he had been all too conscious of time. Unable to escape time in his working hours, he seeks to do so by going on tour. To some extent, he is even successful. One of the letters growing out of the tour and written to the ailing Tom comments:

June 26--I merely put pro forma, for there is no such thing as time and space, which by the way came forcibly upon me on seeing for the first hour the Lake and Mountains of Winander--I cannot describe them--they surpass my expectation.

... They can never fade away—they make one forget the divisions of life; age, youth, poverty and riches; and refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open lidded and steadfast over the wonders of the great Power. (Letters, I, 298-299)

Yet, as this letter goes on to document, the area is also blighted by London seekers after the picturesque—those who go to such places as Winander and Staffa solely because it is in vogue. Even Wordsworth's home, Keats is forced to recognize, is open to such people. The trip begins to teach lessons quite different from those Keats hoped it would teach.
A clear-cut assertion of man's desecration of a sacred place appears in "Staffa," a poem occasioned by Keats's visit to Fingal's Cave. At its heart, the poem is both an informal elegy for the lost human capacity for wonder and a prophesy of the resultant loss of natural wonders. Entering the "rugged wonder" (9) of a cave, Keats experiences an emotion he can only describe metaphorically, in mythical terms. He says that he encounters the sleeping form of a young man, and he expresses his subsequent state of contingency:

"What is this? and what art thou?"
Whisper'd I, and touch'd his brow;
"What art thou? and what is this?"
Whisper'd I, and strove to kiss
The spirit's hand, to wake his eyes. 

(19-23)

Close human contact awakens the marvelous youth who soon identifies himself as Lycidas--as Edward King drowned nearly one hundred-eighty years previously in the Irish Sea and apparently restored to eternal life by the power of the regenerative waters. The cavern, he explains, is the sacred construct of Oceanus, one of the water Titans famed for their separation from the masses of mankind. Recently, however, the place has been profaned by the invasion of seekers after the picturesque:

Many a mortal in these days,
Dares to pass our sacred ways,
Dares to touch audaciously
The cathedral of the Seal

(35-38)

Instead of keeping the sacred fires burning, Lycidas opts
to preserve the place from further desecration by the "stupid eye" (45)—by those capable of physically enter-
ing the cave's portal but incapable of crossing the "threshold," of intuiting the place's holiness as the 
wondering Keats has done. The poem's style becomes increas-
ingly light as Keats mocks fallen man's fashion boats and quadrilles, but its point is a serious one. The great days 
of the Titans, of Milton and King, are passing; with them 
passes man's recognition of the wonder of the spheres. 
Just as the garden in "The Sensitive Plant" becomes shrivelled 
and choked by weeds when the perception of wonder dies, the 
cave is also fated to pass away.

Within a few weeks, the novelty of the north begins 
to wear off even for Keats, and, as Burke predicts, the 
personal sense of wonder begins to fade. On July 22, Keats 
writes to Bailey:

I should not have consented to myself these four 
Months tramping in the highlands but that I thought 
it would give me more experience, rub off more 
Prejudice, use /me/ to more hardship, identify finer 
scenes load me with grander Mountains, and strengthen 
more my reach in Poetry, than would stopping at home 
among Books even though I should reach Homer—By 
this time I am comparitively a mountaineer—I have 
been among wilds and Mountains too much to break out 
much about the/Ir/ Grandeur. 

(Letters, I, 342)³⁰

Initial fascination, first changing to mild pleasure, soon 
becomes extreme fear and ultimate rejection. As early as 
the previous January, Keats had voiced definite fears in 
"God of the Meridian." Speaking of Magical Flight, but not 
of the perfect archaic form in which body was believed to
soar with the soul, Keats asserts that hieratic moments are fearful because so rare. Man no longer is at home with such experiences, as once he was. Explaining, Keats addresses Apollo:

To thee my soul is flown,  
And my body is earthward press'd,--  
It is an awful mission,  
A terrible division;  
And leaves a gulph austere  
To be fill'd with worldly fear.  

(3-8)

Recognizing duality, he asks, "And is this not the cause/ Of madness?" (16-17). Now in the sublime north country, Keats increasingly realizes that a wonder-event can be far too self-destroying. Already by July 20, he has begun to have second thoughts about his former assurances that he would straddle mountains with his soul and "exist." Tension develops between the poet's desire to lose himself and the man's desire to remain alive to the earth and to humanity. "Lines Written in the Highlands after a Visit to Burns Coun-try" speaks directly to the point. Although he says "There is a charm in footing slow across the silent plain" (1) associated with past glories, the mountains are fraught with danger. Turning from the southern "silent plain" to "the silent North," he writes:

Scanty the hour and few the steps beyond the bourn of care,  
Beyond the sweet and bitter world,—beyond it unaware!  
Scanty the hour and few the steps, because a longer stay  
Would bar return, and make a man forget his mortal way:  
O horrible! to lose the sight of well-remember'd face,  
Of Brother's eyes, of Sister's brow--constant to every place.  

(29-34)
Even the half-whimsical "Ben Nevis: A Dialogue" dramatizes this discovery. Like Keats, Mrs. Cameron has come court-ing the Natural Sublime (Ben Nevis) whom she accuses of ignoring her. When she finally succeeds in awakening him, he threatens an earthquake intended to fold her into the fault and thus make her his bride for ever, but, of course, at the cost of her annihilation. As his threats to "make her feel" (53) intensify, so does her terror. Comically, her fainting from fear causes Ben Nevis to think her dead and to return to his own slumbers. Realizing that she must be "madbrain'd" (12) to undertake her quest for the Sublime, she returns to her preferable "Pickles and preserves" (13). Sublime fear, from a distance seems attractive; whereas immediate threat causes Mrs. Cameron to flee like Shelley's mountain-dwellers.

Similarly, dwelling with mysterious otherness becomes increasingly difficult for Keats. Both the misty chasms and the misty atmosphere of Ben Nevis result in the sonnet in which Keats appeals to the Muse for knowledge that man cannot attain unaided: "I look o'erhead," he writes,

And there is sullen mist,—even so much
Mankind can tell of heaven; mist is spread
Before the earth, beneath me,—even such,
Even so vague is man's sight of himself!
Here are the crazy stones beneath my feet,—
Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,
I tread on them,—that all my eye doth meet
Is mist and crag, not only on this height,
But in the world of thought and mental might! (5-14)

Bewilderment, as we have seen, is the most intense form of
wonder. But man cannot happily live in this dis-ease. Unless he integrates the new experience into his past experience, he becomes terrified. Keats borders on following the example of Shelley’s voiturier who fled from the mountains. Unable to achieve the comforting view of mountains that Shelley achieves through contemplation, Keats can escape this terror only by making light of such personal experience. In his description of the ascent of Ben Nevis, he tells Tom:

Talking of Chasms they are the finest wonder of the whole—the appear great rents in the very heart of the mountain though they are not, being at the side of it. . . . These Chasms are 1500 feet in depth and are the most tremendous places I have ever seen—they turn one giddy if you choose to give way to it—we tumbled in large stones and set echoes at work in fine style.

(Letters, I, 353)

For Keats there is no comforting Wordsworthian belief in the Ministry of Fear, nor do his chasms possess a divine power parallel to the Imagination’s, as Wordsworth believes they do when he contemplates them after climbing Mount Snowdon. Keats, at this point, is limited to a more empirical recognition of mystery, to an acute sense of creature-consciousness as a result of his inability to believe that mystery, in itself, is evidence of plenitude. Abandoning his search for the Sublime, he returns to the south of England and to more ordinary human concerns.

As his letters and poems reveal, Keats comes more and more to experience mingled feelings of loss and gain. Throughout the remainder of his career—the period of his
greatest achievement—only the proportions of the two vary. Neither is totally lost, neither totally affirmed to be the ultimate condition of poet or mankind. In "Sleep and Poetry," "Robin Hood," "Meg Merrilies," to name just a few, Keats repeatedly speaks of the decline of art and of human grandeur. The loss is viewed as primarily cultural rather than as personal. Therefore, Keats often feels, the individual can potentially set himself apart from the masses.

**Hyperion** is certainly one of these poems based on the central theme—a fragment that concentrates not on the individual's fall from wondrous relationship but on the Titan's loss of receptivity prerequisite to such relationship. In a sense, the poem is Keats's highly personalized rendition of Blake's *Orc* Cycle. Throughout the first two books, Keats repeatedly describes Saturn, Hyperion, and the fallen masses of Titans in language befitting their loss of receptivity and reminiscent of Blake's descriptions of the cold, shrivelled Urizen and of Fuzon, chained after declaring himself "God . . . eldest of all things" (*Book of Ahania*, 3:38). The opening image of sleeping (but not dreaming) *Saturn* is exemplary:

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 his lair.

(I, 1-5)

The fallen divinity is alienated from the standard Keatsian temporal and spatial sacrality. He is aged, exhausted, and,
also like Urizen, stone-like—a "frozen god" (I, 87) more "like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern" (I, 86) than like a vital being. "I am gone/Away from my own bosom," he declares upon awakening,

I have left
My strong identity, my real self,
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
Here on this spot of earth.
(I, 112-116)

He has suffered an ontological change and becomes increasingly determined to regain his prelapsarian state. As he cries out to Thea, desperation is his primary emotion:

Search, Thea, search! and tell me, if thou seest
A certain shape or shadow, making way
With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
A heaven he lost erewhile: it must—it must
Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be king.
Yes, there must be a golden victory;
... and there shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children: I will give command:
Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?
(I, 121-126; 131-134)

In this vein, he continues:

But cannot I create?
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,
To overbear and crumble this to nought?
Where is another chaos? Where?
(I, 141-145)

Only these words cause Thea to start up with "a sort of hope" (I, 148), saying that they must join the other fallen Titans "and give them heart" (I, 151). Such hope, however, seems unrealizable, for Saturn is portrayed as a fevered, struggling Druid, shaking and oozing with sweat (I, 136-138). He seems impotent to perform such actions. Unlike Blake's
fallen man, and unlike Shelley's residents of Venice and Padua, Keats's Titans do not remain wondrous within. They are no longer the sacred beings that they once were, nor even capable of regaining that past glory by a return to wonder.

Although Hyperion is as yet unfallen, he will surely follow the others, for even mythical time, generally conceived of as perfect, has now become blighted. "Prison-bound" (I, 161), he, too, leads a claustrophobic semi-existence. He is frightened and perplexed by what he sees and experiences:

His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, domes, and fiery galleries;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angrily, while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick.

(I, 176-189)

Intuition of the sacred realm is lost, and replaced not only by recognition of loss but also by foreshadowing of violence and death. Even the "great main cupola" (I, 221) --his former "centre of repose" (I, 243)--is usurped by "shady visions come to domineer, /Insult, and blind, and stifle up his pomp" (I, 244-245). The castle door magically flies open "for the god to enter in" (I, 212), but his manner of entering results in desacralization. "He
enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath," Keats tells us,

His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scar'd away the weak ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble.

(I, 213-217)

His emotions, manifestations of his selfhood, are a cause
of the fall. Uranus tells him:

Divine you were created, and divine
In sad demeanor, solemn, undisturbed,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled:
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath,
Actions of rage and passion; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die,—This is the grief, O Son!
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!

(I, 329-336)

The Titans have lost their selflessness—their wondering,
poetical character. As a result, their mental state
becomes "most of all despair" (II, 95). They crave novelty
that they can no longer experience due to the closing of
their minds.

Uranus having diagnosed the immediate cause of the
fall, Oceanus next explains the cosmic law behind it.
Saturn has recently entered the dark den, proudly announc-
ing, "Titans, behold your God" (II, 110) and causing Oceanus
to remark that he is "only blind from sheer supremacy"
(II, 185)—from the extreme assertion of his selfhood which
necessarily precludes novelty. "Thou art not the beginning
nor the end," Oceanus tells Saturn,

From Chaos and parental Darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. (II, 190-194)

The original wondrous end was cosmic creation: Keats sees cosmic law as future novelty. "Fresh perfection" will always appear, preserving the world from stagnation. While the Titans have become like "forest trees (II, 224) grown from the "dull soil" (II, 217), the new gods are transcendent "eagles golden-feather'd, who tower/Above us in their beauty" (II, 226-227). The final truth and balm is the belief that "first in beauty should be first in might" (II, 229)—that the most wonder-ful will rule the world.

Having said this, Keats has prepared the way for Apollo’s "loveliness new born" (III, 79). His appearance is within a setting directly contrary to the dead realm of the Titans, and, therefore, one typically conceived by Keats as evocative of wonder. Again we seem to have the idea that if man is capable of wonder his realm will reveal itself to be wonder-ful. He now describes an island, dawn, and ankle-deep lilies of the valley. Wandering through the region, he encounters an "awful goddess" (47). Immediately cast into a state of confusion, he asks who she is and how she arrived there. However, he soon recognizes her to be one he has seen in dreams from which he awoke to composite pain and pleasure evoking "new tuneful wonders" (III, 68). Recognizing Mnemosyne in waking life, he learns the reason for the sadness that characterized his dreams and his mom-ent of waking. The initial mystery of her identity and her
silence once again prove not to be meaningless, but instead
a fullness of meaning which the imaginative mind alone can
comprehend. In contrast to the self-centered Titans, Apollo
now empathically enters into her being, saying:

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)

Comprehending the totality of existence with all its joys
and suffering and, most of all, comprehending its on-going
process, Apollo succeeds where the Titans fail. Once
again, a wondering character dies to the self in order to
"Die into life" (III, 130)—to achieve higher ontological
status. Apollo's reward for self-sacrifice is his apothe-
osis. As Eliade says, "in no rite or myth do we find the
initiatory death as something final, but always as the
condition sine qua non of a transition to another mode of
being, a trial indispensable to rejuvenation, that is to
the beginning of a new life."32 Presenting the depths to
which the closed mind could fall and the heights to which
the open mind could rise, Keats could do little more with
the poem. He had expressed an essentially optimistic view
of evolution. If cultural loss occurred, so might cultural
gain; if Titans fell from once peaceful and innocent exis-
tence, the imaginative Apollo "thought into the human heart,"

becoming an experienced poet of the "grand march of intellect" (I, 282). Having attained "knowledge enormous," Apollo could create his future, rather than crave a return to a past golden age or a Shelleyan escape from time. With trust for both man and time, Keats could again temporarily cast off despair.

Yet facing the fact that, for the masses, the earth has lost its splendor, Keats is not entirely satisfied with the consolation of Hyperion. Somewhat like the romances in which wishes are fulfilled, but which have little to do with the quotidian world in which he lived, the epics are attempts to stoically face harsh realities--but attempts that again prove to have little relevance to Keats's more highly personal lyrics, to the real world as he ordinarily sees it. With a belief that the earthly realm has failed him by proving only to contain ephemeral beauties and pleasures that he describes in his "Ode to Melancholy" as "Beauty that must die; /And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips/Bidding adieu" (21-22), Keats explores attainment of happiness through "fancy." The poem by that name serves as a revealing contrast to the earlier "To Hope." In the more youthful poem, Keats speaks of a mind filled with "hateful thoughts" that "enwrap the soul in gloom" (2)-- of a situation "when no fair dreams before my mind's eye flit" and when "the bare heath of life presents no bloom" (3-4). In this situation, and in states of unhappy love, he invokes the aid of personified Hope. Significantly,
Hope is portrayed as an external entity entreated to come shed "ethereal balm" (5) and "celestial influence" (47), while also sheltering the poet with her silver pinions. Like wonder, her power arises from the external world. By the time Keats composes "Fancy" three and a half years later, his unhappiness is similar, but his healing force originates internally. "Ever let the fancy roam," he writes,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pleasure never is at home;} \\
\text{At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth;} \\
\text{Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;} \\
\text{Then let winged Fancy wander,} \\
\text{Through the thought still spread beyond her:} \\
\text{Open wide the mind's cage door,} \\
\text{She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.}
\end{align*}
\]

(1-8)

Keats no longer hopes for Magical Flight as a result of contemplation of concrete objects of wonder. Even if a sense of wonder could come to him as to the true Poet, either "like fearful claps of thunder,/Or the low rumblings earth's regions under" ("Sleep and Poetry," 27-28), he could not now be happy as he once felt he could be. All such joys, he now feels, are "spoilt by use" (10)--all wonder-events are destined to pass away as man leaves sacred time and re-enters historical time--just as highland scenery recently had been for him. Unlike Wordsworth who could regain sacred time through memory, and Shelley who at least attempted, as best he could, to perpetuate the fading coals of the fires of inspiration by recording his wonder in verse, Keats rejects past recognition of natural wonders, hence denying the possibility of finding his happiness in
the external world. If man has memory, it is only the agonizing "feel of not to feel it [<i>past wonder</i>]' that lies at the center of "In Drear-Nighted December." Questioning the idea of natural supernaturalism, Keats claims to find his own form of "abundant recompense." The mind need not be over-awed by external forces as in the sublime poems of the northern walking tour, but can instead be "self-overaw'd" (26). Because the world fails to satisfy his desires, Keats denies it. The revered object is now the self, or one's fancy totally at odds with the external world. If fancy is granted free flight, Keats proposes, she will prove capable of transforming the mind into an ever-wondrous and fertile region antithetic to the fading, frosty natural world. Into the garden, she will bring the wonders of each season "all together" (31), and she will further intensify each pleasurable moment by bringing "a mistress to thy mind" (80). There remains no fear of self-annihilation even though this supposed success has been achieved at the great cost of rejecting the world Keats has long loved—the world that he has long believed wonderful in the eyes of the real Poet even if he, himself, could not always experience such wonder. Discontent with what is given, he escapes, at least occassionally and temporarily, into a solipsistic realm.

This notion of finding a mistress to the mind, although of a far more spiritual than sensual sort, is central to Keats's important "Ode to Psyche," a poem that
is both an affirmation and a rejection. As Sperry has explained, the poem is an interiorization process. "The change between first and second sections of the ode," he writes, "between the playful, lightsome creature and the high, forlorn deity, partly suggests the change between the poetry of the mythological golden age, a poetry of instant discovery and unquestioning belief, and a poetry of established, even ritualized, order."33 In the terms of this study, the poem demonstrates a shift from a world in which external objects can still be conceived of as wonder-ful to a world in which only the internal faculty of imagination is viewed as sacred.

"I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly" (7), Keats comments, describing both the locale and passive receptivity conducive to the experience of hierophany. As in Shelley's "Mont Blanc" or Keats's own "Ode to a Nightingale," the poet is initially bewildered--uncertain whether he "dreamt to-day" (5) or saw "the winged Psychewith awaken'd eyes" (6). The encounter is characteristically depicted as confusing: "The winged boy I knew," Keats notes, next asking, "But who wast thou, 0 happy, happy dove?/His Psyche true" (21-23). Having been accustomed to worshipping external things as wonder-ful (and it is true that Keats frequently attributed love to external things of beauty), he is readily capable of recognizing Eros, but not of recognizing the imaginative soul which he now gradually comes to believe exists as sacred within man. She is not a nature nymph,
not Pan of the first book of *Endymion*, not any number of "Olympus's faded hierarchy" (25) believed to have once controlled the earth. Hence Keats's confusion concerning her ontological reality. She is none of these ancient deities, and the realm in which she exists is not their world in which wonder-ful beings were in-dwelling—"when holy were the haunted forest boughs, / Holy the air, the water, and the fire" (38-39). Sperry seems exactly right in saying that the mythological world has been replaced by the historical world. 34 "I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired" (43), Keats writes, differentiating himself from traditional wondering man, for surely his eyes are inward ones. He cannot have actually seen Psyche in the bower, but in a receptive state conducive to insight, he must suddenly have recognized the force that is man's imaginative power and man's soul.

In a peculiar variation on the familiar Keatsian theme that "scenery is fine—but human nature is finer" (*Letters*, I, 242), even the archetypal wondrous bower is now internalized. The pines of the Latmian cosmos are replaced by "branch'd thoughts" (53). The new growth results from recognition of a new type novelty—of the idea that the imagination is a sacred element in an otherwise desac-ralized world. Like recognition of wondrous novelty in the natural world, the experience is described as both painful and pleasant—as painful because it disrupts Keats's old way of viewing things and forces him to seek a new
order, as pleasant because that new order is tentatively established. The tentativeness, however, is an important qualification, and here, wandering in the spaces that Keats leaves for our luxury, my path again traverses Sperry's. Keats refers to thought as "shadowy" (65), a contrast to the bright light repeatedly used to describe a sense of immediate revelation of sacrality in the external world and, instead, reminiscent of the "Shadow of a magnitude" in the "Elgin Marbles" sonnet. Although the poem approaches affirmation of sacrality in the mind of man, it does so only with the accompanying acknowledgement of the desacralized character of nature. Keats's stance seems neither totally pessimistic nor optimistic, but instead one of uncertainty which characterizes his poems of this period.

"The Eve of St. Agnes" seems to me the best of Keats's poems in which cultural "fall" is juxtaposed with an attempt at individual "salvation." Only in recent years has it begun receiving the critical attention merited by its depth and complexity. The cold, passionless beadsman, whose rituals prove sterile, has been contrasted with the warm and loving nature of the spiritual Madeline, whose St. Agnes Eve rituals end with the attainment of the husband she desires. Similarly, Porphyro's progress from outside to inside, downstairs to upstairs, purgatorial closet to paradisal chamber to dark elfin-storm, has been
compared with Keats's discussion of progress from the simple wonders of the Infant or Thoughtless Chamber to the Chamber of Maiden Thought and on into the region of Mystery. Given these suggestions, we have learned much about a great poem. Nevertheless, several elements have remained conspicuously unexplained, and the most confusing of these elements, for the most part, have been those that exist at the poem's heart. Why do Madeline and Porphyro behave as they do? What is meant by the concluding stanzas? Finally, what is the poem's place in Keats's career?

One key to the first question is inherent in the difference between Madeline and her relatives. Although the holiday should be a sacred one, the majority of celebrants are totally secular. As Wasserman comments, "the revelers engage in only the petty passions of the world: 'Whispers in anger, or in sport; 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn' (68-69)." In Verhoeven's terms, they "party" rather than "feast." "A party is a foaming, superficial phenomenon," he writes, "fine and sparkling perhaps, but lacking . . . a dimension that the feast possesses." That missing dimension is the feast's slow, solemn nature, further characterized by the contemplative nature of its celebrants. His point is clearly applicable. The party, "with plume, tiara, and all rich array" (38), is certainly non-contemplative. The party-goers are interested solely in appearances and sensual gratification. Although the evening is a holy one dedicated to love, the
servant Angela recognizes that they are a "blood-thirsty race" (99), and warns Porphyro, saying "St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes's Eve--/Yet men will murder upon holy days" (118-119).

From the beginning of the poem, Madeline exists in a world set apart. "These [Revelers] let us wish away," Keats writes,

And turn sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes's saintly care. (41-44)

"Thoughtful Madeline" (55) scarcely hears the loud, cacophonous music and completely ignores the women's sweeping trains and the cavaliers' amorous advances. With her "vague, regardless eyes" (64), she looks only toward "the hallow'd hour" (66). She is

all amort,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn. (70-72)

When Stillinger accuses her of wrongly believing in an old wives' tale, he falls victim to modern man's tendency to equate "myth" and "fable." As Eliade continually points out, traditional societies view myth as "the only valid revelation of reality." During a festal occasion, religious man sincerely believes he lives in sacred time. He must be completely immersed, avoiding profane activities. Entering the chamber in which the revelation is to occur, Madeline is neither permitted to speak nor to look behind herself. Instead, she must "require/Of Heaven with upward
eyes for all that they desire" (53-54). She cannot, in any way, associate herself with the human world. Similarly, and again in contrast to the luxuriously dressed women downstairs, she soon stands naked, Keats having stressed the fact by enumerating the accessories and garments she removes:

her vespers done,
Of all her wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees;
Half-hidden like a mermaid in sea-weed.

(226-231)

Although the other women exist only as articles of splendid clothing, Madeline's clothing exists primarily as part of herself, warmed and scented by its contact with her, and, like sea-weed, taking value only from what it conceals. Removing this clothing, she further separates herself from the temporal existence she has left behind.

Once Madeline is asleep, the most puzzling events of the poem commence. As early as William Michael Rossetti's Life of John Keats, critics have revealed Porphyro's actions to be a point of confusion. "One of the few subsidiary incidents introduced into 'The Eve of St. Agnes,'" writes Rossetti, "is that the lover Porphyro, on emerging from his hiding-place while the lady is asleep, produces from a cupboard and marshals to sight a large assortment of appetizing eatables. Why he did this no critic and no admirer has yet been able to divine." Some help came with
the discovery of the original sixth stanza, explaining
the actions as part of the holiday's ritual. Yet even
this stanza, as critics have recognized repeatedly, is
finally little real assistance. The original legend of
St. Agnès states only that "by fasting all day and eating
a salt-filled egg at night, a young girl will dream of her
lover--who will appear and offer her water." Why should
Keats exclude this and include so much more? A few suggestions
have been made, but none seems entirely satisfactory. Wasse
serman has associated the actions with Keats's "pleasure
thermometer," commenting that

Porphyro has recognized that the dream vision for
which Madeline is preparing is an ascent to the
'dream intensity,' to the spiritual repetition of
what we call happiness on earth; and therefore the
feast and the music represent the sensuous and
imaginative entrances into essence before the spir
itual entrance through love.

Sperry has cited other allusions to food and drink in Keats's
canon, for example his comment: "would we were a sort of
ethereal Pigs, & turn'd loose to feed upon spiritual Mast &
Acorns (Letters, I, 223). Boulger has argued that the
entire section serves as a daring parody of a mass, replacing
the Christian beadsman's preparation for union with
Christ with Porphyro and Madeline's preparation for sexual
union. Although all this is interesting, questions still
remain to be answered.

The extremely sensuous nature of Porphyro, as con
trasted with the spiritual nature of Madeline seems a cen
tral concern in any solution to the critical problem. Again,
the interpretation of his nature is a subject of contention. While Wasserman points out that the sensual and mortal Porphyro is originally a "famish'd pilgrim" (33) later spiritualized by contact with Madeline and, thus, "Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far" (316), Stillinger argues that Porphyro is not fit to be a pilgrim at all, but is instead an unethical strategist. What all critics of the poem overlook is the inherently sacramental nature of both sexuality and the feast. Speaking of this idea, Eliade writes:

Indeed one of the major differences separating the people of the early cultures from the people today is precisely the utter incapacity of the latter to live their organic life (particularly as regards sex and nutrition) as a sacrament. Psychoanalysis and historical materialism have taken as surest confirmation of their theses the important part played by sexuality and nutrition among people still at the ethnological stage. What they have missed, however, is how utterly different from their modern meaning are the values and even the function of eroticism and nutrition among those people. For the modern they are simply physiological acts, whereas for primitive man they were sacraments, ceremonies by means of which he communicated with the force which stood for Life itself. As we shall see later, this force and this life are simple expressions of ultimate reality, and such elementary actions for the primitive become a rite which will assist man to approach reality, to, as it were, wedge himself into Being, by setting himself free from merely automatic actions (without sense or meaning), from change, from the profane, from nothingness.

Looking back, we can recall the similar portraits of nutrition and love in Endymion. Both the "teeming sweets" heaped upon the "sacred fire" (I, 223) and human sexuality are viewed as life forces. Keats even expresses his doubts
that the earth would have fish, flowers, and harvest "If human souls did never kiss and greet" (I, 842). It is this sensuality that is believed capable of making "man's being mortal, immortal"—of altering his ontological status. The spiritual Madeline having been initiated into sexuality and the sensual Porphyro having been etherealized, the two stand as exemplars of a belief that the sacred and the sexual are inseparable. Thus, even the party's "boisterous, midnight, festive clarions,/The kettle-drum and far-heard clarinet" (258-259) are incapable of profaning the sacred bedchamber. Although they threaten, "the hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone" (26). The revelers' state of being is neither Madeline's nor Porphyro's.

Once initiated, the lovers are capable of leaving the castle for an existence away from all earthly hindrances to their love. The storm, arising at the time of sexual union Keats considers sacred, must be a beneficial one, if only for the immediate purposes of the couple. As Porphyro says, "'tis an elfin-storm from fairy land,/Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed" (343-344). Themselves seeming to represent a marriage of heaven and earth (spiritual and sensual), they exist amidst violent weather like that marking the marriage of Aeneas and Dido:

Intererea magno miseri murmur murmur caelum incipit, insequitur commista grandine nimbus, et Tyrii comites passim et Troiana iuventus Dardaniaque nepos Veneris diversa per agros tecta metu petiere; ruunt de montibus amnes, speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem
Both the union of Aeneas and Dido, of Porphyro and Madeline, coincide with the union of the elements. According to Eliade, "the whole of human experience can be homologized to cosmic life." Passing through the door, the Keatsian hero and heroine pass the threshold from historical to mythical time. The ascetic beadsman who had earlier exited "Northward ... through a little door" (19), now sleeps in his ashes after a fruitless "thousand ayes told" (377). The others are left dreaming of the "large coffin worm" (374) or, in the case of Angela, dying "palsy-twitch'd" (376). For those incapable of a complementary relationship, and therefore of entrance into the ethereal realm of sacred experience, there is only a succession of days culminating in death. On the other hand, Madeline and Porphyro escape those "tedious hours" in which they once hoped, for "one moment" (79), to glimpse their true loves. Their realm is to be beyond the southern moors, in the direction that Keats long associated with mingled feelings of pleasant sensuality, inspiration, and transcendence. As early as December, 1816, he was writing of a preferable, seemingly less earthly, realm in the south:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Happy is England! I could be content} \\
\text{To see no other verdure than its own,} \\
\text{To feel no other breezes than are blown} \\
\text{Through its tall woods with high romances blent} \\
\text{Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment}
\end{align*}
\]
For skies Italian, and an inward groan
To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,
And half forget what world or wordling meant.

(1-8)

As late as "Ode to a Nightingale," he is relating the
South to vision and to a departure from quotididian life
into the wonder-ful realm of the bird:

II
0, 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 Provincial song, and sunburnt mirth!
0 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,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim.

(11-20)

By the time of the nightingale ode, England itself is no
longer a happy place of pleasure evoked by the Beautiful,
but a dreaded place of weariness, fever, and fret

... where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

(24-30)

Such is the world of northern man, truly not a world of
earthly sacrality and joy.

Because Porphyro and Madeline escape this world, as
Newell Ford claims, "The Eve of St. Agnes" is in one sense
Keats's supreme celebration of the heart's affections. 53
Oddly enough, however, it is also one of his bleakest poems.
Certainly "Calidore" and Endymion, both of his prior attempts
to write wish-fulfillment romances, are primarily celebrative. The first portrays a world that exactly conforms to the hero's desires—in which man coexists harmoniously with both nature and fellow men. The second portrays a world in which man and man, man and nature, for the most part exist in social and cosmic harmony. The young Latmian prince even is initiated into the sacrality of the natural world which he originally considers shrivelled and dead by comparison with his visions. Nonetheless, even in Endymion another element creeps into the romances. Although the hero and heroine successfully unite, they do so by relinquishing a society that seems good. If Endymion and the Indian Maid are "enskyed" as their sudden disappearance suggests, this separation seems justifiable because an attainment of the "finer tone." If they merely isolate themselves in the forest, as Endymion himself announces to Peona that they will do, their separation seems an inappropriate abandonment of the social and cosmic responsibilities emphasized by the Pan Festival. Supposedly discovering the truth of the Pan-worshippers' belief in immanent sacrality, Endymion only half accepts the lesson learned. At best, Endymion's conclusion is unsure of itself. By the time Keats composed "The Eve of St. Agnes," however, he is increasingly certain of at least one thing: man is "fallen." Admittedly, even the Pan-worshippers are incapable of interpreting the Mystery, but they at least are granted intimations of an
immanent sacrality. They are able to recognize a "touch ethereal." On the other hand, the beadsman, Angela, and the St. Agnes revelers have lost this. Having divorced the sacred and the sensual, their hearts' affections are no longer holy, their imaginations are incapable of intuiting truth. Only by leaving historical existence behind can Porphyro and Madeline attain an immortality of passion; and, although they are successful in their transcendence, within the context of the canon of a poet who for so long had sought to harmonize the sacred and the profane, they are tragic figures. We are again reminded of Vergil who tells us that Aeneas' and Dido's marriage initiates their unhappiness. Interested only in sexuality, they make warm the winter but forget Aeneas' obligations to his people. Perhaps Keats's recognition of this ambiguity motivates his later condemnation of the poem as "colouring" and "drapery" (II, 234). Apparent success is mere romance. The poem is a temporary mood of the poet's mind as he strives to ignore painful recognition of the "knowledge enormous" which had recently concluded the first Hyperion fragment (III, 113). An acceptance of the "knowledge" and an attempt to integrate it into experience begins more and more to demand Keats's attention.

Both "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and "Lamia," the major fairy land poems written after "The Eve of St. Agnes," depict their hero's failure to attain an immortality of passion and, in their own ways, his return to the ordinary
world. Probably because they come at a point in Keats's career when he is seriously questioning past ideas but as yet incapable of formulating answers, they are among the most controversial of his poems. Is La Belle Dame a Circe using man for her own pleasure and casting him from her "elfin grot" (29)? Is she, as Wasserman would have it, a vision of perfection—an ideal that mortal man can momentarily grasp but cannot hope to possess permanently?54 Or is she an inseparable and ironic commingling of these two, offering, as Sperry suggests, nourishment (mana) that is both a sacred substance and a substance taboo to man?55 Similarly, is "Lamia" a poem about the wonder-ful vision attainable by imaginative Lycius but destroyed by the dissecting quality of Apollonius' "consequentive reasoning"?56 Or, is it Keats's farewell to "the heart that lives alone,/ Housed in a dream, at distance from the kind" ("Elegiac Stanzas," 53-54)—a poem about Lycius' recognition that the trumpet sounds rejected in Endymion and "The Eve of St. Agnes" are an integral and important part of life? Is Lamia at fault, or Apollonius, or Lycius? Or is the poem, as Donald Reiman suggests, actually about no single character's faults but, instead, about the transience of man's myths—about the fact that "what he values one day may seem, on the morrow, an empty dream"?57 These questions seem to me difficult ones to answer. Keats's own vacillation creates the difficulty, making each interpretation a possibility,
depending on which other poems one considers in conjunction with "La Belle Dame" or "Lamia." Whatever Keats intended the poems to mean, two things are certain: the lovers no longer escape the real world for a life of bliss and, as this indicates, Keats's personal mythologies were undergoing radical revaluation at this point in his career. The happy romance world disappears.

Increasingly fearing man's separation from the sacred and, therefore, the external world's diminishing hieratic quality, Keats writes "Ode to a Nighingale"—a poem in which agonizing post Christian recognition of mortality borders on plunging the meditative poet into a psychic state of despair. As in many earlier poems, the setting is again outdoors, but a great change has taken place in Keats's outlook and method. No longer does he enumerate the many wonders he has seen this day and then conclude that they are wonders as a result of his abiding sense of human relationships. No longer does he substitute a romantic Calidore or Endymion for himself, presenting them as achieving states of ontological harmony and plenitude that he personally realizes he cannot retain or even be certain of having momentarily intuited. Realizing that the imagination alone will not suffice, he tells the George Keatses that he comes increasingly to write with his mind (Letters, II, 81). As a result, there is a marked dwindling in his belief in the "holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the imagination" and a marked growth of
painful and inescapable self-awareness.

The bird itself is viewed metaphorically as a sacred being completely other than the creature-conscious poet. It is a "light-winged Dryad of the trees" (7)—a spirit visible within the natural world, yet also possessing a supernatural quality. It is at least momentarily the type of minor deity that "Ode to Psyche" declares to have vanished from the earth. In great contrast to Endymion, "The Eve of St. Agnes," and "Ode to Psyche," however, Keats now feels that he can neither bodily nor mentally fade far away from and forget the ordinary world. "The weariness, the fever, and the fret" (23) he now finds inescapable clearly contrast with the "sleep/Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing" of Endymion (I, 4-5).

Although imagination is finally insufficient to enable the poet to achieve permanent transcendence, it results in his only success within the poem. All sense of the empirical is lost as Keats claims he can

guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild.

(43-45)

Trying to achieve empathy, he imagines what the bird sings of, even though he recognizes that this blossoming world is not his.

Once viewing consciousness of death as the prime factor separating himself from the bird, Keats now fleetingly thinks of death in terms of ease, richness, and immortality. It would be both an escape from the world and a
participation in the nightingale's ecstatic song. In contrast to the older Shelley, however, Keats achieves no lasting belief in an immortal realm attainable by man. Once again, he recognizes that his ontological state is not the bird's and that he is incapable of transcending it. With this recognition, he begins to conclude the poem, writing:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown;  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd the magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.  
(61-70)

The bird, of course, exists beyond time, whereas Keats can only hear its song in time ("this passing night"). Interestingly, while Keats previously lamented his inability to learn a rural song from the bees, he now views the auditory faculty in a very different manner. No longer does the ability to hear the songs put man in touch with the sacred. Instead, it makes him, throughout the ages, increasingly conscious of his separation from that sacrality. The image of Ruth in Boaz's field, like that of Keats in Charles Brown's garden is one of complete alienation. However, the stanza moves beyond this passive audition and this state of ontological distinctions. In fairy lands, forlorn because man cannot live in them, song is an active force, charming magic casements and opening that world to novelty unavail-
able to mortals.

Keats begins the poem in a state of half-participation, half-separation—of attempted poetic empathy and of human creature-consciousness. Even though attaining temporary insight into the world about which the bird sings, gradually Keats the Poet is destroyed by Keats the Man's recognition of unavoidable separation. A personal sense of despair is projected onto the bird that no longer "sing-est of summer in full-throated ease" (10) as the poet intuited it to do, but that now sings a plaintive anthem. But is the Poet in Keats completely destroyed? It seems not. As the bird soars over the hillside that man is apparently unable to climb and as it dies to the profane realm, its plaintive song fades—and with it a modicum of Keats's despair. We might ask about the poem what Buber asks about all falls from relationship:

Since one must after all return into "the world," why not stay in it in the first place? Why not call to order that which confronts us and send it home into objectivity? 59

Why not deny that the nightingale was ever anything other than an ornithological specimen? Keats asks, "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?" (79-80). Keats's answer might even be similar to Buber's: the wonder-event "does not help you survive; it only helps you to have intimations of eternity." 60

Although Keats recognizes a difference between his ontology and the bird's, not expecting to attain a personal immortality and realizing that the world surrounding him is not
supernatural, he at least recognizes the possible existence of a transcendent realm. It is nonetheless important to acknowledge that, as his open-ended structure indicates, he possesses no certainty.

In many ways, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is the same poem. Like the nightingale ode, it is a prolonged meditation upon a single symbol and a dramatization of recognition. From the outset, the urn is seen in its otherness, as a "still unravish'd bride of quietness" (1) and a "foster child of silence and slow time" (2). Its silence, like Mont Blanc's, is sacramental in nature, sweeter than any language that the poet can muster to describe it. The poet's disturbed time sense, in this case, deceleration, is characteristic of altered states of consciousness in general. As in "Staffa" and "Ode to Psyche," the object of wonder initially evokes bewilderment:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both
In Temper or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

The poet must attempt to come to terms with an experience poised between human and divine. He is not sure whether it is earthly heaven or heavenly earth.

In stanza two, Keats's empathic involvement is fully realized, and his language is wrenched beyond the bounds of the rational in order to approximate his experience: "Heard
melodies are sweet, but those unheard/Are sweeter," he asserts, advising,

therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.
(11-14)

Keats suggests that their silence is not inactivity, but, because they sing of the ineffable, actually the highest activity conceivable by man. Such a conception is available only to one entering the realm of silence and slow time, where to have no sound is to have sweetest harmony, to have no consummation is to have eternal potential. Like the world within which Calidore is left "burning/To hear of knightly deeds, and gallant spurning/Of all unworthiness" (142-144) and still kissing each lady’s hand, the world of the urn was taken from human time at a point prior to completion, and therefore was never forced to recognize the fall from intensity that Keats must learn to face. Contrasting sharply these sacred and profane states, Keats writes:

More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy’d,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy’d,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.
(25-30)

At this point, a major shift occurs in Keats’s view of the urn. Having just praised it as an example of immortal passion, he turns to the village procession, questioning and interpreting the significance of what he sees:
Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.
(31-40)

The poet attempts to explain the urn in terms of human ontology, giving its people precisely the past and future that their existence in slow time precludes. The worshippers will never reach the altar to perform their sacrifice. Unlike the Pan-worshippers in Endymion who do exist in time, these figures are incapable of insuring cosmic plenitude, and lead the poet to imagine an ironic desolation. The once meaningful silence of the urn becomes a silence of vacancy. The for-everness of youth and passion becomes an evermore of loss and loneliness. Neither empirical sight nor more imaginative wonder can answer specific questions about the urn, and all attempts to place it in time culminate in Keats's rejection of it.

As the final stanza begins, the fall from relationship has occurred. The urn has become an "Attic shape" (41) associated with a particular time and place distant from the poet. During his contemplative process, it undergoes an ontological change, no longer being personified as "unravish'd bride," "foster-child," and "sylvan historian." Now Keats goes a step further than he does in "Ode to a Nightingale," using his objective eye to see the urn momen-
as a mere cultural artifact. Nevertheless, he never quite despairs, for he believes that the "silent form, dost tease us out of thought/As dost eternity" (44). Even if the object itself is not sacred, it can prompt man's imagination to contemplate the sacred. Through the interaction of matter and mind, the object comes to possess an over-plus of meaning. As man perceives the urn in time, he also imaginatively conceives of it as beyond time. Although old age lays waste generations of man, individual man continues experiencing wonder which, although fleeting, serves as a possible intimation of a sacred realm. Capable of helping man to intuit such a realm, the urn can be viewed as a true friend to man. If this ode seems slightly more optimistic than "Ode to a Nightingale," it is probably because man-made art objects almost consistently were conceived of by Keats as more wonder-ful than was nature. We cannot help recalling the difference between his youthful craving for the experience of wonder in natural settings and his actual intense experiences when first seeing the Elgin Marbles or reading Chapman's translation of Homer.

Having already abandoned the comforting notion of cultural evolution set forth in the first Hyperion fragment, from the nightingale and grecian urn odes on through The Fall of Hyperion, Keats increasingly tests epistemological limitations and the possibility of individual "Soul-making" (Letters, II, 102). As far back as January, 1818,
when he composed "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Again," he acknowledged the need to turn from escapist romance to human tragedy, from Spenserian to Shakespearean poetry. By the summer of 1819, he feels incapable of transcendence, believing he has become totally terrestrial. "I have of late been moulting," he writes to Reynolds, "Not for fresh feathers & wings: they are gone, and in their stead I hope to have a pair of patient sublunary legs. I have altered, not from a Chrysalis into a butterfly, but the Contrary" (Letters, II, 128). The Fall of Hyperion, his major poem of this period, encompasses his entire career. It manifests a conflict between poet-narrator's desire for sensuous existence and later for "Knowledge enormous" and his recognition of "high tragedy" and subsequent desire to escape that recognition.

The dream commences in a bower, much like Fancy's garden, where "trees of every clime" (I, 19), fountains, and blossoms, all appeal to the visual, auditory, and olfactory senses. This ontological plenitude is further supplemented by a sacramental meal, the "refuse" of one "By angel tasted or our Mother Eve" (I, 30-31). By partaking of it, the narrator starts "up/As if with wings" (I, 58-59), experiencing Magical Flight to a realm more obviously sacred and yet not wholly different from that bower. Like the bower possessing abundance greater than any earthly garden, he now notes of the temple: "I remember'd none/
The like upon the earth" (I, 65-66). Reaching to the sky, it transcends all spatial bounds; seeming "eternal" (I, 71), it also transcends temporal bounds. The feast has put the poet in contact with sacred time, but he initially fails to recognize its exact nature. Instead, he experiences only a sense of "awe" (I, 81) at the "confus'd" (I, 78) array of religious symbols and recognizes the necessity of ritardando—of "repressing haste, as too unholy there" (I, 94). As he approaches the altar, the fragrant Maian incense acts as a renewing force filling "the air with so much pleasant health/That even the dying man forgets his shroud" and also spreading "Forgetfulness of everything but bliss" (I, 100-101, 104). The narrator begins to experience adamic renewal so characteristic of Keats's experience in the early poems. The sense is that a past state of innocence has been regained. For the moment, the poem seems to be that which Keats craved in the earlier "Fragment of an Ode to Maia"—a poetry "Rich in the simple worship of a day" (14).

Yet, as the strange and eternal austerity of the temple indicates, the poet-narrator mistakes its character. It is not the Temple of Delight of "Ode to Melancholy." It is not even one with Melancholy's altar of individual fall from relationship at its center. Although he experiences blissful reverie, the narrator is nevertheless soon forced to turn his attention to the voice of Reality. Keats's state of innocence has been lost. As Newell Ford aptly
points out, "the incense is not the easeful sweetness of the olfactory palate that it was in 'Psyche' and the 'Nightingale.' It symbolizes the sensuous temptations that betray poets addicted to the voluptuous and blissful, oblivious of the tragical in human history." Any potential wonder-response to nature becomes more and more unlikely.

The poet-narrator's difficult ascent of the altar is clearly another version of Apollo's dying into life at the end of Hyperion. Just as the new god's apotheosis occurred on an island, the narrator's ontological transformation also occurs at a sacred center, now Moneta's altar. It is an initiatory passage from a lower mode of being to a higher—from man's uncomprehending mortal existence to a recognition of "high tragedy" (I, 277) and eventually to an entrance into mythical time of the Titans. In his initial stage of transformation, the narrator is accused of being a member of the "dreamer tribe" (I, 198)—one who "vexes" (I, 202) rather than "pours a balm upon the world" (I, 201) because he seeks to transcend the earthly, whereas better men allegedly "seek no wonder but the human face,/No music but a happy-noted voice" (I, 163-164). We are reminded of Keats's contemporaneous assertion that "wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst Men and Women" (II, 234). Although his view of humanity is no longer the simple delight of his early poems such as the sonnet to his brother George ("Many the wonders I have seen this day") and "Calidore," he has returned to his
original emphasis on man's superiority to nature. The narrator, however, is surprised by this view of the true Poet—a view so radically different from Keats's youthful belief that the Poet experienced wonder everywhere in nature—and he calls out, "Apollo! faded! O far flown Apollo!" (I, 204). With recognition that the poet-god is no longer considered supreme, he lapses into a state of confusion, asking to know where he is, what the statue before him represents, and who Moneta is. It is at this point that the narrator is humanized, but whether or not this humanization is "salvation by means of an initiation into gnosia, a secret knowledge," as Abrams suggests it is,⁶² remains to be seen. "Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold/Free from pain if wonder pain thee not" (I, 247-248), Moneta says prior to parting her veils. The narrator's wonder, however, is certainly not free from pain, but instead a true mixture of the frightening and the fascinating. "But for her eyes I should have fled away" (I, 264), he remarks, implying that the greatest wonder now seems to be sparked by recognition of internal power of endurance, not by external objects nor internal powers of imagination. Yet his pain continues. As the narrator finds himself capable of entrance into mythical time, he discovers, not the perfection generally believed to have existed in illo tempore, but in its place the fallen realm of the Titans, a state indicative of the fact that at no time can man escape "high tragedy."
His salvation from death at the foot of the stairs leading to Moneta’s altar is now recognized in all its paradoxical character. He has been “saved” only for a life of suffering.

Describing experience and desire, he comments:

Without prop or stay
But my own weak mortality, I bore
The load of this eternal quietude,
The unchanging gloom and the three fixed shapes
Ponderous upon my senses, a whole moon;
. . . Oftentimes I pray’d
Intense, that death would take me from the vale
And all its burthens—Gasp ing with despair
Of change, hour after hour I curs’d myself.
(I, 388-392, 396-399)

As Saturn and Thea vanish into the woods, the narrator pauses, allowing Moneta to explain that they are in search of the other Titans. When he continues, it is to say that the reader capable of continuing beyond the “antechamber of this dream” (I, 465) can learn the remainder of the Titans’ story, but that he, meanwhile, “must delay, and glean his memory/Of her high phrase,—perhaps no further dare” (I, 468). So far, he has not managed to come to terms with his experience.

David Perkins’ summary remains one of the best:

The Fall of Hyperion shows the conflict of attitudes in Keats’s mind more markedly than any other of the poems he wrote during this five or six months. There is the suspicion that he has been a dreamer, the assertion that he ought not to be, and the fear that poetry may inevitably involve illusion and make-believe. There is the notion that the poet has special powers of vision beyond those of other men, and the contrary premise that all men have visions like the poet. There is the assumption that the poet stands apart from the typical life of man, and the wish to
see him as a humanitarian actively engaged in promoting human welfare. Finally, there is the desire to find some "haven" and the conviction that it cannot be found, especially by the poet. . . . In The Fall of Hyperion, the ferment in Keats's mind produced as much confusion as complexity.63

Abandoning the belief in the "finer tone" and the "grand march of intellect" in favor of recognition of the Titans' "high tragedy" and belief in the "vale of Soul-making," Keats nevertheless remains uncertain of any set philosophy. Even this poem about humanization is not a clear-cut Romantic spiral upward toward a better way of life, but a deeply paradoxical recognition that even knowledge of ultimate reality does not result in happiness.

In a famous letter to Richard Woodhouse, Keats asserts that the poetical character "does no more harm from its relish of the dark side of things anymore than from its taste for the bright one; because both end in speculation" (Letters, I, 387). He could almost have been talking about his major romances and epics. Just as he can finish neither Hyperion nor The Fall of Hyperion, epics attempting to present a dark loss compensated for by a bright gain or the dark necessity of renouncing the visionary in favor of the quotidian. Although important speculations, these poems all finally appear to be ideas Keats is trying out and not embodiments of any entrenched belief. Those poems which are most commonly declared his finest--"Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode to a Nightingale"--end with typical Keatsian irresolution; the urn is both immortal
and mortal, the experience in the garden both a vision and
a waking dream. Keats's poetic self can occasionally
intuit "much more than we can see" (The Witch of Atlas,
672), but his sole self cannot often accept that intuition
wholeheartedly. He, therefore, becomes the extreme example
of epistemological humility, rarely capable of looking
entirely beyond the earthly, certainly never turning to
a Wordsworthian or Shelleyan belief in post-mortal existence
as a means of retaining hope and avoiding despair. The
thoughts that spring out of human suffering are never
completely soothing. He develops no Wordsworthian "faith
that looks through death/In years that bring the philosophic
mind" ("Immortality Ode," 185-186). In this sense, he is,
without question, the most courageous, and perhaps the most
modern, of the major Romantics.

What everything finally comes down to is the idea
that Keats lives in the least wonder-ful universe. He is
the least self-assured and, therefore, the least teleologi-
cal of these poets. Although he believes somewhat from
the beginning that the Poet should be a physician of man-
kind, he is never confident in his own powers to be so.
Unlike Blake, Wordsworth, and even Shelley to a lesser
degree, Keats is never at all confident of shamanic powers,
ever certain that he has received "the call" and become
one of the initiated. In his letter on the poetical char-
acter, for example, he writes:
I am ambitious of doing the world some good; if I should be spared that may be the work of maturer years—in the interval I will essay to reach as high a summit in Poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. . . . All I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs.

(Letters, I, 387-388)

Poetry and the world of human action are separated in a manner that they are not in the canons of the older, more self-confident Romantics. Although he dreams of amelioration of social ills, Keats realizes the difficulty of fulfilling those dreams. He does not, with the preface to Blake's Milton, declare:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand;
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & pleasant land.

(13-16)

He does not, with Wordsworth, assert:

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how.

(Prelude, XIV, 444-447)

He does not, with Shelley's Demogorgon, even advise man to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

(Prometheus Unbound, IV, 575-576

Instead, in a typical mixture of optimism and pessimism, Keats writes to his brother George:

There is an electric fire in human nature tending to purify—so that among these human creature[s] there is continually some birth of new heroism—The pity is that we must wonder at it: as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish—I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts comp[letely] disinterested: I can remember but two—
Socrates and Jesus--their histories evince it--what I heard a little time ago, Taylor observe with respect to Socrates, may be said of Jesus--That he was so great a man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his Mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour. Even here though I myself am pursuing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal you can think of--I am however young writing at random--straining at particles of light in the midst of great darkness--without knowing the bearing of any one assertion of any one opinion. Yet may I not be in this free from sin? May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful, though instinctive attitude my mind my [for may] fall into... (Letters, II, 79-80)

Keats recognizes the all too frequent recurrence even of wonder-ful human beings, and, in contrast to Blake who views himself as a subsequent incarnation of the Genius whose primary incarnation was Christ, Keats asserts that he only strives after particles of light, perhaps occasionally grasping one, but certainly never believing that he dwells "in Realms of day" ("Auguries of Innocence," 132). It is this uncertainty that, in one sense, makes him the most confused and confusing of the major Romantics but that, in another sense, reveals him to be the most open-minded and contemplative. Not wanting to be enslaved by anyone else's system, he will not even allow himself to create a comforting one of his own. He believes that no system can be Truth. As both man and poet, he is forced to contemplate all things together--for all things lead to speculation and only speculation itself is ultimately
believed to be Truth.
Chapter 5: Notes

1John Keats, The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821, II, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 234. All subsequent references to the letters will be to this edition and documented within the text.


4Dorothy Van Ghent has written an illuminating study of Keats's interest in the sacred bower as literary archetype. "The Passion of the Groves," Sewanee Review (1944), 226-246. Mario D'Avanzo's Keats's Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination (Durham, NC., 1967) should also be mentioned here. Although it does not analyze the detailed manner in which metaphors work within contexts of individual poems, its catalogue of archetypes is a ready reference for the student unfamiliar with anthropological studies such as Eliade's.


6Compare Keats's description of the true Poet: "With forehead to the soothing breezes bare" ("Epistle to my Brother George," 56).

7Many cosmogonic myths serve as archetypes. One of the best known is Buddha's appearance in the midst of lotus blossoms, symbols of "being" in the waters of mystery. Eliade, Patterns, pp. 281-283.

8In the sonnet "Woman! When I behold you Flippant, Vain," Keats voices his desire to be a heroic lover: I hotly burn--to be a Calidore-- A very Red Cross Knight--a stout Leander-- Might I be loved by thee like these of yore.


That Keats believed a relationship to be necessarily reciprocal is most clearly stated in his letters:

... if a Sparrow come before my Window I take in its existence and pick about in the Gravel.

(I, 186)

When I am in a room with People, if ever I am free of speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, that, I am in a very little time annihilated.

(I, 387)


Bate, p. 28.


In the now legendary account of Keats's reaction to Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, Clarke writes that the youth read "as I formerly told his noble biographer Monckton Milnes/ 'as a young horse would through a spring meadow--ramping!' Like a true poet, too--a poet 'born, not manufactured,' a poet in grain, he especially singles out epithets, for that felicity and power in which Spenser is so eminent. He hoisted himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, 'what an image that is'--'sea-shouldering whales!'" Cited by Bate, p. 33.

Keen, p. 28.

Eliade, *Patterns*, p. 325.

Herein lies a major difference between archaic man and modern man as Eliade views them: "It is a responsibility
on the cosmic plane, in contradistinction to the moral, social, or historical responsibilities that are alone regarded as valid in modern civilizations. From the point of view of profane existence, man feels no responsibility except to himself and to society." The Sacred and the Profane, p. 93.


22van der Leeuw, p. 41.


24Eliade, Patterns, p. 184.

25Bate, p. 191.

26Donald Reiman, "Keats and the Humanistic Paradox," Studies in English Literature (Fall, 1971), 662.


28Wordsworth expressed a similar view of Staffe after his 1833 visit. The first of his four sonnets on the place begins:

We saw but surely, in the motley crowd,  
Not one of us has felt the far-famed sight,  
How could we feel it? each the others blight  
Hurried and hurrying, volatile and loud.

Unlike Keats, Wordsworth is later able to return alone and to explore "under circumstances more favorable to those imaginative impressions which it is so wonderfully fitted to make upon the mind." (Poetical Works, IV, p. 407)

29See Eliade, "The Water and Water Symbolism," Patterns, pp. 188-215. Similar examples are rife. For example:

With refreshing lave  
Thou dipp'st them into the taintless wave.  
(To Mary Frogley," 31-32)

then high it soar'd,  
And downward, suddenly began to dip,  
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip  
The crystal spout-head.  
(Endymion, II, 86-89)
See also "A Song about Myself" in which Keats concludes that everything in Scotland is essentially the same as in England.

As far back as "Epistle to My Brother George," this fear appeared:

Ah, my dear friend and brother,
Could I at once, my mad ambition smother,
For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
Happier, and dearer to society.

(109–112)


Stuart Sperry, Keats the Poet (Princeton, 1973), 254.

Sperry, p. 252.

Sperry, pp. 256–257.


Wasserman, p. 116ff.

Wasserman, p. 129.


Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, p. 24.

Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 85.


'Twas said her future lord would there appear
Offering as sacrifice—all in a dream—
Delicious food even to her lips brought near:
Viands and wine and fruit and sugar'd cream,
To touch her palate with the fine extreme
Of relish; then soft music heard; and then
More pleasures followed in a dizzy stream
Palpable almost; then to wake again
Warm in the virgin morn, no weeping Magdalen.


Wasserman, pp. 105-106.

Sperry, pp. 52-53.

Boulger, "Keats' Symbolism," ELH (September, 1961), 244-259.

Wasserman, p. 109; Stillinger, p. 538.

Eliade, Patterns, pp. 31-32.

Meanwhile confusion takes the sky, tremendous turmoil, and on its heals, rain mixed with hail. Then scattered trains of Tyre, the youth of Troy, and Venus' Dardan grandson in alarm seek different shelter through the fields; the torrents roar down the mountains. Dido and the Trojan chieftain have reached the same cave. Primal Earth and Juno, queen of marriages, together now give the signal; lightning fires flash, the upper air is witness to their mating, and from the highest hilltops shout the nymphs. (Aenead, IV, 213-227, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, Berkeley, a971)

Eliade, The sacred and the Profane, p. 146.

Ford, "Holy Living," 45.

Wasserman, p. 74ff.

Sperry, p. 239.

See Keats's comment that "Philosophy will clip an Angel's wing" (Letters, II, 234), a notion probably derived from Hazlitt's "On Poetry in General," Lectures on the English Poets.

Reiman, p. 662.

This reading of the troublesome word forlorn is David Perkins', The Quest for Permanence (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 255.

60 Buber, p. 84.
62 Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York, 1971),
63 Perkins, pp. 276-277.
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