VOLUME 22
2000
NUMBER 1

# THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Aligarh Muslim University

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Farhat Ullah Khan

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**VOLUME 22** **NUMBER 1** **APRIL 2000**

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*Annual Subscription:*
Rs 120.00
£ 6.00
$ 10.00
*Single Copy:*
Rs 60.00

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*The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol.22, No.1, pp.1-14

***Raymond Chapman***

# HUMAN KIND CANNOT BEAR VERY MUCH REALITY STRATEGIES OF ESCAPE IN *HAMLET* AND *KING LEAR*.

T. S. Eliot has suggested that 'Human kind cannot bear very much reality'.[1] This is a realization which comes to most of us as we pass through our lives, though less traumatically than it appears in two of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. Some of the principal characters in *Hamlet* and *King Lear* try in various ways to avoid the pressure of reality that becomes too threatening. Eventually reality overcomes and destroys them, whether or not they have abandoned their escape routes and come to accept it as a part of the tragic *anagnorisis*. Sharing the experience of self-knowledge, whether destructive or redemptive, has been part of the multi-level appeal for audiences for four hundred years. The catharsis, the poetry, the dramatic power to enthrall by great theatre; these and more do not exhaust their meaning of the plays. They confront us with the tension between illusion and reality; they address our own anxiety and explore our own deceptions. The world of 1600 was troubled by many things, some still shared today, some different, but all tending to disquiet both socially and individually.

The tension between illusion and reality is an essential factor in imaginative literature, most of all in acted drama. We collude in a deception; we accept as a temporary reality what we know to

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be an illusion in the world we have left outside the theatre and which seems enriched by what we carry back to it. Some dramatists try to make the illusion complete, as in the most realist drama of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Others from the start emphasize the presentation of illusion, anticipating in various ways the Brechtian alienation-effect. Shakespeare, supreme in this as in all else, holds the two in creative conflict. He creates the conflicts, comic or tragic, of characters with whom we empathise as if they were real people – without succumbing to Bradleyan excesses of biographical conjecture. He also loves to tease the audience with the reminder that the seeming reality of the play is contained within the material reality of the playhouse.

Our age feels strongly the drive towards escape from reality. People in every part of the world are heavily pressured. Two major wars and their aftermath, the fear of terrorism, technology growing at a rate that forbids the full grasp of its implications, constant impact of new information and of disquieting or horrific news, all contribute to unsettlement. Things were, in their own way as bad when *Hamlet* was first acted, but there were no daily global bulletins, no television to bring the horror into our own homes - a flat image of reality, more artificial than the similitude of the theatre, but a reality enough in its reception. As we gain more control over the physical world, we feel ourselves less able to deal with living in it; even the bleak self-sufficiency of the post-war Existentialists seems too confident. Iris Murdoch wrote about Sartre that the individual is not self-contained in loneliness but is to be seen 'against a background of values, of realities, which transcend him… We are not isolated free choosers, monarchs of

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all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy'. [2] This has the ring of truth; is it so far from the *angst* of Hamlet in soliloquy, Lear in the storm?

Paul Roubiczek has found the genesis of this retreat from reality in European Romanticism: '[T]hey ignore the existing world [...] they always build up in their imagination a world as it should be [...] Eventually Romanticism manifests itself as an inability to cope with life'. [3] But the Romantics, even in their most self-lacerating mood, did not outdo the people of the early seventeenth century in *angst.* Uncertainty about the royal succession before the death of Elizabeth I – the genesis of the Essex rising with its provocative prelude of a revival of *Richard II* – was followed by disappointment with James I. The growing confrontation of King and Parliament, was clear enough in the dramatic and other literature of that first decade, starker and more despairing in Webster and Tourneur. Shakespeare did not escape it, as witness his 'dark' comedies, and his tragedies, above all *Hamlet* and *King Lear.* In these plays we are constantly reminded that things are not what they seem; characters are speaking and acting in what are, for the purpose of the play, 'real' situations of rule and power and the common life around it, afflicted by the current climate of uncertainty. In their words, they are forced to acknowledge the truth and at the same time they subvert their knowledge by retreating from it.

A study of psychoanalysis states that 'A component of character is deemed neurotic when it is sufficiently rigid to lack variability in adapting to variations in reality situations and interpersonal relations, and therefore engenders disaster and

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suffering'.[4] This is applicable to Hamlet, most self-analytical of dramatic characters, who tries to evade his role as the revenger, a role generally sympathetic to the audience. He prefers to cast himself as the villain and soloquises:

> Why, what a rogue and peasant slave am I
> (II. ii. 550)[5]

And accuses himself to Ophelia,

> I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious.
> (III.i. 126)

Lear , as the truth of his downfall begins to dawn sees one role passing from him and seeks a new one:

> Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
> Does Lear walk thus? Speak Thus?
> Where are his eyes?
> Either his notion weakens, his discernings
> Are lethargied- Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so.
> Who is it that can tell me who I am?
> (I.iv. 207)

And the Fool replies, with cruel insight into the personality being torn apart, 'Lear's shadow'.

Edgar, with more insight into the true reality comments:

> 'Poor Tom!
> That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am'
> (II.ii.184)

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Now this loss of one identity and assumption of another is of course the accepted situation of the actor, who must alienate his living ego from the represented 'reality' that he is to present. Shakespeare, actor as well as dramatist, often too draws attention to the theatricality of the play:

Fabian: If this were played upon the stage now,
I could condemn it for an improbable fiction'.
(*Twelfth Night* III. iv. 125)

Cassius: How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown/"
(*Julius Caesar* III. i. 112).

Leontes: Thy mother plays,
And I play too, but so disgraced a part
Will hiss me from the stage'.
(*The Winter's Tale* I. ii. 187)

Berowne: Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill: these ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.
(*Love's Labour's Lost* V, ii. 851)

York: As in a theatre the eyes of men,
After a well-graced actor leaves the stage
Are idly bent on him that enters next
Thinking his prattle to be tedious;
(*Richard* II. v. 23-26)

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Macbeth: A poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more
(*Macbeth* V.v.23)

These are daring and provocative references, something perhaps comparable to the alienation effect of Brecht in calling attention to the pretence of the stage and thus limiting the identification of both actors and audience with the drama as 'reality' while at the same time demanding consideration of its relevance to their own lives. These words speak what is universally true of the theatre: they are not specific to Elizabethan playhouse as is the first Chorus of *Henry V* with its precise references to the limitation of the 'wooden O'. They still work for us today; even though we may not sometimes need to think of their first setting to receive their full impact. Thus Lear, wise in his madness, exclaims: 'When we are born, we cry that we are come/To this great stage of fools (IV, v, 179), a vision not only of human stupidity but the chaos of a stage occupied by professional fools or clowns, those who 'speak more than is set down for them' and cause disruption to 'the necessary business of the play', (*Hamlet* III. iii, 38).

It is into this world of theatre that Hamlet would like to withdraw. He is a lover of the stage, an 'old friend' of the Players. He is one who can remember and declaim an old speech and write a new one. He speaks to the actors in friendly, familiar prose, and in soliloquy contrasts his inactivity with the lively simulated passion of the actors. The First Player takes a role, an imaginary persona, and makes it live in an outpouring of emotion and art. Hamlet in a 'real' situation, finds himself ineffective. It is 'a fiction, a dream of passion', which makes him face his withdrawal from

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threatening reality and begin to act in life, not to act as on a stage. For the status of the Ghost is dubious, not satisfying his need to distinguish illusion and reality. He questions the witness of the sentinels and then questions his own senses: 'This spirit I have seen may be the devil' (III. i. 599). The credentials of the Ghost as a possible illusion sent to destroy him – must be tested through a further staging of illusion.

The play scene is the supreme test of the tension between reality and illusion. It has the usual effect on us of a play; we see the actors in different roles. They become spectators with us and thus gain a greater reality in our imagination, yet their response to the play is part of another play which we have accepted as our temporary reality. The Mousetrap is the twice-removed illusion, through which truth is revealed. It is truth for Hamlet, forced to confront the reality which he had been avoiding; it is illusion for the audience, yet at the same time makes us more deeply involved in his dilemma. Even after the revelation of the King's guilt, 'freighted with false fire', Hamlet still sees himself in a dramatic role. He is now the Revenger, a famous type of Renaissance tragedy, and is partly removed in a new way from the reality of his situation.

While Hamlet strives to make appearance into reality, Claudius is forced to recognise that he is removed from reality when he tries to pray: My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to Heaven go (III. iii.97). Then the Revenger is deceived by what he falsely believes – to be the Murderer, Polonius behind the arras. The fatal mistake is followed by his second encounter with the Ghost, seen by the Revenger alone as the Ghost of Banquo who is seen only by the

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Murderer. This convinces Gertrude of his withdrawal from reality; 'How is't with you/That you do bend your eyes on vacancy?' (II. IV. 107).

Something of the same effect is the 'trial' in *King Lear* where only one of the characters on the stage believes in the reality of what is happening. It is the crowning effect of alienation; the Fool speaks to Lear's arraigning of Goneril, 'Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool'; the Fool alienated by his calling from general society, is both actor-'yoke-fellow of equity'-and cynical spectator in the fantasy being played out in the larger play that gives him his existence. This is both theatrically subtle and disquieting. All the characters on the stage except one know, and in their own ways emphasise, its pretence while they watch Lear, the self-deceived, beginning to face the truth through a fantasy of his own designing.

The ultimate withdrawal from reality is of course into madness; a comprehensively loose term for states from serious neurosis to complete loss of reason. It was an obsession for the people of the Renaissance, not knowing how to deal with it, feeling horror of when meeting it, and displacing their fear through cruel treatment of the sufferers. The Dance of Madmen in *The Duchess of Malfi* and the Bedlam scene in *The Changeling* display all these reactions. Modern clinical psychology recognises another dimension: mental illness as being sometimes a refusal to live in reality and a defence against the pressure to do so. Laing says, 'The ways of losing one's way are legion. Madness is certainly not the least unambiguous ... if by madness we mean any radical estrangement from the totality of what is the case.'[6]

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At a time when Freud was among the chief influences in western society, much was made of the Oedipal conflict in *Hamlet.* The most important and the most balanced was the work of Ernest Jones. [7] The attitude to the father is a key theme beyond one central character. The trauma of loss of a father, the deprivation of love and protection, is suffered by Hamlet, Laertes and Ophelia. In each case the father's death is strange and puzzling. A false report is put out and accepted on the fate of old Hamlet, and Polonius dies through mistaken identity. In *King Lear* Cordelia and Edgar suffer loss through the withdrawal of affection, and usurpation by a treacherous sibling. Of these five characters, one becomes mad, two feign madness, one is seized by violent anger. Only Cordelia seems outwardly unscathed and she has found substitution in a loving husband.

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It is the madness of Hamlet that has been most studied. Some critics have pondered whether his madness is real, although the text makes it clear that it is pretence. It is an assumed role, natural for one with so strong an inclination to theatricality. He speaks of his intention to 'put an antic disposition on' and confides that he is 'but mad north -north-west' (II. ii. 379). Apparent phases of alternate madness and sanity would be accepted at the time, in the belief that madness often came in cycles. Nor is this belief contrary to modern experience of some types of mental illness. Thus Gertrude apparently tries to excuse the killing of Polonius: 'Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend/ which is the mightier… in this brainish apprehension kills/ The unseen good old man' (iv. i.6).

The genuine madness of Ophelia is her pathetic and

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involuntary escape from pressures: the loss of her father, the absence of her brother, the defection and apparent madness of her lover. It gives her freedom to be frank and familiar with royalty, to sing songs improper for a well-bred girl, to wander alone until she meets an ambiguous death. Her death begins another sequence of doubt between the true and the false. The Gravediggers argue about the matter and the 'churlish priest', who has made up his own mind as to the reality, says that 'Her death was doubtful' (V.i.221)

In *King Lear* we have a reverse pattern. Here it is the principal character who is truly driven mad by the pressure of anger and disappointment, while a secondary one, caught up in the conflict of deceit, feigns madness for self-protection. Lear's madness is his response to seeing the reality that trusted daughters are malignant, the banished daughter faithful. As the truth is borne in upon him, he knows that his sanity is threatened, the scene, which breaks him, begins with the stark realism of Kent in the stocks, a deep affront to a royal servant. The audience would recognise it as a low and shameful punishment, the fate feared by vagabonds like Autolycus. But Kent himself is not what he seems. It is not the Earl, but the rougher retainer Caius who is in the stocks. Kent has been banished and has assumed the escape of disguise. He is not recognised even by his master: a stage convention that allows the audience to accept the stage reality of the illusion, as with Rosalind in the forest who is not recognised by her father or her lover. The scene begins with royal anger, Lear's last true assertion of authority: 'Who put my man in the stocks?' (II.ii.356) And moves to the terrible 'O Fool, I shall go mad'. His fear of madness has moved from the precatory

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to the indicative, and appeals to the man who pretends folly and now seems his only refuge.

Edgar, like Hamlet, uses feigned madness to escape from a cruel and dangerous situation, often counterfeit and denounced as such in many underworld pamphlets, yet a feared reality in lonely country places. His position is ambiguous, and the audience would recognise both the effectiveness and the danger of his disguise. Like Hamlet, he can assume or drop his pretence of madness at will. He takes a new role with his blind father Gloucester but puts on a strongly rustic accent to deceive Oswald (IV.v.233). This use of the conventional peasant speech which was known as 'stage southern', heightens the theatricality of his assumed role. Gloucester is forced by the horrible reality of his torture into a world of uncertainty. In his blindness, he does not know what is true and what is false, as earlier he had failed to distinguish the faithful son from the traitor. Now he is deceived about being at the top of Dover cliff which seems to offer means of escape in death but confronts him with the reality of harmless ground.

All this action simulates the world in which people must live and move; yet all the time it is the stage of the Globe Theatre. As spectators four hundred years later, we welcome recognition of our own dilemmas and our strategies of escape. Mercifully, few will go to such extremes; but tragedy is there as a form of extremity to cleanse our lesser griefs and fears through its pity and terror. It is like an electrical transformer which reduces a potentially fatal force of current to give safe illumination. We must know what it means to refuse to see things as they are, to have the mental blindness, which is partly voluntary or inescapably conditioned.

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We feel the pressure on sanity which makes people pretend not to understand, to act irresponsibly, to seek attention which diverts attention from the real problem. This perhaps is the Hamlet for our age, and the Lear too. As the Romantics found their own Hamlet, so we may find ours and still respect the integrity of Shakespeare's presentation to his own time.

The plays do not leave us to indulge in our strategies of escape, for the characters who have fled from reality must confront it at last. Hamlet puts aside all pretence and speaks soberly before the fatal duel. He can still be mischievous with Osric about the climate of the day as he had been with Polonius about the shape of a cloud, his own jesting way of saying how hard it is to be sure of reality. At the end, recognising the treachery of poison, the rapier and the cup that had seemed harmless but are fatal, he acts in a real situation. Ophelia meets without resistance the reality of death by water – the combination of madness and drowning that so obsessed Virginia Woolf and haunts Eliot's *Waste Land.* Gloucester learns the truth too late and dies of it; Edgar and Kent are the survivors whose strategy has worked and to whom the 'gored state' is entrusted.

It is in Lear himself that we have the most extreme presentation of delusion. Mistaken about his daughters, forced to recognise the truth, driven to madness by it and restored at last to sanity, he shows the whole cycle of pressure, escape and return; because it is a tragic world, where consequences are, in George Eliot's phrase, 'unpitying'[8] He experiences the *anagnorisis* which is a vital feature of great tragedy and comes too late to save the hero. His moment of truth is one of the finest ever written:

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> I am a very foolish fond old man,
> Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less,
> And to deal plainly
> I fear I am not in my perfect mind. (V.i.52)

It is the coming to reality of the tyrant who thought that his mere word could command love and loyalty. Yet faced with the more bitter truth of death he himself dies in a moment of illusion; a moment so terrible that Nahum Tate had to change the ending and circumvent the death of the virtuous. But, in Bradley's phrase, he dies in a state of 'unbearable joy', deluded to the last by appearances. [9] For all these characters reality breaks through as judgement but also as release. They are drawn back from their refuges into the real world, either to death or to a life enriched by experience. Yet the reality to which they return is the illusion of the stage. We who have witnessed the enactment of their struggles have accepted the double illusion. As we watch their attempts to escaped from what reason tells us is itself illusion, the play has subverted its own pretence. To collude with dramatist and actors, to live for a time in their world but not to remain in it when the action finally culminates is to be cognisant of the tension between illusion and reality.

Perhaps it is true that we cannot bear very much reality. But to share in these strategies of escape tells us that we must bear it, because the refusal is worse that the acceptance. Hamlet speaks for us before he fully confronts his own tragic dilemma, even before he begins his unsuccessful attempt to escape. When his mother challenges that his mourning 'seems so particular to thee', he replies 'Seems, madam? Nay it is I know not seems' (I. ii. 76).

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*The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol.22, No.1, pp.15-55

***Jalal Uddin Khan***

# HELD TO AEOLIAN AND APOLLONIAN LYRES: A VIEW OF KEATS' EARLY POEMS (1814-17)

Keats' most anthologized and most well-known poem, "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer"(henceforth *Chapman's Homer*) is one of his early poems, first published in Leigh Hunt's liberal *The Examiner* of December 1,1816 and then included in the poet's first volume published a few months later in 1817. For his readers the poem with its compact beauty, brevity and accessibility serves as the ideal introduction to his work. It tells everything that the poet came to be known for – his form-consciousness demonstrated in his successful handling of the sonnet form (later to be transposed into the ode form), his being inspired and influenced by the classical and Elizabethan sources, his sense of Romantic wonderment, and above all his powers of creative and suggestive expression.

However, Keats' first poem to be published, "O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell"(henceforth *O Solitude*), a fine Petrarchan sonnet, again in *The Examiner,* in early May 1816, deals with objects and ideas closer to home and the physical self, far from the borderless expanses of nature and literary imagination of *Chapman's Homer*. Speaking of "the sweet converse of an innocent mind" in the tranquillity of the English countryside, "*O Solitude*" contrasts the Romantic sweetness of nature's "haunts"

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with the drab routine of city life. It was written in reaction to the boredom of the poet being confined to the city during his medical studies in London. The sonnet "To one who has been long in city pent" (henceforth *Long in City Pent*), composed next June, records a similar reaction as *O Solitude* and forms a sequence with "Oh, how I love, on a fair summer's eve" and "To a friend who sent me some roses" in the sense that the three sonnets "record Keats' excursions into the countryside around London when he was studying medicine at Guy's Hospital 1815-16."[1] The beautiful "On the Grasshopper and Cricket," another successful sonnet about those charming little creatures, is the result of a fifteen-minute poetical contest between Hunt and Keats. The sonnet beginning "This pleasant tale is like a little copse" is another result of such a contest.[2] Keats could even write extempore with a great success, for instance, "To Leigh Hunt, Esq.," and "Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds."[3]

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This introductory sketch of some of Keats' early poems shows his natural creative genius taking shape under conscious cultivation in his poetical compositions. There is a constant use of the Romantic metaphors of inspiration and spontaneity, the "Aeolian lyre," from Aeolus, god of winds, and the " golden lyre," meaning Apollo's lyre, symbol of poetry and poetic achievement associated with Homer, Virgil, Spenser, and Milton.[4] His first volume (1817) included some of the poems which had just been published in contemporary local outlets like *The Examiner, The Champion, Annals of the Fine Arts,* and *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature,* but it mainly consisted of hitherto unpublished new poems some of which were posthumously published much later. This article takes

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a brief general look at the poems composed from the beginning through 1817, some of which, however, remained unpublished by then. In themes and ideas as well as forms and styles, the early poems unmistakably anticipate the later poems: there are Keats' favourite flowers such as musk-roses and eglantines, his favourite words and figures like *the wing of poesy*, *happy*, *melodious*, *hemlock*, *elf*, *halcyon*, *cloy*, *incense*, *attitude* and *brimful*, and his favourite references – classical , pastoral, Spenserian, Shakespearean and Miltonic– , including those to love and beauty. On the thematic level, there are his favourite paradoxes of pain and pleasure, suffering and creativity with the connotations of self-destruction as being necessary for poetical creation, the paradox of truth and beauty, and finally his constant preoccupation with that of the luxury of painless death.

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Douglas Bush argues how some of Keats' central ideas are present in his very early verse:

> The poems of 1814-16, with their frequent symbols of liberty and tyranny, give evidence of a schoolboy liberalism which was only to mature in later years. More important ….. was a devotion to poetry and nature, and an eager recognition of their affinity…. Keats associates classical myth with poetry and nature.[5]

From the beginning Keats aspired to be a serious and responsible poet raising the problems of poetic creativity and experimenting with a variety of poetic forms such as the sonnet, epistle, ode, hymn, valentine, long narrative poem, even parody,

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and doggerel.[6] "To Hope" with its neoclassical-style personified abstractions is mainly an exercise in the elevated expressions of an ode. The experimental Petrarchan sonnet "Woman! When I Behold Thee Flippant, Vain" (henceforth *Woman! When I Behold*) anticipates the structure of the later major odes whose stanzas are patterned like a sonnet. The pentameter couplets of early narrative poems such as *Sleep and Poetry* and *Endymion* later would be used again in *Lamia* with the vigor and economy of Dryden. The stanzaic hymn to Pan in *Endymion* (1:232-306), which Shelley, in a letter to the *Quarterly Review* in 1820, recognized, among a few other passages in the poem, as having the "promise of ultimate excellence," is again a significant step towards the structure of the major odes.[7] "Ode to Apollo" ('In thy western halls of gold'), with the influence of Gray's *The Progress of Poesy* on it, suggests Keats' early pre-occupation with the grandeur of poetry and poetic achievement. The verse epistle "To My Brother George" (henceforth *Brother George*), the second of its kind in a group of three in heroic couplets, printed together in the first volume, expresses the problem concerning the function and status of poetry.

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Similarly, Keats' early letters have been regarded as a valuable source to sketch his development as a poet. He "invested as much energy in his letter as in his poetry. Typically, the important letters.... mingle localized details of his life in London with important statements about his work."[8] In such an important letter, to his brothers George and Tom, dated 21-7 December 1817, he outlined his ideas on "Negative Capability" and "intensity":

> The excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their

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> being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth - Examine *King Lear* and you will find this exemplified throughout ... what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean *Negative Capability,* that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.[9]

In other words, a poet should be capable of remaining content with what Keats calls "half knowledge" (in the same letter) and with whom "the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration or rather obliterates all consideration." These ideas find a condensed expression in the famous phrase " The feel of not to feel it" in the poem "In Drear-Nighted December," composed in the same month.

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The sonnet "To Chatterton," a tribute to the remarkably gifted Chatterton (1752-1770) who died very young and is thus described as a "half-blown" flower, expresses the idea of a lonely and sensitive Romantic genius. Chatterton, who came of humble origins, was reduced to despair by poverty ("child of sorrow – son of misery"), and poisoned himself with arsenic at the age of seventeen.[10] For the Romantics he became a symbol of society's "misunderstanding and neglect of the dedicated artist." Keats again refers to him in the verse letter "To George Felton Mathew" (henceforth *Felton Mathew*), as one of the "lone spirits" in *Sleep and Poetry,* and his death in the sonnet "After Dark Vapours Oppressed Our Plains. "*Endymion* is dedicated to Chatterton, whose medieval style greatly influenced the unfinished *The Eve*

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*of St. Mark*, written early in 1819.[11] In September the same year he wrote, "The purest English… is Chatterton's… Chatterton's language is entirely northern—I prefer the native music of it to Milton's cut by feet."[12] He described him as "the most English of poets except Shakespeare."

*I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* (henceforth *I stood*), the opening poem in the first volume, gives an account of the creative myth not only touching upon the common Romantic theme of the moon's influence over the poetic imagination (II. 113-15), anticipating *Endymion*, but expressing the central problem of the function and nature of poetry (II.125-204) related to the origins of myth. Keats' ideas can be traced to those of Wordsworth in *The Excursion*, which was one of his favourite readings and as such had a profound influence on him . Wordsworth suggests (in *The Excursion*, IV, II. 687-765, 840-87) that the classical dieties originated in man's animistic response to the forces of nature. Accordingly, the cluster of classical figures in *I stood* , to Keats' mind, could be used to describe the origin of poetry. Suggested by "a delightful summer-day," the poem was in the process for a few months until it was revised and completed in December 1816. Originally intended as a narrative poem under the title of *Endymion*, *I stood* ends up as being a descriptive piece. It mentions the Psyche story (II . 141-50), which is further developed in "Ode to Psyche," as it does the classical story of Endymion and Cynthia (II. 181-204) later given a full treatment in *Endymion*.

Begun later but finished earlier than *I stood*, *Sleep and Poetry* is the last and longest poem (404 lines) in the first volume and as such Keats' most ambitious poem before *Endymion*. Using

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the subject of the imagination in its double sense of sleep (meaning reverie or dream) as well as the deep understanding of the reality of the world, he suggests that "fulfillment can come only through comprehensive awareness of the actual and through sympathy for it."[13] In its interplay of dream and reality, the poem anticipates many of his later poems such as the Odes, *Lamia* and *The Fall of Hyperion;* as it makes a statement about what the ultimate aim of poetry should be, advancing a whole poetic theory, it not only realizes more fully the issues explored in *I stood* and the contemporary verse letters, but also anticipates poems such as "Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair" (hereafter *Milton's Hair*), "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again" (hereafter *King Lear Once Again*), "When I have Fears," and "God of the Meridian."

*Sleep and Poetry* amounts to an estimation of Keats' present status, forecasting his future potential and the preparation he needs to meet the challenge. At the early age of twenty-one he wanted to model himself according to the greatest poets of the past. He laid out for himself a program very similar to that of aligin Virgil, Spenser and Milton, all of whom had begun with pastoral writing before they prepared themselves to embark on an epic project. Keats, who aspires to be a great poet but is aware of his present inadequacies, realizes that it is far beyond his capacity:

> *O Poesy! for thee I grasp my pen*
> *That am not yet a glorious denizen*
> *Of thy wide heaven.*(ll. 53-55)

He wishes to undergo a training process beginning with the carefree pastoral world ( the realm of "Flora, and old Pan" as

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he calls it ) and ending with the epic scale of "a nobler life,/ Where I may find the agonies, the strife/ Of human hearts" (II. 123-250. In the key lines 96-154 starting with the famous "O for ten years" passage, he gives an account of the development of the artist, which resembles Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and anticipates his (Keats') later view of human life as "a large mansion of many apartments" expressed in his letter to Reynolds.[14] As he describes in this letter, which significantly expands on the ideas expressed in *Sleep and Poetry*, the first apartment is the "infant or thoughtless chamber" corresponding to the early period of unreflective joys, followed by the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" with many passages darkened by "misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness, and oppression," which we get to "imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle—within us." This second stage of dark passages leading into the "Chamber" is Keats' equivalent of Wordsworth's "burden of mystery" in *Tintern Abbey.*

Keats' profound sense of vocation in comprehending humanity contradicts for a time his own craving for "a life of sensations rather than thoughts."[15] However, it is only through deeper reflection of intuitive nature that he can reach a philosophic understanding of human joys and pains which will enable him to see into the veiled mystery of nature. This is how the poet attempts to effect a resolution between the ideal world, the world of the senses, and that of human misery. The image by which he expresses such a resolution of life and nature is the hurrying flight of the chariot over the trees and mountains through the winds and clouds in the sky (II. 125-154). As he watches the trail of the flight in his visionary imagination suddenly he sees that the imaginative visions he has just seen are no more, leaving him disillusioned with a forced recognition of actuality:

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*The visions all are fled— the car is fled*
*Into the light of heaven, and in their stead*
*A sense of real things comes doubly strong ,*
*And, soul to nothingness: but I will strive*
*Against all doubtings, and will keep alive*
*The thought of that same chariot, and the strange*
*Journey it went,*(II. 155-62)

His vision of the chariot of poesy with its charioteer is similar to the allegorical visions of Shelley, who also he thought represented human strife, though not as successfully as Wordsworth. Metaphorically, the chariot "represents the higher poetic imagination, which bodies forth the matters of delight of mystery, and fear' (1.138) that characterize the grander poetic genres."[16] In a vision Keats sees the vast idea of "The end and aim of Poesy" rolling before him (1.293).

*Sleep and Poetry* is also an attack on the Popian mechanistic view of poetry and the world, while it expresses an admiration for some truly poetic souls like Chatterton, Wordsworth and Hunt. Like most of his generation, Keats thought of French-dominated Augustan critical tastes as an interim period in the development of English poetry, of which he gives a brief history in II. 162-229. According to his account, while the greatness of the Elizabethans and seventeenth-century writers gave way to the formalism of the neo-classical writers, there was a resurgence of poetry in his own time referred to as "a myrtle fairer"(1.248). In this context he refers to Chatterton and Kirke White as "lone spirits" (1.218), who were poets of great promise but died very young, Wordsworth as "swan's ebon bill" (1.216), Hunt as a "pipe"

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bubbling from "a thick brake" (II.226-8) i,e,. singing like a bird from the bushes, Byron and perhaps also Coleridge as "strange thunders from the potency of song" (II.231,241-2). Perhaps there is an attack on the Lake School when Keats says, "the themes/ Are ugly clubs, the poets Polyphemes/Disturbing the grand sea" (II.233-5), meaning that "The poets are giants like Polyphemus and his brethren, of superhuman strength, but like the eyeless Polyphemus without ability to direct their energies fitly, so that their clubs ( the themes they write on...) only succeed in disturbing the grand sea (of poetry? Or life?)."[17] Such a qualified esteem following his dislike of certain things particularly in Wordsworth anticipates Keats' later condemnation of Wordsworth's didacticism and excessive introspection, the "egotistical sublime."[18] Against such defects he sets up the twofold ideal of poetry: one, poetry in conceptual power and grandeur as "A drainless shower/ Of light"(II.235-36), and the other, poetry as directly human and reassuring — "it should be a friend/ To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man" (II. 246-47). Poetry is viewed as "An ocean dim" that, "sprinkled with many an isle,.... Spreads awfully before (him)," and as a temple where it is his "ardent prayer" to have access to (II. 306-7)

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The pastoral realm of "Flora, and old Pan" described in *Sleep and Poetry* (II. 101-21) anticipate the fuller details of the festival of Pan described in *Endymion* (1: 89-392), which include the famous hymn to Pan (II, 232-306), drawing on Keats' reading in Elizabethan pastoral poetry. *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, to give its full title, is an ambitious project of more than four thousand lines in four books based on the classical myth of the moon-goddess Cynthia (Diana) in love with a mortal (Endymion),

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who in his turn is in search for an immortal goddess of whom he had dreamt so many times. During his wanderings Endymion falls in love with an Indian maid out of his sensual passion for her in what seems to be a betrayal of his pursuit of the heavenly ideal. But the matter is resolved when she reveals her true identity as Cynthia goddess of the moon, who is the same celestial figure as he dreamt of earlier. Thus the poem, "diffuse and wayward" as it is, is first an expression of the fundamental opposition between the pleasures of mortal beauty and those of the immortal and finally of the resolution in the "essences" free from the dross of ordinary experience.

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*Endymion* is a process, rather than a finished product, in which the poet attempts to work out his still half-realized impulses and ideals in a somewhat confused state of mind. It was written and revised from April to November 1817 and was published as a separate volume the following year. Keats viewed the poem as a "test, a trial" of his powers of imagination and invention: "a long poem is a test of invention which I take to be the polar star of poetry, as fancy is the sail, and imagination the rudder. Did our great poets ever write short pieces?" As such he saw the poem as an "endeavour" rather than "a thing accomplished." Like Shelley's *Alastor* (1816), which expresses his early visionary ideals and which Keats knew as what Bate says to be a "sort of anti-model," Keats' long narrative can be read as an allegory, with a neoplatonic touch, "a parable of the poetic soul in man," in the words of Colvin, "seeking communion with the spirit of essential beauty in the world."

The Platonic idealism of Keats' parable, as pointed out by Bush, is that "the way to the One lies through loving

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apprehension of the Many." This is borne out in a key passage of *Endymion* (I:769-857) where Keats expresses his idea of what he called "the gradations of happiness… like a kind of Pleasure Thermometer."[19] The first gradation is marked by a physical or sensual enjoyment of the objects of nature, followed by an aesthetic taste for works of art such as music and poetry (II. 781-97); the next higher level is "love and friendship" (II. 801-05) and then passionate love and sexual union (II. 805-842), which makes man's mortal being immortal (II. 844). This is a "self-destroying"(1.799) process involving a "loss of personal identity through our imaginative identification with a beloved person outside ourselves," which enables us to "escape from the material limits and the self-centered condition of ordinary experience, to achieve a 'fellowship with essence,' which is a kind of immortality within our mortal existence."[20] Among other things the poem explores the idea of the connection between suffering and creativity, especially in its "Cave of Quietude" passage (IV.512-48) with Murry interpreting the "Cave" as "a state of profound content, beyond sorrow and joy."[21]

Keats' poetry continues to be a probe into the deeper aspects of mortal existence including the mystery of life and death and the importance of friendship and community in life. Both pleasant fancies and unpleasant realities qualifying each other find their way into his poetry, thematizing mortality in the particular and the universal in the minute. His letters constitute "his ceaseless effort to assimilate his enlarging experience[and] his sharpening sense of suffering humanity…. into his theory and program of poetry."[22]

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In "Ego Dominus Tuus," W.B. Yeats describes Keats' poetry as a "luxuriant song". Yeats' adjectival phrase attempts to capture the sense of the richness and intensity of Keats' poetry, which is, in the first place, an expression of sensuous experience indeed demonstrating the poet's love of nature, power of observation and visual memory. His early verse is strong in luxurious and fanciful sensuousness with the particular and the minute in focus. Without denying or undermining the allegorical meaning of this work, Bush claims that the poet's "sensuous response to the actual and concrete" is more real than his "metaphysical notion of unity or reality." His conception of "Beauty" with which *Endymion* begins ("A thing of beauty is a joy for ever...") works itself out in terms of "particular beauties, natural and erotic." The final Platonic identification of Cynthia with the Indian maid, Bush points out, takes place at the conceptual level only, thus having "far less authenticity than Endymion's moods of disillusionment in his quest of the Ideal." Similarly, the strength of the "Hymn to Pan" lies in its romantic particulars embellishing the episodes of love and revivals, not in its feeling for "the One or the All".

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However, it may be said that Keats' early work is without much of an intellectual scheme or structural control, letting one train of images follow another with no particular plan of sequence. Occasionally it drops into banal and commonplace expressions resulting from "a deliberately cultivated slackness of manner." Consequently, there is no masterly expression of sentiment or deftness of control. Keats is so attracted to the external physical world that there is an excess of natural description, which results in mere ornamentation or decorative illustration. Many of the poems are diffuse lapsing into description after description and

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lacking in life and motion. Most of the time observations made are not really functional or dynamic but are marred by elements of obscurity, affectation and haste. Long ago Bate said that Keats' was an adjectival and adverbial style influenced by Hunt and consisting of mostly y-ending words: for example, *bloomy*, *balmy*, *rosy*, *milky*, *lawny*, *sphery*, *silvery*, *pillowy* and *nervy*, *lingeringly*, *coolingly*, *dyingly* and *beamily*.[23] He also found that Keats had a predilection for abstract nouns that had little intellectual content – *languishment*, *ravishment*, *designment*, *freshness*, *leafiness*, *dewiness*, *deliciousness*, *flutterings* and *smotherings*. Keats expresses his sensuous experience through this peculiar use of abstractions but not very successfully. There is too much of the states of melting, dreaming, sleeping, soaring, fainting, pining and aching, which suggests an intensity of emotion and sensation but in a rather preliminary and immature manner. Another thing that makes his early poems seem loose and mechanical is his use of plenty of conjunctions. This connective or associative manner makes one thing figure another making the poet move on and move away from the direct subject. His use of run-on lines and rhyming couplets has its disadvantages adding to slackness of manner. There are also some weak inversions used to get his rhyme: for instance, "plumage bright" and "golden scales light".

Nevertheless, in spite of all the problems of early apprenticeship, there are times when the details are rendered concrete and the poet achieves a great concentration. Here are a few more examples from Keats' early poetry illustrating his sensuous instincts that render the details vivid and pictorial:

> *'Mongst boughs pavillioned, where the deer's swift leap*
> *Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.*
>
> *(O Solitude)*

Or,

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*On a lone winter evening, when the frost*
*Has wrougth a silence,...* ("*On the Grasshopper*
*and Cricket*)

Or,

*ever startled by the leap/Of buds into ripe flowers...*
(*I stood*)

These fairly condensed expressions anticipate the still greater concentration of later poems. The reviewer in *Edinburgh and Scots Magazine*, earlier, singled out *O Solitude* and *Long in City Pent*, praising that they rose to the "simple poetry of the heart," expressing the poet's love of nature "so touchingly." There are many passages that are touched with exquisite perception of the objects of nature. Apart from being a record of the external spectacle of life, they are an expression of nature's "gentle doings". Keats' attitude to nature is such that he loves nature for its own sake and does not moralize on its manifestations or provide keen insights into it as the other Romantics do.

Keats' feeling for nature is simpler, more direct and more genuine than that of some others. Blake, the most urban of English Romantic poets, uses nature as a backdrop for his social and humane concerns. Wordsworth interprets the operations of nature from a didactic and ethical point of view. Coleridge's greatness lies in his power of naturalizing the supernatural. Byron is interested in the wild and stormy aspects of nature. For Shelley, nature is symbolic so that its visible glories are the garb of the unseen glow of his revolutionary and remote spirit. Keats, on his part, demonstrates a tremendous yearning for the ability to feel. He lays much stress on the importance of intense feeling as an index

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to the authenticity of an experience. Many of his early poems, for instance, the sonnets on Chapman's *Homer*, the Elgin Marbles and Leigh Hunt, originate from the effect of a work of art on imagination or from the thrill caused by a particular occasion in real life. These poems celebrate the value of wonderful discovery with the word "wonder" itself being repeatedly used.

*So do these wonders a most dizzy pain...*
*(On Seeing the Elgin Marbles)*

*Many the wonders I this day have seen...*
*(To My Brother George)*

But the sense of wonder seems to be deeper and more genuine in *Chapman's Homer*, whose original version contained the phrase "wond'ring eyes," to be shortly replaced with "eagle eyes." The sonnet is the product of a great joy at the discovery of the beauty of the Homeric world—a wonderful joy that is compared with that of a sailor (Cortez or Balboa) who first discovered the Pacific Ocean or of an astronomer at the discovery of a new planet after a long watch.[24]

The story of what is Keats' first great sonnet (*Chapman's Homer*) coming into being is this: late into an October night in 1816, Keats and Clarke, both fond of the Elizabethans, were absorbed in reading the 1616 folio edition of Chapman's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Keats was particularly struck with the magnificent conception of the shipwreck of Ulysses in the fifth book. As he was walking back at dawn to where he was residing as a medical student at Guy's Hospital, about two miles from

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Clarke's, he probably composed part of the sonnet, finished it as soon as he arrived at his place and, by ten o'clock in the morning, sent it off, along with a letter, to Clarke, who was not only surprised to see Keats' letter so soon after they had parted but was also amazed to read the sonnet. It was Leigh Hunt who first drew critical attention to its unquestionable merit along with its certain defects when he first published it by quoting it in full in his article called "Young Poets," published in his *Examiner* on December 1st. The article was actually the first public recognition of Keats, in which Hunt pointed out the incorrect rhyme of "demesne" of the sixth line and "mean" of the following original line, "Yet could I never tell what men could mean" Keats changed the line to the much-improved "Yet did I never breathe its pure serene" to rhyme well.[25]

Clearly Keats' wonder is the outcome of natural sights and sounds and the works of art he has encountered, a wonder common to all Romantics, of whom Blake and Wordsworth additionally celebrate the wonder and delight of the child's world as well. Like the other Romantic poets, Keats believes in the power of imagination, a vital creative faculty that distinguishes between the Romantics and the neo-classicists. He believes that the imagination can raise the poet above reason and can make him transcend human limitations. The sonnet on Chapman's *Homer* bears witness to this transforming power of creative imagination. Keats believes that the poetic imagination is an instrument of knowledge, which can endow the facts of the natural world with life and meaning. As he says in a letter, he is "certain of nothing but of the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination. What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth."[26] The visions

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of the poet can convey a truer picture of reality than that obtained by consecutive logical reasoning. The summer pleasures of the grasshopper and the cricket are rendered fresh and charming in the poem named after those cheerful creatures that begins with an imaginative glorification of "the poetry of earth".

Like all the other great Romantics, Keats demonstrates a clear devotion to poetry and nature recognizing their mutual affinity. The main argument of *I stood* is that nature is the true inspiration of poetry. A great advance in effort and understanding is registered in *Sleep and Poetry*, in which poetry implies not pleasurable indulgence but passionate struggle for truth as it images itself in beauty. Poetry is not merely a pleasing embroidery on reality but an interpretation of the spiritual truth behind the phenomenal world. Keats frequently associates classical art and myth with poetry and nature. For him, myth is partly an embodiment of truth and beauty in nature and partly an ideal version of human experience. The god Apollo remains a symbol of vital reality with him. In *O Solitude* and *Long in City Pent*, pleasures of nature are joined with those of art. The poet turns away from "the jumbled heap/Of murky building" to "Nature's observatory". The Elgin Marbles and their grandeur bring home to him the heavy weight of mortality; yet they, along with the sea, become symbols of an inspiring beauty and greatness. The octave of "How many bards gild the lapses of time" rehearses the pleasures of reading and writing poetry, the sestet those of quiet evening nature.

Keats was greatly influenced by the world of classical mythology and classical writers, the Elizabethans, and his contemporary English Romantic poets. His early familiarity with

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classical mythology is demonstrated, among scores of references to Apollo, by the three poems connected with that god of the sun and poetry (two odes and one song), and his uses of Pan, Diana (also called Cynthia or Phoebe), Endymion, Psyche, Cupid, Hero and Leander, Orphus, Bachus, and Hyperion among a host of other classical myths."[27] The plenty of direct or indirect references to the literary works, both ancient and contemporary, that Keats had read or heard of gives the readers the impression that his poems were written out of his knowledge of those works and their authors. *Chapman's Homer*, *To Homer* and the hymn to Pan (in *Endymion*) as far as it was influenced by his favourite Chapman's Homeric hymns, again are good examples. Virgil's *Aeneid* was such a favourite that Keats started translating it into English in prose. *Endymion* with its numerous classical and pastoral elements is the result of his readings in the Elizabethans (such as George Sand's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* Drayton's *Man in the Moon* and *Endymion and Phoebe,* Lyly's *Endimion*), John Potter's *Antiquities of Greece* (1697), Andrew Tooke's *Pantheon* (1698), Joseph Spence's *Polymetis: or an Enquiry Concerning the Agreement Between the works of the Roman Poets and the Remains of the Ancient Artists...(1747),* John Lempriere's *Bibliotherca Classica: or, A Classical Dictionary (1768)* Wieland's *Oberon* (1780, Sotheby's English translation 1798), Mary Tighe's *Psyche (1805),* Southey's *Curse of Kehama* (1810), Shelley's *Alastor* (1816), and the exotic *Arabian Nights,* among other contemporary narrative poems and tales. The thought of the formative and profound influences of the past masters like Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Chapman, Shakespeare, Milton and Dryden leaves a strong hold on his imagination and proves to be encouraging. Apart from Homer, Anacreon, and Ovid in English

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translation, Spenser was the early major influence either through *The Faerie Queene* and "Epithalamion" or through the 18th century Spenserians like Thomson, Beatttie and Mary Tighe, who were also influenced by Milton as well. In fact, the first poem Keats wrote, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, was the descriptive "Imitation of Spenser," using Spenserian lakes and isles and stanza-form. The poem was actually an imitation of the Spenser imitated by the above less–mentioned Spenserians, However, according to Clarke, he went through *The Faerie Queene* "at a young horse through a spring meadow—ramping." According to Brown, "it was *The Faery Queene* that awakened his genius." The extent of the influence of Spenser is further demonstrated by "Calidore," "Sonnet to Spenser," "Specimen of an Induction to a Poem" henceforth *Induction to a Poem*) and *Endymion* all of which attempt to capture the spirit of Spenser in terms of stylistic, allegorical and romance elements. Apart from a host of Spenserian references of various kinds, Keats uses Spenserian vowels, six-syllable lines, and nine-line Spenserian stanzas, including Alexandrines especially in "The Eve of St. Agnes," his first complete success in sustained narrative. Characters from Spenser such as Sir Calidore, Queen Una and the Red Cross Knight, the Knight of Courtesy, the warrior heroine Britomartis representing Chastity and purity, and the magician Archimago are mentioned more than once in his early poetry. The details of Keats' Bower of Adonis in *Endymion* (II: II 389-427) are taken from the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis in *The Faerie Queene* (II.xii & III.vi respectively).

Although Shakespeare was the most pervasive influence, he, however, did not deeply flavour Keats' early verse, which,

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nonetheless, refers many times to *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Cymbeline*, and *Hamlet*. "On the Sea," based on a passage in *King Lear*, and *King Lear Once Again* show the lasting influence of that Shakespearean play on Keats, who also knew Hazlitt's essay on Lear in *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. As Dorothy Hewlett says, "a deepening of the human spirit within him… had made him turn from Shakespeare's fairy-tale comedies to *King Lear* and other tragedies."[28] Shakespeare became the presiding genius over him since he had started writing *Endymion* whose motto was taken from Shakespeare's Sonnet 17. As underscored in the "Negative Capability" letter mentioned earlier, his ultimate ideal was Shakespeare and the Shakespearean drama.

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The influence of the "fair-hair'd" Milton, as he is called in the sonnet "Keen, fitful gusts are whispering here and there" (henceforth *Keen, fitful gusts*) with his "tuneful thunders" ("Ode to Apollo") came mainly through *Paradise Lost*, which Keats was reading when he was staying with Bailey at Magdalen Hall, Oxford in September 1817 and was writing *Endymion* (Bk.III). The allusive style of *Endymion* with its wealth of mythological, biblical, historical and literary references, its phrasing and syntax such as "behemoth… leviathan" (III,134), inversions, description of dead lovers lying like Satan's host (III,728-44) and invocation at the beginning of Book IV reflect his recent reading of Milton's epic. The critic reviewing the first volume in *Edinburgh and Scots Magazine* singled out the sonnet to Haydon, "Highmindedness, a Jealousy for good" (henceforth *Highmindedness*), for its Miltonic moral energy concerning the "zest of the pathos of genius." Words and expressions such as *Urania, Lydian airs, Dedalian*

*wings*, *daedal*, *adamantine*, *debonair*, *diadems*, *amazement*, *incense* and *cerulean* have their sources either in Milton or Spenser. Keats' struggle with the Miltonic epic form and style comes to a crucial dead-end in the Hyperion fragments towards the end of his career when he found out that he was too much under the spell of Milton and that he had to give up the Miltonic verse in order to be independently able to find his own true voice. "Milton's Hair," written extemporaneously early in 1818 at the suggestion of Hunt, who had just acquired the lock for his collection, consists of a credo, as do many other poems, expressing the poet's new commitment to a conception of poetry exemplified by Shakespeare and Milton—a conception suggesting a deep philosophic insight and a long experience in poetic practice.

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However, the powerful influence of the great writers of the past, instead of making him limited or overshadowing him, proved to be a liberating force. It enabled him to free his energy and aspirations. He had the integrity not to take over images and expression from other poets. His language is not as imitative as it is reproductive of a language which the earlier poets held in common. The passage from *King Lear*, "Do you not hear the sea?" may have led to the sonnet "On the Sea," but it is just a matter of poetic inspiration where the poet is able to transmute the borrowed material into his own idiom and preserve his imaginative wholeness and originality. The same thing is particularly true of *Chapman's Homer* with its masterful combination of form and style, foreshadowing the greater poetry lying ahead. Whatever economy and condensation Keats achieves in his early poetry is mostly in the form of isolated phrases like "fair veins in sable marble," "Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call," and "Venus looking

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sideways in alarm". However, in *Chapman's Homer* the mastery of phrase and pictorial and metaphorical exactness are sustained throughout so that the transition from the octave to the sestet is skillfully managed. The same is true in "On the Grasshopper and Cricket." Both sonnets are, in their own way, self-contained, neat and compact, with no incongruity or didacticism in them. Another poem of Keats' early career, "How many Bards," deals directly with the matter of what Bloom calls the "embarrassments of poetic tradition" or more well-known "Anxiety of Influence" and Bate, "The Burden of the past."

The style of *O Solitude* suggests the short-lived influence of George Felton Mathew, who attempted to write poetry himself, had a taste for sentimental poeticizing, and liked the jingling quatrains of Thomas Moore. Mathew occupied an important place as a friend and admirer of Keats in 1815. As suggested in the verse letter "Felton Mathew," the first of its kind in Keats and probably written as a reply to a complimentary poem by Mathew, they read and explored together.[29] While the couplet form of the epistle suggests the influence of William Browne, from whose *Britannia's Pastorals* Keats took its prefacing motto, its general style is in accord with that of Mathew's poem. Both friends alluded to the German poet Wieland's *Oberon,* which with its powerful demonic atmosphere highly influenced the whole Romantic Movement.[30]

Keats soon moved on to make friends with those, especially Hunt and Benjamin Robert Haydon, who were of "a finer mental caliber and more congenial views" than the Mathew of sentimentalist taste. He remained very friendly and sociable

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with his contemporary artist-patrons, whose influence can be easily noticed in his poetry. Even though Hunt's romantic narrative in heroic couplets, *The Story of Rimini,* appeared in February 1816, well before they had even met sometime in October, it was an instant influence on Keats, who not just made many references to it in his early poetry (for instance, *Long in City Pent*) but attempted to imitate its meter, diction and other conceptual aspects in poems such as "Induction to a Poem" and "Calidore." However, while Hunt was mainly narrative, Keats' strength lay in being descriptive. It has already been mentioned that Keats had a liking for participal nouns ending in "-ness," verb- or noun-derived adjectives ending in "-y", adverbs made from participles, the word "so" as a way of appealing to the reader, and the use of verbs as nouns. All these stylistic elements had their origin in *Rimini*. He not only prefaced *I stood* with a quotation from Hunt's poem but impregnated it with a large dose of Huntian elements. While an examination of the earlier manuscript fragments of *I stood* provides evidence of Keats eliminating some "Huntisms," the poem remains, as Barnard claims, his most Huntian.[31] Both the idiom and the loose flowing couplet of *Rimini* strongly influenced *Endymion.*

Keats celebrates his friendship with Hunt in *Keen, fitful gusts* composed during a lonely five-mile night walk back home in London after a visit to Hunt in Hempstead sometime around October/November, when probably both came to know each other personally for the first time. He says:

*For I am brimful of the friendliness*
*That in a little cottage I have found;*

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*Sleep and Poetry* was largely composed, as some other poems were, in Hunt's Hempstead cottage, its last part giving an inventory of the art garniture of Hunt's library, which included, among other things, a bust of the famous Polish patriot Kosciusko and a portrait of Petrarch and Laura, both of which came to Keats' close notice to the point of being frequently alluded to in his poetry. He dedicated his first volume to Hunt, having composed the dedication sonnet extempore.

As mentioned earlier in reference to *Chapman's Homer* from the beginning the liberal Hunt recognized the merit of Keats' work and published many of his poems in his rebel *The Examiner*, copies of which he used to get from Clarke. In early 1815, at the age of twenty-seven, Hunt had just finished a two-year sentence for his liberal views libelling the Prince Regent. Upon hearing the news of his release on 2 February, Keats wrote the sonnet, "Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison. "Even the earlier "On Peace," an irregular Shakespearean sonnet written to celebrate the peace that followed the defeat of Napoleon, shows the influence of Hunt's editorials in *The Examiner*. A number of sonnets were composed in occasional quarter-of-an-hour extemporaneous competitions between Keats and Hunt. Apart from "On the Grasshopper and Cricket," mentioned earlier, such results include "On Receiving a Laurel Crown From Leigh Hunt" and "On Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair." A similar competition which made Keats produce "To the Nile" involved Shelley also.[32] In each case it was Hunt who had proposed the subject.

Keats is the most social of all Romantic poets. A charming personality, he cared much for his family and friends to whom be

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addresses many of his poems and writes many of his letters, full of warmth and affectionate concern without any affectation. Being the eldest child in the family he felt his responsibility, as expressed in "To Hope." He was an orphan tenderly attached to his grandmother and wrote two poems ("As from the darkening gloom a silver dove" and "Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream") upon her death. From early on he was conscious of his dismal feelings of loneliness and, therefore, he warmly appreciated the value of human society making friends, first and foremost, with his own two brothers, George and Tom. Besides the verse epistle *Brother George*, mentioned earlier, the sonnet "To My Brother George" closes with the following lines:

> *But what, without the social thought of thee,*
> *Would be the wonder of the sky and sea?*

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Soon he made friends with many others such as Mary Frogley, Charles Wells, Georgiana Augusta Wylie, Mathew and his cousin sisters, John Hamilton Reynolds and his sisters, Isabella Jones, Clarke, and Charles Brown, not to speak of Haydon and Hunt, all of whom left a permanent impression on him just as he did on them. He wrote a few valentines associated with Frogley, who was a cousin of Richard Woodhouse and who is pictured as Spenser's chaste Britomartis in those valentines. Two of them are "To [Mary Frogley], written for his brother George to send to her, and "To—('Had I a man's fair form')," which is also a Petrarchan sonnet, expressing his sensitivity about his small height.[33] He wrote a number of poems associated with Mathew and his cousin sisters. Apart from *Felton Mathew*, mentioned earlier, they include "To some Ladies" (in anapaestic meter), "On Receiving a Curious

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Shell and a Copy of Verses, from the Same Ladies," "To Emma," Song ('Stay, ruby-breasted warbler, stay') and *Woman! When I behold*. The artistic and structural significance of the last one with respect to its sonnet stanzas has been mentioned earlier.

There is another group of poems associated with the unknown woman he briefly saw in the summer of 1814 at Vauxhall Gardens: "Fill for me a brimming bowl," "When I have fears" and "To—('Time's sea...)." However, while the first, a twenty-line poem in octosyllabic couplets derived from Milton and having a presumably accidental parallel with Byron's "To a Beautiful Quaker," was written in that summer, the last two are sonnets belonging to early 1818, and marking the beginning of Keats' preference for the Shakespearean sonnet form over the Petrachan. Poems like these were influenced by the thought of this or that woman other than the one to whom they are directly addressed, especially when the addressee is not clearly identified. The roses of "To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses," originally titled "To Charles Wells on receiving a bunch of roses," settled a disagreement over a trifle between Keats and Wells, a minor writer and friend of Tom.

"To Charles Cowden Clarke" (henceforth *Cowden Clarke*), written in early September, 1816, is the last and best of Keats three verse epistles, which are poems about poetry. Clarke, the son of his school headmaster at Enfield, was a pianist, who introduced him to Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberated* and who had early encouraged his interests in poetry, music and liberal politics. In paying tribute to Clarke, Keats says that it was Clarke who acquainted him with the stylistic beauties of Spenser, Chapman's

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*Homer*, and Milton and those of the ode, sonnet and epigram. Keats wrote three poems addressed to Haydon, who was an important influence on Keats and who tried to free him from the influence ofHunt in matters of style. Haydon was a historical painter and a friend of Wordsworth, Reynolds and Hunt. From 1812 he had carried out a vigorous war, through *The Examiner* and the *Annals of the Fine Arts,* with the Academy over the marble works brought from the Panthenon by Lord Elgin in 1803, and offered for sale to the nation in 1811. The Government finally agreed to buy the Marbles early in 1816. Later the same year Keats wrote *Highmindedness* and "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning ,"both addressed to Haydon. Early next year he visited the British Museum with Haydon to see the Marbles, following which he wrote what Haydon called "two noble sonnets": "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" and "To B.R. Haydon," both expressing the poet's awareness of the grandeur and magnitude of the world of art as represented by both Haydon and the ancient Greek artists, which his youthful and weak spirit had yet to reach.

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Keats wrote about half a score of poems, most of them in 1817, associated with the Reynolds family whom he met earlier the previous year. The poems were written sometimes to acknowledge gifts and sometimes to express emotions ranging from eager anticipation to tender farewell, from remorse to reproaches for coldness. There is a possibility that some of them, for instance, "Stanzas('You say you love'), are connected with Isabella Jones, whom he met about mid-1817. He continued his relationship with the Reynolds sisters until Fanny Brawne appeared on the scene. The theme of friendship continues with the last poem in the first volume. After a forecast of the poet's own

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development, *Sleep and Poetry* dwells on the stirring and ennobling pleasures of friendship:

> *I turn full-hearted to the friendly aids*
> *That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood*
> *And friendliness, the nurse of mutual good.*
> *(II.317-19)*

In the next major poem *Endymion* Keats has this to say:

> *But there are*
> *Richer entanglements, enthrallment far*
> *More self-destroying leading by degrees*
> *To the chief intensity: the crown of these*
> *Is made of love and friendship, and sits high*
> *Upon the forehead of humanity,*
> (*I:II.*797-802)

Politically, Keats was liberal-minded. His political liberalism preceded and was confirmed by his friendship with men like Hunt (repeatedly referred to as "Libertas" as in *Induction to a Poem*, *Brother George*, *Cowden Clarke*), and Hazlitt. It was also demonstrated by his admiration for patriotic national heroes of the past, for example, the legendary Brutus (regarded to have founded Britain), King Alfred of Britain, William Tell (believed to have liberated the Swiss from the Austrian tyranny) and the Scottish William Wallace, as mentioned in *Felton Mathew*, *Cowden Clarke*, and *Sleep and Poetry*. As mentioned earlier, the sonnet. "On Peace" was written to celebrate the end of the war with France, with Napoleon exiled to Elba. "Lines Written on 29 May,

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the Anniversary of the Restoration of Charles the 2nd" follows Napoleon's escape from Elba, suggesting Keats' liberal stance with regard to May 29 commemoration of Charles II's restoration and the huge crowds greeting Louis XVIII seeking asylum in England. Keats, for whom legitimacy alone was not sufficient, did not approve of either reaction. In the poem he speaks favorably of the Whig heroes Algernon Sidney, Lord William Russell, and Sir Henry Vane, who were all executed for treason against Charles II, the first two in 1683 and the last in 1662. Tadeusz Kosciusko of "To Kosciusko" was a Polish patriot who fought against Russia in 1792 and in the United States War of Independence and died a hero of English liberals in 1817. "Nebuchadnezzar's Dream," composed probably towards the end of 1817 and based on *Daniel* ii-iv, is a political satire upon the repressive measures taken by the Tory government of the time to silence its critics. According to the biblical account, Nebuchadnezzar erects an image of gold and suffers from nightmares, which Daniel interprets as foretelling the overthrow of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. In the sonnet Nebuchadnezzar probably represents George III and the "valiant crew" of "loggerheads and chapmen" the members of the Tory government, who were afraid that their rule by force might soon come to an end in the face of popular revolt. By their "lying lips" they engage in the subversion of the Constitutional liberties they are supposed to defend. But their days are numbered because they will be defeated by the voice of truth represented by Daniel, who probably stands for William Hone, who had attacked the government in a number of parodies and who was tried for blasphemous and seditious writings in December. Hone's acquittal following his defense on the basis of his argument that the employment of biblical parallel in political satire was nothing new

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came as a liberal triumph to Keats and his circle who followed the trial with interest. Keats again attacks the Tory government and other reactionary regimes in *Endymion* (III:1-21) using the images of the downfall of Babylon to foreshadow the end of Tory tyranny in II, 18-21. In keeping with his politically liberal views, Keats expresses his unorthodox religious attitudes in "Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition," written in December of 1816.

Following Keats' Elgin Marbles and Grecian Urn poems critics pointed out the influence on Keats of works of art other than literary. He strongly reacted to the music of Mozart and Thomas Erne, referred to in *Cowden Clarke* and the pastoral and mythological elements of the paintings of Poussin, Titian, Rubens, Claude Lorrain, and Salvator Rosa. Keats saw Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* exhibited in London 1816, which left an influence on his details in the portrayal of Bacchus' triumphal progress in *Endymion* (IV, 193-272). His description in *Endymion* (I,107-13) draws upon Titian's *The Worship of Venus* and Rubens's *Sacrifice to Venus* or the *Feast of Venus*. He knew Poussin's *Bachanalian Revel Before a Team of Pan, Landscape with Narcissus and Echo, Landscape with Orion, The Realm of Flora*, and *The Triumph of Venus and Amphitrite*, which are all full of Arcadian scenes and whose influence can be noticed in *Endymion* (II. 392-411; III 862-5, 943-90). Among other works of art, mention may be made of Claude's *The Enchanted Castle* and Rosa's *Glaucus* and *Scylla*, which had a great influence on him.[34]

Keats was highly influenced by his great elder contemporaries, especially Wordsworth whose influence has been

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briefly noted earlier in the essay. In his first published poem, *O Solitude* (1.8, 'wild bee from the fox-glove bell')' Keats echoes Wordsworth "Nuns fret Not" (II.5-7 ).It is likely, as De Selincourt suggests, that Keats borrows the title name of "To Emma " from Wordsworth, who had used the name to address his sister Dorothy.[35] He quotes the phrase "Singleness of aim" in *Highmindedness* from Wordsworth's "Character of the Happy Warrior" as he does many other Wordsworthian expressions such as "the burden of mystery" (from *Tintern Abbey)* and "the philosophic Mind" (from the *Immortality Ode* ) in his letters to Reynolds and Bailey respectively. In the letter to Reynolds, Keats distinguishes between Milton and Wordsworth as great geniuses of epic depth, and testifies to the latter's best representation, among his contemporaries, of human misery. As mentioned above, his conception of the origin of myth derives primarily from his enthusiastic reading of Wordsworth's *The Excursion,* although ironically, Wordsworth described Keats' *Hymn to Pan* (Pan being the god of universal nature) as " a very pretty piece of paganism." "for Keats as for Hunt, myth is partly a Wordsworthian revelation of truth and beauty in nature, partly an ideal version of human experience ( which was Wordsworthian too),"[36] Wordsworth's frequently referred to Hevellyn and Skiddaw, two of the Lake District mountains immortalized by him, appear in Keats' Address to Haydon ('Great spirits...')" and *Endymion* (IV: 1. 394) respectively. One of the spirits alluded to in "Great spirits are now sojourning" is Wordsworth. However, Keats later grew deeply critical of what he described as Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime." Keats was aware of Byron's popularity. One of his early poems, "To Lord Byron," written at the age of nineteen, is probably his first sonnet, in Petrarchan style. Typical of the plaintive or elegiac

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sonnet, which was the fashion of the time, it expresses his admiration for Byron's poetry and his sympathy for Byron's grief. He was also fond of Thomas Moore and Mary Tighe, among his other contemporaries.

Although Keats drew inspiration from the great English poets of the past as well as his time, his acute self-consciousness made him congenial to modern sensibility. He was conscious of his own developing powers, tempered by self-criticism. From the beginning he was aspiring after fame and immortality. As he evolved into a self-consciously disciplined artist, he delved deep into the mystery of human nature. Both the theme and the craft came under his close scrutiny in his letters in which he delivered his observation on life and art without any intellectual pretension. No doubt a brilliant artist in the language, who was to emerge, after trying several styles, as the most form-conscious of all the Romantic poets, Keats also thought deeply and freshly about life and its problems. He had a deep insight into the tragic aspect of life— its cruelty and destructiveness. Thus, the "miseries of the world" or the "great agony of the world" form a familiar Keatsian theme. The philosopher, the moralist and the poet-artist wrestle with each other in him only to let the last emerge triumphant.

Keats does not start out with a clear-cut set of convictions nor does he achieve a settled and unified creed in his full maturity. He remains continually divided against himself. We notice his divided self from the beginning. Though often he tends to dwell on the delights of the senses in love, drink, and natural beauty, the conflicting tendencies in his mind begin to express themselves in terms of the opposition between the immediate physical and the

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remote ideal, the fondness for sensuous luxuries of nature and a longing for ecstatic flight into purer element beyond sense, the self-indulgent aspect and the self-denying struggle towards higher achievement. Similarly, there is a tension between the moods of indolence or living fully and intensely for the moment and ambitious programs of study and creative activity, between wake and dream, imagination and reality, mortality and immortality. There is again a contrast in his acceptance of earthly pain and sufferings as unavoidable and even valuable and his inability to refrain from testing the possibilities of escape.

All these conflicts find an expression in *I stood* and *Sleep and Poetry,* which are important in the sense that together they not only document Keats' early views of nature, art, poetry, myth and reality but also disclose fully the dualities between his opposed instincts and ambitions. The latter grows out of the creative tension between a passive and relaxed acceptance of life, imaged as a gentle and productive slumber or a soothing dream, and an active involvement in life. There is a split between the love of the intoxicating earthly pleasures to the point of wishing to "die a death/ of luxury" and that of the winning of immortality by seizing, like a strong giant "the events of this wide world." As such, *Sleep and Poetry* explores "the baffling relation of dreams to insight, of wishful fantasies and illusions to imaginative truth of the life of actuality and humane action to the contemplative vision of the poet, [who] had worked these matters into his poetic program" detailed in the poem.[37] Repeating and widening a similar pattern in the poems that followed, including *Endymion* and a number of his later odes, Keats continued to use the dream vision mode to his last moment when in *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream* he not

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only examines the nature of escapist dreams but returns to his interest in Apollo by treating the subject of the deification of Apollo in an epic fashion.

Keats' early verse, in spite of its little selectivity of subject and many structural and procedural flaws, is important and interesting in consideration of how he gradually unfolds, with sure signs of success and perfection, into a mature artist. It shows his own continuing preoccupation with the theme of evolutionary development of the artist. From the beginning there is a tremendous desperation on his part to try to attain some permanent intensity and to impose a disciplined control over art. The rudiments of all the major themes of his poetry—his attitude to nature, his adoration of beauty, imaginative quest for truth, attempt to transcend the limitations of the self, exploration of the permanence of art and transitoriness of human lot—are there in his early poetry. It contains not only the romantic Keats of sensuous luxury but the deeply thoughtful, philosophic Keats too.

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## REFERENCES

1. *Keats: The Complete Poems,* ed. Miriam Allott, Longman Annotated English Poets Series , 1970, p.45. As critics have pointed out, it has echoes of Milton and Coleridge: see" As one who long in populous city pent" (*Paradise Lost* IX,445), "How many bards in city garret pent" (*To the Nightingale.2)* and "In the great City pent" (This lime-tree bower my Prison).

2. "For the results of such a contest, see below. "This pleasant tale" was written on a blank space at the end of Chaucer's *Tale of the Flower and the Leaf,* in Cowden Clarke's copy of *The Poetical Works of Chaucer (1780),* which Keats

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found beside the sleeping Clarke on a sofa one day in his home and which is now in the British Museum. The tale from which Keats quotes for the motto of *Sieep and Poetry* is no longer attributed to Chaucer."

3. "To Leigh Hunt" was composed as a dedication sonnet the moment he received one evening "in the buzz of a mixed conversation" the last proofs of his first volume. The epistle which begins with casual matters but ends up highly reflective was written in March 1818, as part of a personal letter.

4. The Aeolian lyre is that stringed wind-harp which, hung, vibrates to make a musical sound in contact with the currents of the blowing wind. It was invented in the seventeenth century and re-invented in the early 1740s. Keats refers to it in "Ode to Apollo" and *Endymion* ("Aeolian magic,"1.786, "Aeolian-tuned,"II.866,"Aeolian twang,"III. 973). For a discussion, see G. Grigson's *The Harp of Aeolus*, 1947. For references to Apollo, see the verse epistle "To My Brother George"('golden lyre,'1.12); *Endymion* ("golden lyre," IV. 702; "Thy lute-voiced brother," IV. 774); *Sleep and Poetry* ("Lyrist, "1.202); *Chapman's Homer* ("Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold"), let alone the later *Hyperion* fragments.

5. Douglas Bush, "Keats and His Ideas, " *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M.H.Abrams, OUP, 1968, p.328.

6. The six-line verse beginning with "Give me women, write, and snuff" is an example of Keats' doggerel rhyme. :Lines Rhymed in a Letter... From Oxford" is a loose parody of what Keats calls Wordsworth's style of school exercises," for instance, "The lake doth glitter/Small birds twitter" in "Written in March while Resting on the Bridge at the Foot of

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Brother's Water."

7. The other passages Shelley praised are *Endymion* (II:833ff, and III: 113-20 &193ff.). See *Keats*: The *Critical Heritage*, ed. G.M. Mathews, 1971, p.124.

8. *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu, Blackwell, 1994,p. 108.

9. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2, 6th ed, 1993, p.830-31. Henceforth *Norton.*

10. Apart from his fabrication of a number of pseudoarchaic poems of the first order, which he fraudulently attributed to Thomas Rowley an imaginary 15th century poet, Chatterton wrote a successful burlesque opera, *The Revenge.*

11. See *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard, Pengiun, 1979, p.629. Henceforth *Keats.*

12. *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, ed. H.E.Rollins (1958), Vol. II, p.212.(henceforth, *Letters).* For Chatterton's influence on Keat, see R. Gittings, *The Mask of Keats,* 1956.

13. David Perkins (ed.), *English Romantic Writers,* Harcourt Brace,1995,p.1198.

14. Letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818: *Norton, p.*835.

15. Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22: Nov. 1817: *Norton,* p. 829.

16. *Norton*, p. 770

17. Quoted from Ernest de Selincourt ( *The Poems of John Keats, 1926 )* in *Keats*, p.553.

18. Letter on the subject of the poet having no identity to Richard Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818: *Norton,* p. 836.

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19. Letter to his publisher John Taylor, 30, January 1818: *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 218-19.

20.. *Norton, p. 773n.* For the meaning of "fellowship with essence," see *Keats,p.568*

21. J.M.Murry, *The Mystery of Keats (*1949), pp.118-50.

22. *Norton,* p.815

23. W. Jackson Bate,"Keats's Style: Evolution Toward qualities of Permanent Value,"*The Major English Romantic Poets: A Symposium in Reappraisal,* ed. Clarence Thorpe, Carlos Banker, and Bennett Weaver, Southern Illinois University Press, 1957, p.219. Bate argues that Keats' hold over his style continues to be weak and immature through *Isabella,* after which he developed his maturer style.

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24. Keats probably remembers F. William Herschel's recent discovery of the planet Uranus (1781) in John Bonnycastle's *Introduction to Astronomy (1807 edn.),* which he won as a school prize in 1811 and which he might have in mind when referring to "Saturn's ring" in *Cowden Clarke*. The source of Keats's Cortez simile may have been a passage from William Gilbert's *The Hurricane (1796),* quoted by Wordsworth in *The Excursion* (1814), III: 931n., which was one of Keats' most favourite readings. The other source may have been William Robertson's description of the Spanish Balboa as the first discoverer of the Pacific in his *History of America* (1777)1,pp.289-90.

25. For further details, see Charles Cowden Clarke, "Recollections of Writers, "in Perkins (cited above), pp. 1305-06. For a critical analysis of the poem's sources, see J. M. Murry, *Studies in Keats, 1930*, pp. 15-33, and B. Ifor Evans,

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"Keats's Approach to the Chapman Sonnet, "*Essays and Studies of the English Asssociation,* XVI, 1931.

26. Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22, Nov.1817: *Norton*, p. 829.

27. See W.Evert. *Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats (1965)* ; Ian Jack, *Keats and the Mirror of Art* (1967).

28. Dorothy Hewlett, *A Life of John Keats,* London, Hutchinson: 1970, p. 150.

29. Mathew's " To a Poetical Friend" was published in the *European Magazine,* 70(1816). In this connection, see *PMLA XI,* 1930. For Mathew's comments of Keats' epistle, see *The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers* 1816-1879, ed. H.E. Rollins, Vol. II,1965 pp.181, 186-8. Also J.M.Murry, *Studies in Keats, 1930,* pp. 1-6.

30. While Coleridge read the German original, with his *Christabel* and *The Ancient Mariner* showing its strong influence, Keats read Sotheby's translation. See Hewlett, *A Life of John Keats' p. 49,* and Werner W. Beyer, *Keats and the Daemon King.*

31. *Keats, p. 549,*

32. Hunt's titles for his sonnet on the corresponding subjects are "To the Grasshopper and the Cricket," "On a lock of Milton's Hair" and "The Nile," the last, according to the Harvard professor Perkins (cited before), is far superior to those of Keats and Shelley, on which Hunt worked for several hours. See Perkins, p. 786.

33. George married Georgiana Wylie in May 1818 and they emigrated to America the following June. Like "To [Mary

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Frogley]," Keats also probably wrote, on behalf of George, "To G[eorgiana] A[ugusta] W[ylie]," which no doubt betrays his strong affection for his future sister-in-law. George is said to have also used "To Emma," supposed to have been addressed to one of the Mathew sisters, during his courtship of Georgiana with the title name rightly changed. Regarding Keats' concern about his small stature expressed in "To— ('Had I a man's form');" see Stuart M. Sperry, "Richard Woodhouse's Interleaved and Annotated Copy of Keats' Poems (1817)," *Literary Monographs*, Vol. I, ed. E. Rothstein and T.K. Dunseath, 1967, p. 148. For J. Burke Severs's interesting idea that the speaker of the poem is a fairy, see *Keats-Shelley Journal*, VI, 1957, pp. 109-13.

34. For a dicussion of the influence of fine arts on Keats, see Evert; Jack; also S.A. Larrabee, *English Bards and Grecian Marbles* (1943).

35. *The Poems of John Keats,* ed. Ernest de Selincourt (1926), p.563.

36. Bush, p.328.

37. *Norton*, p.815.

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*The Aligarh Journal of English Studies* Vol.22 No.1, pp.-55-67

***Mina Surjit Singh***

# POETIC STRATEGY IN EMILY DICKINSON'S *MY LIFE HAD STOOD—A LOADED GUN –*

There is a word
Which bears a sword
Can pierce an armed man—
Emily Dickinson

If we were to study women's writing from the point of "feminist style" we would notice several recurring traits and arrive at several conclusions about the female mind. As women's experience is different from men's, women often write not only of that difference, that is, their feminine consciousness but also out of their difference of view and standard in a social order in which they are 'alien' or 'other'. Women critics have been particularly concerned with focussing on just where lies that difference, if there is a difference. The rift experienced by women writers in a patriarchal society where: "language itself may re-inscribe the structures by which they are oppressed" (Jacobus 10), is also uncovered by some recurring narrative strategies that are discernable and demonstrable in women's writing which often transgresses the boundaries of womanhood laid down by a patriarchal ideology that inscribes the notion of: "virgin, wife, mother" (Jacobus 10) on to woman and which comes to represent everything a woman is *supposed* to be—sympathetic, charming, utterly unselfish, domestic, self-sacrificing and, above all, *pure* even if this nature is factitious. The tradition of women's writing,

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thus becomes an: "exit from the sacred to the profane"(Jacobus 10). Innocent angelic creatures get metamorphosed into *sinful* adventuresses who in their search for self-knowledge, bring upon themselves unhappiness, loneliness and alienation for having silenced the 'feminine' and sacrificed their ancient consciousness of silent suffering and sensibility, in their attempts to transcend the determinants of gender and culture which are, at bottom, just prisons created by patriarchy to contain women. These women writers, then, no longer suffer in silence but seek to educate themselves about their own true nature/selves, as well as about the lies that have been foisted on them through centuries of historical distortions and control. Since their experience forms the basis of female creativity, it is important for women writers to realize that the self, whatever that self is, is the base upon which they must work for it can be the source of their greatest authority and strength. While eschewing prescriptions on what and how to write, there is almost a conspiratorial tendency in women's writing to overthrow all the pleasing, agreeable patterns and associations of a male literary tradition which has treated men's writing as though it where a model for all writing. Even though there may be some common ground between men's and women's writing and their language will ever reflect this similarity, there is bound to be a representation, as well, because the setting of both is different.

Any criticism of a literary text from a political or feminist perspective, then, allows us not only to better define the portrayal of attitudes towards women characters, but also to expose ways in which sexist bias or stereotyped formulations of women's roles in society as well as the reproduction of sexist ideology by male critics, gets codified in literary texts. The major assumption behind

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this kind of criticism is, that stereotypical portrayals of women are politically interested figurations and tropes that pass off as truth, and that there is something unique about women's writing which gains special significance as a practical way of influencing everyday conduct and attributes. As a society alters its definition of what is appropriate, so too, it alters what and how artists may express themselves, though the commonly accepted rules of discourse might be different for men and women. These 'norms', in turn, determine the parameters of what may or may not be expressed, revealed, or even be admitted as true or meaningful. And as Gayatri Spivak remarkably demonstrates in her essays, 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference' ,whatever is taken as the 'norm' is never neutral or universal but rather governed by the specific *requirements* of a class or society. What needs to be clearly defined, then, is that what women have so far expressed in literature is only: "what they have been *able to express* as a result of the complex interplay of innate biological determinants, personal and individual talents and opportunities and the larger effect of socialization, which, in some cases, govern the limits of expression or even perception and experience itself" (Kolodny 76). Thus, biology and culture both influence expression and as Kolodny reiterates, in literature particularly: "this gets translated into the interplay between inherited tradition and conscious, even idiosyncratic, artistic choice"(77). This artistic choice must neither be slighted nor dismissed as the manifestation of neurosis even though the perception of reality may sometimes seem eccentric, bizarre or even exaggerated, when we study how women use language in the process of self-discovery.

Generally, the female writer is seen as suffering the handicap of having to work within the framework of the oppressor's

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language in the absence of a form of language which is inherently feminine, the assumption being based on Dale Spender's thesis, put forward in *Man Made Language* (1980) that language is 'masculine' and: "not a neutral medium but one which contains many features which reflect its role as the instrument through which patriarchy finds expression"(Barry 127). Though necessarily working within the male discourse, women's writing, then, seeks: "ceaselessly to deconstruct it: to write what cannot be written"(Jacobus 13). Women's writing, therefore, has a political agenda that is articulated in the form of a double-voiced discourse, which could declare overt, strident warfare against patriarchy, on the one hand, or engage in guerilla tactics through subversive strategies—reticence, irony, understatement, indirection — to vitiate dominant patriarchal and sexist assertions. One can, therefore, perceive a clearly demonstrable repetition of particular thematic concerns, image patterns and stylistic devices in women's writing in general. Although many of these are shared by male writers as well, they are without central emphasis on the peculiarly feminine circumstantial connotations they hold in women's writing. Women's writings which have been systematically devalued through injudicious masculinist interpretations, then, need to be re-evaluated through a fair, unbiased appraisal of their works, that is, through a more judicious, non sex-biased analysis which will, again, depend on, both, gender sensitization as well as understanding of the many layers of female experience and its consequent verbal expression. As such, male scholarship on women's texts needs to be reviewed and looked upon with suspicion for its tendencies to dismiss women writers through clichés.

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To illustrate some of the strategies that women writers adopt and the use they make of the dominant discourse in the process of abrogation and appropriation of patriarchal ideologies which inscribe their marginality, this paper proposes to attempt a critique of Emily Dickson's poem 'My life had stood—a Loaded Gun.' I quote here the poem in full:

My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun –
In Corners – till a Day
The Owner passed – identified –
And carried Me away –

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods –
And now We hunt the Doe –
And every time I speak for Him –
The Mountains straight reply –

And do I smile, such cordial light
Upon the Valley glow –
It is as a Vesuvian face
Had let its pleasure through –

And when at Night – Our good Day done –
I guard My Master's Head –
'Tis better than the – Eider – Duck's
Deep Pillow – to have shared –

To foe of His – I'm deadly foe –
None stir the second time –
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye –
Or an emphatic Thumb –

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Though I than He – may longer live
He longer must – than I –
For I have but the power to kill,
Without – the power to die –

*c.* 1863 (CP 369-370)

Poetry can never be read as if it had not been written by anybody in particular. It is always the product of the person. The relationship between art and biography is an exigency of feminist criticism and most scholars of the genre do recognize the constant speculation between self-representation and art. So also, there is a definite ideological link between Emily Dickinson's life and art, which is informed by her need for gender identification, as well as a desire for liberation from the stifling patriarchal culture of her nineteenth century New England, Puritan inheritance. The potential violence contained in the very title of the poem, its idiosyncratic punctuation and disregard for syntax, reveal the explosive and Vesuvian nature of her art which is to be seen as an extension of the specific biological, psychological and cultural situation in which she sees herself as the alien and critical other. A recurring stylistic device that is to be found in women's writing, is that they repeatedly invest their female characters with what Kolodny terms as "reflective perception" which is defined as the "habit of the mind", whereby: "character after character is depicted as discovering herself or... part of herself in activities she cannot fully comprehend" (79). So also, in the poem there seems a violent disjunction between what the poet observes and what she feels about it. Though a passive observation of her "life" (imaged through a silent but potentially dangerous weapon) which "had stood" silent

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and lifeless "In corners—till a Day", the poet chances upon a sudden and unexpected perception of the self amputated from self, that is, of the rift between her life and her real self. The underlying rage and resentment implicit in the discovery of this fracture, then, determines the imagery, syntax and narrative pattern of the poem itself. At once within a culture and outside of it, the poem becomes, both, a rejection of inescapable and unacceptable reality, as well as a demand for another, truer reality. In her given reality the poet feels not only, the double exclusion of woman and poet but also an internal split, in like manner of Virginia Woolf's observation in *A Room of One's Own*:

> If one is a women one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness… when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical (146).

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To recognize that split and the ways in which it is composed, and to challenge its terms even while necessarily working within them, then, is the hidden agenda behind the act of being "carried …away" by her "Owner." This act of willful submission and defiance is a deliberate subversion of the double standards of New England Puritan laws that prescribed passive, confined and private roles for its women, even while advocating active, public, authoritarian roles for its men. Her perspective makes two separate people of the observer and the observed (a device that is paralleled in Eliot's technique of *le doublement*), wherein the self is split into subject and object, that is, the self thinking and the self observing: the self thinks and acts —you and I, my "Owner" and "Me." From the

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first person narrative the poem then moves to the second and then the third person through which the poet is objectified even though she has taken on the standard female role of object.

In the whole process of objectification, the poet affects an inversion of generalized, traditional stereotyped images, not only to explore their inherent absurdity but to reveal their hidden reality in new ways. The tone of the poem changes to a conspiratorial one in which the constructed self and the real self become comrades-in-arms, in their battle against stock assumptions that circumscribe females roles of do[e]cility and submission and their activity to home, heart and bedroom. Standard notion of feminine sensibility and conduct are thus subverted through the birth of new self, in which both selves are united even while retaining their individual properties, which "hunt [s] the doe" and refuses the "Eider-Duck's/ Deep Pillow." This new self takes on, instead, a role in which inaction gives way to action, suffering to "pleasure", submission to aggression, and a silent, seething rage to explosive, resounding pronouncements, renouncing its hitherto passive role as if: "a Vesuvian face/ had let its pleasure through—." If day is spent in hunting and roaming in "Sovereign Woods", night brings with it a different kind of freedom. Having rejected sleep for surveillance, the self now stands "guard" in a gesture that abrogates confinement and sensibility (both entrapments to contain women). Heart no longer rules the "Head". The poet is excited at having acquired a killer instinct which is self-consciously violative of gender role expectations and will brook no non-sense. The excitement, at having discovered another world, another more authentic reality, is effectively conveyed through the racy style of the central body of the poem and through a remarkable use of the

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simplest of conjunctions—"And"—which binds together line after line in breathless urgency.

The poem ends as it began, on a reflective note, but with a difference. Having come to a recognition of her latent power and self-worth, the poet now expresses anxiety over the life of this real self which must out-live her, for without it she is powerless:

> Though I than He– may longer live
> He longer must – than I –
> For I have but the power to kill –
> Without – the power to die –

The act of killing, therefore, gains major significance as it is now viewed as a self-empowering and not a self-destructive force. Passivity has to be subsumed if this force is to be kept alive. Though seemingly an act of cruelty that highlights/ underscores the principle of violence and repression by which men sustain their oppositional roles of privilege and activity, it is regenerative and empowering, in that, it subverts the power of patriarchy by first defining the source of that power and then appropriating it by conforming to it.

'My Life had stood', then, is about inherent strength and control, about a positive structure that the poet attempts to build on a negative foundation. Shedding off inhibitions is an important element in the evolution of authentic being. The poem articulates Dickinson's pride, anger, self-centeredness, daring, emotional and intellectual assertions – responses conventionally associated with *unfeminine* thoughts, nevertheless, the only empowering ones.

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The killing of the soft, cherubic angel is a conscious and intentional creative act. In its place is reborn a woman who is re-defining herself on her own terms through a release of powerful energies. Structured in a double and simultaneous movement, the poem contains the voice of a poet who first writes about the dominant culture and then appropriates its empowering traits. Even though the feminist voice directed against patriarchy dominates, a critique of New England Puritan laws is tucked away into the margins. This strategy performs the dual function of affecting an awareness of the destructive nature of patriarchal power as well as the matriarch's ability to appropriate it, however, not for the mere pleasure of rule swapping. If the poet has rejected subjection and subjectivity, she also rejects force and domination *per se*. Only to "foe of His – I'm deadly foe" she says. As Paula Bennett rightly suggests: "embracing the true or unacceptable self appears to be the poem's *reason d'etre*" – (6). Dickinson's life is her weapon and her poems the ammunition with which she wages her judicious battle for freedom. The poem is: "central in understanding Emily Dickinson, and ourselves, and the condition of the woman artist, particularly in the nineteenth century" (Rich 174). Through a recognition of her own interior strength Dickinson celebrates her womanhood and its elevating powers. That she exteriorizes that strength in masculine form is very natural and understandable, since the most powerful figures in the dominant culture have been men. Also, her poetic powers would not have been expedient to the conventional ideology of womanhood. This idea finds support in Juliet Mitchell's contention that one: "has to speak 'masculinity' in a phallocentric world" (427). Dickinson's poetic voice, then, could very well be identified with: "the hysteric's voice which is the *woman's masculine language* ... talking about feminine

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experience. It's both simultaneously the woman [poet's] refusal of the woman's world ... and her construction from within a masculine world of that woman's world.... It touches, therefore, on the importance of bisexuality" (Mitchell 427). Poetic impulse and poet, poet and woman, poetry and womanhood are thus integrated to form a meaningful discourse aimed at altering the basic structures of emotion. The poem suggests a way to life, a way to self-definition and self-empowerment, by redefining the parameters of the feminine. 'My Life had stood', then, is a poem about social reconstruction.

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*The Aligarh Journal of English Studies* Vol.22 No.1, pp-67-88

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# INDIANNESS OF SOUTHEY'S *CURSE OF KEHAMA*

Highlighting the sudden upsurge of interest in non-classical cultures in the poetic mind of England at the close of the eighteenth century, Mr. William Haller, instructor in English at the Columbia University, U.S.A., and famous biographer of Southey, frankly remarked:[1]

> Eighteenth Century judgement had erected classical literature into a Canon and in its Passion for order and modernity had thrust what was not classical according to the canon into an outer darkness as something "Gothic" or otherwise to be contemned. Yet the fine intelligence of the 18th century could not rest content with that, and by Southey's time the impulse to investigate the non-classical was already developed. Already, too, there had been attempts to utilize other mythologies and other histories and literatures than those of the Greeks and Romans as material for poetry.

In the quotation cited above, by the term "non-classical" Haller clearly meant "medieval" and "oriental" and the latter epithet, primarily and pre-eminently, implied Indian. There is

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not an iota of doubt whatsoever that the Romantics, by and large, had become fascinated with India as a result of the discoveries made by English, French, German and Dutch Orientalists of the intellectual and spritual wealth of the country in the form of the publications of Indian texts in the later half of the eighteenth century. The first full-length direct translation was no doubt that of the *Bhagavad Geeta* in English prose done by Charles Wilkins and published in London in 1785 at the Strand at the recommendation of Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of British India. After this publication there was an unabated spate of European translation of Indian texts - *Hitopadesha, Abhigyanshakuntalam, Manusmriti, Ritusamhara, Meghdoot, Ishavasyopanishad, Tiruvallavur* etc.

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Naturally, the Romantic mind of Europe of the times was moved and enthralled by the discovery of this literary treasure which had remained hitherto unknown and unheard of in West. And Southey was no exception to this. To my mind, of all the English Romantic poets, Robert Southey, was affected most by this Indian Renaissance in the West. At least the range of his reading in Indian literature in their European versions and in literature on India by tourists, missionaries, diplomats, administrators and above all by the Orientalists, is stupendous, and Southey displays this without any sense of inhibition. The foot-notes to his Indian epic called *The Curse of Kehama* provide us with a mine of information regarding India, collected from numerous sources. It is really very sad that this has gone completely unnoticed, notwithstanding the fact that these notes are a measure of Southey's deep

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fascination with and keen interest in India and things Indian; they ought to receive scholarly and critical attention at any rate. And India, on her part, should feel gratified that among the English Romantic poets there was at least one whose knowledge regarding her cultural, religious and literary traditions was very vast indeed. The mere titles of the Indian texts that Southey mentions in his "Notes" are legion and quite startling for that age: *Bhagavad Geeta*, *Manusmriti*, *Shakuntala*, *Ramayana*,*Mahabharat*,*Yajurved*,*Gitagovinda*, *Vayupurana*, *Shivpurana*, *Shrimadbhagavata*, *Naldamayanti* and so on. He also seems to have read from Abu Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari* because he cites a passage from his work's English translation by Gladwin, in notes to book V of *Thalaba* as well as in the *Curse*.[2] And of the works on India by the Western travellers and scholars, he mentions the works of Jones, Moor, Bernier, Stavorinus, Abraham Roger, Colonel Mark, Wilkins, Claudius Buchanan, Pietro Della Valle, Crawfurd, Symes, Forster, Wilford, Cordeyro, Maurice etc. He seems to have been a regular subscriber to journals like the *Asiatic Researches* and the *Indian Antiquities* from both of which he cites passages frequently. *Hindu Pantheon, Oriental Sports* and *Historical Sketches of the South of India* appear to have been his favourite books on India written by English scholars who had spent a considerable time in India, observing and noting her peculiarities and singularities.

Of all the English Romantic poets, Southey is the most remarkable for his having provided several pieces of evidence of his aquaintance with Sanskrit, the language in which the most ancient wisdom of India is enshrined. It seems that he

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was trying to learn that great language, which as Halhed remarked, "far exceeds the Greek and Arabic in the regularity of its Etymology, and like them has a prodigious Number of Derivatives from each primary root."[3] In all probability, he was seeking help from books such as the *Sanskrit Grammer* by Halhed (1778) or by Charles Wilkins (1808), in this endeavour. The greatest proof of this is that he cites many Sanskrit words with their precise meanings.The following details, scattered in the "Notes", clearly demonstrate his awareness of the language of the Brahmins, otherwise called "Deva-Vani" : The poet makes the following statement regarding the Hindu division of human age : "The Hindoos call a child *Bala* till it attains the age of fifteen; from the sixteenth year to the fiftieth, *Youvuna* or a state of youth is supposed to continue. Each of these have several divisions and sub-divisions and in certain cases the period admits of variation, as appears to have been the case here."[4]

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The above quotation forms a sub-note on the expression "the state of youth" in a running note on the descent of the Ganges, as available in the first volume of the English translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* which was in the process of being done into English by the Baptist Missionaries at Serampur near Calcutta.[5] Southey had the first volume that had arrived in Europe in his day. The above quotation,being Southey's own statement and not a citation from the work of any Orientalist or traveller, is very remarkable indeed. It leaves us in no doubt whatsoever that Southey was trying to be familiar with the Sanskrit language. This impression gets support from the poet's note on the etymological meaning of words like "Shoolin" and "Ganga".

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The poet's note on the word "Shoolin" is available in the following piece of information that he supplies in a sub-note which stands asterized (i.e. bears the symbol of a star):[6]

"Shiva, from Shoola, the Spear which he held". Southey gives the derivation of the Sanskrit word "Ganga" in the following manner:

"From the root 'gum', signifying motion."[7] [If Southey says, as he does, that the word "Ganga" is derived from the root "Gam", he has evidently mastered or is trying to master, the ancient language of the Hindus. This fact is demonstrated by the two-word sub-note, namely, "The earth", devoted to the explication of the word "Gang" used by the Baptist missionaries of Serampur in their translation of a portion of the *Ramayana* which the poet cites by way of clarifying the descent of the Ganges in detail. It must be noted that the Baptist missionaries had erred in their transliteration of the first syllable of the word "Ganga" as"Gang" but the poet correctly gives an accurate English rendering of that syllable as "The earth."[8] The correct transliteration of that syllable is no doubt "Gam" and in no case is it "Gang" and the syllable "Gam" is the objective case of the word "Go" which means "the earth" besides bearing several other senses. It evidently seems that Southey had the following etymological meaning of the word "Ganga"; "That which passes through the earth or descends on the earth from heaven - Svargat gam gacchatiti." However there is another interpretation of the word which appears to be more pointed:

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"That which goes to the ocean - gam Samudram gacchatiti."]

That Southey had achieved some proficiency in the Sanskrit language is also clear from his sub-notes(i.e. his own remarks) on numerous Sanskrit words, used by the Orientalists from whose works he frequently quotes. For example, he adds sub-notes on the words "Purighas, Shoolas, Moosalas and Shaktis."[9] The first word he explains as "An instrument said to be formed like an Ox's yoke, the second as "A dart or Spear", the third as "A club or crow" and the last as "A weapon, now unknown".

Southey had collected a lot of information regarding the plants, trees, herbs, creepers, birds and animals of India. He makes references to these in the body of the text of his *Curse* and adds long notes, taken from travellers and Indologists known to him, with a view to giving authenticity to his description of the Indian scene.

Among the prominent birds of India mentioned by the poet in his notes are "the tufted lark"[10] and "sparrow"[11] "raven"[12], "aunny birds"(or Hansas)[13], "nightingales"[14], the "Chatookee" or "Chataka"[15] and a special bird to be found in Molucca Islands that has no feet at all but has a big body and big bill.[16]

From among the Indian animals he has chosen the horse and divides the Indian horses into two categories. "Haya" and "Ashva". The first according to his information, was "Arabian

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Horse" and the second as "Turkish".[17] He describes the buffaloes[18] bathing in muddy ponds, especially in summer. He did not forget to allude to the antelopes of India.[19] Of the Indian Trees mentioned by Southey, the most prominent are the Oak-sized Chinur or plane tree called "Platanus Orientalis"[20] by the botanists, to be found mostly in Kashmir; Til or Linden or Garse or Fierro tree to be found in Canary Island[21]; Burghut or Banian tree[22]; Kamala or the lotus[23]; the bhojpatra tree[24] ; the long grass called "Junglee"[25] and the "Surput" or tassel grass.[26] the poet also alludes to the heavenly tree called "Amrit" or "Kalpadrum."[27]

Southey displays a very remarkable awareness of the social customs, good as well as evil, that were prevalent in India of his day. The most significant of these customs is indeed what the West called "Sati". The poet had collected a very large number of vivid accounts of self-immolation committed by Hindu brides on the pyres of their dead husbands. Bernier, Stavorinus and Abraham Roger were the main sources from whom the poet had derived his information on Sati. (p.550).

The Hindu mode of marriage has received a vivid and detailed account on pp. 550-59. The custom of playing chess called "Chaturang" has been mentioned on p.585 as a very ancient game which even Shiva and Parvati used to play as the poet maintains.

The royal custom of performing numerous kinds of yagyas or sacrifices our poet knew full well : Rajsuya Yagya

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and Ashvamedh Yagya (p. 571&572-73). He has provided details of both at great length.

The evil custom of "Devadasi" too, Southey aludes to (p.598) and the poet dwells on it in several notes. The custom of wearing Janeoo or Yagyopavitra by the Hindu priests and other high-caste people finds mention on p.601.

Scattered in the notes to *The Curse of Kehama* are Southey's numerous pieces of information regarding philosophical and religious beliefs of the Hindus, obtained chiefly from the works of Jones, Wilkins, Maurice and Halhed : The Hindu doctrine of "Metempsychosis or Punarjanma" and of the immorality of the soul (p. 553); the Hindu ethics of controlling lust, anger and avarice, folly and pride (p. 553) ; the way a Hindu widow must conduct herself according to *Manusmriti* (p. 552) ; the view that Man has originated from the universal spirit called *Parmatma*, lives, moves and has his being in Him and goes back to the same Ocean from which he proceeds (i.e. *Parmatma*) (p. 573) ; the view that the soul itself is its own refuge and its own witness and that the gods, posted in every nook and corner, watch all our acts as does the spirit within us , implying that the Atman (Soul) is essentially *Parmatman* (God) and man is in harmony with his own spirit; he need not undertake any pilgrimage and has no need of expiation (p.591); that Brahma is the creator of all who has decided each individual's destiny beforehand, written on his or her forehead (p.609); the doctrine that God is at once Being and Becoming, Truth and Falsehood and that God is both within and beyond everything (p.612) ; that God lives

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everything (p.612) ; that God lives where the sun shines not, nor the moon and other lightning flash not (p.612) ; the statement regarding God, presumably from the *Rigveda*, namely, "Of him whose glory is so great, there is no image :- He is the incomprehensible Being which illumines all, delights all, whence all proceeded in that by which they live when born, and that to which all must return (p.620); the quotation from Wilford : "The Dharma-Raja, or king of Justice has two countenances; one is mild and full of benevolence; those alone who abound with virtue see it, His other countenance or form is called Yama; this the Wicked alone can see, it has long teeth and monstrous body" and the citation from Halhed : "Punishment is the magistrate; Punishment is the inspirer of Terror; Punishment is the Defender of Calamity."

Thus Southey can claim to have grasped the essential points of India's philosophical and moral laws.

Though in the Preface to *The Curse of Kehama* the poet very harshly condemns the mythological personages of the Brahmins, (p.568) he seems to have been really deeply fascinated by the Indian myths. The collection of Indian myths in the notes to the poem and the integration of those myths in the structure of the poem provide ample evidence of this assertion. Indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that the foot-notes to the poet's Indian epic constitute a virtual encyclopaedia of Hindu mythology. There is hardly a notable Hindu myth which Southey had left untouched. All the important gods and goddesses have been introduced in the

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form of *Dramatis Personae*, provided just after the "Preface" and their exploits and the tales connected with them elucidated in the "foot-notes" to the poem. We come across a full detailed account of Pollear or Ganesha along with his characterstic features on p. 561. A note on the next page (i.e. 562) explains Grindouvers or Gandharvas who play a very significant role in the mythological stories of the Hindus. A little earlier on p. 554 in the course of the delineation of the goddess of the Pariah (i.e. the untouchable) - Mariatale, the poet introduces the mythological story of Parashurama, an incarnation of Vishnu, according to which at the command of his father Chamadaguini (i.e. Jamadagni), Parashurama had cut off the head of his mother from her stock in consequence of her having watched the beauty of some Gandharvas and taken fancy to them and thus polluted her otherwise pure mind. Southey's source gives a new turn to this famous myth by saying that when at command of his father, the sad Parashurama put the severed head again on the trunk of his mother, he had actually put the head of a Parichi (i.e. a woman of untouchable class) who had been recently executed. The result of this mixture was that the goddess(i.e. the mother of Parshurama) became very cruel and indulged in criminal acts. At last the gods intervened and appeased her by providing her the power to cure small-pox and instructed mankind to implore her in the event of that disorder.

On p. 582 the wedding of Shiva and Parvati has been described. In this description Vishnu, Yama, Kuber, Indra, Varuna, Garuda, Vasukee, Gandharvas, Apsaras - all these Pauranic personages have been mentioned and the description

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is clearly based on *Shiva Purana*. On p. 584 the sun-god Surya, drawn in a chariot by seven horses with Aruna in the driver's seat, has been depicted along with his two sons - "Ashwinau" or "Ashvinikumarau". The source of Southey in this case, i.e. Sir Williams Jones, rightly identifies these two sons of Surya with the classical figure - Aesculapius. On p. 585 the story of Rahu and Ketu has been narrated. On the same page we come across the story of Kamadeva, son of Maya, and that of his wife Rati and of how the god was destroyed by Shiva. On p. 600 the story of the demon king Bali and how his pride was destroyed by Vishnu in the form of Vamana (i.e. dwarf) has been told quite vividly. On p. 621 the two forms of Yama - Dharamraja and Yamaraja and the office of his secretary - Chitragupta have been explained. On p. 623 the story of how Narada was cured by Vishnu in his incarnation as Krishna. On the same page we get the information that each of the chief Hindu gods has his female counterpart, differing from him only in sex but in every other respect exactly like him, with the same form, the same decorations, the same weapons and the same vehicle. Lastly on p. 624 - 626 the story of the churning of the sea (i.e. Samudra-manthana) has been told in detail and in this narration almost all the famous items and personages of the Hindu mythology have been mentioned: Meru, devas, gandharvas, Narayana, Amrita, Mandar, Kinnars,Apsaras,Brahma, Koormaraja (king of Tortoises), Parijata, Surabhi (or Kamdhenu), Dhanvantari, Shiva, Rahu, Sudarshana,Chakra etc. Thus the notes to *The Curse of Kehama* undoubtedly constitute a virtual encyclopaedia of Hindu mythology.

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Southey had aquired some knowledge of how the Hindus measure time. Notes on pp. 572-74 of the *Complete Poetical Works of Robert Southey* have a graphic discussion of this. One statement in a note on p. 588 leads us to believe that the poet had some idea of Hindu astrology. The statement runs thus, "Sani being among the astrologers of India, as well as with their sapient brethren of Europe, a planet of malignant aspects, the ill-omened raven may be fit *Vahan* for such a dreaded being."

Southey had become quite fascinated by the architecture of India, especially the art of temple - building and sculpture; p.597 provides us with comments on the serpent-shaped idol of Lord Jagannath. On the same page the poet has collected a remarkable piece of information on the Indian art of chariot-making. The chariot used in Orissa during the *yatra*-festival has been described as having sixteen wheels on either side, every wheel being of five feet in height and the chariot itself being about thirty feet high. On pp.601-602 there is a detailed account of the temple architecture of Mahabalipuram, the temple having been created there out of a single rock. The Shiva temple has also been elaborately described in the notes on p. 602

From the above account of the poet's notes to *The Curse of Kehama* it becomes quite evident that Southey had a very deep and penetrating knowledge regarding various aspect of India, Indian civilization and Indian culture plus Indian philosophy and Indian mythology. However critical he may have been of the mythological conception behind its

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personages, there is absolutely no denying that he had imbibed the true spirit of Hindu mythology. There is a great substance in his claim about the Indianness of *The Curse of Kehama* when he observed on the descent of the Ganges: "The reader will be less disposed to condemn the fictions of Kehama as extravagant, when he compares them with this genuine specimen of Hindu fable. "(p. 578). I think that the poet had within the heart of his hearts a profound appreciation for Indian culture. In support of this claim I would like to cite the following remark of the poet, justifying the Hindu custom of the "Sati" :

> yet, if we are to believe the anti-missionaries, none but fools, fanatics, and pretenders to humanity, would wish to deprive the Hindu women of the right of burning themselves. (p.552)

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However,the question remains whether the poet was able to make any really useful poetic use of the information on India he had gathered from his wide reading.The answer is quite positive indeed *The Curse .of Kehama* creates almost the same impression as any Sanskrit poem does whether it is the *Kiratarjuniyam, Shishupalavadham* or any other large scale treatement in verse of an episode from the *Ramayana, Mahabharata* or any of the *Puranas* like *Devibhagavata, vayupurana, Vishnupurana, Vamanapurana or Shrimadbhagavata*. A reader steeped in the Indian lore, I am sure, will instantly feel the Indian epic. Let us note the following points in this regard.

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The basic foundation on which the mythical edifice of the poem has been erected is thoroughly Indian. In the "Original Preface" to the poem, Southey observes on the peculiar nature of the Hindoo religion:

"Prayers, penance, and sacrifices are supposed to possess an inherent and actual value, in no degree depending upon the disposition or motive of the person who performs them." (p. 548)

No doubt, *The Curse of Kehama* is a demonstration of this very feature of Hinduism. The hero of the poem,i.e. the *tantric* Rajah Kehama,has aquired complete sway over the elements of nature, presumably, by dint of his prayer and penances - all directed to Lord Shiva. In the fourteenth section of the second canto called "The Curse" Kehama passes certain orders on the various elements of Nature and these orders are subsequently complied with. The passage begins thus:

I charm thy life
From the weapons of strife,
From stone and from wood,
From fire and from flood,
From the serpent's tooth'
And the beasts of blood:
From sickness I charm thee:
And time shall not harm thee.............(p. 555)

In section 5 of the third canto entitled "The Recovery", the poet demonstrates how the curses lavished on Ladurlad are obeyed by the elements concerned:

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"For water knew Kehama's charm
The Water Shrunk before his (i.e. Ladurlad's) arm."
(p. 557)

Clearly, Southey is using here an idea that the he had found in the statement of Edward Moore, made in *Hindu Pantheon* (London, 1810,p.333) which the poet cites in a foot note on p.564 of the *Curse*. The statement of Moore describes the power of the penances by Ravana on account of which all the gods had become his servants. Moore observes:

> Ravana, by his power and infernal arts, had subjugated all the gods and demigods, and forced them to perform menial offices about his person and household. Indra made garlands of flowers to adorn him withal; Agni was his cook; Surya supplied light by day, and Chandra by night; Varuna purveyed water for the palace; Kubera furnished cash...

Moore's description of the powers of Ravana was already available in a dialogue between Ravana and Angada in the *Ramachandrica*, the Hindi epic of Keshavadasa of the seventeenth century. In the dialogue concerned, Ravana boasts:

> How can Sugreeva carry on enmity with one whose feet are washed by Great Death in the form of a maidservant; whose indulgence the sun - god craves while serving as the door-keeper and whose umbrella is held by the moon?

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Now, what Southey assertes in the "Original Preface" to *The Curse of Kehama* and represents in his epic and what Moore says and Keshavadasa represents in the *Ramachandriaca*, has a very strong backing in the religious texts of India. Take up any hymn addressed to any god and goddess and you will find Southey's point fully vindicated. At the end of the hymn, very high claims are made for the efficacy of the hymn by the hymnodist. For example, in the hymn to Shiva, supposedly composed by Ravana, we come across a very high claim for reciting the hymn daily at the end of the worship:

> Shiva ever bestows without fail lasting and favourable wealth, consisting of chariots, elephants, and horses on anyone who reads in the evening at the end of the worship this hymn addressed to Shiva, composed by the ten-handed one (i.e. Ravana).

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This is as regards prayers. The powers of the penances have equally been glorified by the Hindu texts. A character (that is the enemy of King Pratapabhanu, in the guise of a sage) utters the following, addressing the king, in the first Canto called "Ayodhyakanda" of the epic entitled *Ramacharitamanasa* by the Hindi poet Tulsidasa:

> Marvel not in your mind, my son; for nothing is too difficult for penance.

Later in the same Canto Tulsidasa demonstrates the efficacy of the penance through the narration of the story of the penances

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performed by Ravana, Vibhishana, and Kumbhakarana. The great poet states:

> The three brothers practised manifold penitential austerities, severe beyond all description; the Creator drew nigh to witness them and said, "Son, I am well pleased, ask a boon of your choice."

Southey also makes the following remark about the efficacy of penances, prayers and sacrifices: "They are drafts upon Heaven for which the Gods cannot refuse payment." ("Original preface" to the *Curse of Kehama,p.548)*

The above statement of Southey is fully vindicated in the following couplet of Tulsidasa:

> Very short is the spell that overpowers Brahma, and Vishnu and Mahesha and all the gods; and a mere goad governs the mightiest and most furious elephant.

And as regards the efficacy of the sacrifices, especially of the Ashvamedha or Horse-sacrifice, the mythical writings of the Hindus called the *Puranas* are full of the stories of the evil character called "danavas" or "asuras" who were able to establish their sway over all the three worlds by means of one hundred horse-sacrifices. It must be borne in mind that Kehama, in Southey's epic seeks to attain the Lordship of the Swerga and later of Padalon or Patalaloka and nearly succeeds in his endeavour by performing one hundred Ashvamedhas. Southey does not cite

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any Indian source for the genuineness of his narrative, but there is not an iota of doubt regarding the authencity of the basic idea on which the edifice of the epic has been erected. The idea has been clearly and vividly described in the 52nd Chapter of the *Vamana purana* where the poet of the *Purana* concerned describes how the demon-king Dhundhu wins the region of Brahma and replaces Indra by becoming its ruler himself. Dhundhu asks his fellow-demons:

> O excellent demons, how and with what action is the region of Brahma obtained ? How did the thousand - eyed Indra along with the gods arrive there?

The fellow-demons ask Dhundhu to go to Shukracharya, the teacher of all demons, for a proper reply to this query. Shukracharya tells him:

> O excellent demon, Indra in ancient times performed a hundred pious Ashvamedhas or horse - sacrifices; he attained the residence of Brahma by virtue of that.

Kehama thus belongs to the class of people like Dhundhu and wins the throne of Indra by dint of one hundred horse -- sacrifices as Southey shows -- first unsuccessfully in Canto VIII called " The Sacrifice" and later quite successfully in the XIIth Canto entitled "The Sacrifice Completed" In the first section of Canto VIII Southey very beautifully suggests the idea of conquering the Swerga by means of performing one hundred Ashvamedhas (Horse - Sacrifices):

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'Nine and ninety days are fled,
Nine and ninety steeds have bled;
One more, the will be complete,
One victim more, and this the dreadful day.
Then will the impious Rajah seize thy seat,
And wrest the thunder - sceptre from thy sway.
(p.573)

However, Kehama's plan of performing the hundredth Ashvamedha and thereby winning the Lordship of the Swerga is thwarted by Ladurlad. But in Canto XII 'The Sacrifice Completed" the Rajah successfully performs the remaining sacrifice and as a consequence:

Up rose the Rajah through the conquer'd sky
To seize the Swerge for his proud abode,
Myriads of evil Gennii round him fly,
As royally on wings of winds he rode,
And scaled high Heaven, triumphant like a God.
(Section 8, concluding lines, p.592)

How closely Southey is consciously or unconsciously in line with the poets of India in his treatment of various themes of his Indian epic will become clear if we could point out the innumerable parallels his poem has to the texts of Sanskrit and those of other regional languages like Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati etc. without knowing them. The episode of 'Sati' delineated in the very first Canto in which Ajala and Nealliny, the two wives of Arvalan, the slain son of Kehama, recalls the "Sativrata" performed by Nagamati and Padmini,

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the two wives of king Ratnasana of Chittora in the Hindi epic *Padmavata*, written in the Awadhi dialect by the Sufi poet Mullick Mohammad Jaisi, It also reacalls the scene of "Sati" to be performed by Kunti and Madri, the two wives of king Pandu in the *Mahabharata* where the former is eventually persuaded to live in the interest of the children, born to both of them. I do not think that the two episodes were known to Southey and yet the description of the self-immolation by the wives of their dead husband in the English poem resembles the description of the same subject in the Indian texts, particularly the account of the Sativrata performed by Madri as given in the *Mahabharata*. The tenth section of the first Canto of *The Curse of Kehama* describing the *Sativarta* performed by Azla reads as follows:

> Woe! woe! for Azla takes her seat
> Upon the funeral pile!
> Calmly she took her seat,
> Calmly the whole terrific pomp survey'd
> As on her lap the while
> The lifeless head of Arvala was laid (p.550).

Now see how Vyasa, the supposed author of the *Mahabharata* describes the *Sativrata* performed by Madri in the Adiparva or Sambhayaparva of his grand epic:

> Having said so, the famous lawful wife (Madri), the daughter of the king of Madra, swiftly ascended the pyre, following the best men (King Pandu) who was laid in the pyre-fire.

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No doubt, the two descriptions are quite close to each other. In Southey's poem, Azla ascends the pyre first and her dead husband is laid on her lap later but in the poem of Vyasa Pandu's dead body is consigned to the pyre-fire first and his wife Madri follows the dead king on the pyre later. In Southey's poem Azla ascends the pyre of her husband "calmly" (i.e. without any mental disturbance), The poet should be credited here with having grasped the significance of the way a pious Hindu widow ascends the pyre of her husband with perfect devotion, without any regrets whatsoever. However the adverb that Vyasa employs for modifying the act of Madri's ascending Pandu's pyre is "turnam" meaning "Swiftly"; perhaps the Indian poet wants to stress by that expression Madri's impatience of meeting her lord on the pyre. "calmly" and "Turnam"-both bring out very skillfully the different shades of the character of a devout Indian widow in regard to her dead husband.

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The episode of Ladurlad's desertion of his daughter Kailyal, described in the fifth Canto of *Curse* is very close to Nala's abandoning of his wife Damayanti as given in the 63rd chapter of the "Vanaparva" called "Naloppakhyanaparva" in the *Mahabharata*. The logic of desertion and the reaction to that act of desertion in both texts have much resemblance to each other. It appears that the English poet was inspired by the Hindu text. But the fact is that except for a few portions of the Hindu epic such as the *Bhagavad-Geeta* and *Mahabharata* was not available in English or any other European language in Southey's day, not even the episode of Nala and Damayanti which was introduced by Henry Hart Milman, the then professor of poetry at the university of Oxford in1835 in his *Specimens of Indian Poetry*. Southey's observation on this point is worth-recording here. On the desertion of Kailal by Ladurlad,the poet says:

> This part of the poem has been censured upon the ground that Ladurlad's conduct in thus forsaking his daughter is inconsistent with his affection for her. There is a passage in Mr. Milman's version of Nala and Damayanti so curiously resembling it in the situation of the two persons, that any one might suppose that I had imitated the Sanskrit, if Kehama had not been published five and teenty years before Mr. Milman's most characteristic specimen of Indian poetry."(p. 560)

Clearly, Southey was so much engrossed in the then available English versions of the literary and religious works of India that his entire mind -- set had become thoroughly Indian, thinking and imagining like the poets of India. He had fully caught their manner and style. The result is that there is hardly an episode in *The Curse of Kehama* which could not be called Indian. No reader, fairly acquainted with the Pauranic and epic texts of India, can ever fail to detect the Indianism of the episodes in Southey's poem. Let us discuss some significant descriptions of the poem which the poet regarded as the product of his own fancy, but which have their Indian prototypes.

1. The graphic description of the Heavenly Ship in which Ereenia (the corrupt form of *Hiranya*) carries Kailyal to Hemakoot, to the Swerga and later to Mt. Meru, recalls to our minds the description of *Pushpakvimana,* in which Rama takes Sita and Luxamana and the entire monkey - ranks and Vibhishana to Ayodhya as we have it in Cantos 119-121 of "Lankakanda" in Valmiki's *Ramayana*. The Sanskrit poet starts describing the Heavenly Car in the following words:

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> That Chariot was wrought in gold and sapphire, having altars of *lapis lazuli* covered with rooms at its top, shedding silvery lights in all directions; decorated with pale-white flags and standards, possessing golden cabins decorated with golden lotuses....

In the style of Valmiki, Southey, too, describes his Ship of Heaven in very glowing terms in the first two sections of "The Swerga", the seventh Canto of his epic:

> Then in the Ship of Heaven, Ereenia laid
> The waking wondering maid;
> The Ship of Heaven, instinct with thought, display'd
> Its living sail, and glides along the sky
> On either side in wavy tide,
> The clouds of morn along its paths divide;
> The winds who swept in wild career on high
> Before its presence check their charmed force;
> The Winds that loitering lagg'd along their course,
> Around the living Bark enamour'd play,
> Swell underneath the sail, and sing before its way.
>
> 2
>
> That Bark, in shape, was like the furrow'd shell
> Wherein the Sea-Nymphs to their parent-king,
> On festal day, their duteous offerings bring'
> Its hue? .... Go watch the last green light
> Ere Evening yields the western sky to Night;
> Or fix upon the sun thy strenous sight
> Till thou hast reach'd its orb of chrysolite,
> The sail from end to end display'd

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Bent, like a rainbow, o'er the Maid,
An Angel's head, with visual eye,
Through trackless space, directs its chosen way;
Nor aid of wing, nor foot, nor fin,
Requires to voyage o'ver the obedient sky,
Smooth as the swan when not a breeze at even
Disturbs the surface of the silver stream,
Through air and sunshine sails the Ship of Heaven (p.566)

Southey had learnt about the self-moving car from two sources as his foot-notes on pp.566-67 of his *Complete Poetical Works* show- one is the summary of a Pauranic tale regarding the sage Richikesha and the fifty daughters of king Hirnyavarna, presented by Captain Wilfford in the *Asiatic Researches* and the second is Kalidasa's *Abhigyanashakuntalm* in the English translation of Sir William Jones under the title *Sakuntala* (1790). But his Heavenly Ship is closer to the *Pushpakavimana* of Valmiki. It is remarkable that in both texts the divine car is animate and sensitive; it understands the intention of its occupants and takes them to their destinations automatically. In both texts the descriptions of the Heavenly Ship are very graphic and vivid and have a very high pictorial quality about them, making, as they do, profuse use of gems, minerals and colours. In the case of Valmiki the description is rather detailed and specific whereas in the case of the English poet, it is brief, suggestive and evocative. Valmiki calls the Pushpakavimana "Kamaga" (moving in accordance with the wish of the passenger) and Southey calls the Heavenly Ship 'instinct with thought'. Valmiki's car is brilliant as the sun, whereas Southey's "Ship" is like the sun's 'orb of Chrysolite'. And so far as the speed of the car is concerned, both poets stress the impetuosity

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of their vehicle's speed. Valmiki suggests the extraordinary speed of "Pushpakavimana" by the use of the epithet "Manojavam" (having the speed of the mind) and Southey suggests the same feature of the Ship of Heaven by stating that it was swifter than the "swiftest of the winds':

> Recumbent there the Maiden glides along
> On her aerial way,
> How swift she feels not, though the swiftest wind,
> Had flagg'd in flight behind. (p.566)

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Thus there is hardly any doubt that the English poet had caught the spirit of Indian poetry in as much as he thought and imagined in the way the poets of India do. The fact becomes all the more remarkable when we bear in mind the fact that the portions of the Ramayana, containing the description of the Pushpakavimana had not been available in English or any other European language by 1810, the year of the publication of *The Curse of Kehama*. No doubt William Carey and Joshua Marshman, the Baptist missionaries of Serampore in Bengal, had started their English translation of the Ramayana much earlier than that date. But the portions of their translation, under discussion, were yet to arrive. *The* proof of this is Southey's own remark in the foot-note No. 1 on p.578 of his *Complete Poetical Works* (1837) which runs as follows:

> The descent of the Ganges is related in the *Ramayana*, one of the most celebrated of the scared books of the Bramins, *This work the excellent and learned Baptist missionaries*

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*at Serampore are at this time employed in printing and translating; one volume has arrived in Europe, and from it I am tempted here to insert an extract of considerable length.*

(Italics mine)

We do not know when the above foot-note was written, whether before 1810 or a little before 1837. In any event, Southey did not have the translation of the "Lankakanda" of the *Ramayana*, that contains the description of the "Pushpakavimana". This being the case, the resemblances between his description of the Heavenly Ship on the one hand and that of the Pushpakavimana by Valmiki on the other are really striking as well as surprising.

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Neither Wilford's summary of the story of Rishikesha nor Kalidasa's description of Indra's car, driven by Matali, can by said to be the real inspiration behind the creation of the heavenly Ship of the *Curse*. No doubt, Valmiki's description is the closest to that of Southey.

2. The picture of Ereenia taking Kailyal to his own bower of bliss in the Swerge and Indra's opposition to and rejection of a mortal's entry into his realm in Canto III entitled "The Swerga" of Southey's poem reminds us of Trishaku's attempts at entering the abode of the immortals by dint of the mantric powers of the sage Vishvamitra and his expulsion from the heavenly kingdom by Indra in the *Ramayana*. The arguments of Indra regarding a mortal's expulsion from his abode in both poems are indeed quite similar to each other. Valmiki narrates the

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story of Trishanku in Canto 9 of the "Ayodhyakanda" of his epic. I quote the relevant portion in the English verse translation of Ralph T.H. Griffith:

> But Indra, when he saw the king
> His blissful regions entering,
> With all the army of the Blest
> Thus cried unto the unbidden guest:
> "With thy best speed, Trishanku, flee:
> Here is no home prepared for thee,
> By thy great masters' curse brought low
> Go, falling headlong, earthward go."

In Southey's poem Indra exclaims at the sight of Kailyal in the Bower of Bliss in the Swerga:

> No child of man, Ereenia, in the Bowers
> Of Bliss may sojourn, till he hath put off
> His mortal part; for on mortality
> Time and Infirmity and Death attend
> Close followers they, and in the mournful train
> Sorrow and Pain and Mutability.
>
> (p.571)

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Southey only elaborates the description of the reasons why mortals are not to be admitted in the Swerga while Valmiki only suggests those very reasons. Whether Southey was conscious of Valmiki's text, cited above, we cannot say; at least he does not refer to it in his foot-notes. But the text was available to him as the first volume of Carey Marshman translation of the *Ramayana* containing the rendering of the

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"Ayodhyakanda" as he himself confesses, was available to him (vide his foot-note on p.578 of his *Complete Poetical Works* which I have cited above). Perhaps the influence of Valmiki here is unconscious; otherwise Southey would have referred to it.

3. Kailyal's curt rebuffs to Kehama's proposals in Canto XVIII as well as in Canto XXIV recall Sita's rebukes to the advances of Ravana in the 20th Canto of the "Sundarakanda" of Valmiki's *Ramayana* just as Kehama's attempts at tempting the virtuous maid remind us of Ravana's pleas, put forward to Sita, persuading her to be his bride. For the latter context, have a look at the following verses, addressed to Sita by Ravana:

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In Griffith's English version the above verses read as follows:

> Methinks when thy sweet form was made
> His hand the wise Creator stayed;
> For never more could He design
> A beauty meet to rival thine.
> Come, cast thy grief and fear aside
> And be my love, my chosen bride.
> The gems and jewels that my hand
> Has reft from every plundered land,
> To thee I give them all this day
> And at thy feet my kingdom lay."

Now read the seventh section of the eighteenth Canto called "Kehama's Descent" in Southey's Indian epic and appreciate the closeness of the argument enshrined therein to the argument put forward in the passage from Valmiki. Southey's passage reads as follow:

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Then turning to the Maid, the Rajah cried,
O Virgin, above all of mortal birth
Favour'd alike in beauty and in worth,
And in the glories of thy destiny,
Now let thy happy heart exult with pride,
For Fate hath chosen thee
To be Kehama's bride,
To be the Queen of Heaven and Earth,
And of whatever World beside
...... Come, Maiden mine
High-fated One, ascend the subject sky,
And be by Kehama's side
Sit on the Swerga throne, his equal bride.

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Indeed, the parallels, mostly unconscious, between *The Curse of Kehama* on the one hand, and the literary and religious texts of India on the other are legion, Meru, Swerga, Padalon (Patalaloka), the City of Baly – all have their prototypes in Indian texts, some of which Southey had read in their English translation but most of which were not available to him. The unconscious parallels establish beyond any doubt whatsoever that the English poet had imbibed the spirit of Indian writings very thoroughly and that the Indian epic of the poet is genuinely Indian, pervaded by Hindu sensibility through and through. The information regarding India, scattered in the footnotes, the poet's own comments on certain points in the statement of the Orientalists and travellers to the East, incorporated in the foot-notes, and above all the creative use made by the poet of this ample information on India in the body of the text of the poem itself, evidenced so clearly by the parallels between the Indian texts and the Indian epic of the poet, proclaim loudly that within the heart of his hearts the English poet

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was enamoured of India and that for a proper appraisal of *The Curse of Kehama* a deeper study of Southey's knowledge of India is called for. However much he might denigrate Hindu religion and Hindu mythology in his "Original Preface" to the poem, Southey had an intense love for India and things Indian. The following words by which the poet describes the mystical experience of Ereenia in Section XII of the XIXth Canto called "Mount Calasay" can be treated as the poet's own prayer to the Indian God Shiva:

> Where shall he rest his wing, where turn for flight.
> For all around is Light,
> Primal, essential, all pervading Light!
> Heart cannot think nor tongue declare,
> Nor eyes of Angel bear
> That Glory unimaginably bright:
> The sun himself had seem'd
> A speck of darkness there,
> Amid that Light of Light!
>
> (p.612)

And that is a measure of the poem's genuine Indianness. We must note that precisely that was the impression created on the mind of the narrow-minded polemical writer John Foster who had come out with a very hostile critique of the Indian epic of Southey within a few mouths of its publication in the pages of *The Eclectic Review* (March/April issue, 1811). The crux of Foster's argument is that Southey endeavours here "to elevate Seeva, the adored abomination of the Hindoos." According to Foster, in *the Curse of Kehama* "He (i.e. Shiva) is as much, and as gravely, attempted to be represented as a reality, *as he could be by the poets of those heathens themselves.*"

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(emphasis mine). [vide Vol.II of *Contribution Biographical, Literary and Philosophical to The Eclectic Review by John Foster* (London: Thomas Ward & Co. 1844, p.162,)] Thus there is absolutely no doubt that our poet was in full sympathy with the Indian themes that he sought to treat of in this most ambitious of his poems.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. William Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1917), pp.63-64.
2. While enumerating the works on India that Southey had read, John Drew in his *India and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1987), p.237, maintains in the footnote no.31 that the poet does not mention the *Ain-i-Akbari* in the notes to *The Curse of Kehama* while he refers to almost all works on India that had been available in London of his day. But the fact is that the learned scholar failed to notice that on p.587 of *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey Complete in one Volume*, (New Edition, London: Longmans, Green, and Co.. 1971), p.587, note no.1, the poet clearly mentions the *Ayeen Acbery* (Ain-i-Akbari).
3. N,B, Halhed, *A Code of Gentoo Laws or Ordinations of the Pundits From a Persian Translation. Made from the Original Written in the Sanskrit Language* (London, Printed in the year MDCCLXXVI, 1776), p.XXII.
4. For the references to Southey's notes to *The Curse of Kehama* see *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey Complete in one Volume*, vide note 2 above for the details of the volume. The facts mentioned in this reference are to be found on p.578 (vide the asterized note in the second column).

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5. The Baptist missionaries, responsible for the first European translation of Valmiki's Ramayana in three volumes into the English language, were William Cary and Marshman. The three volumes appeared in England during the period of 1806-10.

6. Vide *The Poetical works of Robert Southey*. Op. cit. p.581.

Hence onward all references have been indicated by citing the page number in the text.

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THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES
(BI-ANNUAL)

**Statement under Section 19-D Sub-section (b) of the Press and Registration of Books Act read with Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central Rules) 1965.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Place of Publication | : | Aligarh |
| 2. | Period of Publication | : | Bi-annual |
| 3. | Printer | : | Aligarh Muslim University Press |
| 4. | Publisher | : | Farhat Ullah Khan |
| 5. | Editor | : | Farhat Ullah Khan |
| | Nationality | : | Indian |
| | Address | | Department of English<br>Aligarh Muslim University<br>Aligarh |
| 6. | Owner | : | Aligarh Muslim University<br>Aligarh |

7. I, Farhat Ullah Khan declare that the above-mentioned particulars are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**Farhat Ullah Khan**
**Publisher**

Reg. No. 29062/76

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